The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

We can do it!

The needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

2001
Canberra

ISBN 0 642 78405 1

Contents

THE REPORT

Foreword

One little appreciated fact is that the majority of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders live in capital cities and other regional centres rather than in 'the outback'. The demographic and socioeconomic profile of Indigenous people in urban areas is markedly different from that of the wider Australian population which, to an even greater extent, lives in capital cities and regional centres.

Indigenous people in urban areas are more likely to be younger, poorer, be unemployed, in poor health, and have had less formal education and more contact with the justice system than their non Indigenous neighbours.

The Committee has not underestimated the magnitude of the tasks confronting the community in order to allow Indigenous people to participate as equals in the wider society and economy. In particular, Members have been dismayed at the alienation felt by some young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and their subsequent decline into a life of substance abuse, violence and self harming behaviour.

At the same time, Members have also been heartened by the enthusiasm and commitment of other Indigenous people to improve their lot and help other Indigenous families and communities. The Commonwealth, in cooperation with other governments, the private sector and Indigenous groups is also introducing flexible, innovative, well coordinated partnerships to redress the disadvantage suffered by Indigenous people in urban and non urban areas.

There remains much to be done, but the foundations for success are being laid.

I commend the Commonwealth Government for the leadership and determination, exhibited in so many ways, to address in a practical fashion the disadvantages faced by Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. To devote taxpayers funds, as the Government now does, to targeted outcomes in education, employment, health and housing has, in my view, the undisputed support and approval of the vast majority of Australians.

It remains for me to thank the people who have contributed to the inquiry. Firstly, I must thank the Members of the Committee for their support during the inquiry: my very able Deputy Chairman, Harry Quick; Trish Draper; Barry Haase; Kelly Hoare; Bob Katter (replaced towards the end of the inquiry by John Forrest); Jim Lloyd; Daryl Melham; Warren Snowdon and Barry Wakelin. I would also like to thank Catherine Cornish, James Catchpole, Jenny Cochran and Fran Wilson of the secretariat staff who have helped the Committee. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance provided to me by my electorate staff during this and previous inquiries.

Of course, my thanks are also extended to the many individuals and organisations - both Indigenous and non Indigenous – who forwarded submissions to the Committee and spoke to Members at hearings.

Finally, I wish to emphasise the Committee's belief that with goodwill and strong partnerships between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians, the particular needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be met – together we can do it!

Hon Lou Lieberman MP

Chairman

Membership of the Committee

Chair	Hon Lou Lieberman MP
Deputy Chair	Mr Harry Quick MP
Members	Mrs Trish Draper MP
	Mr John Forrest MP (from 7 August 2001)
	Mr Barry Haase MP
	Ms Kelly Hoare MP
	Hon Bob Katter MP (until 7 August 2001)
	Mr Jim Lloyd MP
	Mr Daryl Melham MP
	Hon Warren Snowdon MP
	Mr Barry Wakelin MP

Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Catherine Cornish
Inquiry Secretary	James Catchpole
	Cheryl Scarlett (until 26/3/2001)
Research Assistant	Jenny Cochran
Administrative Officer	Frances Wilson

Terms of reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on the present and ongoing needs of country and metropolitan urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Among other matters, the Committee will consider:

1. the nature of existing programs and services available to urban dwelling indigenous Australians, including ways to more effectively deliver services considering the special needs of these people;
2. ways to extend the involvement of urban indigenous people in decision making affecting their local communities, including partnership governance arrangements;
3. the situation and needs of indigenous young people in urban areas, especially relating to health, education, employment, and homelessness (including access to services funded from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program);
4. the maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in urban areas, including, where appropriate, ways in which such maintenance can be encouraged;
5. opportunities for economic independence in urban areas; and
6. urban housing needs and the particular problems and difficulties associated with urban areas.

List of abbreviations

ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ACCs	Area Consultative Committees
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy
AHS	Australian Housing Survey
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
ARHP	Aboriginal Rental Housing Program
ARIA	Accessibility / Remoteness Index of Australia
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Scheme
ASTF	Australian Student Traineeship Foundation
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BDP	Business Development Plan
CAAC	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development and Employment Projects
CGC	Commonwealth Grants Commission

CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
CHIP	Community Housing and Infrastructure Program
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CPS	CDEP Participant Supplement
CSHA	Commonwealth State Housing Agreement
CWPs	Community Working Parties
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DEWRSB	Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
FATSIL	Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages
HOP	Home Ownership Program
IEP	Indigenous Employment Programme
ILO	Indigenous Liaison Officer
ISBF	Indigenous Small Business Fund
IYPI	Indigenous Youth Partnership Initiative
LAIP	Language Access Initiatives Program
LOTE	Languages Other than English
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
NAAP	New Apprenticeships Access Programme
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NAHHC	National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NIELNS	National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

RTOs	Registered Training Organisations
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SNAICC	Secretariat Nation Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
STEP	Structure Training and Employment Programme
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAS	Tenants Advice Service Inc
VET	Vocational education and training

List of recommendations

2 Setting the Context

Recommendation 1

The Commonwealth, in conjunction with state and territory service providers, give a higher priority to the collection of national data to enable comprehensive, objective and uniform evaluations of Indigenous need across portfolio areas.

Recommendation 2

Commonwealth agreements with the states and territories include requirements for regular and comprehensive performance information from the states and territories about their delivery of jointly funded services to Indigenous people.

3 More Effective Service Delivery

Recommendation 3

Commonwealth agencies must ensure that, as part of the evaluation and performance reporting requirements, mainstream programs providing services used by Indigenous people, detail:

- the extent to which Indigenous people or their representative organisations are involved in the identification of needs, priority setting, service delivery and reporting on effectiveness and barriers to access;

- the extent to which the program overlaps or duplicates services provided by any level of government or organisation, and action proposed to address this;

■ the potential for pooling program funding with any similar programs of the Commonwealth or other levels of government or organisation, and action proposed to help achieve this; and

■ the extent to which the programs encourage Indigenous capacity and leadership building and action proposed to implement, expand and achieve this, while addressing any obstacles.

Recommendation 4

When designing Indigenous specific programs, government agencies take the following principles into account:

■ integration where appropriate with mainstream Commonwealth programs and services provided by other levels of government administration at the community level;

■ exploration of the potential for pooling program funding (actual or notional) with any complementary programs of the Commonwealth, other levels of government or other appropriate organisations;

■ involvement to the maximum extent possible of local Indigenous people or their representative organisations in the identification of needs, priority setting and service delivery;

■ funding be guaranteed for sufficient time as to allow the program to achieve its objectives; and

■ encouragement to the maximum extent possible of community capacity and leadership building.

Each program must also set clear goals, performance monitoring arrangements and reporting requirements. Reporting requirements must include identification of any impediments to Indigenous access to the program and how the impediments will be addressed.

Recommendation 5

When Commonwealth agencies are coordinating their activities in joint arrangements, one agency be nominated as the lead agency to take overall responsibility for the partnership and act as a first or single point of contact for service users.

Commonwealth agencies involved in existing joint arrangements should review those arrangements to ensure that one agency has overall responsibility for the partnership and that one agency is identified to service users as the first or single point of contact.

Recommendation 6

Commonwealth agencies ensure that the following guiding principles be applied to pilot and other projects that they fund for the delivery of services to Indigenous people. The projects:

- be designed and run in the context of agreed long term strategies for addressing Indigenous needs;
- run for at least three years or for a time that accommodates local timeframes and capacities where appropriate;
- be developed locally with a high degree of Indigenous involvement and ownership and where possible be in partnership with mainstream service providers;
- have flexible funding arrangements and minimise the administrative burden on participating Indigenous organisations;
- be adaptable to accommodate modifications if better processes are discovered;
- have evaluation processes that incorporate Indigenous feedback;
- ensure processes for skills transfers to Indigenous participants where external personnel are used to implement the projects;
- be goal orientated and require reporting on outcomes and impediments to achieving goals; and
- make maximum use of mainstream expertise and services.

Recommendation 7

Mainstream Commonwealth agencies and non-government organisations delivering Commonwealth services which have a significant Indigenous client base (notionally over three percent of their total client base) or which provide Indigenous specific services, strive to employ appropriately trained Indigenous staff and provide non Indigenous staff with cross cultural training with qualified Indigenous trainers.

Recommendation 8

Commonwealth mainstream agencies which have nominated Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO) positions ensure that:

- there be at least one male designated ILO position and one female designated ILO position;
- all ILOs, and particularly those who are non Indigenous, have access to adequate training and professional support.

Recommendation 9

The Commonwealth further strengthen its leadership role in coordinating with the states and territories, the delivery of Commonwealth and state services using a case manager approach. Under this approach, case managers at either level of government would assist Indigenous individuals and families to access the range of services available from either level of government in a holistic, client focused approach.

Recommendation 10

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission investigate the greater use of its program allocations as leverage to encourage new and more efficient service delivery partnerships between mainstream agencies at the Commonwealth, state and local government level, Indigenous organisations and the private sector.

4 Local Decision Making

Recommendation 11

When planning and establishing Indigenous community consultative structures, Commonwealth government agencies take into account the following principles:

- seek participation by Indigenous people, where appropriate by public advertisement;
- ensure broad representation of community interests, including representatives of local Aboriginal community controlled organisations; non affiliated community members, possibly representing relevant sectional interests (youth, the elderly, clients etc); the ATSIC regional council; and local government;
- invite representatives of appropriate and affected Commonwealth and state government agencies with observer status;
- provide flexible funding arrangements if the consultative structures are to prioritise or allocate expenditure so as to allow the community to tailor solutions to the local needs;
- nomination of agency community liaison officer(s) with a mandate to work alongside the community groups / members in the consultative structure;
- provide funding to cover participants' costs and, where appropriate, to cover some forms of capacity building;

- ensure that written information provided to consultative groups is written in plain English and, if necessary, assistance is provided to those in the groups who cannot read or write English;
- recognise that consultative processes for Indigenous participants will require time;
- hold meetings in public and maintain a public record of decisions; and
- ensure impediments are always identified and ensure strategies are developed and introduced to tackle the impediments.

Recommendation 12

The Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable Working Group review the needs of urban as well as remote area Indigenous families and communities when considering funding priorities under the Indigenous component of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

Recommendation 13

All government agencies recognise and accept the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) regional councils play as a vehicle for community capacity building and as a conduit into Indigenous communities. ATSIC should also be encouraged to offer regional council network services to the community.

Recommendation 14

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission develop with the National Office of Local Government a proposal to continue to part fund an Aboriginal policy officer position with the Australian Local Government Association with the view to providing advice to local government on ways of extending the involvement of Indigenous people in local government.

Recommendation 15

The National Office of Local Government in conjunction with departments of local government in the states and Northern Territory take a leadership role in facilitating, where necessary, more cooperative arrangements between mainstream councils and separate and discrete Aboriginal communities within council boundaries ('town camps') as is being done in Bourke, New South Wales and in the Northern Territory between the Alice Springs and Tangentyere councils.

5 The Needs of Youth

Recommendation 16

The Department of Health and Aged Care consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth as a priority target group for the Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program of the National Illicit Drug Strategy.

Recommendation 17

The Commonwealth Government and National Indigenous Substance Misuse Council consider the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's draft national strategy - the *Substance Misuse in an Aboriginal Community Controlled Primary Health Care Setting* - so that a decision on implementation can be made at the earliest possible date.

Recommendation 18

The Commonwealth Government seek the agreement of the Government of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) to conduct a joint inquiry into the extent and underlying causes of illicit drug use in the ACT. The inquiry should also investigate the economic, health and social impact of illicit drug use on the Indigenous and wider ACT community.

Recommendation 19

The Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy consider placing a priority on developing and implementing strategies to reduce illicit drug use among young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, particularly those living in urban areas.

Recommendation 20

The Commonwealth continue to take a leadership role to ensure that initiatives funded under the National Indigenous Family Violence Grants Programme are coordinated with equivalent state and territory initiatives to provide long term and holistic solutions to Indigenous domestic violence.

Recommendation 21

The Commonwealth Government reconsider the recommendations of the Proposed Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities and consider whether those recommendations can be integrated into more recent strategies.

Recommendation 22

The Commonwealth Government, in conjunction with state and territory governments, review current strategies and consider further strategies to reduce the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander truancy rate in schools.

Such strategies should include those targeting:

■ Indigenous parents and highlighting to them the benefits of their children's regular and ongoing attendance at school; and

■ Indigenous Elders, as community leaders, intervening on behalf of the young to help ensure the success of the strategies.

Recommendation 23

When responding fully to the Report of the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, the Government review funding arrangements to reflect the significant value of sport and organised recreation: in their own right; as diversionary tactics; and as means of building the confidence and self esteem of young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Recommendation 24

The Commonwealth Government fund the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to take a leadership role in and also encourage the establishment of regional and state based Indigenous youth advisory councils and youth participation charters as mechanisms to better engage Indigenous young people in decision making processes and provide role models for their peers.

The Commonwealth Government also encourage Commonwealth agencies, state, territory and local government boards, committees and community organisations to involve young people in their decision making processes.

Recommendation 25

The Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the states and territories, place greater urgency on providing services under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) for:

■ young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, including those in their early teenage years;

■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children escaping domestic violence; and

■ those living in smaller rural towns.

Recommendation 26

When determining further responses to the report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, *Footprints to the Future*, the Commonwealth Government develop specific initiatives for young Indigenous people on the basis that they are one of the most 'at risk' groups.

Recommendation 27

The Commonwealth Government establish a 'clearing house' to collect, share, monitor and distribute information on issues affecting young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. The 'clearing house' should be funded by the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS); administered by FaCS and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and designed in consultation with Indigenous groups. It should be run along the lines of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

6 Maintenance of Culture

Recommendation 28

Recommendations 8.5 and 8.6 of the report into Broadcasting by the Productivity Commission to establish a new licence category for Indigenous broadcasters and to reserve spectrum for this purpose be implemented by the Commonwealth Government.

Recommendation 29

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) consider mechanisms to further promote urban based community arts and craft centres.

ATSIC should also take a leadership role in coordinating funding arrangements for urban arts and craft centres with the Australia Council and state and territory arts and culture organisations.

7 Economic Independence

Recommendation 30

Area Consultative Committees (ACCs), particularly those in urban areas, invite members of their local Indigenous communities to become ACC members and to consult local Indigenous communities when identifying potential employment opportunities.

Recommendation 31

That the Government provide the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission with additional funding to further expand the number of Community Development Employment Projects participant places, particularly in urban areas.

Recommendation 32

The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business allocate funds from the Indigenous Employment Program Wage Assistance Program to provide mentoring services for Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Scheme participants entering employment off CDEP and during the initial stages of that mainstream employment.

Recommendation 33

The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business ensure it is a goal of Indigenous Employment Centres that they be managed and run by Indigenous staff. Funding for the Centres should include sufficient amounts to allow for appropriate skills transferral and training.

An allowance in the funding for Indigenous Employment Centres also be made in recognition of the additional administrative overheads ('oncosts') that will be faced by the parent Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) organisations.

Recommendation 34

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, and the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs jointly pilot projects in urban areas that:

- encourage partnerships between Indigenous organisations (particularly those receiving Community Development and Employment Project funding) and public authorities, private companies or industry groups;
- have the goal of moving Indigenous people into mainstream employment with those public authorities, private companies or industry groups; and
- use, at least notionally, pooled Commonwealth funds.

Recommendation 35

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission make *CDEP News* available on the ATSIC Website.

Recommendation 36

The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs fund the Green Corps beyond 2002 and promote Green Corps membership to young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Recommendation 37

That the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business jointly take a leadership role to coordinate the delivery of Commonwealth, state and territory mainstream and Indigenous specific programs offering assistance to small businesses.

8 Housing

Recommendation 38

The Commonwealth Government provide additional funds to expand the capital base of the Home Ownership Program and to monitor and report the increase in Indigenous home ownership rates over the next five years.

Recommendation 39

The Government review Indigenous access to the Rent Assistance Program and the extent to which it enables Indigenous families to enter or remain in private rental accommodation.

Recommendation 40

The Commonwealth State Working Group on Indigenous Housing ('the Working Group') is to review the extent to which poverty after housing affects Indigenous and non Indigenous households in public rental housing.

The Working Group is to investigate strategies to reduce the differences between the rates of before and after housing poverty for all households in public rental housing.

1

Introduction

Referral to Committee

1.1 This is the report of the inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs ('the Committee') into the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1.2 After correspondence with the then Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Senator the Hon John Herron, the Committee formally commenced the inquiry on 30 August 2000. A copy of the terms of reference is at page xii.

Conduct of the Inquiry

1.3 The Committee advertised the inquiry in September 2000 and distributed an information pamphlet throughout Australia. The pamphlets, over 1000, were sent with a letter from the Chairman inviting submissions to the inquiry.

1.4 During the course of the inquiry, the Committee received over 110 separate submissions from a range of individuals, Aboriginal and private sector organisations and Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments. A list of the submissions received by the Committee is at Appendix A. A list of other documents of relevance to the inquiry that were formally received by the Committee ('exhibits') is at Appendix B.

1.5 The Committee held a number of public hearings and meetings with those who had forwarded submissions to the inquiry as well as with other

relevant parties. A list of organisations and individuals who gave evidence can be found at Appendix C.

1.6 Copies of the submissions that the Committee received in electronic form, transcripts of the public hearings and a copy of this report can be found on the Committee's internet home page.[1]

Scope of the Report

Chapter Outline

1.7 This chapter outlines the contents of the report and the core themes that guided the Committee as it considered its recommendations. The second chapter sets the context for the rest of the report. It draws out distinctions between the needs of urban and non urban Indigenous people and presents a demographic and socio-economic profile of the two groups and the broader Australian population.

1.8 Chapters three to eight respectively address the dot points of the terms of reference for the inquiry. Each chapter contains relevant case studies or examples of good practice as Members felt it was important to highlight the many successful and innovative ventures being undertaken by Indigenous people and others in urban areas, much of it under the leadership of the Commonwealth Government.

1.9 Many of the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are intertwined – poor housing and infrastructure, for example, can lead to ill health and thus poor school attendance which, in turn, can lead to low achievement and less chance of finding employment. Similarly, the elements of the inquiry terms of reference are interconnected and this should be borne in mind when reading individual chapters.

1.10 In the final chapter, the Committee outlines its vision for a positive future in which Indigenous people (urban and non urban) maximise their potential and can fully participate as equal members of the Australian community.

What is 'Urban'?

1.11 There has been some discussion about the most appropriate definition of 'urban' in the context of the terms of reference. The Committee has used the formal Australian Bureau of Statistics definition of urban Aboriginals

1 At www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/index.htm.

and Torres Strait Islanders as being those living in population centres of more than 1,000 people.[2] This definition incorporates people living in a wide range of circumstances. It includes Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders living in mixed, predominantly non Indigenous communities ranging in size from small country towns to capital cities. The definition also incorporates traditionally oriented Aboriginals living in predominantly Indigenous communities in remote areas, some of which have populations of up to 2,500 people.[3]

1.12 Some of the evidence to the Committee has used the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) to categorise the location of Indigenous people. The ARIA ratings define location on a rating of service accessibility from 'highly accessible' to 'very remote'.[4] The definition of 'urban' would loosely fit centres falling within the categories of 'highly accessible', 'accessible' and 'moderately accessible' and, in some cases 'remote'.[5] The ARIA ratings are being used increasingly by planners and government agencies with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, for example, basing its funding formulae on ARIA ratings.[6]

1.13 The Committee has not wished to be pedantic in its application of any definition – to be so would be of no help to those suffering disadvantage. There is a continuum rather than an absolute distinction between urban and non urban contexts.[7] Indeed many of the Committee's observations and recommendations apply to all Indigenous people wherever they live.

1.14 Regardless of whether defined in terms of population or service access, the Indigenous population is not homogeneous. The Northern Territory Government distinguishes between four categories of 'urban' dwelling people, including:

- long term urban dwellers, sometimes for several generations, including the traditional owners of the land on which the urban centre is based;
- those who have permanently relocated from other areas in search of different or better opportunities;

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2 See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Occasional Paper: Population Issues, Indigenous Australians*, 4708.0, 1996, pp. 28-29.

3 Such as Wadeye, Port Keats, Maningrida and Galiwinku.

4 See www.health.gov.au/hfs/ari/aria.htm.

5 For example, the Committee has considered Alice Springs an urban area although it has an ARIA classification of 'remote'.

6 See also Senator the Hon John Herron, *Submissions*, pp. S1401–53.

7 Warawara, Department of Indigenous Studies and Prof A Hamilton, Macquarie University, *Submissions*, p. S64.

- those (often with their families) forced to relocate to urban centres, often unwillingly, to access specialist services, such as renal dialysis; and
- medium and short term visitors who may visit for specific purposes but do not intend to stay permanently.

1.15 These categories accommodate a key feature of Indigenous urban populations - their mobility - with people moving between houses, suburbs, towns and to and from remote areas. The categories also encompass those living in the suburbs of capital cities, small towns and the town camps that adjoin a number of rural centres in more remote areas. The key to remember is that, regardless of definition, urban dwelling Indigenous people encompass a range of groups with widely differing backgrounds, needs and aspirations.[8]

Other Relevant Inquiries

1.16 The breadth of the terms of reference did not allow the Committee to examine all issues as fully as it wished in the time available. However, many of the issues have been examined in other inquiries - even if without an urban specific focus. Members of the Committee have also drawn on their wider experience on the Committee to assist them to develop recommendations in this report.

1.17 In November 1992, this Committee completed a similar inquiry into the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.[9] Many of the issues before this inquiry are the same as those raised nearly a decade ago. The Committee is pleased to note that progress is being made. There is no doubt that the mood now of the Australian community is overwhelmingly in favour of reconciliation as the Prime Minister has observed:

> It has become an unstoppable force… the nation has been enriched and is better and more united nation as a consequence.

and:

> our collective priority must be to strengthen support for the ongoing process and, most importantly, improve the lives of Indigenous Australians.[10]

8 Northern Territory Government, *Submissions,* p. S1361.

9 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Mainly Urban: Report of the Inquiry into the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, November 1992. The Hon Warren Snowdon MP is the only Member who has served on the Committee for both inquiries.

10 Hon John Howard MP, *Australia and Reconciliation Today*, MRC News, Summer 2001, pp. 5-6.

1.18 Similarly, the Leader of the Opposition has commented:

> there has been movement in the right direction. Anyone who had taken part in last year's [2000] marvellous marches across bridges all over the country knows there is a groundswell of opinion in favour of reconciliation…[11]

1.19 All governments, Commonwealth and State acknowledge that "basic living standards from employment to health, from education to mortality rates" - remain unacceptable:

> It is true…that past policies designed to assist have often failed to recognise the significance of Indigenous culture and resulted in the further marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the social, cultural and economic development of mainstream Australian society.
>
> This led to a culture of dependency and victimhood, which condemned many Indigenous Australians to lives of poverty and further devalued their culture in the eyes of their fellow Australians.
>
> The inconsistencies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches remain at the root of much of the current difficulty.[12]

1.20 The Committee urges all governments - Commonwealth state and territory to continue to address Indigenous needs with determined and focused policies and to measure the progress being made and their deliberations in policy against core Australian values. In the Prime Minister's words:

> the principle of equity and a fair go, at the heart of the Australian character, is also at the heart of practical reconciliation programmes.[13]

and as expressed by the Leader of the Opposition:

> What we want is for Governments to create the environment in which a more open, generous and creative spirit can flourish in this country.
>
> These are imponderables: they cannot be measured in a Government's Budget Papers or laid out in a bar graph.
>
> And yet Governments can take the lead on issues at the heart of how we will come to feel about ourselves as a nation, on issues

11 Hon Kim Beazley MP, *Address, NSW Reconciliation Dinner*, 2 June 2001, p. 2. www.alp.org.au/media/0601/kbsprec020601.html (August 2001).

12 Hon John Howard MP, *Australia and Reconciliation Today*, p. 7.

13 Hon John Howard MP, *Australia and Reconciliation Today*, p. 9.

that reflect the values we would like to see for your children and their children.[14]

Other Parliamentary Inquiries

1.21 The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs tabled its *Health is Life* report of its inquiry into Indigenous health in May 2000.[15] That Committee's comments on the delivery of health services to Indigenous people have been of relevance to this Committee's examination of the delivery of health and other services to Indigenous people in urban areas. The two committees have also had an overlapping membership which has assisted in the deliberations for this inquiry. This Committee generally endorses and supports the recommendations of *Health is Life* and notes, with pleasure, that the Commonwealth Government has embraced that report.

1.22 At the time of this inquiry, the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs was conducting an inquiry into the social and economic costs of licit and illicit substance abuse. While this broad ranging inquiry is not Indigenous specific, its findings should be of relevance to reducing the rate and impact of Indigenous substance abuse.

1.23 In March 2000 the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee completed an inquiry into the effectiveness of education and training programs for Indigenous Australians. The report of that inquiry has also provided a backdrop for this Committee's consideration of the situation and needs of Indigenous young people and the opportunities for economic independence in urban areas.[16]

Commonwealth Grants Commission Inquiry

1.24 In October 2000 the Commonwealth Grants Commission released a draft report for its inquiry into the distribution of Commonwealth funding for programs that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.[17] While having a financial focus, the data collected by the Commission has been of

14 Hon Kim Beazley MP, *Address, NSW Reconciliation Dinner*, p. 3.

15 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, *Health is Life: Report on the Inquiry into Indigenous Health*, May 2000.

16 Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, *Katu Kalpa: Report on the Inquiry into the effectiveness of education and training programs for Indigenous Australians*, March 2000. A Government response to the report was tabled in the Senate on 8 March 2001.

17 Commonwealth Grants Commission, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, Discussion Paper IFI 2000/2, 2000.

assistance to the Committee. A final report was provided to the relevant Commonwealth ministers on 28 March 2001. The Committee recognises that this report will need to be examined on the basis that the final Grants Commission report may lead the Government to modify its response to some of this report's recommendations.

1.25 The Grants Commission was to: develop a methodology to measure the relative needs of groups of Indigenous people; identify and measure the relative needs of Indigenous people in regions for specific services; and consider how well the distribution of Commonwealth resources for each service accords with the relative needs of those regions.[18] If its findings are adopted by government, the report will have significant impact on future programs as it will provide a whole of government methodology to improve the efficiency of service provision. However, the Committee believes that most existing and future services will require individual assessment and monitoring and the exercise of judgement.

McClure Report

1.26 The report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform, provided to the Minister for Family and Community Services in July 2000 ('the McClure Report') has been particularly influential in the redesign and delivery of mainstream social support services.[19] Much of the philosophy and many of the recommendations of the McClure Report are reflected in 2001-02 Commonwealth budget initiatives and will have an impact on the services used by Indigenous people in urban (and non urban) areas. The Committee anticipates that these initiatives will provide more efficient and effective services for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Core Principles

1.27 Committee Members found it useful to agree to a set of core principles to assist them assess the inquiry evidence and consider possible recommendations. The core principles or values underpin the report and are discussed below.

18 The Commission based findings on ATSIC regions where possible.

19 Reference Group on Welfare Reform, *Participation Support for a More Equitable Society*, Final Report, July 2000.

Equal Access to Government Services for all Australians

1.28 All Australians should have the same rights, opportunities and obligations. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, as Australian citizens, therefore, have a right to reasonable and equitable access to mainstream government services. It is the responsibility of governments to ensure that their programs and services are accessible by all Australians who need them.

Community Focus

1.29 Communities and individuals should be encouraged to develop services to meet the needs of their community. They are generally better able to do this than governments. Communities are also more likely than governments to find the best solutions to local problems and challenges. Government programs need to be developed with this understanding.

1.30 Governments should help local groups articulate their needs and manage their resources so that they can successfully interact socially, politically and economically with the wider community.

Partnerships

1.31 It is desirable for all levels of government, the private sector, Indigenous groups and individuals to work together to maximise opportunities for individuals and ensure that services designed to meet the needs of people are delivered as efficiently as possible.

1.32 The Committee believes that through such cooperative strategies the entrenched disadvantage and alienation suffered by many Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders living in urban areas will be successfully challenged. This will require new ways of thinking.

Rights and Responsibilities

1.33 The unique identity and culture of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders living in urban areas should continue to be recognised and respected by all Australians.

1.34 At the same time there should be a balance between rights and obligations. All Australians – Indigenous and non Indigenous - need to take an appropriate level of responsibility for their own actions and respect the rights of others and the broader community.

1.35 The Committee accepts that the capacity of some Indigenous people to accept individual responsibility may be affected by the long term

disadvantages referred to throughout this report. Nonetheless, these structural factors do not alleviate the need for Indigenous people, at the individual, family and community level to share responsibility with the wider community for urgently addressing such issues as domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, truancy and parental responsibilities. There is much evidence available to indicate that many Indigenous leaders agree. Evelyn Scott regards welfare dependency as 'almost totally destroying Aboriginal culture'; Peter Yu asserts that communities are being 'crushed with the weight of the welfare economy'; and Noel Pearson argues persuasively that 'the scale and nature of Indigenous problems changed dramatically after passive welfare became the economic foundation of their communities'.[20]

Focus on Mainstream Services

1.36 In urban areas at least, the urgent priority should be on meeting the needs of Indigenous people through better access to existing mainstream services. This means that mainstream services need to be appropriately designed and delivered in culturally sensitive ways that reflect regional differences and cultural diversity. It also means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to be involved in program design and service delivery. It may be necessary to invest in parallel Indigenous specific structures or services where mainstream services are inadequate or non existent.

1.37 The Committee acknowledges that there are many mainstream government services that Indigenous people find currently neither easy to use nor appropriate to their circumstances. However, this is not a reason for doing nothing. Appropriate plans need to be developed to overcome these obstacles. They should not be perpetuated.

20 Hon John Howard MP, *Australian and Reconciliation Today*, pp. 9-10.

2

Setting the Context

Introduction

2.1 The demographic and socioeconomic profile of Indigenous people is markedly different from that of the wider Australian community. Within the Indigenous population there are also identifiable differences between the profile of those who live in urban and non urban areas.

2.2 Even within the group of urban dwelling Indigenous people there are vast differences. The group includes those living in the inner suburbs of capital cities, living in small towns where there are very few Indigenous people and those living in the town camps that adjoin a number of rural centres. They also have different needs and varying degrees of understanding and acceptance of the broader community in which they live. As the Committee was told:

> the problem again is to not assume a "blanket classification" of peoples within either their "Aboriginality" or their "Urban-ness".[1]

2.3 This chapter begins with a demographic and socioeconomic profile of Indigenous people as a stark backdrop to the discussion in the following chapters. It should be borne in mind that the indicators below of low health status, low education status and low housing status are not separate phenomena but all part of a large complex of disadvantage.[2] The chapter concludes by indicating the range of service providers attempting to redress this disadvantage.

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1 Broome Aboriginal Media Association, *Submissions*, p. S415.

2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), *Annual Report 1999-2000*, p. 25.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Status

Demographics

2.4 As of the census in 1996, some 386,000, or 2.0% of the total population were Indigenous.[3] The Indigenous population growth rate between 1991 and 1996 was 2.3%, almost twice that of the total population at 1.2%.[4]

2.5 The age structure of the Indigenous population is very young, predominantly the result of high fertility and high mortality.[5] In 1996, the median age was 20 years, compared with 33 years for the total Australian population.[6] In 1996, 40% of the Indigenous population was under 15 years, compared to 21% of the total population. Further, 2.6% of Indigenous Australians were over 65 years, compared to 12% of the total Australian population. The age structure of the Indigenous population is relatively constant across urban and rural areas.[7]

Estimated resident Indigenous population, 30 June 1996

	Indigenous population	Proportion of Indigenous population	Proportion of total State population
	'000	*%*	*%*
New South Wales	109.9	28.5	1.8
Victoria	22.6	5.9	0.5
Queensland	104.8	27.2	3.1
South Australia	22.1	5.7	1.5
Western Australia	56.2	14.6	3.2
Tasmania	15.3	4.0	3.2
Northern Territory	51.9	13.4	28.5
Australian Capital Territory	3.1	0.8	1.0
Australia	**386.0**	**100.0**	**2.1**

Source ABS, 3230.0, p. 3.

3 The Estimated Resident Population. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Population Distribution, Indigenous Australians*, 4705.0, 1996, p.6.

4 ABS, *Main Features, Experimental Estimates of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population, 30 June 1991–30 June 1996*, 3230.0, 1998, www.abs.gov.au (August 2001). Indigenous growth rate figure needs to be treated with caution as people are now more likely to self identify as being Indigenous.

5 ABS, 3230.0; ABS, *Population: Indigenous population*, www.abs.gov.au (August 2001).

6 ABS, 4705.0, p. 6.

7 ABS, 3230.0.

Percentage of population by location, 1996 Census

Geographic area	Indigenous Population	Total Australian Population
	%	%
Major urban (>100,000 people)	30.3	62.7
Other urban (1,000 – 99,999 people)	42.3	23.3
Rural locality (<200-999 people)	27.4	14.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Source *1996 Census of Population and Housing, ATSIC, Submissions, p.S807.*

2.6 The Indigenous population is becoming increasingly urbanised: in 1971, 44% of Indigenous people lived in urban areas, but by 1996 this had risen to 72.6%.[8] This can be accounted for by natural growth, migration from rural areas, changes in classification of some smaller urban centres and higher representation of mixed origin families.[9]

Health

2.7 Indigenous Australians continue to have worse health than the rest of the Australian population. The health disadvantage of Indigenous people is marked. It begins early in life and continues throughout their life cycle. In contrast with other indicators, location seems to make no significant difference to the health status of Indigenous people.[10]

2.8 Based on the 1996 census, the life expectancy for Indigenous Australians born in 1997-1999, is 56 years for males and 63 years for females. This compares to the expectancy for total Australian males and females of 76 years and 82 years respectively.[11]

2.9 Age specific death rates were higher for the Indigenous population than for the total population in every age group. The death rate for young Indigenous males was 2.6 times higher than for other young males in 1995-97, while Indigenous females were 2.2 times as likely to die young as

8 IESIP SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team, *What Works: Explorations in Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*, 2000, p. 381.

9 ABS, *Population: Special Article – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: A Statistical Profile from the 1996 Census, (Year Book Australia, 1999)*, www.abs.gov.au (August 2001).

