



Barry Wakelin MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Dear Mr Wakelin

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited has a keen interest in building the capacity of Indigenous communities, as is demonstrated by the company's aim of providing appropriate temporary accommodation that assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people improve their standard of living and achieve health, educational and employment-related goals.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited is aware of the importance of targeted service delivery, strategic partnerships, strong leadership and community governance.

The enclosed submission highlights Aboriginal Hostels Limited's capacity to have input in these areas, using examples from the company's current operations. Further, it looks towards the company's ability to continue to contribute, and highlights important strategies to increase community capacities in the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Clarke
General Manager
30 August 2002

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities

Summary

In summary, Aboriginal Hostels Limited sees the following as key points to be addressed in relation to capacity building in Indigenous communities.

- More partnerships should be established between government agencies and communities to address Indigenous community capacity issues.
- These partnerships should be supported by the CEO's of agencies as priorities across each agency.
- Increased capital funding should be made available to support the community infrastructure components of existing and new partnerships; and
- consideration should be made of funding existing or new capacity building projects which fall outside the current responsibility of individual agencies.
- The expertise of agencies and organisations with a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff should be recognised and utilised.
- Funding should be made available to communities and individuals to access training which increases their ability to maximise the benefits of existing and proposed government programs.



House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities

Aboriginal Hostels Limited welcomes the opportunity to comment on capacity building in Indigenous communities and offers the following submission for consideration by the Committee.

Terms of Reference

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

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

Aboriginal Hostels Limited, as a Commonwealth agency, is able to respond most fully to part c of the terms of reference, however, as Aboriginal Hostels Limited has dealings with both individual community members and Indigenous organisations on a daily basis the company is also able to comment in relation to parts a and b.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) has a keen interest in building the capacity of Indigenous communities, as is demonstrated by the company's aim of providing appropriate temporary accommodation that assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people improve their standard of living and achieve health, educational and employment-related goals.

AHL is aware of the importance of targeted service delivery, strategic partnerships, strong leadership and community governance. This submission highlights AHL's capacity to have input in these areas, using examples from the company's current operations. Further, it looks towards the company's ability to continue to contribute, and highlights important strategies to increase community capacities in the future.

Partnerships and service delivery

AHL focuses on achieving its goals through partnerships at the local, regional and national level. These partnerships are negotiated to address resource, logistic and strategic issues related to the company's service delivery. AHL has developed partnerships with communities, State and Commonwealth agencies.

Partnerships to deliver services to renal dialysis patients

AHL recognises the impact which the high incidence of renal failure has on Indigenous communities. Those undergoing renal dialysis treatment, especially from rural and remote communities, seek accommodation that is culturally appropriate. In response to this need, AHL currently provides hostel accommodation specifically for renal dialysis patients in two locations. The 18 bed Nagandji Nagandji Ba Hostel in Nightcliff, Darwin and the 20 bed Topsy Smith Hostel in Alice Springs.

AHL is pro-active in meeting the needs of renal dialysis patients requiring accommodation, however, AHL has no responsibility to meet the wider needs of renal patients. State agencies are funded to provide a range of support services, such as medical services, transport to and from treatments, educational awareness campaigns, and counselling. AHL has established partnerships with State health agencies and community organisations to address the increasing demand for renal dialysis accommodation, and is continuing to work towards strengthening these partnerships. Currently AHL is in discussion with the Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (BRAMS) to establish an hostel in Broome to complement the new renal dialysis service. It is envisaged that this hostel will be operated by BRAMS and funded with assistance from AHL's Community Hostel Grants program.

Current research indicates that the demand for renal dialysis among the Indigenous community will continue to rise. AHL has the capacity to assist with addressing the resultant demand for accommodation, however, this will only be possible with increased funding, and strong partnerships with the State agencies responsible for the primary care of these patients.

Partnerships with community organisations to deliver accommodation options

AHL currently provides funds to approved organisations to operate hostels through the Community Hostel Grants (CHG) program. These funds are primarily available to subsidise the agreed operating deficit of an hostel. The CHG program creates the capacity for organisations to meet the temporary accommodation needs of their local Indigenous communities, and provides a cost-effective way for the company to be

immediately responsive to a wider range of temporary accommodation needs in the community. Seventy seven community organisations across the country were funded in 2001-2002 to provide accommodation for substance use rehabilitation, aged care, homeless, primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and training, medical transient, and transient residents.

AHL has the capacity to provide minor capital to these organisations. However, many hostels operate from facilities which require substantial capital funds to maintain occupational health and safety standards, or require total redevelopment. AHL and community organisations currently have the expertise, but not the financial capacity, to address these needs. If the capital requirements are not addressed, they threaten the continued viability of these services.

Partnerships to deliver services to the aged

The Department of Health and Ageing and AHL have an agreement to facilitate the provision of aged care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People through assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care services under the company's Community Hostel Grants program. The aged care services supported are those that receive funding from the Department of Health and Ageing under the Aged Care Act (1997). This partnership utilises AHL's experience in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care sector, and allows for these small and less viable services to have support from an Indigenous network.

Summary

In summary, Aboriginal Hostels Limited sees the following as key points to be addressed in relation to capacity building in Indigenous communities.

- More partnerships should be established between government agencies and communities to address Indigenous community capacity issues.
- These partnerships should be supported by the CEO's of agencies as priorities across each agency.
- Increased capital funding should be made available to support the community infrastructure components of existing and new partnerships; and
- consideration should be made of funding existing or new capacity building projects which fall outside the current responsibility of individual agencies.
- The expertise of agencies and organisations with a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff should be recognised and utilised.
- Funding should be made available to communities and individuals to access training which increases their ability to maximise the benefits of existing and proposed government programs.

Impediments to successful partnerships

AHL has experienced some impediments to successful partnerships in the past. Action on key Indigenous service delivery issues has at times lacked interagency coordination and ongoing funding, and has also been hampered by inflexible guidelines. The effort required to establish and re-establish frameworks for discussion between agencies has at times resulted in unacceptably long time frames to address critical service needs in the community. A lack of combined purpose and focus has tended to impede the development of successful partnerships which would enable important projects to be actioned in a timely way.

Leadership and community governance

Through the AHL Community Hostel Grants program, and through more broad community consultation, AHL is conscious of the current capacity of many Indigenous communities to engage in government programs, especially funding programs.

AHL has identified a need for training to be made available to communities and individuals to enable them to maximise the benefit of their access to these programs. This training would also mean communities are able to establish more mature relationships with agencies. AHL currently has a limited capacity to assist organisations funded under the Community Hostel Grants program to access training related to their hostel operations. Funding for this type training needs to be increased, coordinated, and the scope of the training broadened, to provide increased skills for high quality governance.