

Government response to

We can do it!

The needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

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

September 2002

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to the Parliament tabled September 2001

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Background

The report *We can do it! The needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*¹ is the result of a House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HORSCATSIA) inquiry initiated on 30 August 2000. It was tabled in September 2001.

The Committee instituted the inquiry because the majority of Indigenous Australians live in capital cities and regional centres, and the Indigenous urban dwelling population is both socioeconomically disadvantaged and different in demographic profile relative to the corresponding non-Indigenous population. The focus of the inquiry was on the following issues:

- the needs of Indigenous youth in relation to health, housing, employment and education;
- housing and employment issues generally;
- access to and appropriateness of mainstream services;
- involvement in decision-making; and
- maintenance of culture.*

The Committee assessed evidence presented to it on the basis of a set of core principles:

- equal access to government services for all Australians;
- community focus;
- partnerships;
- rights and responsibilities; and
- focus on mainstream services.†

* Report, Terms of Reference, p.xii

† Report, §§1.27 – 1.37, p.7

General considerations

The government accepts or accepts in principle 24 of the 40 recommendations. It notes a further 15 recommendations, but does not accept recommendation 31.

Overall direction

The government acknowledges and shares the Committee's concerns about the issues confronting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It supports the broad direction of the report:

- on capacity building and the need to increase awareness amongst Indigenous communities about government support programs;
- on working more closely with Indigenous people and organisations;
- on encouraging and supporting local decision-making and responsibility;
- on addressing gaps and overlaps in programs;
- on improving cross-portfolio and cross-jurisdictional coordination; and
- on developing an effective accountability framework.

Urban focus

A factor that broadly influences the utility of the report is the definition of 'urban' chosen by the Committee.

The HORSCATSIA inquiry was based on the definition of 'urban' as centres with a population of 1000 or more, although noting that this included some large discrete Indigenous communities in geographically isolated locations.* The Committee also noted that there was no absolute distinction between urban and non-urban, and that 'many of (its) observations and recommendations apply to all Indigenous people wherever they live'.† It was also recognised that urban dwelling Indigenous people constitute a heterogeneous group, many of whom are highly mobile. A particular aspect of urban residence and mobility raised by the Northern Territory government was that lack of services (particularly health services usually provided in hospitals) in non-urban areas caused permanent or temporary relocation to an urban centre.‡

A consequence of excluding only communities with populations under 1000 is that urban dwelling Indigenous people then become a group with a range of access to mainstream services from none to full (leaving aside the issue of appropriateness of services to Indigenous needs); a range of cultural and

* Report, §1.11, pp.1-2

† Report, §1.13, p2

‡ Report §§1.14-1.15, pp2-3

community participation from extensive to minimal; a community presence from near 100% to below 1%; and overall, comprising over 70% of all Indigenous people.

As the report itself acknowledges, its observations and recommendations largely apply to all Indigenous people.

Commonwealth Grants Commission Inquiry into Indigenous funding

The HORSCATSIA inquiry was partially concurrent with the Commonwealth Grants Commission Inquiry into Indigenous Funding², and had access to much the same information. The ground it covers is roughly similar to that of the Commonwealth Grants Commission inquiry, excluding only some remote dwelling people. This is alluded to in the report,^{*} noting that some evidence used the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) to categorise locations³. The ARIA classification, which is based on accessibility of services, does not always match the 'community size' basis for separating urban and non-urban.

The HORSCATSIA report is useful in that it approaches the issues from a different perspective than geography; covers functions not considered in detail in the Commonwealth Grants Commission report, and is not limited to services funded solely by the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Grants Commission report places more emphasis on locational differences in disadvantage and as a consequence, on remote populations.

Overall, the Grants commission concluded that the more remote ATSI regions tend to be those with the greatest level of socio-economic disadvantage (per person or per household) and those in physically accessible areas have the least disadvantage.⁴

This report also gives some attention to absolute need for services and overall level of allocation, whereas the focus of the Commonwealth Grants Commission inquiry was on finding an appropriate model for more equitable distribution of available resources applied to programs and services for Indigenous people.

^{*} Report, §1.12, p3

Correspondence with existing government policies

HORSCATSIA based its decision-making and conclusions on the set of core principles. Those principles are broadly compatible with the government's Indigenous policy.

Access to services and programs

No one disputes that all Australians, whatever their origins, should have equal rights, opportunities, and obligations. The government accepts the view of the Committee that 'it is the responsibility of governments to ensure that their programs and services are accessible by all Australians who need them', where *need* is demonstrated by meeting eligibility criteria for assistance in the form of the particular program or service.

The question of what constitutes *need* is sometimes obscured by its use to describe different things in different contexts. Examples are 'need for assistance' or 'need for resources' or 'need for results'. HORSCATSIA conceptualise 'need' in terms of 'need for assistance'. In contrast, the Commonwealth Grants Commission in its *Report on Indigenous Funding 2001* adopted a definition of need based on required outcomes (results). It noted that there is not a direct linear relationship between resource allocation and improved outcomes. Although often beneficial, additional resources for improved access to services and programs may not always be the best way to improve outcomes. For these reasons additional resource requests are usually considered on a case by case basis.

The government also recognises that the policies, programs and services it provides should be appropriate and responsive to needs, and delivered efficiently. The Committee reflects the government's view in stating that 'it is desirable for all levels of government, the private sector, Indigenous groups and individuals to work together to maximise opportunities for individuals and ensure that services designed to meet the needs of people are delivered as efficiently as possible.'[†]

Service delivery recommendations generally refer to 'Indigenous people'. The government notes the advice of the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health that there may be different implications for effective service delivery for Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland (and primarily located in urban areas). This applies particularly to health services, because mainland Aboriginal community controlled health services specifically target Aboriginal people, although the services are available to people of Torres Strait Islander origin (usually a small proportion of clients).

* Report, §1.28, p.8

† Report, §1.31, p.8

Mainstream services

In considering the views of the Committee, the government agrees that there is more needed to be done to reduce the overall disadvantages of urban dwelling Indigenous people relative to their non-Indigenous counterparts. As noted above, because of the definition of 'urban' chosen by the Committee in scoping its report, it does not clearly differentiate a specific sub-group of the Indigenous population with a set of common characteristics. Nevertheless, we know that around 40% of Indigenous people live in locations, such as the capitals and other major cities classified by ARIA (see page 58) as 'highly accessible'. That is, they have 'relative unlimited [access] to a wide range of goods and services, and opportunities for social interaction'.⁵ This specifically includes mainstream government assistance programs and services.

The report states as principle that 'in urban areas at least, the urgent priority should be on meeting the needs of Indigenous people through better access to existing mainstream services.'^{*} In its discussion of core principles, the Committee also considered that Indigenous people may find some mainstream government services difficult to use or not appropriate to their circumstances, and that 'mainstream services need to be appropriately designed and delivered in culturally sensitive ways that reflect regional differences and cultural diversity.'[†]

Nevertheless, Indigenous-specific services and programs are the focus of 35 of the 40 recommendations in the report, with the broad issues of mainstream services and programs the subject of recommendations 3, 7, 8, 10, and 39. As a contrast, for the health sector it is reported that 'the vast majority of Indigenous health expenditure is allocated through mainstream health programs' even though 'such services do not, or only incompletely, document use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people'; for 1998-99, Commonwealth funded Indigenous-specific programs constituted 9.7% of the estimated total of \$1.245 billion expended on Indigenous health (cf. \$46.412 billion on non-Indigenous health).⁶

The government fully agrees with the Committee on the importance of appropriately formulated mainstream services for meeting the needs of Indigenous people. Mainstream programs and services have the same responsibility to assist Indigenous Australians as other Australians. Where mainstream programs and services are available, such as in large cities and other accessible locations, Indigenous people should have the same opportunity to access as the rest of the population.

The government is therefore committed to improving the ability of mainstream systems to respond to the needs of Indigenous people, and to monitor performance in terms of Indigenous outcomes. Most government agencies already consider Indigenous clients in the context of mainstream services, but it is acknowledged that further progress is essential.

^{*} Report, §1.36, p.9

[†] Report, §1.37, p.9

Community focus and consultation

The government agrees that consultation with local people and communities is essential to finding workable solutions to local problems. This is consistent with the view expressed in the *Australians Working Together* consultations, that national programs need to be adapted to local conditions. The government notes that the Indigenous-specific measures in *Australians Working Together* bring together a number of Commonwealth agencies, and will require involvement by Indigenous people in implementation and service delivery.

Nevertheless, the government has reservations about the Committee's principle that communities and individuals are generally better able to develop services to meet the needs of their community than governments, or more likely than governments to find the best solutions to local problems and challenges.* There are circumstances where this is true, but there are also circumstances where it is not. The level of community capacity is a key influencing factor.

It is important to note that this factor is not confined to Indigenous people: it applies equally to any community or individual. It is because governments have access to expertise and knowledge beyond the capacity of individuals or communities in many functional areas. Where community self-management is feasible, to say that as a principle, any community can do it is contradictory to the view that capacity building is a basic and outstanding need for many Indigenous communities. This is why the government is moving towards greater flexibility in the delivery of its programs and services at the local/regional level, and also why it has been placing emphasis on the development of effective partnerships between governments and Indigenous communities. The government acknowledges that better outcomes can be achieved where partnerships occur between government and communities. The Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable has developed a number of principles to promote a partnership between governments and communities that will facilitate the development of self-reliance for Indigenous Australians.

The government's responsibility in the development and provision of services is to ensure that appropriate services are delivered efficiently and effectively, regardless of the management mode. At the same time, it has a role in developing the capacity of individuals, groups and communities to manage, whether this is in terms of individual self-management, or community control of services, or of knowledge and information essential to participating effectively in decision-making processes.

In this context, the government agrees that it has a role in assisting Indigenous groups 'to articulate their needs and manage their resources so that they can successfully interact socially, politically and economically with the wider community.'[†]

* Report, § 1.29, p.8

† Report, § 1.30, p.8

Pooling program funds

The HORSCATSIA report raises the issue of pooling funds in recommendations 3,4 and 34. The pooling of program funds is only one of several options to be considered to improve the effectiveness of service and program delivery. What is important is to achieve the efficient application of resources to reaching intended outcomes.

