

## CHAPTER 6

### CO-ORDINATION

#### Introduction

6.1 In its interim report the Committee indicated, in broad terms, problems associated with co-ordination amongst organisations and agencies involved in service delivery to Aboriginal people. The Committee noted that the lack of co-ordination and co-operation occurred not only between the different levels of government but also between organisations at the same level of government and even within particular agencies. Furthermore, the Committee noted an inability or lack of desire on the part of agencies to co-ordinate and co-operate with the Aboriginal organisations and people they are supposed to be assisting.<sup>112</sup>

6.2 A range of approaches to service delivery is required to match the circumstances of Aboriginal people. Diversity poses a challenge for co-ordination and co-operation between government agencies and non-government bodies and for effective service delivery. Ultimately co-ordination needs to be implemented at a number of different levels including:

- . between the Commonwealth, States and Territories;
- . between the respective agencies of the Commonwealth, States and Territories;
- . between Commonwealth, State, Territory and non-government agencies at a regional level and;
- . at the Aboriginal client delivery level where the impact of poor co-ordination and co-operation is most felt.

6.3 This chapter will examine some of the problems with co-ordination at these levels and will suggest a number of improvements. Underlying the Committee's approach is the belief that the needs of Aboriginal people should remain the primary focus for any strategy of co-ordination and co-operation. To this end the Committee proposes that a locally-based approach to co-ordination be adopted so that the programs of departments and agencies area tailored to the needs identified by Aboriginal people themselves. The Committee notes that a number of issues relating to co-ordination directly concern funding. These are discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>112</sup> Interim Report p.12

## The government level

6.4 The major reasons preventing effective co-ordination as being at the government level are identified by the committee as:

- . the plethora of agencies involved in service delivery and the consequent potential for overlap, duplication and wastage of resources;
- . poor inter- and intra-agency communication, compounded by rivalry or even hostility;
- . the failure of bureaucratic mechanisms resulting from the differing structures of government agencies; and
- . the absence of an overall co-ordinating authority in many of the States and Territories.

## Too many agencies

6.5 In recent years, a number of features have emerged in the administration of Aboriginal affairs that have had an impact on the co-ordination of service delivery to Aboriginal people. The Commonwealth's role has developed substantially with much of the effort concentrated in Aboriginal Affairs portfolio agencies. This has led to the need for a growing relationship with the States and Territories. At the same time, State and Territory Governments have been involved in varying degrees of service delivery. Unlike the Commonwealth, however, their involvement has generally taken place through a broad number of departments rather than through a discrete department specifically directed to Aboriginal affairs. This trend has taken place without adequate definition of the respective service provision roles of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. As a result, the overall number of agencies providing services to Aboriginal people has increased, producing a high degree of ambiguity, confusion and dispute about the roles and responsibilities of each agency or level of government.

6.6 In evidence to the Committee, the South Australian Government indicated that Aboriginal organisations had typically to deal with around 18 Commonwealth or State Government bodies. Aboriginal people also deal with a range of non-government bodies. A document prepared by the Northern Territory Local Government and Industries Training Council illustrates this. It shows that a community with an average population of less than 100 would have contact with:

- . the Northern Territory Departments of Primary Industry, Lands and Housing, Transport and Works, Labour and Administrative Services, Office of Local Government and Health and Community Services;
- . various education bodies, the Northern Territory Grants Commission and the Northern Territory

Power and Water Authority;

at the Commonwealth level, the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Development Commission both (now both in ATSIC), Community Services and Health, Employment, Education and Training, Administrative Services (Construction Group) and others;

assorted independent Aboriginal organisations including land councils, the Aboriginal Legal Service, health services and other resource agencies; and

other non-government organisations such as church groups.

This situation is mirrored in other States and Territories.

6.7 The duplication of effort is a waste of resources and represents a significant economic cost to the broader community. The extent of that cost is yet to be calculated. Duplication also diminishes the overall level of resources available to Aboriginal people.

6.8 The Committee recommends that:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission examine the economic cost of ineffective co-ordination.

6.9 With such a large number of agencies involved with Aboriginal people it is difficult to achieve a comprehensive co-ordinated approach. Each department or agency has its own brief and operates to its own timetable and set of programs. This situation is complicated by the different policy approaches between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories; a factor pointed to by the Northern Territory Government in its submission. The submission distinguished between the Commonwealth's approach towards 'a particular racial group on a national basis' and that of the Northern Territory which attempts to provide services 'in an equal fashion' to Aboriginal people as to all Territorians, while having regard to the special needs of particular groups.<sup>113</sup>

6.10 Whilst the Committee recognises that some attempts at co-ordination and co-operation do occur, the general point needs to be made that a proliferation of agencies, policies and programs in Aboriginal communities is leading to 'duplication, high administrative costs, a lack of efficiency in program delivery and an increasingly territorial "bureaucratopia"', to use the term coined by one witness.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1303

<sup>114</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S301

6.11 The Regional Director of the New South Wales Office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs echoed this point:

I think it would be fair to say that co-ordination is a difficult thing. With the number of players, if I could use that term, involved in Aboriginal affairs, it is difficult sometimes to co-ordinate things in the sense of getting decisions or even getting people down to talk, because the departments have their own roles and responsibilities.<sup>115</sup>

6.12 During a visit to western New South Wales the Committee encountered this problem over the provision of housing to two separate locations in one region. The houses were being built for one group by the Aboriginal Development Commission whilst the New South Wales Housing Commission was responsible for the other. It was apparent that little, if any, co-ordination between the two bodies had occurred. No assessment had been made of the relative needs of the two groups. At the tender and construction phase it was clear that duplication and waste would occur given that two different bodies were involved, and that there would be no attempt<sup>116</sup> to achieve any economies of scale in the construction process.

6.13 The practical effects of inter-governmental conflict is well illustrated by the situation at Toomelah (New South Wales) which was the subject of an inquiry by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). The Commission's findings were reiterated in its submission to the inquiry and in evidence given at a public hearing.<sup>117</sup>

6.14 The Commission found that the inter-governmental conflicts on policy and funding responsibilities were the fundamental cause of the appalling conditions in the community. The HREOC was critical of the situation whereby no government authority took responsibility for monitoring the conditions at Toomelah and helping the people access the required services. The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs was criticised for failing in its obligations in this regard. The Department's view was that services should be supplied by State and local government authorities. Yet the Department did little to bring Toomelah's needs to the attention of those authorities, and did nothing to encourage them to provide those services. The HREOC also noted that when the Department belatedly provided the services itself, they were inadequate and inappropriate. As a consequence of this mismanagement, the Toomelah community had been severely and unjustly denied basic rights and an improvement in living conditions.<sup>118</sup>

6.15 The review went on to say that there was considerable

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<sup>115</sup> Transcript of Evidence, pp.630-631

<sup>116</sup> Hansard precis, visit to NSW 13-15 February 1989.

<sup>117</sup> See Transcript of Evidence, pp.S852-913 & pp.595-627

<sup>118</sup> HREOC Toomelah Report, p.62

dispute among government service providers as to whether Toomelah residents had certain entitlements at all, what procedures they should follow to acquire services and which bodies were responsible for providing them. The various levels of government made little attempt to clarify or define responsibility for the delivery of essential services to the people of Toomelah. No government authority - Commonwealth, State or local - provided adequate information, consulted the people effectively, or co-ordinated the three tiers of government in the provision of services. The former New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the authority most able to influence State and local government authorities, abdicated its responsibilities to the Toomelah people. In the view of the HREOC, the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs failed to ensure that the Toomelah residents obtained the information and assistance necessary to acquire the services they needed. The Aboriginal Development Commission, a body designed to provide for the basic needs of Aboriginal people, could be even more strongly criticised for pursuing policies which directly impeded and obstructed the interests of the community.<sup>119</sup> Unfortunately, the Toomelah example is only one of many that have been allowed to occur throughout Australia.

6.16 The South Australian Government indicated that it had problems in not only developing policies in Aboriginal affairs but also in 'keeping in touch with the Commonwealth'.<sup>120</sup> It also argued that despite the apparent clarity in the Commonwealth's position on the division of responsibilities, misunderstandings and disagreements continue.<sup>121</sup> In part the difficulties stem from the patchy involvement of some State and Territory governments in the provision of services. From the Commonwealth perspective the question exists as to whether the States are meeting their full responsibilities towards Aboriginal people under the Constitution. In the case of Western Australia, for example, the Commonwealth provides most of the funding for Aboriginal people in the absence of the State Government playing a more active role. In addition, as the States and Territories come under greater fiscal constraints, there is a tendency to expect the Commonwealth to fund services to Aboriginal people that the States and Territories would normally provide.

6.17 The Toomelah inquiry recommended that the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments renegotiate their existing agreement on Aboriginal affairs. The new arrangement should provide that primary responsibility for providing services to Aboriginal people rests with a single authority empowered to implement or require the implementation of decisions to which Aboriginal people have direct access. It pointed out that several other matters also needed to be addressed in the agreement:

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid*

<sup>120</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.515

<sup>121</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2197

... firstly, establish a clear demarcation of responsibilities; secondly, make clear funding commitments; thirdly, set up effective co-ordination mechanisms; and finally, ensure that Aboriginal communities themselves determine what services they require and how they are to be delivered.<sup>122</sup>

6.18 The Committee strongly considers that there is a need for the Commonwealth, States and Territories to sort out their respective functions in Aboriginal affairs. One solution would be for ATSIC to assume the co-ordinating role for service delivery to Aboriginal people and for Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments to work through the Commission. Such a step would reduce the potential for a breakdown in co-ordination and co-operation as happened for Toomelah where, ultimately, it was the people, not the State or Commonwealth governments, that bore the brunt of the problems that occurred.

6.19 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Commonwealth renegotiate agreements with the States and Territories over their respective roles and responsibilities for the delivery of services to Aboriginal people in line with the general thrust of the report of the Human Rights Commission.
- . Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments view the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission as the co-ordinating agency for working with Aboriginal people.

6.20 The range of 'players' may also engender confusion about who is responsible for what. Aboriginal people have told the Committee that the number of State, Territory and Commonwealth Government officers passing through a community can be confusing and community members do not know who to approach about particular subjects. In her study on 'The Effects of Public Sector Activity on Aborigines in the East Kimberley', Bolger substantiates this point:<sup>123</sup>

In all the communities studied the number of agencies with which they were required to deal was a source of confusion and frustration. Most people had little understanding of the functions and boundaries of the many government agencies, nor were they particularly interested in them ...<sup>124</sup>

... people still have little knowledge of the government agencies with which they are now involved. Only a handful of people attend community meetings, mostly women and older men, and even their

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<sup>122</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.598

<sup>123</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S876

<sup>124</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S972

understanding is sketchy. For instance, they confuse ADC and DAA and most know nothing about other agencies such as ComEd. As far as they are concerned the promised improvements are simply coming from 'the government' ...<sup>125</sup>

6.21 This situation also affects the broader society. Aboriginal people, however, are almost entirely dependent on public sector programs for their funding and service provision. It is therefore more important for Aboriginal people to be cognisant of the range of programs and possible funding sources available to them and be able to ensure that the programs and services are properly co-ordinated.

6.22 It is easy to understand how the proliferation of agencies and departments dealing with Aboriginal people can lead to greater dependence on outsiders or increase the potential for manipulation at the local level. More programs generally mean more discussions, more dealings with bureaucracy and, ultimately, more accountability. In many organisations the weight of these matters will be transferred to the community adviser or to non-Aboriginal staff.

6.23 Similarly, with each government or agency pushing its own agenda, Aboriginal people may be pressured into making a decisions against their wishes or without the possibility of broader community discussion. These different agendas, when operating at the local level, can result in co-ordination difficulties.

#### Poor communication

6.24 Just getting all parties to agree on which body should be responsible for co-ordination presents difficulties. From the Commonwealth perspective, Cabinet decided that the DAA (now ATSIC) is to be responsible for the co-ordination of the policies of all Aboriginal affairs portfolio organisations in accordance with the policies and program priorities set by the Government.<sup>126</sup> This organisation will also be responsible for programs requiring co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.<sup>127</sup> This view has been generally supported by State Governments although DAA had indicated that its role was not always accepted by State and Territory Governments.<sup>128</sup>

6.25 The New South Wales Government indicated that, in reality, co-ordination between Commonwealth and State departments is often ad hoc with no clear guidelines as to who formally co-ordinates the programs and who is responsible for program

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<sup>125</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.932

<sup>126</sup> DAA Annual Report, 1988-89, p.15

<sup>127</sup> DAA Corporate Plan 1987, p.4

<sup>128</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.635

components.<sup>129</sup> Inadequate communications then, can give rise to disagreements, a duplication of resources and confusion. Many government officials are ignorant of just what other Commonwealth, State or Territory agencies are doing in a particular program area or locality. Indeed, ignorance and lack of co-operation has resulted in different agencies providing funding for the same things, or services being provided in an illogical fashion.<sup>130</sup>

6.26 In some instances, inter-departmental or inter-governmental rivalries have led to outright hostility. In such cases differences are almost impossible to resolve. However, ultimately it is Aboriginal people who feel the consequences of this situation. In her submission, Audrey Bolger provided an example of what can happen to communities when co-ordination fails. She gave the example of the need to establish stores capable of sustaining communities during the wet season, thereby avoiding the necessity for expensive food drops. Establishing these stores was a complicated operation and ADC, DAA (now ATSIC) and DEIR (now DEET) needed to work together. Each community needed a store building containing a small office from which general community business, as well as store business, could be conducted. The project envisaged employment of a person to run the stores and to train Aboriginal people in both store management and bookkeeping. A house for the store/bookkeeper was also included.

6.27 It was agreed that ADC would provide funding for the building materials and a loan to each community for the initial stock. DAA was to provide funding for wages for those employed in the building, while DEIR would fund the trainer and trainees. Six months later funding was approved. As Bolger noted, from then on, problems with co-operation surfaced and the store was not completed until 15 months later - over two years after the project had been mooted:

Difficulties were experienced both in co-ordinating the release of funding and in the general organisation of the project to such an extent that the store at Mulan was not completed until October 1984. Reading the files of the three organisations it is difficult to apportion blame for the delay since each blames the others! Suffice it to say that it seems to have been mainly due to bureaucratic incompetence and lack of co-operation that Mulan people were left without adequate supplies for another wet season.<sup>131</sup>

6.28 This example illustrates the effects of

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<sup>129</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1917

<sup>130</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S907 and Gerritson, R Blackfellas and Whitefellas: the politics of service delivery to remote Aboriginal communities in the Katherine region, P. Loveday (ed), *Service Delivery to Remote Areas*, NARU, Darwin, 1982, p.16.

<sup>131</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S939



inter-departmental or inter-governmental rivalry and poor working relations. Effective co-ordination and co-operation clearly depends on the goodwill of the agency participants, particularly at the field level. As DAA's regional manager for New South Wales indicated to the Committee, irrespective of how departments co-operate at the broader level and of Cabinet decisions on the respective roles of government agencies, 'when it gets down to that field area it can be a basic problem of personalities.'<sup>132</sup>

#### Failure of bureaucratic mechanisms

6.29 One of the problems with government departments is the lack of coherence between policies and activities in the field. Ideally these should complement each other but this is not always the case. Sometimes good policies are not able to work because of poor field services. Sometimes field officers are working well with communities but are inhibited by a poor relationship with their central office. Also, policies developed at the national, State or Territory level do not allow sufficient flexibility at the local level to ensure their effective implementation.

6.30 Difficulties occur because different departments have different structures, which means that officers from various departments who should be liaising on a program may not be located in the same town. Although communication is not impossible it makes it difficult to obtain any consolidated and focused assessment of a particular situation. In addition, with regional offices separated, there may be a tendency to devote more priority to areas or organisations in the vicinity.<sup>133</sup>

6.31 The Committee believes that there is also a need to rationalise and strengthen activity in the field at the State/Territory, regional and local level. DAA's submission noted that 'no viable operating methods have been established to reduce the number of government agencies involved.'<sup>134</sup> The Committee believes that a more integrated use of field staff at the local level by all departments and agencies would go a long way towards achieving this objective. In practical terms this might be achieved by agencies contracting ATSIC to do field work on their behalf.

6.32 This issue was discussed in the Committee's previous report *A Chance for the Future*, specifically in relation to the implementation of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP). The Committee recommended that there be a detailed investigation of the mechanisms for implementing an amalgamated field officer service for the Commonwealth agencies directly involved in the AEDP. The Committee argued that an amalgamated field officer structure for a field operations service would have a number of benefits. It would ensure a rapid change of focus of field officers away from the programs of particular agencies

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<sup>132</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.631

<sup>133</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.755

<sup>134</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.@296

to a more comprehensive approach; enable a much better co-ordination of programs at a local level; limit the confusion amongst Aboriginal people of how all the agencies fit together; and reduce the stream of visitors to, and discussions with, Aboriginal people.<sup>135</sup>

6.33 In this report the Committee expands on the recommendations in *A Chance for the Future* by advocating that all government departments and agencies improve their co-ordination and rationalise discussions with, and visits to, Aboriginal communities.

6.34 The Committee recommends that:

- . all Commonwealth agencies involved in service delivery to Aboriginal people improve co-ordination activities of their field staff, particularly in terms of visits to remote communities;
- . Commonwealth, State and Territory government agencies develop mechanisms to rationalise their discussions with, and visits to, Aboriginal communities with a view to reducing the number of visits;
- . the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Department of Employment, Education and Training develop a proposal for the implementation of an amalgamated field officer structure.

6.35 Whilst in theory the use by government agencies of bodies such as regional co-ordinating committees is a useful and important vehicle for promoting co-ordination, the existence of such bureaucratic bodies does not guarantee their success. As the New South Wales Government noted, co-ordination is sometimes used as a euphemism for convening meetings of interested parties rather than the carrying out and following through of program implementation in a structured and sequential manner.<sup>136</sup>

6.36 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Commonwealth conduct a formal review of the effectiveness of all bureaucratic co-ordination mechanisms with the States and Territories in the area of Aboriginal affairs with a view to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission being given responsibility for co-ordination.

#### Mainstreaming or single agency service provision

6.37 At the State and Territory level the lack of effective co-ordination may result, in part, from the absence of a

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<sup>135</sup> See *A Chance for the Future*, pp.29-31

<sup>136</sup> NSW Government Discussion Paper, p.18

department or agency with formal responsibility for implementing Aboriginal affairs policies and programs such as the Commonwealth's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Instead, the responsibility is spread amongst a number of other departments and agencies. In some cases, a smaller Aboriginal Affairs unit is located within the Premier's Department. The South Australian Government referred to this issue in evidence:

It is the obvious question to ask, I guess, as to whether the existence of a number of units with one small central office is the right way to go. It is a difficult question to answer as to whether the alternative which you have proposed - that is, having a State department of Aboriginal affairs - would be any more effective. However, it is also true to say in South Australia that with regards to the units, I think it would be true to say that they have been more or less effective, depending upon the agency, and in fact over time.<sup>137</sup>

6.38 For 'mainstreaming' of service delivery to be effective, issues such as co-ordination and responsiveness to Aboriginal needs and aspirations are vital. Efficiency of service delivery should not be regarded as more important than the effectiveness of services provision.