10 Based on data from Western Australia and New South Wales. See Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1296.

11 ABS, *Deaths*, Section 6, Deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, 3302.0, 1999, p. 73.

other females.[12] Death rates for Indigenous males and females were higher than those for non-Indigenous people for every age-group in 1999.[13]

2.10 In 1999 Indigenous women, on average, had more babies and had them at a younger age than non Indigenous women. The median age of Indigenous mothers was 24.4 years compared to 29.7 years for all women. Total fertility rates for Indigenous women were highest in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.[14] However, Indigenous babies are more than twice as likely to be stillborn or die within the first 28 days after birth than those with non Indigenous mothers.[15] On a more positive note, the infant mortality rate has been cut from up to 20 times the non Aboriginal rate to four times the national average today.[16]

Education

2.11 Indigenous Australians have a lower rate of participation in the education system and attainment of educational qualifications.

2.12 In 1996, 74% of Indigenous 15 year olds were in full-time education, compared to 92% of all 15 year olds. At the age of 19, the difference was even greater, with only 12% of Indigenous Australians in full-time education, compared to 36% of all Australians.[17] However, since the 1970s, the proportion of Indigenous students completing high school has quadrupled.[18] Furthermore, at 25 years or older, Indigenous people in 1996 had similar participation rates in post-secondary education to the total population (6% and 5% respectively).[19] This reflects that Aboriginal enrolments in higher education have increased by 60% in the 1990s.[20] Nearly 9% of the Indigenous population had acquired a vocational qualification or undergraduate or associate diploma compared to 20% of the total population.[21]

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12 Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet, *Frequently asked questions*, www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au (August 2001).

13 ABS, *Occasional Paper: Mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, 3315.0, 1997, 2000, p. ix.

14 ABS, *Births*, Chapter 7, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Births, 3301.0, 1999, p. 76.

15 ABS, *Australian Social Trends 2000, Population – Population Characteristics: Social Conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peopl*e, www.abs.gov.au (August 2001).

16 Hon John Howard MP, *Australia and Reconciliation Today*, MRC News, Summer 2001, p. 8. Infants are classed as babies up to 12 months old.

17 ABS, *Population: Special Article*.

18 Hon John Howard MP, *Australia and Reconciliation Today*, p. 8.

19 ABS, *Australian Social Trends 2000*.

20 Hon John Howard MP, *Australia and Reconciliation Today*, p. 8.

21 ABS, *Australian Social Trends 2000*.

Housing

2.13 Indigenous households have more residents on average than other households. Indigenous households had an average of 3.7 people, which is one more person than in all households. This can partly be attributed to the higher number of children resident in Indigenous family households.[22] Where the number of bedrooms were stated, 7.5% of bedrooms in Indigenous houses had more than two people sleeping to each bedroom compared to 1.0% of total households.[23] These are national figures and mask regional variations – houses occupied by Indigenous people in remote and rural areas are more likely to be more overcrowded than Indigenous occupied houses in urban areas.

2.14 Indigenous households are also more likely to be multi-family households. In 1996, 6.2% of Indigenous family households contained two or more families, compared to 1.2% of total Australian households. In addition, nearly half of three-family households were Indigenous households (at 45%).[24]

2.15 Despite Indigenous households having on average one more person than in all households, the median household income was $540 per week, $90 less than in all households.[25]

2.16 Nonetheless, at the national level, the proportion of Indigenous Australians who own their own home has increased from one in four in the 1970s to one in three today.[26]

2.17 Further details on Indigenous housing are described in chapter eight.

Employment

2.18 In 1996, the unemployment rate for Indigenous Australians was 23%, which was more than double the 9% unemployment rate for all Australians. The Indigenous figure would be 40% if those employed on Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) were included. Further, Indigenous people were less likely than the total population to work 35 hours or more each week.[27]

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22 ABS, *Population: Special Article*.

23 ABS, *Population: Special Article*.

24 ABS, *Population: Special Article*.

25 ABS, *Population: Special Article.*

26 Hon John Howard MP, *Australia and Reconciliation Today*, p. 8.

27 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S645.

2.19 Indigenous people in urban areas have higher rates of labour force participation than those in rural areas and a larger share working 35 hours or more each week. In contrast, and in part reflecting greater access to CDEP employment in rural areas, unemployment rates were higher in urban areas.[28]

Torres Strait Islanders

2.20 There are some 39,000 Torres Strait Islanders ('Islanders') of whom approximately 33,000 live on the Australian mainland, principally in urban centres on the Eastern seaboard.[29] References in other chapters of the report to Islanders are to those living on the mainland, on the basis that none of the communities in the Torres Strait region classify as 'urban'.

2.21 The data available on Islanders living on the mainland needs to be treated with some caution due to the small statistical sample. However, Australian Bureau of Statistics data from 1994 and 1996 indicates, in summary, that:

- Islanders on the mainland were more likely to have a current or long-term health condition than Islanders living in the Torres Strait. Both groups were less likely to have a current or long term health condition than the national Indigenous population;
- compared to the national Indigenous average, Islanders appeared to have higher levels of formal education and be better qualified. This was particularly the case for Islanders on the mainland;
- the individual median weekly income for Islanders on the mainland ($229 in 1996) was more than that for Aboriginal people ($188 in 1996), but both were less than that for all other Australians ($292 in 1996); and
- Islanders on the mainland were more likely to have contact with the police and legal system than are those in the Torres Strait. Both groups, however, had less contact with police, crime and the legal system than did the national Indigenous population.[30]

2.22 The Committee notes that the Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs seeks recognition of the full diversity of mainland Torres Strait Islander issues in all policy and program fora with Islander representation on government

28 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S809.

29 ABS, 4705.0, pp. 65-67.

30 ABS & Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey: Torres Strait Islanders in Queensland*, 4179.3; and ABS, *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 4704.0.

decision making bodies.[31] The Committee supports the need for Torres Strait Islanders to have their unique culture recognised, particularly in those regions where they make up a large minority of the Indigenous population.

Data Collection Problems

2.23 The data above comes from a number of different sources and, in some cases, extrapolates national figures from the data collected in only two or three states.[32] Accurate data on Indigenous demography, needs, expenditure and outcomes is necessary for making decisions on priorities, funding allocations and monitoring performance. There is, however, a lack of accurate data on which to base decisions. As the Committee was told:

> available data in a number of areas is poor when it comes to identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within existing program and service data collections.[33]

and that:

> The lack of good quality data on Indigenous health and health care has been an issue for many years, and continues to constrain effective policy development, planning and program evaluation.[34]

2.24 The problem is not only a lack of data, but a lack of comparable data between states and the lack of regional data.[35] This makes it difficult to estimate Indigenous needs (urban and non urban) and plan ways to deliver services more effectively.

2.25 There are now a number of initiatives to improve the quality and usefulness of the data collected in several sectors. The most significant of these is the Commonwealth Grants Commission inquiry into funding.[36] Nonetheless, the Committee sees a pressing need for comprehensive, accurate and comparable data collection and recommends so accordingly.

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31 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S686.

32 Most national Indigenous health information is based on extrapolation of data collected from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia – although the data sources are improving.

33 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S444.

34 Department of Health and Aged Care, *Submissions*, p. S1084. See also Australian Capital Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1166; National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), *Transcripts*, p. 464.

35 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1239.

36 See Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC), *Draft Report on the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, Discussion Paper IFI 2000/2, pp. 34-39.

Recommendation 1

2.26 **The Commonwealth, in conjunction with state and territory service providers, give a higher priority to the collection of national data to enable comprehensive, objective and uniform evaluations of Indigenous need across portfolio areas.**

Further Differences

2.27 The evidence above indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders by all socio economic indicators are worse off than other Australians, wherever they live, but generally more so in remote areas. However, the data does not reveal all the subtleties of the circumstances facing urban dwelling Indigenous people.

2.28 For example, Aboriginal communities in remote areas are relatively easy to identify spatially, socially and for the purposes of service delivery. It may be harder to identify more dispersed groups in urban areas, particularly when they are a small proportion of the total population. In fact there may not be a 'community' at all, but a loose network of geographically dispersed family and organisational affiliations not at all obvious to non Aboriginal observers. The needs of those without networks at all often go unnoticed and unmet. The disadvantages of cultural isolation can be just as acute as those of geographic isolation.

2.29 In remote areas, the direct service providers are more likely to know each other, making joint initiatives easier to initiate at the local level. Services in urban areas are more likely to be provided from numerous facilities. In urban areas with a dispersed Indigenous population, it may be more difficult for service providers and planners to know whether they are reaching the Indigenous people most in need of assistance or involving all sectors of the community in decision making. Indigenous people, when only a small proportion of a community, may have 'a very quiet voice' in local decision making forums.[37]

2.30 Urban dwelling Indigenous people may also suffer from having their Aboriginality denied and be assumed to be assimilated. The stereotypes of 'real' Aboriginals being those living 'out bush' or in 'traditional' settings may lead to a denial of the possibility of a dynamic, contemporary

37 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1295-96.

Indigenous culture in urban areas. As the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress told the Committee:

> It galls to hear non-Aboriginal people in Alice Springs saying that they want to go to [an Aboriginal] community, when in fact they are living in one, a community that is ignored because they host a large non-Aboriginal population.[38]

2.31 Finally, in a perverse sense, the very extent of the needs of Indigenous people may make it easier to tackle them. In remote communities where there may be no access to mainstream services, no functioning market economy and the tyranny of distance is easily apparent, the disadvantage may be very stark. In urban areas, the social barriers faced by Indigenous people may be less apparent and, thus, generate less political pressure to be addressed.[39]

Service Provision

2.32 In the late 1960s and 1970s there was a major reassessment of Aboriginal social policy and the way in which services were delivered to Aboriginals.[40] The Commonwealth Government became increasingly involved in what had been an area of state responsibility. At the same time there was a winding down of the Aboriginal welfare agencies in the states and territories which had responsibility for delivering all services to Indigenous people. Mainstream government agencies at the Commonwealth and state level entered the gap, taking primary responsibility for providing services to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, just as they did to other Australians.[41]

2.33 In the thirty or so years since then, mainstream agencies at all levels of government have been providing services to Indigenous people in urban and non urban areas. These services are supplemented by Indigenous specific services, delivered by a variety of agencies.

2.34 Indigenous people (both urban and rural) have access to a range of mainstream and Indigenous specific services provided by the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments.

38 Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, *Submissions*, p. S989.

39 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1295.

40 CAEPR, *Discussion Paper: Rethinking the fundamentals of social policy towards Indigenous Australians: block grants, mainstreaming and the multiplicity of agencies and programs*, No 46/1993, Australian National University, 1993, p. 1.

41 CAEPR, No 46/1993, p.1.

Mainstream and Indigenous Specific Services

2.35 Mainstream services are generally those provided for all Australians, including urban dwelling Indigenous Australians, to access. Ideally, Indigenous and non Indigenous people should have equal access to these services. Mainstream services provided by the Commonwealth and States include Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, hospital services, community health, school education, training and public housing.

2.36 Mainstream agencies and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) are also funded by the Commonwealth to provide supplementary Indigenous specific programs where mainstream services are inaccessible, inadequate or non existent – such as in remote areas. Indigenous specific programs at the Commonwealth level include the Indigenous Employment Plan and the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program. In the 2001-02 Budget, identifiable Commonwealth Indigenous specific expenditure totalled $2, 391 million – see Appendix D for details.

2.37 The Commonwealth also funds non government direct providers of services such as the community controlled health services.

2.38 The Commonwealth's policy is that the bulk of Indigenous specific resources should be allocated to areas of greatest need, where there are limited or no mainstream services.[42] As a corollary, the needs of Indigenous people in urban areas are expected to be met by access to appropriate mainstream services on the basis that the service infrastructure is already available.[43] The Committee agrees with this direction.

2.39 In an urban context, therefore, it is especially important that publicly funded mainstream services are as accessible to Indigenous people as they are to other Australians.[44] As part of ensuring accessibility, governments need to fund services sufficiently to ensure that they adequately meet the needs of Indigenous people.

42 Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Submissions,* p. S1403.

43 See, for example, Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1365.

44 States and territories in many cases must be primarily responsible to ensure this.

Australia's Federal Structure

2.40 Any consideration of the nature of existing services for urban Indigenous people needs to recognise that state and territory governments (and to a lesser extent local governments) are the major primary service providers for Indigenous and non Indigenous people. School education, public housing and hospitals and, indirectly, local government, for example are the responsibility of the states and territories. In that regard, the states and territories determine their own funding priorities and are accountable for their expenditure.

2.41 The Commonwealth has some funding control over the way the states and territories administer their own mainstream and Indigenous specific programs (through Special Purpose Grants), but has generally limited ability to directly ensure that services provided by the other tiers of government are available to all.

2.42 The Commonwealth is very active in:

- improving the accessibility of its own mainstream and Indigenous specific services;
- promoting national objectives and frameworks for partnerships with the states and territories; and
- entering partnerships with states, territories and Indigenous organisations to jointly deliver Indigenous specific services.[45]

2.43 The Committee recognises the constraints of Australia's federal structure which have caused some frustration for Committee members who have wanted to make recommendations concerning state or territory responsibilities, particularly in the area of education.

Recommendation 2

2.44 **Commonwealth agreements with the states and territories include requirements for regular and comprehensive performance information from the states and territories about their delivery of jointly funded services to Indigenous people.**

45 See CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, p. 52.

2.45 The principles of good partnership agreements in a generic sense, including accountability requirements, are described in chapter three in greater detail.

Indigenous Community Organisations

2.46 Indigenous people in urban and non urban areas also receive services from an array of non government Indigenous organisations. These have arisen to meet local needs, often as a result of the inadequacies of mainstream service providers. They range from neighbourhood organisations that rely on volunteers and small, periodic government grants to national organisations with state and territory affiliates, formal partnerships with governments and multimillion dollar budgets.[46]

2.47 Mainstream agencies may develop programs in conjunction with these Indigenous organisations and use the organisations to deliver specialist or mainstream services to Indigenous people. The Committee has observed that mainstream agencies that involve Indigenous groups in needs assessments, program planning and service delivery seem better able to meet the needs of Indigenous people.

2.48 The argument has been put to the Committee that Aboriginals have a right to their own culture and to express their culture in every aspect of their life, including service delivery. The use of Indigenous organisations to deliver services is thus an extension of peoples' rights to exercise self determination and control their own affairs.[47] While accepting this point, Indigenous service providers must still be fully and publicly accountable to the communities they serve as well as to the governments from which they receive funding.

2.49 The Committee makes recommendations in following chapters to encourage effective Indigenous involvement in all aspects of service planning and delivery. This may mean a particular focus in the urban context on ensuring that mainstream services are developed in culturally appropriate ways that recognise differing regional needs, cultural variation and the legacy of the historically unmet needs of Indigenous people. Alternatively, it may require a recognition that certain services for Indigenous people may be best met through Indigenous specific organisations.

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46 An example of the former is the Krurungal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Welfare, Resource and Housing; see *Submissions*, pp. S850-60. An example of the latter is NACCHO; see *Submissions* pp. S1551- 1574; *Transcripts*, pp. 462-502.

47 NACCHO, *Transcripts*, p. 475.

2.50 At the same time, the Committee notes that there are far more funds available through mainstream programs than there are likely to be through Indigenous specific equivalents. Accordingly, Indigenous people potentially will have more access to more services and grants by tapping into mainstream programs than they are likely to through Indigenous specific programs. Again, of course, these programs will have to be tailored to effectively deliver services to Indigenous customers.

Time for New Thinking

2.51 The key test of any service – mainstream or Indigenous specific - is the extent to which it reasonably meets the needs of urban dwelling Indigenous Australians. The Committee's impressions are that, in some cases, the needs of Indigenous people have not been adequately met by existing services – as described in the following chapter.

2.52 However, this inquiry took place during a major pubic debate about the way in which welfare services are delivered to tackle the apparent entrenchment of economic and social disadvantage for some Australians (including Indigenous people). It has been prompted by the growing recognition that the current social support system may be failing many of those Australians it is designed to help most. The shift in thinking centres around mutual individual and community (not just government) obligations and partnerships.[48] Many of the themes of this debate are showing up in government social policy.[49]

2.53 There has been a parallel shift in thinking about the effects of entrenched welfare dependency on Indigenous people and the impact it has had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage. This debate has been initiated by Indigenous people who are calling for a reduction in socioeconomic disadvantage, economic development, independence from welfare and assistance in building stronger families and communities.[50] In

48 See Reference Group on Welfare Reform, *Participation Support for a More Equitable Society: Final Report*, July 2000.

49 For example: the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy; the Australians Working Together Package.

50 See for example: Noel Pearson, *Our Right to Take Responsibility*, Discussion Paper; Joseph Elu, *Indigenous Economic Empowerment: Fact or Fiction*, Address to the Menzies Research Centre, 23 March 2001; Aden Ridgeway, 'Practical blueprint fails blacks', *The Australian*, 12 June 2001; 'G-G helps soothe divisions on rights', *The Age*, 13 June 2001.

response to these calls, government policies are correctly focussing on working in partnerships and through shared responsibilities with Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and ATSIC. The goal is to strengthen families and communities to ensure their capacity to manage their own affairs and become more self reliant – a goal the Committee wholeheartedly endorses.[51]

51 Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together: Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock, MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs*, 22 May 2001.

3

More Effective Service Delivery

Introduction

3.1 A general consensus has emerged over the last 20 years that many mainstream and Indigenous specific services are failing to adequately meet the needs of urban (and non urban) Indigenous people. As acknowledged by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services:

> The Department recognises that there is a justifiable concern that welfare, as it has been traditionally understood, is now no longer an adequate framework for addressing social disadvantage.[1]

3.2 An Indigenous leader expressed it thus:

> "mainstream" examples and systems are failing Indigenous people thus setting the challenge to comprehensively review underlying factors and modern needs rather than continuing to try and make a poor system fit the people or the people fit a poor system.[2]

3.3 The evidence suggests that Indigenous people in urban areas tend not to use mainstream services and choose instead to use Indigenous community organisations as either intermediaries with mainstream agencies or as replacement service providers, or not to use any services at all – as will be described later in the chapter. As one such organisation explained:

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1 Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), *Submissions,* p. S446.

2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Commissioner Nothern Territory (North), *Submissions,* p. S390.

> while staff [of the Indigenous organisation] make every attempt to assist clients to use the mainstream services available, clients are not comfortable using these services.[3]

3.4 The result is overstretched community organisations attempting to provide parallel services while at the same time mainstream agencies may go underutilised or not be given the opportunity to tailor solutions to problems.

3.5 However, as mentioned in chapter two, the last decade has seen a major rethinking of the way in which services are delivered to Indigenous people (urban and non urban). In the last half decade in particular, action taken after the rethinking has begun to bear fruit. Services are now being better designed and are more effectively meeting the needs of Indigenous people. It will take time, patience and effort to ensure that the initiatives, many still top down approaches, can lead to improved outcomes at the individual, family and community level. The evidence before the Committee suggests that there is still a way to go yet.

3.6 This chapter examines the nature of existing programs and services available to urban dwelling Indigenous people and how they may be more effectively delivered. It begins by describing some of the key features of service delivery reform to provide a theoretical perspective. The chapter then reviews some of the evidence before the Committee indicating where service delivery remains less effective and where progress is being made.

Service Delivery Reform

Inter-Government Agreements

3.7 The need to more effectively deliver services to Indigenous people (urban and non urban) was first acknowledged at a government level at a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in 1992 and reflected in the *National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders* ('the Commitment'). Under the Commitment, Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments agreed, among other things, that service delivery and planning is a shared responsibility of all levels of government.

3.8 At its November 2000 meeting, COAG committed itself to an approach based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Indigenous

3 Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, *Submissions*, p. S1468.

communities, program flexibility, and coordination between government agencies with a focus on local communities and outcomes. This commitment included reviewing and re-engineering programs and services to ensure that they deliver practical measurers that support families, children and young people.[4] The November 2000 commitments were reiterated at the June 2001 COAG meeting. That Council meeting noted that:

> the development of partnerships between Indigenous peoples and governments, greater flexibility and coordination between programmes and a focus on practical outcomes for local communities are key factors in advancing reconciliation.[5]

Inter-Agency Agreements

3.9 As a complement to the COAG process, individual governments are taking steps to improve the coordination of their own programs and taking 'whole of government' approaches to Indigenous funding allocation and service delivery. The goal is to minimise duplication and overlap between agencies.[6]

3.10 These arrangements are at their most advanced at the state level. Western Australia, for example, has established an Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee to 'coordinate effectively the activities of all persons and bodies, corporate or otherwise, providing or proposing to provide service and assistance in relation to people of Aboriginal descent'.[7] The Committee brings together the chief executive officers of relevant state agencies and the chairs of key Indigenous advisory bodies. Its aim is to develop clear priorities agreed with Aboriginal representatives, to coordinate the activities of government agencies and provide regular feedback on progress. Similar arrangements at the ministerial or chief executive level are in place in Victoria and Queensland.[8]

3.11 The Prime Minister has asked all Commonwealth portfolio ministers to review their mainstream and Indigenous specific programs and services to improve outcomes for Indigenous people. The reviews will be completed

4 Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Meeting, 3 November 2000, *Communique,* Canberra, p.7

5 COAG Meeting, 8 June 2001, *Communique,* p. 4.

6 For example, see Western Australian Government, *Submissions,* pp. S1625-26.

7 Western Australian Government, *Submissions,* p. S112.

8 See Queensland Government, *Submissions,* p. S1297.

during 2001 and a comprehensive whole of government response will be provided to COAG.[9]

Key Principles of Successful Agreements

Agreements

3.12 The importance of the COAG Commitment and subsequent resolutions is that they have provided a framework for a series of bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and states.

3.13 Bilateral and multilateral agreements have slowly 'evolved' in the last several years, and have been signed, to date, in the health, housing and infrastructure areas.[10] The agreements that have been signed are usually between the Commonwealth, a state or territory government(s), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and other Indigenous groups (such as Indigenous housing authorities or Aboriginal community controlled health organisations). The agreements can cover a broad range of cooperative activities including: data collection; forward planning; demarcation of responsibilities; joint funding arrangement; decision making; and evaluations.

3.14 In a parallel process, ATSIC is entering Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with state governments which outline principles upon which partnerships for joint policy development and service delivery can be based. So far these have been signed with Western Australia and Queensland.[11] ATSIC is also in the process of reaching an MOU with the Australian Local Government Association on behalf of local governments.

3.15 In addition, there are now hundreds of local, specific arrangements for partnerships and collaborative activities that involve Indigenous organisations and provider agencies.[12]

Partnerships

3.16 A key element of the agreements described above is that they bring together Commonwealth, state and territory governments at the national and regional levels. Equally important is that the agreements incorporate Indigenous organisations or representatives in government program planning, priority setting and service delivery.

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9 Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together: Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock, MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs,* May 2001, p. 16.

10 ATSIC, *Submission*, p. S620.

11 See ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S696-707.

12 ATSIC, *ATSIC Annual Report 1999-2000*, p. 13.

3.17 The Indigenous participation is based on the recognition that programs are more successful if Indigenous people have input into and play an active role in making decisions that affect them (as with other service recipients). Indigenous organisations must have or be given the capacity to be equal and fully participating partners with governments.

Community Focus in Decision Making

3.18 It is also apparent that a 'one size fits all' approach to service delivery will not effectively deliver services to Indigenous people. There may be national or state based goals, but decisions on how to provide the services are best if based on local circumstances as agreed by local communities. As an Aboriginal group told the Committee:

> Giving the community primacy in the planning and delivery processes is the only means to achieving sustainable outcomes.[13]

3.19 It is particularly challenging to identify the discrete needs of urban communities – in fact, more so than for discrete remote area communities. The first difficulty in urban areas is to determine who is part of or speaks for 'the community' and in fact what is the community. The best way is to encourage Indigenous people to identify their own community in the context of the various needs.

3.20 Commonwealth agencies are now acknowledging that they should assist communities to develop their own solutions, rather than imposing solutions.[14] As a community leader told the Committee for her region:

> All of the Indigenous urban-based programs and services have arisen because of a need or needs identified by the Indigenous people of the region.[15]

3.21 The challenge is for agencies to acknowledge that Indigneous people know what their problems are, generally what possible solutions are, and that they need reasonable resources applied in accordance with their own priorities to implement locally developed solutions. That being said, governments cannot expect to slip into a passive or just funding role as communities cannot be expected to find all the solutions to their problems.[16] At the same time, community groups must acknowledge their need to be accountable to their community and to the governments that fund them for any expenditure of public money. Indigenous people and

13 ATSIC, Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1048.

14 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S447.

15 Margaret Hornagold, *Submissions*, p. S1461.

16 Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants, *Submissions*, p. S359.

the wider community increasingly expect regular reports on how public money is being invested and what is being achieved.

3.22 In structural terms, agencies need to delegate to their regional offices or service deliverers the authority to customise services and react flexibly to local circumstances.[17] These issue are discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

Coordination and a Holistic Approach

3.23 Successful agreements involve restructuring different programs in concert so that they can meet the needs of the individuals or the community as a whole. Ideally, agencies and governments should pool resources and funds, as distinct from just coordinate them, so that interconnecting factors such as the housing, education, health and employment needs of individuals, families and communities can be met in a planned, structured and comprehensive way.

3.24 Particularly in an urban context, holistic approaches may require a 'whole of family' response, recognising that solutions to the needs of individuals will be more successful if they take into account family networks.[18]

Funding Certainty

3.25 The needs of Indigenous people are often intractable and complex and require long term solutions and commitments. Short term funding for agencies or programs that is only guaranteed on a year by year basis does not allow enough certainty for long term planning either by mainstream agencies or grant recipients, nor encourage people to invest effort in programs.

3.26 At the macro level agencies, including ATSIC, need program funding certainty, and at the community level grant funding cycles need to be long enough to allow time for projects to demonstrate successful outcomes. The Committee believes that, generally, funding on a triennial basis is appropriate.

Recommendation 3

3.27 **Commonwealth agencies must ensure that, as part of the evaluation and performance reporting requirements, mainstream programs providing services used by Indigenous people, detail:**

17 See D E Smith (ed.), *Indigenous Families and the Welfare System: Two Community Case Studies*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), Research Monograph No. 17, 2000, p. 112.

18 See chapter four.

- **the extent to which Indigenous people or their representative organisations are involved in the identification of needs, priority setting, service delivery and reporting on effectiveness and barriers to access;**
- **the extent to which the program overlaps or duplicates services provided by any level of government or organisation, and action proposed to address this;**
- **the potential for pooling program funding with any similar programs of the Commonwealth or other levels of government or organisation, and action proposed to help achieve this; and**
- **the extent to which the programs encourage Indigenous capacity and leadership building and action proposed to implement, expand and achieve this, while addressing any obstacles.**

Recommendation 4

3.28 **When designing Indigenous specific programs, government agencies take the following principles into account:**

- **integration where appropriate with mainstream Commonwealth programs and services provided by other levels of government administration at the community level;**
- **exploration of the potential for pooling program funding (actual or notional) with any complementary programs of the Commonwealth, other levels of government or other appropriate organisations;**
- **involvement to the maximum extent possible of local Indigenous people or their representative organisations in the identification of needs, priority setting and service delivery;**
- **funding be guaranteed for sufficient time as to allow the program to achieve its objectives; and**
- **encouragement to the maximum extent possible of community capacity and leadership building.**

Each program must also set clear goals, performance monitoring arrangements and reporting requirements. Reporting requirements must include identification of any impediments to Indigenous access to the program and how the impediments will be addressed.

A Way to Go Yet

3.29 Governments are working to improve the delivery of services and programs to Indigenous people through partnership arrangements between the different levels of government, Indigenous groups and other interested parties (such as the private sector). However, evidence suggests that there are still some 'top down' reform processes and that individuals, families and community based groups are waiting to see improved outcomes. As a community representative explained:

> There is a sort of facade that there is community control of projects and moneys… when in fact the community at the real grass roots level has very little control because we can only bid for funds within the parameters that the funds are made available. So we have to almost design out of our buckets of needs, what will fit into that bucket of funding… there has to be some hard looking at who is really controlling what is going on, because at the moment it is not the communities.[19]

3.30 And an observation from health consultants:

> The consultation for [a study] was carried out within the last twelve months [since October 1999], so the issues raised are current. It is alarming that mainstream services are still alienating their Indigenous clients to the extent indicated by the interviewees and focus group participants.[20]

3.31 In the following section, the Committee reviews its evidence highlighting where services could be more effectively delivered but also gives examples of successful and innovative service delivery as an inspiration and encouragement to others.

3.32 The Committee has identified two broad categories of barriers to the efficient delivery of mainstream, and to a lesser extent Indigenous specific services, that remain:

- those barriers that are structural in nature and require a whole of government response; and
- those barriers that are managerial in nature and can be addressed at the level of individual agencies.

19 Wongatha Wonganarra Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcripts*, p. 40.

20 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S360.

Structural Barriers to Mainstream Access

Fragmentation of Programs

3.33 Despite initiatives to coordinate programs and pool funding, Indigenous groups and individuals seeking services or grants are still confronted by a plethora of similar programs, different tiers of service delivery and a complex array of funding sources. This has an impact at the individual level:

> The multi-sourcing of specific Indigenous programs and services… often produces significant levels of confusion for Indigenous end-users of programs and services. An overriding sense of fragmentary and dislocated delivery is experienced by families who may be accessing multiple services…[21]

Agency innovation

Client Focus at Centrelink – National

Centrelink is restructuring its service delivery focus to a 'life events' model.

Instead of having to find out about and apply individually for different allowances, customers will be able to present to Centrelink with a 'life experience', such as having a baby.

Centrelink will then put together the best package of services and allowances from a range of agencies to meet the customer's needs. Customers will not need to know the name of the programs they are using and should only need to tell their story once.[22]

3.34 The multiplicity of programs across agencies places stress on Indigenous organisations trying to access government funds to meet the range of needs facing Indigenous people. It is 'the rule rather than the exception' that urban based Indigenous cooperatives, in Victoria at least, administer community housing assistance, Community Development Employment Projects, cultural programs, primary health care, mental health care, substance abuse prevention, as well as a host of State funded programs. This requires the organisations to operate on 'a cocktail of program

21 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S580.

22 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S1490.

funding' that requires extensive management, administration, fiscal care and coordination.[23]

3.35 The ATSIC Murdi Paaki Regional Council sees the fragmented nature of program responsibility as leading to 'continuing difficulties' for Indigenous groups to access available funding.[24] Furthermore, funding from government agencies is often allocated on an application basis rather than a needs basis, favouring agencies that can prepare the best grant application rather than the one most in need.[25] Funding agencies tend not to recognise the costs of applying and administering the range of grants nor the need for organisations to plan for the long term. The impact of this in Western Sydney is that:

> workers are so overwhelmed by the unrelenting pressure of their day to day activities that establishing and cultivating the links necessary to co-ordinate services is simply beyond them.[26]

3.36 A counter view, however, is that the multiplicity of funding sources can work well – what cannot be achieved or obtained through one government agency under one guise, 'might just be achievable under a slightly different guise'.[27]

3.37 It is not just Indigenous people who have difficulty accessing programs. At an early stage in the inquiry, Anaconda Nickel Ltd told the Committee of its difficulties at that time of trying to draw on funds from several agencies to run a vocational education training course for Indigenous people:

> the real issue is that it is extremely unstable, relying on five or six individual contracts to be signed between various departments and agencies before we can actually run one course.[28]

Also:

> you are dealing with three different agencies and three different policies and three different rules of administration. The administration rules ATSIC uses to control funding are totally different from those of the state or [the Department of Employment, Work Place Relations and Small Business], and they

23 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p S580.

24 Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1047.

25 See Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC), *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, Discussion Paper IFI 2000/2, 2000, p. 24.

26 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S360.

27 CAEPR: *Rethinking the Fundamentals of Social Policy Towards Indigenous Australians: Block Grants, Mainstreaming and the Multiplicity of Agencies and Programs*, Discussion Paper, No. 46/1993, p. 10.

28 Anaconda Nickel Ltd, *Transcripts*, p. 203.

> will be different from the [Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs'].[29]

3.38 However, as an example of good agency flexibility, the Department of Employment, Work Place Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB) took a leadership role between the Commonwealth agencies. It ensured, by the end of the inquiry, that there was sufficient funding provided in a flexible way to suit Anaconda Nickel (and others) to ensure adequate funding for the course to be run.

Program 'Silos'

3.39 A further difficulty is that agencies tend not to be aware of the programs or services that their clients – individual or corporate - may be accessing from other agencies. From a client perspective, this can lead to the receipt of disjointed or uncoordinated services because no agency is looking at the client's total needs. Consultancy firm Burns Aldis believes that a major failing within the system is:

> the inability of service providers, functioning within the constraints imposed by the reductionist processes of government, to take an holistic approach to service planning and delivery, in the recognition that Aboriginal people and communities are greater than the sum of their parts...[30]

3.40 Another group has described this as the 'functional silo mentality that currently exists in many program delivery agencies'.[31] One impact is that single agencies cannot provide satisfactory or comprehensive solutions to complex problems - at the individual or community level - which require responses from a range of services. Indigenous organisations seeking holistic solutions find the responses by single mainstream agencies inadequate, as one explained:

> we are finding the people come in and their problems are so diverse that I cannot send them down to mainstream.[32]

29 Anaconda Nickel, *Transcripts*, p. 217.

30 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S359.

31 Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1048.

32 Bay of Isles Aboriginal Community Inc, *Transcripts*, p. 101.

Partnerships

Coordinating Housing Services – National

Indigenous housing bilateral agreements have been signed between the Commonwealth, ATSIC and (separately) New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and with Queensland for the Torres Strait region.

The agreements improve and simplify the planning, coordination and delivery of Indigenous housing programs by:

- pooling funds (notionally or actually) to get better value for money;
- reducing duplication between programs and departments;
- coordinating key players and clarifying roles and responsibilities; and
- giving Indigenous people a decision making role at the state, territory and community level.

