

**KIMBERLEY
COMMUNITY
MANAGEMENT
SERVICES**

3/20 HUNTER ST
PO BOX 2879
BROOME 6725
PH 08 9192 6288
FAX 08 9192 6299
MOB 0417 961 183

CAPACITY BUILDING
INQUIRY
Submission No.7.....

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

E-mail: atsia.reps@aph.gov.au

27 August 2002

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities

Please find herewith a submission to the above inquiry, including the attached Feasibility Study.

We trust this will be of value to the inquiry. Please contact Mike Newbigin on (08) 9221 7933 should you require any further information.

Yours faithfully



Mike Newbigin
Executive Officer
Community Housing Coalition of WA



3/20 HUNTER ST
PO BOX 2879
BROOME 6725
PH 08 9192 6288
FAX 08 9192 6299
MOB 0417 961 183

Submission to the

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

**Inquiry into capacity building
in Indigenous communities**

from

Kimberley Community Management Services

August 2002

Addressing the following terms of reference:

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

- b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and
 - c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous people.
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Introduction

Who is responsible for ensuring Kimberley community organisations are able to deliver services efficiently and sustainably?

At present, the role of building sustainable capacity belongs to no-one.

Community organisations are generally only supported to deliver services. They are not supported in their own management, yet often are managed by committees with limited time, knowledge and ability. They must respond to the bureaucratic needs of funding agencies, the service needs of the community, and the management needs of the organisation. All this occurs within a context of limited skills and experience, social, economic, and educational disadvantage, isolation and absence of support.

It is little surprise that the management, staffing and operation of community organisations is often problematic.

Government agencies involved with community organisations generally only provide funding for services, then monitor and evaluate performance. Active involvement in organisational operation is usually reactive to severe difficulties, and usually focuses on how those difficulties affect the funding agency. Agencies place high demands upon community organisations, often in areas of special expertise, yet provide little support to ensure these demands can be met.

The Kimberley

The community sector is a major economic player in the Kimberley. It is estimated that direct funding for the community sector in the region is upwards of \$120 million per annum.¹ Excluding CDEP, the health and community sector is the largest employer in the Kimberly providing some 2,400 jobs (approximately 15% of all employment in the region). If the estimated 2,500 CDEP are included, of the total workforce in the Kimberley 26% are employed in the health and community sectors.² This spread amongst some 300 active incorporated associations, including 165 aboriginal communities.

If the efficiency and stability of these organisations could be improved by even a small amount, the benefits to the region would be immense.

The community and the three levels of government need be concerned about the lack of capacity within community organisations, and take appropriate and adequate steps to address the issue. Whilst individual organisations need direct assistance to improve efficiency and stability, it is a regional problem requiring a regional response. Skilling and empowering a few organisations is not a long-term solution; ensuring the region develops and retains skills and abilities is.

¹ Kimberley Community Management Support Feasibility Study, Step Management, June 2001

² Background demographic and workforce information for the Kimberley, unpublished paper by the WA Department of Indigenous Affairs 2002.

There is a clear need for an adequately resourced organisation dedicated solely to providing capacity building to Kimberley community organisations across the board.

This need was identified in a feasibility study sponsored by a number of Federal and State Government agencies which fund Kimberley community service organisations. The feasibility study, completed in June 2001, responded to the difficulties experienced by those organisations, and recommended processes to address those difficulties. A copy of this "*Feasibility Study to Establish a Management Support Service for Community Organisations in the Kimberley*" is attached as part of this submission.

The feasibility study identified a number of areas where many Kimberley community organisations lack the capacity to operate efficiently and maintain stability. A model was proposed to assist organisations to improve their capacity in key areas.

The following is taken from the Executive Summary of the feasibility study:

Kimberley Community Management Support

A Feasibility Study to Establish a Management Support Service for Community Organisations in the Kimberley

Executive Summary

The aim of the feasibility study was:

- To investigate the feasibility of establishing a management support service for community organisations in the Kimberley, and
- Determine and plan an appropriate operating model for such a service

The consultants interviewed 100 community workers and representatives of government agencies in the Kimberley. The information has been grouped into 11 key areas and stated as desired outcomes:

1. Employment Practices

Community organizations are able to attract and retain suitable staff, particularly in remote communities

2. Supervision & Mentoring

Staff and committee members receive adequate orientation, supervision, direction and support to effectively perform their roles

3. Training & Professional Development

Staff and committee members build skills and confidence to effectively manage community organizations

4. Leadership & Succession Planning

People are empowered as leaders in community building

5. Management Committees & Decision Making

Management committees effectively carry out their policy, planning and decision making roles to achieve community organisations' vision and goals.

