



GPO Box 9879 CANBERRA ACT 2601

National Office

The Hon Lou Lieberman MP
Chairman
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Attention: Mr James Catchpole

Dear Mr Lieberman

I am writing in reference to your Committee's Inquiry into the Needs of Urban Dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Attached are the Department's responses to your Committee's requests for additional information arising from the hearing of 27 June 2001.

Should the Committee require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached on telephone 02 6121 7303.

Yours sincerely

Dianne Hawgood
Group Manager
Regional & Indigenous Employment
Support Group

13 July 2001

**THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS**

**INQUIRY INTO THE NEEDS OF URBAN DWELLING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDERS**

**HEARING OF 27 JUNE 2001
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS**

1. CHANGES TO IEP

Question: The Committee asked for examples of some of the changes made to the IEP and a brief summary of why they were suggested.

Answer: The following are examples of changes that have been implemented under the IEP since its introduction in July 1999.

A restructure of the amount paid under the CDEP Incentive element of the IEP.

- The CDEP Incentive provides a financial incentive of \$2,200 (inclusive of GST) to CDEP sponsors for each placement of a participant in open employment and off CDEP payments. Take up is largely reliant on CDEP schemes' access to full time employment opportunities, either in community enterprises or in mainstream labour markets. The incentive fee can be paid for subsidised jobs, so long as the participant is off CDEP
- On its introduction, the \$2,000 CDEP placement was paid as follows
 - \$1,000 after 13 weeks of full time employment, and
 - a further \$1,000 after 26 weeks of employment.
- The take up of the CDEP Incentive was less than was anticipated in its first three months.
- On 20 November, following feedback from the Department's State offices and CDEPs, the Minister endorsed a restructure of the incentive payment as follows
 - \$700 up-front (that is, on application for the incentive), and
 - \$1,500 after 20 weeks employment.
- The restructure recognised the need to off-set up-front costs incurred by the CDEP in locating employment opportunities.
- Since the introduction of the incentive in September 1999 to the end of June 2001, a total of 483 placements have been made with the incentive.

Establishment of the CDEP Trials

- Also in November 2000 and in response to the experience with the CDEP incentive, the Minister and the Chairman of ATSIC, Mr Geoff Clarke, agreed to trial new arrangements in selected CDEPs aimed at increasing employment outcomes from CDEPs.

- The new arrangements are aimed at providing pre-employment training and assistance into sustainable employment for agreed numbers of CDEP participants.
- Eight CDEPs have been contracted to undertake the trials. These are located in ACT/Queanbeyan, Brisbane, Broome, Geraldton, Newcastle, Port Augusta, Shepparton and Sydney.
- Details on the operation of the trial are as follows:
 - (i) *Selection Criteria for participating CDEPs* : these included consideration of the following:
 - the characteristics of the labour markets in which the CDEPs are located
 - whether indigenous people in the area's workforce comprised five per cent or more;
 - obtaining a mix of metropolitan and regional trial sites
 - whether there was a culture within the CDEP which supported participants obtaining employment off CDEP; and
 - the track record of the CDEP in assisting participants into mainstream job outcomes.
 - (ii) *Participant numbers*. Each trial site identified 20-25 participants to be in the trial.
 - (iii) *Timing*. The trial will run for twelve months. Where required, during the first six months participants' skills will be assessed and they will be provided with pre-vocational/work preparation training (including literacy/numeracy training if necessary) and other employment assistance. By the end of six months, participants will be assisted into employment off CDEP. The CDEP will continue to provide support and mentoring for the duration of the contract.
 - (iv) *Links with Job Network*. The CDEP organisations selected are encouraged to develop relationships with local Job Network members throughout the trial, particularly Job Search training and Job Matching services where these are available. These services will be tailored to the needs of the CDEP participant group where appropriate.
 - (v) *Funding*. The contracted sponsor CDEP will receive up to \$6,600 per participant in the trial comprising:
 - \$3,300 up front establishment costs per participant;
 - \$1,100 when the participant is placed in full time, ongoing employment off the CDEP, and
 - \$1,100 when the participant has been in continuous employment off the CDEP for 26 weeks.

A proportion of the funding (\$500-\$1,000) is to be made available to the participant for clothing, equipment, travel or other ancillary costs as appropriate or required.

- (vi) *Evaluation*. The trial is to be evaluated towards the end of the twelve month period. Continuation beyond that period, or substantial expansion of the number of CDEP sites involved, will be subject to the evaluation. Measures of success will include the number of participants who are in sustainable jobs off CDEP.