6.39 The Northern Territory Government referred to its decision to 'mainstream' service delivery to Aboriginal people. In March 1987 the Territory Government abolished the former Department of Community Development, and is now delivering services through relevant specialist servicing agencies. While the Department had a broad oversight, co-ordination and client/agency role in relation to Territory's Aboriginal people, co-ordination now takes place at the central and regional levels and a concept of special need has been developed to give recognition to the different aspirations and requirements of Aboriginal people.<sup>138</sup> The Territory Government has acknowledged that 'there have been some difficulties in shaking down the new arrangements and settling some agencies into their newly acquired responsibilities' but argued that the decision succeeded in cutting administrative costs and promoting 'social cohesiveness'.<sup>139</sup>

6.40 However, some Aboriginal resource organisations in the Northern Territory noted the effects which mainstreaming of service delivery had on co-ordination of services to Aboriginal communities. Whereas previously the resource organisations had only to deal with a single government department - the former Department of Community Development - they now deal with a number of different government departments and agencies. The example was given that where organisations had to deal previously with one government agency to construct a house, they now needed to

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<sup>137</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.528

<sup>138</sup> Transcript of Evidence, pp.S2402-2409

<sup>139</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2408

deal with five different agencies. The result is that co-ordination has become much more difficult. It has effectively become the responsibility of Aboriginal community organisations rather than of government authorities.<sup>140</sup> Also, some of the mainstream agencies also do not seem responsive to Aboriginal needs and aspirations.

6.41 The New South Wales government opened discussion on changes to the administration of Aboriginal affairs in late 1988 by inviting public comment on a discussion paper *New Directions in Aboriginal Affairs*. This discussion paper floated various options for future directions in Aboriginal affairs administration ranging from no change to the abolition of all special programs for Aboriginal people. The majority of submissions responding to this paper supported maintaining the status quo with no changes to the administrative arrangements.<sup>141</sup> However early in 1989, the New South Wales Government, in a follow-up discussion paper, announced its intention to mainstream services to Aboriginal people. This was considered a more cost-effective use of moneys through the elimination of unnecessary bureaucratic structures. 'The long-term aim is that all services provided by State departments and agencies should be designed to meet the needs of all, regardless of race, ethnic or nation origin.'<sup>142</sup> The NSW Government has since announced a further set of proposals which involve the establishment of an Aboriginal Affairs Commission which will have responsibility for co-ordination.

6.42 The role of Aboriginal organisations and resource agencies can become particularly important where services are mainstreamed. Pressure is increased on these Aboriginal groups to co-ordinate government agencies in order that service delivery at the local level does not go awry. In the same way that community advisers have become a major contact for government agencies so too have resource agencies. A number of these organisations complained to the Committee that they were expected to perform the role of government agencies without any additional funding for the extra workload. This situation usually occurs where mainstreaming has been effected. The resource agencies are placed in a difficult position. Their very existence is often due to the absence of effective service delivery by government agencies. This matter will be discussed in Chapter 10.

6.43 The Committee is of the view that mainstreaming is inappropriate for service delivery to Aboriginal people. However, where mainstreaming is to occur, it needs to be negotiated between governments and Aboriginal people.

6.44 The Committee recommends that:

the question of mainstreaming of service delivery be negotiated between governments and Aboriginal

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<sup>140</sup> Precipis of field visits to NT, 29 January-1 February 1990

<sup>141</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2336

<sup>142</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2838

people.

#### Role of local government

6.45 The role of local government in the provision of services to Aboriginal communities was discussed in the Committee's recent discussion paper *Aboriginal People and Mainstream Local Government*. The Committee noted that local government needs to respond more generously to Aboriginal needs for facilities and services and to enable greater Aboriginal participation within its structure. As local government increases its involvement with Aboriginal people, the level of co-operation and co-ordination between bodies will need to be broadened.

#### Poor co-ordination and planning at the local level

6.46 The Committee has stressed on a number of occasions that it is difficult to devise universal solutions for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people are diverse and require a range of different resources and infrastructures. Their skills vary as do their aspirations and objectives. From this perspective the problem arises of how to provide services that are appropriate to the needs of each local area.

6.47 Aboriginal aspirations and priorities do not always match those of government and the bureaucracy. As Gerritson noted, there is frequent incongruence between Aboriginal perceptions of the role of their local organisations and the designs of government bureaucracy. He provided, as an example, the instance of a DAA review team visiting a community in the Northern Territory to find that the council workforce was involved in making rodeo yards. When told that this activity was beyond the scope of the council's functions, the council adviser made it clear that grants-in-aid to the council should be allocated as the council saw fit. Furthermore, the council was keen to create employment for the young men in the community. When the department suggested the men should be employed cutting grass or in town maintenance they were told this was 'women's work'.<sup>143</sup>

6.48 In her paper on the East Kimberley, Audrey Bolger noted the increasing number of Commonwealth and State government agencies appearing in the area. All have some brief to deal with Aboriginal people and offer what appear to be choices in future services and resources. A bewildering array of new resources and services are presented and Aboriginal people are encouraged to make choices from what is offered and make requests for resources to fit their own circumstances. The reality is, however, that the resources are limited and accompanied by strict controls. Moreover, government agencies turn down seemingly reasonable requests by Aboriginal people.<sup>144</sup>

6.49 As the above example demonstrates, Aboriginal people

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<sup>143</sup> Gerritson, R. *ibid*, p.17

<sup>144</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S919

have not usually been informed of the full range of options. The choices put to them by government agencies are usually limited by the function of the particular agency and the national, State or Territory policy direction. Communities are not asked to discuss what their broader needs are or to assess the relative priority of a particular proposal. As Bolger noted, this really means that communities are offered no choice at all and it is hardly surprising that people simply accept whatever is offered. She argued that communities may be consulted about the sort of facilities they want, such as the size and design of the houses, but through a fairly simple process of observation it is possible to deduce how genuine the 'consultation' process is and what little impact communities have had:

Travelling around the Kimberleys one is struck by the similarities in each Aboriginal community. In the course of time each acquires its houses, store, clinic, power house, bore and tank, community hall. Not only that, but by careful observation one can almost date when items were put in. It soon becomes apparent that what happens in each community is dictated more by the fashion of the time in any particular government department than by any genuine choice being made by Aboriginal people.<sup>145</sup>

6.50 Increasingly departments and agencies themselves are recognising the limitations of this approach. If communities are to exercise genuine control over their direction and the services that are provided to them, greater account needs to be made of what they actually want. At a community in Arnhem Land the Committee was told that the community often felt government departments were saying to them, 'We decide; you do.' As a result, programs which were designed for self-management and Aboriginal advancement were often seen to be too restrictive or too inflexible.

6.51 It is also important to recognise that many of the problems affecting Aboriginal communities are inter-related. These need to be addressed by the range of agencies involved and at the community level. This point was illustrated by the arguments of the Department of Community Services and Health. The Department noted in its submission that when dealing with health and community services issues it also encompasses other areas including employment, education, infrastructure, housing and transport:

If employment and education are poor and basic services, housing and transport inadequate, then, the ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle and have adequate access to community facilities must suffer. How, for example, can ear and eye infections in children be adequately treated when there is inadequate clean water in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community to regularly bathe the children's ears, eyes and hands? How can aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their families have adequate access to aged persons homes

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<sup>145</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S971

and visitation opportunities when local transport is inadequate?<sup>146</sup>

6.52 To a certain extent agencies already co-operate with each other on such projects as housing where a range of authorities are involved, each with a specific task. Beyond this, however, broader co-operation is not assured and there is only a limited attempt to draw in those agencies connected with social development and social welfare and to identify appropriate services within the broader needs and desires of a community.

#### A framework for more effective co-ordination

6.53 The Committee believes that models for improved co-ordination and co-operation currently exist. The Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP), for example, already provides a mechanism for co-ordination between Commonwealth agencies as well as between Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. Importantly, it places a heavy emphasis on government agencies acting on needs identified by Aboriginal people at the local level and providing training that is adapted to local needs. In its previous report, *A Chance for the Future*, the Committee was concerned that the co-ordination arrangements put in place under AEDP are not yet working to their potential.<sup>147</sup> Nonetheless the Committee recommended that the AEDP, as a local decision-making and development approach, provide the co-ordination and policy framework for Commonwealth, State and Territory government funding of Aboriginal employment and training programs. As the Committee noted, the encouragement of Aboriginal people to set their own goals and plan their own strategies to achieve those goals, complemented by the actions of government agencies in assisting Aboriginal people to implement their strategies within known resource limitations, are crucial to program success. It is a principle that the Committee believes should form the basis of all co-ordination by government agencies.

6.54 If co-ordination is to be consistent with policies of self-determination and self-management then there needs to be a concerted change in the relationship between government departments and agencies and Aboriginal people. In order to improve Aboriginal control over the range and shape of government services, there needs to be a reversal of the direction in which policy is made. According to the Human Rights Commission, policy tends to be made from the top down and is brought to the people with a preconceived idea of how it is going to be implemented:

The notion is we can adjust a few things here and there, but basically this is the policy, and we are going to stick to it. It should be an interactive approach, a two-way approach, even what is called in the literature as opposed to a top-down approach, a bottom-up approach, and that is people - the target group - influencing the providers of the policy and

<sup>146</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1635

<sup>147</sup> *A Chance for the Future*, p.24

making a policy in that way.<sup>148</sup>

6.55 The recommended change from a process of 'consultation' to 'negotiation' in Chapter 4 is intended to address the issue of co-ordination. With increased involvement by Aboriginal people in the planning and delivery of policies and programs a more planned co-ordinated approach should be an achievable outcome.

#### Development of community plans

6.56 The Committee strongly supports the development of community plans as a means of co-ordinated action on the part of government agencies. In its report *A Chance for the Future* the Committee recommended that government agencies assist Aboriginal people to develop community plans and to include education and training needs within them.<sup>149</sup> Community development has rarely been discussed with Aboriginal people in an overall context which draws together economic, infrastructure, social and cultural needs. The Committee has been struck time and again by this fact.

6.57 The development of community plans has a number of benefits:

- . the process could identify local Aboriginal people's concerns and priorities relating to political and administrative arrangements, social, economic and cultural matters, allowing these issues to be dealt with within a broader context;
- . community plans would provide the basis for action on the part of government departments and non-government organisations. Each organisation should gain a clearer idea of their role in the community, how they relate to each other and what their respective funding responsibilities are;
- . the process could identify infrastructure deficiencies which could then be met according to a community's priorities;
- . funding could be better targeted as a result of priorities and objectives being set out;
- . community advisers and other community-based staff would have access to a framework for community development and would gain a better idea of their role.

6.58 The Committee discussed the issue of community planning in its earlier report *A Chance for the Future* and noted that a number of government departments supported the concept although

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<sup>148</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S863

<sup>149</sup> *A Chance for the Future*, p.29



only limited attempts had been made so far to put this into practice.<sup>150</sup>

6.59 The Committee argued that the development of community plans is crucial to the design and implementation of programs at a local level. Community plans must be wide ranging, covering the physical, socio-economic and cultural aspirations of the local people. They must be much more than just a town or infrastructure plan and should embrace the future development strategies of people in a broad sense.

6.60 In this respect, some of the areas community plans could address would include:

- Land and cultural matters
  - . land tenure
  - . sacred site protection
  - . homelands
  - . means of facilitating ceremonies
  - . control of seas
  
- Social
  - . needs of youth, women and aged persons
  - . recreation needs
  - . health matters such as clinics, birthing facilities, disease control, information programs
  - . problems such as alcohol, substance and child abuse
  - . police
  - . education at preschool, primary and secondary levels
  - . adult education and other training needs
  - . community management training
  
- Infrastructure
  - . roads, airstrips, barges, power, water, community facilities, equipment needs, housing, communications, motor vehicle maintenance etc.
  - . structure of community organisations
  - . provision of local government services
  
- Economic
  - . enterprise development, stores, tourism, canteens, fishing, market gardens etc.
  - . employment and unemployment

The list is not exhaustive and priorities will vary according to local needs.

6.61 However, the Committee noted in its Interim Report that the basic needs of Aboriginal people for infrastructure and services such as health, education and employment are substantial. During the inquiry the Committee visited few, if any, Aboriginal communities where infrastructure and services would be considered standard for non-Aboriginal communities of similar size and remoteness. This points to the continuing

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<sup>150</sup> *A Chance for the Future*, pp.26-29

requirement for significant funding to meet the basic needs of Aboriginal people. In particular, the suggestion that Aboriginal people should, in the context of substandard facilities and services, be self-determining and self-managing imposes an additional burden onto the communities. These basic needs must be addressed in the community planning approach so that infrastructure and service provision is closely related to individual communities' social, economic and cultural aspirations.

6.62 The development of community plans may be time consuming and requires a level of awareness and expertise not always available in Aboriginal communities. Non-Aboriginal staff may also be unfamiliar with principles of community development. Consequently, there is a need to develop training packages for both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal community based staff or departmental personnel, which are based on accepted principles of community development.

6.63 The Committee recommends that:

- . training packages be developed by appropriate institutions for the training of government agency and community employed staff in community planning and other issues relating to community development;
- . government agencies assist Aboriginal people to develop broad-ranging community plans which identify political and administrative requirements, infrastructure and service needs in local regions and which also reflect social, economic and cultural aspirations; and
- . these plans once developed, form the basis for co-ordinated action by government agencies in a region.

6.64 For community plans to have any meaning they will require the financial support of government. In the next chapter the Committee discusses the issue of funding and proposes a shift towards greater discretionary funding through means such as the provision of block grants. The South Australian Government noted that there was a need for State and Commonwealth Governments to effectively co-ordinate their activities in the areas of policy development and planning and in consultation and direct contact with local Aboriginal communities. It added that 'less specific and complicated approaches' to accountability, such as block grants, would be possible if such changes were made.<sup>151</sup> The Committee notes that the development of community planning could provide the necessary framework for the type of funding arrangements suggested by the South Australian Government.

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<sup>151</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2192

6.65 The Committee recommends that:

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments develop organisational funding arrangements which are compatible with community development plans.

6.66 Community planning, implemented with the support of Aboriginal people, is self-determination in practice. As one submission noted, self-determination raises the possibility of Aboriginal people demanding real choices and having a real input into their development. This involves a process of community development whereby Aboriginal people are able to plan ahead and take the actions necessary to put the plan into operation.<sup>152</sup> There may also be a need for advice from non-Aboriginal community-based staff or from Aboriginal resource organisations. The Committee discusses these two matters in detail in Chapters 9 and 10 respectively.

6.67 The Committee stresses, however, that community planning should not be seen as an infrastructure development plan. The process discussed by the Committee in this chapter should involve the broader 'development of a community'.

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<sup>152</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S975

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## CHAPTER 7

### FUNDING

#### Introduction

7.1 An examination of funding to Aboriginal communities reveals a great deal about the limits to self-determination and the effectiveness of self-management. Even though Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are increasingly expected to manage public funds going into their communities, very real questions exist as to the control communities are able to exercise over them. This chapter considers the overall funding framework for Aboriginal communities and discusses the impediments to self-determination caused by the current funding process.

#### Overall funding framework

7.2 Following the 1967 referendum, the Commonwealth became involved in direct funding of Aboriginal affairs in a significant way. Commonwealth funding of Aboriginal advancement programs began in financial year 1968-69 when a total of \$10 million was spent through the Office of Aboriginal Affairs: \$5 million for a capital fund for Aboriginal enterprises, \$4 million to the States for housing, education and welfare, and \$1 million to programs in the Northern Territory and \$0.1 million paid directly to Aboriginal welfare organisations in each State.

7.3 Since then the Commonwealth has dramatically increased its funding involvement and the number of programs and agencies aimed at benefiting Aboriginal people. In 1988-89 the Commonwealth allocation for Aboriginal people was \$784 million. Of this, some \$457 million was administered within the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio with the balance of \$327 million being spread amongst other departments. A further \$31 million was paid by the Commonwealth to the States and Northern Territory under the *States Grants Aboriginal Assistance Act 1976*.<sup>153</sup>

7.4 A large and increasing proportion of this funding is provided to Aboriginal people, communities and organisations directly by the Commonwealth rather than being channelled indirectly through the State and Territory governments. Commonwealth funding to Aboriginal organisations and communities takes place through a series of grants known as 'grants for Aboriginal advancement' or 'grants in aid'. A wide range of groups are eligible for this form of government assistance. The only general conditions governing these grants are that the Aboriginal organisations be incorporated under some form of

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<sup>153</sup> Department of Aboriginal Affairs Annual Report, 1988-89  
pp.17,218

State/Territory or Commonwealth legislation and that the grant be 'one-off', although this latter condition is not always applied. The grants may be used for a range of purposes including community infrastructure, health, education, recreation, broadcasting, heritage protection, etc.

7.5 In theory, direct funding of Aboriginal organisations promotes self-determination by giving Aboriginal organisations control over resources thereby ensuring that funding accords directly with Aboriginal priorities and needs. This approach has the broad support of Aboriginal people and is also supported by the Committee.

7.6 Apart from the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio agencies, many other Commonwealth agencies direct funds specifically towards expenditure on Aboriginal affairs. These include the Departments of Employment, Education and Training, Community Services and Health, Social Security, Administrative Services, Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, Attorney-General's, Transport and Communications and even the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.<sup>154</sup>

7.7 Commonwealth agency funding is divided amongst these departments covering a range of program areas, each with its own policy basis. Some examples would include CDEP, Town Camp Housing Improvement Program (TCHIP) and the Town Campers Assistance Program (TCAP). In broad terms these cover land and economic development, social advancement, heritage protection and cultural matters. These arrangements are likely to give rise to some overlap and/or policy conflicts. The Department of Community Services and Health noted that this can arise where one department has a policy-advising role for a particular function and another department may have the administrative and funding role for the same function. So, for example, conflict might arise between DCS & H, which has responsibility for health policy, and ATSIC which has responsibility for administration and funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders health programs.<sup>155</sup>

7.8 In addition to the direct funding of Aboriginal affairs, the Commonwealth makes a series of grants each year to State and Territory governments. Financial assistance is provided to the States by means of 'general purpose' and 'specific purpose' grants. The general purpose grants are made to State and Territory governments every year for the continuing administration of programs in education, health, community welfare and housing. These are available to Aboriginal people equally with other Australians. A budget and set of conditions, prescribing in general terms how the funds are to be administered, accompanies each of these general purpose grants.

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<sup>154</sup> DAA Annual Report 1988-89 p.224

<sup>155</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1641

7.9 By means of the 'specific purpose grants', the Commonwealth, through one of its departments, provides financial assistance for specific purposes - often for particular Aboriginal programs or projects designed for the advancement of Aboriginals in that State or Territory. Each State and Territory Government assumes the responsibility for the administration of these funds and the operation of the programs established as a result.

7.10 State and Territory governments also have their own sources of income which they use to provide some of these services and programs in accordance with their own policy approaches. These priorities may not necessarily coincide with those of the Commonwealth. They may also supplement their own funds with Commonwealth grants so that State and Commonwealth funds may often be used for the same purpose or to fund jointly a particular program or project. In some instances formalised joint funding arrangements exist between the States and Commonwealth. For example, the Aboriginal Communities Development Program - a \$100 million program over five years - is funded equally by the Commonwealth and Western Australia, while the Town Camp Housing Improvement Program is funded jointly by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments. Some services or programs for Aboriginal people are, however, established and run separately by the State and Territory governments.

7.11 In the Northern Territory and Queensland a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities are receiving untied general purpose funding under the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act*. In the Northern Territory 43 communities received approximately \$2.8 million between them in 1988-89 and in Queensland some 33 communities shared around \$1.6 million. Of these only Mornington Island and Aurukun in Queensland are constituted as mainstream local government councils. The rest are incorporated under the community government provisions of the Northern Territory *Local Government Act*, as is the case in the Northern Territory, under the Queensland community services legislation or under the various associations and councils incorporation legislation available to them.

7.12 Previously most of these bodies would not have been eligible for such funding and a number of bodies performing local government functions in Aboriginal communities remain without access to such funding. However, the *Local Government Act* now provides that bodies performing local government functions may be nominated by the relevant State or Territory minister as eligible for assistance. Under the Act funds are provided to the States and Northern Territory. Recommendations are made to the relevant State/Northern Territory minister by a Local Government Grants Commission on the allocation of funds among the local governing bodies. The allocation to councils recommended by the Grants Commission must be made in accordance with principles of distribution drawn up by the States and Northern Territory and approved by the Commonwealth minister. The principles direct

more financial assistance to those local governing bodies which are the most disadvantaged in their ability to raise revenue and provide services as compared with the average standard performance of other local governing bodies. A minimum entitlement provision is contained in the legislation which ensures that no local governing body will receive an allocation less than the amount it would receive if 30 per cent of the State's allocation were distributed on a per capita basis.

