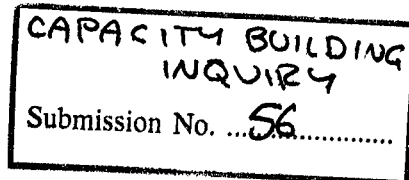




**Queensland
Government**

Our ref: BR02/1403



Office of the
Minister for Families
**Minister for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Policy**
**Minister for
Disability Services**

13 JAN 2003

Mr Barry Wakelin MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Wakelin

It is my pleasure to forward to you the Queensland Government's submission to the Inquiry into Building Capacity in Indigenous Communities.


The submission primarily focuses on the need for government reform to enable community capacity building, both within the Queensland Government and in Commonwealth/State collaboration. Improved Commonwealth/State collaboration has the potential to improve service and program delivery for Indigenous Queenslanders, and Queensland welcomes any recommendations the Inquiry may develop that would advance such collaboration.

Queensland has a whole-of-Government policy that commits the State to developing partnerships with Indigenous communities, community organisations and the private sector as the vehicle for improving the quality of life of Indigenous Queenslanders.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry and the Government looks forward to reading the report when it is released in 2003.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Mr Tony Dreise, Executive Director, Regional Operations Directorate, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy on (07) 3836 0547.

Yours sincerely


Judy Spence MP
**Minister for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Policy**

Enc

7th Floor, 111 George Street
Brisbane Queensland 4000
GPO Box 806 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3224 7477
Facsimile +61 7 3210 2190
Email families@ministerial.qld.gov.au

**QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION TO
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS INQUIRY INTO
BUILDING CAPACITY IN INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES**

Ministerial foreword

I am pleased to present the Queensland Government's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities. The submission details the Queensland policy framework that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community capacity building, examines issues surrounding community capacity building in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and outlines strategies for greater collaboration between the Commonwealth and Queensland Government.

The concept of partnerships is critical to issues of community capacity. In March 2000 the Queensland Government endorsed a new framework, *Towards a Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ten Year Partnership*. The Partnership is built on the premise that government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should work together, through partnering, to improve the economic, physical, social and emotional well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. At the same time, Aboriginal leaders such as Noel Pearson were urging a new approach to dealing with the entrenched difficulties in Aboriginal communities in Cape York. The resulting model for government and community interaction in the Cape is known as Cape York Partnerships.

In 2001, Premier Peter Beattie announced the engagement of Justice Tony Fitzgerald QC, to undertake a study of the impacts of excessive alcohol and other substance abuse in the Cape. *Meeting Challenges – Making Choices*, the Queensland Government's response to Justice Fitzgerald's Cape York Justice Study is a blueprint for government – community interaction and the development of strategic partnerships not only in the Cape, but throughout the state. The Queensland Government is now adopting a new approach in the areas of targeted intervention, community development and public sector reform, identifying these as keys to sustaining improvements in Indigenous communities. Our approach to partnerships is community driven. We recognise that continued reliance on 'top – down' models would only serve to increase dependency on the welfare economy.

The immediate focus of our approach is to arrest the alarming rate of alcohol and substance abuse and related violence, to create a more favourable environment for Indigenous people to achieve a better quality of life and take greater advantage of the opportunities available to them as Australian citizens. The Queensland Government recognises that communities need healthy and strong individuals to be equipped to operate in the partnerships environment and community capacity ultimately must be developed by community members themselves. However government can act as facilitator of capacity building, if we change the way we do business. We can provide targeted assistance, the nature of which has been determined at the community level; we can align government services and priorities maximising their coherence and effectiveness in supporting communities to achieve their stated goals and aspirations; we can achieve negotiated outcomes through embedding decision making mechanisms such as our negotiation tables.

I welcome the opportunity to provide this submission and commend its contents to the Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities.

Judy Spence MP

Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors

!

INTRODUCTION

This submission is intended to demonstrate the link between the Queensland Government's commitment to partnerships, the need to intervene in collaboration with partners when communities become dysfunctional, the need to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the development of greater capacity, and collaboration between the Commonwealth and State Governments to enable more effective and streamlined service delivery and positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

What is Community Capacity?

The Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) endorsed the following definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community capacity at its meeting of September 2002:

“The knowledge, ability and commitment for individuals, families, groups and organisations to:

- Maintain their cultural identity;
- Interact confidently and effectively with the dominant Australian society;
- Identify goals;
- Determine strategies to achieve their goals;
- Work effectively with government and the private sector to access the resources necessary to implement those strategies.”

This definition is consistent with the United Nations' definition of community capacity building as “the process by which individuals, organisations, institutions and societies develop abilities (individually and collectively) to perform functions, to solve problems and to set objectives”. MCATSIA is recommending that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorse the definition for use in all jurisdictions.

Enhancing Capacity

The Queensland Government is currently implementing significant policy changes designed to enhance the ability of both communities and Government to build capacity and generate positive service delivery outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

A central premise of the new policy approach is that if negotiations between Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are going to be effective, the current inequity at the negotiating table needs to be addressed at the community level. Furthermore, in the context of our partnership, both parties need to feel responsible for progressing the outcomes of negotiations. The limited success of consultation as a mechanism to solve seemingly intractable problems has now been recognised. Increased consultation processes, while meeting with some degree of success, did not provide a solid foundation for the development of community capacity.

The Queensland Government is now working toward creating partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and industry and then bringing policy, program and service delivery dilemmas to negotiating tables for resolution. In committing itself to partnerships with communities as the new way of doing business, the Government has sought to streamline existing program and service delivery mechanisms through reforms such as notional resource pooling, regional budgeting and regional planning. The Government is taking active steps towards changing the mindset of the bureaucracy from that of provider to the enabler of more effective and efficient local and regional program and service delivery. Capacity building is a key component of these partnerships.

QUEENSLAND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

In March 2000 the Queensland Government endorsed *Towards a Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ten Year Partnership* (Ten Year Partnership). This framework lays the foundation for the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the Queensland Government interact through partnership arrangements. In May 2000 the Government initiated *Cape York Partnerships – Some Practical Ideas* (CYP), a program designed to address issues surrounding welfare dependency through a partnerships approach. The third framework, *Meeting Challenges – Making Choices* (MCMC), released in March 2002, built on Cape York Partnerships.

All three frameworks stress the importance on reducing the levels of bureaucracy between communities and decision-makers. They emphasise the point that the interface between community-identified priorities and decisions on how best to provide coordinated government response to those articulated needs should be as close to the community level as possible. The adopted model is negotiation tables where communities are provided the facility to identify, develop and present their priorities and government is able to respond quickly and in a coordinated way.

The Ten Year Partnership, CYP and MCMC are currently being amalgamated into one streamlined State-wide Strategic Policy Framework. Each of these initiatives is described below.

Complementing these frameworks are a range of initiatives including the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Champions program and the memorandum of Understanding between the Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

In the CEO Champions program, CEOs of Queensland Government departments have been allocated an Indigenous (mainland) community with which they have a special relationship. This provides communities with a direct link to the highest levels of the bureaucracy. In addition to being available to advocate on their behalf in Brisbane, CEOs visit 'their' community and meet with community members at least twice a year.

The Queensland Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ATSIC. On 9 July 2002 the Queensland Government and the State Policy Council of ATSIC signed a commitment to partnership in recognition of the need for a closer working relationship. It was agreed this would provide a means of improving the coordination of planning and programs, particularly in areas where both entities have significant resources, eg housing. ATSIC has similar agreements with the state governments of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. The agreement provides that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy will meet with ATSIC Commissioners twice a year to review progress. The Premier is to meet with ATSIC within a year of signing the document.

Ten Year Partnership

Towards a Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ten Year Partnership (Ten Year Partnership) is a long-term strategic policy, planning and performance management framework. It has eight priority areas for achieving improved outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders: justice; reconciliation; family violence; human services; service delivery; economic development; community governance; and land, heritage and natural resources. It is intended that statewide agreements in each of the priority areas will be developed to improve coordination and planning at the central level and negotiation tables will be established at regional and local levels.

The first agreement, the *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement* (Justice Agreement) was made between the Queensland Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board in December 2000. The Justice Agreement seeks a 50% reduction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates by 2011. The Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan was endorsed by the Government in September 2001. Agreements relating to family violence, economic development, land, heritage and natural resources are currently being developed and completion is anticipated in 2003. The Government will also release a green paper exploring preferred community governance models in 2003.

