

Chapter 4

The effectiveness and adequacy of resources

4.1 The committee acknowledges the considerable resources directed towards the issue of petrol sniffing and substance abuse in central Australia since it last reported.

4.2 The Commonwealth government outlined that four specific Budget measures and initiatives have funded the Petrol Sniffing Strategy (PSS) and roll out of Opal fuel:

- In 2005–06, \$9.6 million was allocated over four years under the *Addressing Indigenous Needs – Combating Petrol Sniffing* budget measure to supply Opal fuel to 23 communities;
- In September 2005, \$9.5 million was allocated to the above measure through the additional estimates process, including \$6 million over two years to supply Opal fuel in central Australia, funding for the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk and \$3 million from the Aboriginal Benefit Account to support diversionary and rehabilitation programs;
- In 2006–07, \$55.1 million was allocated over four years under the *Reducing Substance Abuse (Petrol Sniffing)* budget measure to extend the services in the existing Central Desert Petrol Sniffing Strategy Zone and extend the strategy to two more zones; and
- In July 2006, \$12 million was allocated to the above measure through additional estimates for the roll-out of Opal fuel to Alice Springs.¹

4.3 In addition to funding specifically for the PSS, the Commonwealth government noted that other measures, such as drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation are relevant in tackling substance abuse in central Australia. The Commonwealth government's submission provided an overview of these funding sources, including all the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) initiatives for each state and territory as well as measures under the Northern Territory Emergency Response.²

4.4 At the committee's hearing in Canberra the Commonwealth government advised:

The way we work the petrol sniffing strategy is evolving in response to that changing environment. Wherever possible, we seek to build partnerships

1 The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and the Attorney-General's Department (AGD), *Submission 14*, pp. 31–32.

2 See FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, pp. 32–36 for details.

and to link government programs. As a result, we do not depend just on funds associated with the petrol sniffing strategy; we draw on whatever programs or resources we can and work with Indigenous communities, with non-government organisations, with shires and local councils, with state governments and with the whole range of Australian government programs. We also work outside the Central Australian petrol sniffing strategy zone, and one of the challenges we have is to address outbreaks—to stop petrol sniffing in other areas before it becomes entrenched.³

Adequacy of resources

4.5 Although considerable resources have been committed the committee notes that there are some areas of the PSS that many witnesses and submissions identified as lacking adequate resources. This was also identified by the Urbis Review as a factor that may have adversely affected the strategy's implementation.⁴

4.6 The Alice Springs Town Council raised concerns regarding a lack of additional resources to implement aspects of the Eight Point Plan in Alice Springs, noting that it has not been provided with any additional resources:

That is the only disappointment about the roll out of Opal fuel. We very vigorously and effectively dealt with the problem but not with the causes. As a result of the lack of funding, the initial plans relating to looking at addressing the causes of petrol sniffing have all been put to one side.⁵

4.7 The Town Council also pointed out that anecdotal reports suggest that as Papunya received less resources for complementary activities proposed under the PSS, sniffers from Papunya moved into Alice Springs to continue sniffing which simply transferred the problem. The Council notes that again no additional funds were received to:

...deal with the...problem of sniffers from the Communities, leaving stretched resources to attend to the problem. In fact resources for Youth supportive structures in Alice Springs are now less than before the roll-out of Opal.⁶

4.8 The NPY Women's Council also identified that although the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk is operating effectively at the current funding level additional resources should be provided to expand its capacity:

...at least threefold, including both officers and sniffer dogs, in order to allow it to collect more and improved intelligence in the region and work more effectively with State and Territory forces to work towards the

3 Ms Donna Moody, FaHCSIA, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 2.

4 Urbis, *Review of the First Phase of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy*, June 2008, p. 43.

5 Ms Melanie van Haaren, Alice Springs Town Council, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2008, p. 78.

6 Alice Springs Town Council, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

eradication of liquor and illicit drug trafficking and enforce existing and any new laws relating to the supply of premium unleaded fuel.⁷

Youth services

4.9 The inadequacy of resources for youth services across the central Australian region was consistently raised in submissions and by witnesses during this inquiry.