#### Implications of the funding framework

7.13 A number of general observations need to be made about the implications of the overall funding framework for Aboriginal communities. The involvement of two levels of government (not to mention the role of non-government agencies or local government in some cases) produces a lack of clarity in the division of funding responsibilities between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments. When coupled with inadequate co-ordination and planning between the two levels of government these funding arrangements accentuate the possibility of fragmentation of service delivery. Indeed, the South Australian Government argued that 'a lack of co-ordination, fragmented policy development and planning and unnecessarily complex financial arrangements are all consequences of the present situation.'<sup>156</sup>

7.14 From the top, the government funding regime can be depicted as a pyramid with funding going either directly to, or trickling through, subsequent layers of government until it reaches Aboriginal communities. From the bottom, however, at the community level the picture is more like a tangled and confused web with Aboriginal communities and organisations being provided with funding and services from a myriad of agencies in a seemingly disconnected fashion. The problems with funding and accountability from this perspective are understandable.

7.15 At a community level this structure ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs are not accorded appropriate funding priority in terms of amount and proper targeting. By way of example the Committee recalls the report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission on the Toomelah community in New South Wales. The appalling conditions in the community were largely attributable to the conflict over appropriate policy and the respective funding responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the State Government. Uncertainty about funding responsibilities means that it is easy for the States and Territories to blame the Commonwealth, and vice versa, for allocating insufficient funds to Aboriginal communities.

7.16 The funding of support services for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders through the States and Territories also introduces inefficiencies because funds are simply passed from one body to another. Already the funds for Aboriginal

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<sup>156</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2192



advancement are diluted by around 8.5 per cent per annum - the proportion of the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs' administrative expenses to the value of program expenditure.<sup>157</sup> As money is passed on to the States and Territories the overall resource level is further diluted by program administration.

### Particular funding problems

7.17 A major criteria for determining self-determination and self-management in Aboriginal communities is the extent to which they are able to exercise control over their funding and generate other forms of income, independent of government agencies. Clearly, Aboriginal communities are experiencing a number of funding problems that limit their ability to be self-managing and restrict the scope of self-determination. They arise for a number of reasons including: the dependence of Aboriginal communities on government funding, their inability to raise revenue and accumulate cash reserves, and the consequences of mismanagement. Concern also exists over the limited amount of discretionary funding available to community councils.

7.18 Aboriginal communities are severely restricted in their ability to raise revenue and, as such, are heavily dependent on public funding through Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. Municipal government revenue comes from a range of sources: specific purpose and general purpose (untied) government grants, government and commercial loans, interest, rates, fees, charges, fines, rent and trading activities. In the Northern Territory, for example, municipalities receive around 38 per cent of their revenue from rates and 41 per cent from government grants. The typical Aboriginal community council, however, is greatly limited in its capacity to generate its own revenue and receives around 93 per cent in government grants.<sup>158</sup> For this reason, the effects of any reduction in funding levels or financial mismanagement are quickly apparent and have a significant impact on the community, particularly in terms of the level of employment available.

7.19 By way of example, a community such as Yuendumu in central Australia derives about 95 per cent of its income from government sources. In her submission to the inquiry Dr Elspeth Young described the effects on such a community if funding is reduced. She noted, for example, that in late 1978, the Yuendumu Council employed 69 people. The majority of these were unskilled positions engaged in tasks such as camp cleaning and firewood collection. Half the council employees were women. In 1983, in the wake of funding cutbacks and budgeting problems, the workforce numbered only 32, mostly men in skilled positions.

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<sup>157</sup> DAA Annual Report 1987-88, p.112

<sup>158</sup> M. Mowbray, Black and White Councils: Aboriginal and Local Government in the Northern Territory, Report for the Central Northern Land Councils, 1986, pp.27-28

In addition,<sup>159</sup> a number of basic services had to be discontinued.

7.20 Fluctuations such as these not only cause instability for individual members of the community but also affect the entire local economy. Unemployment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities is high and any reduction in the size of the workforce by the community's largest employer is a serious matter.

#### Need to streamline funding arrangements

7.21 The problems associated with funding represent real restrictions on the autonomy of Aboriginal communities. This lack of autonomy is reinforced by the fact that almost all funding to Aboriginal communities comes in the form of grants for specific projects or functions, although some may receive block grants or untied local government funding. These funds are supplemented to a limited extent by other activities such as enterprises. Communities also tap into sources such as the CDEP and direct individual unemployment benefits into a community wages pool from which a variety of projects are funded. In reality, however, it is difficult for communities to control and set priorities for the overall funding coming into their communities as they are derived from too many sources and tied to predetermined priorities that may not necessarily reflect a community's requirements.

7.22 The problem of multiple funding sources was addressed by Mr J. Tanner, an auditor for a number of Aboriginal organisations in Victoria:

The multiplicity of funding sources, the somewhat complicated and varied requirements of each of the funding bodies and the individual and different formal requirements of the various Acts under which the organisations are registered create a situation where the costs of maintaining administration and accounting functions is quite excessive.<sup>160</sup>

His submission proposed streamlining the funding process in order to ease the burden presently imposed on Aboriginal community administrators.

7.23 The Committee believes that improvements need to be made in the funding arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities and organisations in order to increase control over resources. This will go a long way towards ensuring that funding better matches needs and priorities. The dominance of specific-purpose or tied grants has led to a misallocation of funding in the opinion of some commentators. Owen Stanley

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<sup>159</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S775-776

<sup>160</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1163

identified four obvious reasons for this economic misallocation:

Firstly, the government needs to engage in a certain amount of 'show-piece' expenditure to appease visitors who complain about the state of housing and facilities in the communities. This partly explains the emphasis on new buildings and town construction. In many places the need for these facilities is great, of course. Secondly, many Europeans fear that Aborigines will 'waste' resources if given complete control. Thirdly, many Europeans feel that since they are the donors they have a 'donor's right' to determine what is done with the resources. Finally, the fact that grants come from different government agencies leads to misallocation because of the way in which allocation questions are asked. For instance officials responsible for housing funding ask 'Do you need more or better housing' and the answer to that type of question is always 'Yes'. The appropriate question is 'If you have \$x, how much do you want to spend on housing?' The answer to that question, for instance, may lead to a reduction in housing and town maintenance expenditure and an increase in spending on enterprises.<sup>161</sup>

7.24 It is arguable that the major constraint on the autonomy of Aboriginal organisations, irrespective of their structure, relates to funding. If organisations have only sufficient funds to meet the provision of essential services and are obliged to work within the confines of pre-determined policy, then the fact that they are empowered to do much more is of little consequence.

7.25 The previous chapter argued for more systematic planning of a community's needs. If community planning is to be effective and have any substance, it needs to be underpinned by appropriate funding arrangements. By this the Committee means that organisations need greater discretion over available funding in order to allow Aboriginal people to design their services and determine their own priorities.

7.26 The lack of control over how funding is spent emerged as a major issue for communities during the inquiry. Incorporated bodies often encountered problems when using funding from one source to pay for some other function which at the time was a more immediate priority. This usually results in an official reprimand, as communities are not supposed to transfer money between functions. In the evidence to the inquiry, Audrey Bolger noted that communities felt strongly about the way grants were tied to spending on particular items and the lack of discretion attached to funding, even if money was unspent on a particular item:

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<sup>161</sup> Stanley, p.114

Once a community has signed the letter of acceptance money is paid into its bank account at quarterly intervals and the community is required to account for the spending of the grant. DAA officers monitor this and check that the money is spent on the items for which it was given. The control is tight and communities which transfer money across categories are reprimanded and warned that future funding may be compromised if they do not adhere to the spending guidelines.<sup>162</sup>

7.27 In a more general sense, however, evidence of the lack of flexibility of government was provided by the Commonwealth Auditor-General in his report on audits of September 1987. In that report, the Auditor-General noted that there was little evidence that existing projects were assessed on an ongoing basis against their initial justification or against the merits of new proposals. As a result, new projects had little chance of obtaining funding irrespective of their merits, raising the question of the extent to which funding is able to keep up with Aboriginal needs and objectives.<sup>163</sup> The Auditor-General's view was confirmed in evidence by an officer of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs who noted that 'there is very little, if any, new money for initiatives in the area that we are responsible for'.<sup>164</sup>

7.28 The funding process also becomes complicated when one project is funded from more than one source. In this situation funds must be accounted for separately. In reality the categories under which accounts must be registered may not accord with the way a council actually functions. Nor does this allow for the interdependence of community activities which means that documenting such elements separately may be extremely difficult. For example, the grants provided for the operation of a workshop in a community may also relate to the operations of the school, sawmill, grader, brickworks or whatever, which may or may not be incorporated under the same body. This makes accounting for the money and reconciling all the functions in a community extremely difficult.

7.29 Councils may face budgeting problems through delays in the release of their funds. This may tend to be exacerbated during the supply period but any uncertainty arising at that time can also affect planning and performance later in the year. Woorabinda Council complained to the Committee that funding from various bodies was not always prompt.<sup>165</sup> This meant that the council was forced to temporarily discontinue a service or

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<sup>162</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S880

<sup>163</sup> Auditor-General's Report on Audits, September 1987, p.1

<sup>164</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.630

<sup>165</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S80

employment or else rely on CDEP money - which is paid quarterly in advance - or on an overdraft facility.

7.30 There is a case for providing 'block grants' to communities which would allow some flexibility in allocating money to areas they see as important. Indeed, if this approach were adopted, it could be expected that Aboriginal priorities would take precedence over what agencies currently are willing to provide.

7.31 The concept of moving increasingly towards 'one line appropriations' or 'block grants' was supported by governments and communities throughout Australia. The South Australian Government noted that less specific and less complicated approaches to accountability and funding, such as the use of block grants, are highly desirable. The submission argued, quite correctly, that the stronger the community management structure, the greater the possibility for a devolution of financial responsibility along these lines.<sup>166</sup>

7.32 A recent report has recommended the introduction of a system of block grant funding for Aboriginal organisations and communities. It argues that the Commonwealth Grants Commission should have a role in assessing the relative needs of communities, providing the basis for the level of block grant funding.<sup>167</sup>

7.33 A move towards block grant funding would need to resolve a number of issues prior to introduction. These include:

- . how a system of block funding can be introduced in the context of the current multiplicity of funding sources which involve different levels of government;
- . how the relative needs of communities would be assessed;
- . the extent to which block funding should be extended to cover the range of services provided to communities;
- . what would be done about funding to regionally provided services such as health, legal aid, resource agencies, etc; and
- . financial management, administrative and accounting practices that would need to be implemented as part of the move to block funding.

7.34 The Committee strongly supports moving towards the

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<sup>166</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2192

<sup>167</sup> *Land of Promises*, op.cit., pp.98-99

provision of block grants for the funding of Aboriginal communities and organisations. However, given the complexity of the issues involved, a move to complete block funding could take some time to achieve.

7.35 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Commonwealth in conjunction with the States and Territories develop proposals for implementing a system of block grant funding of Aboriginal communities and organisations;

7.36 There is also considerable merit in government providing Aboriginal organisations and communities with a minimum level of funding across a supply period. A suitable term would be three years. In this way communities could be guaranteed a certain minimum level of funding thereby minimising many of the problems referred to above.

7.37 The Committee recommends that:

- . Commonwealth, State and Territory governments implement a system whereby Aboriginal communities and organisations are provided with a minimum level of funding on a triennial basis.

#### Options for generating revenue locally

7.38 Communities are only too well aware of the difficulties the dependence on government funding has placed on them. Many community councils have attempted to expand their sources of funding and generate their own revenue with varying degrees of success. Communities may seek to increase their revenue by a number of means including:

- . negotiating royalties and ex gratia payments with mining and exploration companies;
- . developing enterprises such as farms, a canteen, shops, fishing, arts and crafts or tourist ventures;
- . undertaking contract work; and
- . levying charges on community members.

7.39 The scope for communities to expand their sources of revenue varies, but is generally extremely limited. Most communities are not in a position to take advantage of payments arising out of mining ventures. Indeed, possibly only the Gagadju people in Arnhem Land, who are the recipients of such moneys, can be said to be in any way genuinely independent of government funding.

7.40 Part of the success of the Gagadju Association in the Northern Territory may be attributed to the financial

independence of the organisation. The fact that the association receives almost no government funding allows it to provide its members with services that are suitable to their needs. The \$3 million per annum paid from mining royalties essentially acts as a 'one line' appropriation or block grant over which the association exercises its autonomy. For instance, the Gagadju Association has chosen to build elementary houses for its people rather than more elaborate and costly structures. The association has also been able to accumulate capital and direct the funds towards other investments for the long term - something other communities are unable to do.<sup>168</sup>

### Enterprises

7.41 The establishment of enterprises is considered by Aboriginal communities to be an important means of generating revenue in addition to government funding. Enterprises are also seen as providers of much needed employment and training and, in a broader sense, as making a contribution to community development.

7.42 The Commonwealth Government sees an explicit link between the development of commercially viable enterprises and an increase in the level of self-determination and self-management of communities.<sup>169</sup> In practical terms it has supported the development of Aboriginal enterprises through funding from the former Aboriginal Development Commission and by way of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy which encompasses two schemes: the Community Economic Advancement Projects scheme and the Community Employment and Enterprise Development scheme. It is envisaged that enterprises will develop in the following areas providing employment for up to 20 per cent of the workforce: agriculture, tourism and hospitality, public works contracting, retailing and transport, housing and construction, textiles, arts and artefacts and broadcasting and the performing arts.<sup>170</sup>

7.43 Under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989*, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation has been established to take over the enterprise functions previously the responsibility of the Aboriginal Development Commission. The broad purpose of the corporation is:

... to advance the commercial and economic interests of Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders by

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<sup>168</sup> Stanley, p.114

<sup>169</sup> Aboriginal Development Commission Annual Report 1987-88, p.54

<sup>170</sup> For a detailed description see *Aboriginal Employment Development Policy, Community-based Employment Strategies, Policy Paper No.3, pp.2-6*

accumulating and using a substantial capital asset for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.<sup>171</sup>

7.44 This approach recognises that a major constraint to autonomy is the lack of economic independence. The Committee supports this approach. It offers the prospect, over the medium to long term, of developing alternative sources of income and increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community control over financial resources while engaging in community development. The problems and limitations facing enterprise development in Aboriginal communities, which operate within a different framework from other companies and business enterprises, must also be recognised.

7.45 Many 'Aboriginal enterprises' were not established as 'business enterprises' in the strict sense. They may have been set up for broader social reasons, such as the provision of training, or as a means of co-ordinating craft making within a community. For instance, the overriding reason for a cattle project, may be to provide a land base for the community and employment for as many people in a community as possible. In this sense Aboriginal enterprises do not necessarily equate with enterprises in the mainstream community where the question of profitability is necessarily a motivating and primary factor.

7.46 Nor does the setting up of these 'businesses' or 'enterprises' mirror the way businesses would be established in the private sector. In Aboriginal communities they would usually be formed with the support of, and in consultation with, government agencies and non-Aboriginal people working in a community, rather than on the initiative of only one entrepreneur. Direct Aboriginal involvement in setting up these enterprises may not necessarily be that great. Nor are they usually privately owned. Instead, Aboriginal corporations own them on behalf of the broader community or a particular group within the community.

7.47 Some enterprises, such as retail stores, also perform a broader service role within a community. Their profitability is restricted by high overheads and the low income of community members. It should also be recognised that the cash economy in Aboriginal communities is open, with much of the revenue leaving the community to pay for the purchase of goods and services. It is usually therefore the larger towns such as Alice Springs, Port Augusta, etc., that ultimately benefit from the multiplier effect of spending within communities.

7.48 Some of the problems affecting Aboriginal community enterprises are common to all business operators in remote areas: high overheads relating to isolation, a limited local resource base exacerbated by climatic difficulties, marketing

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<sup>171</sup> Section 143 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989*



difficulties, lack of ready access to sources of finance, and a small and dispersed population base. On the other hand, there is a range of factors peculiar to Aboriginal circumstances which need to be recognised when considering any Aboriginal enterprise. These factors relate to the often differing cultural aspirations of Aboriginal people living a more traditional lifestyle. Their decision-making structures reflect these differing cultural determinants.

7.49 In Chapter 2 the Committee referred to the potential conflict between Aboriginal values and non-Aboriginal structures. Dr Elspeth Young has tackled this problem in relation to the operation of Aboriginal enterprises. She noted that, inevitably, people involved in economic enterprises find it difficult to reconcile the requirements of the operation of the enterprise with their traditional kinship obligations particularly in regard to the reciprocal exchange of money and goods. The hierarchy of Aboriginal society, which is based on traditional knowledge and not business skills, complicates this problem. Dr Young noted that the younger people, who tend to be involved more in financial management, may feel obliged to hand on benefits to their older kin, to the detriment of the business.<sup>172</sup>

7.50 Again the Committee turns to the need to have appropriate structures in place if Aboriginal enterprises are to succeed. The structure of an enterprise should take into account the relationship between particular individuals or families and particular areas of land. Aboriginal perception is such that people usually do not have the right to control resources if they are not the traditional owners. The imposition of a management structure that is incompatible with this may promote conflict and organisational breakdown. This is more evident in the case of a pastoral property where the land itself is used for the enterprise. This also raises the question of equity. If an individual or small group is utilising a large area of community-owned land or resources for their own benefit, then the community as a whole may be disadvantaged, particularly if the venture fails.

7.51 Not only are the structures important, but, as Dr Young argues, there are certain types of enterprises that stand greater prospects of success. These activities - such as the making of artifacts, arts and crafts - are increasingly popular and more compatible with Aboriginal interest and skills:

People already have the skills, or are interested in acquiring them; the work can be done as piece work rather than in a conventional 9 to 5 situation; and, because the designs are produced by the Aborigines themselves they have full control over what they will make, how they will make it, and what aspects are

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<sup>172</sup> Young, Aboriginal Economic Enterprise, p.7

appropriate for exhibition to outsiders.<sup>173</sup>

7.52 It is also worth mentioning that Aboriginal communities themselves are thinking about appropriate forms of enterprise for their communities. The debate within communities over tourism is a good example of the way communities are seeking to manage, alter and balance their own requirements with the desire to obtain more funding. Different communities are coming to different conclusions about the extent to which they involve themselves in the tourist industry, if at all. The point is that Aboriginal communities themselves are exercising control over the decision rather than having it imposed on them.

7.53 Another major difficulty facing the operation of enterprises in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities is the general lack of skills. The Committee dealt with this issue in detail in its previous report *A Chance for the Future, Training in Skills for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Community Management and Development*. The community-based approach to training is of particularly relevant to enterprises in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities. On-the-job training in such areas as retail stores, sawmills and housing and construction, is provided in some communities.

7.54 Too often, however, a project may end up in difficulties because of a lack of expertise and an enterprise may fail before the problems are recognised. The community as a whole then suffers because of the poor management skills of a small number of individuals. This often results in a reduction in employment and training opportunities and control of the enterprise is taken away from the community and given to an outsider, either a government department or an administrator. In the case of a store, for example, the whole community ends up paying for the problem with higher prices until the store trades out of difficulties. The Committee discussed this problem with representatives of Anangu Winkiku stores who have attempted to prevent retail stores from failing by anticipating management problems and providing advice and training. It was evident to the Committee that there were many pressures on Anangu Winkiku to assist communities in difficulty. Whilst this scheme was succeeding in central Australia, the Committee notes that many other stores and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island enterprises do not have access to similar advisory services.

7.55 Finally, the almost total dependence by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities on government funding for enterprise development and investment, contradicts the use of enterprises for increasing economic self-sufficiency. Given the limitations on these organisations, it is unlikely that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities will be able to access the commercial finance sector for funds. Indeed, in many cases, the nature of land tenure precludes commercial borrowings. The use of government funding for enterprises produces another

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<sup>173</sup> *ibid*, p.23

set of problems for communities which relate to accountability. These are dealt with in chapter 8.