3.41 One of the challenges for mainstream agencies is tackling the cross agency and interconnected nature of Indigenous needs. As an example in the health area, the Committee was told that:

> to fix some of the lifestyle diseases that Aboriginal people currently must carry, we need to get education, employment, housing and other areas of activity outside the health sector well organised.[33]

3.42 The dimensions and breadth of these types of problems place substantial challenges of coordination on agencies and across levels of government as another witness told the Committee:

> I have been sitting on the health council for how many years and I have not once seen a bloke from the water authority come along to the health council and tell me how we are going to fix the water… I have not seen anybody from housing… I have not seen anybody talk about education… I have not seen anybody talk about sewerage… Is this the national health strategy… it has not affected how the state brings the housing up to scratch…[34]

33 Western Australian Government, *Transcripts*, p. 226.

34 National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), *Transcripts*, p. 480.

3.43 This quotation highlights the importance of ministers or agencies continuing to take a leadership role in bringing parties together. The problem of coordination in the health sector (as an example), presents at the individual as well as the structural level as the mainstream does not always meet the needs of Indigenous patients. Mainstream primary health care services (provided by general practitioners funded under the Medical Benefits Scheme) are structured to provide for a patient case load that is characteristically high volume and low complexity. In contrast, there is an increasing proportion of Indigenous people who require more complex management.[35] Indigenous primary health service providers are generally acknowledged to provide a more efficient service (financially and professionally) than the mainstream system:

> In a [Indigenous community health service] consultation you would have, say, a child being immunised at the same time as the growth being assessed and the mother's health being checked… whereas with the fee-for-service type of arrangement, you would tend to have just one problem fixed at one time and that is $30, thank you very much.[36]

3.44 Primary health care delivery is an example of an instance where it is currently more effective to deliver tailored services to Indigenous people through Indigenous organisations rather than through mainstream service providers. The challenge for mainstream health delivery is to adopt similarly effective service delivery models and efficiencies that meet the needs of Indigenous people.

35 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S1077.

36 Northern Territory Government, *Transcripts*, p. 362.

Partnerships

Coordinated Health Care – Perth and Bunbury, WA

Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) are the Commonwealth's largest mainstream primary health care programs. Per capita, Indigenous people receive only 27% of the Medicare benefits paid to non Indigenous people. Similarly, per capita, Indigenous people only receive 22% of PBS benefits paid to non Indigenous people.[37]

In an attempt to better utilise and link mainstream funding sources to provide holistic health care for Indigenous patients, a Coordinated Care Trial was undertaken at two urban sites in Western Australia where individual patient care plans were prepared by Aboriginal health workers.

The trial was jointly funded by using pooled funding from capitated Medicare and PBS benefits (Commonwealth) and hospital (state) costs to fund the care, supplementary services for patients and costs of coordination.

3.45 Inter sectoral collaboration 'is one of the most difficult processes to achieve'.[38] When combined with the fragmented nature of funding sources and areas of program responsibility it can be difficult for Indigenous organisations trying to develop multi functional strategies by drawing on the resources of different agencies. Programs need to be flexible enough so that they can be tailored to meet local circumstances. The risk is that local groups tend to provide services that they can get funding for rather than providing those that meet local priorities. A further risk is that organisations bypass mainstream services and do not act to seek a review of the mainstream services.

3.46 The Committee believes that inter government and inter agency cooperation and coordination will be more successful if one government or agency provides leadership and drives progress. A mining company with extensive experience at negotiating with Commonwealth and state agencies, Anaconda Nickel, commented that:

> The continual competition between State and Federal agencies and their respective ministers over successful outcomes and funding frustrates effective partnering… This competition takes form in neither party committing support until it is clear what the other

37 CGC, *Draft Report on the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, pp. 77-78.

38 Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1048.

> (both state and federal agency level) is contributing with the result that initiatives are slow and difficult to progress.[39]

3.47 The Committee, accordingly, makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation 5

3.48 **When Commonwealth agencies are coordinating their activities in joint arrangements, one agency be nominated as the lead agency to take overall responsibility for the partnership and act as a first or single point of contact for service users.**

Commonwealth agencies involved in existing joint arrangements should review those arrangements to ensure that one agency has overall responsibility for the partnership and that one agency is identified to service users as the first or single point of contact.

Short Term Approaches

3.49 A consistent complaint to the Committee is that grant funding cycles are too short and do not allow time to demonstrate successful outcomes, allow ventures to become independent or for Indigenous people to build trust in a service:

> You had what appeared to be not a lot of action while all these processes happened in the beginning. Even during what was called the live phase of the trial, a number of the trials where those community processes were happening did not see action on the ground and results until much later in the process.[40]

3.50 Companies and employment placement groups have also noted that employers will not utilise assistance to take on Indigenous people for multiyear apprenticeships if the funding is only guaranteed for one year at a time.[41]

3.51 An allied complaint is that 'there appears to be a lot of money for "pilot projects" but not enough to sustain successful projects'.[42] Not withstanding this, the Committee is heartened to see that pilot projects under the auspices of the Commonwealth Department of Family and

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39 Anaconda Nickel, *Submissions*, p. S1501.

40 Department of Health and Aged Care, *Transcripts*, p. 167. See also: City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Submissions*, p. S231; Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1048; Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1298; Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions*, p. S935.

41 See Anaconda Nickel, *Submissions*, p. S1502; Indigenous Housing Association, *Submissions*, pp. 378-79.

42 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S651.

Community Services to strengthen Indigenous communities will run for a minimum three years duration and take into account local rather than nationally determined timeframes and capacities.[43]

Recommendation 6

3.52 **Commonwealth agencies ensure that the following guiding principles be applied to pilot and other projects that they fund for the delivery of services to Indigenous people. The projects:**

- **be designed and run in the context of agreed long term strategies for addressing Indigenous needs;**
- **run for at least three years or for a time that accommodates local timeframes and capacities where appropriate;**
- **be developed locally with a high degree of Indigenous involvement and ownership and where possible be in partnership with mainstream service providers;**
- **have flexible funding arrangements and minimise the administrative burden on participating Indigenous organisations;**
- **be adaptable to accommodate modifications if better processes are discovered;**
- **have evaluation processes that incorporate Indigenous feedback;**
- **ensure processes for skills transfers to Indigenous participants where external personnel are used to implement the projects;**
- **be goal orientated and require reporting on outcomes and impediments to achieving goals; and**
- **make maximum use of mainstream expertise and services.**

Mainstream Services: Barriers to Individual Access

3.53 There are barriers facing individuals trying to access mainstream services that need to be addressed by individual agencies. Some of these barriers are at the primary service delivery level where, in cases, the reform initiatives have yet to filter down.

3.54 The Committee acknowledges the difficulties agencies face in providing flexible services for Indigenous people, particularly when they have low

43 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S447.

visibility in the community and may form a small proportion of the agency client base.

Knowledge of Services

3.55 The difficulty of access to services may arise because of a lack of knowledge by Indigenous clients of the services available and how to access them, or in some cases a reluctance to attempt to use them.

3.56 As a corollary, people may accept a lower standard of service as they are unaware of or unable to deal with service inequities. A tenants' advice service noted that many Indigenous customers of a mainstream public housing authority were not made aware of their appeal rights which, in any event, were often difficult to take advantage of (requiring access to documents under Freedom of Information legislation, written appeals collating all relevant information and speaking before a review panel to the written submission).[44]

Distrust

3.57 Indigenous people may be reluctant to use mainstream services simply because of a lack of trust. The experience of an Indigenous housing association was that:

> when our people come against the Ministry of Housing there is automatically a brick wall there and it shuts off a lot of vision now to see either side's problems.[45]

3.58 Allied to the distrust may be feelings of shame, shyness, the perception of prejudice and concern that the service provider may be judgemental and see problems as causally related to a lack of individual care and responsibility. Some Indigenous representatives do not, for whatever reason, encourage people to try to overcome their apprehension and break down barriers. There also appears to be a lack of resolve in some quarters to find a way or a solution to make it easier for Indigenous people to use mainstream services. This is one of the reasons why the Committee seeks to encourage the reporting of barriers to Indigenous access so that these are brought into the open and solutions quickly found to overcome them.

44 Tenants Advice Service Inc (TAS), *Submissions*, pp. S969-72.

45 Peedac Pty Ltd & Yahnging Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcripts*, p. 306.

Institutionalised Discrimination

3.59 The Committee believes that the historical legacy of perceived institutionalised discrimination has reduced the appropriateness of mainstream programs for Indigenous people and hindered their access to services.

3.60 Until the last two decades or so, insufficient effort has been made by some mainstream services to take into account Indigenous experiences, priorities and cultural traditions. An example of such assimilationist policies has been the lack of culturally appropriate school curricula, particularly for more traditionally oriented Aborigines. While mainstream services, are generally becoming more responsive to the needs of their clients, both culturally and regionally, the 'one size fits all' model continues to predominate and impact negatively on Indigenous families.[46]

3.61 The Committee notes too that the provision of culturally appropriate service delivery requires more than just the elimination of perceived discrimination. Nor will culturally appropriate services just materialise because of an absence of discrimination.[47] The absence of perceived discrimination is certainly the first step to providing culturally appropriate services but the latter will require a focus on meeting any special needs clients may have.

A Culturally Appropriate Setting

3.62 There are a number of cultural barriers that may discourage Indigenous people (urban and non urban) from using mainstream services. Indigenous people may feel a minority in a 'white enclave'; isolated from family and community support structures; feel that gender differences are not respected and that agency staff are not culturally aware. These may lead to a sense of alienation and resentment that they are dealing with a government agency staffed by people who are not Aboriginal, providing services to them on conditions determined by the government agency.[48]

3.63 In these circumstances, it is not surprising that Indigenous people may wish to use Indigenous organisations that are staffed by Indigenous people who are usually from their local community and have a better understanding of their needs. As an Indigenous person explained, in a housing context:

> It just feels so much better talking to your own people, too, if there is a problem, a lot of the things you are probably too ashamed to

46 D E Smith CAEPR, Research Monograph No. 17, 2000, p. v.

47 NACCHO, *Transcripts*, p. 473.

48 ATSIC, *Transcripts*, p. 179.

share with the [non Indigenous]...accommodation manager that comes around.[49]

Community initiative

Tangentyere Town Council – Alice Springs, NT

Tangentyere Town Council is an Aboriginal community controlled agency providing services to the Alice Springs town camps. Council runs a resource centre called the 'One Stop Shop'.

In partnership with Westpac Bank, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and Centrelink, camp residents at the Shop can access:

- a bank agency and post office;
- the Council's housing office (for tenancy, repairs and maintenance);
- the 'Job Shop' (a member of the Job Network); and
- purchase electricity cards and firewood.

The Council bus service transports people between their homes, the One Stop Shop, and a supermarket part owned by Council.[50]

3.64 The Committee has been told of the benefits of agencies and their staff building personal and long term relationships with Indigenous people.[51] Indigenous people have said that it is confronting to have to repeatedly explain their circumstances or case history to new staff or case managers, or to have to renegotiate previously made arrangements.[52] In this regard, the Committee is heartened to learn that Centrelink, at least, now identifies 'one main contact' officer for each customer, with that contact officer taking responsibility for all of the customer's business. Customers can then receive more personalised service and a more holistic assessment of their needs.[53]

3.65 The Committee believes it important that the staff of mainstream agencies who are delivering services to Indigenous people should undertake cross

49 Peedac Pty Ltd & Yahnging Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcripts*, p. 307.

50 Tangentyere Council Inc, *Submissions*, pp. S278-80; *Transcripts*, p. 433.

51 Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions*, p. S900.

52 See TAS, *Submissions*, p. S964; Council of the City of Wagga Wagga, *Submissions*, p. S370.

53 FaCS, Submissions, p. S1490.

cultural education. Staff with an understanding of Indigenous culture and history are more likely to be culturally sensitive and deal with Indigenous people in an empathetic way. This will not only have benefits for staff dealing with Indigenous customers but also for staff dealing with Indigenous co-workers.

3.66 In any event, under directions issued by the Public Service Commissioner, Agency Heads must ensure that employment strategies in their agency take account of the diversity of the Australian community and the agencies' business goals.[54]

3.67 The Committee believes that Commonwealth agencies using non government organisations to deliver services to clients of when a high proportion are Indigenous, should ensure that those organisations also comply with the requirement to provide cultural training for staff.

Recommendation 7

3.68 **Mainstream Commonwealth agencies and non-government organisations delivering Commonwealth services which have a significant Indigenous client base (notionally over three percent of their total client base) or which provide Indigenous specific services, strive to employ appropriately trained Indigenous staff and provide non Indigenous staff with cross cultural training with qualified Indigenous trainers.**

54 2.13, Public Service Commissioner's Directions. See www.psmpc.gov.au/publications01/diversityguidelines.

Agency innovation

Lowana Young Women's Service – Canberra, ACT

Lowana Young Women's Service is a gender specific mainstream youth accommodation refuge in the ACT. In its 1996-97 Annual Report Lowana noted that Indigenous young women did not use its services. Lowana assumed this was because potential Indigenous clients feared racism and discrimination by mainstream services. In the following year:

- the common rooms and office were decorated with Indigenous posters;
- an Aboriginal flag was hung at the front entrance;
- Lowana secured funding to train a female Indigenous youth worker;
- cross cultural training was provided for staff.

In 1999-2000 18% of the Refuge's clients identified as Indigenous. Lowana is now trying to attract adult Indigenous women onto its management committee.[55]

Indigenous Staff

3.69 There is an increasing recognition by mainstream agencies that Indigenous people are more likely to access services if the agencies are staffed by Indigenous people.[56]

3.70 It is desirable for mainstream agencies staff to reflect the diversity of the customer group. The Queensland Department of Families, for example, through its Walking the Talk Strategy, sees the use of Indigenous staff as an 'intrinsic part of management', underpinned by the belief that 'investment in Indigenous staff is an investment in the community'.[57]

3.71 Where it is not always possible or feasible for mainstream agencies to employ Indigenous staff, the agencies may be able to use Indigenous groups to provide its services. For example, the Western Australian Department of Family and Children's Services purchases services such as

55 Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions*, pp. S931-34.

56 See Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1117, S1121; Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1367; FaCS, *Submissions*, pp. S459, S1486; Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, *Submissions*, p. S1468.

57 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1291. The Department of Families was formerly the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care.

child care, domestic violence support, child placement, and family support services from local Indigenous groups in the Perth metropolitan area. The Department does this in acknowledgment that Aboriginal people are more likely to access a service if it is staffed by Aboriginal people.[58]

3.72 An alternative approach is for mainstream agencies to nominate Indigenous Liaison Officers (ILOs), who may or may not be Indigenous, to assist Indigenous clients or work in a community development capacity.

3.73 However, Indigenous groups cautioned the Committee that some agencies see the nomination of ILOs as absolving them of further responsibilities to provide culturally sensitive services. The Committee was told of several circumstances where ILOs were organisationally isolated, expected to relate to and meet the needs of all Indigenous clients and overcommitted for the areas and population they are expected to cover, leading to 'burn out'.[59]

3.74 It is important for agencies with ILO designated positions to have at least one male and one female ILO position. Having ILOs of both sexes will help reduce any barriers to access based on gender differences between agency staff and Indigenous customers. Having at least two ILOs will also: reduce their organisational isolation; reduce agency reliance on a single person; help ensure a support network and allow the ILOs to become a hub for agency services to the Indigenous community.

3.75 The work of ILOs will be maximised if they are allowed to go out into Indigenous communities to build bridges with clients in their surrounds and explain mainstream services and processes.[60] This may take the form of giving talks or holding question and answer sessions with community groups, visiting schools or the like.

3.76 All ILOs will need access to appropriate and regular training and professional support, particularly those ILOs who are not Indigenous.

Recommendation 8

3.77 **Commonwealth mainstream agencies which have nominated Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO) positions ensure that:**

- **there be at least one male designated ILO position and one**

58 Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1117. Territory Housing in the Northern Territory has a similar rationale for employing Indigenous organisations to deliver some of its services. See Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1373.

59 See: Mental Health Council of Australia, *Submissions*, p. S188; City of Wagga Wagga, *Submissions*, p. S370; Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, *Submissions*, p. S275; Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, *Transcripts*, p. 511;

60 Binaal Billa Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1097.

female designated ILO position;

- **all ILOs, and particularly those who are non Indigenous, have access to adequate training and professional support.**

Lack of Language Services

3.78 Language difficulties present another barrier to mainstream service access for those Indigenous people who do not speak English as a first or even second language. Unless staff in agencies speak the first language of Indigenous customers, there is a risk that their needs may be poorly understood or not understood at all. In this regard, the Committee notes that interpreter services are often available for non Indigenous, non English speaking communities, but not for those speaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. In this regard, the Committee welcomes the establishment in 2000 of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service in the Northern Territory jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments. The service can provide interpreters in 104 languages and offers services at the Royal Darwin Hospital and the courts in Darwin, Alice Springs and for bush circuits.[61] Similar services are also needed in other areas of the country.

3.79 In addition, while Aboriginal Australian and Standard Australian are usually mutually intelligible, there are significant differences in vocabulary, grammar, gesturing and socio-cultural context. The result can be misunderstanding between agencies and Indigenous people, which can be particularly critical in places such as courts and hospitals.

Problems Common to all Disadvantaged

3.80 Indigenous people sometimes suffer problems of access to agencies and services that are common to other disadvantaged Australians. As identified in the McClure Report, the lack of access to affordable, regular and safe public transport may create a significant barrier for those seeking access to services.[62] Further disadvantages include the need to use public phones to contact agencies and case managers; the need for a fixed postal address to receive correspondence from agencies; and poor writing and spoken English skills.

3.81 The Committee notes a suggestion by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research for agencies to formulate and implement a framework for the administrative recognition of 'no correspondence' Indigenous clients.

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61 Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP, *News Release*, 9 April 2001.

62 *Participation Support for a More Equitable Society, Final Report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform*, July 2000, (the McClure Report), p. 15

Under this proposal, Indigenous clients could self nominate or be nominated after consultation with the agency and be classed as a no correspondence client. Such status would be on the basis of customer characteristics including a low level of literacy, difficulties in responding to correspondence and filling out forms and high levels of mobility. Such clients could be targeted for more intense face to face contact by agency staff about decisions and information that might affect the clients.[63] The Committee sees this as an excellent initiative that could be adopted to advantage by a wide range of agencies that offer services to Indigenous people.

Community initiative

The Grannies Group – Adelaide, SA

The Grannies Group mainly consists of grandmothers who devote their spare time to helping young Aboriginals living in metropolitan Adelaide. The Group began as friends getting together to help Aboriginal women re-entering the community after prison terms, but soon expanded into a general support network for Aboriginal families. Without any public funding, the group now:

- successfully lobbies state and Commonwealth agencies for resources to help Indigenous young people, particularly those with drug and alcohol problems; and
- provides assistance to women and children suffering domestic violence.

The Group promotes the local Aboriginal heritage through school visits, story telling, dance sessions, language groups and advice on traditional parenting skills.[64]

Case Managers

3.82 Several initiatives have been described or highlighted in this chapter to make it easier for individuals or families to access the array of services to which they are entitled. The initiatives described include 'one stop shops' and Centrelink's 'life events' model. The Committee is impressed with the

63 D E Smith, CAEPR Monograph No. 17, 2000, p. 118.

64 See Grannies Group, *Submissions*, pp. S126-54; *Transcripts*, pp. 342-55.

potential of such approaches, and would like to see them extended using a case manager approach.

3.83 The Committee envisages Indigenous individuals and families in need of public services being able to use a locally based case manager who could bring together information and improve access to available services at the Commonwealth and state level in a holistic client focussed approach. Case managers could assist clients identify entitlements to which they may be eligible, but also discuss with clients longer term strategies that identify emerging needs for housing, education or training assistance (for example).

3.84 This type of service is already offered, to some extent, on an informal basis by local Indigenous community organisations which act as advocates for Indigenous people and assist them access government services. However, the Committee believes such approaches should be integrated more closely into government service delivery strategies. At the minimum, case managers at one level of government should be able to provide advice on services offered by other governments and assist individuals and families to access those services.

Recommendation 9

3.85 **The Commonwealth further strengthen its leadership role in coordinating with the states and territories, the delivery of Commonwealth and state services using a case manager approach. Under this approach, case managers at either level of government would assist Indigenous individuals and families to access the range of services available from either level of government in a holistic, client focused approach.**

ATSIC and Service Delivery

3.86 ATSIC is the largest Commonwealth agency in the Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs portfolio and was created to devolve as much decision making in Indigenous affairs to Indigenous people as possible, particularly at the region and community level.[65] Through ATSIC's representative arm, Indigenous elected representatives are brought into the processes of government through regional councils and the Board of Commissioners. The representatives are able to make decisions about projects, programs and policies that affect their communities at the regional and national level.[66]

65 ATSIC, *ATSIC Annual Report 1999-2000*, p.4.

66 ATSIC, *ATSIC Annual Report 1999-2000*, p.4.

3.87 ATSIC also has an administrative arm to support the activities of the Commissioners and regional councils and administer ATSIC's programs.[67] ATSIC's appropriation in the 2001-02 budget was $1,064 million.

3.88 ATSIC's program delivery function is to supplement mainstream government services rather than replace them. ATSIC's major programs are the Community Development Employment Projects program (see chapter seven); the Community Housing Infrastructure Program (see chapter eight); a number of other national programs and discretionary expenditure for regional councils (see chapter four).[68]

3.89 By having structures of elected councillors and commissioners at the regional, state and national level, ATSIC should be ideally placed to represent Indigenous people from the planning to delivery of mainstream services at the national and local level. ATSIC also delivers a range of services to Indigenous people in urban and non urban, some of which are described in more detail in later chapters.

3.90 The Committee sees an emerging role for ATSIC as a 'broker' of services as distinct from being a service deliverer in its own right – particularly in urban areas. As a broker, ATSIC is ideally placed to bring together agencies from different levels of government, the private sector and Indigenous organisations into partnerships to deliver services in a coordinated and flexible way. To this end, the Committee notes ATSIC's involvement in a number of working relationships with policy makers and service providers.[69]

3.91 ATSIC has memoranda of understanding with the Department of Health and Aged Care; the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; and DEWRSB. Several state governments too have signed formal communiques with ATSIC to strengthen joint efforts in policy development and service delivery.[70] ATSIC has also entered formal agreements with state, territory and other Commonwealth agencies providing ATSIC with an integral or representative role in the planning and delivery of services.[71]

3.92 ATSIC's expenditure on its own service delivery programs, in urban areas at least, may achieve better results if it is used as leverage to bring mainstream agencies, their programs and others together to provide more

67 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Social Justice Report 2000*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, p. 116.

68 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S618-19.

69 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S696-97.

70 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S698-708. Agreements with other states are due to be signed in 2001.

71 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S696-97.

effective service delivery. In a sense, this allows value adding to ATSIC's own funds.

Recommendation 10

3.93 **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission investigate the greater use of its program allocations as leverage to encourage new and more efficient service delivery partnerships between mainstream agencies at the Commonwealth, state and local government level, Indigenous organisations and the private sector.**

Conclusion

3.94 The Committee commends those governments at all levels which are adopting partnership arrangements with Indigenous groups and others. The Committee sees these arrangements as the best strategy to better meeting the needs of Indigenous people. In the urban context, this requires a particular focus on ensuring that mainstream services as seen by the Indigenous end user are accessible and meet his or her needs in a culturally sensitive way. It is possible and it is happening. The Committee is convinced that these new approaches, as they develop from novelty to orthodoxy will lead to real improvements in outcomes.

4

Local Decision Making

Introduction

4.1 A finding of the previous chapter was that government services will meet the needs of a community more effectively if the community is involved in the planning, prioritising and delivery of the services. That finding presupposes a functional community with a degree of social cohesion. It also presupposes that the individuals, families and organisations of a community have the capacity and inclination to seek solutions to problems, take advantage of opportunities and enter into effective partnerships with governments. However, not all Indigenous communities have that capacity - as the Youth Coalition of the ACT explained:

> One of the significant issues for the ACT Indigenous community is a lack of community capacity to manage those sorts of programs and run those sorts of programs. We often struggle to find people or organisations to take on board new strategies, new ideas and new programs, because we have really only got a handful, and even that handful is really only two community based Indigenous organisations who are constantly expected to take on new programs and new responsibilities.[1]

4.2 This chapter examines strategies to extend the involvement of urban Indigenous people in decision making affecting their local communities. It begins by examining some of the subtleties of community consultation before examining strategies to extend the involvement of Indigenous people in the decision making that affects their community.

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1 Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Transcripts*, p. 491.

The Nature of Indigenous Urban Communities

Who to Consult

4.3 In large urban areas particularly, it is often difficult to get agreement on a clear definition of a 'community' and who makes it up. As described in chapter one, Indigenous communities in an urban context may be a network of family relations and organisational memberships geographically dispersed and intermixed. The complexity was acknowledged by an ATSIC state office:

> One of the problems we have in Perth – and you will find that it is probably the same issue in all the major cities - is that it is really hard to define the Aboriginal community… Is it Armadale? Is it North Bridge? Is it Balga? It is very hard to get that sense of community in Perth because the level of dispossession in the metropolitan area is far higher than anywhere else in the state.[2]

4.4 This, in turn, makes it difficult for agencies to know who to consult when seeking to extend the involvement of urban Indigenous people in decision making. One Indigenous organisation cautioned agencies to:

> be aware that there are a large number of organisations. It is not a criticism… but a warning to outside people coming in trying to negotiate with the community to be aware of this wide variety and not to fall into the trap of thinking that if you consult one organisation you have consulted everybody in town.[3]

with advice that:

> Misinformed approaches when seeking community consultation or attempts at establishing bilateral agreements within this environment may be, or be seen to be, meddling in local Aboriginal political and community processes.[4]

4.5 It can get more complex still. Agencies may rely on advice from self-nominated spokespeople who do not have community authority. Even more legitimate participants in consultation processes may be unsure for whom they can speak and on what issues. The problem can be exacerbated when organisations compete for resources by each claiming to

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2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), Western Australian State Office, *Transcripts*, p. 83.

3 Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC), *Transcripts*, p. 448. See also Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants, *Submissions*, p. S361.

4 CAAC, *Transcripts*, p. 443.

represent 'the' Indigenous community in an area.[5] In practice, agencies tend to set up their own consultative networks that rely on community groups formed to address single issues (such as housing, health, or youth). The resulting risk is that agencies receive different and possibly conflicting advice.[6]

Perceptions of Token Consultation

4.6 On the other hand, the Committee has been told that a major frustration for Indigenous participants on agency consultative committees is that they often perceive their involvement as token. Community based planning and prioritising requires agencies to devolve decision making to the local level. This may require the agencies to loosen what has been called their 'passion for control'.[7] One local Indigenous group complained that consultative committees in its region 'have no real legitimacy in the eyes of senior managers of government agencies', while another spoke of agencies that establish consultative committees and then 'ignore what they say or by-passing the committees during the process of policy development or service delivery'. [8]

4.7 These criticisms strike at the core of the new program reform processes. It is not enough to simply inform Indigenous people about policies; use consultation processes to ratify decisions already made; or even allow Indigenous modification of programs but only within narrow, predetermined parameters. 'Full' consultation or negotiation implies that Indigenous people have a direct say in deciding final outcomes and can negotiate as equal partners with agencies.

4.8 The criticisms outlined above indicate the need for behavioural changes amongst some agency managers and Indigenous representatives either to ensure that they do, in fact, consult appropriately or to ensure that their consulting processes are seen as genuine and representative. To effect such changes will require time, an agency wide and Indigenous commitment to the importance of genuine consultation.[9]

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5 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1297; ATSIC Binaal Billa Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1097.

6 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1297.

7 Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants, *Submissions*, p. S361. See also Bourke Shire Council, *Submissions*, p. S213.

8 Binaal Billa Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1098; Grannies Group, *Submissions*, p. S136.

9 For an earlier discussion on this issue see: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, *Our Future Our Selves: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Control Management and Resources*, August 1990, pp. 47-60.

Stresses within Communities

4.9 The Committee acknowledges that in many instances it is a 'great strength' of Indigenous communities that they have established community controlled organisations that fulfil a wide range of functions.[10] The Committee also recognises the work done by community leaders and volunteers. However, there is also social dysfunction in some Indigenous urban communities where:

> clan allegiances and loyalties, together with the history of unresolved family disputes is a recipe for disaster and causes great disruption and distrust today within mixed Aboriginal communities, especially in regional urban areas.[11]

4.10 The dysfunction seems most pronounced where families or individuals move into existing communities or are forced together over time, creating distinctions between locals and 'outsiders'.[12] The results can be two fold:

- services that are monopolised by particular family groups; and
- nepotism where family loyalties lead to the appointment of untrained and unsuitable people to positions of power.[13]

4.11 ATSIC too has noted the need to 'have a pretty strong grasp of the structure of communities and their politics' in order to bring in changes at the community level.[14]

4.12 The Committee has taken sufficient evidence to suggest that strategies are needed to deal with these issues, particularly where public expenditure is involved.[15]

Better Consultation Processes

4.13 The result of the practical issues described above is that it is difficult for agencies to be confident that they have consulted appropriately or reached all those in the Indigenous community who should be consulted.

4.14 As a strategy to help ensure that its consultation processes are comprehensive, the South Australian Department of State Aboriginal

10 Indigenous Land Corporation, *Submissions*, p. S254.

11 National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council (NAHHC), *Submissions*, p. S429.

12 See Stephanie Jarrett, *Reconciliation Breaking Point: Stories in Black and White*, Doctorate, Departments of Politics and Geography, Adelaide University, 2000, pp. 129-56.

13 See ATSIC, Binaal Billa Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1097.

14 ATSIC, *Transcripts*, p. 181.

15 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1549; Anaconda Nickel Ltd, *Submissions*, p. S1502; NAHHC, *Submissions*, p. S429; Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S360; City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Submissions*, pp. S229, S231; Grannies Group, *Transcripts*, 348.

Affairs, distinguishes between three groups in Indigenous communities: community leaders; opinion leaders; and the relevant client group. Community leaders are those who have been elected or appointed to formal structures, boards or consultative positions and act or speak on behalf of a community. Opinion leaders are those who have influence in communities without necessarily being in formal positions of leadership – including community elders, local Indigenous business people and members of community groups. It may be more difficult for some agencies to identify opinion leaders as they may not see their primary role as being community advocates. Finally, there are clients who use or may use the services in question. The Department endeavours to obtain the views of all categories when seeking community input.[16]

16 South Australian Government, *Transcripts*, pp. 302-03.

Community initiative

ATSIC Murdi Paaki Regional Council

The ATSIC Murdi Paaki Regional Council negotiated a regional agreement with the New South Wales Government for the provision of housing and infrastructure services. The Council developed Community Working Parties (CWPs) as a mechanism to ensure that the local Aboriginal people were involved in the decisions made under the agreement:

- CWPs were established in most towns within the Council region;
- Council's approach is to fund communities and not organisations. Organisations are often service providers and may only represent a small section of the communities;
- a CWP typically includes representatives of all local community controlled Aboriginal organisations; non affiliated members of the community representing young people, elders, women and others; local government; ATSIC; the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs; New South Wales Health; and other state and Commonwealth agencies as relevant – agency representatives do not have voting rights;
- the representation on each CWP is designed to avoid undue influence by particular sectional interests; and
- each CWP identifies: the needs of its community; how to meet the needs; who is to benefit; the priorities for funding; the order of work; the suitability of solutions and how results can be measured.

Other agencies now seek advice from the CWPs about a range of issues affecting their communities.[17]

4.15 When establishing consultative mechanisms, government agencies must ensure that those mechanisms have a broad representational basis. The goal is to tap the broadest cross section of the community and not just community organisations. Ideally, local government should also be represented, along with representatives of other appropriate Commonwealth and state agencies.

17 See ATSIC, Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1049; Bourke Shire Council, *Submissions*, p. S212; Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Regional Agreement, Implementation Manual*, 2nd Edition, pp. 28-31.

Recommendation 11

4.16 **When planning and establishing Indigenous community consultative structures, Commonwealth government agencies take into account the following principles:**

- **seek participation by Indigenous people, where appropriate by public advertisement;**
- **ensure broad representation of community interests, including representatives of local Aboriginal community controlled organisations; non affiliated community members, possibly representing relevant sectional interests (youth, the elderly, clients etc); the ATSIC regional council; and local government;**
- **invite representatives of appropriate and affected Commonwealth and state government agencies with observer status;**
- **provide flexible funding arrangements if the consultative structures are to prioritise or allocate expenditure so as to allow the community to tailor solutions to the local needs;**
- **nomination of agency community liaison officer(s) with a mandate to work alongside the community groups/members in the consultative structure;**
- **provide funding to cover participants' costs and, where appropriate, to cover some forms of capacity building;**
- **ensure that written information provided to consultative groups is written in plain English and, if necessary, assistance is provided to those in the groups who cannot read or write English;**
- **recognise that consultative processes for Indigenous participants will require time;**
- **hold meetings in public and maintain a public record of decisions; and**
- **ensure impediments are always identified and ensure strategies are developed and introduced to tackle the impediments.**

Community Capacity Building

4.17 The expectation by governments that Indigenous communities will become more involved in agency processes can place an unequal burden on the comparatively small number of individuals who have the skills and confidence to participate. As the Committee was told:

> Many Indigenous people are burnt out by the level of their unpaid involvement in relevant governance arrangements, so all levels of governments must be aware that Indigenous leaders and their skills are neither unlimited nor without social or financial costs.[18]

4.18 It is not enough, or likely to be successful, for governments to suddenly give communities the power to determine priorities and make funding decisions without also giving them the training and resources to do so. What is needed is to build the capacity of communities to manage their interaction with government agencies and gain access to funding sources, rather than rely on a few overworked individuals. As one group described:

> We have got a lot of people, who are willing, and probably able, but could use some coaching around organisational skills, around governance, around financial managements … in the interests of enabling the community – which has a lot of will, but often not the skills – to participate.[19]

Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

4.19 The need for capacity building does not confront the Indigenous community alone and there is similar need in other sectors of the community suffering stress and disadvantage. However, governments cannot adopt a passive role in community capacity building and need to play a facilitator role.

4.20 In recognition of this need, the Commonwealth Government announced a broad strategy to help strengthen all families and communities with funding in the 1999-2000 budget. The strategy, entitled the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, is underpinned by the belief that strong family relationships are the vital building blocks of strong

18 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S585. See also Council of the City of Wagga Wagga, *Submissions*, p. S370; Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, *Submissions*, p. S1470.

