



**WYONG SHIRE
COUNCIL**

building a better tomorrow!

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Shirley Hotchkiss

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CAPACITY BUILDING INQUIRY Submission No. 12

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Parliamentary inquiry into capacity building in Indigenous communities

I appreciate the opportunity to provide the attached submission to this Inquiry.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information on any of the matters raised.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Hotchkiss
Community Development Worker
Community Services

Submission to Inquiry into Capacity building in Indigenous communities: Wyong Shire Council

Terms of reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on strategies to assist Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders better manage the delivery of services within their communities. In particular, the Committee will consider building the capacities of:

- a) Community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities;
- b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and
- c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous people.

Submission

This brief submission comprises general comments on the inquiry, followed by suggested capacity-building strategies specific to each of points a), b) and c) in the terms of reference.

The submission has been prepared by a non-Indigenous Community Development Worker who has provided an administrative resource to the NSW Central Coast Aboriginal Interagency. This submission was then reviewed by the Community Development team.

General comments

- The focus of an **asset-based community development (ABCD)** approach is on using people's strengths and developing their capacities. It acknowledges that each person has vast ability to develop skills and qualities that contribute to their own well-being and to that of their community. This approach includes all community members as valuable and having a contribution to make. It counters the traditional service delivery focus on deficiency or lack, as this has not been effective in developing people's capacities. However, much organisational structure, policy and practice has been based on the deficiency model of identifying a need, and then providing a service to meet the need. Further, much service and program funding for Indigenous communities has been competitive, promoting competition for scarce resources, and thereby inhibiting collaboration among Indigenous community members and organisations.
- A traditional **service delivery focus** may inhibit capacity-building, and may indeed encourage a "welfare mentality". Therefore service design and provision needs to occur in the larger context of capacity-building. For example, if a community does not have clean water, then there needs to be processes for community inclusion in decision-making to design and provide clean water infrastructure and service. These processes may include training community members in provision and maintenance of water infrastructure. This strategy will require that mainstream organisations develop positive working relationships with their local Indigenous communities.
- **Capacity-building service delivery** also requires mainstream non-Indigenous "experts" such as engineers, planners and social workers, to work collaboratively with Indigenous people. This utilises the expertise of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups to implement the most workable decisions, using a capacity-building approach. This strategy implies the need to train professional non-Indigenous people in collaborative, capacity-building and anti-racist approaches.
- Implementing the recommendations of all the **other inquiries**, eg Bringing Them Home, would greatly support Indigenous capacity-building, by reducing the negative, ongoing and cumulative effects on Indigenous people by white settlement of Australia. The capacities of Indigenous community members are paradoxically both underdeveloped and consumed by, these negative consequences, eg high suicide and high mortality rates.
- It is important to focus on how **mainstream organisations** and non-Indigenous people can contribute to Indigenous capacity-building, not just Indigenous organisations and people.
- **This Inquiry's terms of reference** appear to focus on service delivery, and hence undermine, or be incongruent with capacity-building. Such a service delivery focus appears to have been determined by the assertion in the Inquiry literature "that access to natural resources (including land) and finance is less important for community development and economic growth than effective governance at the community and regional level". This assertion is challenged, in that acknowledgement of sovereignty and prior ownership of this country by Indigenous Australians is seen as providing a solid and honest foundation for capacity-building **and** good governance.

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Strategies for term of reference a)

- Conduct a **skills audit** of Indigenous community members. For example, the NSW Central Coast Indigenous community recently completed a community profile/skills audit.
- Conduct a **Community Economic Development audit** of communities to identify human, natural and built resources that can then be the focus of a range of developmental projects. For instance, Indigenous heritage sites can be the basis both for tourism opportunities, and for community members to learn more about their own heritage and its significance. In Kempsey for example, local Indigenous people grow and sell bush tucker as an economic and tourist enterprise.
- Identify, publicise and use **successful Indigenous capacity-building projects**, eg in areas of health, environment, reconciliation. This strategy requires methods to record and widely disseminate these case studies to mainstream as well as to Indigenous communities. For example, there is a community school in Lismore NSW that actively promotes anti-racism in its policies and practices, using strategies to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members.

Strategies for term of reference b)

- Recognise and address **internalised racism** and its effects on Indigenous organisations. This term refers to the internalisation by Indigenous people of the mainstream racist messages such as deficiency and inferiority. Strategies for addressing internalised racism were implemented at the recent World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) by the NGO United to End Racism. Please see the attached internet information provided by United to End Racism on these strategies, including a reference to Indigenous Australians.

Strategies for term of reference c)

- Provide resources to **support Indigenous agencies**. For example, Wyong and Gosford Councils provide an administrative resource to the Central Coast Aboriginal Interagency.
- Provide **culturally-appropriate services**. If a mainstream service or program is not being accessed by the Indigenous population, then the service or program has a responsibility to find out how their service can be a resource for Indigenous people.
- **Educate employees about racism**, including institutionalised racism, and its consequence of restricting Indigenous community members from full access to mainstream services and employment opportunities. Examples are: implementing cultural awareness training for non-Indigenous staff; implementing support mechanisms for Indigenous staff so that they are better able to survive in such an environment; and, celebrating Indigenous events such as NAIDOC Week. For instance Wyong and Gosford Councils host NAIDOC Week Koori Community Awards.
- Implement **Indigenous employment strategies**, so that Indigenous workers are employed by mainstream organisations. This will utilise and build Indigenous community member's skills and improve delivery of culturally-appropriate services. Community Development Economic Programs provide a work-ready pool of labour for such positions. One example of this strategy is government departments sharing resources to recruit and support Indigenous trainees, while Wyong Council has created some Aboriginal-identified traineeships, eg in child care and public relations.
- Acknowledge **existing capacity-building work**. For example many Elders are expected by governments to attend official functions, at the Elders' expense. This service provision by these community Elders takes them away from capacity-building activities in their own communities.
- **Pay for capacity-building work** that enables governments to provide "core business" services to Indigenous communities. For example, if governments can't provide services without the advice of an Indigenous Advisory Group, then members of this group should be paid for the provision of their services in this way. Currently, many Indigenous community members provide these voluntary services, often at financial and emotional cost to themselves. Other Indigenous agency workers spend large proportions of their paid worktime providing these "interpreting" services to mainstream government organizations. This leaves them less time to fulfil their core business of service delivery to Indigenous community members.

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- Provide **enterprise development programs** in Indigenous communities to enable these communities to become more economically and socially viable.
- Take responsibility for **educating the non-Indigenous community about racism** and its effects. This was identified as a key strategy in two recent Central Coast Koori youth forums sponsored by Wyong Council.
- Foster **alliances between Indigenous and other community groups** that are minority or disenfranchised, such as young or disabled people.

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