Establishment of the Rural Pilot Project

- This is an initiative developed since the introduction of the IEP. The pilots are intended to test the potential of bringing a local or regional focus to private sector involvement in and responsibility for improving the circumstances of indigenous people through a considered employment strategy. Each strategy includes a strong mentoring component for both employers and indigenous employees aimed at breaking down barriers to indigenous employment in the region.
- The implementation of practical and appropriately supported employment projects have the potential to support community efforts towards reconciliation.
- There are four rural pilots to date located in Australia Holiday Coast (Port Macquarie region), Dubbo and Armidale in NSW and Albany in Western Australia.

Establishment of the Mining Industry Framework

- In response to issues raised by several mining companies focussing on the need for a more coordinated approach between relevant Commonwealth Government agencies (specifically DEWRSB, DETYA and ATSIC), the Department held two workshops for mining companies in February and May this year.
 - mining companies were finding the cost of redressing the extreme disadvantage of potential indigenous employees to bring them to a job-ready stage was becoming prohibitive, and
 - the level and nature of the disadvantage frequently being paid for by employers are more appropriately addressed by Government.
- The workshops resulted in the development of the Mining Industry Framework. The elements of the framework are outlined below:
 - a virtual gateway on DEWRSB's home page which link to other relevant Commonwealth department's funding sources and support mechanisms. Participating agencies can also provide this link on their home pages;
 - The establishment of a framework coordination team comprising representatives of the participating agencies to work closely with the mining companies;
 - The team will develop expertise in issues facing mining communities and all government programmes that can potentially benefit mining communities under the framework; assist companies in the development of strategic plans to address employment issues in mining communities; liaise and negotiate with ATSIC, Regional Councils and local communities and assist companies in the development or alteration of contracts;

- More flexible funding under the IEP including an increase in the maximum amount available to \$16,500 (GST inclusive) – \$6,500 for workplace preparatory training and \$10,000 for employment assistance.

Establishment of the Job Network STEP model

- While the STEP and Wage Assistance elements have been successful, the Department considered that there was scope to increase the use of this assistance in the Job Network context.
- In May this year, a trial of a new approach to increase the use of these elements of the IEP by Job Network was announced at the Job Futures Conference.
- In brief, Job Network members can claim between \$500 and \$1000 per participant to deliver
 - a consultancy service to employers and jobseekers to help the development of a solutions package. That is, a mix of pre-employment training, post-placement support, mentoring and coaching, cross cultural-training etc, and
 - facilitation services for the delivery of Wage Assistance placements by marketing Wage Assistance to employers, preparing and lodging Wage Assistance forms on behalf of groups of 5 or more indigenous job seekers on the Job Network Member's caseload, placed with one or more employers.
- Under the model ongoing employment payments would be paid to the employers through Wage Assistance of \$2,200 at 13 weeks and \$2,200 at 26 weeks.
- The Department is currently in the process of inviting Job Network members to participate in this trial.

Removal of the requirement for a minimum of 5 positions under STEP

- The original guidelines for STEP required projects to be developed for a minimum of 5 participants. STEP was targeted at medium to large employers on the basis that Wage Assistance was a more suitable and less onerous approach for small business.
- However, in recognition of the critical importance of the small business sector in the provision of job opportunities, this restriction has been lifted. The Department is prepared to consider any proposals which meet the aims of STEP and are viable.

Increase in and Restructure of Payments under the National Indigenous Cadetship Project (NICP)

- The NICP element of the IEP extends the existing Indigenous Cadetship Program in the Australian Public Service to private sector employers. Assistance is provided to companies to offset their financial support for the cadet during the academic year. Recruits are released for full-time study, provided with work experience during long

vacation breaks and usually appointed to a permanent position on successful completion of their study. Vacancies are advertised in July each year.

- Until recently, funds of up to \$11,000 per cadet were provided to participating employers through a reimbursement of costs system.
- The amount has now been increased to a total of \$14,000 per cadet and to reduce the administrative burden on cadets and employers, the funds will be provided directly to the employer through a progress payment system.

2. THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY CAPACITY ROUNDTABLE, COAG, THE WELFARE REFORM REPORT.

Question: The Committee asked for information on the adoption of these principles and strategies.

Answer: The Indigenous Roundtable, the COAG decision and the release of the McClure Report provided a framework and opportunity to review current mainstream and indigenous-specific service delivery within the portfolio. The indigenous measures announced in the Budget under *Australians Working Together*, are the result of that review.