There is an assumption in the report that the pooling of program funds will often generate either improved outcomes for the same money or equal outcomes at a lower cost. Because of the increased flexibility that the pooling of funds can produce, there should be situations where the benefits of pooled funding outweigh the costs associated with the mechanics of pooling. At present, however, the empirical evidence for these benefits is inconsistent. Nevertheless, the concept deserves to be tested further and the government is keen to pool funds when benefit can be demonstrated. Several departments are currently examining its potential. For example:

- the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations supports the identification of pathways such as education to employment being used to better coordinate funding and maximise outcomes;
- the Department of Education, Science and Training is examining the potential for pooling of program funds, but notes that differences between existing programs in the reporting obligations on funding recipients creates some difficulty;
- the Department of Family and Community Services reports that the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* goes a considerable way to addressing the lack of substantial progress on developing local joined up solutions within the Family and Community Services portfolio, but is limited in regard to the broader cross-portfolio and cross-jurisdictional pooling of resources and funds; and
- the Department of Health and Ageing considers pooling of primary health care funds in each state and territory as part of the negotiations for the implementation of the *Primary Health Care Access Program*. The *Primary Health Care Access Program* allows for pooled funding from Commonwealth and state/territory governments to be allocated to local community controlled Aboriginal health services.

The recommendations

The *We can do it!* report presents 40 recommendations, collated under subject headings related to the terms of reference in a *List of recommendations*.^{*} This response is set out under the headings of the *List of recommendations* in the HORSCATSIA report so that readers may easily refer back to it.

Setting the context: recommendations 1-2

The government places a high priority on improving the quality and coverage of nationally consistent data, and of regular, comprehensive performance reporting. The government's aims are to have appropriate information to support policy and program development and to monitor national progress in reducing Indigenous social and economic disadvantage. In support of these aims the government strongly endorses the Australian Bureau of Statistics program on Indigenous statistics, and the efforts of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and other Commonwealth agencies in improving the range and quality of information available.

Through national agreements with the states and territories, Commonwealth agencies are working towards national data definitions, standards, and classifications.

Also through national or bilateral agreements, Australian governments are moving to improve the quality and comparability of performance information across jurisdictions, sectors and programs.

The government notes that the relevance and usefulness of performance reporting depends on the quality and accuracy of the underlying data. In relation to both mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs and services, this in turn relies on the quality of the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the reporting process. This entails developing the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access, understand, value and contribute to the statistical processes of government. It is also important that statistical data about Indigenous people can be understood and used by Indigenous people.

^{*} Report pp.xvi-xxv

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.

The government accepts the recommendation, noting that this has been a long-term national priority. Over the past decade, considerable effort in several functional areas (eg. health, community services, housing) has gone into improving the national consistency, comparability and quality of data on Indigenous people and their access to and outcomes from government services and programs. The government recognises that further improvement is needed and continues to put resources into national data development, often in partnership with the states and territories.

Key data issues being addressed include:

- improving the collection and reporting of data on Indigenous use of and outcomes from mainstream programs and services, with the primary factor being the inclusion of an Indigenous identifier in mainstream administrative data collections.
- consistency and comparability of data between jurisdictions (and therefore better national reporting), through use of agreed national data definitions and standards.
- quality and comprehensiveness of data collection and reporting from service providers and through the information chain.

Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) November 2000 Framework to Advance Reconciliation, and particularly through the Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA), efforts are in train to improve the assessment of Indigenous need across portfolio areas. Where they have not already done so, COAG has asked Ministerial Councils to develop action plans, performance reporting strategies and benchmarks. This work is progressing steadily, led by MCATSIA. At its April 2002 meeting, COAG agreed to commission the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision to produce a regular report against key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage.

Through its national statistical bodies, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the government provides national leadership in improving Indigenous information. The National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, situated in Darwin, plays a major role in developing Indigenous statistics. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Information Unit, a joint venture of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, carries out the collection and analysis of Indigenous health and welfare information. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare also has a dedicated Indigenous housing data work program.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is the lead agency in the improvement of Indigenous identification in vital statistics. There is now an active program of data development in each Regional Office to progress the completeness of the Indigenous identifier in Registrars' births and deaths records.

Identifying Indigenous status in mainstream data collections

In support of this priority, the government endorses the use of the standard Australian Bureau of Statistics format for requesting and recording information about Indigenous status, and encourages its use by all portfolios in all jurisdictions to enable more complete and consistent national data sets to be compiled for improved and appropriate analysis relating to Indigenous people, and more effective consultation.

In its current term of office, the government has committed specifically to the inclusion of the Indigenous identifier in the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement *Public Rental Housing Program* and Medical Benefits Scheme data sets.

A large number of agencies are working to increase the extent and quality of Indigenous identification through the use of the Australian Bureau of Statistics standard for the identification of Indigenous people in administrative collections and 'best practice' guidelines. The highest priority was given to vital statistics; other priorities include hospital separations, community services, cancer registries, perinatal data, income support, education, housing, police, and law and justice statistics.

From April 2001, the Indigenous status question has been included on the Australian Bureau of Statistics monthly labour force questionnaire and all new selections now report on Indigenous status.⁷

As a result of negotiations between the Department of Family and Community Services and Centrelink under their Business Partnership Agreement to improve management information for special customer groups, Centrelink included a compulsory Indigenous identifier field on all its forms from September 2000. Consequently data on Indigenous customers has greatly improved.

Applicants for funding from Commonwealth grant programs will also be asked to self-identify about Indigenous status. A Standardised Organisational Information Section for grant applications is currently being implemented across the Commonwealth. This format has been developed by the More Accessible Government Working Group as a measure to improve community access to Commonwealth funding programs and streamline grant administration. Fifteen Commonwealth departments covered by the *Financial and Management Accountability Act* are involved in this initiative.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Indigenous statistics strategy

The Australian Bureau of Statistics paper *Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics*⁸ sets out the priorities for Indigenous statistics. The main points are summarised here.

The five-yearly Census of Population and Housing provides the basis for estimating the size of the Indigenous population, and information on housing, employment, education, income and language. An Indigenous Enumeration Strategy, comprising special collection procedures and census awareness activities, and the employment of Indigenous people to assist with the census, is designed to address cultural barriers that may discourage Indigenous people from participating in the Census.

The evaluation plan for the 2001 Census includes:

- capturing field information about collection activities, community response, and problems in the field;
- assessing the success of the collection;
- identification of unoccupied dwellings;
- comparisons for small geographic areas with the 2001 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey and with administrative data sources; and
- a report, *Population Issues, Indigenous Australians*⁹, with special analyses of the Indigenous population.

The National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data has put a high priority on supporting and monitoring the Bureau's Action Plan to improve Indigenous enumeration for the 2006 Census.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics produces Indigenous population 'age by sex' estimates and projections annually for Australia and for each state/territory. Estimates at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Region levels will be produced for Census years. Estimates are 'experimental' due to quality issues for births and deaths data from some jurisdictions (see also page 46);

The Bureau, in partnership with other agencies, has a program of work to improve the availability and quality of administrative data, which includes promoting the use of the standard Indigenous identifier.

The Indigenous Statistics Strategy includes surveys of Indigenous persons and communities. The 2001 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey was coordinated with the 2001 Census, which will extend the usefulness of the data. The 2001 National Health Survey (Indigenous)* will be repeated in 2004 and six-yearly thereafter. It will provide national estimates on:

- the prevalence of specific illnesses and injuries;
- use of health services and programs in relation to the presence of illness or injury, and identifying ongoing needs;
- levels and patterns of health-risk behaviours (eg. smoking and alcohol consumption); and
- the comparative status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The 2002 Indigenous Social Survey† will be repeated every six years. The survey will provide national and state/Northern Territory data on sectors such as health,

* Data expected to be available from October 2002

† Data expected to be available from September 2003

housing, education, employment, communication, transport, crime and justice. It will examine participation (and barriers to participation) in society, relationships between areas of social concern, changes over time in Indigenous wellbeing, and comparisons with non-Indigenous people and between jurisdictions.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation, noting, however, that improved performance reporting is usually negotiated when agreements are renewed, or in new agreements. As an example, information on jointly funded education services is not included in existing bilateral agreements with the states and territories. This can be reviewed at the end of the current quadrennium (31 December 2004).

The government notes that performance information in current agreements may not cover all desirable elements, and that the availability and quality of data have often limited performance reporting. For example, provision of aggregated data only is a recognised weakness in performance information, as jurisdiction-wide reporting may mask significant regional variations in performance.

Requirements for regular and comprehensive performance information are included in a number of existing agreements with state and territory governments, such as:

- multilateral and bilateral agreements with the state and territories that exist under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (see also page [51](#));
- National Illicit Drug Strategy;
- Commonwealth State Disability Agreement; and
- Indigenous Education Agreement (see also page [49](#)).

Requirements for performance reporting are also built into the agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory for the funding of juvenile pre-court diversionary schemes and part funding for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service.

The Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision has asked its Working Groups to develop performance information that will provide an adequate assessment of service delivery and outcomes for Indigenous clients of government services. The 2001 *Report on Government Services*¹⁰ included an overview of data development, outlining the need for improvements in the collection of the Indigenous identifier as the major data quality issue. Currently, there is a lack of data across all the sectors required to support reporting against the performance framework.

Where data are both available and of good quality, it is intended that publication of performance information should proceed even though coverage across all jurisdictions may not yet be possible.

Additional information on data and performance reporting in selected functional areas is provided at Attachment A.

More effective service delivery: recommendations 3-10

The Council of Australian Governments framework for advancing reconciliation and the Prime Minister's requirement that portfolio ministers review their mainstream and Indigenous specific programs in order to make them more responsive to the needs of Indigenous people demonstrates that the general intent of the service delivery recommendations accords with current government policy.

Government initiated service delivery should be consistent with government policy, be conducted efficiently, should engage target groups appropriately, and should be accountable in terms of outcomes.

The government recognises that policy development, service delivery and support for Indigenous people is most effective when provided by appropriately qualified Indigenous people or by non-Indigenous people with an understanding of the issues affecting Indigenous people and an ability to communicate sensitively and effectively with them. The government emphasises adequate and appropriate education and training support to ensure that Indigenous people are employed at decision-making and management levels as well as the service delivery stage. This is linked to adequate and appropriate education and training support.