6. Communication & Conflict Resolution

Staff and management committees communicate well with stakeholders and resolve conflict appropriately.

7. Vision & Planning

Community organisations have a clear purpose and shared vision, with active planning and review processes

8. Financial Management

Community organizations have proper accounting policies and controls, timely financial reports, and make sound and ethical financial decisions

9. Contract Management

Tendering processes are suitable for the purchase of community services and community organizations have the skills and resources to manage contracts.

10. Legal Structures

Community organisations adopt appropriate legal structures to streamline administration and service delivery, ensure effective representation and minimise risk.

11. Information Technology

Community organisations make effective use of information technology to improve their learning, communication and networking.

To address the management support needs of community organizations in the Kimberley region in a coordinated way we recommend the development of a "community broker" model. A community broker is the link between non-profit community organisations that require management/development services and public and private sector organisations offering such services. This may include:

- Linking local community organisations with funding and resources
- Facilitating access to specialized management and administration services
- Developing regional information and support networks
- Providing specialized advisory and training services to address specific organizational problems (the troubleshooting role)
- Negotiating partnerships with public sector and private sector organisations

The community broker model does not involve channeling government funding for service delivery through a regional body, or in any way impinging on the direct relationship between government agencies and funded organisations.

Proposed services:

- 1. An information service - web portal**
- 2. Local support networks** throughout the region including: orientation of new workers, information and resource sharing, a forum for consultation, identifying professional development and other support needs.
- 3. Employment services** including recruitment and appointment of staff, employment contracts, orientation, supervision, mentoring and performance reviews.
- 4. Training and professional development program** organized in conjunction with Community Services Training Centre and/or other training providers.
- 5. Planning, facilitation and mentoring services** including strategic planning, meeting facilitation, mentoring for committees, management troubleshooting and advice on restructuring.
- 6. Accounting services** including access to accounting advice, auditing services, assistance to restructure and simplify accounting procedures, accounting manuals, and outsourcing bookkeeping, payroll and salary packaging services.
- 7. Development of business/community partnerships** with private companies, tertiary institutions and government departments to attract more funding and management resources for community organisations in the region.

The aim is to build the capacity of community organisations to provide more effective and professional services to people in need in the Kimberley.

The benefits for staff and committee members will include:

- Access to information, advice and a troubleshooting service on governance and management issues
- Better access to relevant training and development
- Reduced professional isolation and burnout
- Improved skills and confidence
- Improved administrative and management systems
- Reduced number of committees and committee meetings

It is envisaged that the management support service will be governed by a board of management, possibly operating with advisory groups and/or project teams, and local support networks for members in each town. The service could either operate as a separately incorporated non-profit body or a joint venture between existing organisations, with one organisation designated as the lead agency.

The establishment of Kimberley Community Management Services followed from this feasibility study. Kimberley Community Management Services has been set up to take on the role of delivering co-ordinated capacity building to the Kimberley community sector.

Kimberley Community Management Services commenced limited operation in August 2002, with 1.5 staff positions, and is concentrating on some specific projects outlined in the feasibility study (development of a web portal, establishment of a pilot support network in a single Kimberley town, and planning for a brokerage service). Whilst important first steps, these projects only go a small way in addressing the capacity building needs of Kimberley organisations. Kimberley Community Management Services is not presently resourced to implement all the strategies identified in the feasibility study.

Whilst all levels of Government provide generous and committed support to community organisations for the delivery of services, much of this support is diluted by the lack of capacity within those organisations.

Kimberley Community Management Services recommends an approach from and across all levels of Government and community that acknowledges, supports, and resources the capacity building needs of community organisations.

Whilst this should be viewed as separate from service delivery responsibilities of both Government and the community sector, successful capacity building will lead to successful community organisations, and thus to successful service delivery.

Kimberley Community Management Services recommends that capacity building in the Kimberley be undertaken as a priority, that it be supported separately from delivery of services, that it be widely available to all community organisations, and that it be delivered in a co-ordinated and sustainable manner.

Attachment:

“Kimberley Community Management Support A Feasibility Study to Establish a Management Support Service for Community Organisations in the Kimberley” STeP Management Services Pty Ltd June 2001