Indigenous Community Capacity Roundtable

- The Roundtable was convened on 24 October 2000 at the request of the Prime Minister by the then Ministers Newman and Herron (then Ministers for Family and Community Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs respectively).
- The Roundtable comprised prominent Australians with expertise and interest in working with indigenous families and communities.
- It aimed to develop a mutual understanding of the needs of indigenous people and communities in relation to national, regional and local approaches to supporting indigenous people to take responsibility for achieving healthy and purposeful living, balanced self-esteem and strong self-reliant families and communities.
- The Roundtable released a Communique detailing principles and noting that the \$20 million earmarked by Senator Newman under the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* ('*the Strategy*') will assist indigenous Australians to develop the capacity for self-reliance and to build on existing strengths and capacities.
- A copy of the Communique is at **Attachment A**.
- The Roundtable agreed on a number of principles to underpin future initiatives. Of particular relevance to this portfolio was the need for
 - flexibility in and coordination of government activities;
 - the development of regional approaches;
 - collaboration and the establishment of partnerships, and
 - priority to be given to initiatives that encourage self-reliance, sustainable economic and social development.
- These principles have been utilised in the delivery of current responsibilities and in the development of future initiatives.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

- On 3 November 2000, COAG announced a framework for advancing reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. It agreed that governments can make a real difference in the lives of indigenous people by addressing social and economic disadvantage, including life expectancy, and improving governance and service delivery arrangements.
 - a copy of the COAG Communique is at **Attachment B**.
- The Council committed itself to an approach based on
 - partnerships and shared responsibilities with indigenous communities;
 - programme flexibility and coordination between government agencies, and
 - a focus on local communities and outcomes.
- It agreed priority actions in three areas:
 - investing in community leadership initiatives;
 - reviewing and re-engineering programmes and services to ensure they deliver practical measures that support families, children and young people. In particular, governments agreed to look at measures for tackling family violence, drug and alcohol dependency and other symptoms of community dysfunction, and
 - forging greater links between the business sector and indigenous communities to help promote economic independence.
- The Prime Minister wrote to all Ministers advising them of COAG's decision and requesting that all Ministers review and re-engineer their programmes and services in accordance with the COAG decision.

The Welfare Reform Report

- The final report of the Welfare Reference Group, *Participation Support for a More Equitable Society*, also known as the McClure Report, was released on 6 August 2000.
- The report set out strategic directions for fundamental change over the short, medium and longer term, and suggested action in five major areas:
 - individualised service delivery;
 - simple and responsive income support structure;
 - incentives and financial assistance;
 - mutual obligations, and

- social partnerships.
- The report proposed three key aims, that are ambitious and requiring action over time:
 - a significant reduction in the incidence of jobless families and jobless households;
 - a significant reduction in the proportion of the working age population that needs to rely heavily on income support, and
 - stronger communities that generate more opportunities for social and economic participation.
- In addition to these actions and aims, Recommendation A10 of the Report, which proposed the trialling of innovative approaches to service delivery for indigenous people which are culturally appropriate and can be adapted to suit local circumstances, was also taken into account.

3. POST PROGRAM MONITORING OUTCOMES FROM THE INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Question: The Committee asked for information on the outcomes under the IEP by State.

Answer: A breakdown of post-programme monitoring data by States and Territories will not provide meaningful data as the sample size is not sufficient to provide statistically reliable information at that level. This is due to the relatively long lead times on a proportion of the activity under the IEP. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that the Department's post-programme monitoring differs from administrative data in that it relates to specific indigenous job seeker records, which do not necessarily reflect the level of State or Territory activity.

At a National level the following outcome data is available:

POST PROGRAM MONITORING FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS (Post-assistance outcomes for year to 30 Dec 2000)

	<i>Positive Employment Outcomes %</i>	<i>Positive Education Outcomes %</i>	<i>Total Positive Outcomes* %</i>
STEP**	68.0	24.2	74.0
Wage Assistance**	64.2	15.7	67.1
Intensive Assistance	27.1	9.9	35.1
Job Search Training	29.2	12.1	39.8
Job Matching	47.8	5.4	50.0
Work for the Dole	15.7	7.2	21.5

* Total positive outcomes are less than the sum of employment and education outcomes as some job seekers achieve both.

** Care should be taken in interpreting this data for STEP & Wage Assistance as it is based on a small number of survey responses, & may be subject to change as the cohort changes

Progress on the other elements are as follows:

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT POLICY (IEP)

	<i>1999/00</i>	<i>2000/01</i>
Structured Training & Employment Projects		
Commencements (including Corporate Leaders projects)	2,673	3,934
Wage Assistance		
Placements	1,631	2,228
Corporate Leaders (50 companies)		
Commencements	77	350
CDEP Placement Incentive		
Commencements	158	325
Cadetships		
Commencements	77	74
Total IEP Jobs*	4,616	6,911

* There may be some unintended double counting of Corporate Leader commencements under STEP and WA

3. COSTS AND OUTCOMES FOR TAP AND IEP

Question: The Committee asked for any figures on the relative costs and outcomes for TAP and IEP.

Answer: The following information is sourced from the Department's annual reports for 1998-99 and 1999-2000, the latter representing the first year of the IEP.