19 Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Transcripts*, p. 491.

communities. In turn, it is only strong communities that have the capacity to truly engage families in economic and community life.[20]

4.21 The strategy aims, among other things, to strengthen communities through investing in community capacity to solve problems and grasp opportunities. It will support:

- communities to find local solutions to local problems (the 'Local Solutions to Local Problems' initiative);
- develop community leadership (through the 'Potential Leadership in Local Communities' initiative),
- promote best practice communities (the 'Can Do Community' initiative); and
- support volunteers to develop skills (the 'Skills Development Program for Volunteers').

4.22 The Committee sees the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy as a significant initiative that can underpin Indigenous specific approaches to develop community capacity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Community Capacity Roundtable

4.23 In October 2000, the Commonwealth's Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs convened the 'Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable' to discuss ways to strengthen Indigenous families and communities. Membership of the Roundtable included Indigenous and community leaders, industry and church representatives, academics and individuals with recognised expertise in working with Indigenous families and communities. The Roundtable agreed, among other things, that a government priority should be to target the needs of younger people, including in the areas of leadership training and self esteem.[21]

4.24 Principles developed by the Roundtable are being used to assess projects under the $20 million component of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy provided for Indigenous specific projects. To date,

20 Commonwealth Government, J Newman & J Howard, *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*, April 2000.

21 See Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, *Submissions*, pp. S1668-71; FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S451; Senator Jocelyn Newman, Minister for Family and Community Services, *Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable 24 October 2000 – Old Parliament House, Canberra, Communique*, 24 October 2000.

funding has been used for projects in relation to leadership, conflict resolution and strategies to increase social and economic opportunities.[22]

4.25 The Roundtable also nominated a working group to provide ongoing advice to the department in relation to priorities and projects to be supported through the Strategy.

4.26 As part of the strategy, the Commonwealth is conducting pilot projects in several Indigenous communities to enable and support communities to take practical actions to address their own needs and priorities through building capacity.[23] The Committee understands that these pilots are intended to be restricted to remote and rural areas. The Committee believes, however, that the pilots could provide best practice examples of direct value to urban communities and recommends accordingly:

Recommendation 12

4.27 **The Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable Working Group review the needs of urban as well as remote area Indigenous families and communities when considering funding priorities under the Indigenous component of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.**

4.28 Capacity building initiatives are not just taking place at the Commonwealth level. Queensland, for example, has established the 'Community Capacity Building Cluster Group'. This group, comprising senior officials from a broad cross section of Queensland government agencies is informing government officials about how they can work more flexibly and responsively with community representatives.[24]

22 Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together: Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock, MP Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal Affairs*, 22 May 2001, p. 15.

23 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S447.

24 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1244.

Community initiative

Coalition of Aboriginal Agencies – Perth

In late 1999, the leaders of six community controlled agencies in Perth undertook a process of partnership development to formalise the Coalition of Aboriginal Agencies.

The organisations were Manguri Aboriginal Corporation, Nyoongar Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, Yorganup Child Care Service and the Aboriginal Advancement Council.

The Coalition allows the agencies to better coordinate their own services, link resources and develop a coordinated casework approach to help Aboriginal extended families in Perth.

As a coalition, the agencies are also better able to work with State government agencies.[25]

Community Consultation Mechanisms Already in Place

ATSIC Regional Councils

4.29 There are 35 ATSIC regional councils with locally elected representatives and regional support staff. The councils already provide local governance structures that can provide networks and processes for capacity building. The councils also have statutory obligations to consult with, advocate for and represent their communities and are encouraged by the ATSIC Board of Commissioners to enter into relationships with other government agencies to improve local service provision to their Indigenous constituents.[26]

4.30 Many agencies also tend to establish their own consultative networks rather than use the regional council network which 'inserts yet another layer of advisory bodies'.[27] Accordingly, where possible, regional councils and their offices should be involved in capacity building initiatives as the council structure already exists and is familiar to Indigenous people. However agencies and communities should be free to consult in their own way. ATSIC can promote its elected structures and communities may choose to use them.

25 ATSIC, *WA's Aboriginal Groups Unite as One*, Media Release, 14 June 2001.

26 ATSIC, *Annual Report 1999-2000*, p. 4.

27 ATSIC, Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1053.

Recommendation 13

4.31 **All government agencies recognise and accept the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) regional councils play as a vehicle for community capacity building and as a conduit into Indigenous communities. ATSIC should also be encouraged to offer regional council network services to the community.**

Regional Agreements

4.32 There are several models evolving to establish service delivery models at the local or regional level. These comprise regional agreements under which a range of service providers work in partnership with local Aboriginal communities and organisations to provide better coordinated services. One goal of such agreements is to provide a framework under which the Indigenous communities have a central role in setting regional service priorities.[28] Examples of such agreements include the Murdi Paaki Regional Council Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Regional Agreement in western New South Wales and the Cape York Partnerships Project in far north Queensland.

4.33 The Agreements involve the establishment of consultative processes to bring service delivery agencies and communities together: in the Murdi Paaki agreement it is Community Working Parties; and in the Cape York project it is Community Negotiation Tables.[29]

4.34 After an extensive consultation process ATSIC released a report on greater regional autonomy in June 2000.[30] The report recommended that ATSIC regional councils be given greater capacity to enter regional agreements with Indigenous organisations and communities and governments of all levels and their agencies for the coordinated provision of services to Indigenous people of the region.[31] Granting the regional councils greater autonomy requires amendments to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission Act 1989.*

4.35 The Committee sees regional agreements as excellent mechanisms to allow Indigenous people to play a greater role in regional service delivery, particularly in rural areas. The Committee encourages their development.

28 See ATSIC Regional Autonomy Portfolio Commissioners Djerrkura OAM, Bedford and Williams, *Report on Greater Regional Autonomy*, ATSIC, May 2000, pp. 29-36.

29 See: Murdi Paaki Regional Council, *Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Regional Agreement, Implementation Manual*, 2nd Edition, 1999; Queensland Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1250-51.

30 ATSIC, *Report on Greater Regional Autonomy,* ATSIC Regional Autonomy Portfolio Commissioners Djerrkura OAM, Bedford and Williams, 2000, ATSIC, Canberra.

31 ATSIC, *Report on Greater Regional Autonomy*, p 37.

Local Government

4.36 The Committee has mentioned that ATSIC's regional councils provide an existing mechanism for extending the involvement of urban Indigenous people in decision making affecting their local communities. Other existing structures with community level planning and service delivery responsibilities are local governments.[32]

4.37 Local governments can potentially play a significant role in extending the involvement of urban Indigenous people in decision making. This has become particularly so in the last 20 years as the role of local government has expanded. Councils, from principally providing physical services and infrastructure for ratepayers, now provide a broader range of services (often on behalf of other levels of government) to all residents within the council boundaries.

Councils Responding to the Needs of Indigenous People

4.38 A number of local government councils have made great strides in incorporating Indigenous people in their decision making processes, often through the establishment of Indigenous consultative committees. The committees act as a bridge between councils and Indigenous groups and provide an Indigenous perspective to councils. As an indication of the range of strategies available to councils, the Brisbane City Council has:

- employed Indigenous liaison officers;
- created an Indigenous advisory group;
- liaised directly with Indigenous community groups;
- formed joint partnerships with Indigenous groups;
- conducted Indigenous women's and men's safety seminars;
- made Indigenous homelessness and usage of public space as the topics of monthly meetings with community agencies and council;
- established Indigenous representation on funding bodies; and
- signed a native title accord with the local land council.[33]

4.39 The Committee commends and encourages those local governments who have taken initiatives to: fund full or part time Indigenous liaison officer positions; provide cultural awareness courses for staff; and target council cadetships and apprenticeships to Indigenous people.

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32 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S718.

33 Brisbane City Council, *Submissions*, pp. S1056-65.

4.40 Members note that local government does not extend to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and that the ACT government undertakes local government functions. The Committee's comments regarding the roles being undertaken by local government apply equally to the ACT.

Partnerships

Council Recognition of Indigenous Rate Payers – Townsville, QLD

The Townsville City Council has introduced new ways to respond to the needs of Indigenous people. Council:

- employs a full time community development officer;
- hosted an Elders Dinner which 80 elders attended and also formed an Elders Advisory Committee;
- has employed 100 Indigenous trainees since 1982; and
- is helping to set up an Indigenous cultural centre.[34]

Local Government Associations

4.41 As well as the efforts made by individual councils, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has been promoting reconciliation and better cooperation between local governments and their Indigenous residents. The ALGA has established a National Indigenous Local Government Advisory Committee which provides advice to the ALGA. In consultation with ATSIC, the ALGA has also released guides for local governments seeking to enter agreements with Indigenous groups; distributed case studies of good practice relations with Indigenous people; and adopted a 'commitment statement'. In the latter, local government committed, among other things, to:

- take effective action on issues of social and economic concern (as identified in the 1992 COAG Communique) where they lie within the sphere of interest and responsibility of local government; and
- develop strategies that improve the level of participation of Indigenous people in local government at all levels.[35]

34 Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) & ATSIC, *Justice and Equity for All: Local Government and Indigenous Partnerships,* pp. 52-53.

35 *Local Government of Australia Reaffirms its Commitment to Maintaining a Culturally Diverse, Tolerant and Open Society, United by an Overriding Commitment to our Nation and its Democratic Institutions and Values,* Adopted, 24 February 2000, *Submissions,* p. S724.

4.42 Discussions for a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the ALGA and ATSIC are in progress as the inquiry was conducted and expected to be finalised in late 2001.

4.43 In the mid 1990s the Department of Transport and Regional Services and ATSIC jointly funded Aboriginal policy officer positions in state local government associations. Funding was withdrawn in 1999. However, ATSIC still continues to part fund a national policy officer position in the ALGA.[36] The Committee has taken evidence that various state wide local government initiatives regarding local government service delivery to Indigenous people have subsequently become 'moribund'.[37]

4.44 The Committee believes that these positions facilitated partnerships between local governments and Indigenous communities at the local level and helped councils improve service delivery to Indigenous people. Accordingly, the Committee makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation 14

4.45 **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission develop with the National Office of Local Government a proposal to continue to part fund an Aboriginal policy officer position with the Australian Local Government Association with the view to providing advice to local government on ways of extending the involvement of Indigenous people in local government.**

Town Camps

4.46 The Committee has received evidence of Indigenous households not receiving municipal services in some circumstances, despite being ratepayers. This occurs most frequently where there are discrete Aboriginal communities ('town camps') within council boundaries.[38] In these cases, ATSIC and state departments of Aboriginal affairs are usually forced to step in to provide the necessary community infrastructures on behalf of quasi local government town camp organisations.

4.47 Historically, contact between town camps and councils has often been limited, accompanied by simmering disputes over the payment of rates and delivery of services. However, there are examples of councils and town camps working together to resolve issues of dispute and improve

36 At the time of the inquiry, the position was unfilled.

37 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, pp. S583-84.

38 See South Australian Governments, *Submissions*, p. S1209; Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1362-63.

relations.[39] The Committee wishes to encourage these initiatives and urges the National Office of Local Government, the states and Northern Territory agencies responsible for local government to take a leadership role in bringing councils and town camp organisations together.

Recommendation 15

4.48 **The National Office of Local Government in conjunction with departments of local government in the states and Northern Territory take a leadership role in facilitating, where necessary, more cooperative arrangements between mainstream councils and separate and discrete Aboriginal communities within council boundaries ('town camps') as is being done in Bourke, New South Wales and in the Northern Territory between the Alice Springs and Tangentyere councils.**

Indigenous Participation on Council

4.49 Another way for Indigenous people to extend their involvement in decision making that affects their local communities is to gain election to their local council.

4.50 As a general rule, Indigenous people, have not shown a great deal of interest in standing for election onto mainstream councils.[40] A consequence was that in 1999, for example, only 11 out of 1807 elected councillors in New South Wales were Indigenous.[41] The low involvement has been attributed to poor understanding of the electoral processes and the role of councillors; a reaction to an assessment of the probability of success or a lack of interest.

4.51 There are a number of excellent state and Northern Territory based initiatives to encourage more Indigenous people to run for election. In NSW, for example, the Aboriginal Mentoring Program has been designed to give Aboriginal participants a greater insight into the operation of local government and encouragement to run for office. A person nominated by their community spends six months shadowing a councillor, attending council meetings, having access to council facilities and attending civic duties with their mentor.[42]

4.52 In Alice Springs, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Tangentyere Council and the Alice Springs Town Council contains a

39 See Bourke Shire Council, *Submissions*, p. 214; Tangentyere Council, *Transcripts*, p. 440.

40 As distinct from those standing for local government where the ward population is all or nearly all Indigenous. Northern Territory, *Submissions*, p. S1383.

41 ALGA & ATSIC, *Justice and Equity: Local Government and Indigenous Partnerships*, 1999, p. 38.

42 ALGA & ATSIC, *Justice and Equity: Local Government and Indigenous Partnerships*, 1999, pp. 38-39.

commitment to seek a change in the voting system to proportional representation on the basis that it will give Indigenous people a greater chance of being elected.[43]

4.53 ATSIC too is encouraging Indigenous people to participate in local government. It has developed a guide to assist ATSIC regional councillors who consider standing for election to become a local government councillor.[44]

4.54 The Committee is very keen to encourage Indigenous people to run for local government. Members encourage the ALGA, the Northern Territory and state local government associations to continue efforts to increase the number of Indigenous people running for local government.

Conclusion

4.55 The Committee has already indicated that it sees that the contribution of Indigenous individuals, families and communities is vital to improving the effectiveness of programs and the relevance of community decision making.

43 Tangentyere Council, *Transcripts*, p. 440.

44 ATSIC, *Making the Decision to Get Involved in Local Government*, 2001.

5

The Needs of Youth

Introduction

5.1 Of all the issues examined by the Committee for this inquiry, none has struck Members as more pressing than the absolute urgency of addressing the needs of young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, and particularly those alienated from both their own heritage and the broader community.[1]

5.2 In 1996, 71% of Indigenous students left school before year 12, in comparison with 26% of all students.[2] Between 1995 and 1997, the death rate for young Indigenous males between 15 and 24 years old was 2.8 times higher than their non Indigenous counterparts. Despite the likelihood that suicide rates are under-recorded, it appears that the Indigenous youth suicide rate is two to three times higher than the rate for non Indigenous young people.[3] In 1994, nearly half of 18 to 24 year old Indigenous males had been arrested at least once and one third of them had been arrested more than once.[4] These figures reflect national data and mask regional variations. However, in one regional example, local groups

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1 There is some debate about what ages are encompassed by the definition of 'youth'. The Committee has taken a flexible approach, but worked on the general premise that Indigenous youth are those aged from 12 to 25 years old.

2 Australian National Training Authority, *Partners in a Learning Culture: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training*, 2000, p. 11.

3 See: C Tatz, *Aboriginal Suicide is Difference: Aboriginal Youth Suicide in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand: Towards as Model of Explanation and Alleviation: A Report to the Criminology Research Council on CRC Project 25/96-7*, July 1999, p. 10. See also: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence, *Report*, 1999, p. 102.

4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Commission (ATSIC), *ATSIC Annual Report 1999-2000*, p. 29.

estimated that some 200 of the 1,300 or so Indigenous youths in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (and 500 Indigenous people of all ages) used illegal drugs in 2000 and that most of those were polydrug users taking at least heroin.[5] In evidence to the committee, Indigenous youth have been variously described as:

- an 'apocalyptic generation who do not envisage a future';[6]
- including 'a sizeable minority with no apparent social norms';[7] and
- with 'a deep-seated hostility to white society'.[8]

5.3 Their disadvantage is made worse because governments and policy makers cannot obtain an accurate picture of the full extent of the problems, as indicated in a government submission to the inquiry:

> Like the rest of their community… it is difficult to meaningfully assess the needs of young Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders due to the paucity of data available.[9]

and by a non government agency in Western Sydney that:

> where we work, the needs of young people by and large have not even been identified, let alone met.[10]

and, finally, that:

> their needs are currently left largely unaddressed.[11]

A Positive Approach Is Needed

5.4 While deeply troubled by the evidence before it, Members did not want to diminish the achievements of Indigenous young people who are not on drugs, nor law breaking and are either employed, at school or other institutions of learning. The Committee notes that Indigenous students, attending educational institutions, as a proportion of all students increased at all levels in 1991 and again in 1996. Of particular note is the jump in the number of Indigenous people obtaining tertiary degrees in the last decade. In 1991, 0.6% of the Indigenous population obtained a

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5 P Dance et. al., *They'll Just Read About Us in Storybooks: Estimations of the Number of Young Indigenous People using Illegal Drugs in the ACT and Region*, unpublished, February 2000.

6 Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants, *Submissions*, p. S360.

7 Bourke Shire Council, *Submissions*, p. S213.

8 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S586.

9 Australian Capital Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1179.

10 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S361.

11 ATSIC, Wongatha Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S106.

bachelor degree, but by 1996 this figure had risen to 1.5% of Indigenous people.[12] Similarly, in the same period, the percentages of Indigenous people with associate diploma degrees rose from 0.5% to 1.2% of the total Indigenous population.[13] Members also acknowledge that Indigenous families and communities take pride in and recognise the value of their young people and try to integrate them in the community.[14]

5.5 Rather than stereotyping Indigenous young people (particularly when in groups) as a threat, involved in anti social or self harming behaviour, the Committee believes a far more constructive approach is to emphasise the contribution they make or can make to Australia's future. On that note, the chapter turns to examine some of the pressures on young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and then discusses possible solutions and initiatives.

Pressures Faced by Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Alienation

5.6 In a compilation of the evidence to the Committee, Members identified the following problems facing young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in urban areas in particular (although also to varying extents in non urban areas):

- substance abuse (alcohol, heroin, marijuana, amphetamines, tranquillisers, petrol, glue);
- emotional and physical abuse (racism, being 'put down', sexual abuse, family violence);
- poor school attendance, low levels of education, high unemployment with poor job prospects;
- difficulties finding accommodation (moving from house to house, using emergency shelters);

12 IESIP SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team, *What Works: Explorations in Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*, March 2000, p. 358. 5.7% and 7.7% of the total population had bachelor degrees in 1991 and 1996 respectively.

13 IESIP SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team, *What Works: Explorations in Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*, p. 358. 1.3% and 2.6% of the total population had associate diplomas in 1991 and 1996 respectively.

14 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S587.

- lack of parental involvement or control (dysfunctional families, lack of respect);
- poverty (affecting lifestyles, health, entertainment, lack of food); and
- being young single parents with poor parenting skills.[15]

Unfortunately, young people may suffer from more than one of these disadvantages listed.

5.7 One aspect of their lives that all Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders – young and old - share is the need to balance and reconcile their Indigenous culture with their involvement in the mainstream community. This can be particularly stressful in urban areas where mainstream culture is so dominant, and even more so for young Indigenous people. One group spoke of the stress for young people when 'establishing their identity as Indigenous people, whilst balancing their involvement in the Indigenous and mainstream community'.[16] Similarly, ATSIC spoke of the 'challenges' for young urban people 'coming to terms with who they are'.[17] The result may be alienation from both cultures with a loss of traditional principles and a lack of respect for mainstream values.

Substance Abuse

5.8 The Grannies Group in Adelaide sees the adverse effects of drug and alcohol abuse as the greatest problem facing Indigenous people in urban areas.[18] The group acknowledges the efforts put into mainstream strategies to address drug and alcohol related problems, but believes they need to include specialist Indigenous services if they are to have an impact on Indigenous young people. Similarly, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Injecting Drug Use Project has found that a major problem for young Aboriginals in Victoria is a lack of access to appropriate detoxification and rehabilitation services.[19] In the ACT, there has been an increase in the number of deaths due to heroin overdoses but not an increase in the number of Indigenous young people using mainstream

15 See Grannies Group, *Submissions,* p. S134; Burns Aldis, *Submissions,* p. S362; ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions,* p. S595; National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), *Submissions,* pp. S1563-64.

16 Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions,* p. S887.

17 ATSIC, *Submissions,* p. S679.

18 Grannies Group, *Submissions,* p. S139.

19 See NACCHO, *Submissions,* p. S1558.

detoxification centres – suggesting that there are barriers to access for young Indigenous people.[20]

Community initiative

Kaingani Tumbetin Waal – Callington, SA

Kaingani Tumbetin Waal is an initiative of the South Australian Aboriginal Sobriety Group. It offers a rehabilitation and prevention program designed for young Aboriginal males and females 'at risk' and courses are carried out on a property leased from the Aboriginal Land Trust.

Up to ten 13 to 18 year olds participate in a ten week residential course that provides drug rehabilitation and strategies to remain drug free.

Participants are also taught independent living skills, computing and literacy skills and outdoor activities.

It also offers 'time out' from the influence and pressures of substance abuse in urban areas.[21]

5.9 The National Illicit Drug Strategy, *Tough on Drugs*, is the Commonwealth's mainstream strategy to reduce the supply and demand for illicit drugs. It includes funding for the treatment of illicit drug users, prevention strategies, training and skills development for front line workers who come into contact with people who use drugs or who are at risk of using drugs.[22] The strategy, administered by the Department of Health and Aged Care, has the support of the Council of Australian Governments.

5.10 Through its Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program, the Strategy has provided grants to a range of non government organisations across the country to treat drug users.[23] The Committee has noted the number of organisations funded under the Program that target Indigenous people and the others that target young people in general. The

20 Youth Council of the ACT, *Submissions*, pp. S890-93.

21 South Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1200.

22 Department of Health and Aged Care, National Illicit Drug Strategy, www.health.gov.au / pubhlth / strategy / drugs (August 2001).

23 See: Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program, Department of Health and Aged Care, National Illicit Drug Strategy, www.health.gov.au / pubhlth / strategy / drugs / illicit (August 2001).

Committee believes, however, that further focus should be given to services targeting specifically Indigenous young people.

Recommendation 16

5.11 **The Department of Health and Aged Care consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth as a priority target group for the Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program of the National Illicit Drug Strategy.**

5.12 The Committee also notes that the Strengthening and Supporting Families Coping with Illicit Drug Use Measure, which is part of the National Illicit Drug Strategy, will fund services to families where a young person is suffering from the effects of illicit drug use. Two programs funded under this measure, one in South Australia and the other in Victoria, focus on the needs of Indigenous families in urban areas.[24]

5.13 In response to the specific needs of Indigenous people, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs launched the National Indigenous Substance Misuse Council in June 2001. The Committee also notes that the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation has a draft national strategy to tackle Indigenous drug and alcohol abuse with solutions based on consultation with community groups. This strategy addresses the following priority areas:

- reducing access to specific substances;
- providing advice on early intervention measures;
- ensuring access to intervention and treatment options and programs; and
- ensuring people in custody have access to appropriate polydrug services.

Recommendation 17

5.14 **The Commonwealth Government and National Indigenous Substance Misuse Council consider the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's draft national strategy - the *Substance Misuse in an Aboriginal Community Controlled Primary Health Care Setting* - so that a decision on implementation can be made at the earliest possible date.**

24 Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), *Submissions*, p. S464.

5.15 The Committee was particularly concerned at evidence it took from witnesses about the extent of heroin (and other drug) use in the ACT by Indigenous people of all ages. Witnesses believe that there are some 500 heroin users of all ages in the ACT and that up to 200 of the Territory's 1,300 Indigenous youth are users.[25] While having not taken direct evidence from witnesses on this issue in other states, an extrapolation of the ACT figures to the national level would suggest a most alarmingly high number of Indigenous young people using heroin.

5.16 The Committee notes that the ACT Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Health and Community Care has just tabled a report on the health of Indigenous people in the ACT.[26] That Committee noted that Indigenous people made up less than one percent of the ACT population, but that in 2000, made up 27% of those who died in the ACT from drug overdoses.[27] That Committee recommended, among other things, that the ACT Government identify barriers to Indigenous people using detoxification services in the ACT and implement policies to remove the barriers.[28]

5.17 This Committee awaits with interest the findings of the inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs into the social and economic costs of licit and illicit substance abuse. While that broad ranging inquiry is not Indigenous specific, its findings should be of relevance to reducing the rate and impact of Indigenous substance abuse – which the Committee views as a most serious issue.

5.18 So seriously, in fact, does the Committee view the issue, that it thinks the Commonwealth and ACT Governments should conduct a full joint inquiry into the use of illicit drugs in the ACT. Such an inquiry should investigate the extent and underlying causes of the widespread use of illicit drugs. Such an inquiry should also investigate the economic, health and social impact of illicit drug use on the Indigenous and wider ACT community. Those involved in the inquiry should include Commonwealth and Territory health officials, the police and, of course, Indigenous health and community groups.

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25 Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, *Transcripts*, p. 505. See also: P Dance et. al., *They'll Just Read About Us in Storybooks*, p. 20. See also Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, Standing Committee on Health and Community Care, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in the ACT*, Report No. 10, August 2001, pp. 73-75.

26 Legislative Assembly *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in the ACT*.

27 Legislative Assembly, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in the ACT*, p. 69.

28 Legislative Assembly, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in the ACT*, recommendation 24.

Recommendation 18

5.19 **The Commonwealth Government seek the agreement of the Government of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) to conduct a joint inquiry into the extent and underlying causes of illicit drug use in the ACT. The inquiry should also investigate the economic, health and social impact of illicit drug use on the Indigenous and wider ACT community.**

5.20 Of course, the impact of substance abuse is not restricted to Indigenous people in the ACT alone. The most recent source of national information on the use of illicit drugs by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban areas are the 1993 and 1994 National Drug Strategy surveys. According to these surveys, over half the Indigenous population aged 14 years and over in urban areas had tried at least one illicit drug, compared with 38% of the general urban population. About a quarter of the Indigenous urban population in the surveys also said they were currently using an illicit drug compared to 15% of the general population.[29]

5.21 The Committee notes that in 1999 the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy endorsed the establishment of the National Drug Strategy Reference Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.[30] The Reference Group, among other things, provides advice to the national expert advisory committees of the Ministerial Council's Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs about strategies to address the specific drug issues relating to Indigenous people. The Committee encourages the Ministerial Council to make tackling illicit drug abuse by young Indigenous people, particularly in urban areas, a priority and recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 19

5.22 **The Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy consider placing a priority on developing and implementing strategies to reduce illicit drug use among young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, particularly those living in urban areas.**

5.23 While acknowledging the gravity of the drug problem in Indigenous communities, the Committee again wishes to stress that many young

29 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) & the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 4704.0, 1999, pp. 57-58.

30 See: www.health.gov.au/hfs/pubhhlth/nds/mcds/.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and their families are leading successful and productive lives without the taint of substance abuse.

Violence

5.24 The latter part of this inquiry has been conducted in the midst of a national debate about the appalling affects of violence and abuse within Indigenous families and communities.

5.25 It is not easy to quantify the incidence of violence or its impact among young people. There is: anecdotal evidence; evidence of hospitalisation rates due to injuries (transport accidents, self inflicted injury, attempted suicide, interpersonal violence); the number of applications for domestic violence orders; and surveys of individuals.[31]

5.26 As an indication, hospital separations for intentional injury inflicted by others on Indigenous males are over six times higher than for all males and 20 times higher for Indigenous females than all females.[32] The rate of sexual abuse among young girls involved with the criminal justice system is between 70% and 80%.[33] As appears a common problem in Indigenous data collection, the official records are likely to under represent the true picture.[34]

5.27 Furthermore, the statistics tend to show only some of the consequences of violence on the individuals involved. What they do not portray is the way that acts of violence affect those who witness it and those who are caught up in its consequences. Families and communities too are distorted by the violence of individuals. Accordingly, strategies to address the various forms of violence have to incorporate whole of family and whole of community responses in addition to coordinated action by Commonwealth and state agencies. Individuals including Elders and community leaders must be involved and lead the way, helping to eliminate violence. Cultural issues must not impede or prevent the implementation of initiatives.

5.28 In 1999, the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs agreed to the need for a national strategy for tackling Indigenous family violence and in 2001 a National Forum on Indigenous Family

31 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1559.

32 ABS, *Hospital Statistics: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*, Occasional Paper, 1997-98, 4711.0, p. 34.

33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence, *Report*, 1999, p. 99.

34 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence, *Report*, 1999, pp. 98-100.

Violence was held. The Commonwealth's response was the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative. Program initiatives include the Indigenous component of the Office of the Status of Women's National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Grants Programme and ATSIC's National Family Violence Legal Prevention Program. A further component of the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Programme was the Walking into Walls national Aboriginal awareness raising campaign which took place in 2001.

5.29 In addition, state and territory agencies are also developing a range of initiatives to tackle violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, especially in Queensland.[35]

5.30 In July 2001, state, territory and Commonwealth ministers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs and ATSIC agreed to a common seven point strategy to reduce Indigenous family violence. The seven priority areas are:

- reducing alcohol and substance abuse;
- child safety and wellbeing;
- building community capacity (including cultural strength);
- improving the justice system;
- creating safe places in communities (safe havens);
- improving relationships (focusing on perpetrators and those at risk of offending); and
- promoting shared leadership (empowering women).[36]

5.31 At the meeting, ATSIC also announced that it would establish a National Indigenous Women's Forum to give Indigenous people a direct national voice in proposing solutions to family violence.

5.32 The Committee welcomes the initiatives to tackle this most pressing issue. However, Members are concerned that the programs, grants and pilot studies not be spent or conducted in isolation without best practice solutions being available across the nation. The Committee fears that the energy and good will of individuals, communities and agencies may dissipate in a flurry of small scale, short term and ad hoc initiatives.

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35 See: Queensland Government, Response to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report, *The First Step*, May 2000 and *The Next Step*, December 2000.

36 Hon Philip Ruddock MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Media Release*, 28 July 2001.

Recommendation 20

5.33 **The Commonwealth continue to take a leadership role to ensure that initiatives funded under the National Indigenous Family Violence Grants Programme are coordinated with equivalent state and territory initiatives to provide long term and holistic solutions to Indigenous domestic violence.**

5.34 In September 1996, the then Minister for Family Services launched a proposed plan of action for the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities after widespread consultation with Indigenous communities.[37] As with more recent studies, the proposed plan of action identified alcohol and substance abuse and the breakdown of family structures as contributing factors to child abuse and neglect.[38] The Committee understands that the recommendations of this plan have yet to be implemented and recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 21

5.35 **The Commonwealth Government reconsider the recommendations of the Proposed Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities and consider whether those recommendations can be integrated into more recent strategies.**

Truancy

5.36 One consistent message received by the Committee was that there is a correlation between truancy and anti social or self harming behaviour by Indigenous young people. As the Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs told the Committee:

> While kids are in school they are not petrol sniffing, they are not committing criminal offences, they are not harming themselves and others. This activity makes them fitter, stronger and tireder. At the end of the school day they have less energy for nefarious activity.[39]

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37 Secretariat National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care (SNAICC), *Proposed Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities: National Prevention Strategy for Child Abuse and Neglect*, 1996.

38 SNAICC, *Proposed Plan of Action*, p. 5.

39 Tangentyere Council, *Submissions*, p. S288.

5.37 Drawing the same conclusion, Aboriginal police liaison officers in Perth work with members of the local Aboriginal community and families to conduct truancy patrols on the basis that truancy is 'the dominant cause of most juvenile offences'.[40]

5.38 Of course, the more frequently students are at school and the longer they are retained in the education system, the greater their chance of employment or post school training when they finally do leave school.

5.39 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) is the national policy on Indigenous education supported by all governments. Under the aegis of the AEP, the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) has been developed to ensure that Indigenous students reach levels of literacy and numeracy comparable to other Australians. As an example of need, 71% of year 5 students nationally met the national year 5 identified performance standards in reading and writing while only 23% of Indigenous students met the standards.[41]

5.40 One of the NIELNS objectives is to lift the school attendance rates of Indigenous students to national levels, although how this is to be achieved is up to each state and territory. Several surveys from year 1 to year 12 indicated that Indigenous students have nearly twice the absentee rate of non Indigenous students.[42]

5.41 There exists a mutual responsibility for encouraging and supporting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to attend school. Governments and departments of education have an obligation to ensure that they offer a culturally appropriate learning environment where children are stimulated and can see their schooling and the curricula as relevant. There may also be complex underlying reasons for truancy and other forms of non attendance at school. Some of these reasons include: a belief by students that school is irrelevant; embarrassment and resentment caused by feeling less successful scholastically than other classmates; hunger; transport difficulties; and an inability to afford textbooks, sporting equipment and excursion fees. An appreciation of such factors by schools will help them develop programs to reduce the incentives for truancy.

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40 Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1135. See also Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1387.

41 See: IESIP SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team, *What Works: Explorations in Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*, March 2000, pp. 370-71.

42 IESIP SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team, *What Works*, p. 372. Note that students can be absent form school without being truant.

However, at the same time, families should also be encouraged to take responsibility for supporting their children to attend school.

5.42 In this context, the Committee notes that one of the themes of the AEP is to increase Indigenous parental and community involvement in education decision making. Under the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) Scheme, local ASSPA committees are established between schools and local Indigenous communities to improve Indigenous participation at school and involve parents in the education of their children. The ASSPA committees often also run homework centres, funded under the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, at which Indigenous school students can complete homework and receive assistance if required.[43] It is vital that full reports on the progress of AEP be published and that these highlight any impediments encountered with proposals to tackle them.

5.43 Nevertheless, the Committee believes that more needs to be done at the state and territory level to reduce truancy and recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 22

5.44 **The Commonwealth Government, in conjunction with state and territory governments, review current strategies and consider further strategies to reduce the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander truancy rate in schools.**

Such strategies should include those targeting:

- **Indigenous parents and highlighting to them the benefits of their children's regular and ongoing attendance at school; and**
- **Indigenous Elders, as community leaders, intervening on behalf of the young to help ensure the success of the strategies.**

Sport

5.45 The Committee has already noted a correlation between truancy, boredom and Indigenous self harm and anti social behaviour. Another factor that increases the likelihood of such behaviour is boredom. The Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Community in Western Australia believes that school attendance can reduce boredom which, in itself, is also a significant cause of problems. The Community concludes that:

43 Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, *Submissions*, p. S828.

