

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

4<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Dear Secretary

**Re: Inquiry into community stores in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

I submit to you the attached description of a "store" which I believe is needed in the larger towns that currently have only one major store and possibly additional takeaway outlets.

The marketing of consumer goods via television and associated media is providing adequate motivation for consumer spending which is not in the best interests of the health of the people.

I make this claim on **the following basis:**

1. The people living in remote Aboriginal communities have been living for the majority of their lives in a community where **health status has been on the decline** since the introduction of welfare payments in 1976.
2. The **power and might of television advertising has been ignored** in attempts to reverse the downward trend in health status with the associated poor life expectancy and disastrous median age at death.
3. There is an urgent need to **sell the benefits of the product Good Health** with the same vigour, expertise and panache of the major marketers of alcoholic beverages, sugar loaded soft drinks and fast food with low nutrient value.
4. In order for a multi media campaign to effectively sell *Good Health* there is the need for a **point of sale outlet where the product and all information** relating to its take-up can be provided, and what better place than linked to a pharmacy.
5. The **cash flow from the pharmacy** in supplying PBS medicines to the nearby community health clinic is the ideal mix to combine with a store selling products and accessories that will lead to better health outcomes.
6. A good health image to a store in the larger towns will offset the **totally damaging effects that the existing takeaway shops** are having through the sale of unhealthy food, drinks and cigarettes. Such outlets should be bulldozed from the scene and a Good Health Store put in their place.
7. While competition to any existing store may be seen as a problem the emphasis of the Good Health Store and Pharmacy places it in another league and should not be viewed as a damaging influence. **National Competition Principles allow this to happen** and the benefits will outweigh any cost.

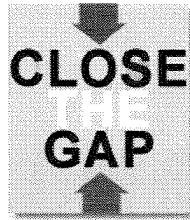
The following business case describes how such a venture could be progressed and the support of the ATSLIA Committee would be most advantageous in obtaining financial support from major stakeholders in the retailing sector.

I will be pleased to attend and present to a public hearing of the Committee in Darwin. If time permits I would like to show a PowerPoint presentation on this subject which I have given at a number of health related conferences over the past three years and received wide praise for the concept. It takes about 15 minutes.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

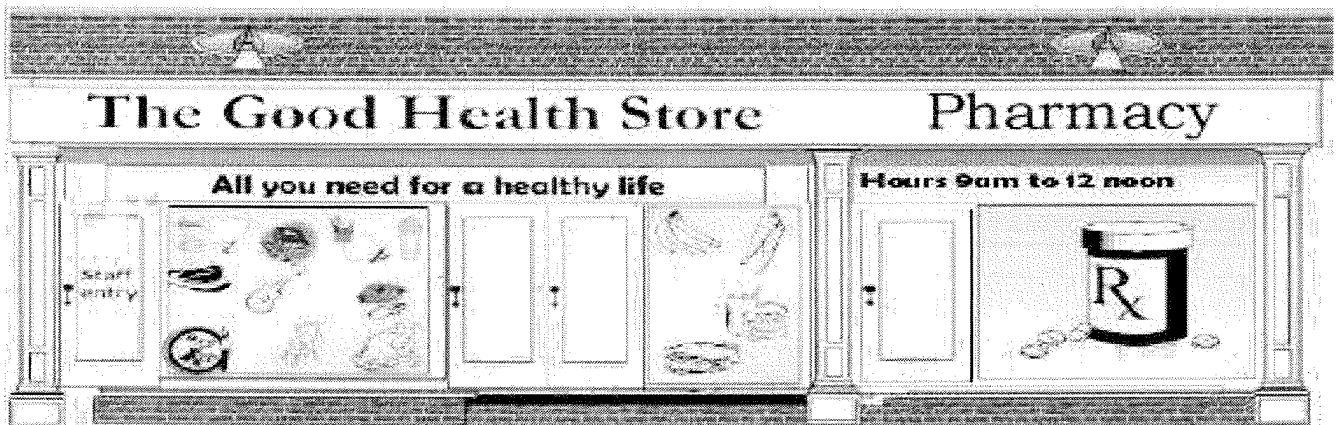
ROLLO MANNING  
Principal



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## Submission

# ***Good Health Store and Pharmacy*** For **Remote Aboriginal towns in the Northern Territory**



This document describes a vision to create a competitive retail situation in remote Aboriginal towns and lead the way to better health through a multi media campaign for a new product - "Good Health" - marketed to Aboriginal people who have not experienced it before.

