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House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal
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Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

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**Government
of South Australia**

**Submission
to**

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

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

June 2005

Introduction

In South Australia there are over 25,000 indigenous people in a total population of just over 1.5 million. Over half live in urban areas. Like other Australian states and territories there is a major disparity in the employment and unemployment experiences of indigenous and non-indigenous people in South Australia.

In recognition of the extent of disadvantage experienced by indigenous people the South Australian Government has made improving indigenous wellbeing a key target in its strategic plan and a central part of this is improving indigenous training and employment outcomes. The Government's *Doing it Right* policy framework is also aimed at ensuring that indigenous South Australians have the same choices as other South Australians and the same opportunities to share in the social and economic advantages of living in this state.

This submission provides an overview of current state government funded indigenous employment development programs and examples of successful programs within the vocational education and training system that have improved employment outcomes for indigenous South Australians. A brief analysis of why these programs have been successful is offered along with comment on the impact the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) has on the education and long-term employment outcomes of indigenous people. An overview of current activity on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the areas of employment, education and training has been included for information although it is too early to offer any comprehensive assessment of the success of these programs.

Examples resulting in improved employment outcomes for indigenous people

South Australia has a number of highly effective state-based programs aimed at encouraging greater participation of indigenous people in the labour market.

In December 2003, the Premier launched South Australia Works, a comprehensive strategy to address the state's employment and skills formation needs through six priority areas: Regions at Work, Indigenous Works, Experience Works, Industry Works, Public Sector Works and Youth Works. Two of these priority areas – Regions at Work and Indigenous Works – are designed to impact on indigenous employment.

Regions at Work

Regions at Work, which commenced in January 2004, is the centrepiece of South Australia Works. In the 2004/05 financial year the South Australian Government allocated up to \$900,000 to assist up to 1,000 indigenous people obtain the skills and experience necessary to gain employment through locally negotiated initiatives.

Regions at Work has numerous customised programs aimed at improving indigenous employment across South Australia. Examples of these programs include:

- the development of the Solid Futures Count Me In Directory which acts as an indigenous education, employment and training guide for the Limestone Coast region
- a Ropes and Floats training program on Eyre Peninsula for indigenous people interested in looking for employment opportunities in the aquaculture industry. The program provides training in First Aid, safety procedures on boats and a range of rope and knotwork

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- the Making Moves with Indigenous Apprenticeships initiative on the Fleurieu Peninsula which aims to identify employment opportunities and coordinate support for jobseekers to enter the workplace
 - retail and hospitality training provided to indigenous people to support the development of the Pomburuk Cultural Centre in the Murraylands
 - training opportunities provided through the Adelaide Mee Wee Community Coalition in a range of areas such as carpentry and glass blowing.

Indigenous Works - Tauondi College

Tauondi College, located at Port Adelaide, is a highly successful registered training organisation controlled and managed by indigenous people. The college receives the majority of its funding from the State Government and the remainder from the Commonwealth. Tauondi offers Aboriginal students a range of national training package qualifications and accredited courses as well as adult community education activities. Courses include information technology, business administration, hospitality and tourism. Programs are designed to provide pathways to further studies and/or employment and to empower Aboriginal students in their own growth and in the economic development of their communities.

Indigenous Works - Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program

The Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program is one of the most successful indigenous programs in South Australia. The program provides incentives for the employment of indigenous people in the private sector while they complete a nationally recognised trade based qualification over a period of three to four years. The program first commenced in 2000 with the first 20 apprentices graduating in October 2004. The South Australian Government has expanded the program to achieve a range of new goals including:

- targeting placements in areas of skills shortage and projected long-term growth industries
- encouraging a greater uptake of indigenous apprentices within the private sector
- promoting the participation, training and employment of indigenous people in group training schemes
- providing the support of mentors for indigenous apprentices and trainees
- collaboration between the two State Government departments responsible for education and further education to create pathways for young indigenous people from school into apprenticeships and traineeships
- providing a state-wide focus on developing 'best practice' for indigenous apprenticeships and traineeships through the expanded program.

Indigenous Enrolled Nurses Program

Another success story is the Indigenous Enrolled Nurses Program, which is a collaborative effort between the Department of Health, Pika Wiya Learning Centre and TAFE SA Regional. Participants first undertake a Certificate IV in Aged Care through TAFE SA and following this are offered an Enrolled Nursing Cadetship through the Public Sector Cadetship Program. The cadets combine paid employment in a health organisation whilst studying towards the Diploma of Enrolled Nursing at TAFE SA. On completion of the diploma those who wish are supported to

complete their Registered Nursing qualification. To date 21 indigenous people have undertaken this training initiative in Port Augusta and Ceduna.