The Department of Family and Community Services is currently working with a number of other agencies on the development of better ways to make services responsive to the needs of Indigenous clients, and internally, on developing an alternative approach, involving a single point of local contact through the establishment of a network of government brokers.

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health is currently working with the Office for Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board on a project to examine information concerning access to health services by Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland.

The specific issue of pooling program funds is common to several recommendations and is discussed separately under *General considerations* (see page 7).

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.

The government accepts the recommendation in principle. It considers that it may not be appropriate or necessary to specifically reflect the principles of the recommendation in evaluation and performance reporting. Such matters are best considered during program development and formulation, and for periodic review. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in collaboration with other Commonwealth portfolios, is actively considering a range of models for improving service delivery and outcomes for Indigenous people. Further work needs to be done to ensure that accountability requirements are included, and performance outcomes are transparent. The development of a cross portfolio key performance indicator could serve these functions.

The Department of Education, Science and Training is attempting to address this recommendation by instituting reporting arrangements which detail Indigenous involvement and participation in both mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs.

The Blueprint for Implementing the National Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Vocational Education and Training was developed to support *Partners in a Learning Culture*, the first national strategy for Indigenous people in vocational education and training. *Partners in a Learning Culture*, developed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Training Advisory Council, identifies strategies needed for the provision of culturally appropriate vocational education and training, which would improve education, training and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The four objectives of *Partners in a Learning Culture* are:

- Increasing the involvement of Indigenous people in decision making about policy, planning, resources and delivery;
- Achieving participation in vocational education and training for Indigenous people equal to that of the rest of the Australian community;
- Achieving increased, culturally appropriate, and flexibly delivered training, including use of information technology, for Indigenous people; and
- Developing closer links between vocational education and training outcomes for Indigenous people and industry and employment.

The Blueprint builds on the objectives from *Partners in a Learning Culture*. It recognises the right of Indigenous people to participate in vocational education and training and the benefits that can arise for those individuals, for industry, for government and the community. The Australian National Training Board has established a national taskforce to implement the strategy.

The Department of Education, Science and Training notes that current recipients of funding are required to report on the outcomes of each project/activity and can report any impediments to Indigenous access. Reporting requirements also focus on Indigenous involvement and participation in the programs at all levels.

The government is also working to improve the extent to which support organisations such as Divisions of General Practice work with Indigenous communities and organisations to identify and meet needs at a local level.

The *Regional Health Services Program* includes Indigenous representation on the state/territory committees providing advice to the Commonwealth minister on priorities and submissions.

The government recognises that a key issue in evaluating and monitoring the use by Indigenous people of mainstream services is the inclusion and collection of Indigenous status data in mainstream program administrative data. This has been actively pursued in a number of portfolio areas in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Private providers provide most mainstream health programs, such as the Medical Benefits Scheme (Medicare). The National Community Controlled Health Organisation participates in a range of national committees that consider issues of access and appropriateness of mainstream services for Indigenous people. The introduction of the voluntary Indigenous identifier into the Medicare data set for statistical purposes will improve understanding of Indigenous use of Medicare and add to increased use by Indigenous people in the future.

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.*

The government accepts the recommendation in principle, subject to funding limits, and providing it does not constrain the capacity for providing flexible responses to changing circumstances and performance of providers.

The government notes that the recommended reporting requirements are standard public sector management and accountability requirements and are therefore built into program and service management operations. Goals, performance monitoring, and reporting arrangements are also provided in Portfolio Budget Statements, Annual Reports to Parliament and program evaluations.

Indigenous involvement

The Department of Family and Community Services, as part of the Council of Australian Governments review, conducted a stocktake of programs and services provided to Indigenous people. This revealed that the department already pursues initiatives relevant to the recommendation, and has made considerable progress in making services and programs more responsive to the needs of Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

The Department of Health and Ageing strongly supports community control of health services and requires the involvement of the local Indigenous people in the planning of local services. The *Primary Health Care Access Program* includes comprehensive local area planning which facilitates reform of the local area primary health care system to maximise responsiveness and to ensure that the system is integrated at the local level.

The Indigenous education programs administered and delivered by the Department of Education, Science and Training are supplementary to mainstream education services and address specific needs of individuals and communities. As discussed in recommendation 3, recipients of funding are required to report on the outcomes of each project/activity and in their reports are able to notify the Department of any impediments to Indigenous access. Reporting requirements also focus on Indigenous involvement and participation in the programs at all levels.

Environment Australia supports a network of Indigenous Land Management Facilitators whose role includes providing information for improved participation by Indigenous groups.

There is also facilitated access for Indigenous groups to programs and grants such as the *Cultural Heritage Project Program*, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*, and the National Indigenous Cultural Heritage Officers Network.

An Indigenous Advisory Committee established under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* advises the Minister, taking into account the significance of Indigenous knowledge of management of the land and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The Indigenous Protected Areas Group also provides policy advice to the Minister on the future development of Indigenous Protected Areas. The Indigenous Protected Areas program encourages close cooperation between Indigenous landowners and Commonwealth, state/territory and local governments.

Environment Australia also provides advice and support, including financial assistance, to Indigenous groups to facilitate Indigenous involvement in World Heritage management.

Economic wellbeing is enhanced through direct employment and training at Environment Australia, enterprise opportunities through park maintenance services, cultural and eco-tourism, Natural Heritage Trust employment, and improved economic viability of Indigenous lands.

In addition, Environment Australia supports research, application and recognition of traditional ecological knowledge in the management of protected areas, appropriate consultation mechanisms, and Indigenous involvement in regional and local land use planning and capacity building.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council delivers specific programs to Indigenous and other applicants. These programs all require Indigenous control and management of projects. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board Operational Plan 2002-2004 has a strategy to develop better relationships with the state and territory arts agencies.

The Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy outlines principles and priorities for Indigenous issues development, regional cultural development, intellectual property and moral rights. It provides for protocols and procedures whereby other sections and divisions of Council address Indigenous applications and issues and assesses the impact of its other initiatives and policies on Indigenous people.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics consults on priorities and directions for Indigenous statistics through peak bodies, and consults directly with Indigenous individuals and representatives of communities in its Indigenous survey development.

Capacity and leadership building

As part of its response to the Council of Australian Governments Reconciliation Framework, the government has established a Working Group on Community Capacity Building, known as the Commonwealth Indigenous Reference Group. This group was established to:

- develop a common understanding and terminology within government around 'capacity building', 'capacity development', and 'community development';
- develop a practical and coordinated approach to community service delivery; and
- consolidate government efforts in respective activities and programs under the banner of 'community capacity building'.

The issues of capacity and leadership building are intrinsic to the government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's Community Participation Agreements and Capacity Building initiative.

The government is also coordinating work with all jurisdictions on the development of capacity building and leadership initiatives through a Senior Officials Working Group of the Council of Australian Governments.

Primary Health Care Access Program funds are allocated on the basis of identified need and the capacity to effectively utilise the funding. Where need is high but local capacity to use the funds is low, some funding is available for local capacity development.

A number of the programs delivered by the Department of Education, Science and Training, including the Indigenous education programs, encourage leadership building within the Indigenous community.

Employment and workplace relations activities are important to and can contribute to community capacity. Where relevant to a particular project, service or program objective, and where practicable, the impact of these activities on community capacity will be examined. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is strongly involved in the whole of government policy development process because of the importance of developing strong communities in sustaining labour market participation

The government is working with jurisdictions to assist Indigenous individuals and communities to identify and encourage individual leadership capacity, through targeted programs and by increasing Indigenous representation in decision-making roles as well as through innovative relationships with the non-government and business sectors. An example of this latter approach is the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre – which will provide training for 125 Indigenous leaders over the next three years in governance, ethics, communication, negotiation, conflict resolution and networking – in partnership with Citigroup, a financial services company. Funding from the Commonwealth and from New South Wales has assisted the Centre.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation in principle. The government recognises the significant demands placed on Indigenous communities and organisations through the need to deal with multiple agencies, each of which brings its own administrative process, and accountability requirements.

The government is examining options to streamline such arrangements. The lead agency model, and the use of brokers are two options being considered.

The More Accessible Government initiative aims to improve access to programs and streamline administrative arrangements for the fifteen agencies covered by the *Financial and Management Accountability Act**. For example, since December 2001, all Commonwealth grant application forms will standardise the information requested from applicants about the applicant organisation. Work proposed or in progress includes investigating the standardisation of contractual arrangements;

* The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission operates under the Commonwealth Authorities & Companies (CAC) Act and these arrangements do not apply.

better ways to improve local access to, understanding and uptake of Commonwealth grants; and streamlined funding arrangements for joint projects. Nominating a lead agency or single point of contact for service users is already general practice in some departments (eg. the Department of Education, Science and Training).

The Department of Family and Community Services has been working for some time to improve and streamline its business processes for managing partnerships with its service providers in the community. Part of this work involves developing a practical guide for program areas to refer to for consistent information on department- and government-wide approaches to service delivery.

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.*

The government accepts the recommendation in principle. The key issue that gave rise to the recommendation was the contention that grant funding cycles were often too short. Projects therefore could not continue for long enough to determine whether or not the intended outcomes could be achieved. It also led to reluctance in the private sector to participate.

The government notes that it has already accepted a set of principles to govern the design and implementation of programs for Indigenous communities developed by the Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable. The principles are:

- responses should build on the existing strengths, assets and capacities of Indigenous families and communities, and reflect the value of positive role models and successful approaches;
- programs should be delivered on a strategic, coordinated and whole-of-government basis and recognise the complex nature of the problems they seek to address;

- programs should provide a clear framework of transparent accountability for funding and evaluation that takes into account actual outcomes for people at the community level and the views of communities;
- programs should be based on the views and aspirations of the whole community, particularly those most affected by programs, and Indigenous people themselves should have a central role in the design, planning and delivery of services;
- time is required to enable the participation of the whole community and this should be reflected in funding cycles;
- responses should aim to empower Indigenous people in leadership and managerial competence;
- urgent attention should be given to initiatives which target the needs of children and young people, particularly in the areas of leadership training, self esteem building, awareness of one's culture and family, and anti-violence training;
- programs should reflect the specific needs of local communities and families and not be designed on a "one-size-fits-all" basis;
- programs should contribute to practical reconciliation by empowering Indigenous people to take responsibility within their families and communities for developing solutions to problems;
- priority should be given to initiatives that encourage self-reliance, sustainable economic and social development, and that encourage the capacity of families and communities to deal with problems as they arise;
- programs should encourage the growth of local economies;
- where possible, programs should take account of and respond to regional and local plans; and
- programs must be developed and delivered in ways that give priority to the building of trust and partnerships.