7.56 The Committee believes that the promotion of viable enterprises is crucial if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities are to become self-sufficient. Nonetheless, the Committee is realistic about the scope of achieving this. The prospect of having enterprises generate enough revenue to allow communities to be completely independent of government funding, is remote. In many cases enterprises may become viable only over the long term, and some may never do so. At the same time the Committee emphasises that the operation of enterprises provides a range of benefits, even if they do not appear to be altogether successful at first. By this the Committee means that there are cases where ventures can be judged to be successful because they are being run by Aboriginals, in accordance with their values and needs, and performing a useful training, employment and community development role.

7.57 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation support enterprises where they have the clear potential to generate additional income and employment within communities.
- . training for involvement in enterprises be provided to Aboriginal people.
- . the management structures for enterprises reflect the broad principles set out in Chapter 3.

#### Contract work

7.58 The opportunity for communities to undertake contract work is an important element in generating additional revenue. Involvement in contracts has a number of other benefits for a community because it provides greatly needed employment opportunities and enables training to be provided. Contract work could be for a range of functions including grading roads, building houses, printing, etc.

7.59 Community participation in contract work is often irregular and patchy. In his study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island local governing bodies in Queensland and the Northern Territory, Alan Morton found that contract work was more likely to be undertaken by communities in the Top End than in

central Australia.<sup>174</sup> Too often the Committee heard complaints that 'a contractor from town just arrived one day' and graded the road/built houses/installed a tank, etc., and the community did not have a chance to participate in the project.

7.60 Although it is often the policy of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to give preference to communities in gaining contracts for local work, in practice, this does not always occur. Guidelines for allowing communities to take on contract work and participate favourably in the tender process exist in a number of departments but are sometimes overlooked. The Committee is keen to see greater flexibility in allowing councils to generate funds from sources such as contracts and public works. The importance of contract work to community development needs to be recognised and positive efforts made to assist the less advantaged communities obtain work of this nature.

7.61 Aboriginal organisations and community councils should be encouraged to tender for contracts. It is not enough for tenders to be gazetted or advertised in the regional press. Few Aboriginal people read or have access to Government Gazettes. The onus should be on government departments and agencies to notify the relevant communities of a prospective tender process and give them an opportunity to make an application.

7.61A Most local governments and some state governments require prospective tenderers to register with them, indicating the type of work they are interested in tendering for. The Commonwealth requires tenderers to pre-qualify before lodging tenders by establishing that similar work has been successfully undertaken. Registered parties are invited to tender on work in their area. Communities should be encouraged to register with all authorities likely to undertake such work in their general area. Similarly, an appropriate weighting in favour of the community needs to be applied when assessing tenders.

7.62 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments provide ample opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities to participate in contract work in and around their community;

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<sup>174</sup> Morton Aboriginal and Island Local Governing Bodies, Grants Determination Project, April 1988 p.34

- . Commonwealth, State and Territory Government departments and agencies develop guidelines, where none exist, to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in contract work. These guidelines include:
  - directly informing communities of local methods of tendering opportunities, and
  - the provision of preferential tendering arrangements.
- . relevant Commonwealth departments and agencies provide details in their annual reports of tenders let to Aboriginal communities and organisations;
- . where a community is unsuccessful at a particular tender, the Commonwealth, State or Territory government agency responsible for the letting of the contract provide the community with a written explanation of the reasons why it was unsuccessful;
- . (DELETED)

#### Rates and levies

7.63 Mainstream local governments are heavily dependent on their ability to collect rates from land or property owners. The provision of utilities in local government areas is funded by specific purpose rates service charges or fees which are supplemented to some extent by the State and Territory Governments. Local governments operating in remote areas may rely more heavily on the funding from their State or Territory authorities although they generally are able to charge rates.

7.64 It is arguable that the levying of property rates is neither appropriate nor equitable in respect of the land in Aboriginal communities which may be either reserve or inalienable freehold title. Such land does not have a capital value in that it cannot be bought or sold. It has similar status to other land reserved or made inalienable by governments, such as national parks.

7.65 The widespread poverty in Aboriginal communities and the dependence on social welfare provides an argument against the levying of rates on individuals. Similarly, the level of home ownership in Aboriginal communities is extremely low, which negates the levying of rates as a source of income. However, rent paid for housing includes a component for rates where rates are payable.

7.66 Some communities are finding alternative means of

raising revenue from residents such as levying service charges on each household or family which go towards the cost of providing services. The success of community councils in collecting such revenue is variable, although some indicated to the Committee that they were pleased with their efforts.

7.67 In Queensland, the previous government required communities to generate a certain amount of revenue through the collection of rates or service charges. Five communities - Yarrabah, Hope Vale, Woorabinda, Palm Island and Cherbourg - were required to have a self-funding component in 1988-89 of 7.5 per cent of funds needed for the provision of local government services. Other councils are required to self-fund at not less than 2.5 per cent.<sup>175</sup>

7.68 Prior to the change of government in Queensland consideration was also given to allowing communities the capacity to divest trust land to individuals for ownership or to establish commercial enterprises. In such cases it is possible that, by exempting Aboriginal land from general rates, enterprises and conventional housing could be established under a rate shelter thus depriving the community council of valuable revenue.<sup>176</sup> This situation could also arise in other parts of Australia.

7.69 The issue of divestment of community-owned land to individuals and corporations for their own benefit is a complex one that would require significant consideration by Aboriginal communities. Further, if divestment is to occur a formula must be devised so that an appropriate charge could be levied on the corporation or individual. As this would be similar to rates levied by mainstream local governments, the charge should be taken into account for Local Government Financial Assistance and other grant purposes. These matters require further investigation preferably by Aboriginal organisations or organisations with predominantly Aboriginal membership.

7.70 The Committee recommends that:

- . The issues associated with the divestment of community-owned Aboriginal land to individuals and corporations for their exclusive use be further investigated.
- . A formula be devised to establish an appropriate levy to the community - similar to the local government rates that would otherwise be payable - for the use of divested land.

7.71 A number of Commonwealth, State and Territory

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<sup>175</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1195

<sup>176</sup> For further discussion of this problem see Transcript of Evidence, pp.S661-663

government departments and agencies also operate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities. Under section 114 of the Constitution the Commonwealth Government does not pay taxes, including rates. Commonwealth business enterprises such as Telecom and Australia Post do however pay rates. Service charges such as water, sewerage and electricity are payable by Commonwealth agencies. The low revenue base and the general financial disadvantage of Aboriginal local governments and community councils needs to be better recognised.

The Committee recommends that:

In addition to normal funding to Aboriginal community councils Commonwealth, State and Territory government departments and agencies make full payment for local government services used.

#### Cash Accumulation and Infrastructure Deficiencies

7.72 Aboriginal councils find it nearly impossible to accumulate cash reserves for future discretionary expenditure. This is not surprising given the difficulties of generating additional revenue and the unwillingness of bureaucracy to provide funds to communities and organisations for the orderly replacement of capital assets. The large proportion of funding earmarked for specific purposes or for providing basic or essential services also ensures that cash reserves are minimal, if they exist at all. Communities are thereby placed in the position of being unable to upgrade plant and equipment, which is important if they are to participate in contract work or continue to provide various types of employment and training. In many cases this is particularly disadvantageous to communities where they have inherited inadequate facilities or run-down plant and equipment.

7.73 Part of the problem seems to be that any success in generating private funds is seen as an indicator for a reduction in public funding. Communities expressed their concern to the Committee that if they are able to earn additional money from contracts or other enterprises there is a risk that government funding will be cut. Although the Committee has supported the principle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities broadening their sources of funding and reducing their dependence on government, there needs to be a recognition that this will be a long time coming for most communities, given their inadequate resource bases and infrastructure. There should be a substantial period during which councils gain experience in private fund generation and are able to accumulate sufficient resources to address their infrastructure requirements and to increase the level of skills in the local workforce.

7.74 The Committee recommends that:

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments recognise the infrastructure and resource

deficiencies in Aboriginal communities and allow them to carry over funding where necessary without prejudice to the level of funding; and that

as part of this recognition, funding of Aboriginal communities and organisations be supplemented to allow for the orderly replacement of capital assets.

7.75 The Committee has referred to the infrastructure deficiencies that exist in Aboriginal communities and the need for these to be identified as one part of the process of community planning. Once these needs have been assessed they need to be supported by a level of funding that is determined by an appropriate mechanism. Grants commission methodology may be a suitable means of calculating funding levels for infrastructure, although this requires further investigation.

7.76 The Committee recommends that:

the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in conjunction with the Commonwealth Office of Local Government, determine an appropriate mechanism for funding infrastructure deficiencies in Aboriginal communities.



## CHAPTER 8

### ACCOUNTABILITY

#### Introduction

8.1 The sizeable amount of public funding to Aboriginal communities necessarily entails a high degree of public accountability. Aboriginal communities and organisations have had varying degrees of success with accountability for public funding and have tended to attract publicity when breakdowns occur. The Committee referred to these problems in its previous report, *A Chance for the Future*, noting that problems continue in the management of Aboriginal organisations.

8.2 The Committee pointed to poor financial management and the non-compliance with grant conditions as evidence of this but was critical of government agencies for failing to provide Aboriginal organisations and communities with the support that would allow them to handle their responsibilities. It urged the Commonwealth and States to fund jointly training packages and programs in community management, financial management, administration and development to promote the development of skills in communities.<sup>177</sup>

#### Conflict with self-determination

8.3 The Committee has referred in this and previous reports to the conflict between the notion of self-determination and the requirements placed on communities in receipt of government funding. The Committee noted that there are limitations to the extent to which a community can be genuinely 'self-determining' or 'self-managing' whilst it is subject to government controls in the form of policy making and financial accountability.<sup>178</sup> Another conflict, recognised in the DAA submission, is the failure to achieve a balance between the demands of the cultural imperatives of Aboriginal society and the needs of good administration and proper accountability has been the major cause of the lack<sup>179</sup> of success of self-determination in some communities.

8.4 For a variety of reasons, Aboriginal organisations and councils can get into financial difficulties and sometimes reach positions where they are technically insolvent. When these situations occur, providers of services, including shire and city councils, electricity suppliers and local tradesmen, often petition the Commonwealth, State or Territory governments to 'bail out' the organisation or community and to cover the cost

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<sup>177</sup> *A Chance for the Future*, pp.7-8, 22-24

<sup>178</sup> *ibid*, p.9

<sup>179</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2555

of its debts.

8.5 This poses a dilemma for governments, particularly when essential services are involved. Obviously the Commonwealth is, and should be, reluctant to see these terminated. Yet to bail out defaulting organisations without other action only reinforces the sense of dependence on outside help by communities and renders self-management little more than rhetoric.

8.6 When this occurs there are three options available to government agencies:

- (a) to closely monitor and allow normal processes to take their course, but this requires some action to be taken eventually;
- (b) to bail out the organisation or community and thereby effectively condone the mismanagement; or
- (c) to set conditions on their assistance which might include staff replacement, the appointment of an administrator, the introduction of rigorous reporting and funds release requirements, the establishment of training programs, or any combination of these.

8.7 DAA's submission clearly came down on the side of accountability and argued that the administration of programs without due regard to public accountability cannot be justified on the grounds of cultural sensitivity and self-management.<sup>180</sup>

Whilst the Committee agrees with this proposition it considers that programs that do not recognise certain cultural features of Aboriginal society are unlikely to achieve their objectives.

8.8 There is also a tendency in some communities to see bureaucratic accountability mechanisms relating to self-management as 'whitefella' business and, therefore, something that does not have a high priority or should be left to community advisers and other non-Aboriginal staff in the community. It is also likely that those community members with the skills in financial management are younger and do not have sufficient authority in the eyes of more senior community members. Young people may also be hesitant to be seen to be promoting a non-Aboriginal value system.

8.9 Communities also become frustrated by the restrictions placed on funding. As mentioned previously, experience has shown repeated examples of shifting funds between functions contrary to grant arrangements. Aboriginal people have their own priorities which may lead to decisions that do not necessarily accord with funding guidelines and this inevitably results in an official admonishment.

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<sup>180</sup> ibid

## Accounting Procedures

8.10 Communities also face multiple accountability requirements in accordance with the multiple funding sources. This problem was raised in evidence by the Woorabinda community in Queensland. The Woorabinda Council stated that the widely varying, complex and ad hoc reporting requirements demanded by a number of different funding bodies ensure difficulties for Aboriginal communities, particularly with respect to training in financial control and management.<sup>181</sup>

8.11 The Northern Territory Government noted that even though the accounting requirements between the Commonwealth and Territory are similar, they are 'not similar enough'.<sup>182</sup> The Territory Government has been attempting to negotiate with the Commonwealth on uniform accounting procedures. The Committee strongly supports the development of uniform accounting procedures and recommends that:

as a matter of urgency the Commonwealth develop uniform accounting procedures with the States and Territories for grants to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

## Need for Aboriginal input

8.12 So far the Committee has only referred to 'external' accountability or the need for Aboriginal organisations to be accountable to funding agencies for the expenditure of public money. This emphasises a strictly auditing approach to accountability which implies ensuring that funds allocated for a particular purpose are spent accordingly.

8.13 The concept of accountability goes further than this and, in the case of Aboriginal affairs, should be concerned with objectives and outcomes in service delivery. External accountability needs also to be judged by the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery to Aboriginal people and some assessment needs to be made as to whether particular programs are achieving their objectives.

8.14 Aboriginal people and organisations have an important role to play in monitoring and assessing agencies' achievement of their objectives. Not only is there a need for government agencies to develop their own means of monitoring programs and to formulate performance indicators, but Aboriginal people need to be involved in this process.

8.15 The Committee recommends that:

all government agencies negotiate with funded communities the development of appropriate performance indicators for programs and put in place performance monitoring and assessment

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<sup>181</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S80

<sup>182</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2371

mechanisms that have significant Aboriginal input.

further research on the development and appropriate use of performance indicators be undertaken by ATSIC.

### Internal Accountability

8.16 It is also important to recognise the significance of 'internal' accountability for Aboriginal people. In a recent article Dr H.C. Coombs said that Aboriginal society imposes its own forms of accountability on those entrusted with authority based on a mutual acceptance and understanding of an individual's responsibility.

8.17 Most Aboriginal clans or other traditional groups are divided into two parts. A senior person from one part will, for instance, be the owner of a particular area of land of a particular category of traditional knowledge or ceremony. It will be his function to make decisions for the use and care of the land, to decide who can share in the knowledge or to arrange and present the ceremony. But, parallel with those allocations of the power of decision, there will be from the other part a senior 'guardian', whose function it is to see that the owner's responsibility is performed correctly according to tradition and that the rights of others are respected. However, both owner and guardian share common relevant traditional knowledge and concern for the group's social purposes. Furthermore, an owner for one purpose will be guardian for another; power and control are shared but also divided. It is as if the internal auditor for one part of a company's business was the managing director of another and vice versa.<sup>183</sup>

8.18 In his submission to the inquiry Dr Altman noted that Aboriginal people face a continuing dilemma in the need to be publicly accountable both within the community and to external funding sources. External accountability is required for expenditure of public money but internal accountability is required to kith and kin who frequently make demands of Aboriginal office holders or employees. He noted that the current reality is that internal accountability is frequently of greater importance to Aboriginal people than external accountability. This is further complicated by the fact that politicking over the distribution of resources in communities is intensified because people are poor and because in Aboriginal practice rights to land can be transposed to rights to monetary resources.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Dr H.C Coombs, *The Canberra Times*, 20 April 1989

<sup>184</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2218

## Bookkeeping

8.19 Council bookkeeping can be an onerous task simply because of the range of functions and operations that need to be documented. It is also complicated by the range of funding sources and the diversity of organisations that can exist in a single community and the need to co-ordinate them.

8.20 As with other community-based staff, there tends to be a high turnover of bookkeepers, mostly non-Aboriginal. Communities have not always recruited suitable applicants for the job and may have been subjected to incompetence or fraud about which they can do little until it is too late. Unless affairs have been carefully documented there may well be discontinuities when people leave. This detracts from the financial efficiency of the organisations as council members may be largely unaware of the financial status of the community.

8.21 Communities, and specifically community councils and their chairpersons, need to be kept reliably informed on a regular basis about the status of funds in a community. They need to know what funds have been spent, how much is committed and how much money remains in order to be able to determine priorities at any given time.

8.22 One suggestion has been for community councils to engage private accounting firms to look after their books for them. Whilst this option may be suitable for communities close to urban centres where accounting facilities are available it does have a number of disadvantages. Councils need to know the state of their affairs on a day-to-day basis. External accountants may not understand how the community functions and the cost of professional fees is high. In addition the information provided to communities by external accountants may not be in a form that is easily read or understood.

8.23 In New South Wales the Committee saw the difficulties imposed on a community when responsibility for financial management is removed. One community, whose affairs had been placed in the hands of an administrator, had completely lost control over its affairs and felt very strong frustration at being unable to determine its own financial priorities. The people complained that they were not kept informed about the status of the community's budget and finances and, on top of this, they were expected to pay for the 'privilege' of the services of an administrator.

8.24 A number of councils, however, have successfully implemented accounting and financial reporting mechanisms. A community council in Queensland told the Committee that, although it had struck problems in the past, it was happy with its reporting system. The local bookkeeper kept the council informed on a regular basis and the CDEP project officer undertook a quarterly review of funds for that program. In this way the council could determine its priorities on an ongoing basis.

8.25 Ultimately the solution lies in a core of trained people in the community who are able to prepare budgets and keep track of the receipt and disbursement of funds, or in the use of

Aboriginal-controlled resource agencies to provide accounting services and support the community employees. At a community in South Australia the Committee was impressed by an Aboriginal woman who had taken responsibility for these matters after a succession of problems bequeathed to the community by non-Aboriginal staff. The success of such communities should form a model for other Aboriginal communities and organisations.

8.26 The Committee recommends that:

Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments strengthen the accounting and financial reporting capacities of Aboriginal communities and organisations by:

- providing sufficient funding to communities and organisations to enable them to perform this function, which is required of them by funding agencies;
- assisting communities to develop simple but efficient accounting and financial reporting systems; and
- developing and implementing appropriate training programs for Aboriginal bookkeepers and other personnel working with Aboriginal organisations.

## CHAPTER 9

### COMMUNITY ADVISERS AND COMMUNITY-BASED STAFF

#### Introduction

9.1 The question of community advisers and non-Aboriginal staff employed in Aboriginal organisations has been a matter of interest and concern to this and previous committees for a number of years. In theory, community advisers are a means of facilitating self-determination and self-management by providing the expertise lacking in discrete Aboriginal communities. In practice, however, the system has been fraught with difficulties and in many cases has had an adverse impact on people it is meant to assist.

9.2 The problems were best summarised for the Committee by Mr Neil Bell MLA, Northern Territory Member for MacDonnell, who wrote:

These employees of Aboriginal communities are recruited in a very ad hoc fashion, receive absolutely no training prior to their commencement, receive little or no support during their employment and are difficult to get rid of should they prove to be incompetent. Additionally, they are not required to account for their actions and should they become good at their work, their expertise and experience is lost on leaving the community because there is no career structure.<sup>185</sup>

9.3 This chapter looks at the history of community advisers and identifies a number of problems associated with them. The Committee makes a number of recommendations aimed at improving the quality of existing staff but believes that ultimately the best solution is for Aboriginal people to assume control over their own affairs.

#### Background

9.4 It is difficult to provide a precise definition of the term 'community adviser'. Its usage has evolved since the introduction of policies of self-determination and self-management, most notably in the Northern Territory after the role of superintendents on communities became non-directive.