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## **Project Title**

### **Developing Business Plan for *Good Health Store and Pharmacy* at Aboriginal towns in the NT**

## **Summary**

The project will satisfy a number of factors currently seen as top priority in **CLOSING THE GAP:**

1. Improved health outcomes
2. Economic development in remote Aboriginal towns (See **Attachment A**)
3. Employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people in remote locations.
4. Greater control by Aboriginal people over their lifestyle and future opportunities.
5. A healthy community that can participate in its own social and economic development.

A combination of economic development, health promotion, employment and training is presented in a way that will create additional opportunities for local Aboriginal people to see a wider vision in scope for their future.

The creation of economic stimulus in an area that is currently being serviced by operators at a distant place (retail pharmacies) will provide competition to existing businesses and give the community a wider choice at competitive prices.

The *Good Health Store and Pharmacy* is a visionary approach to a long standing problem. It presents an opportunity to change behaviour in the way people live (and eat) through a combination of public sector funding (the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme), health promotion campaigns with force (the multi media approach to marketing "good health") and local initiative – in developing the ancillary factors needed to succeed. Through the community notice board, sporting activities, learning and challenging pastimes, the social capital of communities may be expected to improve.

## **Project Outline**

A Business Plan will describe a venture that could be carried out by an entrepreneur to create a "chain" of stores across the Top End that could be called the "Good Health Store" incorporating a pharmacy. The store will become the "point of sale" for a media campaign to promote to Aboriginal people the advantages of *good health* – a condition the majority have never experienced due to their health status having been on the decline for the past 30 years. See **Attachment B** for a summary of the media campaign and its rationale. Nutrition (diet) is one of the main social determinants of poor health amongst remote living Aboriginal people. The Good Health Store will try and arrest this and provide an outlet and medium for education to attempt to change behaviour in a sustainable manner. The pharmacy will provide to the health centres in the region PBS supplies utilising Section 100 processes which will bring in additional income to cover the cost of an in house pharmacist.

## **Project Team**

A project team will be assembled and be made up of a cross section of business and health professionals with a keen interest in the subject.

## **Aim of the project**

- o Improve the health status of the population to a point where they can have the motivation and desire to lead a socially and economically fulfilling life and contribute to the well being of the total population.
- o Provide the population with an acceptance of the need for improved health
- o Create a social marketing program that will sell the notion of good health as a new and emerging lifestyle that will benefit the entire community
- o Establish a retail store that will be the key point of sale for all products and advice needed to enable success of the marketing program.
- o Enable the establishment of key groups to rebuild social capital and return people to work, education and recreation.
- o Provide a pharmacy practice model that best suits a remote Aboriginal town with a population to support a sustainable business

## Need

Remote Aboriginal towns in the North of Australia have the following key features of disadvantage<sup>1</sup>:

- Poor health status
- Low levels of literacy and poor school attendance
- Overcrowded housing
- High crime and incarceration rate
- Inadequate transport opportunities to nearby communities and regional centres
- High unemployment and welfare dependence
- Personal and domestic hygiene of sub standard levels to maintain good health
- Few leisure activities especially for young people
- High degree of substance abuse brought on by state of boredom
- Social capital from pre-colonization era shattered by western invasion

The *Good Health Store and Pharmacy* is proposed to be a sustainable attempt to lift the health status of the population to a level where the people can see the link between good health, social happiness, personal fulfilment and economic prosperity.

The key problems that the *Good Health Program* will address are:

- ✚ A realization that poor health status is an indicator of social despair and exclusion.
- ✚ An understanding of the alternative to poor health – good health
- ✚ An awareness of the factors that hold a person back in their own self fulfilment through poor health
- ✚ An awakening of the benefits to the individual of an improved health status
- ✚ How good health for the individual can be extended through to the community by joint and co-operative actions
- ✚ An active community that participates in organised sporting events (e.g. "little" athletics), women's activities (e.g. weaving and art), and "Men's Shed" type activity (e.g. games, hobbies, art, culture)
- ✚ An understanding of the need for strong social capital to be returned to a community that has been shattered by past attempts at segregation, assimilation and reconciliation and the consequent breaking down of culture, law and society.
- ✚ An education of the elements needed to bring about a status of good health to the individual and in turn the community
- ✚ Provide a "point of sale" (*Good Health Store and Pharmacy*) where the elements needed to bring about good health can be obtained. A graphic showing the role of the "point of sale" is at **Attachment C**.

This project will work in with other agencies providing health promotion services to the people living in these towns.

The rationale for the *Good Health Store and Pharmacy* supports the thrust towards economic development in remote Aboriginal towns.