1998-99

- Direct assistance through the Commonwealth Employment Service ceased to be offered from 1 May 1998 when Job Network commenced. A total of \$22.5million was expended on approximately 3,800 placements through the direct assistance component carried over from 1997-98.
- In the Budget in May 1999 the Government announced the introduction (from 1 July 1999) of the Indigenous Employment Policy.
- For the 1998-99 financial year under TAP there were 2,300 commencements for a total of \$23.6m. This included 1,827 job placements, 473 other assistance placements and 22 new cadetships with professional occupations in the Australian Public Service.
- Some 131 new projects were approved during the year, including 69 in the private sector and 17 in the health and housing sectors.

1999-2000

- Under the IEP in the 1999-2000 financial year there were a total of 4,500 commencements for a total expenditure of \$35.3million. These are outlined below:
 - Wage Assistance – 1,631 placements approved;
 - STEP – 2,673 commencements, including 2,624 placements and 441 other assistance. 150 STEP projects were approved leading to 3,403 placements in 1999-2000 and future years. Around 40 per cent of these projects and 60 per cent of the placements were in the private sector.
 - Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project – 34 major Australian companies signed a commitment to provide more than 800 job opportunities.
 - CDEP Placement Incentive – commenced in September 1999 with 158 placements for the year.
 - National Indigenous Cadetship Project – 200 applications resulting in 77 cadetships
- Job Network recorded more than 9,700 job placements for indigenous people during the year, a significant increase over the previous year. A total of 1,675 indigenous people achieved employment outcomes from Intensive Assistance in the year, an increase of 30 per cent over the previous year.

4. OUTLINE OF INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED IN THE BUDGET

Question: The Committee asked for information on the initiatives announced in the Budget.

Answer: The indigenous measures announced in the recent Budget under *Australians Working Together*, are the result of the collaborative analysis and review of programs by DEWRSB, ATSIC, Centrelink and FACS in the context of Government policy requirements arising from the COAG decision and the recommendations of the McClure Report.

- In brief, existing DEWRSB and ATSIC indigenous employment activity, in partnership with Centrelink, has been refocused to deliver more targeted coverage for indigenous job seekers.
- DEWRSB is to provide indigenous job seekers, as it does other job seekers, with the opportunity to access mainstream employment assistance and services. In areas with good labour markets, DEWRSB can assist CDEPs to fill an employment services gap in a culturally appropriate way, whereas in remote areas CDEPs provide a mechanism for community capacity building in the context of scarce jobs.
- The indigenous initiatives and targeted assistance announced in the Budget are as follows:
 - *Indigenous Employment Centres - \$31m over four years*
 - CDEPs in areas where there are viable job markets are to be encouraged to take on a new role as an Indigenous Employment Centre (IECs) for up to 10,000 participants;
 - The IECs will offer work experience, job search support and access to training and will provide support and mentoring assistance to indigenous job seekers outside CDEP;
 - IECs are to work with local employers and Job Network members, and
 - IECs will complement the Indigenous Employment Policy.
 - *Community Participation Agreements and Capacity Building - \$32m over four years*
 - ATSIC is to work with about 100 remote communities to develop Community Participation Agreements;
 - Each community can decide what people should do in return for their income support and plan for better delivery of services at the local level, and
 - ATSIC will assist communities to develop and manage the Agreements and support activities such as leadership, strengthening culture and community governance.

- *Centrelink Remote Area Servicing Strategy - \$9m over four years*
 - Centrelink will establish up to 12 remote area servicing centres, employing local staff, to add to its current agency arrangements;
 - These will provide better services and support to indigenous Australians in remote communities and work with them to implement the new Community Participation Agreements;
 - In addition, Centrelink will improve assessment for indigenous and other eligible job seekers. Centrelink Personal Advisers will help indigenous job seekers prepare to find jobs in a way sensitive to indigenous culture.
- DEWRSB, through both Job Network and the Indigenous Employment Policy, will continue to retain an interest in and support employment activity in remote communities where jobs are available.
- In these cases, DEWRSB will work more closely with other relevant Commonwealth agencies on the ground, particularly ATSIC and DETYA, to ensure the best possible support to the employer and the potential employees, improved job outcomes and better overall investment of the Commonwealth dollar.
- Assistance will also continue to be available to remote (and other) indigenous communities through DEWRSB programmes such as the Regional Assistance Programme (RAP) and the Indigenous Small Business Fund (ISBF).
- *Increased Education and Training Assistance - \$10 million over four years*
 - These funds provide assistance to young indigenous Australians to finish their schooling, get better skills and move into paid jobs. There are two parts to this extra funding:
 - One will provide vocational learning opportunities for 2,300 indigenous secondary students, mainly in rural and remote areas, in partnership with local businesses. The vocational nature of this assistance will enhance their future job prospects.
 - The other element of the funding allows for the development of partnerships in rural and remote areas, between communities, education providers and local industry, to encourage young indigenous people to stay in school till year 12, and possibly go on to further education.
 - This model builds on the project operating in Western Australia under the Polly Farmer Foundation, which has been very successful.
- In addition to the indigenous specific measures, there were significant amendments to mainstream assistance to which indigenous job seekers also have access. These are briefly described below.
- *Changes to mainstream assistance*
 - There will be more job search training places and job seekers will be able to use job search training earlier, if required.