9.5 Before 1973 Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory were administered by the Commonwealth Government through the Northern Territory Administration (and later the Department of the Northern Territory) Welfare Branch or by missions most of which were funded by that agency. Aboriginal people had little to do with the running of their communities. Community management and administration was carried out by

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<sup>185</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1607

government officers, including tradesmen, administrative officials and others needed to run the community. Managerial staff were permanent public servants and were predominantly non-Aboriginal.

9.6 After 1973 a decision was made by the then Department of Aboriginal Affairs to withdraw superintendents and other public service staff from communities and to replace them with staff employed by and responsible to the various Aboriginal councils. In a number of communities this caused administrative problems but in others many of the superintendents and staff who were previously employed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs resigned and were immediately re-employed by the communities in which they worked. In recognition of some of the problems caused by the withdrawal of management experience the Department of Aboriginal Affairs put in place a number of support mechanisms. Community advisers were to become a major part of this support. Several short courses for non-Aboriginal community personnel were held with a view to providing skills in community development. Since then the term 'community adviser' became widely used in other States.

#### The role of a community adviser

9.7 Although the term 'community adviser' as it is referred to in the previous paragraphs denotes a particular position, it is used more generally to define a role and a broad set of duties and functions that could be carried out by any one of a number of personnel employed by Aboriginal organisations and incorporated bodies. It may include administrative officers, town clerks or council clerks, homelands resource centre managers, works supervisors, store managers, adult educators, CDEP co-ordinators, other employees of Aboriginal organisations or even employees of Territory and State government departments located in communities.

9.8 The functions of the community adviser vary greatly with the nature and priorities of the particular community. Their day-to-day work will vary significantly depending on whether the position is attached to a group of outstations, large homogeneous or multi-lingual communities or a relatively small self-contained community. Typically, however, community advisers are required to liaise with government agencies, perform or supervise administrative and financial tasks, engage in maintenance work, ensure the operation of essential services and help in the running of community enterprises. As a general rule, to perform the duties of a community adviser, skills and knowledge are necessary in the areas of community development, anthropology, training, good inter-personal interaction, administration, government and financial management. Depending on the needs of particular communities an understanding of machinery, building, store management and bushcraft may be needed.

9.9 The ability to live in cross-cultural situations under difficult conditions is also important. A recent job advertisement in the national press for a shire clerk in a Queensland Aboriginal community made no reference to the fact that the community concerned was an Aboriginal community. Whilst



any prospective applicants would presumably be able to discover this for themselves eventually, the Committee suggests that such an omission at the early stages of recruitment for community-based staff is undesirable from both the applicant's and the community's point of view.

9.10 The Committee recommends that:

- . any job advertisements for community-based positions make it clear that the community is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community; and
- . eligibility requirements include the ability to communicate and operate effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and sensitivity to the issues confronting them.

9.11 Ideally, the community adviser's role should, as the name implies, be to provide advice. He or she should be a facilitator who can work with the community, consult effectively and then assist the community to implement its objectives. A community adviser must not only have a wide knowledge of the opportunities open for development but must also be able to organise and co-ordinate them. This co-ordination role can only be performed if advisers are well informed about the economic and social complexion of the community, and if contact is maintained with external agencies.

9.12 The Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute drew a distinction between the role of a community adviser and that of a community administrator or community clerk. The Institute's submission accepted the need for communities to have access to the services of someone specially trained to provide advice on the implications of decisions or plans for development but argued that this function should remain purely advisory. Aboriginal people should retain the ultimate responsibility for all decision making and control over their own affairs.<sup>186</sup>

#### Need for advisory staff

9.13 The Committee noted in Chapter 6 that there is a proliferation of government agencies that deal with individual Aboriginal communities. This has been accompanied by such an array of programs, schemes, projects and resource options about which Aboriginal people are expected to make decisions that it is doubtful that many people fully understand the implications of their choices. As one submission noted, as community administration has become more complex, Aboriginal people 'need help so that the wrong choices are not made'.<sup>187</sup> A good community adviser will set out the options open to a community in regard to a particular issue and help people to come to grips with the implications of their decision.

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<sup>186</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2597

<sup>187</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S974

9.14 The Northern Territory Government echoed this view and pointed out that:

The social and physical development which occurred on communities, and the time frame in which they occurred, significantly altered the aspirations and expectations of Aboriginal people. This created a community-driven demand for a greater range of goods and services. More importantly, there was a demand for specialist information on which to base informed decision making on the range of community management issues which self-management had opened up.<sup>188</sup>

9.15 At face value the presence of a community adviser may seem to contradict the objectives of self-determination and self-management. The contrary argument, however, is that no realistic autonomy can take place unless there are qualified people who can outline to a community what options are available and where they may lead so that informed decisions can be made.

9.16 The change occurring in Aboriginal communities creates a need for qualified and experienced advisory and support staff. In the foreseeable future few Aboriginal people will find their way into these jobs. There will be even fewer Aboriginal people acting as advisers for their own community because, as the DAA submission noted, remote communities do not have the necessary skills or expertise to become self-managing in the short term.<sup>189</sup> As Bolger argued:

... if Aborigines are not to return to situations such as prevailed on the old missions and pastoral stations they need to have some people who have sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to take charge in some areas, rather than to continue to be the unskilled workers taking orders and not understanding what is being done. Lack of knowledge means that people remain in a<sup>190</sup> state of total dependence and powerlessness.

9.17 The community adviser should become less necessary as Aboriginal people take greater control of their own affairs. Skills and responsibilities will be transferred to the community and community members will take on the functions of non-Aboriginal employees. Although the Department of Aboriginal Affairs acknowledged that the diminution of responsibilities of advisers and the commensurate assumption of skills and functions within communities is a slow process, the Committee believes that the progressive assumption of power and responsibility by Aboriginal people should be a primary objective of a community adviser and other staff in Aboriginal organisations.<sup>191</sup> More

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<sup>188</sup> NT Government, Third Submission, December 1989, p.3

<sup>189</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S243

<sup>190</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S973

<sup>191</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S687

importantly, this view is strongly supported by Aboriginal people themselves.

9.18 Aboriginal people frequently told the Committee that they considered training a primary responsibility of non-Aboriginal staff. They are seen as having a role in imparting skills and providing training in a range of areas including management, storekeeping, maintenance functions and the various community enterprises.

9.19 In some communities it should be recognised that non-Aboriginal staff conveniently fulfil the function of looking after 'whitefella business' which may not be considered to be very important in the eyes of senior members of the community. In this way Aboriginal people are able to delegate the burdens of an imposed self-management structure to a non-Aboriginal who may be better equipped to look after this function whilst Aboriginal people devote themselves to matters that have a higher priority such as land and other traditional matters.<sup>192</sup>

9.20 In its third submission to the inquiry the Northern Territory Government distinguished between 'primary' advisers and 'secondary' advisers.<sup>193</sup> The distinction in many cases is unimportant. The significance rests in the fact that the work of some advisers is more influential and, in this sense, has a more immediate impact on the community. Community advisers are in a potentially powerful position in a community. They may be able to control the flow of information into and out of the community; they provide advice on, or are responsible for, programs critical to the development and sound management of a community; they may be able to influence decision making and they may be able to control a community's finances. Aboriginal people, who may have little experience of dealing with government agencies etc, have little choice but to trust the judgment, integrity and ability of the community adviser and hope that they are presented with the best advice possible to allow them to make decisions in the best interests of the community. As many Aboriginal communities have found in the past, this is not always the case.

9.21 This points to the broader problem about the nature of community advisers. To a large extent the role of a community adviser can be seen as a bridge between Aboriginal society and the broader community which places the adviser in a somewhat ambivalent position. Communities are expected to be self-determining entities and the proper role of the adviser is to assist in this process. Even though the community may be responsible for significant resources, the responsibility for maintaining these resources, making the community work and putting into effect the community's overall objectives often falls on the community adviser regardless of his background or qualifications because the community is not in a position to accept such responsibility. In other words, the adviser is expected simultaneously to take responsibility for the community

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<sup>192</sup> Transcript of Evidence, DAA, p.S241

<sup>193</sup> N.T. Government, Third Submission, pp.5-6

and also promote self-determination. By ensuring that a community is run effectively an adviser may be criticised for unduly influencing the community and undermining self-determination, whereas a more laissez faire approach could lead to a breakdown in community facilities, infrastructure and management mechanisms.

### Some broad problems

9.22 The Committee identifies the following broad problems with the employment of community advisers and staff by Aboriginal organisations:

- . The nature of the work is a strong disincentive to continued employment. There is a high turnover amongst staff in Aboriginal communities. Given the location of remote communities and the lack of a career structure for advisers, there are constant difficulties in attracting suitable applicants for these positions.
- . The recruitment process for advisers, being largely in the hands of individual communities, is very much an ad hoc affair and this can work against the best applicants being chosen.
- . There is no systematic training available for or required of people who are employed in Aboriginal communities. Many advisers lack training and have insufficient expertise and management skills. Others may possess the necessary skills but are unable to translate them into the different cultural system in which they find themselves because they are unable to communicate effectively with Aboriginal people.
- . In some situations advisers have used their position to inculcate dependence and set up a new style of paternalism which works against self-determination and community development in general. This has gone hand in hand with bringing to bear influences inimical to proper community management, financial responsibility and accountability.
- . Advisers also have the potential to factionalise communities, either deliberately or unintentionally, by favouring one power group within the community over others. Although some level of factionalism exists in most communities its exploitation is extremely destructive and can exacerbate existing problems.
- . Some advisers and/or government employed staff have, on occasions, worked against the interests and wishes of the Aboriginal community and have pursued their own agenda or policy interests dictated from outside the community.

- . Some advisers may seek to play off one level of government against the other, using the community as the instrument in this power-play.
- . In a few cases advisers have misappropriated community funds and assets.

#### Nature of the work

9.23 There is a chronic shortage of suitable and qualified people available to work as community advisers to Aboriginal communities. Turnover of non-Aboriginal community-based staff is high and the average length of employment in communities is about 18 months to two years.<sup>194</sup> In many instances the length of service is even less. There are a number of reasons that account for the difficulties of obtaining and retaining good staff, many of which are beyond the control of the community. These may include the high cost of living, isolation, poor communications, a lack of facilities, harsh climate, cultural and language differences, general health standards in a community and poor working conditions. In addition, community-based staff face constant demands and are often overworked, the level of remuneration is poor and no formal career structure exists.

9.24 Although there is often a number of non-Aboriginal staff in communities, by and large the range of duties expected of a community adviser is huge. In its previous report, *A Chance for the Future*, the Committee identified the wide range of skills necessary to run a community.<sup>195</sup> Often unfair pressure and demands are placed on community advisers who are expected to be jack-of-all-trades and are on call the whole time.

9.25 Much of the work of a community adviser is fairly thankless. One submission noted that it often seems that the DAA expects miracles from overburdened community staff without providing them necessary support.<sup>196</sup> And as Tonkinson noted, local advisers are often trapped between a remote and unresponsive bureaucracy and the client community. On the one hand they must play the role of mediators with the unenviable task of encouraging and promoting development while on the other hand trying to explain why it is not taking place.<sup>197</sup>

9.26 Added to this is the lack of clarity on the part of community-based staff about their actual role. Often staff do not really know what their responsibilities are supposed to be. This may lead not only to conflicts and confusion with Aboriginal people and the council, but also to division and conflict between community-based staff members, reducing their overall

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<sup>194</sup> Homelands Inquiry, Transcript of Evidence, p.S1650

<sup>195</sup> See *A Chance for the Future*, p.13

<sup>196</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S956

<sup>197</sup> Tonkinson, p.101

effectiveness.<sup>198</sup> The Committee believes that the development of community plans will go some way towards overcoming this problem. Non-Aboriginal staff will be able to see what the objectives of the community are and, similarly, the community will be better able to define its expectations of its staff.

9.27 As previously noted, the Committee strongly supports the concept of Aboriginal people assuming the functions of community advisers and non-Aboriginal community-based staff. In some instances, Aboriginal people have been recruited into such positions. The Committee is concerned, however, that as funding arrangements become more complicated the need for specialist advice will outstrip the local supply of Aboriginal administrators. There is also the problem that the skills acquired by Aboriginal people may not necessarily remain in the community. Few Aboriginal people choose to take community adviser positions because jobs elsewhere, especially with government, prove more attractive and community and government pressures on the individual are too great.

9.28 One possible solution to this problem is the greater use of Aboriginal-controlled resource agencies. This matter is discussed in Chapter 10. The Committee is also concerned, however, that there is no incentive structure in place to attract Aboriginal people to the area of community administration and management. The issue of staff recruitment for Aboriginal organisations and incorporated bodies is discussed later in this chapter.

9.29 The Western Australian Government noted that the lack of adequate accommodation in remote areas makes it difficult to attract good staff to work in Aboriginal communities.<sup>199</sup> Communities may be restricted in the staff they can select because they may have limited or no accommodation facilities available. In some cases this may be single accommodation or possibly a caravan or a tent. The Committee is aware that in a number of cases the availability of accommodation acts as a disincentive for local Aboriginal people to assume positions within the community. Aboriginal people complain that housing owned by government departments and agencies is allocated only to outsiders employed in a community but not to local people who may occupy the same positions. This includes a range of positions such as council workers, teachers, health workers, police aides etc.

9.30 The Committee recommends that:

where accommodation is provided in a community to an officer who performs a particular function, it be made available to the occupant of the position irrespective of whether the person is from the community or elsewhere.

#### Industrial award

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<sup>198</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.567; Tonkinson, p.101

<sup>199</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1169

9.31 The Committee has received evidence relating to the formulation of an industrial award for employees of a number of communities in the Northern Territory. Even though the award - entitled the Remote Communities Local Government (Northern Territory) Employees Interim Award - is initially designed to cover workers in only ten communities, it would appear to be capable of covering employees of many other Aboriginal organisations throughout the Northern Territory. Since the award was consented to in December 1989, the Pitjantjatjara Council has applied to have it cover staff in its communities in the Northern Territory and South Australia. The award could also be the forerunner to similar awards in other States. The award goes some way towards providing appropriate remuneration for, and recognising the importance of work that is performed by, community-based staff and is supported by both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments.

9.32 The career classifications and wage structure of workers in support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are an integral part of the award. Clauses have also been included on matters such as holiday entitlement, superannuation, promotion, termination, dispute settlement procedures, redundancy and severance pay.

9.33 Both the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Northern Territory Government have noted that the ratification of the award by the Industrial Relations Commission will have far-reaching financial implications for government as well as for individual communities and Aboriginal organisations. In its submission the DAA estimated that the proposed award structure could mean an increase of over 100 per cent in the cost of the wages and benefits for resource organisation staff and community advisers:

It is not mainly in the salaries area, even though there is an increase there; it really has to do with the conditions package that is attached to it. Conditions have a tremendous impact on each of those organisations because they have not been paying them before. To mention a few, there are district allowances, overtime, penalty rates, superannuation, and the rest.<sup>200</sup>

9.34 The point the Committee wishes to make is that Aboriginal communities and organisations will be unable to sustain such increases in their operating costs without either a significant increase in funding or a substantial reduction in staffing or service provision. The Committee believes that the introduction of an industrial award covering employees of Aboriginal communities and organisations will require a financial commitment from the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments. If the award coverage is to spread, State governments will be in a similar position.

9.35 The Committee recommends that:

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<sup>200</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1057

. with the promulgation of an industrial award for Aboriginal community workers and employees of Aboriginal organisations, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments fully fund the communities and organisations so that they are able to meet their obligations without a reduction in services.

#### Selection and monitoring of staff

9.36 It is clear to the Committee that procedures in the selection and monitoring of staff need to be improved dramatically. In general the selection, employment and ongoing support of community advisers and other non-Aboriginal staff is largely under the control of individual communities. Whilst such an approach is consistent with the philosophy of self-determination, the resulting recruitment of unsuitable staff may actually work against this outcome.

9.37 Community advisers today come from varied backgrounds. Some have previously worked under government or mission auspices as 'superintendents', in roles more in accordance with the assimilation era. Others are people with community development interests, possibly generated through experience in jobs such as teaching or through previous experience in neighbouring developing countries or other parts of the Third World. In her submission, Dr Young suggested that the first group in general tend to be more restrictive in the control which they operate, and less innovative in their suggestions. The second group, however, may lack experience, particularly in the specific context of an Aboriginal community.<sup>201</sup> Other applicants may have little or no experience in any of the above areas and the danger exists that unsuitable staff are recruited because no one else is available. The Committee is also aware of instances where community advisers and other staff have departed particular communities after a period of poor performance or who may have defrauded a community only to turn up in a community elsewhere in Australia.

9.38 The issue of improving the quality of staff within communities and organisations has been considered by government departments over a number of years but as yet there has been little improvement; nor have there been any new ideas generated about how to improve the quality of these staff. For Aboriginal communities, where the absence of skills means that the community relies heavily on the knowledge of its employees, obtaining the right staff assumes great importance. It was put to the Committee that the shortcomings of staff has been a significant factor in the failure of many of the development programs initiated for Aboriginal people.<sup>202</sup> The Committee therefore strongly supports moves to assist communities in their overall recruitment requirements as a means of improving the quality of employees in communities.

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<sup>201</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S779

<sup>202</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S845



9.39 Part of the problem stems from a lack of understanding within communities about what is involved in community management. The recruitment process, being largely in the hands of individual communities, is very much an ad hoc affair and this can work against the best applicants being chosen. The Committee was given one example of a community which recruited a community adviser without the skills necessary for the job. The person was selected simply because two people in the community happened to like him and managed to persuade a community meeting to grant approval for his employment. After further negotiations others were convinced that a mistake had been made and a more suitable person was chosen.<sup>203</sup>

9.40 One option for the recruitment of staff suggested in one submission was to constitute a selection panel consisting of community representatives and possibly the current community adviser and/or a DAA officer. Other people with a knowledge of the qualifications considered necessary for the job and who have an ability to explain to community panel members what was relevant could also be included.<sup>204</sup> Not all communities, however, have been unsuccessful in selecting staff, and some may not need such assistance. One submission told the Committee of a community in Western Australia that had selected its staff without the assistance of DAA and which had achieved long-term and stable staffing as a result.<sup>205</sup>

9.41 At the other extreme, however, is the situation where Aboriginal people have little or no input into the selection of community-based staff. It is apparent to the Committee that this occurs more often when government officials are located in a community or when dominant non-Aboriginal staff do not refer matters to their Aboriginal employers.

9.42 Community councils and Aboriginal organisations may have the power to dismiss advisers and other staff but this rarely happens in practice. Some communities lack the necessary management, administrative or supervisory skills to ensure accountability of non-Aboriginal employees or to insist on compliance with council policy or community objectives. In many cases a written contract may not form the basis for employment and, even if they do exist, communities may be unable to insist on compliance. Although ATSIC has the responsibility for overseeing projects in Aboriginal communities and its officers come into regular contact with community-based staff, there is no systematic monitoring of their performance. The Committee recognises that ATSIC is in a difficult position in this regard as it is limited in what it can do to improve the performance of individuals who are not employed by the Commission. Even in situations of gross mismanagement, advisers and other staff employed by the community often have the community's confidence and support. Intervention can leave the Commission open to the charge of breaching the principle of self-determination and the

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<sup>203</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S959

<sup>204</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S974

<sup>205</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1982

department must act cautiously if it is not to exacerbate existing problems. As the then DAA acknowledged, however, the secret lies in the Government, as the provider of the policy and of the finances, having a say in the quality of the people appointed and ensuring that standards are set, in concert with Aboriginal people, and adhered to.<sup>206</sup>

9.43 The former Department of Aboriginal Affairs also complained that some advisers do not understand or appreciate, and even actively oppose, the Government's policies and the need for the department to account for moneys spent. Such persons have often used their influence to exacerbate differences between the department, Minister and Government and the community instead of acting as a bridge between the community and the Government.<sup>207</sup> The Northern Territory Government argued that it felt that the work of government could often be 'adversely affected ... by the community-driven nature of the advisers' work'. The Northern Territory Government added that 'No man or woman can serve two masters'.<sup>208</sup> The Committee believes that both views completely misrepresent the role of the community adviser or staff employed by Aboriginal organisations in that these positions are seen as being agents of government. The primary loyalty of staff employed by any Aboriginal organisation or community should be to the community itself which, after all, is the employing body, and not to any outside agency.