> People who are occupied, either as students or at work, have greater self-esteem, less boredom and less opportunity to create "mischief".[44]

5.46 Boredom can also arise because of a lack of recreation facilities, youth clubs, discos and employment opportunities for young Indigenous people in urban areas.[45] Boredom can 'find outlets in drugs, alcohol and fights'[46] as:

> the nexus between the availability of recreational opportunities for young people and diversion from anti-social activities is difficult to dispute.[47]

5.47 The Committee believes that young people – Indigenous and non Indigenous – require positive outlets and pathways for their energies. The Committee accepts however, on the evidence, that there is a lack of culturally appropriate clubs, activities, sporting groups and the like for young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, particularly in country towns. To this end, the Committee notes with approval that the Commonwealth funds the Youth Activities Service Program which provides young people, aged 11 to 16 years old, with structured activities and positive peer supports outside school hours. The aim is to help them avoid patterns of destructive behaviour.[48]

5.48 It has been repeatedly put to the Committee that a successful strategy for reducing boredom and providing a mechanism for broader engagement is to establish sporting activities and organised recreation at a community level for males and females and for all skill levels.[49] Sporting activities can also foster self esteem, social interaction skills and teamwork.

5.49 The difficulty in attracting funding for sports and recreation is that other areas of high need, such as the health, housing and education sectors, tend to receive priority. Similarly, there is reluctance to view, and thus fund, facilities such as sports grounds as an integral component of the infrastructure necessary to build a sustainable community.[50]

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44 Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Community, *Submissions*, p. S104.

45 See Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1133.

46 ATSIC, Victorian Office, *Submissions*, p. S595. See also National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council, *Submissions*, p. S431.

47 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S363.

48 FaCS, *Submissions*, pp. S462-63.

49 ATSIC Wongatha Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S108; Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions*, p. S904; Gindaaja Yarrabah Youth Sports and Recreation Aboriginal Corporation, *Submissions*, p. S52; ATSIC Binaal Bill Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S1096.

50 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S361; ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S793.

Community initiative

Sport and Recreation – Dareton, NSW

Using Commonwealth and New South Wales Government grants, Dareton's Namatjira Working Party employed the community's landscape gardening apprentices to participate in the building of a football oval and a basketball court.

The community has formed the Namatjira Regional Sporting Association which has developed a calendar of sporting and recreational activities.

The Sporting Association and Collingwood Football Club host an annual trip to Melbourne for Dareton school children, selected on the basis of their attendance, attitude and performance at school each year.

Shortly after completion of the oval and the introduction of a night patrol, the NSW Police Service noted a reduction of approximately 50% in the incidence of petty crime and the Ambulance Service reported a reduction in the ambulance call our rate of 75%.[51]

5.50 ATSIC supports a number of sporting programs, some in conjunction with the Australian Sports Commission and delivered in partnership with state and territory agencies. The National Sport and Recreation Program, for example, is designed to assist in the development of Indigenous athletes, coaches, administrators and trainers.[52] However, the Committee is aware of the pressure on ATSIC's budget and is reluctant to encourage it to divert funds from other priorities.

5.51 In May 2001, the Government released the report of the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce commissioned by the Prime Minister.[53] The report recommends the development of local programs that build the confidence and self esteem of young people and create for them coherent local networks of support. A suggested mechanism is through participation in cultural, sporting and recreational activities.[54] The Government has already indicated its broad support for the findings of the Taskforce and

51 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S361. See also: Secrets of Successful Communities: The Namatjira Housing and Infrastructure Project, www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/ (August 2000).

52 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S793.

53 Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, *Footprints to the Future: Task Force Report*, 2001.

54 *Footprints to the Future*, recommendation No. 5.

has responded with several measures in the 2001-02 Commonwealth budget with more comprehensive responses promised in the 2002-03 budget.[55] Accordingly, the Committee makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation 23

5.52 **When responding fully to the Report of the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, the Government review funding arrangements to reflect the significant value of sport and organised recreation: in their own right; as diversionary tactics; and as means of building the confidence and self esteem of young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.**

Influencing their own Future

5.53 The Committee believes that young Indigenous people may feel less of a sense of alienation from the wider community if they can directly provide advice to governments and others on the issues that are of most importance to them.

5.54 The Commonwealth Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs formed the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group in October 2000 specifically to raise awareness about the particular issues facing young Indigenous people. The leadership group offers an opportunity for direct dialogue between the Commonwealth Government and young Indigenous Australians. At its first meeting in July 2001, the Leadership Group told the Minister that its primary concerns were the issue of sexual and domestic assault; the need for more positive role models in Indigneous communities; and the need for more young people to be involved in community decision making.[56]

5.55 Several states also have established or are establishing Indigenous youth councils. These draw on the experience of mainstream youth advisory councils which exist more commonly. The councils are made up of young people elected by their peers to represent their communities and are designed to enable members to advise governments about issues facing young people and ways in which to address them. They also provide a forum for young people to develop, coordinate and manage their own

55 Senator Hon Amanda Vanstone, Hon Dr David Kemp MP, *A National Commitment to Young People: The Report of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce Footprints to the Future*, Joint Release, 22 May 2001.

56 Dr David Kemp, MP, Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, *Media Release*, 18 July 2001, K163.

initiatives and are an excellent training ground for the next generation of community leaders.

Partnerships

Aboriginal Youth Councils – Western Australia

In 1999, Western Australian government agencies and ATSIC sponsored a state wide Aboriginal Youth Forum. As a result of the forum, the State Aboriginal Youth Council was established.

The purpose of the Youth Council is to provide Aboriginal youth with a voice in communities and government and to provide a conduit to influence government policy.

It will also foster the development of future Aboriginal leaders in Western Australia.[57]

ATSIC Victoria and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria are working together to establish a similar Indigenous Youth Council in Victoria.[58]

Recommendation 24

The Commonwealth Government fund the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to take a leadership role in and also encourage the establishment of regional and state based Indigenous youth advisory councils and youth participation charters as mechanisms to better engage Indigenous young people in decision making processes and provide role models for their peers.

The Commonwealth Government also encourage Commonwealth agencies, state, territory and local government boards, committees and community organisations to involve young people in their decision making processes.

Crisis Accommodation

5.56 The extent of homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people is often masked and difficult to quantify. Young Indigenous

57 Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1132.

58 ATSIC, Victorian Office, *Submissions*, p. S700.

people appear reluctant to use the mainstream services for emergency and temporary accommodation, instead seeking accommodation in the extended family.[59]

Transience

5.57 Homelessness, thus, often manifests itself as transience which brings its own problems – discontinuity of schooling and gaps in education, not to mention placing pressures and overcrowding on other family units. Lack of a permanent address also brings difficulties in accessing government allowances, such as the Youth Allowance which has been described as 'intimidating and incompatible with the often transient lifestyles of many Indigenous young people'.[60]

5.58 The difficulties facing young people seeking stable, long term accommodation away from their family are compounded by the lack of alternative housing options. Indigenous specific housing is provided under the ATSIC funded Community Housing and Infrastructure Program and the Aboriginal Rental Housing Programs funded by the Department of Family and Community Services. However, due to the demand for housing under these programs, families and those with young children receive priority for the housing stock which, in any event, is often unsuitable for single or young people.[61] Similarly, Aboriginal Hostels Ltd has places for transients, but these places are severely limited too. The Committee will view with interest a review of unmet housing needs of young Indigenous people being funded by the Queensland Government that is due for completion towards the end of 2001.[62]

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

5.59 The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is a joint Commonwealth, state and territory mainstream program to assist people (young and old) who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. SAAP provides transitional supported accommodation with the goal of resolving the crisis that led to the homelessness in the first place, re-establishing

59 See; Bega Garnbirringu Health Services, *Submissions,* p. S60; Youth Council of the ACT, *Submissions,* p. S928.

60 Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions,* p. S927.

61 See: Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, *Submissions,* p. S375-76; ATSIC, Victorian Office, *Submissions,* p. S582; Queensland Government, *Submissions,* p. S1304; Wongatha Wonganarra Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcripts,* p. 38.

62 Queensland Government, *Submissions,* p. S1304.

links with families where appropriate; and / or re-establishing a capacity to live independently of SAAP.[63]

5.60 SAAP is overseen by a joint Commonwealth, state and territory committee, but is administered on a day to day basis by state and territory governments. These governments have agreements with non government organisations and some local governments for the delivery of SAAP funded services.

5.61 In 1998-99, just over 10% of SAAP agencies targeted Indigenous people and nearly 40% targeted young people. Just under half the agencies providing SAAP services to Indigenous people were Indigenous managed. In the same year, Indigenous youth made up 35% of total Indigenous clients – a figure roughly comparable with the percentage of all clients who were youth.[64]

5.62 In 1998, Keys Young Pty Ltd reviewed Indigenous homelessness, including the accessibility of SAAP to Indigenous people.[65] The review recommended, among other things:

- an increase in the level of management support for Indigenous managed SAAP services;
- increased service links between SAAP agencies and local Indigenous organisations and services;
- providing further cross cultural training for non Indigenous SAAP workers; and
- providing more outreach activity and adopting a holistic approach to Indigenous homelessness.[66]

5.63 The SAAP Coordination and Development Committee established a working group to review the Keys Young report and recommend an implementation strategy. As part of the strategy agreed to by the Committee, the states and territories are consulting Indigenous organisations and communities to develop more appropriate services for Indigenous SAAP clients, particularly for those escaping family violence and for Indigenous young people.[67] The reforms are being implemented in

63 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S466.

64 FaCS, *Submissions*, pp. S467-68.

65 Keys Young Pty Ltd, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Context and its Possible Implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP): Final Report*, Prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services, 1999.

66 See: FaCS, *Submissions*, pp. S491-92.

67 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S492.

conjunction with the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness.

SAAP and Indigenous Young People

5.64 As the states and territories are responsible for the delivery of SAAP services, there may be regional variations in the speed and extent of reforms, depending on the priorities of the particular jurisdiction.

5.65 Evidence to the Committee suggests that young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders still face barriers to accessing SAAP funded services. The barriers, as assessed by young Indigenous people, include:

- the lack of culturally appropriate services for young Indigenous people (as distinct from Indigenous people of all ages);
- incidents of discrimination from SAAP agencies with a non Indigenous focus;
- fear of coming to the attention of 'social services';
- feelings of shame and, particularly in services run by Indigenous organisations, fear of lack of confidentiality.[68]

5.66 The Northern Territory Government also noted a lack of facilities under SAAP arrangements for younger children (under 16 years old) seeking alternative accommodation.[69]

5.67 The Committee acknowledges the reforms being undertaken to make SAAP funded services more accessible to Indigenous people. However, Members are concerned that the needs of young people, as a sub group of the Indigenous client group, are still not receiving adequate attention. At the same time, the Committee wishes to reinforce the need to also provide for younger dependent children escaping family violence.

Recommendation 25

5.68 **The Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the states and territories, place greater urgency on providing services under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) for:**

- **young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, including those in their early teenage years;**
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children**

68 See: Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions,* p. S928; ATSIC, *Submissions,* p. S1549.

69 Northern Territory Government, *Submissions,* p. S1385.

escaping domestic violence; and

- **those living in smaller rural towns.**

5.69 Of course, early intervention in the lives of those at risk of homelessness is better than providing a service once a person has left home. SAAP services are complemented by the mainstream Reconnect Program. This program, for the young homeless and those at risk of homelessness is delivered by community organisations and aims to reconnect young people with their families, and reintegrate them with the education system, employment market and their community. Activities funded include counselling services, referrals to specialist services, respite care, and sports and recreation.[70]

Conclusion

5.70 The Committee appreciates that many of the anti social and self harming activities undertaken by some Indigenous young people arise from a variety of underlying problems. Thus the symptoms cannot be treated in isolation and must be tackled in a holistic way and integrated with programs that strengthen families.

5.71 Furthermore, to be lasting, solutions need to be preventative, rather than only swinging into action once a problem has become acute. In this regard, the Committee notes that the Commonwealth Government's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce report recommends bringing parents, schools, communities and government agencies together to encourage the successful transition of young people from childhood into adulthood. The Committee commends the direction of the Taskforce report, but wishes to emphasise that Indigenous young people are a category most 'at risk' and deserving the Government's highest priority.

Recommendation 26

5.72 **When determining further responses to the report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, *Footprints to the Future,* the Commonwealth Government develop specific initiatives for young Indigenous people on the basis that they are one of the most 'at risk' groups.**

5.73 As a final note, the Committee wants to stress again that, while many young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are battling with complex

70 FaCS, *Submissions,* p. S462.

disadvantages, others are managing the transition to successful and productive lives as adults.

5.74 The Committee believes that another way of building self confidence and self esteem, is for the establishment of a 'clearing house' to disseminate information about successful Indigenous youth initiatives. The clearing house could be accessed by Commonwealth, state and territory policy makers, community groups, service providers and young people themselves. While the Committee envisages that the clearing house would be primarily computer based, it could also incorporate a telephone based advisory service with access to a register of potential mentors. Such a clearing house could be modelled on the National Child Protection Clearinghouse administered by the Australian Institute of Family Studies and funded by the Department of Family and Community Services.[71] The Committee recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 27

5.75 **The Commonwealth Government establish a 'clearing house' to collect, share, monitor and distribute information on issues affecting young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. The 'clearing house' should be funded by the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS); administered by FaCS and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and designed in consultation with Indigenous groups. It should be run along the lines of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse.**

71 See: www.aifs.org.au/nch/nch.html.

6

Maintenance of Culture

Introduction

6.1 A common non Indigenous misconception is that 'real' Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are those who are 'dark skinned and found in remote communities'.[1] This misconception denies urban dwelling Indigenous people their Aboriginality and ignores the fact that the majority of Indigenous people live in urban areas. Further, it depicts Indigenous cultures as frozen in time. Evidence to the Committee and described in this chapter paints a different picture of Indigenous culture (urban and non urban) as being one of 'living, breathing, evolving cultures in the here and now'.[2]

6.2 In urban areas or where there has been a long period of European contact, surviving pre-contact elements of traditional cultures may be fragmentary or lost entirely. The continuity with traditional cultures will be most tenuous for Indigenous people who were moved or have moved from their traditional lands or dislocated from kinship structures by family separation.[3] Urban senses of community identity will be further blurred where a population consists of people from many areas, each bringing their own differing traditions.

6.3 However, Aboriginal culture today is also infused with a shared history of the 'aspirations and battles forged by Indigenous individuals and organisations in more recent times.'[4] In its broadest sense this is a national

1 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1274.

2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S589.

3 Australian Capital Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1180.

4 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S589. See also National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council, *Submissions*, p. S429.

rather than regionally focused Aboriginal culture that is 'the sum of everything that we do as Indigenous people'.[5] In this broader sense of culture:

> Our community organisations are particularly important to us not only because they allow us to conduct our own cultural business but also because their existence is one of the ways in which we… are able to reaffirm our distinctiveness as the Indigenous people of this country.[6]

6.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are thus a mix, in varying proportions depending on location, of pre contact traditions and the post contact experiences that differentiate Indigenous people from non Indigenous people.

6.5 This chapter examines strategies for the maintenance of Indigenous cultures in urban areas: both in the lives of individual Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders; and as component of the broader 'Australian' culture. The Committee received comparatively little evidence on this term of reference, perhaps as a result of a reluctance by non Indigenous groups to comment on such a collectively 'personal' issue.[7] Nonetheless, the chapter describes strategies to make it easier for urban Indigenous people to learn about and maintain their pre-contact heritage and also how to reflect and celebrate their contemporary identity.

Cultural Centres

6.6 One of the most frequent suggestions to the Committee for maintaining Indigenous cultures in urban areas has been to establish cultural and heritage centres.[8] Similarly, Torres Strait Islander communities on the mainland want cultural centres 'to act as a focus for the maintenance and promotion of Torres Strait Islander culture and its recognition by the wider community'.[9]

6.7 Cultural centres can serve many functions. They can act as museums and education centres where the local Indigenous history can be recorded and told and where sacred and utilitarian artefacts can be displayed in a

5 Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, *Submissions*, p. S376.

6 Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, *Submissions*, p. S376.

7 For example, see Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants, *Submission*s, p. S363. See also Grannies Group, *Submissions*, p. S150.

8 Also a common request to governments: see Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1142.

9 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S685.

culturally acceptable way. This is of benefit to Indigenous people trying to establish their identity, for:

> When local Aboriginal people record their culture and stories in ways meaningful to them, those without a knowledge of their culture can be reconnected with it and with the means to replace what is missing in their family system.[10]

6.8 In the same vein, cultural centres can act as mechanisms for community harmony, friendship and reconciliation, informing and sharing with non Indigenous people of the cultural heritage and history of local Indigenous communities.

Community initiative

Dreamtime Cultural Centre – Rockhampton, Qld

The Dreamtime Cultural Centre is a cultural and convention centre on the land of the Darambal people in Rockhampton.

It has display centres and a museum, outlining the history and culture of the Darambal and displaying cultural artefacts. There are also lecture rooms, dining facilities and a lodge and motel complex. Torres Strait Islander culture is also recognised, reflecting the large Islander community in Rockhampton.

The Centre is owned and managed by the local Indigenous community and employs 26 people (in 2000) in the all Indigenous staff. It has trained and employed more than 50 others who have gone on to other careers.

The Centre has several thousand visitors taking conducted tours each quarter as a result of its own promotion and through agreements with local and state tour operators.[11]

6.9 Cultural Centres can also act as a cultural repository and place to return the artefacts, objects and human remains that were taken in the past and deposited in Australian and overseas museums, libraries, archives and art galleries.[12]

6.10 Cultural centres are also used as meeting places and become a focus point for local activities. In this regard, they also act as a place where people can

10 Anglican Counselling Service, *Submissions*, p. S73.

11 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S799; Correspondence, Administrator, Dreamtime Cultural Centre to Committee Chairman.

12 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S639.

'gather in privacy as a community in order to sustain and develop cultural identities'.[13] As the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils explained:

> there is a widespread need for investment in land and buildings for meeting places, offices from which to run services, spaces to exhibit artworks and promote cultural activities and simply to be secure and community "owned"….[14]

Link Up

6.11 Specialised cultural centres of particular relevance to urban dwelling Indigenous people, are the national network of Link Up Centres. In 1997, the report into the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families ('Bringing them Home') was presented to the Commonwealth Government.[15] In its response to recommendations in the Report, the Government funded the Link Up Program. The Program established a national network of Indigenous family tracing and reunion services (Link Up) with one in each state and two in the Northern Territory. Link Up centres can be used by Indigenous people to re-establish links to family, and their traditional country and community.[16]

6.12 The Bringing them Home Report recommended that organisations, such as Link Up centres, which help people undertake family history research, be recognised as Indigenous communities for the purposes of certifying descent from the Indigenous peoples of Australia.[17] Link Up centres are recognised as Indigenous communities for the purposes of proving two of the three parts of the proof of Aboriginality, namely: proof of Indigenous descent; and secondly, acceptance by the Indigenous community as being an Indigenous person (the third part of the test of Aboriginality is self identification as an Indigenous person).[18]

6.13 For many Indigenous people, particularly in urban areas, the Link Ups have provided the first means for them to publicly affirm their Aboriginality, which may have been impossible for them to do in the past. Link Up centres can also facilitate the acceptance of such people within

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13 Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation, *Submissions*, p. S424.

14 Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Inc, *Submissions*, p. S274.

15 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, April 1997.

16 See: www.atsic.gov.au/issues/bringing_them_home/bringhome/ (August 2001).

17 *Bringing them Home*, Recommendation 13.

18 See: *Bringing them Home*, pp. 300-01.

their local Indigenous communities and provide links for them to other Indigenous organisations.[19] By providing these services, Link Up centres provide a useful mechanism for reaffirming Indigenous identity and allowing, particularly urban Aboriginals, to gain an understanding of their history and cultural heritage.

Languages

6.14 Language is at the core of cultural identity and is one of the pillars supporting the intrinsic sense of identity and membership of a group.[20] In urban areas where assimilation and dispossession have 'almost totally silenced Indigenous cultures', there is presently a 'real yearning for the continual restoration and sustenance of traditional languages and other valued cultural practices'.[21] The interest in re-learning traditional languages is present even where the traditional languages are no longer used as community vernaculars and need to be reconstructed. As was explained to the Committee, Indigenous people:

> see [language revival] as being central to the sense of Aboriginality – they want to hold on to and reconstruct new identities that they want to find for themselves in urban environments.[22]

6.15 ATSIC administers the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Initiatives Program which funds the operating costs of regional Indigenous language centres and management committees. These centres support the retrieval, preservation and revival of languages in contemporary contexts. ATSIC also funds the Language Access Initiatives Program (LAIP) which aims to improve the knowledge base for those languages with few speakers, particularly for those people who suffered cultural and language loss because of past government removal policies. LAIP funds the production of dictionaries and other language materials and the running of regional workshops engaging communities in language work.[23]

6.16 ATSIC believes most Indigenous languages can be revitalised. It believes there is usually still sufficient knowledge of languages within communities and recorded in archival deposits, as well as technical

19 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S781-82.

20 Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages (FATSIL), *Transcripts*, p. 112. See also ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S779.

21 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, pp. S589-90.

22 FATSIL, *Transcripts*, p. 126.

23 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S774.

expertise and community enthusiasm. In addition to preserving languages, the revitalisation of languages also acts to bring communities together.[24]

6.17 When sufficient numbers of people speak a language to enable support documents to be produced, it may be possible to offer the language as a school subject.[25] In the urban context, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training is providing some of the more innovative language maintenance programs. In several schools, students in year seven and eight have been taught local Aboriginal languages through the national Languages Other than English (LOTE) program.[26] However, for the program to be successful with students, adults too need to regain the languages at the same time so that the skills learnt in schools can be reinforced at home.

6.18 Maintenance of language need not only include traditional languages as it can also include 'Aboriginal English'. Aboriginal English is a dialect of Australian English and widely spoken by Indigenous Australians. Aboriginal English differs from Australian English in pronunciation, vocabulary, idiom and in the ways in which it is used. Aboriginal English is also a 'key instrument' for cultural maintenance because:

> Aboriginal English… is a rich repository of Indigenous culture. It incorporates levels of meaning which relate to traditional Aboriginal values, relationships and ways of life. It also maintains Indigenous cultural patterns in genres and community based verbal art forms it incorporates…. Aboriginal English is a symbol of shared Aboriginality... it is a more reliable marker of Aboriginality than the colour of one's skin.[27]

6.19 One disadvantage for school pupils speaking Aboriginal English is that teachers often assume the students are speaking Australian English badly and place them in remedial reading and writing classes.[28]

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24 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S773.

25 In remote areas, particularly in South Australia and until recently, the Northern Territory, school curricula have been taught bilingually – as distinct from students having language lessons.

26 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S776.

27 Edith Cowan University, *Submissions*, p. S177. See also FATSIL, *Submissions*, p. S420; *Transcripts*, pp. 126-27.

28 Edith Cowan University, *Submissions*, pp. S176-77; FATSIL, *Transcripts*, pp. 128-29.

Broadcasting

6.20 An important mechanism for promoting and reinforcing Indigenous culture and identity is via Indigenous radio or television broadcasts in English or language. While there are several Indigenous television stations, Indigenous radio stations or programs reach a far greater proportion of the population.[29] Regardless of the medium, Indigenous broadcasts provide news and entertainment of direct relevance to local Indigenous communities; facilitate Indigenous networks; provide access to local languages and can facilitate communication with other Australians.[30]

6.21 For example, for two weeks during NAIDOC 2000, an Indigenous managed test broadcast was transmitted in suburban Melbourne. It provided music, Indigenous news, history, story telling and generally promoted pride in Indigenous culture.[31] As a side benefit, broadcasting also provides employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people.

6.22 In remote areas, broadcasting is allowed under remote area community broadcasting licences (formerly, the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme) that have been issued by the Australian Communications Authority.[32] In other areas of the country, Indigenous groups transmit as mainstream community broadcasting services using temporary or permanent community broadcasting licences. Community broadcasters operate non profit services emphasising community participation, access to minority and special interest groups and promotion of the Australian music industry. Community broadcasters are licensed under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Licences are granted free of charge and managed by the Australian Broadcasting Authority.[33] Indigenous groups may hold their own community broadcasting licences or broadcast Indigenous segments on mainstream community stations.[34]

6.23 ATSIC's Broadcasting Program funds organisations for broadcast related activities via Regional Council grants and through nationally funded projects. The 2001-02 budget appropriation for the Broadcasting Program is $11.8 million. In most cases, the stations or programs supplement ATSIC funding with sponsorship revenue. However, community broadcasters are

29 See ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S784.

30 Productivity Commission, *Broadcasting*, Report No. 11, March 2000, p. 28.

31 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S589.

32 Limited to areas that do receive any other radio or television broadcast.

33 See: *Community Broadcasting* at: www.dcita.gov.au/text_welcome.html (August 2001); *Community Broadcasting and Radio* at www.indigenousaustralia.com.au/nimaa/broadcasting (August 2001).

34 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S785.

not allowed to receive advertising revenue.[35] This ensures that community stations do not compete unfairly with full commercial stations, but also limits the self sufficiency of Indigenous broadcasters.

6.24 In recognition of the restrictions in the Act, the 2000 Productivity Commission inquiry into broadcasting recommended the creation of an Indigenous category of broadcasting licence in acknowledgment of the important social and cultural role of Indigenous broadcasting.[36] If implemented, the Commission's recommendations would allow greater flexibility for Indigenous broadcasters without the restrictions imposed by inappropriate community broadcasting licence arrangements.

6.25 Indigenous broadcasters provide an important mechanism for cultural maintenance. Broadcasts can also be used to effectively target and distribute information in a culturally sensitive way about government services, health promotions and the like to people who may find written information difficult to access. The Committee supports the Productivity Commission's recommendations and makes its own recommendation accordingly.

Recommendation 28

6.26 **Recommendations 8.5 and 8.6 of the report into Broadcasting by the Productivity Commission to establish a new licence category for Indigenous broadcasters and to reserve spectrum for this purpose be implemented by the Commonwealth Government.**

The Arts

6.27 Indigenous arts and crafts play an important role in affirming the identity of urban Indigenous communities and provide a link to the non-Indigenous community.[37] A problem facing urban artists is that many have difficulty convincing customers and galleries that their work is 'genuine' or 'real' Indigenous work. Most galleries and retail shops in south east Australia, for example, show work that is predominantly from northern Australia while only rarely showing the art of artists from the south east.[38] In an echo of the debate about the legitimacy of urban based forms of Indigenous culture, urban based Indigenous artists may have

35 Section 15 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* specifies that community broadcasts 'are not operated for profit or as part of a profit making enterprise'.

36 Productivity Commission, *Broadcasting*, April 2000, recommendations 8.5, 8.6.

37 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S637.

38 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S637.

difficulty convincing others that non traditional art forms are still Indigenous.

6.28 ATSIC's national arts support program, the National Art and Craft Industry Support Strategy, focuses specifically on visual arts and crafts. The strategy principally funds the capital and operational costs of a network of community art and craft centres, although these are mainly situated in remote Australia.[39] ATSIC regional councils also receive funding under the strategy to allocate for local festivals and cultural centres.

6.29 The Australia Council also supports contemporary Indigenous cultural expression, primarily in the form of subsidies to individuals or companies, through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Fund and Community Cultural Development Fund.[40] Similarly, state and territory arts and crafts councils provide funding, to greater or lesser extents, to Indigenous artists.

Recommendation 29

6.30 **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) consider mechanisms to further promote urban based community arts and craft centres.**

ATSIC should also take a leadership role in coordinating funding arrangements for urban arts and craft centres with the Australia Council and state and territory arts and culture organisations.

Non Indigenous Support for Culture

6.31 Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders do not live in isolation and they face the 'the constant battle of maintaining [their] cultures while surrounded with non-Indigenous urban mores'.[41] There is much that the wider community can do to help Indigenous people maintain their cultures and reinforce their place in the wider community. These include traditional welcomes at official events; flying Indigenous flags at offices or during NAIDOC week; or displaying local art in building foyers.[42] Local

39 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S798.

40 The Australia Council for the Arts, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Fund: About the Fund*, www.ozco.gov.au / atsia (August 2001).

41 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S615.

42 See: ACT Government, *Submissions*, p. S1180, Council of the City of Wagga Wagga, *Submissions*, p. S371.

Governments can also dedicate parks and open spaces to reconciliation and streets and suburbs can be named after Indigenous people or local places.[43] The Australian Capital Territory Government, for example, is placing signs acknowledging the traditional owners of the land at major road entrances to the Territory and officially recognising traditional titles of prominent landmarks.[44] Governments of all levels can support cultural festivals and acknowledge significant events in the Indigenous calendar such as NAIDOC week, National Sorry Day and the Coming of the Light Festival for Torres Strait Islanders.[45]

Partnerships

Telephone Art – Dubbo, NSW

Telstra agreed that local Indigenous artists could paint three public telephone boxes in Dubbo.

The painted boxes are a symbol of mainstream recognition of the presence of Aboriginal people and their culture in Dubbo.

The phones have been free of vandalism since they were painted.[46]

6.32 A greater appreciation and acknowledgment of Indigenous cultures in the mainstream can also help counter racial intolerance. This was observed by an Aboriginal group that discusses Indigenous culture at nearby schools:

> What has been particularly pleasing has been the observation by Indigenous children that racial taunts and other discriminatory behaviour from fellow pupils had lessened considerably following the lessons on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture presented by members of our group.[47]

6.33 The Committee also sees significant benefit in Indigenous studies becoming a core component of school curricula. While primary and secondary school curricula are a state and territory responsibility, the

43 Council of the City of Wagga Wagga, *Submissions*, p. S371; Brisbane City Council, *Submissions*, p. S1060.

44 Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, Minutes, 30 August 2000, p. 1.

45 NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islanders' Day Organising Committee) is used to widely refer to events and celebrations that go under during National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Week (from the second Sunday in July). Coming of the Light Festival is in the week before NAIDOC week.

46 Anglicare Australia, *Submissions*, p. S609.

47 Grannies Group, *Submissions*, p. S149.

exposure of non Indigenous students to Indigenous cultures and history would improve racial tolerance and mutual understanding.

6.34 Mainstream recognition of the presence of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in urban areas is an important part of reinforcing Indigenous culture and building community relations between the two cultures. This is particularly so as 'urban dwelling Indigenous people generally have a lack of visual cultural identity in the eyes of the wider population'.[48]

Conclusion

6.35 The Committee has been impressed with the dynamism of Indigenous cultures in urban areas and, most significantly, the desire of people to preserve and rediscover their heritage and history. While maintenance of Indigenous cultures is ultimately a responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, there is also clearly a role for governments to assist in this task.

48 ATSIC, Wongatha Regional Council, *Submissions*, p. S109. See also: Anglicare Australia, *Submissions*, p. S609.

7

Economic Independence

Introduction

7.1 Indigenous people suffer considerable economic disadvantage in terms of wealth, employment and income in comparison with other Australians.[1] The barriers to Indigenous people achieving greater economic independence include: low formal education levels; poor literacy and numeracy skills; a lack of personal financial management skills; difficulties in raising capital; a lack of established business networks; and access to good business advice. In remote areas, Indigenous people may also suffer from deficient labour markets. In some cases, cultural barriers and traditions or their inflexibility conflict with economic activities. Poverty, poor health, lack of educational opportunity, alienation, and the weight of long term welfare dependency all contribute to the disadvantage and deprive many Indigenous Australians of opportunities most other Australians have.

7.2 The end result is:

- an unemployment rate in 1996 of 23% for Indigenous people in comparison with 9% for other Australians. The Indigenous figure would be 40% if those employed on Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) were included;[2]
- nearly 25% of the Indigenous labour force working as labourers or in other unskilled jobs, compared to 10% of all Australians;[3]

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1 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Achieving Economic Independence*, p. 1.

2 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Census of Population and Housing: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2034.0, 1999, pp. 39-40.

3 Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC), *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry: Discussion Paper*, IFI 2000/2, p. 141.

- only 3.2% of Indigenous people self employed compared with 8.4% of all Australians;[4] and
- nearly 70% of jobs filled by Indigenous people rely to some extent on public funding.[5]

Note, however, that these are national figures and that there is regional variation in unemployment and labour force participation rates.

7.3 The situation indicated by these statistics has the potential to get worse, given that the Indigenous population growth rate is double that of non Indigenous Australians.[6] A high growth rate, coupled with an already young age cohort indicates that more jobs will need to be found, just to maintain the unemployment rates at their existing high levels, quite apart from aiming to close the gap with mainstream levels of employment.

7.4 While urban Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders have access to a wider variety and number of jobs than those living in remote areas, those in cities and towns will also be competing with a larger pool of non Indigenous job seekers.

7.5 Furthermore, the Commonwealth Grants Commission identifies educational attainment as 'a vital factor' influencing an employer's decision on whether to hire an Indigenous employee, particularly as employers tend to use education as a mechanism for filtering applicants.[7] In 1996 national figures, 71% of Indigenous secondary students had dropped out of school before year 12, compared to just 26% for all students and only 14% of Indigenous people had a post school qualification, compared to 34% of all Australians.[8]

7.6 The situation will become worse for Indigenous job seekers as the increasing levels of education in the mainstream community mean that education standards required for even unskilled jobs are rising. For example, the average age for people entering apprenticeships has risen from the traditional 15 or 16 years old to 18 or 19 years old, reflecting the difference between leaving school at the end of year 10 and year 12.[9]

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4 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Achieving Economic Independence*, p. 3.

5 Department of Employment, Work Place Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB), *Indigenous Employment Policy*, www.jobsearch.gov.au/Indigenous/ (August 2001); See also ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S646.

6 ABS, *Experimental Projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population*, 3231.0, 1998, Canberra, p. 3.

7 CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, p. 144.

8 CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, p. 124; Australian National Training Authority, *Partners in a Learning Culture: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training, 2000-2005*, pp. 11, 12.

9 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S650.

7.7 This chapter examines some of the initiatives to assist Indigenous people find jobs and ease their transition from school to employment or post school training. One of the difficulties for this inquiry, but something which is a great strength of the process, is that strategies are being modified continually and new ones introduced in an effort to make them more successful and accessible to Indigenous people. While it has been a challenge for the Committee to keep up with the changes, it means programs are constantly refined or better targeted. Much of the credit for this innovation and willingness to try new ways comes from leadership at the Ministerial level and the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB).[10]

Employment

Mainstream Government Programs

7.8 Mainstream employment programs are funded primarily by DEWRSB, although the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) provides some employment services for people with disabilities under the Commonwealth State Disability Agreement.