The principles in the recommendation are consistent with the Roundtable principles. The government believes that the extent to which the principles are applied will depend on local circumstances, the nature and requirements of the client group, and the requirements of good public sector management principles and practice. While it has accepted that funding cycles need to be considered in the context of need and real outcomes, the government does not consider it appropriate to lock agencies into a three-year funding cycle.

Current practice at the Departments of Education, Science and Training, Health and Ageing, and Family and Community Services is to seek to adhere to the principles agreed by the government to the maximum extent possible.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation. The government notes that the principles of recruitment and training of Indigenous staff and of cross-cultural training for non-Indigenous staff are already general practice. The measures suggested in the recommendation are already being implemented, where possible, in government agencies. All agencies have the ability to establish Identified Positions.

An Identified Position is one in which:

‘part or all of the duties involve the development of policy or programs relating to Indigenous people, and/or involve interaction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including service delivery. In order to perform these duties efficiently and effectively, the occupant needs to have an understanding of the issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and an ability to communicate sensitively and effectively with them.’¹¹

At June 2001, there were 2372 Indigenous Australians in the Australian Public Service, representing 2.2% of the total.¹² Current details from selected agencies are provided at Attachment B.

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.*

The government accepts this recommendation in principle. Government agencies, where possible, implement strategies to improve gender balance, including for Indigenous staff. The government agrees that circumstances arise where the gender of the contact person is of importance to Indigenous clients. The government recognises that, wherever possible, it is important that appropriately trained male and female staff members should be available to meet the cultural requirement of the client.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. This is one possible model for the delivery of some services where shared responsibility for outcomes exists (eg housing and education). It is not necessarily the most efficient and effective

approach for all public sector services and programs. Flexibility of response is important and the model of delivery will therefore need to reflect the prevailing circumstances.

The Department of Education, Science and Training has a network of Indigenous Education Units throughout the country, whose staff are able to direct clients to other agencies which may provide appropriate services.

Two measures in *Australians Working Together* will provide a case manager approach. The *Personal Support Program* will provide one-on-one support to assist people with problems such as homelessness and drug and alcohol addiction to re-enter the workforce, referring clients to specialists as required. The second measure, Centrelink Personal Advisers, will provide extra support in a case manager role, targeting Indigenous people as one of four disadvantaged groups.

Environment Australia and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Australia jointly manage the Indigenous Land Management Facilitator Project which plays a role in coordinating access by Indigenous land managers to relevant programs and services, working at the community and local clan group level. This work is closely coordinated with state and territory agencies.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation in principle. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission already pursues this approach. The Commission has positioned itself over the last two years to maximise its policy and advocacy role and improve partnerships with agencies of all spheres of government and the community and private sector. Memoranda of Understanding and Partnership Agreements are being extended to secure partnerships at both inter- and intra- government levels in policy and program areas.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission notes that it has set out to achieve this with funding under the *Community Housing and Infrastructure Program*. For the new infrastructure funds allocated in the 2001-02 Budget, its State Policy Centres will be asked to identify strategic initiatives where funds can be used to leverage state/territory support.

The government notes that, although not managed by the Commission, the Health Framework Agreements are also intended to improve service delivery through partnerships between the Commonwealth and other stakeholders.

Local decision making: recommendations 11-15

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.*

The government accepts the recommendation in principle. The nature of the consultation proposed will determine whether all or some of the specific points are applicable to particular circumstances. Agencies need to ensure that the costs of consultation and negotiation are committed within their budgets and that the costs and time allocated for consultation are commensurate with the proposed expenditure.

The government acknowledges the Committee's comments under the heading *Perceptions of Token Consultation**, and agrees that consulting processes should be genuine and representative.

In addition, the government notes that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Board and Regional Councils were established to provide or facilitate

* Report §§4.6-4.8, p55

Indigenous community input and representation and to provide the government with specialist policy and program advice from the Indigenous perspective.

The Department of Education, Science and Training, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Family and Community Services, and the Department of Health and Ageing all indicate that they seek to apply elements of the recommendation as appropriate to particular circumstances.

For example, in May 2001, the Commonwealth Minister for Family and Community Services approved a one-off grant of \$60 000 towards the establishment of a National Indigenous Disability Network. This was matched by a grant of \$56 000 from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. With participation from Indigenous communities around the country, the Network is intended to facilitate information exchange to improve the effectiveness of community based support programs, and raise awareness of government support programs, for people with disabilities.

The Department of Family and Community Services seeks to encourage and support structures that Indigenous communities have developed themselves, using this as a consultative mechanism as well as a feedback system.

The Department of Health and Ageing is strongly committed to involving local Indigenous people in the planning and delivery of Indigenous health services. The implementation of the *Primary Health Care Access Program* involves the partners to the Framework Agreement (the community controlled health sector, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Department of Health and Ageing, and state/territory health agencies).

The comprehensive planning undertaken at the local level requires the involvement of the appropriate community people and health and substance use agencies operating in the area. The program has flexible funding, requiring the community to consider, using the available information and advice, their health priorities and the service delivery arrangements, which best suit the local area. Funds are available to ensure that the planning process appropriately ensures community involvement and can cover costs of participation if required.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. The Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable Working Group considers proposals that address the needs of both urban and rural and remote area Indigenous people.

The government notes, however, that mainstream programs and services have the same responsibility to assist Indigenous Australians as any other Australians. Where they are available, the government expects them to be accessible and responsive to the needs of Indigenous people.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, its Board and Regional Councils were established to provide or facilitate Indigenous community input and representation and to provide the government with specialist policy and program advice from the Indigenous perspective. The government notes that the Commission is firmly committed to a role in facilitating community capacity building activities, and to providing a conduit into Indigenous communities for other agencies, as well as representing communities.

An example of cross-portfolio collaboration is the Commonwealth Indigenous Reference Group, which has responsibility for the development of work on community capacity building. The Reference Group was established as a result of a high level, cross-departmental meeting convened to address the Council of Australian Governments' Agenda for Advancing Reconciliation. Members of the Reference Group are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Departments of Family and Community Services, Employment and Work Place Relations, Education, Science and Training, Transport and Regional Services, and Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Centrelink.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations works closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to develop and support activities which foster community; for example, through the development of Community Participation Agreements under *Australians Working Together*.

The Department of Health and Ageing and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission have a Memorandum of Understanding which identifies key areas of cooperation and joint activity. As one of the partners on Framework Agreements, the Commission is closely linked to health planning processes and related community capacity building.

Department of Family and Community Services staff are actively encouraged to use existing connections, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Regional Councils, as an entry point into Indigenous communities.

Environment Australia works with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission community councils as a point of communication with the Indigenous community. Its Indigenous Policy and Coordination Section has played a key role in advising staff on appropriate ways of consulting the Indigenous community since 1987. Section staff have met with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Regional Councils to provide information on Natural Heritage Trust programs.

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.

The government notes the recommendation, but does not support the involvement of the National Office of Local Government in developing a proposal to fund such a position. The National Office of Local Government does not have administrative responsibility for a discretionary grants program that could contribute to the funding of a position with the Australian Local Government Association.

The government notes that any action by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to implement the recommendation would need to be from within its existing discretionary resources.

Nevertheless, the government understands the important role that the Australian Local Government Association plays in fostering links between Indigenous people and local governments. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission provided in excess of \$800,000 to the Australian Local Government Association over the past six years, and has expressed interest in negotiating agreements with the Australian Local Government Association and state associations to improve participation and outcomes for Indigenous peoples. This could include the possibility of continued joint funding of a national policy position.

An Action plan designed to support the COAG framework to advance Reconciliation will also be considered at the first meeting of the newly formed Local Government and Planning Ministers Conference.

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.

The government accepts this recommendation. It will be pursued under the auspices of the new Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council. The issues can be addressed through the Local Government Reconciliation Action Plan currently being developed for Ministers in response to a request from the Council of Australian Governments.

The government will encourage the states and territories to engender a better spirit of cooperation between mainstream councils and discrete Indigenous communities within their boundaries.

The needs of youth: recommendations 16-27

Several recommendations refer to the Youth Bureau. The government transferred responsibility for the Youth Bureau from the former Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs to the Department of Family and Community Services on its re-election in November 2001. The Department of Family and Community Services will consider relevant recommendations in reviewing Youth Bureau operations.

The government is aware of and already has in place strategies to address the issues raised by HORSCATSIA. The government gives a high priority to reducing substance misuse, family violence, child abuse and neglect, youth homelessness, and school non-attendance, and understands the wish of the Committee to highlight these issues, as much more remains to be done.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. The allocation of funds from the *Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program* is made following advice from the independent Australian National Council on Drugs. This Council has on it representatives of community treatment providers, including providers in Indigenous communities. The *Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program* aims to provide funding to non-government organisations to establish and operate new treatment services and expand or enhance existing treatment services for treating illicit drug problems.

The *Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program* has a particular emphasis on filling geographic and target group gaps in the coverage by existing treatment services. Indigenous people and young people were both identified as key target groups for the program. A total of \$8.3m over four years has been provided to 18 organisations across Australia to provide services for Indigenous people.

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.

The government notes the recommendation, and considers it appropriate for the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to implement actions that relate to their own operations.

The Department of Health and Ageing will continue to work with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and to consider the draft national strategy *the Substance Misuse in an Aboriginal Community Controlled Primary Health Care Setting*. The government recognises the National Indigenous Substance Misuse Council as a newly launched organisation and is aware that the Council is in the process of establishing independent relationships with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and other peak bodies.

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.

The government notes the recommendation, and is considering how best to progress the issue. This may include a review, conducted in liaison with key stakeholders, including the Australian Capital Territory government, of the utilisation of social health services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Capital Territory and the surrounding region.

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.

The government accepts this recommendation. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Attorney General's Department have expressed interest in supporting a proposal to this effect to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy.

At its June 1999 meeting, the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy endorsed the establishment of the National Drug Strategy Reference Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, to provide a reference point and high level advice and expertise on priorities and strategies to address specific substance misuse issues related to Indigenous people.