4.10 The committee notes that Mission Australia has been provided with \$8 million over three years to provide services in four communities, as outlined in chapter 2. This is approximately \$2.6 million a year and around \$660 000 per community, which Mission Australia believe is a sufficient amount to run effective youth services in these communities.

4.11 At the hearing in Canberra the Commonwealth government outlined further funding sources for youth services in the region, stating that:

...there is a range of youth services available in communities within petrol-sniffing zones outside those ones funded by this particular [NTYISP] program. They have subsequently been supplemented in the Northern Territory part of the zone through the Northern Territory emergency response where the department has used approximately another \$8 million of Northern Territory response money on youth related activities. The department, through other programs such as Reconnect, also funds other youth services. The Territory, state governments and local governments also have a variety of services available. Certainly, this particular program focused on four communities but there is what I would describe as a bit of a jigsaw puzzle of services across the area, funded from a variety of sources.⁸

4.12 CAPSSU have also recently awarded a \$2.4 million tender to the MacDonnell Shire to provide infrastructure for youth services in the six communities of Kintore, Papunya, Ikuntji, Mount Liebig, Ntaria and Areyonga. The committee was advised that this funding will:

...provide houses for youth workers in three of those communities. It provides youth worker infrastructure, training and employment for people across six communities. From memory, I think there are seven Toyota four-wheel-drive 'Troopie' vehicles for transport of young people and for use in those communities by the youth workers and the sport and recreation workers.⁹

4.13 It was also noted that there are other sources of funds such as the Aboriginal Benefits Account which has provided resources to the Tangentyere Council and CAYLUS for major infrastructure which will assist to remove 'the barriers to the roll-

7 Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council, *Submission 11*, p. 12.

8 Ms Donna Moody, FaHCSIA, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 16.

9 Mr Steve Vaughan, CAPSSU, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 21.

out of services' that has hampered current efforts to provide youth services in the region.¹⁰

4.14 However, although there are additional resources available for youth services outside of the PSS it is only the four NTYISP communities that are receiving an adequate level of resourcing directly under the PSS. Many of the other communities in central Australia, both within and outside of the PSS zones, are left without adequate resources for basic youth services and infrastructure.

4.15 The Commonwealth government was asked why only four communities were chosen at the hearing in Canberra.

In terms of funding only four under this program, I guess there is constant tension: do you try to do something more comprehensive in a smaller number of locations or do you spread the resources more thinly across a wider number of locations? I cannot give you all the background on why those four in particular were chosen ...But there really is that tension over choosing four that have particular issues. Some of those communities were seen as having particular issues with petrol sniffing at the time and it was about trying to make a difference in those particular communities.¹¹

4.16 In addition, the committee asked whether there was any additional funding for youth services planned for the other communities in Central Australia under the PSS beyond the four communities currently funded, to which FaHCSIA replied:

Not at this point through this program. We do take opportunity. As I said, with the Northern Territory emergency response and other programs we try to be opportunistic where we can and we see other opportunities to put money into those activities, but at this point not under the petrol sniffing strategy itself.¹²

4.17 CAYLUS noted that:

Despite a large amount of funding being spent in the region, little has been targeted to provide the infrastructure to provide ongoing services. Much has been spent on short term programs, and infrastructure such as BMX tracks that are in no way key resources...When the \$55 million was announced for the 8 point plan, service providers in the region rejoiced, as this investment could have seen the infrastructure needs in the region fully met, plus the operational needs met for many years to come. Unfortunately, this has not been the case, and we are concerned that at the end of this federal funding allocation, the region will not be substantially better off than before.¹³

10 Ms Donna Moody, FaHCSIA, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 22.

11 Ms Donna Moody, FaHCSIA, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 16.

12 Ms Donna Moody, FaHCSIA, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 17.

13 CAYLUS, *Submission 10a*, p. 2.

4.18 The committee acknowledges the substantial resources required to provide a basic youth service in remote locations owing to the difficulties in attracting a sustainable and qualified workforce as well as the general lack of existing infrastructure and housing. As the Commonwealth government's submission states:

The long distances, isolation and language and cultural complexities mean that youth workers can be difficult to attract, and they can burn out very quickly. Communities are often unwilling to engage with workers who do not have appropriate cultural knowledge, and who will not be spending long periods of time with the community...