7.9 DEWRSB funds Job Network, which is a mainstream national network of around 200 private, community and government organisations operating from over 2,000 sites and dedicated to finding jobs for unemployed people. It provides job matching services, intensive assistance to disadvantaged job seekers, such as assessment, vocational training, help with transport and return to work costs and post placement support. Centrelink is the gateway to Job Network.[11]

7.10 Job Network is seen by government as the main avenue for Indigenous people to use to seek employment.[12] However, evidence suggests that unemployed Indigenous people avoid Job Network, as one witness told the Committee:

> Aboriginal people do not use the Job Network program because they find it a humiliating and shameful process.[13]

and that:

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10 See DEWRSB, *Transcripts*, p. 546.

11 DEWRSB, *Employment Programmes for Indigenous Australians*, Exhibit 12, p. 5; FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S1482.

12 DEWRSB, *Employment Programmes for Indigenous Australians*, Exhibit 12, p. 5.

13 Anaconda Nickel Ltd, *Transcripts*, p. 205.

> the Job Network has totally failed Aboriginal people. I am quite clear in my mind about that.[14]

7.11 The Commonwealth Grants Commission inquiry into Indigenous funding similarly notes that 'Indigenous people have been and continue to be difficult for employment agencies to place in employment' and that:

> Because of its mainstream nature, focussed approach and relative inflexibility, Job Network is less likely to be effective in addressing the employment needs of Indigenous people than it is for other people.[15]

7.12 The disinclination by unemployed Indigenous people to use Job Network has been acknowledged by DEWRSB which introduced new initiatives from 2000 to encourage Indigenous people to use Job Network.[16] The initiatives include the Indigenous Employment Program's Wage Assistance package (see below) which has been designed to give greater incentives to Job Network members to find jobs for Indigenous job seekers. In addition, the latest Job Network Request for Tender included changes to improve services to Indigenous job seekers by: improving coverage by creating smaller Job Network catchment areas; encouraging the establishment of Indigenous employment specialists; and requiring more providers to include Indigenous servicing strategies in their tenders.

14 Anaconda Nickel, *Transcripts*, p. 217.

15 CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, pp. 157.

16 DEWRSB, Indigenous Employment Program, www.jobsearch.gov.au/Indigenous/ (August 2001).

Agency innovation

Indigenous Employment – Longreach, QLD

The Queensland Department of Main Roads wished to employ Indigenous people in the upgrade of the Matilda Highway. The Department negotiated funding for the local Aboriginal cooperative to carry out a skills audit of local Indigenous people. The results were supplied to the construction contractor who employed seven Indigenous people out of the 11 strong workforce.

- A mentor assisted those long term unemployed Indigenous people chosen for the job to help them assimilate into the workforce; and
- Sub contractors were given access to the skills audit as a source of employees.

Aboriginal monitors were also employed to ensure road building did not disturb Aboriginal sites.[17]

7.13 The Committee is concerned to hear that Indigenous people are reluctant to use Job Network services. Members also note that Job Network services do not, in practice, provide adequate support for people in more remote areas. However, Members are pleased to note DEWRSB's willingness to modify arrangements in an effort to reduce the barriers to Indigenous participation. The Committee will follow the outcome of these modifications to Job Network with interest to see if they prove effective.

7.14 The Committee sees a role for case managers, as described in chapter three above, to assess the formal training and work experience needs of Indigenous job seekers. Two avenues of gaining work skills are through the Green Corps and Work for the Dole Scheme program established under the Government's mutual obligation strategy.

7.15 Mutual obligation is the Government's broad strategy to assist job seekers back to work. It encourages more active job search and participation in activities which improve work skills and habits. Work for the Dole is a Commonwealth Government funded programme which provides work experience opportunities and activities for eligible job seekers. Through Work for the Dole, many unemployed people – Indigenous and non Indigenous - can satisfy their mutual obligation to give something to the community in return for their unemployment payments.[18] The Committee

17 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1252.

18 www.esn.gov.au.

encourages Indigenous people, where appropriate, to use the Work for the Dole scheme to obtain valuable work skills.

Area Consultative Committees

7.16 The Commonwealth Government has established a national network of Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) to provide a link between local businesses and communities and key government job creation programs.

7.17 ACCs bring together government agencies, businesses and community representatives with the principal goal of achieving economic growth at the local level through job creation and small business success.[19] ACCs are funded by the Regional Assistance Programme as administered by DEWRSB. One of the functions of ACCs is to promote and facilitate Commonwealth initiatives, including those for Indigenous employment and training.

7.18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are represented on a number of ACCs, but not all. The Northern Territory ACC, for example, has significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and its strategic plan recognises the importance of employment for Indigenous people.[20] However, in urban areas, where the Indigenous population is a much smaller proportion of the total population, ACCs may be less likely to consider the impact of their decisions on Indigenous employment.

7.19 In this regard the Committee is pleased to note that the Government sees a major priority of ACCs as assisting with implementation of the Indigenous Employment Policy (see below) with particular emphasis on creating employment and training opportunities.[21]

7.20 Nonetheless, the Committee wishes to stress the important role that ACCs can play in assisting Indigenous people in urban areas find employment and recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 30

7.21 **Area Consultative Committees (ACCs), particularly those in urban areas, invite members of their local Indigenous communities to become ACC members and to consult local Indigenous communities when identifying potential employment opportunities.**

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19 *National Network of Area Consultative Committees: Charter*: www.acc.gov.au/acccharter.htm (August 2001).

20 See: Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S399; ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S647.

21 *National Network of Area Consultative Committees: Ministerial Statement of Priorities*: www.acc.gov.au/prioritie.htm (August 2001).

Indigenous Specific Government Employment Programs

Indigenous Employment Policy

7.22 Indigenous employment policy is now administered by DEWRSB. The policy's objective is to generate more employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. There are three components to the policy: the Indigenous Employment Programme (IEP); the Indigenous Small Business Fund (ISBF); and several new measures to improve Job Network outcomes. The IEP and ISBF are described below and the new measures to improve Job Network outcomes we described above.[22]

7.23 The IEP itself consists of several elements, which are:

- the Structure Training and Employment Projects (STEP) program, which provides flexible financial assistance for projects which offer structured training and lead to lasting job opportunities;
- the Wage Assistance Programme which provides employers with a wage subsidy for employing Indigenous job seekers for at least 26 weeks;
- the CDEP Placement Incentive which provides a financial incentive to Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) sponsors for each placement of a CDEP participant in open employment and off CDEP payments;
- the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project, by which companies commit to employing Indigenous people while the Commonwealth provides access to flexible funding for that purpose (usually STEP);
- the National Indigenous Cadetship Project, under which financial assistance is provided to companies which provide work experience to cadets during their study breaks and then usually offers them a permanent position on successful completion of their study;
- Voluntary Services to Indigenous Communities which facilitates the placement of volunteers to provide for short term needs identified by Indigenous communities; and
- the Rural Pilots Project, which provides employment strategies for regions to break down barriers to regional Indigenous employment.[23]

Several of these initiatives are discussed in greater detail below.

22 DEWRSB, *Employment Programmes for Indigenous Australians*, Exhibit 12, pp. 2-8.

23 DEWRSB, Indigenous Employment Program, www.jobsearch.gov.au/Indigenous/ (August 2001).

Community Development Employment Projects

7.24 The CDEP scheme is a community based employment and community development initiative administered by ATSIC. The CDEP scheme was established in 1977 with the original aim of assisting remote area community development through work programs. CDEP participants did and do forgo income support entitlement benefits in return for being paid award wage equivalents for part-time work by the CDEP funded organisations.

7.25 ATSIC provides funding for CDEP positions and 'oncosts' (administration, materials and services to support projects).[24] Indigenous community organisations are then contracted by ATSIC regional councils to deliver the services to communities and individuals.

7.26 The aims of CDEP have now broadened to maximise the commercial potential of projects. CDEP also now emphasises business development and pre-employment and training linkages with mainstream programs so that CDEPs become a conduit to mainstream employment.[25]

7.27 In June 2001, CDEP involved over 270 Indigenous community organisations and over 34,000 participants with funding made available in the 2001-02 Commonwealth budget for 36,300 participants.[26]

CDEPs in Urban Areas

7.28 While CDEPs operate in urban, rural and remote areas, they are predominantly located in remote areas where there are few labour market opportunities. The first CDEP organisations in urban areas were established in 1987. However, by 2000 there were still only 11 CDEP funded organisations in metropolitan areas and 81 in regional areas while there were 169 situated in remote areas.[27]

7.29 The impact of having few CDEP placements in urban areas has an adverse effect as one firm pointed out:

> in areas such as western Sydney, where unemployment rates are high and there are very few CDEP positions, there are negligible opportunities of any sort for community people to gain work skills, and become job ready.[28]

24 ATSIC, *Annual Report 1999-2000*, p. 48.

25 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S727-29, S1618.

26 The amount includes CDEP expenditure by the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

27 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S736.

28 Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants, *Submissions*, p. S363.

Community initiative

Peedac Pty Ltd – Perth, WA

Peedac Pty Ltd is an Indigenous community organisation that currently administers the CDEP in Perth. It has six regional offices in the metropolitan area.

Peedac employs over 500 CDEP participants with 200 for its own projects and 300 people placed with other Aboriginal owned corporations. The participants undertake, painting, house maintenance, automotive repairs, steel fabrication, horticulture, ceramics, screen printing, dressmaking and upholstery.

Peedac has also won lawn mowing and cleaning contracts with state government departments and local councils. The company has also won a contract to provide maintenance and cleaning for public housing in Mandurah.

In the 12 month period to April 2001, 30 participants had moved into full time employment off CDEP.[29]

7.30 The Committee notes CDEP participation provides basic 'pre-employment' experience that equips participants to move to the mainstream job market. As one urban CDEP funded organisation told the Committee, CDEP participation has:

> Given [participants] confidence, given them work experience. A lot of them have never worked before so it is making them job-ready, making them get up and go to work, be there on time and learn how to take orders from somebody else.[30]

7.31 The Committee sees urban based CDEPs as providing a form of employment assistance and more structured training (apprenticeships, traineeships, mentoring and the like), for which there appears a need. The Committee believes that an appropriate expansion of CDEP is justifiable in recognition that employment and training opportunities are being lost in urban areas because of CDEP funding limits. The Committee notes that the Government provided funding for an additional 1,500 CDEP places in rural and remote areas in the 2000-01 budget.[31] However, the unmet

29 Peedac Pty Ltd, *Transcripts*, pp. 301, 312, 313.

30 Peedac & Yahnging Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcripts*, p. 313.

31 Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together*: Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock, MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 22 May 2001, p. 6.

demand for CDEP places in urban areas justifies further additional funding, although not at the expense of remote area CDEP placements.

Recommendation 31

7.32 **That the Government provide the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission with additional funding to further expand the number of Community Development Employment Projects participant places, particularly in urban areas.**

CDEP Employment Programs

7.33 While the CDEP program has successfully employed many Indigenous people in urban and non urban areas, the Government is concerned that CDEP organisations are not moving participants off CDEP and into mainstream employment as successfully as they could.[32]

7.34 One of the elements of the IEP is funding for CDEP Placement Incentives, which were first introduced in 1999. Under the scheme, CDEPs receive a bonus for each participant placed in open employment and off CDEP payments. The incentive fee can be paid for placement in subsidised jobs (such as through the Wage Assistance Programme), so long as the participant is off CDEP.[33]

7.35 ATSIC has been critical that the placement incentives have, in fact, not provided sufficient incentive to encourage CDEPs to provide pre-vocational training or to track participants once they leave the scheme.[34] DEWRSB has recently agreed to pursue new arrangements for payment of placement incentives and to pilot an increase in the incentive fee. DEWRSB is also piloting 'CDEP Trials' in which CDEPs are being directly funded to provide structured employment training for participants.[35]

7.36 CDEPs can take advantage of the Wage Assistance Programme, also part of the IEP, which provides a financial incentive to employers who provide Indigenous job seekers with long term jobs.

7.37 The Committee has been told that a 'major' barrier to moving Indigenous people off CDEP into mainstream employment is the lack of self esteem and confidence felt by many participants. CDEP participants are reluctant to leave the security of an Indigenous controlled and staffed organisation

32 Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together: Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock, MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs*, 22 May 2001, p. 6.

33 DEWRSB, *Employment Programs for Indigenous Australians*, Exhibit 12. See also www.jobsearch.gov.au/Indigenous/ (August 2001).

34 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1621.

35 Personal Communication, Secretariat, DEWRSB, July 2001.

to enter an organisation where they may be the only Indigenous person. Accordingly, people want to stay on CDEP jobs or return to CDEP jobs after a period of mainstream employment.[36] This highlights the need for people going into off-CDEP employment to have mentors to check on their progress and offer them support in their new employment.

Recommendation 32

7.38 **The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business allocate funds from the Indigenous Employment Program Wage Assistance Program to provide mentoring services for Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Scheme participants entering employment off CDEP and during the initial stages of that mainstream employment.**

7.39 In remote areas with limited labour markets, CDEP may be the major local employer. In such cases, it is important to recognise that training to seek advancement or career changes within CDEP (rather than off CDEP) is an appropriate use of training funds.

Indigenous Employment Centres

7.40 From February 2002 and as part of the mainstream *Australians Working Together* strategy, CDEPs in towns and cities where there are viable labour markets will be contracted, where willing, by DEWRSB to take on a new role as Indigenous Employment Centres. These centres will offer work experience, tailor made job search support and access to training to the Indigenous unemployed. The Centres will work with local employers and Job Network members to help Indigenous people find jobs and keep them. Individuals will be able to receive up to 12 months assistance from a Centre.[37]

7.41 As indicated in chapter three, the Committee believes it is important that government programs build the capacity of communities, or in this case community organisations, to manage their own affairs. The Committee is concerned that the managerial and supervisory skills within CDEP funded organisations will be stretched in order for the organisations to fulfil their responsibilities as Indigenous Employment Centres. As a consequence, the organisations may be obliged to contract in non Indigenous experts. The Committee wants to ensure that the funding packages for Indigenous

36 Anaconda Nickel, *Transcripts*, p. 206.

37 See Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, Tony Abbott MHR, *Media Release*, 22 May 2001, ABB41/01; Australians Working Together, *What Indigenous Australians and their communities need to know*: www.together.gov.au/Groups/Indigenous (August 2001).

Employment Centres provides a component for skills transferral and Indigenous managerial capacity building within the CDEP organisations. Accordingly, the Committee makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation 33

7.42 **The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business ensure it is a goal of Indigenous Employment Centres that they be managed and run by Indigenous staff. Funding for the Centres should include sufficient amounts to allow for appropriate skills transferral and training.**

An allowance in the funding for Indigenous Employment Centres also be made in recognition of the additional administrative overheads ('oncosts') that will be faced by the parent Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) organisations.

CDEP Partnerships with Industry

7.43 The Committee has received evidence on the benefits of linking CDEP positions closely with particular industries to facilitate the flow of people off CDEP funding and into full time employment.[38] This is on the basis that there are mainstream industries 'with a big interest' in employing Indigenous people, but which do:

> not have the knowledge, the skills, the time or the resources to learn enough about employing Indigenous people or setting up programs, particularly if they use state and federal funding, to successfully develop any sort of program.[39]

7.44 The Committee notes that a number of companies, particularly in the mining industry, have or are developing partnerships with CDEP organisations for the training and development of participants.[40] Developing relationships between CDEPs organisations and larger companies or industry groups can have two advantages: they can provide CDEP organisations with links to employers; and give employers wishing to employ Indigenous people access to a labour pool.

7.45 By using ATSIC, DEWRSB (and DETYA) assistance to pool CDEP and IEP funding plus state or territory government resources, Indigenous organisations should be able to establish effective partnerships with the private sector.[41] The Committee wishes to encourage such partnerships

38 Anaconda Nickel, *Transcripts*, p. 213.

39 Anaconda Nickel, *Transcripts*, p. 204.

40 Such as Anaconda Nickel, Pasminco Ltd, Rio Tinto. See ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S732.

41 The pooling of funds is likely to be notional pooling.

with a wider range of industry sectors and in urban areas and recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 34

7.46 **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, and the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs jointly pilot projects in urban areas that:**

- **encourage partnerships between Indigenous organisations (particularly those receiving Community Development and Employment Project funding) and public authorities, private companies or industry groups;**
- **have the goal of moving Indigenous people into mainstream employment with those public authorities, private companies or industry groups; and**
- **use, at least notionally, pooled Commonwealth funds.**

7.47 One of the consequences of linking CDEP and mainstream employment programs more closely is that it has led to CDEP participants gaining access to more Centrelink benefits, including the CDEP Participant Supplement (CPS) payments.[42] However, the Committee has taken evidence that the closer links have led to difficulties in practice. CDEP participants have noted frequent duplication of requests for information, delays in receiving CPS payments; and unanticipated payment adjustments to Centrelink entitlements. Participants also claim that CDEP work is increasingly being seen as just a Work for the Dole project, rather than as a scheme with its own socio-cultural objectives.[43]

7.48 While acknowledging these problems and drawing DEWRSB's attention to them, the Committee sees CDEP as a very valuable scheme for preparing Indigenous people for employment and assisting them gain jobs.

7.49 The Committee has been impressed by the quality and innovation of many of the employment initiatives being run through CDEPs. Members note

42 The CDEP Participant Supplement (CPS) is paid by Centrelink to those working for a CDEP organisation. CDEP participants are now also eligible for a range of additional entitlements available to social security income support recipients, including health care cards, rent assistance, pensioner concession cards: See Department of Family and Community Services, *Submissions*, p. S460.

43 Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Community, *Submissions*, p. S101.

the distribution of the magazine *CDEP News: The National CDEP Newsletter* to all CDEPs and other interested parties. The Committee sees the magazine as a useful mechanism for bringing together information on CDEP initiatives; for providing inspiration for others; and for facilitating professional networks. However, the Committee believes that the effectiveness of the magazine would be increased if it were also available electronically and recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 35

7.50 **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission make *CDEP News* available on the ATSIC Website.**

Training

7.51 The Committee has received little evidence of the effectiveness or otherwise of the Commonwealth, state and territories' provision of vocational education and training (VET) for Indigenous people. What is clear, however, is that participation and completion of VET courses will be more likely if VET participants have gained adequate prior literacy and numeracy skills at primary and secondary school. Education is the key to training and training is the key to employment.

7.52 The Committee notes that Indigenous people are more likely to enrol in lower level post school VET courses than non Indigenous Australians and are less likely to pass VET courses than non Indigenous students. Even when they do graduate, Indigenous graduates of colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) are less likely to obtain employment than non-Indigenous graduates and when they do so, their post graduation incomes are significantly lower.[44]

7.53 What evidence the Committee did receive stressed the importance of school based VET for Indigenous students and the need for pre-employment training to help Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders become more competitive with non Indigenous job applicants. These issues are discussed below.

7.54 The provision of VET is essentially a partnership between the Commonwealth, states and territories.[45] The states and territories have primary responsibility for funding VET and for administering and

44 CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, pp. 162-63.

45 Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), *Submissions*, p. S827.

delivering VET within their jurisdictions.[46] VET is provided by registered training organisations (RTOs). These include the public sector TAFEs, which deliver about 85% of training. The RTOs that deliver the residual training include schools, community organisations, enterprises and industry bodies.[47]

7.55 The Commonwealth does fund some Indigenous specific VET programs such as the VET component of the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program and the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme.[48]

7.56 The nationally agreed strategy for Indigenous VET is called Partners in a Learning Culture.[49] The strategy has several objectives: including obtaining Indigenous VET participation rates equal to those of the rest of the community; providing VET in more culturally appropriate ways; and more closely tailoring Indigenous VET training to employer requirements and job opportunities.[50]

Pre Employment Training

7.57 The Committee took evidence indicating that many Indigenous job seekers are uncompetitive with other job seekers because of their low numeracy and literacy standards. As one employer pointed out:

> A lot of [Indigenous] people leave school at the end of year 10 but their education is often equivalent to, say, year 7 and they need ongoing training in literacy and numeracy… and I am not just talking about kids.[51]

7.58 A community group similarly stressed 'an urgent need' to address employment opportunities for Indigenous people in the light of their 'increasingly early school leaving age and low literacy and numeracy skills'.[52]

7.59 The Collins Report into education in the Northern Territory also noted advice from employer bodies that 'more than ever before' employers were

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46 The Commonwealth provides approximately one third of funding and assists in national coordination of priorities. See DETYA, *Submissions*, pp. S830-33.

47 CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, p. 162.

48 CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, p. 171. See also: DETYA, *Submissions*, p. S827.

49 Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), *Partners in a Learning Culture: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2000-2005*.

50 ANTA, *Partners in a Learning Culture*, p. 15.

51 Community Meeting, Laverton, Western Australia, *Transcripts*, p. 29.

52 Youth Coalition of the ACT, *Submissions*, p. S925.

unable to find Indigenous people who met basic literacy and numeracy entry criteria for employment and training.[53]

7.60 There are a number of national and state and territory mainstream and Indigenous specific initiatives to provide basic pre-employment training for people wishing to enter the work force or an apprenticeship. At the secondary school level, a key goal of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) is to raise the literacy and numeracy standards of Indigenous school students to those of their non Indigenous peers.[54] NIELNS is complemented by the Indigenous Youth Partnership Initiative (IYPI), funded by DETYA, which aims to assist young people in the transition from school to employment, primarily through providing them with vocational education (see below).[55]

7.61 DETYA also funds the mainstream New Apprenticeships Access Programme (NAAP), which provides pre-traineeship assistance to post school leavers who are disadvantaged in the labour market and who require preliminary training before they can successfully participate in a New Apprenticeship. Funding is granted to training course providers on the basis that there is a real likelihood that the participant will attain an apprenticeship or traineeship as a result of the training provided.[56]

7.62 Without taking further evidence, the Committee is reluctant to make a recommendation. However, Members are concerned that mainstream pre-apprenticeship or pre-employment programs, such as NAAP, be flexible enough so that they can be tailored to provide training to Indigenous people in culturally appropriate ways.

VET in Schools

7.63 One strategy for retaining Indigenous young people at school and helping them make a post school transition into private sector employment and formal apprenticeships is by providing VET in schools.[57] A structured exposure to the workforce is also helpful for students who lack role models with employment skills, arising from being in families with a generational history of unemployment.[58] The importance of school based VET for preparing Indigenous students to successfully undertake apprenticeships was put to the Committee by an employer:

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53 Northern Territory Department of Education, *Learning Lessons: An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory*, (the Collins Report), 1999, p. 2.

54 DETYA, *Submissions*, p. S826.

55 DETYA, *Submissions*, p. S843.

56 DETYA, *Submissions*, p. S846.

57 ATSIC, Victorian State Office, *Submissions*, p. S600; DETYA, *Submissions*, p. S841.

58 South Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1208.

> What we need is better VET skills training in schools. That is really critical to use because otherwise we cannot start preparing those younger kids, at an earlier age. If we could, we would get a much better result.[59]

7.64 However, the Queensland Government has indicated that, in Queensland at least, the take up and retention of Indigenous students in school based apprenticeships and traineeships has been low. Barriers included employer perceptions, a lack of family support, transport difficulties and poor education skills.[60]

Agency innovation

VET in Schools – WA

The Western Australian Department of Training and Employment administers the Western Australian School Based Traineeship Program. The program is the result of a partnership between the department, local Indigenous communities, regional high schools and group training schemes.

First trialed in 1998, the program provides year 11 and 12 Indigenous students with a two year school based traineeship.

Participants spend two days at school, two days at work and one day in vocational education and training.

In 1999 there were 41 students participating, involving 13 senior high schools. A number of the students were offered apprenticeships on leaving school.

There are expected to be 160 traineeships by 2002.[61]

7.65 The Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) is a Commonwealth funded independent industry led body, responsible for supporting the expansion and enhancement of joint school industry programs. DETYA has contracted the ASTF to manage the IYPI as part of the WADU strategy which the ASTF is running jointly with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Advisory Council to the Australian National Training Authority.[62] The WADU strategy focuses on local level partnerships between schools, VET providers and employers. Through WADU funding, the ASTF has financed innovative national and

59 Round Table Discussions, 1 November 2000, *Transcripts*, p. 50.

60 Queensland Governments, *Submissions*, p. S1279.

61 Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1136-37.

62 WADU is an Indigenous word meaning 'together in partnership and trust'.

demonstration projects to implement successful school based VET for Indigenous students. There have been a number of projects funded since late 1999. WADU demonstrators that have proved successful should receive ongoing funding. The Committee believes that their application for expansion in urban areas should be investigated by the ASTF.

7.66 The Committee sees VET in schools programs, tailored to Indigenous needs, as a very important mechanism to help Indigenous people in school to work transitions. In fact, the availability of VET in years 11 and 12 may be a key factor in encouraging Indigenous students to remain at school for the post compulsory years. The ASTF should be encouraged to identify any impediments to Indigenous secondary school students taking up VET in schools courses and implement strategies to overcome the impediments.

Green Corps

7.67 The Green Corps is a Commonwealth program that provides young people with the opportunity to volunteer to work on environmental and heritage consideration projects. It is managed by Conservation Volunteers Australia on behalf of DETYA as a Commonwealth Youth Initiative. Projects are community based, are of six months duration and are primarily located in regional and remote areas of Australia. The program provides participants with accredited training and a training allowance for the duration of the project.[63]

7.68 Green Corps projects began in October 1999 and will be funded through to November 2002, although there is a possibility of extra Commonwealth funding to continue the Green Corps beyond 2002. During the period, there will be a total of 524 Green Corps projects undertaken across Australia, offering placements for over 5,200 young Australians.

7.69 The Committee sees participation in Green Corps projects as an ideal way for Indigenous young people to gain structured training, particularly for those in rural areas and, accordingly, recommends continued funding for the Green Corps beyond 2002 and the promotion of the scheme to Indigenous people.

Recommendation 36

7.70 **The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs fund the Green Corps beyond 2002 and promote Green Corps membership to young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.**

63 http://greencorps.ballarat.net.au.

Private Sector Initiatives

7.71 There are a number of private sector initiatives to assist Indigenous people into employment, two of which the Committee wishes to promote. The first is the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project and the second is the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)'s Indigenous Employment, and Education Program, run in partnership with DEWRSB and DETYA.

7.72 As mentioned above, the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project is part of the IEP. Project participants are private sector companies that have signed Memoranda of Understanding with DEWRSB offering to employ Indigenous people. Although the strategies of each company will be different, they may include active recruitment campaigns, provision of work experience, access to apprenticeships or joint venture partnerships. In return and if needed, DEWRSB will offer flexible funding arrangements for the companies, usually using STEP funding.[64] At the time of this inquiry, over 50 companies had entered the project.

7.73 In partnership with DEWRSB and DETYA, the ACCI is promoting DEWRSB and DETYA's Indigenous employment and training initiatives to businesses through Indigenous employment managers at chambers of commerce and industry.[65] The ACCI is also a co-signatory of the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project and has agreed to other initiatives including sponsorship of an annual Youth Indigenous Journalist of the Year award as part of the National Youth Media Awards.[66]

7.74 The Committee believes that partnerships between Indigenous people and communities, government and the private sector will provide the best prospects for generating jobs for Indigenous people. Members welcome the two initiatives described above and encourage further ones.

Self Employment

7.75 So far the chapter has examined government and private sector initiatives to help Indigenous people gain economic independence through becoming employees. An alternative method of gaining economic

64 DEWRSB, *Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment: Indigenous Employment Program*, www.jobsearch.gov.au/Indigenous/ (August 2001).

65 www.ieep.com.au/ (August 2001).

66 Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Hon Dr David Kemp, MP, *Media Release*, 31 May 2001, K119.

independence is for Indigenous people or organisations to establish new businesses and employ themselves. However, as mentioned in the first section of this report, it is estimated that only 1.3% of Indigenous people are self-employed, compared to 8.4% of all Australians.

7.76 In its submission, the South Australian government noted the following keys features necessary for successful small Indigenous businesses:

- training in business planning and management that is provided in a culturally sensitive way before and after establishment of a business;
- formal mentoring schemes, which are most effective if provided by an Indigenous mentor;
- flexible training, possibly provided in short sessions to small groups and including literacy and numeracy training where a need has been identified;
- ongoing support in the early stages of a new Indigenous businesses and business incubators – possibly with advice provided remotely using information technology – have helped Indigenous businesses in the past;
- the establishment of formal and informal Indigenous business networks, which facilitate learning through sharing of experiences and providing encouragement; and
- access to finance, which can be difficult if the Indigenous business person has a lack of capital security or a continuous banking history.[67]

7.77 Other evidence notes that a part time work culture and a lack of exposure to market places and operating environments are barriers to Indigenous people wishing to set up businesses.[68]

Government Programs

7.78 There are two main Indigenous specific programs funded by the Commonwealth to encourage the establishment of Indigenous small business: the Indigenous Small Business Fund (ISBF) and the Business Development Plan (BDP).

7.79 The ISBF is a component of the IEP and is jointly funded by DEWRSB, which provides funding for organisations, and ATSIC, which provides funding for individuals.[69] The ISBF provides funding to allow:

67 South Australian Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1214-15.

68 Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, pp. S363-64.

- Indigenous organisations to learn about business, develop good business skills and expand their businesses; and
- Indigenous individuals to develop their business ideas.[70]

7.80 The BDP is administered by ATSIC and combines the former Business Funding Scheme and the Indigenous Business Incentive Program. BDP offers an alternative to mainstream financial institutions by providing a variety of business development facilities. The aim is to promote Indigenous economic development by enabling Indigenous people and communities to acquire or develop commercially successful enterprises. The BDP will also provide finance in the form of loans, grants, guarantees or a combination of them to help start or expand a business.[71]

7.81 The Committee is aware that the states and territories also provide their own mainstream and, in some cases, Indigenous specific programs to assist small businesses get established.[72] However, in what is a common concern raised in the report, there is evidence that the sheer number of different business preparation services is confusing:

> An Aboriginal person wanting to start off a business has to deal with five or six different agencies and by the time you have got to about agency three, he is really just about at the end of his rope and does not progress any further.[73]

7.82 The Committee thinks that small businesses provide an excellent mechanism by which Indigenous people can gain economic independence, particularly in urban areas where there are more markets. However, the Committee makes the following recommendation in recognition that coordination between the various assistance schemes needs to be implemented as much as possible.

Recommendation 37

7.83 **That the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business**

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69 DEWRSB, *Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business – Employment Programmes for Indigenous Australians*, Exhibit 12, p. 4. See also www.jobsearch.gov.au/Indigenous/ (August 2001).

70 DEWRSB, *Commonwealth Government Initiatives for Small Business: Including Government Contacts for Small Business Issues*, 2000, www.dewrsb.gov.au/smallBusiness/advice/ (August 2001).

71 ATSIC, *Programs: Indigenous Small Business Fund*, www.atsic.gov.au/programs (August 2001); *Programs: Business Development*, www.atsic.gov.au/programs (August 2001).

72 For example, Indigenous Development Grants (Queensland); Indigenous Economic Development Scheme (Western Australia).

73 Round Table Discussion, 1 November 2000, *Transcripts*, p. 47.

jointly take a leadership role to coordinate the delivery of Commonwealth, state and territory mainstream and Indigenous specific programs offering assistance to small businesses.

7.84 The Committee also notes the establishment of Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) in April 2001. IBA took responsibility for the operation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation with the aim of forging partnerships between Indigenous people and corporate Australia. IBA will develop commercially viable joint ventures that will enable Indigenous Australians to acquire equity in a number of large businesses and provide opportunities for Indigenous employment.

Conclusion

7.85 The Committee is convinced that improving private sector employment opportunities for Indigenous people will be one of the key drivers for improving the socioeconomic status and economic independence of Indigenous people and their communities. Fortunately, due to their proximity to labour markets, Indigenous people in urban areas are in a position to take advantage of the various government and private sector employment initiatives.

7.86 Greater Indigenous participation in the work force will not just benefit the individuals employed. Indigenous people with jobs stimulate local and regional economies; empower Indigenous people to control their own economic choices and development; and reduce their dependence on social welfare with all its associated pitfalls.[74]

74 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Achieving Economic Independence,* p. 2.

8

Housing

Introduction

8.1 Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders across Australia have significant unmet housing needs. The greatest levels of need are in both rural and remote areas and large communities where the adequacy and shortage of housing contribute to overcrowding and poor health. In urban areas, however, the most pressing issue for Indigenous Australians is housing affordability as they face high housing costs and generally have low incomes.[1]

8.2 This chapter examines urban housing needs by focusing on the types of long term housing most used by urban dwelling Indigenous people. Accordingly, the chapter looks at Indigenous access to three housing tenures: home ownership; private rental housing; and public rental housing. Another tenure, community rental housing is only examined in its urban context – in line with the inquiry terms of reference - although the Committee acknowledges it is the major source of accommodation in remote areas.

8.3 In a comparison between Indigenous and non Indigenous housing tenures the 1996 Census and 1999 Australian Housing Survey (AHS) indicate that:

- 31% of Indigenous households in non remote areas own or are purchasing their own homes, compared to 71% of non Indigenous households;[2] and

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1 Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), *Submissions*, p. S502; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), *Submission*s, p. S1513.

2 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S503.

- 58% of the Indigenous households surveyed in the AHS rent their dwelling.[3] Of those, 38% rent mainstream public housing, 47% rent privately and 15% have other landlords.[4] In comparison, only 27% of non Indigenous households rent their dwelling. Of those, 18% rent mainstream public housing, 76% rent privately and 6% rent from other landlords.

8.4 There are also marked geographic distinctions between the housing tenures used and available to Indigenous people. The 1996 Census indicates that 29% of Indigenous households in urban areas rent public housing while only 6.5% of Indigenous households in remote areas do so. At the same time, only 2% of Indigenous households living in urban areas rent Indigenous specific community housing, but 25% of Indigenous households in remote locations do so.[5]

8.5 Public housing comprises dwellings owned and managed by mainstream state and territory housing authorities. Community housing comprises dwellings owned and/or managed by Indigenous housing organisations. The category includes dwellings that are managed by Indigenous housing organisations but owned by state or territory housing authorities. For an organisation to be classified as 'managing' dwellings, it must take responsibility for at least one of the following functions: arranging tenants, collecting rent or housing maintenance.[6] Indigenous organisations with other primary roles, such as Land Councils, may also undertake the function of being an Indigenous housing organisation.