Four negotiation tables have been established under the Ten Year Partnership at Sarina, Doomadgee, St George and the Torres Strait. The focus of each negotiation table reflects the priorities identified by the relevant communities and government. The Torres Strait regional negotiation table focus is on community justice, with a view to developing individual local justice agreements for each island. In Sarina the primary identified concern is economic and community development. The Doomadgee negotiation table identified sport and recreation, housing and justice issues as priorities. The St George negotiation table focuses on youth, elders, housing and economic development. There have been incremental achievements from each of the negotiation tables including: the formalisation of community and government negotiation teams, including Commonwealth agencies; building of relationships to underpin negotiations undertaken in good faith; establishing capacity building programs; and, the identification of community priorities.

Cape York Partnerships

In releasing *Cape York Partnerships – Some Practical Ideas* in May 2000, the Queensland Government entered into a new relationship with the people of Cape York. The underlying principles are that Government must take responsibility for those things that it is best placed to do and the people of Cape York must take responsibility for those things that they can only do themselves. The people of Cape York cannot be expected to solve their problems without the support of Government, and Government is not capable of improving life in Cape York without the commitment of the community.

This new way of doing business in Cape York has led to significant and positive developments. These include, but are not limited to, community-government collaboration (including with the Commonwealth) around such as initiatives as the:

- Digital Youth Network,
- *Boys from the Bush* youth initiative,
- Family Income Management System, and
- Indigenous Leadership Development program,

In addition to these, a number of enterprise developments such as the Cape Fishing Company and the Weipa Training Centre are also currently in progress.

The Cape York Partnerships model is also leading to significant public sector reform. This reform includes the establishment of the Cape York Strategy Unit (CYSU) within the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy to coordinate whole-of-government activity in the Cape. The Unit will comprise both teams of core staff as well as a number of 'interchange officers' from key agencies such as the Queensland Police Service, Department of State Development, Queensland Health and Education Queensland. In addition, the CYSU hosts a Commonwealth Senior Executive Officer to coordinate activity and engagement between community, State Government and Commonwealth Government sectors.

Negotiation Tables

Negotiation tables were promoted as the means by which government and communities, including those in Cape York, could negotiate on all aspects of policy and program development and implementation. The output from the tables would be partnership agreements, shaped to fit community priorities and circumstances. The agreements could be community specific, thereby reflecting the priorities and decisions of each community.

The principal goals of Negotiation tables are to:

- provide a mechanism whereby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives can directly influence Government decision-making and directly negotiate with Government representatives for new policy responses, service delivery and program initiatives;
- overcome problems of a lack of coordination between agencies and jurisdictions and improve Government's responsiveness to communities' holistic needs; and
- encourage shared or transferred responsibility between Government and communities.

Negotiation Tables represent a new process of interaction emphasising mutual planning and goal setting, responsibility, accountability and ownership of agreed outcomes as outlined in a community or regional action plan.

The Cape York Justice Study and Meeting Challenges, Making Choices

In July 2001 Premier Peter Beattie commissioned Justice Tony Fitzgerald QC to lead a review on justice issues in Cape York communities. The Cape York Justice Study findings were presented to the Queensland Cabinet in November 2001. Consistent with previous studies, the Study concluded that alcohol, substance abuse and violence are threatening the viability of Cape York communities. The Report recommended a new and immediate approach in the areas of targeted intervention, community development and public sector reform, identifying these as keys to sustaining improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Study made clear that current government service delivery is ineffective, inaccessible to many who require services and often unable to be delivered where and when required. The Study identified complex funding arrangements, fragmented service delivery, competing departmental priorities, which were unconnected to community agreed and owned priorities, as barriers to integrated responses. The Study recommended the use of community action plans as essential mechanisms to improve future service delivery and a public sector reform process characterised by better coordination and integrated effort.

The Study noted that structural arrangements to overcome barriers to coordination need to provide strong accountability for the achievement of service delivery goals and place immediate priority on the reduction of alcohol and violence, child protection, childcare and schooling. The Report stated that economic development initiatives would not be successful unless community functioning improved.

The Queensland Government's response to the Study entitled *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* aims to balance its responsibilities for the health and well-being of Queensland citizens, with a deliberate strategy that fosters Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community capacity and the development of locally-based solutions. The immediate focus is to arrest the alarming rate of alcohol and substance abuse and related violence, to create a more favourable environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve a better quality of life and take greater advantage of the opportunities available to them as Australian citizens.