...Communities in central Australia typically have low or non-existent levels of the community infrastructure necessary to run full time youth programs. This can include; housing for permanent youth workers; recreation halls in which to run programs (absolutely necessary in the heat and at night); basic sporting facilities (e.g. basketball courts and ovals in reasonable repair); and training rooms and office accommodation. For this reason the 2006 Budget included funds for the construction of youth worker housing and construction or repair/upgrade of recreation halls. However, construction in central Australia is expensive and can take much longer than similar construction projects in metropolitan or even regional centres. All materials need to be transported long distances; there is a national shortage of construction workers and a large amount of construction work underway or planned for the region.¹⁴

4.19 However, even given these complications and the expense, the committee believes that every effort should be made to provide adequate levels of activities for young people in these communities. The committee strongly believes that well resourced youth services are essential to the success and long term sustainability of the response to petrol sniffing and substance abuse.

4.20 The committee has considered evidence that in order to deliver youth services which follow a best practice model for youth development, a minimum level of investment is required. CAYLUS suggests that basic infrastructure required should take the form of a recreation hall or other suitable building, accommodation for two youth workers (a man and a woman), and two vehicles, one for young men and one for young women. The operational requirements are for salaries for the youth workers, a team of local workers and an adequate budget for activities.¹⁵

4.21 CAYLUS provided the committee with its estimate of the required resource needs of communities in the south west region of the Northern Territory based on the best practice model. CAYLUS estimated that the initial resource requirements for a basic level of service in the 18 listed communities would be \$21.9 million in the first

14 FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, p. 29.

15 CAYLUS, *Submission 10*, Supplementary information p. 8.

year, to allow for the construction of recreation halls and housing, and then recurrent funding of just over \$5 million a year.¹⁶

4.22 The committee also notes that in July 2007 CAPSSU prepared a draft paper proposing a three-year approach to addressing priority needs in the Expanded Central Desert Zone which proposed that youth services be provided in the 16 communities on a level similar to the NTIYSP with a total funding requirement of some \$16 million.¹⁷

4.23 While this may seem like a significant amount of money, the committee acknowledges that providing quality services in remote communities is resource intensive. The need for adequate resources, including both a male and female youth worker for each community is supported by the evidence provided by the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council of South Australia at the hearing in Adelaide on 4 March 2009. As Scott Wilson says:

...there needs to be some sort of gender balanced team...When you go into a lot of these rural or remote communities, there tends to be one worker, whether they are the youth worker or the substance abuse worker. Our own chairperson, for example, is the youth worker in one of the remote communities. Being a traditional male he has restrictions on the female side, which obviously restricts the effectiveness of that position. How you go about addressing that is obviously through the funding issue—making sure that in these communities or in projects such as Making Tracks there is that additional funding so that you can employ a male and a female.¹⁸

4.24 The committee also noted on its visit to Mutitjulu, one of the NTYISP communities, that although there were youth facilities some of the buildings were not always able to be used due to the poor insulation and lack of air conditioning. For example, the arts and craft room is unable to be used when temperatures are above 36 degrees which according to the Australian Bureau of Meteorology is on average 100 days per year, with 32 of those days above 40 degrees.¹⁹ Additional resources to provide buildings that are functional all year around would improve the youth services as well as their appeal to young people.

4.25 It was also apparent to the committee on its visit to Alpururulam, which is outside of the PSS zone but still with has outbreaks of petrol sniffing, that youth services were under resourced. The community has a population of approximately 400 people and almost half are under the age of 25. Boredom was raised as a real problem in the community. The community advised the committee that it had been allocated

16 See CAYLUS, *Submission 10a*, Attachment 1.

17 Urbis, *Review of the First Phase of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy*, June 2008, p. 16.

18 Mr Scott Wilson, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 21.

19 Climate statistics for Australian locations, Yulara Aero, available at: http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_015635_All.shtml

\$200 000 to construct a new recreation hall but this funding was insufficient to build a multi-purpose air conditioned facility.

4.26 Yirara College noted that additional resources are also required for holiday residential programs recommending that there needs to be:

...additional funding for holiday residential programs...Funding for schools or other agencies involved in communities to run such programs would be necessary, as schools are not normally funded for these kinds of activities off-campus...