- There will be more places for literacy and numeracy training with a fortnightly supplement of \$20.80 to help meet costs such as travel to the courses
- There will be more work for the dole places and a training credit for those participants that complete 16 to 26 weeks of approved work experience.
- Training credits will also be available through job search training or intensive assistance for indigenous and mature age people.
- The Personal Support Programme will help those people on payments who have problems such as homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness and domestic violence. It will help people stabilise their lives and get more involved in and contribute to the community.

Communique

Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable 24 October 2000 – Old Parliament House Canberra

1. Background:

- (i) The Roundtable was convened by the Hon Senator Jocelyn Newman, Minister for Family and Community Services and Senator the Hon John Herron, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs;
- (ii) The Prime Minister asked Senators Newman and Herron to convene the Roundtable to arrive at a mutual understanding of the needs of indigenous people and communities in relation to national, regional and local approaches to supporting indigenous people to take responsibility for achieving healthy and purposeful living, balanced self-esteem and strong self-reliant families and communities; and
- (iii) The Roundtable brought together prominent Australians, including senior indigenous and community leaders, industry and church representatives, academics, and individuals with recognised expertise in working with indigenous families and communities (membership of the Roundtable at Attachment A).

2. The Roundtable:

- (i) acknowledged the efforts of indigenous communities and governments that have resulted in many gains in key areas such as health, housing, education, employment, industry and sport;
- (ii) identified a range of major issues affecting the wellbeing of indigenous families and communities. These include: family violence; substance abuse; chronic welfare dependency and the debilitating effects of an over-reliance on welfare such as breakdown of traditional community structures; a lack of direction for young people, resulting in poor self esteem, substance abuse, violence and suicide;
- (iii) called for a new approach involving a partnership between governments and communities that will facilitate the development of self reliance for indigenous Australians, rather than one that entrenches welfare dependency. Such an approach should be based on:
 - (a) flexibility and change in the way bureaucracy works with indigenous people;
 - (b) the existing strengths and assets within indigenous families and communities;

- (c) sustainable economic growth;
 - (d) encouraging pride in indigenous history, traditions, culture and spirituality; and
 - (e) the importance of cultural values and spirituality in the life of indigenous families and communities.
- (iv) recognised that indigenous people themselves should be encouraged to take the primary responsibility for shaping a better life for future generations;
 - (v) called for regional approaches that require collaboration between business, churches, indigenous organisations, other non-government bodies and the broader community;
 - (vi) recognised that there needs to be a process of healing for individuals and communities to enable indigenous people to take up new opportunities within the Australian community;
 - (vii) acknowledged that governments have a key role to play in assisting indigenous Australians to develop the capacity to realise self-reliance;
 - (viii) called for the active and sustained involvement of indigenous people in the social, cultural and economic development of the Australian community;
 - (ix) recommended that governments and indigenous people work in partnership, based on the following principles, in the design and implementation of programmes aimed at supporting indigenous families and communities:
 - (a) 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;
 - (b) programmes should be delivered on a strategic, coordinated and whole-of-government basis and recognise the complex nature of the problems they seek to address;
 - (c) programmes 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;
 - (d) programmes should be based on the views and aspirations of the whole community, particularly those most affected by programmes, and indigenous people themselves should have a central role in the design, planning and delivery of services;
 - (e) time is required to enable the participation of the whole community and this should be reflected in funding cycles;

- (f) responses should aim to empower indigenous people in leadership and managerial competence;
 - (g) 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;
 - (h) programmes should reflect the specific needs of local communities and families and not be designed on a "one-size-fits-all" basis;
 - (i) programmes should contribute to practical reconciliation by empowering indigenous people to take responsibility within their families and communities for developing solutions to problems;
 - (j) 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;
 - (k) programmes should encourage the growth of local economies;
 - (l) where possible, programmes should take account of and respond to regional and local plans; and
 - (m) programmes must be developed and delivered in ways that give priority to the building of trust and partnerships.
- (x) noted that the \$20 million earmarked by Senator Newman under the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* ('the Strategy') will assist indigenous Australians to develop the capacity for self-reliance and to build on existing strengths and capacities;
 - (xi) recommended that, together with the principles underpinning the *Strategy*, these principles will provide the basis for funding indigenous specific projects under the *Strategy*;
 - (xii) nominated a working group (membership at Attachment B) of its representatives to pursue the work arising from the Roundtable and to provide ongoing advice to government including in relation to the use of funds under the *Strategy* and in the development of national approaches; and
 - (xiii) agreed to reconvene in 6 months time to review progress.

