



Stores and food security— what Government can do

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will this Thursday hold a public hearing with officers of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) as part of its inquiry into stores in remote Indigenous communities.

FaHCSIA has oversight of the Northern Territory Emergency Response store licensing process and the implementation of Income Management, while also funding Outback Stores to secure food security in remote regions. Income management is also being trialled in Western Australia and applied in specific cases under the Family Responsibilities Commission in Cape York.

The Department's broader strategy for closing the gap on Indigenous health includes implementing the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program, working with the Council of Australian Government (COAG)'s National Partnerships on Remote Service Delivery, and facilitating the restructure of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme.

In its recent Darwin hearings the Committee met with the Manager of the Northern Territory Response Unit and with the Director of Community Stores Licensing to discuss concerns raised during the inquiry. The Committee had previously met with FaHCSIA officers in Canberra when the inquiry first got under way in March.

The Committee Chairman the Hon Bob Debus stated:

“The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has control of much of Government's machinery to close the gap on Indigenous health. The Committee's meeting with FaHCSIA will clarify some aspects of its important role, and ascertain next steps in response to COAG's proposals for a national food security strategy, a national store licensing policy, and possible amendments to Native Title to fast track infrastructure development under the Remote Service Delivery Partnership”.

Public hearing on Thursday 20 August 2009

Venue: Committee Room 1R2 Parliament House

12.15pm The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

For media comment, please contact the Chair Bob Debus MP on (02) 6277 4490
For programs, see the Committee website **For background information**, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 62774559 or atsia.reps@aph.gov.au