Through this Reference Group, the Inter-governmental Committee on Drugs has commissioned a strategy to address Indigenous substance misuse, to complement and build upon other national action plans developed under the National Drug Strategic Framework.

As part of the consultancy specifications, the consultant developing the strategy is directed to design a complementary strategy to address Indigenous substance misuse which:

- is cohesive, spanning all other national drug strategy national action plans across licit and illicit drugs and other substances of abuse;

- is developed in accordance with the principles of Indigenous community participation and involves all agencies and organisations dealing with Indigenous substance misuse;
- recognises the importance of community control and decision making, which allows for regional variation and flexibility; and
- considers sub population groups within Indigenous communities, for example youth and people in custody.

The Strategy will involve a two-phase national consultation process, which will enable stakeholders from urban and regional, rural and remote areas in all states and Territories to contribute to the development and refinement of the draft Strategy.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. The government is committed to its leadership and coordination role in reducing Indigenous family violence. It notes that state and territory governments continue to hold the chief responsibility for services for women and children affected by domestic violence (the majority of victims), for laws to provide protection from further harm, and for justice responses to offenders.

The *National Indigenous Family Violence Grants Programme*, a part of the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative, concludes in June 2003. All program funds have been allocated. The objectives and selection criteria for the program were designed in accordance with the principles for funding Indigenous community based organisations created by the Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

The government's commitment to ongoing and longer-term solutions, including the coordination of Commonwealth and state/territory initiatives, is being pursued through the Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

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.

The government accepts this recommendation. It considers that child abuse and neglect should be addressed in a holistic way, including in the context of family violence. It notes the advice from the Department of Family and Community Services that the principles and recommendations of the *Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities* could be considered for integration into the selection process for initiatives such as:

- Indigenous Parenting and Family Wellbeing Initiative (\$1.7 million annually)
- Early Intervention Parenting Initiative (\$5.8 million over two years)
- Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (\$20 million specifically for Indigenous issues over four years).

The Indigenous National Plan of Action Against Child Abuse and Neglect was developed in 1996 as part of an overarching *Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect of all Australian Children*. The Plan was a Commonwealth leadership initiative to be implemented as states and territories considered appropriate. Implementation of child protection legislation and programs is the responsibility of state and territory governments.

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.*

The government accepts the recommendation in principle, although noting that constitutional responsibility for education lies with state and territory governments. Therefore it is the responsibility of state and territory governments to introduce programs to promote attendance.

The government provides supplementary funding for Indigenous students under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* for the *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme*.

One initiative funded under the *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme* is the *National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*, whose key elements include:

- improving attendance;
- overcoming hearing, health and nutrition problems;
- improving preschool experiences;
- supporting the teaching profession;
- using the best teaching methods; and
- measuring the success and maintaining accountability.

A number of initiatives aimed at improving attendance are funded over the period of the 2001-2004 quadrennium.

The Department of Education, Science and Training notes that Indigenous education programs recognise the problems of non-attendance and are addressing the issue. For example, Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Committees, which consist of the parents of Indigenous preschool and school

students, the local Indigenous community, and school/preschool representatives, may develop and undertake activities to address non-attendance if it is an issue in their community. These committees receive funding from the Department of Education, Science and Training.

The Department of Education, Science and Training now has a project in place to provide assistance for students in Years 8, 9, 10 and equivalent ungraded students to improve their attendance and retention at school and to improve their literacy and numeracy. A number of pilots are to be run, with students participating in a one-on-one relationship with a mentor. The mentors will be engaged by a service provider organisation that will be contracted to the Department of Education, Science and Training.

The pilots are expected to accommodate around 300 students. In general, students will be on the program for up to one academic year. An amount of \$2.6 million is available up to 30 June 2003 for this project.

Included within the project is a national evaluation, which will be undertaken by Murdoch University. Data collected will be analysed at the end of the last pilot and a report produced which will inform future policy and direction with regard to such a service.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. The Prime Minister launched *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability* in April 2001 setting an innovative agenda for sport in the new millennium. Amongst other things, the new policy actively encourages 13 targeted national sporting organisations (NSOs) to look beyond elite development and play a more active role in increasing participation, infrastructure and skill development. Under the new model NSOs have received an additional \$280,000 to develop strategic links and programs with the national network of 53 Indigenous Sport Development Officers (ISDOs) to ensure their services and expertise are available to Indigenous communities. To complement this approach, the Indigenous Sport Program (ISP) has also injected another \$350,000 into the ISDO network to assist Officers develop and fund collaborative programs.

ISDOs will act as a conduit between Indigenous Australians and the various sports programs of NSOs, the Commonwealth and State/ Territory governments, maximising the effectiveness of available sport resources across Australia to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For the first time the sport-specific delivery system is formally linked to the ISDO network and Indigenous communities. Essentially, the new policy allows the ISP to capitalise on the good work being undertaken by the network of ISDOs throughout Australia and assists Indigenous athletes from a regional level through to

international competitions more effectively and without an inefficient duplication of services.

The government made a commitment at the November 2001 election to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to build on the involvement of sporting identities and other role models as a means of tackling substance abuse issues with young Indigenous Australians.

The Department of Health and Ageing provides funding to the National Indigenous 3 on 3 Basketball Challenge targeting health promotion to young Indigenous people through combining sport and healthy living messages.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. The government will continue to encourage the involvement of young Indigenous people in decision-making processes in its own and in other agencies.

The National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group is a new initiative recommended by the 1999 and 2000 National Youth Roundtables and inaugurated in 2001. The Leadership Group involves 16 young Indigenous Australians aged 15-24, and is designed to provide an opportunity for young Indigenous people to communicate with the government on issues important to them and to identify key issues for promoting leadership and role models in Indigenous communities.

The Youth Bureau manages a project, called 'Young People on Boards and Committees', which is accessed through its youth website, www.thesource.gov.au. It provides a conduit between young people who register their interest in serving on boards or committees, with organisations seeking input from young people.

The National Indigenous Leadership Group, also managed by the Youth Bureau, provides an opportunity for young Indigenous people to discuss with government their experiences and perspectives about issues important to them and to identify key issues for promoting leadership and role models in Indigenous communities.

The Regional Councils of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission are in the best position to determine priorities for their discretionary funding and resources. When establishing priorities for funding, and in seeking applications for funding, Councils do specifically consider providing support to those initiatives which strengthen the family and particularly the specific needs of women and youth.

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.*

The government accepts the recommendation. The Memorandum of Understanding signed by all states and territories in August 1999 identifies culturally appropriate *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* services to Indigenous Australians as one of the strategic themes for *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program 4*, which runs from 2000-2005.

Schedule 7 of the bilateral agreements, which all states and territories have signed with the Commonwealth, reflect the commitment in the Memorandum of Understanding by identifying strategies for service system development that the states and territories will undertake over the life of the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Agreement*.

The *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* National Coordination and Development Committee has identified Indigenous homelessness in its work plan and is currently exploring opportunities which will position the program to better meet the needs of the Indigenous community. Evidence shows that Indigenous people are making use of *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* assistance. Approximately 16% of episodes of care are provided to Indigenous people¹³, who constitute 2.4% of the population.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. The government recognises the important emphasis given to the needs of Indigenous youth by the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce in its report, *Footprints to the Future*. The government notes that there is a range of Commonwealth initiatives to deliver youth services that have either dedicated Indigenous components or are available to Indigenous communities. Following an initial response to the report in the 2001-2002 Budget, the government is continuing to address the findings of the report. In responding, the government is mindful of the need to ensure the needs of Indigenous youth are given adequate attention across the spectrum of issues covered by the report, rather than only considering Indigenous issues narrowly through the Indigenous specific recommendations.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation in principle. The Australian Clearing House for Youth Studies, sponsored by the government, already provides this service. The Clearing House has a section dedicated to Indigenous Youth Issues, accessible at the Internet site:

<http://www.acys.utas.edu.au/ncys/ysa/index/indigen.htm>.

The transfer of responsibility for youth issues to the Department of Family and Community Services provides an opportunity for it to build on the Indigenous section of the database to support this recommendation.

Maintenance of culture: recommendations 28-29

The government notes that the discussion in the report* refers to a much broader recognition of cultural heritage and Indigenous cultural issues than is reflected in the two recommendations.

The government acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's leadership role on cultural issues, noting for example, the Commission's interest in safeguarding Indigenous intellectual property rights, copyright, and 'language' as core components of Indigenous cultural identity, along with the protection of Indigenous sites and places of significance located within urban areas. The value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpretation of sites and the broader cultural landscape both for the benefit of the Indigenous and wider communities should also be recognised.

The government also considered the view of the Australian Film Commission to be pertinent to the broader discussion of Indigenous art and craft: "to limit the 'maintenance of culture' to arts and craft ignores the importance of digital communication to the preservation of arts and crafts....the importance of communication as a means through which cultural identity is shared means that accessing digital production and online technology is increasingly important to all communities in preserving their 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.

The government notes the recommendation. Both a new licence category for Indigenous broadcasting, and a formal mechanism to reserve spectrum specifically for Indigenous services would require amendments to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Reservation of spectrum would also need to be considered in the context of the availability of spectrum in regional and metropolitan areas.

The government is still considering its response to the Productivity Commission report on broadcasting.

The government has committed to exploring with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission opportunities arising from the outcomes of the National Indigenous Broadcasting Strategy feasibility study, which addresses these issues.

* Report, Chapter 6: Maintenance of Culture, pp93-106

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.

The government notes the recommendation. The government agrees that appropriate mechanisms for promoting and coordinating funding for urban and community based arts and craft centres are important, but that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission is best placed to determine priorities for its discretionary funding and other resources. The Australia Council agrees that effective coordination of the Indigenous arts sector will benefit from the developing relationship between its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Arts Board have developed and implemented strategies with ATSIC to establish appropriate and effective mechanisms for promoting and coordinating funding for urban and community based arts and crafts centres.

These include:

- co-funding the 'Inside Art/Out' initiative;
- co-convening and co-funding the 2002 National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts and Craft Conference in Adelaide;
- meeting in February 2002 to further develop strategies for a more effective approach to the co-ordination of funding; and
- developing strategies to provide more effective support to regions of south west Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia and Victoria.