9.44 In some cases the behaviour of advisers has been less than satisfactory as is described in the following account by the Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council:

A Commonwealth funded European project officer, with no special qualifications and having never worked in an Aboriginal community before, has made himself indispensable to the local chairman. He does little training, and what is done is connected with minor office functions. He speaks to and treats the office staff (all Aboriginal and Islander) as if they were children. Perhaps more dangerously, it has been reported that he suggested to an assistant council clerk that she should learn to sign his name in case he is not in the office when his signature is needed.<sup>209</sup>

9.45 The Committee believes that the funding bodies, in consultation with clients, should develop formal guidelines for the operation of community-based staff and that mechanisms should be established for monitoring their performance.

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<sup>206</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.51

<sup>207</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S245

<sup>208</sup> NT Government, Third Submission, p.13

<sup>209</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S444

9.46 Throughout the inquiry a number of proposals for the employment of community advisers and community-based staff were put to the Committee. In his submission, Mr Neil Bell MLA argued that one means of exercising control over advisers was for them to be employed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (now ATSIC). As the employing authority it could then take responsibility for the professionalism of the employee and take any necessary action should their actions be unprofessional. The employer could also offer support for employees as well as in-service training and refresher courses.<sup>210</sup> The former Aboriginal Development Commission recommended that advisers be employed on a short-term or contract basis, a view which was reiterated by the Western Australian Government which argued that community-employed staff should have contracts which clearly outline their tasks and where appropriate require them to take part in training courses, or to train Aboriginal people to take over their jobs.<sup>211</sup> The Western Australian Government also proposed the establishment of an independent recruitment agency to examine applicants' abilities and their suitability for working in a cross-cultural setting. It would provide a short list of suitable applicants to communities which could make the final choice.<sup>212</sup>

9.47 The Committee recommends that:

- . guidelines applicable to the operations of community-based staff be developed;
- . these guidelines should include a clear statement that the primary responsibility of community-based staff is to the Aboriginal organisation which employs them;
- . where no award exists, all community-based staff be employed on the basis of written contracts which outline in details job specifications and duties which could form the basis for monitoring the performance of staff.
- . where community-based staff are employed under an award, a detailed job specification and duty statement, consistent with the award and agreed between the staff member and employing community would assist both parties in performance monitoring.

9.48 The suggestions of the Western Australian Government were similar to more detailed proposals put to the Committee by Mr Ken Neilson regarding the establishment of a staff selection service for Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Kimberley region. The proposal involves the establishment of a recruitment service either within an existing organisation or as

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<sup>210</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1608

<sup>211</sup> Transcript of Evidence, pp.S750,S1175

<sup>212</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S1174

a separate body. The service could compile a list of suitable applicants for positions in communities and organisations. It could also help communities draw up duty statements for positions, co-ordinate interviews and advise on appropriate financial packages for community staff.<sup>213</sup>

9.49 When the Committee met with Mr Neilson he indicated that it was likely that an organisation such as the Overseas Service Bureau could assist the service with the culling of applications.<sup>214</sup> Mr Neilson estimated that the establishment and operating costs of the selection service would be around \$130 000 for the first year. He argued that this represented particularly good value if the right staff are obtained, given the potential for financial mismanagement in communities.

9.50 Another submission referred to a proposal of Dr H.C. Coombs for the establishment of a National Aboriginal Service.<sup>215</sup> This organisation could be responsible for the recruitment, training, promotion and general conditions of employment of staff for Aboriginal communities under terms and conditions similar to those operating in the Commonwealth Public Service.<sup>216</sup> Concern is frequently articulated that administrative staff of Aboriginal communities who embezzle funds are rarely prosecuted. This occurs because cases of fraud are dealt with by State or Territory police; maladministration at Aboriginal communities appears to be a low priority area. The establishment of a National Aboriginal Service could have a fraud investigation and evaluation unit attached to it or, alternatively, such a unit could be attached to ATSIC.

9.51 Whilst there is some merit in proposals to recruit staff on a national basis, the Committee's preference is to see this done at either a local or regional level. The Committee believes that the recruitment of community-based staff by Aboriginal organisations or resource agencies has considerable merit. This would allow for a more thorough screening of applicants. Contracts could be developed for employees and it would also allow for some degree of supervision over the activities of staff. In some areas the apparatus for recruitment may already exist (for example, the Pitjantjatjara Council). Similar organisations could play a role elsewhere in Australia on a regional basis or some organisations may prefer to pool their funding in order to establish a dedicated recruitment service. An alternative proposal would be to give communities more funds and access to expertise so that they can conduct recruitment themselves.

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<sup>213</sup> Transcript of Evidence, pp.S844-851

<sup>214</sup> Precis of discussions, 20-23 June 1988

<sup>215</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2222

<sup>216</sup> For further discussion of the proposal see H.C. Coombs, *The role of the National Aboriginal Conference, 1984*, pp.679-670

9.52 The Committee recommends that:

- recruitment of appropriate staff be recognised as integral to the successful development of a community or organisation and that funds be made available to enable more rigorous and professional selection of staff.

#### Training for community workers

9.53 One of the major deficiencies facing staff who have been employed by Aboriginal community councils and organisations is the absence of training programs. Prior to 1973 training for Northern Territory staff of the Welfare Branch was undertaken at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) in Sydney. This school provided 12-month courses for cadet patrol officers and later, 18-month courses for patrol officers in training. The courses included Anthropology, Geography and Land Use (NT), Aboriginal Community Development, Communication (Extension Techniques), Human Development, Local Government, Small Business Management, Organisation Theory, Government and Principles of Social Development. The school ceased to exist at the end of 1973 and has never been replaced by any specific formal training to meet the needs of personnel recruited into positions classified in the community adviser category.

9.54 A number of submissions referred to the need for the sort of training ASOPA provided. The Northern Territory Government expressed its regret that the school was neither retained nor replaced.<sup>217</sup> These sentiments were echoed by the South Australian Government which indicated that the school 'did provide some good people'.<sup>218</sup>

9.55 Some of the courses which are available for community-based personnel include the field officers training course offered by the Northern Territory. In addition Batchelor College offers a course in community management and certain church groups and the Institute of Aboriginal Development offer cross-cultural courses from time to time. In its previous report, *A Chance for the Future*, the Committee assessed training for Aboriginal people in community management provided under AEDP and the Aboriginal Organisation Training Program. The Committee recommended the further development of flexible community-based training programs that would enable Aboriginal people to manage their own communities. The Committee makes the point, however, that no comprehensive, readily accessible course has existed for non-Aboriginal workers for some time.

9.56 Previous proposals for this type of training have been rejected on the grounds of cost.<sup>219</sup> Nonetheless, the Committee supports the development of short diploma or orientation courses in administration and management of Aboriginal communities.

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<sup>217</sup> NT Government, Third Submission, p.11

<sup>218</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.538

<sup>219</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S246

These could be provided by a range of educational institutions throughout Australia. This would be supplementary to educational institutions developing curriculum which has Aboriginal studies as an integral component. In addition, it is possible for ATSIC to develop its own training packages for use on a regional basis.

9.57 The Committee recommends that:

- . Commonwealth, State and Northern Territory governments, fund the establishment of training courses for staff employed by Aboriginal community councils and organisations prior to their appointment to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively perform their role;
- . these courses be officially accredited and lead to a recognised qualification;
- . existing community advisers and other staff be encouraged to undertake such courses once they are established;
- . the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, in association with other appropriate bodies, develop short training packages suitable for community advisers and other staff that can be implemented on a regional basis.

9.58 Once such courses are established they could serve as a minimum requirement for people seeking employment with Aboriginal community councils and organisations as at present no formal educational or training requirement exists.

9.59 The Committee recommends that:

- . once training courses are established they should be considered as highly desirable for community employment.

#### Possible future arrangements

9.60 The Committee also wishes to raise the issue of the role of advisers in homeland centres. In a previous report, *Return to Country*, the Committee noted that the adviser plays an ambivalent role with respect to homelands communities. An important aspect of the homelands movement has been the desire to escape the control of non-Aboriginals, yet if non-Aboriginal people are employed as advisers to homeland organisations this autonomy can be compromised. On the other hand, because homeland communities wish to remain at arm's length from continual involvement with governmental officials and bureaucratic procedures, mediators such as homeland advisers are vital. They can also provide homeland communities with the practical and advisory assistance needed to become self-managing. As homeland advisers are generally resident in the major communities and not

in a particular homeland centre, 36 homeland centre communities have found it easier to keep significant control over the adviser role.<sup>220</sup>

9.61 The non-resident adviser or advisory service model raises the possibility of reviewing arrangements for other communities. In some areas, for instance, it may not be necessary to employ a community adviser who is permanently based in one community. It may be possible to employ one or more people to service a number of smaller communities in a region from another location. This may better accord with a community's wishes. Not only could this be more cost-effective but it could also enhance co-ordination and allow similar problems to be tackled on a regional basis. Communities may also prefer to be serviced by a resource agency and tap into its services when necessary. This could obviate the need for having a community adviser or other non-Aboriginal staff based permanently in the community.

9.62 Ultimately the solution is for communities to become more effectively involved in the management of their own affairs. It is for this reason that the Committee emphasised the importance of community-based training in its previous report. However, in the short to medium-term, the Committee's proposals relating to the recruitment and training of community advisers and community-based staff should go some way towards improving the performance and quality of community-based staff and employees of Aboriginal organisations.

9.63 The Committee recommends that:

- . the basis for staffing Aboriginal communities and organisations be identified along with training needs in the process of developing community or organisational plans.

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<sup>220</sup> Return to Country, para. 7.23





## CHAPTER 10

### RESOURCE AGENCIES

#### Instruments of self-determination and self-management

10.1 The Committee observed that resource agencies have emerged for a variety of functional reasons and gradually have adopted a wide range of activities on behalf of their member communities.

10.2 Aboriginal people must be able to direct the pace of social and economic change if they are genuinely to practise self-determination. Resource agencies have developed as one of the instruments of Aboriginal self-determination. They perform an intermediary or bridging role that interconnects Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal socio-cultural systems whilst minimising the imposition of non-Aboriginal structures on Aboriginal people.

10.3 In Chapter 1 the Committee identified the various government policies under which Aboriginal people had the right to manage their lives removed. These rights are now being returned to Aboriginal people who in many cases have minimal experience and very few reference points for the skills required to undertake this task. The concept of community advisers was the first attempt at providing advice and experience to Aboriginal people to make self-determination work. But to progress to self-management, the process must also include improved education and training delivery, along with service delivery in the transition process.

10.4 Resource agencies provide a variety of services to Aboriginal people through many different structures which have evolved to meet local needs. They are active participants in service delivery to and between individual Aboriginals, community organisations, government and private agencies. In this sense, resource organisations are also instruments of Aboriginal self-management.

#### What is a resource agency?

10.5 The most easily identifiable form of resource agency is the outstation/homelands agency which exists to provide essential services to one community or a group of communities. Resource agencies of this type can find themselves covering vast tracts of country. Jurnkurakurr Aboriginal Resource Centre in the Northern Territory delivers services to 1200 people over an area of 250 000 square kilometres. Services include the provision of housing, water, bores and mechanical services.

10.6 The second basic resource agency model is that established in major population centres to provide a diversity of services to town residents, transients and fringe dwellers. These organisations are jointly funded by Commonwealth and State

and Territory governments and provide access to services which the client group is unable to access through mainstream systems. Tangentyere Council, which almost serves as a mini-town council to the Aboriginal residents of the Alice Springs area, is a prime example of this model.

10.7 The last group comprises the organisations which provide services primarily of a social service nature. These are the legal services, health services, land councils, etc. They provide services to Aboriginal people that non-Aboriginal people receive from similar services which are either geographically inaccessible to Aboriginal clients or are not set up to provide services in a culturally sensitive manner.

10.8 All the above agency models draw their committee membership from the client Aboriginal population. Most often representation on the agency board is based on geographic grounds, but sometimes includes gender. For example, a resource agency in the Kimberley Region provides services to 17 outstations as well as town people. The agency has one representative for each outstation and four town people on its board. However, all meetings are open to the public.<sup>221</sup> The Ngaanjatjarra, Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, which is a component of the Pitjantjatjara Resource Centre, draws its members on the basis of gender and geography.

10.9 Community government and/or local government councils, as they are variously known in the States and Territories, are another agency from which Aboriginal people variously derive benefit. They are recognised as a third tier of government, are locally controlled and representative and have the potential for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal membership.

10.10 The Northern Territory Government recommended to the Committee that community government councils be recognised as Aboriginal resource agencies. The Northern Territory Government explained that community government councils are self-managing; have access to specialist assistance in Commonwealth and Territory departments; possess management skills; and have access to training programs, equipment, manpower and resources. The Government further submitted that the community councils have an advantage over non-government Aboriginal resource agencies in that they have the ability to offer funding and that their established administrative infrastructure can also absorb additional programs at minimal administrative cost, thereby adding to their cost efficiency.<sup>222</sup>

10.11 One major difference between Northern Territory community government councils and local government councils and Aboriginal resource agencies is that council members are not necessarily Aboriginal. The configuration varies according to local wishes; however, the Territory Government advises that the

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<sup>221</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Field Visit WA Sub-Committee A, p.17

<sup>222</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.1072

councils are '... capable of understanding and dealing with the numerous government mainstream agencies and private organisations which provide services to Aboriginal communities'.<sup>223</sup>

10.12 The Committee accepts that the local or community government councils may be efficient mechanisms for dealing with government and for administering programs. The question remains as to how effectively council structures are able to cater for Aboriginal needs and aspirations. It should be remembered that the need for culturally relevant service delivery gave rise to many resource agencies.

10.13 During a visit to the Northern Territory, the Committee visited a town with a community government council on which there were both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members. The Aboriginal people in that town clearly felt that the community government council did not respond to their needs and aspirations and that an Aboriginal organisation was a more satisfactory vehicle for service delivery. It was apparent that the Aboriginal resource agency in the area had strong Aboriginal support.<sup>224</sup>

10.14 This issue also arose when the Committee was advised by both the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Town councils that they had sought the advice and assistance of local Aboriginal resource agencies because they felt they could not deliver services with the same level of cultural sensitivity as the Aboriginal organisations.

10.15 Another alternative source of service provision is the community adviser. The role of community advisers has been the subject of a previous chapter and many of the functions performed by advisers are similar to the services provided by resource agencies. The main difference is that a community adviser is often expected to be multi-skilled whereas a resource agency provides access to skilled services through a variety of outlets or people.

10.16 Resource agencies are not intended as competition to other services, but rather to: facilitate access where none currently exists, be a service provider in the absence of any other agency, co-ordinate service provision, and facilitate training of Aboriginal staff in a culturally sensitive way where this is lacking. This has consequently meant a diminished role for community advisers as Aboriginal people and organisations become self-managing and assume the roles themselves or become more discriminating in obtaining competent external specialist advice.

10.17 External mechanisms are the final alternative providers. The other service options for assistance with community management are government agency personnel or private people for example, accountants. Both of these sources are valuable in their own right but have varying weakness which were reported to the Committee. Young pointed out that external

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<sup>223</sup> *ibid*

<sup>224</sup> *Precis of Visit to Northern Territory, 29-31 January 1990, pp.13-24*

accountants often do not provide the level of support required to assist with housekeeping decisions at the local level. They also tend to lack adequate understanding of the cultural issues involved. Their very remoteness in physical terms can often mean delays in highlighting potential problems, which contributes to mismanagement of funds.<sup>225</sup>

10.18 Government agency staff who have regular contact with Aboriginal people very often do not possess the necessary cross-cultural skills to adequately perform the same role as resource agencies. While many government departments are developing or implementing various selection policies to address this lack, there are still obvious problems. These problems, combined with the scarcity of government resources, have meant that government agencies have turned to the resource agencies as one area of contact to ease their workload and limit their visits to Aboriginal organisations and communities.

#### The role of resource agencies

10.19 Overall, resource agencies have an important role to play in the process of community development and the development of self-management philosophy. They carry out a wide range of activities on behalf of their member organisations or client group. These activities range from acting as an intermediary between non-Aboriginal agencies to providing Aboriginal people with direct service delivery.

10.20 Resource agencies have been formed as groupings of cultural and political interests to provide technical advice and services which were previously the role of government agencies and, more recently, community advisers. The majority of services provided by resource agencies are delivered to small or dispersed communities which have not received adequate support from government agencies.

10.21 Resource agencies exist to:

- . provide essential services to Aboriginal people living in communities which are not being provided for by their local council;
- . act as bridges and liaison points between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people and agencies;
- . provide access to culturally relevant professional advice in areas such as the law, engineering, architecture, management, accounting, etc;
- . co-ordinate and provide training to Aboriginal people in the skills required to become self-managing in a bi-cultural environment; and
- . give effect to land management and wishes of a

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<sup>225</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S2265

traditional nature on behalf of the owners.

10.22 It is worth noting that DAA, now ATSIC, regarded itself as performing the role of a resource agency having a responsibility to:

... ensure that an effective two-way consultation takes place (between Aboriginal people and other agencies) and to act as a resource agency to provide advice, services and training assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders may achieve control over their own affairs.<sup>226</sup>

10.23 DAA began providing funds and support to Aboriginal resource agencies in 1985. Its objective was to provide Aboriginal client groups with access to resources and skills through co-ordination with other agencies. In 1989-90 DAA was funding 180 resource agencies of varying sizes, from umbrella organisations to small independent organisations serving one community.<sup>227</sup> There is, however, still a need for the establishment of additional resource agencies, as pointed out by the Queensland Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC). The AAC cited the example of the Cape communities in Queensland which still lack access to urban resources, a problem which would be alleviated by a central resource agency.<sup>228</sup> This need was reinforced by evidence from consultants with experience of the Cape York communities.<sup>229</sup>

10.24 Many government agencies have handed over their service delivery roles to resource agencies, viewing them as easily accessible vehicles for the provision of services such as social security, health and consultation. However, with the exception of DAA, many other government agencies have not passed on funding for service provision. This matter will be dealt with in more detail later in the chapter.

10.25 In relation to small non-urban communities, the Committee believes that resource agencies perform an essential role by operating as incorporated bodies for the acceptance and management of funds on behalf of Aboriginal community groups. As the communities are funded through resource agencies there is less need for them to incorporate in their own right to receive funding. Thus they avoid taking on the cultural obligations and responsibilities that may result from artificially incorporating as a community.

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<sup>226</sup> DAA Supplementary Submission 1989, p.3

<sup>227</sup> DAA Supplementary Submission, p.5

<sup>228</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S443

<sup>229</sup> Transcript of Proceedings of Seminar in Brisbane, 11-12 January 1990.

## Advantages of resource agencies

10.26 All State governments which submitted information to the inquiry were supportive of resource agencies. They viewed them as integral to the process of Aboriginal self-management. The Committee considers that resource agencies have been to the mutual benefit of non-Aboriginal organisations as well as Aboriginal people, particularly as central co-ordination points which are easily identifiable by non-Aboriginal agencies and which are easy to deal with in bureaucratic terms.

10.27 The Department of Aboriginal Affairs summarised the advantages of resource agencies in that:

... they are capable of achieving economies of scale in the servicing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and advocacy, and perform a useful role in assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during the transition period from complete dependence to self-management, especially in the establishment and continuance of homeland centres.<sup>230</sup>

10.28 All government agencies which provided evidence to the Committee supported the role of resource agencies. Local government agencies are now increasingly seeking the assistance of resource agencies in recognition that councils are unable to provide equal access to essential services - especially not through a culturally relevant mechanism.