Tourism industry initiative at Yalata

The Head of the Bight is a business enterprise run by the Yalata Aboriginal community and has become a tourism destination for whale watching, surf fishing, desert tours and indigenous cultural experiences. The South Australian Tourism Commission provided \$1.1 million to assist with infrastructure development.

A steering committee consisting of representatives from the Yalata community, Aboriginal Lands Trust, Tourism Commission, Eyre Regional Development Board and the Regional Area Consultative Committee developed the business plan. The Regions at Work program allocated \$10,000 for the provision of training for six indigenous people with a further \$10,000 allocated to train seven indigenous people in tourism business management and retail.

West Coast Building Initiative

The West Coast Building Initiative commenced as a basic home maintenance course for unemployed people in Ceduna. Through this program participants were able to achieve Certificate I in Building and Construction and from here given the opportunity to undertake an apprenticeship. Moving to Adelaide to undertake training was not an option for these participants so a unique partnership was forged between the Aboriginal Housing Authority, the local CDEP, a New Apprenticeship Centre and TAFE SA. Seven apprentices commenced employment with various local industry businesses in Ceduna and of these six are now in the final year of their apprenticeship.

Environmental Health Worker Training – West Coast

A training initiative for indigenous people in environmental health is currently being piloted by the State Government in communities near Ceduna in the state's Far West. This initiative provides opportunity for indigenous people to gain a qualification which will lead to jobs and careers that benefit their communities by improving living conditions. Training in Certificate II, Environmental Health is being delivered over a 12-month period at Ceduna TAFE by the Northern Territory's Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Once qualified, participants will work as environmental health workers in the communities, helping people to understand more about safe waste removal, sanitation, recycling, reducing mosquito breeding, storing pesticides and other community health issues.

The Far West communities to benefit from the pilot include Koonibba, Yalata, Oak Valley and the Town Camp in Ceduna. Thirteen indigenous people are undertaking the current program of training for Certificate II with a long-term goal to develop pathways to a Certificate III, a diploma and then a university degree. Of the 13 currently enrolled, six have already been offered cadetships in the South Australian Public Sector.

TAFE SA/School-based training and employment initiatives

In the Far North of the state work is underway to expand and strengthen existing partnerships between TAFE SA Regional and schools to ensure the sustainability of VET delivery in schools and to increase in the number of School Based New Apprenticeship Agreements (SBNAs). A communication strategy relaying the

benefits of SBNAs is being implemented through local media (Imparja TV), school governing councils and indigenous people on local committees.

In the Upper Spencer and Lower Flinders, collaboration between the TAFE SA Regional Learn to Earn program and Uniting Care Wesley is providing support to young indigenous people as they progress through the program into post-school training options.

The Western Futures Cluster in metropolitan Adelaide includes a partnership between the Department of Education and Children's Services, Taoundi College and local schools to facilitate a range of VET and transition opportunities for indigenous students. The cluster is also working with TAFE SA and other registered training organisations (RTOs) and school staff to plan, extend and facilitate suitable programs for indigenous students. A career education seminar for indigenous students and parents is also provided. Work is conducted with ICAN (a State Government social inclusion initiative) and South Australia Works Western Employment and Skills Formation Network to promote school retention and training and employment opportunities for disconnected youth.

Indigenous employment in the public sector

The South Australian Government has set a target of two per cent employment of indigenous people in the public sector within five years. An Indigenous Employment Strategy for the state's public sector has been developed and is supported by a consultative committee comprising senior indigenous officers from the public, community and private sectors.

This initiative builds on the existing State Public Sector Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy which provides employment opportunities for indigenous people in the state public sector. The strategy comprises a register of indigenous people who are seeking or interested in gaining employment in the public sector. Currently 1,700 clients are registered.

In addition to this an Indigenous Scholarship Program was established in 2003 to provide 15 scholarships over a two year period to enable indigenous people complete their studies. All 15 scholarships have been accessed with ten students successfully undertaking their first work placements within government agencies.

The State Government also operates a number of other programs that include indigenous people as a priority group. These include:

- cadetships to enable people to be employed by South Australian public sector agencies and Local Government and complete a nationally recognised qualification at the Certificate IV Level to Advanced Diploma Level
- Government Youth Traineeship Program provides 12 months, full time vocational training (off-the-job) combined with practical employment (on-job training) in order to enhance the skills levels and future employment prospects for young South Australians. The program will recruit 500 trainees in 2004/05. There is a minimum target of 70 indigenous trainees as part of the overall intake.