Economic independence: recommendations 30-37

The government reiterates its position that where mainstream employment services and programs are available, as in metropolitan and regional centres, they should be the first assistance option for Indigenous as well as other people. Indigenous employment in the public sector is encouraged in a number of public sector areas (see, for example, page [54](#)).

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.

The government accepts the recommendation. Due to the Machinery of Government changes the portfolio responsibility for ACCs now rests with the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTaRS). Limited funding was made available to ACCs by DEWR through the Indigenous Employment Policy to facilitate the implementation of a variety of employment related liaison, promotion and other activities to improve employment outcomes for indigenous people at the regional level. Contracts for this arrangement were completed on 30 June 2002. DEWR will continue to consider proposals from individual ACCs on a case-by-case basis. Arrangements for future interaction between ACCs and DEWR are currently being examined by DEWR and DoTaRS.

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.

The government does not accept this recommendation. The government notes that urban areas are more likely to be areas with good job opportunities and therefore assistance should be targeted at getting more people into work. The government would prefer to see more emphasis on mainstream employment assistance, with more *Community Development Employment Project* resources targeted to areas with limited job opportunities.

The implementation of Indigenous Employment Centres will provide funds for some *Community Development Employment Projects* to undertake expanded employment assistance functions aimed at improving the movement of participants into employment. It would be premature to expand the number of places until better data on the flow of *Community Development Employment Project* participants can be obtained.

The report itself provides no empirical evidence to support an increase in funding for urban *Community Development Employment Project* places. In addition, not all

nationally available *Community Development Employment Project* participant places were utilised in 2000-01.

The government notes that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission is examining ways to make the distribution of currently available *Community Development Employment Project* places more responsive to demand pressures across different geographical locations, including urban locations where *Community Development Employment Project* places are most in demand.

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.

The government notes the recommendation and agrees that mentoring has emerged as a key factor in the successful retention of jobs by Indigenous people generally. Such post placement support can be provided by Intensive Assistance Job Network members through arrangements funded under the Indigenous Employment Policy and will be available from Indigenous Employment Centres for job seekers entering mainstream employment.

The government, through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, is also sponsoring specific pilot mentoring arrangements under the *Indigenous Employment Policy*. The issue of an appropriate level of funding for future mentoring arrangements will be addressed following consideration of the outcomes of the pilot arrangements.

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.

The government notes the recommendation. As far as possible, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations will actively encourage the employment and involvement of Indigenous people in the management of Indigenous Employment Centres. However, the CDEP managing the IEC will have the flexibility to choose staff best able to work with the IEC participants. Sufficient financial and other support will be provided to assist *Community Development Employment Project* operations become Indigenous Employment Centres. This will not take the form of a specific 'allowance' in relation to oncosts but has been built into the upfront fees.

Operation of Indigenous Employment Centres

\$31 million was allocated under *Australians Working Together* in the 2001 Budget for the establishment of Indigenous Employment Centres to assist up to 10,000 participants make the transition from CDEP work experience into paid jobs over four years. The structure of funding for Indigenous Employment Centres will include a commencement fee of \$2200, a training credit of \$800 and, a participant account fee of \$600 per Indigenous Employment Centre participant. Additional payments will be provided for each participant who is placed in employment off CDEP wages, with further payments made after retention in employment for 13 and 26 weeks. The potential total payment for each Indigenous Employment Centre participant who is retained in employment off CDEP wage for 26 weeks will be in the order of \$6400.

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.*

The government accepts the recommendation in principle, noting that a number of initiatives are in progress. The government wholly supports the goal of assisting Indigenous people to move into mainstream employment, recognising, however, that this is a long-term goal which involves a whole of government approach to reducing barriers to employment, including educational attainment and health status.

The Innovative and Collaborative Youth Servicing (ICYS) Pilots are designed to address the need for a greater sense of shared responsibility and accountability among funding agencies and service providers to deliver a joined-up, collaborative approach in supporting all young people in their transitions to independence. A number of these pilots will have an indigenous focus.

In the context of these Pilots, discussions are under way with a number of indigenous communities to develop projects that address issues of importance to them in a culturally sensitive way. This includes devising innovative approaches to provide access to employment, educational and training opportunities to young indigenous people in these communities, whilst at the same time assisting with issues relating to broader health and social concerns.

Existing initiatives relevant to recommendation 34

Program linkages have been established between the *Community Development Employment Projects* and programs administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, including the *Structured Training and Employment Project*, *Wage Assistance* and the *Community Development Employment Project Placement Incentive*.

In addition, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has been successful in securing the commitment of 57 corporations to its *Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment* initiative. This translates to an undertaking by these corporations to provide over 2000 jobs. Discussions are taking place about how such corporations can be strategically linked with the Indigenous Employment Centres. The Department of Education, Science and Training is currently working in partnership with Indigenous organisations, other Departments, public authorities, private companies and industry groups to address young Indigenous people's relative disadvantage in education, training and employment.

Through contracts with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the government aims to achieve up to 1,540 Structured Workplace Learning placements for Indigenous students and up to 2,000 employment placements for Indigenous job seekers and *Community Development Employment Project* participants in the private sector.

The Commonwealth government representatives* on the Indigenous sub-committee to the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation are working together to ensure Commonwealth funding is targeted effectively. This is an extension of the work being undertaken by the Foundation as part of the Indigenous Youth Partnership Initiative. This Initiative provides a 'whole of community' approach to promoting effective assistance and support for Indigenous youth to remain at, or return to, school and to provide a reliable pathway from schooling to training and employment onto independence.

Under *Australians Working Together*, the Department of Education, Science and Training will provide \$10.2m over four years for two Indigenous specific initiatives: one will involve partnerships between communities, industry and education providers; and the second, business support for vocational learning for Indigenous secondary school students based on local industry options.

The Youth Bureau, now part of the Department of Family and Community Services has worked in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Body Shop and the *Commonwealth Youth Program* to conduct:

- Enterprise Development Workshops that provide young Indigenous people from Australia, and the South Pacific region, with training in establishing and running a small business; and
- First Australians Business, a mentoring scheme for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

* The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Department of Education, Science and Training, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Family and Community Services, and the Department of Health and Ageing

Recommendation 35

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

The government accepts the recommendation The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission currently distributes 7,000 copies of the *CDEP News* per quarter to every CDEP organisation and a range of other stakeholders. As an alternative access point, for those with internet facilities, ATSIC will be placing the *CDEP News* on their website during 2002.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation and furthermore, notes that government policy for its third term of office commits to a further Green Corps contract beyond 2002. The Green Corps is the responsibility of the Youth Bureau which is now part of the Department of Family and Community Services.

Environment Australia assisted the Department of Education, Science and Training (formerly The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs) in assessing projects and will continue to work with the Youth Bureau.

The Indigenous Land Management Facilitator network actively promotes the Green Corps program to Indigenous youth along with other programs that can be used to support land management activities in Indigenous communities.

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.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle. Under the Council of Australian Governments process, the Ministerial Council for Small Business is developing an action plan to foster the participation of Indigenous Australians in small business which will provide a framework for the activities of relevant Commonwealth and state portfolios.

Responsibility for the administration of small business functions now rests with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has a continuing role in supporting Indigenous small business through the Indigenous Small Business Fund under the Indigenous Employment Policy. The two departments will work closely on Indigenous small business matters. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations also has joint program arrangements with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

Housing: recommendations 38-40

A key event in Indigenous housing was national agreement in May 2001 on the Statement of New Policy Directions for Indigenous Housing documented in *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*.¹⁴ For the Commonwealth, the statement was endorsed by the Minister for Family and Community Services, and the Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. The objectives are to:

- identify and address unmet housing needs of Indigenous people;
- improve the capacity of Indigenous community housing organisations and involve Indigenous people in planning and service delivery;
- achieve safe, healthy and sustainable housing; and
- coordinate program administration.

The government has identified improved information as essential to improving housing outcomes for Indigenous people.

The National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee has a work program of national Indigenous housing information projects. The focus is on developing and implementing a National Indigenous Housing Minimum Data Set incorporating data concepts, definitions and standards. Data standards will be in a form that is suitable for inclusion in a National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary. Consultation with expert working groups in other areas of information and data development will be a key strategy for the work program.

In addition, including an Indigenous identifier in the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement will provide data on the number of Indigenous people accessing various forms of housing assistance including public housing, community housing, home purchase assistance, private rental assistance and crisis accommodation programs.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics increased the sample of Indigenous households in non-sparsely settled areas in the 1999 Australian Housing Survey. The 2008 Indigenous Social Survey is expected to include housing measures, and a detailed housing supplement is proposed for inclusion in the 2007-08 Survey of Income and Housing Costs.

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.

The government notes this recommendation and will consider it further in relation to existing strategies. The government draws attention to its commitment at the November 2001 election to encourage home ownership for Indigenous people as a means to economic independence.

One of the four objectives of *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010* is to identify and address the unmet housing needs of Indigenous people. A strategy

for achieving this objective is to ensure that policies, plans and service provision take account of the needs and aspirations of Indigenous people and communities with regard to the desire for home ownership. The government notes the success of the existing *Home Ownership Program* operated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

Current action on home ownership

The Department of Family and Community Services/Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission guidelines for the development of annual Indigenous housing plans require each jurisdiction to develop specific strategies to increase home ownership through effective programs and to report on the number of Indigenous people who have accessed home ownership programs each year.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute is expected to carry out research in 2002 on issues surrounding home ownership and specifically, strategies for improving the level of home ownership for Indigenous people.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation in principle and emphasises its commitment to monitoring the outcomes for Indigenous customers in the private rental market. Uptake of Rent Assistance by eligible Indigenous income support recipients is low relative to mainstream recipients, which may reflect the relatively high number of Indigenous people in public rental housing.

The *Report on Government Services 2002*¹⁴ indicates that 2.1% of Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipients stated they were Indigenous. Under the HORSCATSIA definition of 'urban', 13,760 Indigenous recipients (68%) were urban-dwellers at 30 June 2001. Rent Assistance reduced the proportion of urban Indigenous customers paying more than 30% of their income in rent from 71% to 34%, and those paying more than 50% of their income in rent decreased from 25% to 6.7%.¹⁵

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, in conjunction with the National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee, intends to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the Indigenous housing data from the 2001 Census.