## Factors working against resource agencies

10.29 Due to the wide range of tasks performed by resource agencies they can find themselves in a potentially ambiguous role. The often unstated, but underlying, role of resource agencies is to support Aboriginal self-determination and self-management through an Aboriginal cultural perspective. However, there is a non-Aboriginal expectation that resource agencies will administratively amalgamate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures, resources and skills. Resource agencies therefore end up as bridges between cultural systems which, in many cases have irreconcilable interests.

10.30 Sullivan submitted that the representative organisation model is a government creation which meets the 'manifestation of autonomy while still presenting the means for administrative control'.<sup>231</sup> Bolger points out that the change in policy which inspired funding of Aboriginal resource agencies was at a cost to Aboriginal people. The handover of responsibilities brought restrictions in the forms of control resulting from the incorporation of organisations and the subsequent financial accountability and skills required of Aboriginal people. The changeover to the delivery of resources and services through grants funding required administrative work to be undertaken

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<sup>230</sup> DAA Supplementary Submission, 1989, p.6

<sup>231</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.4

within prescribed guidelines. The majority of the communities were ill-equipped to deal with this task.<sup>232</sup>

### The clients

10.31 It is sometimes difficult to identify who the real clients of the resource agencies are; whether they are the Aboriginal people, or government and other agencies. The resource agencies in many instances would appear to be operating in a dual role. There is potential conflict between providing services requested by their constituent groups and the requirements of government.

10.32 The most obvious clients are the voting members of the community for whom the organisation was established. But there is a second group which includes Commonwealth and State government agencies, shire councils, local businesses, mining companies and others who appear to view the agencies as instruments of non-Aboriginal administration which should be responsive to their needs for mediation with the community. However, many of these same groups appear to be resentful of the presence of resource agencies. Resource agencies are sometimes described by them as barriers to access to Aboriginal people.<sup>233</sup>

10.33 The Northern Territory Government provided an example of the dual role that can be expected of resource agencies when they are dependent on government funding provided in accordance with either a Territory or Commonwealth government policy. They believe that when '... a government is providing assistance in some way to a community ... [they] would expect to see that the funds were utilised in a way that was consistent with this policy'.<sup>234</sup>

10.34 The resource agency role of liaising for government departments is, however, not an incompatible one. The Aboriginal clients, and hence the resource agencies, are, after all, seeking to receive or influence program funding determined by government policy. This necessitates continuous dialogue between government departments, Aboriginal organisations and individuals to increase self-determination and self-management. However, it must be recognised that the resource agencies have been established to represent the interests of Aboriginal people.

### Funding

10.35 The devolution of decision making to Aboriginal people through the policies of both self-determination and self-management requires the development of essential skills in Aboriginal communities. Apart from the service delivery function, resource agencies have attempted to meet the educational and training needs of Aboriginal people in the

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<sup>232</sup> Transcript of Evidence, pp.S919-920

<sup>233</sup> Sullivan, pp.28-38

<sup>234</sup> Transcript of Evidence, pp.1086-1087

absence of alternative culturally relevant and efficient service providers. However, the Committee is concerned that the quantity and quality of resource agency programs have been severely retarded by inadequate funding. For example, poor funding has prevented resource agencies from attracting and retaining sufficient quality staff to undertake their roles and functions to maximum effectiveness. Importantly it has forced many agencies to almost abandon their training roles.

10.36 The DAA (now ATSIC) provides funding to resource agencies through Grants for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advancement Programs, either direct to the resource agency or to an organisation which retains the agency to provide services. The States and Territories sometimes provide additional assistance for special projects.<sup>235</sup>

10.37 The Commonwealth Government is the major provider of funding to resource agencies. This funding is provided against pre-established performance indicators on the basis of six-monthly reports. The Commonwealth, States and Territories and the Committee believe that there is a continuing need to refine the funding process. The States and Territories prefer the Commonwealth to provide the funding to them to administer to organisations. They believe the present funding criteria are too broad and that stricter guidelines should be developed to contain projects.<sup>236</sup> The Committee agrees that the funding guidelines require further development to adequately define the roles of resource agencies. The Committee notes that with disparate State and Territory policy and little State or Territory funding input, it would be hesitant to support a handing over of the program money.

10.38 The Committee recommends that:

- funding be provided to resource agencies against negotiated performance indicators for programs which have a primary objective of developing skills and assisting the client group to increase self-determination and self-management.

10.39 Two funding issues recurred throughout the inquiry in relation to resource agencies. Organisations consistently expressed dissatisfaction with funding levels which inhibited their ability to effectively perform the role expected of them. Conversely, funding agencies highlighted the economies of scale made possible by resource agencies.

10.40 Resource agencies are chronically underfunded and, as a result, cannot adequately perform the role expected of them by users and aspired to by directors. Some of the factors surrounding the funding issue are:

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<sup>235</sup> Transcript of Evidence, DAA, p.4

<sup>236</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Northern Territory Government, pp. 20-21 and Department of Aboriginal Affairs, pp. 1039-1045



resource agencies are either funded indirectly for their services through fees from recipient organisations or funded directly by government organisations to provide services to smaller unincorporated groups. However, the grants handled on behalf of communities do not include a component for the cost of administration undertaken by the resource agency - for example, accountancy and audit.

low funding levels of user organisations mean they can pay only minimal amounts for resource agency services. The agencies are expected to provide services at low cost levels, compared to commercial services. This provides economy but creates problems in that the client organisations become captive markets for resource agencies who must provide services, regardless of levels of funding, because the organisations cannot afford to purchase services elsewhere.

the low level of funding of resource agencies either directly or indirectly, inhibits their ability to engage in comprehensive training programs. This works against the principles on which they were established and they attract criticism as yet another form of dependency for the clients.

the low levels of funding available to resource agencies are perpetuating a similar situation to that of community advisers. The resource agencies are being forced to employ multi-skilled people, with lower overall expertise, in an endeavour to cost-effectively provide the level of service necessary to meet the demand. The emphasis is therefore on quantity of skills rather than the quality of these skills. The level of wages that would have to be offered to attract a high level of skills make it a luxury.

government agencies do not pay on a fee-for-service basis for the services they receive from the resource agencies. This places additional unpaid loads on organisations.

resource agencies are subject to ever-increasing demands to extend their services further afield, especially those agencies working in the outstation service delivery area. This gives rise to a dilemma. Agencies have a desire to respond to requests where the Aboriginal people have no alternative service options, but in doing so are spreading their resources thinly over vast geographic areas, thus drawing criticism for inefficiencies in cost and access.

when providing services to more remote communities resource agencies can become one-stop

agencies where advice is sought as well as services. The agencies are then criticised for being politically involved,<sup>237</sup> something which is viewed as outside the agencies' charter and which can jeopardise their funding.

the proactive role of agencies in community development and training is retarded due to a lack of co-ordination of government agencies, especially in the access to and level of funding. It was this lack of co-ordination and access to services which spearheaded the emergence of resource agencies.

the greater the number of clients the more potential there is for the organisation to suffer problems of cost effectiveness due to the large geographic areas which they are expected to cover. The needs of excision communities will soon either place greater demands on existing agencies or new agencies will emerge to service this group.

10.41 Even with the funding problems that have been noted, the Committee believes that resource agencies are cost-effective services providing specialised skills to a maximum number of users through a variety of different structures.

10.42 The Committee recommends that:

funding be provided to organisations at a sufficient level to enable them to purchase the necessary expertise, whether it be through an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal service.

#### Future training needs

10.43 In its report *A Chance for the Future*, the Committee covered extensively the issues surrounding Aboriginal education and training. The report discussed the education and training needs for community administration, management and development and highlighted the inadequacies of existing programs. It recommended a more comprehensive and community-based approach to providing Aboriginal people with the knowledge and skills they require to run their organisations.

10.44 The Committee concluded:

It is essential that training be part of a planned community approach to development and control and that it takes into account the differing levels of physical and social infrastructure within communities and communities' differing concerns and aspirations.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Northern Territory Government, p.18

<sup>238</sup> *A Chance for the Future*, p.44

10.45 The Committee recognises that this will not be a short-term process nor will it be the most inexpensive method of training delivery but, if incorporated in community planning it will be the most effective.

10.46 One of the major aims of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP), administered by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), is to provide training to communities to ultimately alleviate the need to rely so heavily on advisers and agencies. It will not however negate the need to access specialist advice on a fee-for-service basis in the same way as other individuals or organisations within the general community are required to do.

10.47 The Committee believes that institutions have an important role to play in providing some of the training to Aboriginal people but '... proposes that Aboriginal training needs should be met largely by a community-based approach'.<sup>239</sup> This is particularly so in the delivery of community-based training to smaller communities such as homelands and excision communities which have limited access to institutional-based training. DAA believes that resource agencies have a role to play in the transition from dependence to self-management and that, with an improved capacity in training delivery, the need for resource agencies will diminish over time. The Committee agrees with DAA<sup>240</sup> that resource agencies have an important role in this area.

10.48 Without the advantages of training in the many areas of skill required to administer programs and manage community development in a changing social environment, Aboriginal people run the risk of '... being swept along by an influx of programs over which they have no control because they have little knowledge of them'.<sup>241</sup> The more complex government departments make the administration, the less chance there is of crossing the bridge to self-management.

10.49 Aboriginal people have an urgent need to become competent in the skills necessary for executive positions within their organisations. This includes training for the directors of organisations as well as the employees. When policies and programs are being developed and controlled by Aboriginal people it becomes less relevant whether the employee - that is, the specialist adviser - is non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal. One of the recurring issues raised with the Committee was that of staff selection, which was addressed in more detail in the previous chapter. It is crucial to note, however, that the councillors of organisations must receive training to facilitate their fuller participation in the decision-making processes of the organisations, including the selection of staff.

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<sup>239</sup> *ibid*, p.55

<sup>240</sup> Transcript of Evidence, DAA Supplementary Submission, pp.6-8

<sup>241</sup> Transcript of Evidence, p.S973

10.50 The Committee recommends that:

- . training for Aboriginal people in organisation and community management be a priority for government agencies and be concurrent with all program funding, particularly the programs of resource agencies.

10.51 One of the recommendations from the Committee's report, *A Chance for the Future* is worth reiterating.

10.52 The Committee recommended that:

- . the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training ensure that funding is made available to Aboriginal resource agencies to provide them with the capacity to deliver training programs to small communities such as homeland centres and excision communities which do not have ready access to centralised training centres provided by State and Territory Departments of Education and TAFE.

#### Conclusion

10.53 The Committee concludes that regardless of the limitations which have been imposed on resource agencies, self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal people have been increased by resource agencies. Resource agencies provide greatly enhanced access to services at a cost which it is not possible for non-Aboriginal or government agencies to match. Importantly, the services are provided in a culturally sensitive way with a minimum of intrusion of foreign cultural obligations.

10.54 The Committee notes that resource agencies are a cost-effective, culturally relevant mechanism with a significant role to play in the process of self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal people.

10.55 The Committee recommends that:

- . the role of resource agencies be identified in the community planning process and adequately funded to bring policy and practice closer together.

Duncan Kerr, MP  
Chairman

Hon Warren Snowdon, MP  
Sub-Committee Chairman

22 August 1990

## APPENDIX 1

### List of Organisations and Individuals who made Submissions

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- 1 Dr P. Loveday
- 2 Kalkadoon Tribal Council
- 3 Yuendumu Community Council Inc
- 4 Dr R. Coldwell
- 5 Dr W.O. McCarthy
- 6 Ms E. Gardiner
- 7 Woorabinda Aboriginal Council
- 8 Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- 9 Mr S. Barns
- 10 Mr V. Howell
- 11 Aboriginal Coordinating Council, Queensland
- 12 Pitjantjatjara Council Inc
- 13 Barwon Aboriginal Community Ltd
- 14 St Peters Anglican Church Parish Council
- 15 Brisbane Tribal Council
- 16 Mr P. Fewell
- 17 Mr V. Jerrard
- 18 Mr A. Sorrensen
- 19 Ms M. Blair
- 20 Aboriginal Development Commission
- 21 Dr Elspeth Young
- 22 Office of Local Government, Commonwealth Department  
of Immigration, Ethnic Affairs and Local Government
- 23 Aboriginal Housing Board, South Australia

- 24 Local Government Training Council Qld Incorporated
- 25 Mr K. Nielson
- 26 Race Discrimination Commissioner, Human Rights  
and Equal Opportunity Commission
- 27 Dr A. Bolger
- 28 Queensland Government
- 29 Department of Employment, Education and Training
- 30 Mr K. King
- 31 Mr J.A. Tanner
- 32 Western Australian Government
- 33 Northern Territory Government
- 34 Commonwealth Department of Transport and  
Communications
- 35 Mrs E. Bourke
- 36 Batchelor College, Northern Territory
- 37 Staff of the Division of Aboriginal Education,  
Darwin Institute of Technology
- 38 Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs -  
WA State Office
- 39 Mr Neil Bell MLA
- 40 Commonwealth Department of Community Services  
and Health
- 41 Ms H.J. Sinclair
- 42 Institute for Aboriginal Development
- 43 New South Wales Government
- 44 Northern Territory Open College of TAFE
- 45 Mr R. Vallance
- 46 Centre for Appropriate Technology - Alice Springs
- 47 Local Government Association of Queensland
- 48 South Australian Government
- 49 Dr J. Altman
- 50 Dr A.K. Eckermann

- 51 Rick Flowers/Griff Foley
- 52 Aboriginal Cultural and Training Institute,  
Sydney
- 53 Aboriginal Hostels Limited
- 54 New South Wales Aboriginal Consultative Group
- 55 Northern Land Council
- 56 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Education Council
- 57 Patrick Somers, Nightcliff
- 58 Central Land Council - Lynne Alexander
- 59 Gurungu Council
- 60 Katherine Regional Aboriginal Legal Aid Service
- 61 Jurnkurakurr Aboriginal Resource Agency



## APPENDIX 2

### Public Hearings Held and Witnesses Heard

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19 February 1988 - CANBERRA

#### Department of Aboriginal Affairs

Castine Mr G.K.	Director Northern Territory
Frampton Mr D.	Director Policy Co-ordination
Jones Mr G.	Acting First Assistant Secretary Heritage and Legal Division
Koukoulas Mr A.G.	First Assistant Secretary Heritage and Legal Division
Menham Mr J.G.	Acting First Assistant Secretary Corporate Development
O'Rourke Mr D.J.	First Assistant Secretary Programs Policy Division
Rolfe Mr R.K.	Assistant Director Policy Development
Toohy Mr R.F.	Assistant Secretary Housing and Infrastructure

2 March 1988 - KINTORE (NT)

#### Walangurra Council

Major Mr R.	Chairman
Scobie Mr J.	Deputy Chairman
Young Mr J.	Council member

#### Private Citizens

Bartlett Mr P.	Outstation Co-ordinator Kintore NT
Butler Mr S.	Adult Educator Kintore NT
Conway Mr T.	Health Worker Kintore NT
Fisher Mr D.	Sports Manager

	Kintore NT
Michael Mr P.	Store worker Kintore NT
Robinson Ms M.	Teaching Assistant Kintore NT
Robinson Mr V.	Teaching Assistant Kintore NT
Tjumpitjimba Mr	Outstation Worker Redbank NT

6 April 1988 - WOORABINDA, (Qld)

**Woorabinda Aboriginal Council**

Munns Mr T.G.	Chairman
Powder Mr P. B.	Deputy Chairman
Fisher Mr C.	Councillor
Blair Mr N.	Councillor
Thomas Mr R.	Council Project Officer
Sorrensen Mr A.N.	Council Project Officer
Cummins Mr T.	Council Building Superintendent

**Woorabinda Aboriginal and Islander Media Association**

Evans Ms J.	Trainee Broadcaster
Thaiday Mr B.	Training Officer

**Private Citizens**

Bundle Mr R.B.	Woorabinda Qld
Bowering Mrs J.	Woorabinda Qld
Hagger Mr R.W.	Woorabinda Qld

7 April 1988 - BRISBANE

**Queensland Government**

Allison Ms M.A.	Acting Director Department of Family Services Brisbane Qld
Belbin Sergeant V.S.	Queensland Police Department Brisbane Qld
Brown Mr D.P.	Deputy Under Secretary Department of Community Services and Ethnic Affairs Brisbane Qld
Egan Mr D.P.	OIC Aboriginal and Islander TAFE Services

Department of Employment  
Vocational Education and Training  
Brisbane Qld

Swan Mr J.R.                    Executive Director TAFE  
Department of Employment  
Vocational Education and Training  
Brisbane Qld

Gilmore Mr W.H.                Research Officer (Finance)  
Department of Local Government  
Brisbane Qld

McGarvie Mr N.J.               Principal Education Officer  
Aboriginal and Islander  
Education Branch  
Department of Education  
Brisbane Qld

Mitchell Mr W.D.               Chairman  
Queensland Fish Management  
Authority  
Department of Primary  
Industries  
Brisbane Qld

Perkins Mr J.J.                Chief Probation and Parole  
Officer  
Department of Corrective Services  
Brisbane Qld

Webber Mr W.A.L.               Assistant Commissioner  
Queensland Water Resources  
Commission  
Brisbane Qld

Department of Aboriginal Affairs - Queensland State Office

Rolfe Mr R.K.                    Assistant Director  
Wauchope Mr J.L.                State Director

Private Citizen

McCarthy Dr W.O.                Kedron Qld

Brisbane Tribal Council

Davidson Mr D.                    Woolloongabba Qld  
Reid Mr A.G.                      Woolloongabba Qld

15 April 1988 - CANBERRA

Aboriginal Development Commission

Cruse Mr O.                      Deputy Chairman

Faulkner Mr R.                      Branch Manager  
O'Brien Mr M.                     General Manager  
Prior Mr W.                         Acting Deputy General Manager

**Department of Employment, Education and Training**

Fox Mr J.                            Assistant Secretary  
                                      Aboriginal Employment and  
                                      Training Branch

Gulash Ms H.                         Acting Director

Jackomas Mr A.                      Principal Executive Officer  
                                      Research and Development Section  
                                      Aboriginal Education

Parr Mr J.M.                         Assistant Secretary  
                                      Aboriginal Education

Wilson Mr R.                         Director  
                                      Aboriginal Education Operations

**19 May 1988 - CANBERRA**

**Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs**

Calvert Mr R.                        Assistant Secretary  
                                      Government Relations Branch  
                                      Office of Local Government

Holmes Mr C.G.                      Assistant Director  
                                      Financial Relations  
                                      Government Relations Branch  
                                      Office of Local Government

**24 June 1988 - PERTH**

**West Australian Government**

Fitzpatrick Mr B.                    General Manager  
                                      Aboriginal Enterprises Co Ltd

Hamilton Mr C.                      Acting Co-ordinator  
                                      Aboriginal Affairs Planning  
                                      Authority

Molloy Ms A.C.                      Acting Deputy Commissioner  
                                      Aboriginal Affairs Planning  
                                      Authority

Howard Mr A.T.                      Manager  
                                      Aboriginal Legal Service  
                                      Management and Support Unit

Department of Aboriginal Affairs - Western Australian State  
Office

Westbury Mr N.	Deputy Director
Williams Mr R.D.	Principal Project Officer
Wyatt Mr C.	State Director

Private Citizens

Bolger Ms A.	Fremantle WA
Rumley Dr D.	Claremont WA
Rumley Mrs H.	Claremont WA

7 December 1988 - Adelaide

South Australian Government

Briton-Jones Ms S.	Co-ordinator Aboriginal Affairs Department of Premier and Cabinet
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Hutchinson Mr L.A	Manager Office of Employment and Training
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Moriarty Mr J	Director Office of Aboriginal Affairs
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Procter Mr I.J.	Assistant Director Budget Branch Treasury Department
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Rathman Mr D.	Head School of Aboriginal Education TAFE
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Department of Aboriginal Affairs - SA State Office

