
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

We can do it!

The needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

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

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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hon Lou Lieberman MP

Chairman



Membership of the Committee

Chair Hon Lou Lieberman MP

Deputy Chair Mr Harry Quick MP

Members Mrs Trish Draper MP

 Mr John Forrest MP (from 7 August 2001)

 Mr Barry Haase MP

 Ms Kelly Hoare MP

 Hon Bob Katter MP (until 7 August 2001)

 Mr Jim Lloyd MP

 Mr Daryl Melham MP

 Hon Warren Snowdon MP

 Mr Barry Wakelin MP

Committee Secretariat

Secretary Catherine Cornish

Inquiry Secretary James Catchpole

Cheryl Scarlett (until
26/3/2001)

Research Assistant Jenny Cochran

Administrative Officer Frances Wilson



Terms of reference

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

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



List of abbreviations

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

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

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



List of recommendations

2 Setting the Context

Recommendation 1

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

Recommendation 2

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

3 More Effective Service Delivery

Recommendation 3

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

- the extent to which Indigenous people or their representative organisations are involved in the identification of needs, priority setting, service delivery and reporting on effectiveness and barriers to access;
- the extent to which the program overlaps or duplicates services provided by any level of government or organisation, and action proposed to address this;

- the potential for pooling program funding with any similar programs of the Commonwealth or other levels of government or organisation, and action proposed to help achieve this; and
- the extent to which the programs encourage Indigenous capacity and leadership building and action proposed to implement, expand and achieve this, while addressing any obstacles.

Recommendation 4

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

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

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

Recommendation 5

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

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

Recommendation 6

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

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

Recommendation 7

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

Recommendation 8

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

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

Recommendation 9

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

Recommendation 10

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

4 Local Decision Making**Recommendation 11**

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

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

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

Recommendation 12

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

Recommendation 13

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

Recommendation 14

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

Recommendation 15

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

5 The Needs of Youth

Recommendation 16

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

Recommendation 17

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

Recommendation 18

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

Recommendation 19

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

Recommendation 20

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

Recommendation 21

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

Recommendation 22

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

Such strategies should include those targeting:

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

Recommendation 23

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

Recommendation 24

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

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

Recommendation 25

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

- young Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, including those in their early teenage years;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children escaping domestic violence; and
- those living in smaller rural towns.

Recommendation 26

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

Recommendation 27

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

6 Maintenance of Culture**Recommendation 28**

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

Recommendation 29

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

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

7 Economic Independence**Recommendation 30**

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

Recommendation 31

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

Recommendation 32

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

Recommendation 33

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

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

Recommendation 34

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

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

Recommendation 35

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

Recommendation 36

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

Recommendation 37

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

8 Housing**Recommendation 38**

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

Recommendation 39

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

Recommendation 40

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

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