In particular the response includes:

- new policy responses and program initiatives in respect of alcohol, substance abuse and rehabilitation, governance and crime and justice;
- the preparation of the *Indigenous Communities Liquor Licences Bill 2002* and the *Community Services Acts Amendment Bill 2002* in accordance with the drafting instructions provided; and
- strengthened service delivery in the areas of Child Protection, Health, Education and Training, Economic Development and Land and Sustainable Resource Management.

The Queensland Government recognises that both the immediate and longer-term efforts outlined in *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices*, will require a sustained commitment by governments at national, state and local levels, working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Efforts will also need to be more targeted to alleviate immediate problems, and far improved in terms of coordination. Governments cannot achieve the changes required without the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and representative organisations consulted broadly support the directions proposed in the response.

The success of the new policy and program initiatives and the strengthened service delivery components outlined largely hinges on facilitating and enabling the active involvement of individuals, families and communities in developing community-owned solutions through mechanisms such as the establishment of Community Canteen Management Boards, Community Justice Groups and community action plans.

Success also hinges on government departments and agencies collaborating to improve service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities identified by Tony Fitzgerald as crucial to creating a favourable environment. This will include a preparedness to act quickly and allocate resources where immediate intervention is indicated. Clear thinking, communication and leadership, confirming the priorities for action within governments is required at the highest echelons of departments and agencies. It must be mirrored in regional collaboration, goodwill and effort.

A critical component of a partnership approach is outcome focused, positive and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, existing regional representative bodies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to support both community development and drive the implementation and monitoring of community action plans.

The Queensland Government has deliberately adopted a strategy of immediate intervention in communities that lack capacity. *Meeting Challenges – Making Choices* is based on the theory that in dysfunctional communities, immediate intervention is required as a pre-cursor to community capacity building. The hypothesis is that the traditional approaches to government service delivery have failed because of high levels of dysfunction caused by excessive alcohol and substance abuse and violence. MCMC has a three-part theoretical framework of immediate intervention, community engagement/development and public sector reform.

An important component of *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* is the *Community Governance Improvement Strategy*. The Queensland Government is currently undertaking an examination of community governance models as part of a review of the Community Services legislation and the development of the *Community Governance Improvement Strategy*. A Green Paper exploring preferred models to achieve strong and capable community governance arrangements for Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) communities will be developed in early 2003. The final review report, including recommendations, will be completed by mid-2003. The intended outcome of this process will be reformed legislation for DOGIT communities that promotes the ongoing development and viability of communities and enhances the effectiveness and appropriateness of the system of community government.

The *Community Governance Improvement Strategy* will be undertaken in two stages. In the first stage, the existing support to Aboriginal and Island Councils by Queensland Government agencies is being examined. It is anticipated that, in consultation with stakeholders, a range of recommendations or options for future support services will emerge from this stage. It is intended this will result in improved performance and accountability by Community Councils. This first stage is scheduled for completion in March 2003. Subsequently an implementation plan will be developed and the second phase, an implementation phase where new services, or enhancements to existing services, will commence.

The Queensland Government will be undertaking a three-year evaluation of Meeting Challenges, Making Choices to provide an evidence base to Government and community decision-making processes. In particular, the evaluation must inform Government decision-making in relation to alcohol management issues on Aboriginal communities in 2005. The objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the theoretical framework for Meeting Challenges, Making Choices in achieving:

- safer communities with a priority on women and children;
- improved alcohol management;
- improvements in health and well being;
- improved education, training and employment outcomes;
- improved community functioning;
- improved community governance;
- improved community engagement in community owned solutions; and
- improved government service delivery.

From the Queensland Government's perspective it is anticipated that the impact of the improved jurisdictional collaboration would be evaluated as a component of the public sector reform policy intervention. It is important that mechanisms and processes established as part of the collaboration dovetail with the Government's evaluation framework.

COMMONWEALTH-STATE POLICY INITIATIVES

COAG Whole-of-Governments' Collaboration

In November 2000 COAG committed all Australian governments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs policy based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. COAG highlighted its commitment to program flexibility and coordination between government agencies, with a focus on local communities and outcomes. Priority actions were agreed in the following areas:

- Community leadership initiatives;
- Reviewing and re-engineering the way governments do business to ensure programs and services 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as a means of promoting economic independence.