Land management employment in the public sector

As a major landholder within South Australia, the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) recognises that land (country) is central to indigenous cultural identity. Currently there are 30 indigenous people employed across DEH with the majority employed in park management and park maintenance roles. Of these, five are employed as apprentices with all having traditional connections to the parks in which they are working, thereby giving the department a closer connection with local

indigenous communities. All five apprentices are currently progressing or nearing completion of their second year of a unique program that combines on-the-job study, TAFE block release training and computer-based training. In 2005-06 a further two apprentices will be appointed for three years.

Three indigenous cadets are also employed across the Natural and Cultural Heritage (Reserve Planning and Visitor Management Services) and Science and Conservation (Botanic Gardens) directorates of DEH. The program allows the cadets to be paid whilst studying at university and to receive practical experience during their annual break. Fulltime ongoing positions will be offered to those cadets who successfully complete their studies. In 2005-06 a further three cadets will be appointed for a three year period.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands

The South Australian Government has committed significant funds over a four year period to improve the conditions on the APY Lands in the far north-west of the state. A task force was established in 2004 comprising representatives from both the state and Commonwealth to work collaboratively with Anangu to improve planning and coordination of service delivery in the Lands.

Part of the Government's focus on the Lands is improving employment and training outcomes. Initiatives implemented to date include:

- APY Schools Traineeship Program
- APY Lands Traineeship Program (50 trainees)
- Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program.

APY TAFE also delivers tailored training to local communities as needs are identified. Some of the programs delivered through APY TAFE include:

- VET in Schools delivering tailored training as required within individual communities. Resources for Certificate I in Learning Pathways focussing on multi-trades are currently being developed
- Heavy Plant Training delivered through TAFE SA in partnership with several state government departments
- Environmental Health Worker Training in block release format at Ernabella
- retail across all of the stores and within the general community
- Mimili Building Program: construction has begun on the second stage of the program with five of the six trainees returning to worksites on a regular basis
- Pukatja maintenance and fabrications: a new project put together by APY Maintenance Manager and TAFE to train and support CDEP workers while employed as part of this initiative.

In addition, the Department of Minerals and Energy employ two field assistants in APY Lands as well as local casual employees. In fact the increase in mining in South Australia is seen as an opportunity for secure more employment opportunities for indigenous people in remote areas.

Kuka Kanyini Land Management Program

The Kuka Kanyini Pilot Project at Watarru in the APY Lands has been operating since January 2004 in partnership with the Watarru community, the Watarru school and APY Land Management. The project's objectives are to manage country,

conserve biodiversity, maintain culture and improve the social, economic and emotional well-being of Anangu participants.

Project activities include camel mustering, fencing, rock hole protection, fire management, tracking and trapping of wildlife and collecting scientific data. As an example, over 1,200 camels have been mustered, many sent for export with profits from the sale of camels being returned to the community.

One of the project's highlight is the formal and informal training, which includes engaging Anangu male and female elders to pass cultural knowledge onto younger participants (including some youth at risk) and recognising that for members of the Watarru community, well-being is inextricably linked with the land.

Additional funding from the Aboriginal Lands Task Force during 2004-05 has allowed an expansion of the pilot project to include the collection of data to measure Anangu's health, social and emotional well being as the result of their involvement in the pilot project. Results to date indicate the pilot project has been successful and has exceeded expectations including the number of Anangu employed (11 full-time and 10 casual) and the anecdotal, but visible, positive impact on the health, self-esteem and well being of the participants.

The South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage is seeking funding partners to further develop the pilot project and its application in other areas of the APY lands.

Native Foods Project

The Reedy Creek Nursery has been contracted to work with the Mimili community to cultivate Australian native food with the aim of developing a small sustainable horticultural enterprise. Construction of infrastructure and the first planting occurred in November 2004 with the first produce harvested in April 2005. Food produced in Mimili will be available to the community with excess sold back to Reedy Creek for production of commercial relishes and sauces.

Arts-based training

Ku Arts (Ananguku Arts and Culture Aboriginal Corporation) facilitates the provision of skills development and training for indigenous artists of the Lands. Training is ongoing in many art forms including painting, ceramics and textile design and enables artists to produce works that are responsive to national and international markets.

The training model developed in the APY Lands is being used by Arts SA, Country Arts SA and Ku Arts SA to deliver training to artists and arts centres across South Australia. Training is provided in skill areas such as organisational governance, product development and marketing and will assist artists and arts centres to better reach national and international audiences.