8.6 Appendix E provides data on Indigenous housing tenures at the state and territory level.

8.7 The AHS also found that Indigenous households were more likely than non Indigenous households to report that repairs were needed to either the exterior or interior of their homes. When a need for repair was reported, higher proportions of Indigenous households reported an essential, or an essential and urgent need for exterior (10%) and interior repairs (14%) compared to non Indigenous households (5% and 4%

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3 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian Housing Survey*, 4712.0, 1999, p.5. Note that the survey excludes Indigenous (18%) and non Indigenous people (1%) living in remote or sparsely settled areas. Accordingly, the survey data provides useful comparisons between Indigenous and non Indigenous housing patterns, but should be used cautiously for comparisons between remote and non remote area Indigenous people.

4 'Other landlords' includes, for example, employers.

5 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1517.

6 ABS, *Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*, 4710.0, 1999, p. 66.

respectively).[7] For the purposes of the AHS, Indigenous households were those that contained at least one Indigenous person over 15 years old and included houses rented from private and public landlords and Indigenous housing organisations as well as owner occupied houses.

8.8 Data from the 1999 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) indicated that dwellings in the urban and more densely populated rural areas of Australia were in better condition than dwellings in remote areas. For example, 33% of dwellings in sparsely settled or remote areas were reported as needing major repairs or replacement compared to only 25% for dwellings in other areas.[8]

Private Home Ownership

8.9 Most Australians live in accommodation that they own or are purchasing. However, as mentioned above, levels of home ownership and home purchasing for Indigenous households are well below those for other Australian households. The national rate of Indigenous home ownership is increasing, albeit very slowly – from 28% in 1991 to 31% in 1996.[9] These figures hide the regional variation with home purchase rates highest in the ACT; Tasmania; Victoria; outer Sydney and surrounds; and outer Brisbane and surrounds.[10] See also Appendix E.

8.10 Indigenous home ownership rates are likely to always fluctuate as a result of the rise and fall of home loan interest rates; the relative movements in property values; rates of Indigenous population growth; and changes in Indigenous employment and income status.[11] However, with 33% of Indigenous households living in the low cost, income sensitive housing tenures of public and community rental, compared to 5.5% of non Indigenous households, it is unrealistic to expect Indigenous home purchase and ownership rates to approach those of non Indigenous households without targeted assistance.[12]

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7 ABS, 4712.0, p.9.

8 ABS, 4712.0, p.9. See also ABS, 4710.0, pp. 5, 28-29.

9 Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC), *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, p. 91.

10 FaCS, *Submissions,* pp. S550-51.

11 ATSIC, *Submissions,* p. S1524.

12 ATSIC, *Submissions,* p. S1516.

8.11 There are a now a number of mainstream and Indigenous specific programs that Indigenous people can access to make homeownership easier.

Mainstream Home Ownership Assistance Programs

8.12 The First Home Owners Grants Scheme is a Commonwealth Government mainstream initiative to offset the increased costs associated with acquiring a home as a result of the commencement of the Goods and Services Tax on 1 July 2000. The scheme provides eligible first home buyers with a grant for either $14,000 towards the building or purchase of a new previously unoccupied home or $7,000 towards the purchase of an existing home.[13]

8.13 Each state and territory Revenue Office is responsible for administering the grant in their jurisdiction, although ATSIC is an approved agent for the revenue offices and is able to accept completed applications for a grant from the scheme.[14] In addition, the states and territories offer a number of concessions for home purchasers, although they may be means tested or have other restrictions.[15] They are not Indigenous specific.[16]

Indigenous Specific Home Ownership Assistance

8.14 ATSIC funds and administers a concessional home loans program called the Home Ownership Program (HOP), which targets low income Indigenous families who would not otherwise be eligible for private sector finance. Applicants must meet certain eligibility requirements and the loans are available to purchase or build an average standard home for the region in which the applicants wish to live. The repayment amount is tailored to a borrower's ability to meet monthly repayments and the term of the loan generally will not exceed 32 years.[17]

8.15 HOP is based on broad commercial principles (ie, the ability to repay loans) and is self funding, relying for funding for new loans on revenue raised from loan repayments and loan discharges.[18]

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13 First Home Owner Grant Online, First Home Owner Grant – General Information, www.firsthome.gov.au (August 2001).

14 First Home Owner Grant Online.

15 The Home Buyers' Duty Concession Scheme (ACT); First Home Plus (NSW); Queensland Stamp Duty Rebate (QLD); QuickStart New Home Grant (NT); Stamp Duty First Home Concession (SA, Tas, Vic, WA).

16 See: First Home Owner Grant Online portal, www.firsthome.gov.au (August 2001).

17 ATSIC, *Programs*, www.atsic.gov.au / programs (August 2001).

18 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1602.

8.16 The 1996 Census indicated that 16,911 Indigenous households were buying their homes. At the same time, the HOP loan portfolio comprised 3,832 loans, representing less than a quarter of all Indigenous home purchasing households. While acknowledging the difficulty in assessing the contribution of HOP to Indigenous home ownership, ATSIC notes that those who accessed HOP loans would not have been eligible for private sector finance.[19]

8.17 Those living in major urban areas, provincial cities and small towns have benefited most from HOP and ATSIC estimates that the program has assisted more than 12,500 Indigenous home buyers since 1974.[20]

8.18 There are also several state based initiatives to assist Indigenous families purchase houses – usually by allowing them to purchase the public housing they are renting using concessional or interest free loans.[21] Under the Western Australian Aboriginal Home Ownership Program, for example, a household can buy part of their home in a shared equity with the Ministry of Housing, and purchase the remaining share at a later date when it can be afforded by the borrower.[22]

8.19 Home ownership has socio-economic benefits aside from being a tenure choice. Privately owned homes can be used as security for further loans, become an appreciating asset and be a means of passing wealth to younger generations.

8.20 As a mechanism for improving Indigenous socioeconomic status, the Committee fully supports the various initiatives to encourage and assist Indigenous home purchasing where financially possible. At the Commonwealth level, the Committee thinks HOP should be expanded, particularly as one-off additions to the HOP capital base will have recurrent benefits as the money can be recycled through new loans.

Recommendation 38

8.21 **The Commonwealth Government provide additional funds to expand the capital base of the Home Ownership Program and to monitor and report the increase in Indigenous home ownership rates over the next five years.**

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19 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p.S1521.

20 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S1521, 1602.

21 See: South Australia Government, *Submissions*, p. 1191; Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1149, S1643; FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S503.

22 Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, p.S1149.

8.22 A standard feature of mortgages is that the house and land being purchased is used as security by the lending institution financing the purchase. One of the barriers to Indigenous access to home (and business) finance in some areas is the difficulty of using the house and land being purchased as security. Much Indigenous land in rural and remote areas is held under inalienable or communal title or has restricted transfer rights on it, thus reducing the value to the lending institution of the land or houses on it as security.

8.23 The Committee is reluctant to see any extra barriers placed before Indigenous people seeking home ownership. As in previous inquiries, the Committee urges innovative solutions to the problem of raising security on leasehold or community title land, seeking alternative sources of security – such as long term leases or sub-leases on land. With cooperation from lending institutions, these types of 'mortgageable' leases on Aboriginal land would open up the sort of opportunities that other Australians take for granted.

Access to the Private Rental Market

8.24 There is evidence that the national supply of low cost private rental stock is shrinking and, that where it is available, it is often inappropriately sized or located for Indigenous tenants.[23] There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that Indigenous people's access to the private rental market is also limited due to discrimination.[24] The Queensland Government has identified what it sees as three types of 'discrimination':

- direct discrimination where Indigenous applicants are told dwellings are not available for rent when in fact they are available;
- indirect discrimination through strict requirements for evidence of private rental histories, which Indigenous households are less likely to have than non Indigenous households; and
- indirect discrimination through establishing onerous requirements as a general policy for rental housing applicants (eg, based on income or

23 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S503; Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1306. See also: Ballina Shire Council, *Submissions*, p. S356; Tenants Advice Service Inc (TAS), *Submissions*, p. S952.

24 See: ATSIC, Victorian Office, *Submissions*, p. S582; Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission, *Submissions*, pp. S436-37; Anglicare Australia, *Submissions*, p. S607; Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Submissions*, p. S40.

employment) and then making exceptions which largely favour non Indigenous clients.[25]

8.25 There are other barriers that confront all low income earners that Indigenous people may face when trying to access the private rental market. Typically, low income earners will find it difficult to meet up front costs associated with private rental including bonds, stamp duty and utility connection fees.[26]

8.26 The Department of Family and Community Services notes evidence indicating that the rate at which Indigenous households access the private rental market was considerably less in 2000 than it was in 1996.[27]

8.27 The Committee is concerned at what seem to be considerable barriers facing Indigenous people trying to access or remain in the private rental market. For this reason, it is important that Indigenous people take advantage of Rent Assistance provided by the Commonwealth.

Rental Assistance

8.28 Rent Assistance is a mainstream non taxable income support supplement paid to individuals and families in recognition of the extra housing costs faced by those who pay private rent. Assistance is only available to social security recipients paying more than certain threshold amounts in rent. The thresholds are based on varying scales depending on rent paid and the number of adults and dependent children in the dwelling.[28]

8.29 For example, as of 1 July 2001, a single person in receipt of social security benefits with no dependent children can start receiving Rent Assistance if their fortnightly rent is more than $78.00 and receive up to a maximum of $88.00 that will be paid once their fortnightly rent is more than $195.33. A couple with three or more children can start receiving Rent Assistance if their fortnightly rent is more than $151.90 and receive up to a maximum of $116.48 per fortnight that will be paid once their fortnightly rent is more than $307.21.[29] Centrelink will assess a person's eligibility for Rent Assistance when the person claims a pension, allowance or benefit.

25 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1306.

26 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1306-07.

27 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S503.

28 See: www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/rent_assistance.htm (August 2001).

29 See: *How much Rent Assistance do I get?* www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/rent_assistance.htm (August 2001).

8.30 Approximately 1% of all Rent Assistance recipients living in capital cities identified themselves as Indigenous, while 5.7% of all Rent Assistance recipients living in small towns identified themselves as Indigenous.[30] Furthermore, only 26% of 'tenure eligible' Indigenous income support recipients received Rent Assistance, while 55% of all other tenure eligible recipients received Rent Assistance.[31] These figures suggest that Indigenous people may not be taking full advantage of this Centrelink provided service.

Recommendation 39

8.31 **The Government review Indigenous access to the Rent Assistance Program and the extent to which it enables Indigenous families to enter or remain in private rental accommodation.**

8.32 The Committee notes that state and territory governments also offer mainstream programs to assist low income households experiencing difficulty in securing or maintaining private rental accommodation. This is in the form of rent subsidies, help with bonds or advice and information.[32] Some jurisdictions also offer Indigenous specific rental assistance programs, such as the Private Rental Assistance Scheme funded by the South Australian Aboriginal Housing Authority.[33]

8.33 The Committee believes that where Indigenous households wish to rent privately and can afford private rental accommodation with the support of Rent Assistance, they should be encouraged to do so. Supporting families in private rental will take pressure off public housing waiting lists and may offer a more cost effective way of accommodating low income earners than public housing.

Public Housing

8.34 While most Australians are able to house themselves or enter the private accommodation market (rental or purchasing) without government assistance, others, especially low income groups and social services recipients, cannot do so. For these people, state and territory public housing agencies provide low cost stable housing where rent is linked to

30 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S504. The figures may underestimate the Indigenous uptake of Rent Assistance if Indigenous recipients do not identify themselves as being such.

31 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S1515-16.

32 See www.aihw.gov.au/housing/assistance/private_market_assist/htm (August 2001).

33 South Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1191.

people's incomes and capacity to pay. Indigenous people in urban areas can access mainstream public housing and usually also public housing that has been reserved for Indigenous tenants. It is expected that, broadly, public housing will meet the needs of Indigenous people living in urban areas.[34] The option of using community housing managed by Indigenous organisations in urban areas is discussed later.

8.35 The Commonwealth, state and territory governments provide public housing under the umbrella of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA). This program environment is discussed before there is a discussion of some of the particular problems and difficulties faced by Indigenous tenants.

The Legislative and Policy Framework

8.36 The *Housing Assistance Act 1996* provides the legislative basis for the Commonwealth's provision of financial assistance to the states and territories for housing. The Act authorised the Commonwealth to form and enter into a Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) with the states and territories. The second CSHA is in force from 1 July 1999 until 30 June 2003.

Bilateral Agreements

8.37 A feature of the second CSHA is that it provides for bilateral housing agreements between the Commonwealth and each state and territory. Indigenous specific agreements exist between ATSIC, the Commonwealth and New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland and the Torres Strait region. The agreements generally pool (either notionally or actually) Commonwealth and state or territory funds for the purchase or construction and maintenance of public rental and / or community rental housing for Indigenous people.[35] The agreements also offer the following benefits:

- less duplication between programs and departments;
- coordination of all responsible parties and clarification of roles and responsibilities; and
- greater decision making roles for Indigenous people at the state, territory and community levels.[36]

34 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S502.

35 FaCS, *Submissions*, pp. S504-05.

36 See: CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigneous Funding Inquiy*, p. 89; ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S507-08.

8.38 The agreements have consolidated the role of Indigenous housing authorities or boards. These exist in some states and the Northern Territory, with varying degrees of Indigenous representation and independence from mainstream housing authorities.[37] The authorities provide policy advice to government, establish Indigenous housing priorities, may allocate Indigenous housing funds (pooled or otherwise) and manage houses transferred from the mainstream public rental stock.

Indigenous Housing Programs

8.39 The Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP) is an Indigenous specific element of the CSHA, funded by the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). The ARHP budget for 2001-02 is $91 million.[38] The states and Northern Territory can use ARHP for capital construction, upgrades and house maintenance and other related housing functions such as financial and asset management training for Indigenous housing organisation staff.[39]

8.40 ARHP funds are deployed differently in each jurisdiction. In the Northern Territory, for example, all funds are channelled to the community housing sector, while in Queensland the funds are used for community housing and public housing reserved for Indigenous tenants.[40] However, as a national trend in recent years, funds are increasingly being directed to community rather than public housing.[41]

8.41 The other major Indigenous specific program is ATSIC's Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP). The CHIP budget for 2001-02 is $231 million.[42] Among other things, CHIP funds the construction and maintenance of rental housing, the provision of essential infrastructure and municipal services. Some 70% of CHIP funding is expended in remote areas, while 25% is expended in rural areas and the remainder in urban areas.[43]

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37 Indigenous Housing Authority Northern Territory; Aboriginal Housing Authority (SA); Aboriginal Housing Board (WA); Aboriginal Housing Office (NSW).

38 Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together, Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs*, 22 May 2001, p. 28.

39 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S1478. The Australian Capital Territory does not receive ARHP funding.

40 FaCS, Comments on the Draft Report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission's Indigenous Funding Inquiry, Submission No. IFI/SUB/0077, p.6. See www.cgc.gov.au/ifi (August 2001).

41 ATSIC, *Annual Report 1999-2000*, p. 94; ATSIC *Submissions*, p. S1537; CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigneous Funding Inquiry*, p. 88.

42 Personal communication, ATSIC, Secretariat, July 2001.

43 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1536. See also: ATSIC *Submissions*, p. S1507. Note, however, the use of CHIP funds for the provision and maintenance of housing infrastructure and municipal services in town camps (see chapter 4).

Indigenous Housing Needs

8.42 Estimates based on a number of assumptions about acceptable housing and related infrastructure standards and data from surveys show that about $2.2 billion is needed to address capital Indigenous housing needs. This is approximately seven times the current annual funding from all sources. Of this, some $0.5 billion is required to meet the housing shortfall in urban areas.[44]

8.43 Emerging Indigenous housing needs cannot be measured definitively at this stage. However, it is estimated that an extra $120 million alone will be needed each year to meet the growth in demand created by the rising Indigenous population and household formation.[45] The high Indigenous population growth rate coupled with urban drift suggests that it is in urban areas that the rate of increasing demand will be greatest.

8.44 Current housing policy appropriately focuses on identifying and meeting Indigenous housing needs where they are greatest. Policies to maximise the effectiveness of housing expenditure by pooling funding and reducing program duplication and overlap will also help reduce unmet housing needs. However, meeting the total demand for Indigenous housing is beyond the current budget priorities of governments.

Barriers to Public Housing

Affordability

8.45 Almost 30% of Indigenous households live in poverty. While the cause of poverty in non urban areas tends to be low incomes, the cost of housing is the main cause of poverty in urban areas.[46] Twelve percent of Indigenous households in urban areas are in poverty before housing costs are taken into account ('poverty before housing'), but this figure rises to 30% after housing costs for all tenures are taken into account ('poverty after housing').[47] Housing costs include rent, water rates and any repairs or maintenance provided by the tenant.[48] Despite public housing rents being

44 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1510.

45 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1510.

46 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1513.

47 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1514. A household whose income before paying housing costs is less than its non housing income need is in poverty before housing. A household whose income after paying housing costs is reduced below its non housing income need is in poverty after housing.

48 See: ABS, *Australian Housing Survey: Housing Characteristics, Costs and Conditions*, 4182.0, 1999, Appendix 1. Housing costs do not include electricity and / or gas charges.

capped at 25% of household gross assessable income, it is still high enough to tip many Indigenous households into poverty after housing as the table below indicates.[49]

Percentages of Indigenous Households Renting Public Housing in Urban Areas in Poverty - Before and After Housing Costs are Taken into Account.[50]

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
Before	25%	25%	22%	21%	22%	21%	14%	24%	22%
After	48%	46%	41%	42%	41%	46%	27%	54%	43%

Source *ATSIC, Submissions, p. S1514.*

8.46 The Committee does not have evidence to compare the Indigenous and non Indigenous rates of before and after housing poverty rates for public tenants. However, on the basis of the table above, it appears that public housing rents may be set too high for some Indigenous (and possibly non Indigenous) households to manage.

Agency initiative

Centrepay Automatic Rental Deductions – National

In December 1998, Centrelink introduced Centrepay, a voluntary direct deduction scheme for income support customers.

Under the Scheme, tenants of public and community housing organisations, among others, can ask Centrelink to direct a portion of their income support payments automatically to pay for rent and housing related services such as electricity, gas and water.

As of June 2000, over 5,500 Indigenous people used Centrepay.[51]

Centrepay helps families budget and the guaranteed payment of rent to landlords helps customers maintain tenancies.

8.47 Household gross assessable incomes are calculated on the assumption that tenants receive all social security benefits to which they are entitled. Given the evidence in chapter three of the barriers Indigenous people face accessing mainstream services, it is possible that some Indigenous people

49 The rental cap is set as part of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

50 See also: CGC, *Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, p. 9.

51 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S509.

are less likely than non Indigenous people to claim all the entitlements for which they are eligible. If this is the case, actual household income may be below assumed income. In any event, the Committee believes that the issue of after housing poverty for all public housing tenants should be investigated. The Committee recommends accordingly.

Recommendation 40

8.48 **The Commonwealth State Working Group on Indigenous Housing ('the Working Group') is to review the extent to which poverty after housing affects Indigenous and non Indigenous households in public rental housing.**

The Working Group is to investigate strategies to reduce the differences between the rates of before and after housing poverty for all households in public rental housing.

Suitability of Housing Stock

8.49 While attention is increasingly being paid to the appropriate design and construction of houses for Indigenous people living in remote areas, the shortage of suitably designed housing stock in urban areas remains a problem for Indigenous people.[52]

8.50 The 1996 Census indicates that Indigenous families, on average, are larger than non Indigenous families (3.7 people per family compared with 2.7 people per family respectively).[53] Other data indicates that elderly Indigenous people have a strong preference for staying with families and receiving aged care at home.[54] The result is that Indigenous families tend to need larger houses than other mainstream housing tenants.

8.51 Public houses are often older stock (particularly in rural areas) and of three bedroom design.[55] That means Indigenous people face larger waiting lists for four, five or six bedroom houses or overcrowding in three bedroom houses. Delays in obtaining suitable housing can also force those without housing to move into the accommodation of family members, and in the words of one group:

52 See: Tangentyere Council, *Submissions*, p. S291; Healthabitat for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Housing Ministers' Working Group on Indigenous Housing, *The National Indigenous Housing Guide*, 1999.

53 ABS, 1996 *Census of Population and Housing: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, 2034.0, 1998.

54 Department of Health and Aged Care, *Submissions*, p. S1086.

55 See: Western Australian Government, *Transcripts*, p. 234; Burns Aldis, *Submissions*, p. S365.

> This is not traditional Aboriginal extended family living but forced-shared accommodation because of an insufficient supply of suitable housing. It exists in many urban centres.[56]

8.52 This suggests that, when designing houses, public housing authorities need to take into account the needs of Indigenous tenants. There needs to be sufficient large enough houses built, but also those designed with robust fixtures and walls and easy maintenance gardens that can stand the wear and tear of large families.[57]

Overcrowding

8.53 Overcrowding can be exacerbated when children or grand children are rotated between family members (see chapter five) or when households take responsibility for extended family evicted from other public housing.[58] ATSIC presented evidence that some 18% of Indigenous families in public housing were living in overcrowded conditions.[59]

8.54 Overcrowding and high numbers of children lead to extra wear and tear on premises (and gardens), particularly in houses with easily breakable plaster walls, flywire screens and glass windows. As a result, people face high maintenance costs, more frequent inspections and tension with neighbours.[60] This often results in evictions of tenants, who may have accumulated debts from unpaid maintenance bills or rent and, as a consequence be barred from accessing other public housing. Evicted tenants tend to move in with relatives and friends, resulting in overcrowding and possibly the next eviction:

> This situation cements effective barriers to housing as each family in turn is rendered ineligible due to their "poor history".[61]

8.55 Overcrowding also has an impact on health, being a major determinant of the prevalence of respiratory infection / pneumonia in children and affecting access to washing facilities, toilets; the efficiency of the waste

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56 Tangentyere Council, *Submissions*, p. S285.

57 See: TAS, *Submissions*, p. S961.

58 See: Social Responsibilities Commission, Anglican Province of WA, *Submissions*, p. S1067; Indigenous Housing Association, *Submissions*, p. S382; Tangentyere Council, *Transcripts*, p. 438.

59 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1513.

60 See TAS, *Submissions*, p. S958; Social Responsibilities Commission, *Submissions*, p. S1067; Institute for Aboriginal Development, *Submissions*, p. S40. Tangentyere Council, *Submissions*, p. S1589.

61 TAS, *Submissions*, p. S957. See also Bega Garnbirringu Health Services, *Submissions*, p. S61.

water systems; and access to food storage, preparation and cooking facilities.[62]

Visitors

8.56 Witnesses complained that some public housing authorities are also unsympathetic to the cultural traditions that may oblige households to accommodate visitors – often members of extended families - for varying reasons for short or medium terms.[63] Short term visitors, for example coming to see a family member in hospital, may also be forced to stay with relatives because of the lack of alternative affordable short term accommodation. The Committee took evidence of one tenant who was regularly forced out of her house to stay with a friend because of 'the big influx of family into her home' which filled the house.[64] The problem, as one official described:

> If you have got non-Aboriginal people either side of you, you have got a high visitation rate of relatives who come to town with a high population pressure on that particular house and you are unfamiliar with the suburban expectations of behaviour, hours, noise and so on, it seems to me that you are leading people into a formula that really sets them up to fail.[65]

8.57 The result is that it is visitors rather than the tenants themselves that put a tenancy at risk. A consequence is that neighbours may see Indigenous families as anti-social and so object to further Indigenous tenants.[66]

8.58 The Committee acknowledges the cultural sensitivities involved in accepting or refusing visitors. However, the Committee also does not want to see families with children evicted from their homes because of the behaviour of visitors – family or otherwise. The Committee looks to guidance from Indigenous people on this issue and suggests that Elders and community leaders discuss appropriate balances between cultural obligations to visitors and the need to ensure that Indigenous tenants have the best possible chances to remain in public housing free from risk of eviction.

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62 *National Indigenous Housing Guide*, pp. 59-60.

63 Social Responsibilities Commission, *Submissions*, p. S1067; Tangentyere Council, *Submissions*, p. S1590; Goldfields Land Council, *Transcripts*, p. 18; Indigenous Housing Association, *Transcripts*, p. 398.

64 Grannies Group, *Transcripts*, p. 347.

65 Northern Territory Government, *Transcripts*, pp. 370-71.

66 See Indigenous Housing Association, *Transcripts*, p. 397.

Adapting to Urban Life

8.59 'Urban Drift' is the term used to describe the movement of Indigenous people from remote areas into urban centres to settle. The reasons for moving may include searching for work, the need to access urban based services (such as renal dialysis machines), or to join family who have moved there earlier.[67] Some people, used to community based life may take time to adapt to the expectations of urban living. Many:

> face difficulties in adjusting to a mainstream urban life style, and lack skills in a wide range of areas, from budgeting, to managing the behaviour of visitors and routine house maintenance, necessary to succeed in an urban setting. This lack of urban living skills all too often leads to unsatisfactory outcomes, such as eviction from housing.[68]

8.60 Public housing authorities do provide training services in conjunction with Indigenous agencies for those who have had difficulties maintaining tenancies. The courses are usually delivered by Indigenous organisations and help Aboriginal people to understand their rights and responsibilities as public tenants.[69] Such training is particularly important in light of the comments above on the risks to eviction caused by visitor overcrowding.

Transients

8.61 Public Housing authorities need also to consider the provision of suitable living space and facilities for transient people or 'itinerants' who stay for varying periods on the fringes of urban centres. Many have health and substance abuse problems and their behaviour can lead to tension with town residents. At a minimum facilities available should include running water, toilet amenities and basic shelters. Provision of such services will require cooperative efforts between Indigenous organisations, housing and health authorities and local governments.

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67 Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S361.

68 Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1362. See also: Goldfields Land Council, *Transcript*s, p. 16; Yahnging Aboriginal Corporation & Peedac Pty Ltd, *Transcripts*, p. 302.

69 See: Institute for Aboriginal Development, Submissions, p. S39. *Transcripts*, pp. 458-59; Northern Territory Government, *Submissions*, p. S1373. Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, pp. S1647-48.

Partnerships

Manguri Head Leasing Program – Perth, WA

The Western Australian Ministry of Housing provides the Manguri Corporation with Supported Accommodation Assistance Program funds to manage 15 Ministry of Housing properties for 'dysfunctional tenancies'.

The initiative is designed to assist those families who have been evicted from public housing because of 'anti-social behaviour' and who would not be allowed back into public housing.

Manguri is responsible for rent collection, property maintenance, property standards and tenant behaviour.

Four families have 'been moved to the point where they can come back into mainstream rental'.[70]

Data Collection

8.62 Until very recently, it has been difficult for public housing authorities to measure the extent to which Indigenous people use, or seek access to mainstream housing services due to a lack of consistent 'identifier' information in data collections.[71] For example, the Queensland Department of Housing has only been recording whether its tenants are Indigenous or not since 1997, and even then the records rely on self identification – which may lead to under reporting.[72]

8.63 The 1999-2003 CSHA includes a subsidiary National Housing Data Agreement signed by state and territory housing authorities, FaCS, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.[73] A complementary Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information was signed by the same parties, ATSIC and the Torres Strait Regional Authority.[74] Both agreements outline a commitment to obtain nationally relevant mainstream and Indigenous specific housing data respectively.

70 Western Australian Government, *Transcripts*, p. 228; *Submissions*, p. 1134.

71 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S505.

72 Queensland Government, *Submissions*, p. S1302.

73 ABS, Housing: Housing Assistance, www.abs.gov.au/ausstats (August 2001).

74 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S1540-41.

8.64 The collection of such data will allow a more accurate picture of Indigenous housing needs in public housing and other tenures and allow for a better targeting of resources.

8.65 The variations between the different public housing programs; the quality and quantity of their public housing stock; and the different structures in place to meet Indigenous specific needs make it difficult to take a national perspective. The Committee applauds initiatives by public housing authorities to assist Indigenous tenants meet their tenancy obligations irrespective of where they live. Again, however, these strategies will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The key is to provide flexible programs that meet the needs of local Indigenous tenants.

8.66 The Committee understands the complexity of the issues facing public housing authorities. They are charged with: providing housing stock that meets the needs of all tenants - Indigenous and non Indigenous; providing equitable service for all tenants and maintaining the quality of their housing stock. At the same time, housing authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the accommodation needs of their Indigenous tenants and potential tenants are met.

8.67 The Committee sees the bilateral and multilateral housing agreements as the best mechanisms for ensuring public funding is spent as efficiently as it can be and that the housing needs of Indigenous people – urban and non urban - are identified and met to the fullest extent possible. It is within that broad context that the needs of Indigenous households in public housing are most likely to be met.

Indigenous Controlled and Owned Housing

8.68 Community owned rental housing is a major form of housing provision for Indigenous people in remote areas, although only 2% of urban households are accommodated in such housing.[75] Some 20% of community households in urban areas are in discrete Indigenous communities, usually former reserves and missions that were once on the edge of towns which have now grown around them.[76]

8.69 The organisation and funding of community housing varies from state to state and within states. For example, in Western Australia, the Ministry of Housing provides housing stock to Indigenous housing organisations which then manage the properties. The housing stock remains Ministry of Housing property and the Ministry can request inspections of stock it

75 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1517.

76 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1513.

suspects is being misused.[77] At the other end of the spectrum are community housing organisations that own and manage small numbers of dwellings – often relying on grants or CDEP placements to meet revenue shortfalls to stay viable.[78]

8.70 Data from the 1999 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) indicates the existence of nearly 300 urban based Indigenous housing organisations, nearly 60% of which are in NSW and 40% of which own and / or manage less than nine dwellings.[79]

8.71 Commonwealth and state housing ministers and ATSIC have agreed on the need and strategies to rationalise the number of Indigenous housing organisations so as to deliver economies of scale and also to improve their asset and financial management skills and accountability.[80] The Committee took evidence on the difficulties of amalgamating Indigenous housing organisations, not the least, because:

> a lot of organisations have been in existence for years now and they have been autonomous all these years, it is going to be very difficult to bring everybody together under one banner....[81]

8.72 ATSIC has also noted the difficulties of reducing Indigenous housing organisation numbers:

> The processes that are involved in rationalising these kinds of services touch on issues about the structure of communities themselves – the authority structures and the political structures – and, unless those issues are worked through to come up with a sustainable organisation that can balance a range of community and political interests, the rationalisation process will not work.[82]

8.73 There is clearly a need to review the structure and distribution of Indigenous housing organisations to ensure that economies of scale and better management structures can improve the efficiency of the community housing sector. The Committee applauds the initiatives to reduce the number of Indigenous housing organisations, particularly if the outcome will allow the construction and maintenance of more dwellings. Agencies need to publicly report on progress towards further reducing the

77 Western Australian Government, *Submissions*, p. S1640. See also TAS, *Submissions*, pp. S953-54.

78 ABS, 4710.0, p. 30.

79 ABS, 4710.0, p. 27.

80 ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S1527–29.

81 Ninga Mia Village Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcripts*, p. 21.

82 ATSIC, *Transcripts*, pp. 180-81.

number of Indigenous housing organisations and on any impediments to the amalgamations.

Employment and Training Opportunities

8.74 The Committee sees the construction and maintenance of housing for Indigenous people (and others) as an excellent source of employment and training for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. While of particular relevance in remote areas, opportunities also exist in urban areas, as demonstrated by the public housing maintenance contracts won by the CDEP organisation Peedac Pty Ltd in Perth.[83]

8.75 The mix of capital and recurrent expenditure under ARHP and CHIP is being reviewed with a greater emphasis now being placed on recurrent expenditure.[84] Capital expenditure allows the construction, purchase and upgrade of housing, while recurrent expenditure funds the repairs and maintenance of existing housing stock where rental income and service charges are not sufficient to meet the costs involved. The focus on recurrent expenditure funding provides the potential for ongoing Indigenous employment in the housing sector once houses have been constructed.

8.76 Members encourage Indigenous housing organisations and other organisations constructing and maintaining Indigenous housing stock to make the most of the opportunities to employ and train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This will be particularly significant in areas where there are few other employment opportunities.

Non Private Dwellings

8.77 The chapter so far has discussed different housing tenures that could all be classed as 'private dwellings'. The 1996 Census also indicated data about the number of Indigenous people living in 'non private dwellings'. For example, Indigenous people represent:

- 38% of all people living in corrective institutions for children;
- 14% of the population of prisons for adults;
- 14% of all people in hostels for the homeless and refugees.[85]

83 See chapter seven and Peedac Pty Ltd & Yahnging Aboriginal Corporation, *Transcripts*, p. 300.

84 See ATSIC, *Submissions*, pp. S1528-29, 1534.

85 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S538.

8.78 In contrast, the number of Indigenous people living in nursing homes, private hospitals and retirement homes is only 25% of the number that would be expected on a population basis.[86]

8.79 The Committee has not received sufficient evidence to draw conclusions about this data, other than to note that the figures reflect much of the disadvantage faced by Indigenous people in comparison to the wider community.

Conclusion

8.80 The Committee believes that as a first preference and where possible, Indigenous people in urban areas should be encouraged and assisted to enter the private housing market, either as renters or purchasers.

8.81 Proportionally, the housing needs of families in remote areas are greater than they are in urban areas. However, in absolute terms the numbers of those needing housing or relief from overcrowding in the two groups are similar (6,700 families identified in rural areas verses 6,500 families identified in urban areas).[87] However, given the Indigenous population growth and its increasing urbanisation, demand for Indigenous access to affordable housing in urban areas is likely to increase. This, in turn, will place further pressure on public housing. The pressure will not fall until the chronic levels of poverty and unemployment also decline and more Indigenous people can take up rental or purchase options in the private market.

8.82 The challenge for planners and housing organisations will be to balance the housing priorities of urban and non urban households and allocate the scarce resources accordingly. The Committee notes the progress of the current CSHA towards meeting Indigenous housing needs, although there is still a large unmet housing demand in urban (and remote) areas. The needs based focus and use of robust, nationally consistent performance indicators will help ensure that public housing allocations are spent as efficiently as possible.