Grope Mr M.	Assistant Director
Lamshed Mr B.	Regional Manager
Parish Mr T.	Acting Assistant Director
Preece Mr R.	Assistant Director
Roberts Mr E.	Assistant Director
Tripp Ms M.	State Co-ordinator

Department of Employment, Education and Training - SA State  
Office

Correll Mr R.J.	Director
Willie Mr R.	Assistant Director

Private Citizen

Bourke Mrs E.A.	Burnside SA
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16 February 1989 - Sydney

New South Wales Government

Allen Mr R.B.	Manager Roads and Traffic Authority
Cameron Ms J.	Director TAFE
Duncan Mr M.B.	Project Officer Department of Family and Community Services
Eagle Mr R.J.	Assistant Director Public Works Department
Fitzpatrick Mr M.B.	Manager Department of Family and Community Services
Frost Ms B.	Manager Home Care Services of NSW
Kocken Mr K.A.F.	Deputy Director Aboriginal Affairs Premier's Department
Spasojevic Ms N.	Senior Project Officer Department of Family and Community Services
Thorne Mr B.	Assistant Co-ordinator Aboriginal Education NSW TAFE
Vacchini Mr I.F.	Assistant Director-General Department of Education
Webster Mrs M.	Aboriginal District Officer Department of Family and Community Services
Wilson Ms H.	Senior Project Officer Department of Industrial Relations and Employment

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

Chapman Mr M.	Aboriginal Policy Advisor
Moss Ms I.	Race Discrimination Commissioner
Mundine Ms K.	Regional Director
Wilkie Ms M.	Senior Research Officer

Department of Employment, Education and Training - NSW Office

Bush Mr P. State Director  
Devitt Mr C.J. Head  
Aboriginal Education  
Joyce Mrs E.A. Acting Assistant Director  
Aboriginal Programs  
Refshauge Mr M. Head  
Aboriginal Employment and Traing

**Department of Aboriginal Affairs - NSW Office**

Myers Mr I. Deputy State Director  
Rose Mr D. State Director

**Thursday 9 March 1989 - Canberra**

**Private Citizen**

Altman Dr J.C. Yarralumla ACT

**Friday 7 April 1989 - Canberra**

**Department of Aboriginal Affairs**

Morony Mr R.A. Acting Assistant Secretary  
Employment Development

Turner Ms P.A. First Assistant Secretary  
(Programs)

**Department of Employment, Education and Training**

Malezer Mr R.L. Manager  
Community and Aboriginal  
Programs

Parr Mr J.M. Assistant Secretary  
Aboriginal Programs

**Aboriginal Hostels Limited**

Clarke Mr R.C. General Manager

Lane Mr R.W. Manager  
Research and Planning

**Private Citizen**

Young Dr E. Deakin ACT

**Thursday 13 April 1989 - Canberra**

**New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group**

Burney Ms L.J.                      President

**Thursday 18 May 1989 - Darwin**

**Northern Territory Government**

Davis-Goff Ms G.                      Assistant Director  
Department of Local Government and  
Administrative Services

Jones Mr P.                              Principal Education Officer  
NT Department of Education

Nichols Mr P.                            Consultant  
Office of Local Government

Peake Mr O.                              Managing Director (Power)  
Power and Water Authority

Phegan Mr G.                            Deputy Director  
Office of Local Government

Phelan Ms K.A.                          Assistant Secretary  
TAFE  
Department of Education

**Department of Employment, Education and Training**

Calma Mr T.                              Director  
Gibbs Mr G.                              Assistant Director  
Wilson Mr J.D.                            Territory Director

**Department of Aboriginal Affairs - NT Office**

Castine Mr G.K.                          Director (NT)  
Damaso Ms R.                            AEDP State Co-ordinator

**Northern Land Council**

Ah Kit Mr J.L.                            Director  
Leveridge Mr V.                           Senior Research Officer  
Williams Mr S.                            Consultant

**Thursday 25 May 1989 - Canberra**

**Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs**

Calvert Mr R.                            Assistant Secretary  
Government Relations Branch  
Office of Local Government

Lloyd Ms C.E.                            Manager



Financial Relations Section  
Office of Local Government

Thursday 23 November 1989 - Canberra

Department of Aboriginal Affairs

Feltham Mr T.R.	Acting Assistant Secretary Housing and Infrastructure Branch
Gillin Mr P.J.	Industrial Relations Officer
Kneen Mr B.J.	Acting Director Community Services and Local Government
Munn Mr R.J.	Acting Director AEDP

Thursday 1 February 1990 - Alice Springs

Northern Territory Government

Gargan Mr E.T.	Assistant Secretary (South) Department of Lands and Housing
Marshall Mr G.R.	Director Office of Local Government

Department of Aboriginal Affairs - NT Office

Castine Mr G.K.	Director NT Office Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Muddle Mr W.R.	Acting Regional Manager Alice Springs Office Department of Aboriginal Affairs

Aboriginal Development Commission - NT Office

Reilly Mr D.H.	Manager Client Services Aboriginal Development Commission
Dalziel Mr J.A.	Policy Officer Aboriginal Development Commission

## APPENDIX 3

### EXHIBITS

#### Department of Aboriginal Affairs

- 1 Grants Program 1987-88
- 2 Departmental Financial Guidelines for Grants
- 3 Corporate Planning Statement: Policy Guidelines
- 4 Corporate Planning Statement: Corporate Plan
- 5 Corporate Planning Statement: 1986-87 Strategic Statement
- 6 An application form for the incorporation of an Aboriginal association
- 7 Project evaluation form

#### Yuendumu School

- 8 Report on hearing loss from chronic middle ear infection

#### Kintore Community

- 9 Information on community

#### Institute for Aboriginal Development

- 10 Industrial Relations Project
- 11 Draft Estimates 1988-89

#### C. and J. Scollay

- 12 Amata Review, Amata 1982

#### J.C. Altman and I. Taylor

- 13 Employment Opportunities for Aboriginal People at Outstations and Homelands: Report to the Australian Council for Employment and Training, 1987

#### Queensland Government

- 14 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander (Land Holding) Act
- 15 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (Land Holding) Regulations 1986
- 16 Community Services (Aborigines) Regulations 1985
- 17 Community Services (Aborigines) Act
- 18 Aboriginal and Islander TAFE Services Section, Technical and Further Education - Listing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Special Courses
- 19 Aboriginal and Islander TAFE Services Section - Special Courses Conducted by Colleges of TAFE in Queensland - 1986
- 20 Tarkarri Newsletter

**Office of Local Government**

- 21 Policy in Relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- 22 Leaflet
- 23 Steps Being Taken to Achieve Policy Objectives in Relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Communities

**Alan Morton**

- 24 Aboriginal and Islander Local Governing Bodies - Grants Determination Research Project, April 1988

**Mr Don McLeod**

- 25 Documents provided to Subcommittee B at Warrlaong on 21 June 1988

**Western Australian Government**

- 26 Aborigines in Business

**Aurukun Shire Council**

- 27 Statement of Receipts and Disbursements from 1 July 1987 to 30 June 1988 and Revised Estimates to 30 June 1988
- 28 Business Papers for Meeting 8 and 9 December 1986

29 Business Papers for August 1987 presented to meeting  
12 and 13 October 1987

**Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council, Queensland**

30 Community Justice in Northern Queensland: Problems  
of Implementation and Development

**Lockhart River Aboriginal Council**

31 Deed of Grant of Land in Trust, 29 October 1987

**Hopevale Aboriginal Council**

32 Community Economic Development Plan

**Ms R. Fujii, Torres Strait Island Regional Education Committee**

33 Minutes of QATSICC Meeting, 29 June 1988

Minutes of TSIREC Meeting, 30 June 1988

**Batchelor College**

34 List of students in Batchelor College's Associate  
Diploma in Community Management and Certificate in  
Office Administration

35 Batchelor College Community Management Education  
Team, July 1988, Outline of Community Management  
Courses Offered by Batchelor College

**Darwin Institute of Technology**

36 Documents provided by the Northern Territory Open  
College of TAFE

37 Darwin Institute of Technology - Field Officers  
Certificate (Aboriginal Studies) - Handbook 1989

38 Darwin Institute of Technology - Field Officers  
Certificate (Aboriginal Services) Courses

**Home Care Services of NSW**

39 Home Care's Position Regarding Services to  
Aboriginal People

**Department of Aboriginal Affairs NSW Office**

40 Infrastructure Needs on Former Aboriginal Reserves

**Koonibba Community**

- 41 Koonibba Background Paper

**Aboriginal Community College of SA**

- 42 Aboriginal Community College - Background Notes

**TAFE National Centre for Research and Development**

- 43 Developing Training Materials in Community and Enterprise Management for Aboriginal People in Remote Areas - Draft Project Report by E.A. Bourke, H. Guthrie and S. Wilson
- 44 Training Materials for Aborigines in Remote Communities - Approved Projects
- 45 Training Materials for Remote Aboriginal Communities in Community and Enterprise Management - An Introduction to the Use of the Materials
- 46 Developing Training Materials in Community and Enterprise Management for Aboriginal People in Remote Areas - Resource List of Training Courses and Publications
- 47 Common Curricula and Training Materials in Community and Enterprise Management in Remote Aboriginal Communities - Project Description
- 48 Rural Aboriginal Women and TAFE - Excerpt from Overcoming Distance: Isolated Rural Women's Access to TAFE across Australia by Pauline Mageean

**School of Aboriginal and Islander Administration, South Australian Institute of Technology**

- 49 Aborigines in Schooling by Prof C.J. Bourke
- 50 Background Information and Courses Available
- 51 A Proposal for an Aboriginal Senior Executive Management Program for the SA Public Service

**Department of Aboriginal Affairs - SA Office**

- 52 Constitutions of Port McLeay, Point Pearce, Nepabunna, Gerard and Davenport Community Councils
- 53 Associations Incorporation Act 1985

- 54 Documents relating to the Aboriginal Organisations Training Program, 1987-88
- 55 TAFE Community Management Team
- 56 Aboriginal Role in Nature Conservation, Emu Conference, 7-9 June 1988

**Local Government Association of NSW**

- 57 Local Government and Aboriginal Community Development - Project Report - Summary and Recommendations

**Ray Vallance**

- 58 Documents provided by Mr R. Vallance

**Office of Local Government - Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs**

- 59 Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1986
- 60 Local Government (Financial Assistance) Amendment Act 1987
- 61 Local Government (Financial Assistance) Amendment Bill, Explanatory Memorandum

**Aboriginal Cultural and Training Institute**

- 62 Peninsula QATSICC Education Policy

**NSW Aboriginal Land Council**

- 63 Annual Report, 1987-88

**South Australian Government**

64. The Budget and the Social Justice Strategy 1988-89
- 65 Local Government Act 1934-75 and Amendments
- 66 Regulations under the Local Government Act 1933-81 and Amendments
- 67 Outback Areas Community Development Trust
- 68 Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 1966-75 and Amendments
- 69 Anangu Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act 1981
- 70 Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act 1984

## Northern Territory Government

- 71 Hansard of debate in NT Legislative Assembly for Thursday 20 November 1986
- 72 Letter from Sally Kift, NT Department of Law to Secretary NT Department of Community Development, dated 18 November 1986
- 73 Letter from Secretary, Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to Secretary, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, dated 26 October 1987
- 74 Extracts from paper given to Small Towns Conference in Darwin on 24 February 1989 by Graham Phegan, NT Office of Local Government
- 75 Paper given to Small Towns Conference in Darwin on 24 February 1989 by Graham Phegan, NT Office of Local Government
- 76 Copies of all current Community Government Schemes
- 77 NT Local Government Grants Commission, Report on Distribution of Funds under the Commonwealth's Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1986, 1988
- 78 NT Local Government Grants Commission, Report on Distribution of NT Operational Subsidies, 1988
- 79 Synopsis of paper by Peter Nichols to the NARU Conference on Small Towns, 24 February 1989
- 80 Paper by Peter Nichols to the NARU Conference on Small Towns, 24 February 1989
- 81 Per capita distribution of Commonwealth financial assistance amongst NT local government bodies, 1988/89
- 82 Information on Courses at Batchelor College
- 83 Development of Community Education in Aboriginal Communities in the NT, NT Department of Education
- 84 Community Education Centres, Development Schedules and Planning and Development - Yirrkala, Galiwinku, Yuendumu and Maningrida

## Department of Aboriginal Affairs - NT Office

- 85 Bilingual education - Schools and Aboriginal Languages in the Literacy Program
- 86 AEDP Implementation in the Northern Territory

- 87 NT Strategy 1988-89
- 88 AOT Program - NT
- 89 Letter from G. Castine, Director (NT), DAA to Deputy Director, Assistant Director (PD & M) and Regional Managers, DAA, dated 5 October 1988
- 90 Community Profile/Employment History Card Report

**Nguiu Community**

- 91 TIWI Business, Pirntubula Pty Ltd

**NT Local Government Industry Training Committee Inc**

- 92 Interim Draft Report - Training Needs Assessment of Community Government Councils in Remote Aboriginal Communities of the Northern Territory



## APPENDIX 4

### List of Informal Discussions and Field Visits

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#### Northern Territory

	<i>Aputula (formerly Finke)</i>	29.2.88
	<i>Alice Springs -</i>	
		<i>Pitjantjatjara</i>
<i>Council</i>	<i>1.3.88</i>	
	<i>Tangentyere Council</i>	<i>1.3.88</i>
	<i>Central Land Council</i>	<i>1.3.88</i>
	<i>Institute For Aboriginal Development</i>	<i>4.3.88</i>
	<i>Kintore</i>	<i>2.3.88</i>
	<i>Yuendumu</i>	<i>3.3.88</i>
	<i>Willowra</i>	<i>3.3.88</i>
	<i>Batchelor College</i>	<i>14.11.88</i>
	<i>Darwin -</i>	
	<i>University College</i>	<i>14.11.88</i>
	<i>Open College</i>	<i>14.11.88</i>
	<i>NT Minister for Labour and Administrative Services</i>	<i>15.11.88</i>
	<i>Darwin Institute of Technology</i>	<i>15.11.88</i>
	<i>Nguiu</i>	<i>15.5.89</i>
	<i>Galiwinku</i>	<i>15.5.89</i>
	<i>Yirrkala</i>	<i>16.5.89</i>
	<i>Ramangining</i>	<i>16.5.89</i>
	<i>Maningrida</i>	<i>16.5.89</i>

<i>Ngukurr</i>	<i>16.5.89</i>
<i>Groote Eylandt -</i>	
<i>Umbakumba</i>	<i>17.5.89</i>
<i>Angurugu</i>	<i>17.5.89</i>
<i>Katherine -</i>	
<i>Katherine Town Council</i>	<i>29.1.90</i>
<i>Kalano</i>	<i>29.1.90</i>
<i>Combined Aboriginal Organisations</i>	<i>29.1.90</i>
<i>Elliott -</i>	
<i>Gurungu Aboriginal Council</i>	<i>30.1.90</i>
<i>Elliott Community Government Council</i>	<i>30.1.90</i>
<i>Tennant Creek -</i>	
<i>Tennant Creek Town Council</i>	<i>30.1.90</i>
<i>Jurnkurakurr</i>	<i>30.1.90</i>
<i>Julalikari Council</i>	<i>30.1.90</i>
<i>Tennant Creek Town Camps</i>	<i>31.1.90</i>
<i>Alice Springs -</i>	
<i>Combined Aboriginal Organisations</i>	<i>31.1.90</i>
<i>Pitjantjatjara Council</i>	<i>31.1.90</i>
<i>Alice Springs Town Council</i>	<i>1.2.90</i>

*Queensland*

<i>Woorabinda</i>	<i>6.4.88</i>
<i>Aurukun</i>	<i>4.7.88</i>
<i>Hopevale</i>	<i>4.7.88</i>
<i>Lockhart River</i>	<i>4.7.88</i>
<i>Cairns -</i>	
<i>Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council</i>	<i>5.7.88</i>
<i>Torres Strait -</i>	
<i>Yorke Island</i>	<i>6.7.88</i>
<i>Boigu Island</i>	<i>6.7.88</i>
<i>Mabuiag Island</i>	<i>6.7.88</i>
<i>Thursday Island (Island Co-ordinating Council, Interested persons and organisations)</i>	<i>7.7.88</i>

<i>Cherbourg</i>	<i>13.3.89</i>
<i>Pormpuraaw (Edward River)</i>	<i>14.3.89</i>
<i>Kowanyama</i>	<i>14.3.89</i>
<i>Mornington Island</i>	<i>14.3.89</i>

**Western Australia**

<i>Kalumburu</i>	<i>20.6.88</i>
<i>Carnarvon -</i>	
<i>Kuywardu resource Centre</i>	<i>20.6.88</i>
<i>Mungallah Community</i>	<i>20.6.88</i>
<i>Carnarvon Shire Council</i>	<i>20.6.88</i>
<i>Pundulmurra College</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Warralong</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Kununurra -</i>	
<i>Waringarri Aboriginal Coroperation</i>	<i>20.6.88</i>
<i>Mirima Community</i>	<i>20.6.88</i>
	<i>Mud Spring</i>

**Settlement**

	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Emu Creek Settlement</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Mayaroong Constructions</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Kimberley Land Council</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>DAA Regional Offices</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>DEET Regional Offices</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire Council</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Warmun Community</i>	<i>21.6.88</i>
<i>Jigalong</i>	<i>22.6.88</i>
<i>Halls Creek -</i>	
<i>Ngoonjuwah Council</i>	<i>22.6.88</i>
<i>Halls Creek Shire Council</i>	<i>22.6.88</i>
<i>Derby -</i>	
<i>Derby Shire Council</i>	<i>22.6.88</i>
<i>Kimberley Land Council (Derby Office)</i>	<i>23.6.88</i>
<i>Mowanjum Community</i>	<i>23.6.88</i>

*South Australia*

*Koonibba* 5.12.88  
*Yalata* 5.12.88  
*Adelaide -*  
*Adelaide Community College* 6.12.88  
*TAFE National Centre for Research  
and Development* 6.12.88  
*School of Aboriginal and Island  
Education, South Australian  
Institute of Technology* 6.12.88  
*TAFE School of Adult Education* 7.12.88

*New South Wales*

*Walgett -*  
*Gingie Reserve* 13.2.89  
*Namoi Aboriginal Community Corp.* 13.2.89  
*St Peters Anglican Church Parish  
Council* 13.2.89  
*Barwon Aboriginal Community Ltd* 13.2.89  
*Enngonia* 14.2.89  
*Sydney -*  
*Tranby College* 15.2.89  
*Aboriginal Cultural and Training  
Institute* 15.2.89  
*New South Wales Aboriginal  
Land Council* 15.2.89

## APPENDIX 5

### ADVISERS TO THE INQUIRY

To complete the inquiry the Committee initiated two consultancies in order to obtain further information and advice on a number of matters. This was made necessary because of the inability of the Committee to conduct visits around Australia owing to industrial action in the airlines industry in the latter half of 1989.

Dr John Bern, Head, Department of Sociology, University of Newcastle, visited the Northern Territory in December 1989 and later prepared a paper for the Committee entitled *Community Management and Self Determination*.

Dr John von Sturmer, Senior Lecturer, School of Sociology, University of New South Wales co-ordinated an advisory team which focused on Queensland. A seminar was organised in Brisbane on 11 and 12 January 1990 which each team member, plus Dr Bern attended and presented a paper. Those in attendance included: Prof. Nancy Williams and Dr Bruce Rigsby, Anthropology and Sociology, University of Queensland; Dr Peter Sutton, South Australian Museum; Dr Athol Chase, Australian Environmental Studies, Griffith University; Dr David Martin, Prehistory and Anthropology, Australian National University; Mr Allan Dale and Mr Marcus Lane postgraduate students, Griffith University.

The Committee expresses its appreciation to the advisers mentioned above. The Committee would also like to thank Mr Ross Rolfe, formerly of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for his assistance to the advisory team and for his attendance at the Brisbane Seminar.

Dr Bern's paper and a transcript of the seminar are included with the records of the inquiry.