Canberra, 24 October 2000

Attachments:

- A: Membership of the Roundtable
- B: Membership of the working group of the Roundtable

A

Membership of the
Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable
24 October 2000, Old Parliament House, Canberra

Senator the Hon. Jocelyn Newman
Minister for Family and Community Services

Senator the Hon. John Herron
Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

The Hon. Sir John Carrick KCMG

Dr Evelyn Scott
Chairperson, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

Mr Joseph Elu
Chairman, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Commercial Development Corporation

Mr Noel Pearson
Cape York Partnerships

Dr Margaret Valadian
University of Wollongong

Dr Adam Graycar
Director, Australian Institute of Criminology

Mr Paul Wand
Former Vice President, Aboriginal Relations, Rio Tinto Mining Corporation

Commissioner Eric Wynne
ATSIC Commissioner for WA Southwest Zone

Mr David Liddiard
Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal Sports Corporation Australia

Mr Joseph Ross
Chairman, Bunuba Community, Fitzroy Crossing

Mr Paul Briggs
Chairperson, First National Advantage Credit Union

Associate Professor Boni Robertson
Director, Gumurrii Centre, Griffith University; Chair, Qld Taskforce on Violence and Abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Mr Tom Slookee
Chairperson, National Organisation of Aboriginal Housing

Mr Vince Paparo
General Manager, Moree Plains Shire Council

Father Greg Jordan SJ
Chaplain, St Leo's College St Lucia Qld

Mr Tom Mayne
Staff worker, World Vision; Member, Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney

Commissioner Brian Butler
Commissioner, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Membership of the Working Group of the
Indigenous Community Capacity Building Roundtable
24 October 2000, Old Parliament House, Canberra

Dr Adam Graycar

Director, Australian Institute of Criminology

Associate Professor Boni Robertson

Director, Gumurrii Centre, Griffith University; Chair, Qld Taskforce on Violence and Abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Commissioner Eric Wynne or Commissioner Brian Butler (alternate)

ATSIC

Dr Margaret Valadian

University of Wollongong

Mr Vince Paparo

General Manager, Moree Plains Shire Council

Mr Tom Mayne

Staff worker, World Vision; Member, Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney

Mr Tom Slookee

Chairperson, National Organisation of Aboriginal Housing

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS' MEETING

3 NOVEMBER 2000

CANBERRA

COMMUNIQUE

INTRODUCTION

The Council of Australian Governments today held its ninth meeting in Canberra. The Council, comprising the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association, had wide ranging discussions on three important areas of national interest – natural resource management, aboriginal reconciliation and gambling – and signed a major agreement to deliver streamlined national food regulation to Australian States and Territories.

This Communique sets out the agreed outcomes of the discussions on these and other issues.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Council agreed that the issues of salinity, particularly dryland salinity, and deteriorating water quality are of major national significance and are appropriately handled through a national action plan.

Salinity and deteriorating water quality are seriously affecting the sustainability of Australia's agricultural production, the conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure and regional communities. At least five per cent of cultivated land is now affected by dryland salinity – this could rise as high as 22 per cent. One third of Australian rivers are in extremely poor condition, and land and water degradation, excluding weeds and pests, currently costs approximately \$3.5 billion per year.

The Council endorsed the Commonwealth's proposal for a national Action Plan as the basis for developing an Intergovernmental Agreement by end December 2000 to tackle salinity, particularly dryland salinity, and deteriorating water quality. The Agreement will be signed by the Council out of session and will provide the foundation for developing detailed agreements with the States and Territories to implement the Action Plan.

The Action Plan builds on the achievements of the Natural Heritage Trust and initiatives by individual State and Territory governments and the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council.

The goal of the Action Plan is to motivate and enable regional communities to use coordinated and targeted action to:

- prevent, stabilise and start to reverse trends in dryland salinity affecting the sustainability of production, the conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure; and
- improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment.