86 FaCS, *Submissions*, p. S538.

87 ATSIC, *Submissions*, p. S1513.

9

The Future

9.1 Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders living in urban areas face major disadvantage in comparison with other Australians when measured against nearly every social or economic indicator. The Committee acknowledges the magnitude of the task to enable Indigenous people to participate as equals in Australia's community and economic life. However, the Committee believes that there is a common awareness of the need and now, increasingly, the mechanisms in place, to successfully redress these disadvantages. The Committee congratulates those governments which, in the last decade, have shown leadership and initiative in addressing the needs of Indigenous Australians. However there is much more to be done.

9.2 As has been indicated through the report, there is an expectation that the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be met primarily through accessing mainstream services. As a backdrop to the rest of the report, chapter three outlined, in a generic way, some of the barriers Indigenous people face when accessing mainstream services. At the same time, the last half dozen years or so have seen a shift in the way government services have been delivered to Indigenous people. There is a far greater emphasis on agencies working together with each other and with Indigenous groups to provide coordinated support in a holistic way to individuals and communities.

9.3 The Committee has noted a willingness now for many Commonwealth, state and territory agencies to adopt community based initiatives and tailor solutions to the needs of people rather than rely on the approach that 'one size fits all'. The example given in chapter three of the partnership between the Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs and the Department of Family and Community Services, Centrelink and the Westpac Bank to link services in a 'one stop shop' is a case in point.

However, there is still much to do before all agencies offer flexible services that truly meet the needs of Indigenous people.

9.4 When talking with Indigenous people at hearings and informal meetings, Members were struck by the quiet determination of many to deal with the issues confronting them. The Committee is confident that many Indigenous communities have clear ideas of possible solutions and that they only need assistance and encouragement to put them into practice. In chapter four the Committee has discussed some of the community capacity building strategies that have been adopted to help build stronger families and communities. The Grannies Group in Adelaide provide a striking example of 'grass roots' action by families to help each other and their community.

9.5 The Committee was also encouraged by a number of mainstream and Indigenous initiatives to help young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Without doubt there is an urgent need to address the alienation suffered by many young Indigenous people if the cycle of disadvantage is not to be repeated in the next generation. However, as the Namatjira Working Party in Dareton demonstrated, it is possible to successfully engage disaffected young people, in this example through sport.

9.6 In chapter six, the Committee seeks to dispel any myth that Indigenous people in urban areas have somehow lost their 'Aboriginality' and that 'real' Aboriginals only live in the outback. The Committee found city people with a strong sense of their 'Aboriginality' and proud of a cultural heritage that remained very relevant to their day to day lives.

9.7 Members see economic independence as a key to resolving many of the disadvantages affecting Indigenous people in urban areas. In chapter seven the Committee has described some innovative approaches to help Indigenous people enter the workforce and to create better pathways into the workforce for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The willingness by the Government and the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business to try innovative strategies to increase Indigenous employment is an example of the new approaches to service delivery. As a Departmental representative told the Committee:

> Basically, ministers have been keen to test innovative measures and have given the flexibility to adapt programs as necessary so that we can get the best outcomes… our ministers have been open to suggestions about changes to the existing elements [of programs]. If we learn as we go that something is not working and is not as effective as it might be, then we have been encouraged as

> a department to come forward with proposals to change that to better hit the mark.[1]

9.8 Indigenous organisations and the private sector are also integral contributors to the partnership with government that should open job opportunities for Indigenous people. Employment will allow wealth creation and reduce the adverse impacts of disadvantage and long term welfare dependence. Importantly, the realistic prospect of employment should raise the hopes and expectations of young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

9.9 Chapter seven also identified the important role of vocational education and training in encouraging young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders to remain at school and in helping Indigenous people of all ages to find employment. The Committee sees it as vital that governments in partnership with Indigenous individuals and families place a higher priority on participation in school and adult education and training as a means to lift their skills base.

9.10 In the last chapter, the Committee addressed the housing needs of Indigenous people in urban areas. Members see the best long term solution to meeting these needs as being affordable home ownership. Members also acknowledge that many Indigenous people in urban areas will need to continue to rely on public rental housing and to a lesser extent community rental housing. Members believe that public housing authorities are now generally more responsive to the needs of their Indigenous clients, although the authorities still struggle to keep up with the demand for appropriate housing stock. The bilateral Indigenous housing agreements offer the best mechanisms for identifying housing needs and meeting them in the most efficient way possible.

Funding Requirements

9.11 The Committee recognises that a number of its recommendations will require additional funding to implement. In many cases the extra funds will be found within programs through greater efficiencies. In other cases, the implementation of the Committee's recommendations will require additional appropriations from governments. It is also clear that to comprehensively meet Indigenous and non Indigenous needs, particularly in the housing area, will require substantially greater funding by

1 Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, *Transcripts*, p. 546.

governments. The Committee does not have the resources to cost these recommendations or the costs of meeting broader Indigenous disadvantage, but encourages governments to meet the extra needs progressively, noting again that some funds can be sourced from the benefits achieved through efficiencies.

Partnerships and the Right Attitude

9.12 Members believe that there is no valid reason why cooperative approaches and good will between Indigenous people and governments cannot overcome the structural impediments to Indigenous advancement. The priorities are to clearly identify Indigenous needs, with the benefit of nationally consistent and comprehensive data, and then focus on meeting those needs and reducing the impediments facing Indigenous people accessing services.

9.13 The Committee has given examples of successful partnerships between communities, governments and other Australians to highlight the progress that is being made to meet the needs of urban dwelling Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Goodwill and cooperation are the key to achieving results, as an Indigenous representative recounting an experience demonstrated:

> if you go into a meeting with a fair amount of goodwill you can achieve anything. We left all our baggage out the door – about whether we were Commonwealth, state, ATSIC… or whatever – and came in and sat around the table, and within six months we achieved the signing of a bilateral agreement.[2]

And as another noted as a caution:

> attitude. That is a thing that you cannot design. You cannot buy it. You cannot sell it. If there is not a healthy attitude on both sides of the fence, then it does not help to find solutions…[3]

2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Western Australia, *Transcripts*, p. 84.

3 South Australian Government, *Transcripts*, p. 325.

9.14 The Committee is optimistic that the right attitudes exist to address the many problems faced by Indigenous people. However, in order to achieve real solutions for all Indigenous people wherever they live in Australia, there needs to be continuing cooperation, collaboration and consultation between all levels of government, Indigenous Australians and the wider community.

The Hon Lou Lieberman MP

Chairman

August 2001

A

Appendix A - List of Submissions

Submission	Organisation/Individual
1	Ms Melissa Campbell
2	Confidential
3	Marine Enterprises & Construction Pty Ltd
4	Council of the Shire of Wentworth
5	Mr Herman Malbunka
6	Confidential
7	Institute for Aboriginal Development Inc
8	School of Education, Macquarie University
9	'Gindaaja' Yarrabah Youth Sports and Recreation Aboriginal Corporation
10	Greater Taree City Council
11	Confidential
12	Bega Garnbirringu Health Services Aboriginal Corporation
13	Warawara – Department of Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University
14	Anglican Counselling Service, Tamworth, New South Wales
15	Wingecarribee Reconciliation Group
16	Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia
17	Committee for Action for Aboriginal Rights

Submission	Organisation/Individual
18	Gungyah Ngallingnee Aboriginal Corporation
19	Kurrawang Aboriginal Christian Community Inc
20	ATSIC, Wongatha Regional Council
21	Aboriginal Housing Company Ltd
22	Aboriginal Education Program, University of New South Wales
23	Ms Maureen Stack
24	Kerry Ryder
25	Mamu Medical Service Ltd
26	Grannies Group
27	First Nations Advantage Credit Union
28	National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia
29	Mr James Forscutt
30	The WA Catholic Social Justice Council
31	Research Team on Aboriginal English, Edith Cowan University
32	Confidential
33	Mental Health Council of Australia
34	Sister Bernadene Daly
35	Bourke Shire Council
36	Aboriginal Community Elders Service
37	City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Community and Development Services
38	Confidential
39	Indigenous Land Corporation
40	Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd
41	Tangentyere Council Inc
42	Australian Women's Intra Network
43	Tranby Aboriginal College
44	Kulai Pre-School Aboriginal Corporation

Submission	Organisation/Individual
45	Public Health Services, Queensland Health
46	Confidential
47	Confidential
48	Mr Lloyd Appo
49	Kula-marra Aboriginal Corporation Inc
50	Mr Edward Hampton JP
51	Miller-Beeliar Aboriginal Corporation
52	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation
53	Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
54	Ballina Shire Council
55	Confidential
56	Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants
57	Confidential
58	Community Services Department, Wagga Wagga City Council
59	Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria
60	Indigenous Housing Association Inc
61	ATSIC Commissioner Northern Territory – North Zone
62	Northern Land Council
63	Broome Aboriginal Media Association
64	Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages
65	Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation
66	National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council
67	The Hon John Anderson MP
68	Equal Opportunity Commission, Western Australia
69	Department of Family and Community Services

Submission	Organisation/Individual
69	Department of Family and Community Services
70	Kempsey Koori Artists Aboriginal Corporation
71	Kempsey Shire Council
72	ATSIC, Victorian State Office (incorporating Binjirru and Tumbukka Regional Councils)
73	Anglicare Australia
74	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
75	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
76	Krurungal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Welfare, Resource and Housing
77	Youth Coalition of the ACT
78	Tenants Advice Service Inc of Western Australia
79	Australian Education Union
80	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Inc
81	National Tertiary Education Union
82	Confidential
83	ATSIC, Murdi Paaki Regional Council
84	Brisbane City Council
85	The Social Responsibilities Commission, Anglican Province of Western Australia
86	Department of Health and Aged Care
87	ATSIC, Queanbeyan Regional Council
88	Mr S Gordon ATSIC Commissioner New South Wales West and Mr H Whyman, Chairperson Binaal Billa Regional Council
89	ATSIC, Sydney Regional Council
90	Western Australian Government
91	CONFIDENTIAL
92	Zabia Chmielewski
93	Mr Peter Bird

Submission	Organisation/Individual
94	Australian Capital Territory Government
95	South Australian Government
96	Ms Janet Narkle and Ms Laurel Muppy
97	Queensland Government
98	Northern Territory Government
99	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Senator the Hon John Herron
100	Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria
101	Ms Margaret Horngold
102	Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Medical / Health Service
103	Department of Family and Community Services (Supplementary)
104	Anaconda Nickel Ltd
105	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (Supplementary)
106	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
107	Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
108	ATSIC Commissioner Northern Territory – North Zone (Supplementary)
109	Tangentyere Council Inc (Supplementary)
110	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (Supplementary)
111	Government of Western Australian (Supplementary)
112	Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business
113	Youth Coalition of the ACT (Supplementary)
114	Tenants Advice Service Inc of Western Australia (Supplementary)

B

Appendix B - List of Exhibits

Exhibits are published documents received by the Committee that do not relate directly to the terms of reference of the inquiry.

No	From	Exhibit Title
1	Senator the Hon John Herron	Addressing Priorities in Indigenous Affairs, Statement by Senator the Honourable John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 12 May 1998
2	Senator the Hon John Herron	A Better Future For Indigenous Australians, Statement by Senator the Honourable John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 11 May 1999
3	Senator the Hon John Herron	The Future Together: Indigenous-Specific Measures in the 2000-01 Budget, Statement by Senator the Honourable John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 9 May 2000
4	Local Government Association of South Australia	Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People 2: A New Strategy, June 2000
5	Manguri Corporation	Submission to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme, Family and Children's Service WA, Emergency Housing for Indigenous Families, 2000

6	Australian National Training Authority	Partners in a Learning Culture – Blueprint for Implementation from 2000 until 2005: a Blueprint for Implementing then National Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Vocational Education & Training
7	Mr Mark Kilner	Partners in a Learning Culture – National Strategy from 2000 until 2005: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education & Training 2000-2005
8	Prof Anthony Radford	Taking Control, A Joint Study of Aboriginal Social Health in Adelaide with Particular Reference to Stress and Destructive Behaviours 1988-89, Stage 1: Aboriginal 'Heads of Household' Study
9	FATSIL	Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Indigenous Language Policy Statement & Strategic Plan 2000 to 2003
10	Ms Ysola Best	Our Languages are the Voice of the Land, Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Newsletters, Vols 2-15, July 1996–June 2000
11	Associate Professor Pamela Warton	'Nallawa' Achieving Reconciliation in NSW Schools various documents and videos
12	The Hon Peter Reith MP	Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business – Employment Programmes for Indigneous Australians
13	Mrs Joan Martin	Wanting to be Indian: When Spiritual Teaching Turns into Cultural Theft
14	Assoc Prof Paul Memmott	Indigenous Settlements of Australia

15	The Hon Dr Michael Wooldridge MP	List of Programs within the Department of Health and Aged Care Available to Urban Dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
16a	Mr John Jury	Video - the John Forrest VTEC
16b	Mr John Jury	The John Forrest Vocational Training and Education Centre
16c	Mr John Jury	Integrating Indigenous Expectations: Presentation to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 19 September, 2000
17	School of Education, Macquarie University	'Nallawa' Achieving Reconciliation in NSW Schools a Summary of Recommendations
18	Ms Evelyn Scott	Achieving Economic Independence: Ways to Implement the National Strategies for Economic Independence, one of the four National Strategies in the Roadmap for Reconciliation
19	Ms Evelyn Scott	Overcoming Disadvantage: Ways to Implement the National Strategy to Overcome Disadvantage, one of four National Strategies in the Roadmap for Reconciliation
20	WA Equal Opportunity Commission	The Equal Opportunity Act: A Reference Guide
21	WA Equal Opportunity Commission	Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, Western Australia, Annual Report 1998-1999
22	Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants	Murdi Paaki Health Summit, Issues Paper: Employment

23	Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants	Secrets of Successful Communities: The Namatjira Housing and Infrastructure Project
24	Burns Aldis Community Development Consultants	Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation, Western Sydney Aboriginal Substance Misuse Regional Plan, December 1999
25	Aboriginal Education Program, University of New South Wales	Built Environment Preparatory Program for Indigenous Students
26	Mamu Medical Service Ltd	Mamu Medical Service Ltd, various documents
27	Queensland State Government, Queensland Health	Report on Indigenous Environmental Health Issues within an Urban Setting in the Brisbane Northside Area
28	ATSIC, Murdi Paaki Regional Council	ATSIC, Murdi Paaki Regional Council Submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission Inquiry into Indigenous Funding in Australia, 23 August 2000
29	CONFIDENTIAL	
30	The Hon Dr Michael Wooldridge MP	Health and Aged Care Portfolio, Submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission's Inquiry into Indigenous Funding, June 2000
31	Aboriginal Housing Company Ltd	AHC Community Social Plan excerpts
32	Australian Education Union	Crossing the Racial Divide: School and Community Efforts Towards Reconciliation Win Recognition
33	Australian Education Union	Submission to the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee Inquiry into Indigenous Education: 'Talk the Talk'…now… 'Walk the Walk'

34	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress	PHAA Conference 2000, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health: Implementation of the Primary Health Care Access Program (PHCAP) in four Remote Health Zones in Central Australia and the Northern Territory
35	Mr John Ross	correspondence and 'Local Government and Mainly Urban'
36	Ms Liz Curran	'It's not easy walkin' in there' Aboriginal Reconciliation: Towards Practical and Culturally Respectful Solutions
37	Prof Anthony Radford and Graham Brice	The 'Easy Street' Myth: Self Harm Among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Female Sole Parents in Urban State Housing
38	Ms Fay Carter	Aboriginal Community Elders Services
39	Ms Fay Carter	Aboriginal Community Elders Service, Report on Regional Aboriginal Aged Care Forums, November 1999
40	South Australian Government	A Focused Step Toward Wellness and Wellbeing in Aboriginal Health, A State Strategy and Action Plan for Social and Emotional Wellbeing for Aboriginal people, South Australian Aboriginal Health Partnership
41	South Australian Government	Indigenous Population in South Australia
42	South Australian Government	A Different View: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People in Contact with Community Services 1998
43	Senator the Hon Richard Alston	Portfolio: Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Programs of Benefit to Indigenous Australians

44	Queensland Government	Towards a Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ten Year Partnership, information sheets 1–10
45	Queensland Government	Cape York Partnerships: Some Practical Ideas
46	Queensland Government	Partners for Success: Strategy for the Continuous Improvement of Education and Employment Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland
47	Queensland Government	Education Queensland Strategic Plan 2000-2004
48	Queensland Government	Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland
49	Queensland Government	Building Success Together: The Framework for Students at Educational Risk information documents
50	Queensland Government	Kaulder Jibbijah: Our Working Partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
51	Queensland Government	Walking the Talk: Statewide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Reference Group Strategy, July 2000
52	The Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP	Programs within the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Portfolio Available to Urban Dwelling Indigenous People in Australia
53	Anaconda Nickel Ltd	VTEC Executive Weekend, March 17 & 18 2001
54	Anaconda Nickel Ltd	VTEC Workshop Weekend, March 17 & 18 2001, various documents

55	Government of Western Australia	Education Department of Western Australia: Performance Indicators and Targets - 2001 to 2004
56	Government of Western Australia	Creating the Vision 2001-2004, Education Department of Western Australia
57	South Australian Government	Aboriginal Community Justice, Vision 21: Aboriginal Policy Perspectives
58	Aboriginal Medial Service Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT)	'Together for our Health' Aboriginal Medial Service Alliance Northern Territory, Information Package, September 2000
59	AMSANT	AMSANT Aboriginal Health Summit 4-8 September 2000, GULKULA North East Arnhem Land Northern Territory in Conjunction with Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation
60	AMSANT	Banatjarl Aboriginal Health Summit, 2-6 August 1999, AMSANT Wurli Wurlinjang Aboriginal Health Service Jawoyn Association
61	AMSANT	Central Australian Aboriginal Health Summit, Ilpurla Outstation 25-28 October 1998, 'Our Health in Our Hands', Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Association with AMSANT and the Central Land Council
62	Tangentyere Council Inc	Regional Issues Brief, Papunya ATSIC Regional Council
63	The Hon Dr Michael Wooldridge MP	Government Response to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Indigenous Health – 'Health is Life', March 2001
64	Australian Local Government Association	Office of Housing Policy, Directions Paper – Homewest Appeals Mechanism

65	Government of Western Australia	Tenant Support Programs (Ministry of Housing WA)
66	Government of Western Australia	2000 Eviction Statistics All Regions (Ministry of Housing WA)
67	Government of Western Australia	'New Living' Report: An Assessment of Impacts on Tenants and the Community in the Urban Renewal of Lockridge and Langford, Western Australia, 2001
68	Government of Western Australia	Review of the Homeswest Appeals Mechanism, Volume1: Major Findings, Evaluation and Recommendations, Shelter WA, March 2000
69	Government of Western Australia	Correspondence to Minister for Housing from Director, Office of Housing Policy, 17 April 2001
70	Department of Reconciliation and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Information package 'Budget 2001'
71	Government of Western Australia	Ministry of Housing 2000 Annual Report
72	Tenants Advice Service Inc of Western Australia	Transcript of talk by Mr Greg Joyce, Executive Officer Ministry of Housing, Housing Forum, Derbarl Yerrigan Perth, March 22, 2001. "Housing ‘sorry’ to Aborigines", The West Australian, March 23, 2001, p. 8
73	Tenants Advice Service	Noongah Housing Summit 2001 briefing papers, Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service Inc, March 22, 2001
74	Tenants Advice Service	Memo from Mr Bob Thomas, Manager Homeswest, to the Chairman of the Housing Advisory Committee, reviewing “housing for all – a [sub]-urban myth”, 5 February 2001

75	Tenants Advice Service	TAS' letter to Mr Bob Thomas, Manager Homeswest, seeking details of alleged policy and procedure changes, 19 February 2001
76	Tennants Advice Service	Mr Thomas' response to TAS, seeking attendance at the Rental Sector Standing Committee meeting of 28 March 2001, 8 March 2001
77	Tenants Advice Service	Minutes for Rental Sector Standing Committee meeting 23 May 2001
78	Tenants Advice Service	Letter from the Minister for Housing to TAS, outlining Ministry changes implemented in response to the Equal Opportunity Commission Report of November 2000, 29 June 2001
79	Tenants Advice Service	Draft Minutes of the Applicants & Tenants Support Working Party, 5 June 2001
80	Tenants Advice Service	Extract from standard Funding/Lease Agreement between Homeswest and CHAs
81	Tenants Advice Service	Extract from Ministry of Housing, Community Disability Housing Program Guidelines (November 1999), pp. 17, 18
82	Tenants Advice Service	Extracts from Ministry of Housing Annual Report 1999/2000, pp. 120, 169
83	Tennants Advice Service	Extract from pre-1997 Priority Assistance Policy; extract from proposed policy changes tabled at HAC 1997 (x 2); proposal for change to Priority Assistance Policy taken to Board and Minister
84	Tenants Advice Service	Letter from Mr Bob Thomas, Manager Homeswest, to TAS advising number of Indigenous tenancies, 29 May 2001

85	Tenants Advice Service	Eviction statistics 1996 to 2000
86	Tenants Advice Service	Extract from Equal Opportunity Commission Occasional Paper No 2, (2001) Aboriginal Participation within the complaints Process, pp. 1-3
87	Tenants Advice Service	Extract from Ministry of Housing Capital Works Program 2000/2001, undated, pp. 14, 17
88	Tenants Advice Service	Memorandum from Robin Williams, Manager Rental Operations, to Applicant and Tenant Support Committee, re Priority Applicants, 23 April 2001
89	Tenants Advice Service	Fax to TAS from Minister for Housing re the application of the Ministry's "confidentiality" policy to materials in TAS' supplementary submission, 3 August 2001
90	Tenants Advice Service	Penny Rackhan, "Contractor trouble forces long wait", North-West Telegraph, 25 July 2001, p. 3
91	Tenants Advice Service	photographs of occupied Homeswest tenancies
92	Tenants Advice Service	Rental Sector Standing Committee minutes of meeting 22 November 2000
93	Tenants Advice Service	TAS' preliminary assessment of the Parry - Strommen “'New Living' Report” Living Report”
94	Tenants Advice Service	Shelter WA's Review of the: Parry - Strommen 'New Living' Report, 6 August 2001

C

Appendix C - List of Witnesses

Monday, 25 September 2000 - Kalgoorlie

Goldfields Land Council

Mr Brian Wyatt, Director

Ninga Mia Village Aboriginal Corporation

Ms Maria Meredith, Manager

Mr Ross Oakley, Substance Misuse Coordinator

Ms Linda Wicker, Committee Member

Monday, 25 September 2000 - Laverton

Leonora-Laverton Cross Cultural Association

Mr Phil McEvoy, Member

Shire of Laverton

Councillor Murray Thomas, President

Wongatha Wonganarra Aboriginal Corporation

Ms Sally Condon, Member

Ms Jan Douglas, Member

Tuesday, 26 September 2000 - Murrin Murrin

Anaconda Nickel Ltd

Mrs Bronwyn Barnes, Government Affairs

Mr Sandeep Biswas

Mr David Canning, Training Officer

Mrs Sadie Miriam Canning, Director SMC Vending Operations

Mr Alex Hancock, Site Administration Manager

Mr John Jury, Manager Community Development

Anglogold Sunrise Dam Gold Mine

Mr Barrie Parker, General Manager

BIDARN Pty Ltd

Mr James Harkin, Manager

Ms Maisie Harkin, Director

Leonora-Laverton Cross Cultural Association

Mr Phil McEvoy, Member

Wednesday, 27 September 2000 - Perth

Aboriginal Advancement Council of WA

Ms Jennifer Chandler-Jones

Mr Morton Hansen, Acting Administrative Project Officer

Aboriginal Legal Services of WA (Inc) and Derbarl Yerrigan Medical Service

Mr Dennis Eggington, Chief Executive Officer

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Commission

Mr Michael Gooda, Manager, Western Australia State Policy Centre

Mr Eric Wynne, Commissioner for South-West Western Australia

Bay of Isles Aboriginal Community Inc

Mr Ron (Doc) Reynolds, Manager

Curtin University

Mr James Morrison, Program Manager, Ways of Working, Centre for Aboriginal Studies

Mr John Scougall, Academic Coordinator, Postgraduate Programs, Centre for Aboriginal Studies

Dr Joan Winch, Head, Centre for Aboriginal Studies

Derbarl Yerrigan Medical Service

Mr Edward Wilkes, Executive Director

Wednesday, 1 November 2000 - Canberra

Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages

Mr John Atkinson AM, Victorian Delegate

Ms Faith Baisden, Project Officer

Ms Ysola Best, Secretary

Mr Lester Coyne, Chairman

Dr Eve Fesl, Queensland Delegate

Ms Denise Karpany, Vice Chairperson and South Australian Delegate

Mr Kevin Lowe, New South Wales Delegate

Ms Barbara McGillivray, Honorary Treasurer and Western Australian Delegate

Mr Harold Nayda, Treasurer and Northern Territory Delegate

Mrs Sandra Smith, Victorian Delegate

Mr Patrick Whop, Queensland Delegate

Wednesday, 29 November 2000 - Canberra

Department of Family and Community Services

Mr Ian Boyson, Director, Indigenous Policy Unit, Community Branch

Mrs Delilah MacGillivray, Business Manager, Indigenous Community Segment Team, National Support Office, Centrelink

Ms Sioux Monk, Director, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement Management and Development, Housing Support Branch

Ms Tricia Rushton, Assistant Secretary, Community Branch

Mr Stephen Smythe, Assistant Director, Indigneous Policy Unit, Community Branch

Ms Peta Winzar, Assistant Secretary, Parenting Payment and Labour Market Program

Wednesday, 28 February 2001 - Canberra

Department of Health and Aged Care

Ms Helen Evans, First Assistant Secretary, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Ms Marian Kroon, Director, Health Financing Policy, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Ms Mary McDonald, Assistant Secretary, Program Planning and Development, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Wednesday, 28 March 2001 - Canberra

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Commission

Mr Ben Johnson, Program Officer, CDEP

Ms Jackie Oakley, Manager, Rights and Culture, National Policy Office

Mr Jim Ramsay, Manager, National Commission and Corporate Support

Mr Geoff Richardson, Manager, National Policy Office

Mr Geoff Scott, Manager, National Program and Network

Ms Kerry Sculthorpe, Manager, National Policy Office

Mr Peter Taylor, Manager, Housing and Infrastructure Centre

Wednesday, 4 April 2001 - Canberra

Anaconda Nickel Ltd

Mr John Jury, Manager Community Development

Monday, 23 April 2001 - Perth

Government of Western Australia

Mrs Petrice Judge, Director, Federal Affairs Unit, Ministry of Premier and Cabinet

Ms Jody Broun, Executive Director, Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure, Ministry of Housing

Mr Gegroy Joyce, Managing Director, Ministry of Housing

Mr Edward Houston, General Manager, Public Health and Purchasing Group, Health Department of Western Australia

Mr Lemmetj Wyatt, Director Aboriginal Education, Education Department of Western Australia

Mr Stuart Reid, Principal Policy Office (Social Policy), Aboriginal Affairs Department

Tenants Advice Service Inc Western Australia

Dr Jeannine Purdy, Co-ordinator

Ms Robyn Ninyette, Solicitor

Ms Joanne Walsh, Tenant Advocate and Access Worker

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

Reverend George Davies, Member of Executive (Justice Portfolio)

Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission, Province of Western Australia

Mrs Anne Annear, Advocate-Mediator for Aboriginal Issues

Mrs Rona Woods

Western Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

Mr Trevor Carleton, Deputy Chair

Mr Terrence Quinn, Project Officer

Peedac Pty Ltd and Yahnging Aboriginal Corporation

Mrs Lynnette May, Project Officer and Committee Member, Peedac Pty Ltd

Mrs Annette Garlett, Employment Project Administration Officer, Peedac Pty Ltd

Mr Gregory Garlett, Manager, Yahnging Aboriginal Corporation

Tuesday, 24 April 2001 - Adelaide

South Australian Government

Mr David Rathman, Chief Executive, Department of State Aboriginal Affairs

Ms Ceilia Divakaran, Principal Policy Officer, Department of State Aboriginal Affairs

Indigenous Land Corporation

Mr Martyn Paxton, Senior Policy Adviser, Strategic Development Branch

Mr Peter Keogh, Policy Officer

Grannies Group

Ms Heather Agius, Member

Ms Patricia Buckskin, Member

Ms Diane Grose, Member

Ms Lorraine Williams, Member

Ms Coral Wilson, Member

Mrs Margaret Woods, Member

Monday, 30 April 2001 - Darwin

Northern Territory Government

Mr Robert Beadman, Chief Executive Officer, Office of Aboriginal Development, Department of Local Government

Ms Jennifer Cleary, Assistant Secretary, Community Health, Aboriginal Health and Hospital Services, Territory Health Services

Ms Trish Jones, Senior Policy Officer, Aboriginal Health Policy, Territory Health Services

Mr Graham Symons, Chief Executive Officer, Territory Housing

Mr Peter Plummer, Chief Executive Officer, NT Department of Education

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Commission - Commissioner Northern Territory

Mr Kim Hill, Northern Territory North Zone Commissioner

Ms Barbara Cummings, Chairperson, Yilli Rreung Regional Council

Mr Kenneth Walker, State Policy and Advocacy Manager

Mr John Dwyer, Executive Policy Adviser

Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory

Mr Fabian Hazelbane, Chairperson

Mr Lyndsay McGuinness, General Manager

Northern Land Council

Mr John Sullivan, Executive Member, Darwin / Daly / Wagait Region

Mr Curtis Roman, Governing Committee Member

Mr Kelvin Costello, Coordinator, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation

Mr Bill Risk, Native Title Officer, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation

Ms Katy Haire, Research Officer

Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory

Ms Pat Anderson, Executive Secretary

Mr James Gallacher, Executive Officer

Tuesday, 1 May 2001 - Alice Springs

Tangentyere Council Inc

Mr William Tilmouth, Executive Director

Ms Tracey Brand, Senior Executive Office

Ms Kerri Lenehan, Research and Policy Adviser

Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

Miss Donna McMasters, Secretary, Cabinet

Ms Elizabeth Carter, Cabinet Member

Ms Donna Ah Chee, Acting Deputy Director

Mr Clive Rosewarne, Research and Policy Officer

Institute for Aboriginal Development Inc

Mr Richard Hayes, Director

Ms Elizabeth Pearce, Chairperson

Mr Rodney Diggens, Special Project Officer

Wednesday, 23 May 2001 - Canberra

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Mr Puggy Hunter, Chairperson

Ms Julie Tongs, Director

Mr Craig Ritchie, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Helen Kehoe, Policy Officer

Ms Lee-Anne Daley, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Ms Kirstie Hansen, Media Officer

Wednesday, 6 June 2001 - Canberra

Youth Coalition of the ACT

Ms Meredith Hunter, Executive Officer

Ms Susan Pellegrino, Policy and Project Officer

Mr Paul Adcock, Coordinator, Galilee Services Lions Youth Haven, Galilee Inc

Mr Michael Quall, Former Chairperson

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Medical/Health Service

Ms Mary Buckskin, Chairperson

Ms Julie Tongs, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Jill Turner, Finance Officer

Mrs Hilary Crawford, Elder

Wednesday, 20 June 2001 - Canberra

Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Mr Anthony Greer, First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division

Mr Peter Buckskin, Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Education, Schools Division

Ms Julia Forrest, Director, Policy and Coordination Section, Indigenous Education Branch, Schools Division

Ms Barbara Bennett, Assistant Secretary, New Apprenticeships Branch, Training and Youth Division

Dr Tom Karmel, Assistant Secretary, Higher Education Division

Australian Local Government Association

Mr John Pritchard, National Policy Director

Wednesday, 27 June 2001 - Canberra

Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business

Ms Dianne Hawgood, Group Manager, Regional and Indigenous Employment Support Group

Ms Susan Black, Team Leader, Indigenous Employment Branch

Ms Kate Gumley, Team Leader, Indigenous Employment Branch

Ms Stephanie Bennett, Team Leader, Indigenous Employment Branch

D

Appendix D - Commonwealth Expenditure on Indigenous Affairs

Identifiable Commonwealth Expenditure on Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2000-01 and 2001-02

Portfolio/Agency/Description	2000-01 Estimated Outcome	2001-02 Budget Estimates
	$	$
Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Portfolio	1,277,769,000	1,315,717,000
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio	727,000	250,000
Attorney-General's Portfolio	44,966,709	60,530,731
Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Portfolio	30,222,898	15,764,006
Defence Portfolio	95,000	965,800
Education, Training and Youth Affairs Portfolio	443,008,924	448,069,905
Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business Portfolio	67,062,608	73,822,682
Environment, and Heritage Portfolio	3,130,218	3,434,600
Family and Community Services Portfolio	171,624,000	173,190,000
Finance and Administration Portfolio	4,020,000	270,000
Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio	285,790	266,625
Health and Aged Care Portfolio	238,297,998	269,567,212
Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Portfolio	163,952	70,200
Industry, Science and Resource Portfolio	1,085,000	1,800,000
Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio	15,493,590	2,000,000
Transport and Regional Services Portfolio	17,491,619	18,022,096
Treasury Portfolio	8,116,106	7,126,876
Total Indigenous-Specific Funding	**2,323,560,412**	**2,390,867,733**

Source Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together, Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, May 2001, pp. 25-30.*

Identifiable Commonwealth Expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1995-96 to 2000-01

Year	Total Indigenous-Specific Funding
	$
1995-96	1,722,225,647
1996-97	1,700,704,688
1997-98*	1,852,455,335
1998-99*+	1,997,147,438
1999-2000*	2,217,841,093
2000-01*	2,300,001,665
2001-02*	2,390,867,733

* Estimates

\+ As some agencies were unable to provide actual 1998-99 information in a consistent basis with estimates for 1999-2000 and 2000-01, the 1998-99 column reproduces the revised estimates published in last year's statement, *A Better Future for Indigenous Australians*. If items have been reported for the first time in this year's table, both the 1998-99 actual and the 1999-2000 revised estimates have been provided, where relevant, for comparison.

Source Commonwealth Government, *Addressing Priorities in Indigenous Affairs, Statement by Senator the Hon John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, May 1998, p. 29;* Commonwealth Government, *The Future Together, Indigenous-Specific Measure in the 2000-01 Budget, Statement by Senator the Hon John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, May 2000, p. 22;* Commonwealth Government, *Our Path Together, Statement by the Honourable Philip Ruddock MP, Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, May 2001, p. 30.*