The government, through the Department of Family and Community Services and Centrelink, and together with the New South Wales Aboriginal Housing Office, is developing a project to obtain information about issues impacting on the capacity of Indigenous community housing organisations to collect rent. The project has a particular focus on barriers facing Indigenous people in claiming and maintaining entitlement to Rent Assistance and using Centrepay, and the support needs of Indigenous community housing organisations in registering for, and using Centrepay. The government will use the findings of this project to inform future research and policy development.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute is expected to include an analysis of the impact of the current design of Rent Assistance on decisions of recipients, landlords and home investors, and on outcomes for recipients in its 2002 research.

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.

The government accepts the recommendation in principle. The work of the Commonwealth State Working Group on Indigenous Housing has finished and Housing Ministers have established a new group, the Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing, which reports to the Housing Ministers' Advisory Council.

The Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing comprises representatives of Indigenous housing authorities from all jurisdictions as well as representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Department of Family and Community Services. The Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing has primary responsibility for implementing the approach documented in *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*.

The government has already committed to collecting Indigenous status data in the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement *Public Rental Housing Program* data set. This will provide a basis for reviewing factors influencing housing affordability for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous public housing tenants.

The recommended actions will be included in the Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing's work plan.

Attachment A

Additional information for recommendation 2: data and performance reporting in selected functional areas

Health

There are well-documented problems with the collection of data on Indigenous people, especially in relation to their health status. For example, Indigenous mortality data reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics or the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare are drawn from just four jurisdictions: Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

There are several national and some Commonwealth initiatives to address problems with getting valid and reliable national level health data. The basic mechanism is the *National Health Information Agreement*, which has as its highest priority the improvement of Indigenous health data. The National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data coordinates collaborative arrangements between states, Commonwealth agencies and the Indigenous health sector to improve data.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Information Unit carries out the collection and analysis of Indigenous health and welfare information. Its key publication is the biennial *Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, the third edition published in 2001.¹⁶ The unit has a regular work program guided by the National Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data.

The Department of Health and Ageing reports annually on Aboriginal health services and substance use services that it funds. Agreements on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (Framework Agreements), signed by the Commonwealth health minister, all state and territory health ministers; the community controlled health service sector and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, require annual reporting on progress to the Australian Health Ministers Conference.

National Indigenous Health Information Plan

The National Indigenous Health Information Plan¹⁷, endorsed by and published in 1997 for the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council contains 42 recommendations for the collection and maintenance of quality statistics on the health of Indigenous Australians. These fall into three main areas:

- the development of an appropriate infrastructure for the collection and maintenance of Indigenous data;
- technical improvements required to support the collection of high quality statistics on Indigenous health; and

- effective national leadership and coordination to progress issues and strategies across all jurisdictions.

Key directions for implementing the Plan's recommendations to enhance the quality of available data include the need for:

- improved Indigenous identification across a range of health data collections, targeting hospital records and births and deaths registrations;
- safeguards in the appropriate use of data and information; and
- support to be provided for communities and services at the local level to collect and use information for their own needs.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has conducted two relevant projects, in conjunction with state and territory health authorities. The first was to develop, implement and evaluate a method of assessing the completeness of identification of Indigenous people in hospital records. The second project addressed the need to establish best practice procedures for recording Indigenous status in hospital separations data.

The National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data will coordinate a review of the National Indigenous Health Information Plan in 2001-02, leading up to the implementation of the Plan in December 2002.

National minimum data sets

At the community health level, under the National Mental Health Strategy and the National Drug Strategy, two national minimum data sets have been agreed by Commonwealth, state and territory agencies that will provide information on Indigenous patients and clients in two community health service delivery areas. These are the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set and the Community Mental Health Care National Minimum Data Set, both of which include the Indigenous identifier as a reporting requirement.

Data available from the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services Collection will provide information on service utilisation, treatment protocols, and clients' alcohol and drug problems (including injecting drug use), and will report types of drugs used by clients according to the Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern.¹⁸ The Community Mental Health collection will include information on service events, diagnosis and mental health legal status.

Standard demographic characteristics of clients will be included in reports from both data sets.¹⁹

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Indicators

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is responsible for the annual reporting of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Indicators, which were endorsed in 1997 by all Health Ministers. An interim set of national performance indicators has been reported for 1998²⁰ and 1999²¹, and will continue for the 2000 reporting period.

The interim indicators cover mortality, morbidity, access to health services, health services impacts, workforce developments, risk factors, inter-sectoral issues, community development, and quality of service provision.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in their national statistical leadership role, provide advice and data to all governments for reporting on the health performance indicators. For many jurisdictions, however, the data required to report on the indicators are either unavailable, of poor quality, or require substantial development in order to be reported. Commitment by states and territories, as signatories to the *National Health Information Agreement*, to make the improvements necessary for complete coverage of the indicators is likely to achieve fuller reporting in the future.

Community services

The *National Community Services Information Agreement* is the basis for reaching consensus on national data standards. In 1999, the National Community Services Information Development Plan identified the need for improved information on Indigenous people in community services data collections as one of its highest priorities.

One of the long-term aims in the development of administrative statistics nationally, is the introduction of the Australian Bureau of Statistics standard as the accepted way for collecting Indigenous status data (note page [10](#)). This will provide the capacity for reporting Indigenous client data that are comparable, both between and across the different sectors and jurisdictions.

Although the Australian Bureau of Statistics standard is not yet widely used by community service agencies at this time, programs such as the *Home and Community Care Program* and the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* have adopted it. It is also used in the Commonwealth State Disability Agreement minimum data set.

In April 1999 the Community Services Minister's Advisory Council approved funding for the development of principles and standards for community services Indigenous population data. In addition to the development of principles and standards, separate reviews of the collection of Indigenous status in child protection and welfare, the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* and Commonwealth State Disability Agreement-funded agencies were conducted, and a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Services Information Plan has been endorsed with four priority areas for improving information collected on Indigenous clients:

- child protection and welfare;
- the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*;
- Commonwealth State Disability Agreement-funded agencies; and
- juvenile justice.

Education

Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program

The Department of Education, Science and Training collects data in relation to the performance of providers under the *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program*, including the state and territory departments of education.

Performance outcomes are measured and collected using the measurement source defined in the applicable Schedule of the Indigenous Education Agreement between the provider and the Commonwealth and in accordance with any specifications described in the measurement source, for example sample sizes, survey periods. The measurement source is the source of the data being used. Comparative non-Indigenous data are included where applicable. Information about the delivery of jointly funded services to Indigenous people is not included in the negotiated agreement because funding under the *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program* is supplementary.

The performance indicator framework gathers performance information about the absolute changes that occur for Indigenous students and tracks changes in gaps between the performance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Analysis of comparative data is a critical element of the performance indicator framework.

The performance indicators for the *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program* relate to:

- improving literacy and numeracy achievements of Indigenous students at preschool, school and in vocational education and training;
- improving achievement of Indigenous students;
- improving the employment of Indigenous people in education;
- improving the professional development of staff involved in Indigenous education; and
- expanding culturally inclusive curricula.

States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act

Under the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000* all education authorities are required, as a condition of funding from 2001, to make a commitment to the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st century. Authorities are also called on as a condition of funding to make a commitment to achieve any performance measures, including targets, incorporated in the legislation. These commitments form part of the funding agreements between the Commonwealth and each authority. Education authorities are required to report on Indigenous outcomes under the Act.

Performance targets and measures may be determined by the Commonwealth Minister and incorporated into the legislation through regulations, although wherever possible national targets and measures will be agreed by state and Commonwealth education ministers through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. Reporting takes place through the *Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia*.

The first targets, incorporated in the Act through regulations, are that all Year 3 students will meet the national benchmarks in reading, writing and spelling, and in numeracy each year. The performance measures to be reported against (also incorporated in the Act) cover literacy and numeracy and the educational participation and attainment of young people, and reflect decisions on national performance benchmarks and measures made by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.

The Australian National Reporting Information Framework outlines the information to be provided by school authorities. This calls for reporting of literacy and numeracy achievement data disaggregated by student subgroups, including for Indigenous students. The first data against national benchmarks, for Years 3 and 5 Reading, was published in the 1999 Australian National Report and includes comparative data on the performance of Indigenous students.

These educational accountability requirements cover all schools grants programs funded under the States Grants Act, including general recurrent, capital and targeted programs. The provisions apply to non-government as well as government schools.

Housing

Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information

The Commonwealth is committed to improving the collection of data on Indigenous housing, through the National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee (see also recommendation 40, page 45)

This committee is responsible for implementing the *Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information*²², signed by the Department of Family and Community Services, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Torres Strait Regional Authority, all jurisdictions, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in 1999. The long-term goal of the agreement is to introduce a means of obtaining nationally relevant Indigenous housing data that is consistent and compatible with other housing and related health and community services data collections.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Department of Family and Community Services are developing joint guidelines and protocols for state /territory Indigenous Housing Plans and performance reporting requirements. These guidelines will have an increased focus on outcomes reporting in line with the Statement of New Policy Directions for Indigenous Housing - *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*²³, and the May 2001 budget initiative.

The Department of Family and Community Services also provided funding to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to develop a 5-year Indigenous Housing Information Management Strategy and an action plan for 2001-02. The Indigenous Housing Information Management Strategy was endorsed by the Housing Ministers Advisory Council in September 2001.

Substantial work must first be done to establish the infrastructure required to improve the quality of, and access to, Indigenous housing information at the national level. This includes:

- ensuring adequate processes are in place to oversee the implementation of data development strategies;
- addressing ethical concerns relating to data particularly in relation to maintaining and protecting the confidentiality of the data for individuals and for the signatories to the Agreement;
- developing and supporting information management skills and processes in Indigenous housing service provision;
- promoting appropriate information dissemination and communication;
- developing and supporting the use of national data standards and definitions; and
- improving the capacity of housing assistance administrative data collections to identify Indigenous persons.

Commonwealth State Housing Agreement

Under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, states and territories are required to report on the number of Indigenous households utilising mainstream programs funded under the agreement, including: public housing, community housing, home purchase assistance, private rental assistance and crisis accommodation programs. Data coverage and reliability varies between jurisdictions and between programs, particularly in regard to reporting about the total number of Indigenous households utilising these services. Data about new Indigenous households assisted in previous financial years has improved.