In April 2002 COAG agreed to trial a collaborative approach between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in up to 10 communities or regions to see whether this could result in improved program and service delivery responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This collaboration is intended to maximise the effectiveness of governments' efforts to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by promoting coherence in their various individual and joint programs and initiatives. Cape York was selected by the Commonwealth Government as the location for the Queensland pilot program.

Why Collaborate?

Not only do Governments need partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, based on mutual responsibility, effort, negotiation and goodwill but the different levels of Government also need similar partnerships arrangements with each other if they are going to be most effective. Partnerships are a way to achieve coherence in the coordination and delivery of governments' policy, resources and services that respond to need.

A feature of Australian federalism is the overlapping roles and responsibilities of Commonwealth and State governments. This often results in confusion, inefficiency and ineffectiveness in service delivery. This is particularly marked in the health care where the Commonwealth is a policy maker, funder and, to a lesser extent, service provider. State Governments have a similar role in relation to non-government health care providers, but are also a major provider of health care services.

Improving coordination of government effort, at a Commonwealth, State and local jurisdiction, has been underway over the past few years with varying levels of success. Whole-of-governments policy frameworks have assisted in this process, however, barriers to achieving coordination remain in the form of program focused budget processes, lack of shared goals and priorities across government departments and agencies, and separate planning processes particularly at a strategic level.

The tyranny of distance is also a complicating factor for both jurisdictions. Geographical factors and the separation of policy development from program delivery is a particular issue for Queensland, the most regionalised of the Australian states. Regional management must have appropriate delegations and accountabilities in place to ensure that program and funding decisions are responsive to local needs and priorities.

Elements of the Collaboration

This collaboration relies upon an outcome-based long-term and sustained commitment which, to be successful, will need to demonstrate that Commonwealth, State and local jurisdictions can improve the way they plan, fund, deliver and report on programs and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and can improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Jurisdictions will need to work differently. 'Bottom-up' processes, expressed in community-owned planning and decision making processes will have to be combined with 'top-down' leadership, drive and delegation. Communities will rightfully expect that departments and agencies are accountable for activities and results. In return, departments will need support and follow through from communities for agreed actions and responsibilities which can only be undertaken by communities.

Monitoring and evaluation are vital components of this collaboration so that jurisdictions and communities will not know the reasons for the success or failure of particular initiatives and approaches. To ensure the evaluation is useful, clear objectives and performance measures for the collaboration and a commitment to systematic learning and reflection throughout the process will be essential. It is important that these measures are simple and broad enough to be relevant: For example, 'more children attending school, or 'more children can read' would be a useful performance indicator rather than detailed or process oriented reporting that becomes a summary of bureaucratic activities. For the purposes of monitoring and reporting on the collaboration, there will need to be an agreed time frame for reporting to COAG on progress. The Queensland Government supports a three-year time frame.

CONCLUSION

The Queensland Government is leading Australian governments' efforts in reorienting the direction of policy and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Queensland Government is committed to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, community organisations and representative councils to achieve positive service delivery outcomes. Queensland is also committed to public sector reform so that policy and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With an emphasis on effective partnerships, the Government has initiated significant policy changes to enhance the ability of both communities and Government to build capacity and generate positive service delivery outcomes.

There is a clear link between the Queensland Government's commitment to partnerships, the need to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the development of greater capacity, and further collaboration between the Commonwealth and State Governments to enable more effective and streamlined service delivery. The Queensland partnership approach is outcome focused, positive and collaborative in its relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It incorporates existing regional representative bodies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to support both community development and drive the implementation of community action plans. It also includes a preparedness to act quickly and allocate resources where immediate intervention is indicated. Clear thinking, communication and leadership, confirming the priorities for action within governments is required at the highest echelons of departments and agencies. It must be mirrored in regional collaboration, goodwill and effort.

Critical to our efforts, however, is enhanced and effective Commonwealth-State collaboration. Improved outcomes and coordination of government effort are urgently needed. The recently signed commitment to partnership in Cape York between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments presumes an outcome-based long-term and sustained commitment. To be successful, Governments will need to work differently. Community-owned planning and decision-making processes combined with top-down leadership, drive and delegation will need to be established. Otherwise it is likely we will continue to see increasing states of disadvantage in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.