The national Action Plan will involve six elements, all of which are necessary to achieve lasting improvements over dryland salinity and deteriorating water quality:

1. targets and standards for salinity, water quality and associated water flows, and stream and terrestrial biodiversity agreed either bilaterally or multilaterally, as appropriate;
2. integrated catchment/regional management plans developed by the community and accredited jointly by Governments, in the 20 agreed catchments/regions that are highly affected by salinity, particularly dryland salinity, and deteriorating water quality;
3. capacity building for communities and landholders to assist them to develop and implement integrated catchment/region plans, together with the provision of technical and scientific support and engineering innovations;
4. an improved governance framework to secure the Commonwealth-State/Territory investments and community action in the long term: including property rights; pricing; and regulatory reforms for water and land use;
5. clearly articulated roles for the Commonwealth, State/Territory, local government and community to provide an effective, integrated and coherent framework to deliver and monitor implementation of the Action Plan; and
6. a public communication program to support widespread understanding of all aspects of the Action Plan so as to promote behavioural change and community support.

The Action Plan involves new expenditure by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to address salinity, particularly dryland salinity, and water quality of \$1.4 billion over the next seven years. The agreed principles for funding the Action Plan, include:

- the Commonwealth's financial contribution of \$700 million for regional implementation of the Action Plan will be matched by new State/Territory financial contributions;
- Council agreed that new State/Territory financial contributions include funding attached to measures announced since jurisdictions' budgets, provided that money is redirected to joint funding under the Action Plan;
- Commonwealth contributions will be available to a State/Territory once agreement is reached with that jurisdiction on the implementation of the whole package of measures; and
- participating communities will also be expected to make appropriate contributions in addition to the above.

The Council agreed that compensation to assist adjustment where property rights are lost will need to be addressed in developing catchment plans. Council noted that, while any such compensation is the responsibility of the States and Territories, the Commonwealth is prepared to consider making an additional contribution, separate from the \$700 million announced to implement the Action Plan.

The Council also agreed that joint implementation of outcomes of the national overarching agreement will commence for each State/Territory as it becomes a signatory and a partnership between the Commonwealth and each State/Territory is agreed.

Given the importance of this initiative for Australia's future, the Council indicated that its members would maintain a keen interest in progress in their own jurisdictions between now and the next COAG meeting.

FOOD REGULATION REFORM

Heads of Government signed an Intergovernmental Agreement to deliver a more streamlined, efficient and nationally focused food regulatory system for Australia that will enhance public health and safety. The new system will be built upon a strengthening of the partnership between government, industry and consumers and will continue the close relationship between Australia and New Zealand in the development of joint food standards.

Under the new system, national food standards in Australia and New Zealand will be developed by a new, independent statutory agency with appropriate scientific and technical expertise. This agency, to be known as Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), will replace the existing Australia New Zealand Food Authority.

In order to ensure that public health and safety are protected, Ministers will issue clear guidelines to FSANZ regarding the development of all domestic food standards and will also have the opportunity to reject a standard subsequent to its review against certain, specified criteria.

The new arrangements will provide for the interests of all stakeholders to be considered through better consultation with industry and consumers.

QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE OBLIGATIONS

The commitment of all Australian governments to complying with Australia's international trade obligations is needed to underpin Commonwealth efforts to ensure fair access for Australian exporters to overseas markets.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to work closely together, within the framework of the 1995 Memorandum of Understanding on Animal and Plant Quarantine Measures between the Commonwealth, States and Territories, to ensure observance of all of Australia's obligations under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

Heads of Government agreed to intensify dialogue on quarantine policy, import risk analyses and other WTO-related quarantine issues and to confirm this by an exchange of letters.

NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

The Council affirmed the importance of the National Competition Policy (NCP) in sustaining the competitiveness and flexibility of the Australian economy and contributing to higher standards of living.

Heads of Government agreed to several measures to clarify and fine-tune implementation arrangements for NCP as set out in the Prime Minister's letter of 27 October 2000 to Premiers and Chief Ministers. The adoption of these changes will establish a practical framework for the ongoing, effective implementation of NCP, while demonstrating our ongoing commitment to this policy and safeguarding the flow of benefits it is delivering to Australians as a whole. The changes will also serve to address a number of community concerns regarding the application of NCP which were identified in the recent Productivity Commission and Senate Select Committee inquiries into competition policy.

These measures which were previously agreed by COAG Senior Officials, include: that the National Competition Council (NCC) determine its forward work programme in consultation with COAG Senior Officials; that COAG Senior Officials continue to clarify and specify NCP reform commitments and assessment benchmarks for the NCC; that the deadline for completing the NCP legislation review and reform program be extended from 31 December 2000 to 30 June 2002; and that the NCP Intergovernmental Agreements be amended to provide further guidance to the NCC on how to assess whether jurisdictions have complied with their legislation review commitments.

GAMBLING

For most Australians gambling is an enjoyable form of entertainment. For a small proportion, however, gambling has negative social consequences. The Productivity Commission report, *Australia's Gambling Industries*, found that almost 300,000 (or 2 per cent) of adult Australians are problem gamblers and that, for every one of these, an additional 5 to 10 people are adversely affected in a direct way by their gambling.