Several initiatives have been implemented under the National Housing Data Agreement to improve data, including:

- the release of the National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary Version 1²⁴ (Version 2 expected in 2002). This dictionary includes a range of Indigenous data concepts, such as discrete Indigenous community, Indigenous household, Indigenous housing organisation;
- the collection of public housing and *Aboriginal Rental Housing Program* data via a National Public Housing Data Repository. This has improved knowledge, from a national perspective, about Indigenous reporting data issues in these programs;
- a May 2001 recommendation of the National Housing Data Agreement Management Group to develop an implementation strategy for improving the reliability and accuracy of data about Indigenous households utilising mainstream programs; and
- the work program for the National Indigenous Housing Information Implementation Committee for 2001-2002 includes a number of projects to improve national data on the housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians, in particular,

the development of an Indigenous housing performance information framework,

a report on national data on Indigenous access to government managed housing assistance,

the development and implementation of national data standards and definitions, and

the development of national data standards for asset management systems.

Indigenous Housing Common Reporting Framework

To improve accountability for Commonwealth Indigenous housing funds, the Department of Family and Community Services and ATSIC, in consultation with the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, have developed a Common Reporting Framework for state and territory Indigenous housing authorities and ATSIC Regional Councils to use for strategic planning and program reporting. FaCS and ATSIC will monitor the progress of housing programs through annual strategic plans and reports submitted by state and territory Indigenous housing authorities.

Employment

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations collects Indigenous-specific data for evaluation purposes at the national level, which is stored in the Integrated Employment System and the management information systems used for the Indigenous Employment Policy and mainstream employment assistance such as the Job Network. The department's data accords with Australian Bureau of Statistics definitions and can be broken down by a range of reporting requirements and geographical areas.

Environment and Heritage

The collection of national data on Indigenous access to services and support is ongoing through programs under the Natural Heritage Trust. Such programs are delivered in the states and territories through partnership agreements that include agreed processes for project management and key issues being targeted. In the next phase of the Natural Heritage Trust, all natural resource management regions will require accredited plans approved by the government. One requirement is to take account of Indigenous people and issues in the planning process.

The *Program Administrator* database used to manage the Natural Heritage Trust includes data, updated and reported annually, on the participation rates of Indigenous people in mainstream programs. There is an Indigenous 'identifier' section on all application forms, and all non-Indigenous applicants are required to answer questions on their consultations with Indigenous interests where the project is likely to affect places or other interests of Indigenous people.

Arts

The Australia Council has a coding system in place for all applications that identifies those applications with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes. The coding system is being refined to enable more information about the Council's applications, grants and projects pursuant to the Council's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy to be collected.

Attachment B

Additional information for recommendation 7: current status of Indigenous employment and related policies in selected agencies

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

ATSIC has consistently sought to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff it employs. At the end of 2000-01, Indigenous staff made up 46.8% of the workforce. Specifically 62% of the senior executive service officers are Indigenous. The Commission remains committed to achieving a target of 60% Indigenous employees across the agency.

The Commission continues to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through entry-level programs. In 2001-02, 36 new employees were engaged through entry-level programs. ATSIC is also a Partner Organisation in the *Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program*, founded through AusAID, and three Indigenous staff members participated in this program during 2001. Another four Indigenous staff increased their experience through inter-agency placements/secondments, one with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in Canada. Other special initiatives include; the *Future Leaders Program* with 12 participants, an initiative to identify and develop prospective managers from the APS 6 level to the Executive Levels 1 and 2, and the *Operative Development Program* under which 20 Indigenous officers were taken on at entry level to undertake a structured 12 months course both on and off-the-job.

Education

The Department of Education, Science and Training has an Identified Positions Policy. The Department has Education Officers who are responsible for the delivery and administration of the Indigenous education programs. All staff have access to adequate training and professional support.

Employment

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations works to increase the level of Indigenous representation in its own workforce through Indigenous recruitment strategies, cross-cultural and other training initiatives across program and service delivery and through other measures, such as the establishment of NAIDOC Week Awards. At 11 December 2001, 4.74% of the total departmental staff identified as Indigenous.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations also actively encourages and supports Job Network providers to employ Indigenous staff. In addition, the department participates and supports an Indigenous Special Interest Group of the National Employment Services Association, chaired by the Hon

Robert Tickner. It aims to raise awareness of and improve Job Network provider performance in relation to the employment and servicing of Indigenous people.

The Business Partnership Arrangement with Centrelink also provides a means for the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to encourage the employment of Indigenous people by Centrelink and support the provision of culturally appropriate service delivery.

Health

The Department of Health and Ageing released its Departmental Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy in September 2001 to improve the recruitment, retention and development of Indigenous staff across the Department. The Strategy sets four outcomes to be addressed by each business unit in Implementation Plans that are reported against each six months. The four outcomes are: developing an inclusive organisational culture; attraction and recruitment strategies; retention and career development; and monitoring and evaluation. A national coordinator of Indigenous workforce issues is employed to oversee the implementation of the Strategy across the Department and to provide secretariat support for the department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network. The staff network was launched in July 2000 and is supported to meet regularly, holds annual workshops, provides peer support to Indigenous members and reports to the Department's executive on issues of concern to Indigenous staff.

In November 2000, 2.9% of staff in the Department of Health and Ageing identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In January 2002, Indigenous staff within the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, a key program area within the department, represented 32% of all Office staff.

The Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health is responsible for funding Indigenous specific primary health care services to complement the delivery of mainstream health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In 1998-99, 68% of staff employed in Commonwealth funded Indigenous primary health care services were Indigenous Australians. The Office also provides more than \$6 million per annum for development of the Indigenous health workforce. This funding is principally directed to Aboriginal Health Worker training, support for Aboriginal health professional associations, Indigenous health service managers training and management support initiatives. The Office has recently released the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce - draft National Strategic Framework for consultation. This document aims to set a coherent policy framework for Commonwealth and state/territory government involvement in improving training and support for the Indigenous health workforce. The objectives of the strategy were endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council in October 2001, with a final Strategy and Implementation Plan to be considered in 2002.

Family and Community Services

The Department of Family and Community Services is committed to workplace diversity and to recruiting and retaining Indigenous staff including increasing, by more than double, the number of Indigenous people working in the organisation. The Indigenous Community Segment Team is responsible for driving Centrelink to deliver tangible and sustainable outcomes for Indigenous peoples and communities. The Team has responsibility for programs including the *Community Agent Program* and Indigenous Interpreter Services. The Indigenous Community Segment Team also has responsibility for implementing 12 Remote Area Service Centres over the next four years as part of the *Australians Working Together* initiatives.

Centrelink

A network of Indigenous servicing staff supports the Indigenous Community Segment Team, comprising:

- Indigenous Services Unit Managers located in all areas across Centrelink. These positions are responsible for the delivery of services and programs at the Area level.
- Indigenous Services Officers responsible for working with communities, and identifying needs and gaps in service delivery, with a major emphasis on community outreach.
- Indigenous Customer Services Officers whose main role is to facilitate contact for Indigenous customers in their dealings with Centrelink.
- Indigenous Employment Outreach Officers whose main focus is to work with all stakeholders involved with identifying and addressing barriers to employment for Indigenous job seekers.

Centrelink has been delivering Cultural Awareness Training at the local level. The Indigenous Community Segment Team is currently developing a national framework for Cultural Awareness Training. This process will ensure a consistent approach to training on a national level.

On 14 December 2000 Centrelink launched its Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation. The Statement outlines Centrelink's commitment to working in practical ways with Indigenous people and their communities, client departments and other agencies to achieve integrated service delivery which contributes to improving economic and social outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Centrelink has also developed the Indigenous Employees' Action Plan 2001–2004. The four key components of the plan are:

- employment - to achieve a minimum 5% of Indigenous employees within Centrelink;
- learning - having the right skills to do the job and opportunities for career advancement. Centrelink's goal is to ensure Indigenous employees are represented at all levels within the organisation;

- inclusion - Centrelink acknowledges Indigenous people as the first Australians. Centrelink's goal is to ensure that all staff better understand the culture of Indigenous employees and customers; and
- servicing - Centrelink's goal is that employees servicing Indigenous Australians have the correct tools and knowledge to provide an efficient and effective customer service.

Centrelink will provide 10 Indigenous Scholarships and 10 Indigenous Cadetships in 2002. Indigenous scholarships and cadetships will be awarded each year at the rate of 10 per year until there is a "pool" of 30 of each award. This "pool" will be maintained at 30 cadetships and 30 scholarships in subsequent years.

Centrelink is an accredited training organisation and has recently introduced a Virtual College. The Virtual College is responsible for the development and delivery of nationally recognised accredited training within Centrelink. The College has responsibility for as well as a quality assurance role in regard to development and delivery of training and compliance with Registered Training Organisation status, the Centrelink Education Network, and Indigenous cadetships and scholarships.

Arts

The Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts section has nine staff of whom seven are Indigenous. Part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy requires the Council to increase its recruitment of Indigenous people to the Council, its Boards, Committees and staff. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Council and its Grants Assessment Committee of nine persons are all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists or arts workers. The Australia Council offers cross-cultural training by Indigenous staff and consultants under its National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy.

Environment and Heritage

Environment Australia's Indigenous Career Development and Recruitment Strategy sets out a general framework to provide career development, build a supportive and encouraging work environment, and offer employment opportunities to Indigenous people at all levels. The steering committee comprises the three most senior Indigenous staff, and reports to the Environment Australia Network on Indigenous Issues.

A component of the strategy is to raise awareness of the need to work effectively with Indigenous clients. Cross-cultural training programs have been implemented across the agency.

Environment Australia has Identified Positions, particularly for employment in managed parks, and currently employs about 80 Indigenous staff, most of whom are national park rangers. In addition, 10 Indigenous traineeships have been introduced, including two at head office. The current strategy seeks to ensure Indigenous participation in administration and management as well as field-based positions.

Notes and references

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3 ARIA is an index of remoteness derived from measures of road distance between populated localities and service centres. A continuous score of remoteness from 0 to 12 is generated for any location in Australia. The five ARIA categories are 1. highly accessible (<1.84), 2. Accessible (1.84-3.51), 3. moderately accessible (3.51-5.8), 4. Remote (5.8-9.08), and 5. very remote (9.08-12). The categories are based on distance from a range of service centres with various levels of services available. See: <http://gisca02.airnet.com.au/aria/>

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