Assessment of the factors that contribute to successful employment outcomes

Common elements that contribute to successful employment outcomes include:

- one-on-one case management for participants and their employers
- effective mentoring
- regular follow up visits, even when there is nothing of concern
- commitment and perseverance

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- knowledge of indigenous culture and potential impacts on employment
 - finding the right participant/employer match
 - focussing on quality not quantity
 - accessibility and flexibility
 - ability to build up a level of trust
 - training programs able to be delivered in participants local area
 - ability to forge good links, working relationships and partnerships with key stakeholders in the region including indigenous community members, CDEPs, job network providers, indigenous support organisations and industry.

A further factor impacting on successful employment outcomes is the provision of pre-vocational programs in literacy and numeracy. Many indigenous people in rural/remote communities lack the necessary levels of numeracy and literacy to access employment and higher level training. However, the effective delivery of these kinds of programs requires intense and sustained input to ensure competencies are achieved. Unless funding levels support pre-vocational activity many indigenous people will continue to be denied opportunities to access the labour market.

Consideration also needs to be given to the role industry and employers can and do play in providing employment opportunities and suitable training, particularly in indigenous communities. While there are a range of complexities surrounding this issue it is important that the partnerships that are established between these groups are aimed at developing long-term employment opportunities and negotiate positions of mutual benefit, particularly in regard to indigenous people's access to land and cultural heritage.

Similarly, increased economic independence through partnerships with industry, especially in rural and remote communities, lies in indigenous communities being able to effectively negotiate with the minerals and resources sectors as well as being able to access venture seed capital and contractual commitments. Addressing these issues at a national level would greatly assist the self-determination of many indigenous communities.

The impact of CDEP on training and long-term employment outcomes for indigenous people

The effectiveness of CDEP on the training and long-term employment outcomes for indigenous people varies from region to region. In some regions, CDEP has had limited effect in producing meaningful employment outcomes and in other areas CDEP accounts for the overwhelming majority of jobs, especially for communities located in rural and remote areas.

The South Australian Government believes that reforms to CDEP aimed at achieving better education, training and employment outcomes for participants are likely to provide, in the short term, the single biggest opportunity to impact on indigenous employment in many areas across the state.

In a submission to the Senate Inquiry on Indigenous Vocational Education, Training and Employment the South Australian Government suggested that such reforms needed to include:

- modifying CDEP administration arrangements to provide financial incentives to CDEP administering organisations for moving participants into employment rather than providing funds per participant, which provides no incentive to facilitate transition to employment

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- introducing incentives to attend full-time work and/or training coupled through ongoing case management
 - ensuring appropriate skills transfer and development
 - ensuring CDEP has the capacity to develop formal partnerships with existing Commonwealth and state funded programs that are active in their region to ensure training programs are targeted to employment outcomes
 - greater integration and collaboration between CDEP, VET in schools programs, TAFE and higher education to keep indigenous young people engaged in education and training
 - a more viable funding base to support effective training delivery in remote and rural areas.

Future policy development

Funding

The abolition of ATSIC and the redirection of indigenous funding presents an opportunity for states and territory governments to work with the Commonwealth to ensure a more streamlined approach to the funding of indigenous employment and training programs. To this end the South Australian Government suggests that:

- the Commonwealth work with states and territories to undertake a stock-take of funding available for indigenous training and employment
- consideration be given to broad banding current funding programs for indigenous training and employment to enable more flexible use of resources through fund pooling subject to the development of appropriate program plans.

Involvement of indigenous communities in employment and training program development

Equally important is to ensure that future policy initiatives actively engage indigenous people and/or their communities in the development, implementation and monitoring of employment and training programs, especially in rural and remote areas. Too often programs are created that appear on the surface to meet community needs, but fail because they were not accepted or understood by the people they were intended to support. The lack of consultation/engagement is not intentional but a result of not knowing who to involve or how to involve them.

A further challenge for all governments is to ensure that employment programs are developed and funded in ways that permit indigenous people to become, in time, providers of training and employment in their own communities, without having contractors come into a community, take the money and leave with none of the money being invested in the community to support the self-determination of the community. It is now well recognised that improved opportunities at the community level can be a key driver in generating long-term viable employment outcomes as well as breaking the dependency on government welfare.

Summary

The information provided in this submission reflects the South Australian Government's community approach to working to secure better employment outcomes for indigenous South Australians. Most of the examples provided in the submission are multifaceted linking to both mainstream non-indigenous specific employment programs and indigenous state wide programs. They also represent

good practice in linking with non-government agencies, industry and indigenous communities.

The South Australian Government looks forward to a continuing dialogue with the Commonwealth in this important area.