States and Territories have recognised the problems created for some individuals and their families by gambling and are already taking significant steps to address these problems.

The Council agreed that preventing and addressing the negative consequences from problem gambling are the joint responsibilities of governments, the gambling industry, communities and individuals. In addition, they agreed that the Ministerial Council on Gambling will auspice the development of a national strategic framework, to be implemented by State and Territory governments, around prevention, early intervention and continuing support, building effective partnerships and national research and evaluation.

As a first step, there will be early implementation by States and Territories of a range of measures, primarily related to gaming machines:

- the development of best practice public awareness strategies to address problem gambling;
- the development and implementation of training courses in responsible gambling practices for appropriate gaming machine venue staff;
- the display of messages warning of the risks of problem gambling, and where to get help, in all gaming machine venues;
- the chance of winning the major prize from gaming machines to be visibly displayed in all gaming machine areas;
- the requirement of all gaming machine venues to enable patrons to be aware of the time spent gambling; and
- the development, within jurisdictions, of limits over which the payment of winnings from hotel and club gaming machines are paid by cheque.

The Ministerial Council on Gambling will develop at an early stage an on-going national research and evaluation strategy on the social consequences of gambling.

The Council also agreed in-principle, subject to further development by States and Territories, to: codes of conduct on consumer protection and advertising; targeted education strategies for school children about problem gambling and its consequences; consideration of the social impacts of gambling prior to the significant expansion of gambling opportunities; and enhancing the obligations on gambling providers to deliver gambling services in a socially responsible manner.

The Council agreed that the Ministerial Council on Gambling will give consideration to a further range of measures, including: the introduction of pre-commitment of loss limits; phasing out gaming machine note acceptors; the disclosure of the chances of winning the major prize in all forms of gambling; the payment of casino gaming machine winnings over a certain limit by cheque; the imposition of breaks in gaming machine operation; reviewing the impact of gaming machine linked jackpots on problem gambling; banning the withdrawal of funds from credit card accounts within gaming venues for the purpose of gaming; and best practice restrictions on automatic teller machines within gaming machine venues.

ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION

The Council thanked the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation for its extensive work and contribution to the nation over the past nine years.

Reconciliation is an ongoing issue in the life of Australians and a priority issue for all governments that will require a concerted and sustained effort over many years. The Council acknowledged the unique status of indigenous Australians and the need for recognition, respect and understanding in the wider community.

The Council agreed that many actions are necessary to advance reconciliation, from governments, the private sector, community organisations, indigenous communities, and the wider community. Governments can make a real difference in the lives of indigenous people by addressing social and economic disadvantage, including life expectancy, and improving governance and service delivery arrangements with indigenous people.

Governments have made solid and consistent efforts to address disadvantage and improvements have been achieved. For example, indigenous perinatal mortality rates have dropped from more than 60 per 1,000 births in the mid-1970s to fewer than 22 per 1,000 births in the mid-1990s. However, much remains to be done in health and the other areas of government activity.

Drawing on the lessons of the mixed success of substantial past efforts to address indigenous disadvantage, the Council committed itself to an approach based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with indigenous communities, programme flexibility and coordination between government agencies, with a focus on local communities and outcomes. It agreed priority actions in three areas:

- investing in community leadership initiatives;

- reviewing and re-engineering programmes and services to ensure they deliver practical measures that support families, children and young people. In particular, governments agreed to look at measures for tackling family violence, drug and alcohol dependency and other symptoms of community dysfunction; and
- forging greater links between the business sector and indigenous communities to help promote economic independence.

The Council agreed to take a leading role in driving the necessary changes and will periodically review progress under these arrangements. The first review will be in twelve months. Where they have not already done so, Ministerial Councils will develop action plans, performance reporting strategies and benchmarks.

The Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will continue its overarching coordination and performance monitoring roles, including its contribution to the work of the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision.

REVIEW OF MINISTERIAL COUNCILS

The Council has commissioned a review by Senior Officials of the scope for streamlining and rationalising the number of Ministerial Councils, for early consideration.

OTHER MATTERS

The issues of fuel prices and energy policy were discussed by COAG. COAG will discuss development of a national energy strategy, *inter alia*, to take advantage of our abundant energy reserves and to address associated environmental impacts. A paper on energy policy is to be prepared for the next COAG meeting.

COAG also discussed education issues and agreed to an ongoing dialogue in this area.

COAG discussed the issue of owner-drivers. While this is essentially a matter for the industry to resolve, the Australian Transport Council should expedite its consideration of work currently before it on this matter.

The next meeting of COAG will be in the first half of 2001.

Council of Australian Governments

3 November 2000