## Existing Projects or Initiatives

Aboriginal towns with a population of between 1,000 and 2,500 persons have in the main only one store. Comparative stats with a town in NSW (Boorowa – pop 2,000) show 15 retail outlets. There is no reason why Aboriginal people should be denied the opportunity of a choice in where they shop and competition to ensure a wider range of goods at competitive prices.

The *Good Health Store and Pharmacy* will provide that void in the market place not being met by any operator. The income from PBS supply will supplement the establishment of a speciality store concentrating on good health products and promotions.

The supply of PBS medicines is currently being provided by retail pharmacies in Darwin and again there is no reason why this could not be done from a local operation that in turn provides training and awareness among young people on what pharmacy is all about as a career path.

There is no such initiative at present.

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Government Services 2008. Indigenous Compendium, Productivity Commission, Canberra

## Method

The methodology for this project has three parts.

### 1. Key Stakeholders

The investigative and seek support phase with the key stakeholders in the supply of good health and pharmacy services to remote Aboriginal community towns. These are, in the main, the following agencies:

#### Australian Government

1. Minister for Employment
2. Minister for Indigenous Affairs
3. Government Business Managers at Aboriginal town locations
4. Office for Indigenous Employment Programs
5. Office for Indigenous Economic Development
6. Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

#### Northern Territory Government

1. Chief Minister
2. Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Employment and Education and Training
3. Minister for Regional Development
4. Office of Regional Economic Development
5. Office for Remote Health Services

#### Local Government

1. Local Government Association of the NT
2. Shire Councils of Tiwi, West Arnhem., East Arnhem, Roper Gulf, Katherine Town Council, and Victoria Daly Shires.

#### Non Government Organisations

1. AMSANT/NACCHO
2. Arnhem Land Progress Association
3. Fred Hollows Foundation
4. Healthy Living NT
5. Outback Stores
6. Red Cross

Contact will be made with officers of the above agencies and meetings held where possible to obtain support for the rationale behind the *Good Health Store and Pharmacy* and their endorsement of the plan.

### 2. Business opportunities

The support and co-operation is needed with key people at each target site will be necessary and their support and endorsement for the concept obtained.

A strategy will be developed with the help of the people contacted in Phase One above to approach the authorities responsible for social and economic development in the locations shown on the map at Attachment E. A full list of the key people is available on request.

### 3. Business Model

This final phase will be to describe the actual store in terms of the building, fixtures and fittings, opening stock and staffing requirements. This will also describe the clinical pharmacy services that will be provided to the health centres to which PBS supply is being made.

A possible floor plan is shown at **Attachment D**

The map at **Attachment E** shows the target sites all with a population in excess of 1,500. Whilst this may not seem comparable with a mainstream catchment for business potential it should be noted the health status of the individuals and their need for treatment medication for chronic diseases is three fold that of the non Aboriginal population.

## **Outputs**

- A Business Plan that can be put to a funder/investor to obtain the finance needed to establish one or more Good Health Store and Pharmacy in a remote Aboriginal town location.
- A design and project plan to put before a builder to enable the construction of a store that will meet a need not currently before the town population.
- Engage a number of key people through the government and non-government sector in a conversation about pharmacy and the expanded role it can be playing in "closing the gap".
- Involve the pharmacist(s) in both public health and primary health care initiatives and show the range of subjects a pharmacist can contribute to in these areas.

## **Ongoing benefits of the project**

1. Creation of a business that will provide a choice in the range of goods at competitive prices.
2. Provide a place for employment for a number of Aboriginal people and with the training to make sure they enjoy their work and are contributing to their community.
3. Improve understanding of the meaning of good health.
4. Create understanding of the need for healthy living to maintain a useful place in society
5. Understand the elements of good diet and nutrition
6. Obtain information that will lead to improved domestic and personal hygiene
7. Understand the importance of physical activity and enable opportunities for organized sporting events to involve the whole family.
8. Realise the importance of education especially literacy and numeracy in young children as a way to improved health.
9. Contribute to the shift away from welfare dependence to a self sufficient economy.
10. Respect the position that medicines have in the management of diseases especially chronic diseases.

## **Sources of funding**

There are currently no promises for funding.

Charles Sturt University will provide Professor Patrick Ball pro bono to the project.

An application is before the Small Grants Program of the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement Rural and Remote Workforce Development Program.

This summary is being sent to a number of parties that could be interested in assisting the process.

These include government departments administering programs to Aboriginals in remote places who may be captured by the vision; private sector parties now profiting from Aboriginal ill health and with a social conscience (such as the pharmaceutical industry); and, philanthropic trusts and foundations where health promotion and/or economic development comes with in their scope.

**Thank you for your interest in reading this and please contact the writer if you are interested in contributing to the success of the idea.**

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