...The program would encourage students to use their time more productively with the aim to encourage and support students returning to regular daily attendance at their community school and encourage eligible students to attend Yirara College (and supporting the transition).²⁰

4.27 A real improvement in activities and the quality of life for young people will require agencies to budget for the true cost of providing sustainable services in remote communities. As Mission Australia says:

Our experience in providing the NTIYS has demonstrated that a high level of financial resources is required in order to properly fund the provision of services that will have a sustainable impact on the lives of young people in the remote communities of Central Australia.²¹

4.28 The committee believes that in order to address the complex mix of interrelated causes and contextual factors contributing to petrol sniffing and substance abuse in central Australia, adequate resources must be provided to run, at the very least, basic youth services in *all* remote communities. The provision of alternative activities for young people is one of the fundamental elements of the PSS program logic and policy context and must be adequately resourced if the PSS is to be effective.

Recommendation 12

4.29 That the Commonwealth government, in partnership with state and territory governments, provide adequate resources to enable the extension of quality youth services and the employment of a male and a female youth worker for each community in the Petrol Sniffing Strategy Zone.

Rehabilitation services

4.30 As the Commonwealth government outlined in its submission the 'Petrol Sniffing Strategy has not received specific funding through its Budget measures to implement treatment and rehabilitation programs'²² and instead funding is allocated

20 Yirara College, *Submission 6*, p. [3].

21 Mission Australia, *Submission 5*, p. 5.

22 FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, p. 31.

through the COAG measures to the states and territories. The committee acknowledges that a substantial investment of resources has been made recently in this area and new services have opened since the committee last reported such as the Substance Misuse Facility in Amata and Bushmob House in Alice Springs both of which the committee has since visited.

4.31 The Commonwealth government's submission also noted that COAG has specifically developed a \$130 million package over four years and in December 2007 the Commonwealth government agreed to contribute an additional \$50 million for substance and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services.²³

4.32 Some concerns with funding shortfalls and gaps were raised with the committee during this inquiry including for Mt Theo Outstation and Bushmob House. The committee notes the importance of adequate and appropriate rehabilitation facilities in order to address petrol sniffing and substance abuse. This is an essential area of the response which needs greater investment by all levels of government.

Mt Theo Outstation

4.33 During the previous inquiry the committee reported extensively on the success and importance of the Mt Theo program and the committee visited the Mt Theo Outstation rehabilitation facility. The committee is pleased to report the continuing success of the Mt Theo Outstation which:

...remains a powerful diversionary initiative with 78% of total clients this year referred by Department of Community Corrections (35%), Police (26%), FACS (9%), or were family/self referred (30%).

Out of a total of 61 clients cared for at Mt Theo, 30% had been sniffing petrol, primarily in Alice Springs.²⁴

4.34 During this inquiry, both CAYLUS and the NPY Women's Council noted that the Mt Theo Outstation has a continuing funding gap to pay for food, clothing, transport and bedding for Department of Community Corrections clients at the rehabilitation facility. CAYLUS notes that:

...under the 8 Point Plan the Commonwealth Attorney Generals Department provided CAYLUS with one off funds to broker to the outstations to pay for clients to undertake programs. This led to a clear service improvement particularly at Ilpurla, which has very limited administrative capacity. The funds were however one off and were expended according to contract by June 30. At the time of writing the services are looking after a number of the most high needs clients from Central Australia and the top end with no guarantee of how their client

23 FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, p. 7.

24 Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation, *Annual Report 2007-08*, p. 10.

costs will be covered. The outcome currently hinges on an eSub for the next round of funding which was submitted in May this year.²⁵

Bushmob House

4.35 The committee visited Bushmob House in Alice Springs and spoke with the staff assisting young people with substance abuse issues. The submissions from both Bushmob and CAYLUS noted that within just six months of operation Bushmob House has already 'double the number of clients attending the service than they have beds and funding for'.²⁶ Bushmob House has sometimes provided clients with swags on the floor as they are reluctant to turn young people away, especially as there are no other similar services in the area.

4.36 Bushmob House outlined in their submission that there are 60-70 beds for adults with volatile substance abuse and alcohol and other drug problems while for young people there are just the five funded beds at Bushmob House and five unfunded beds for carer support. Bushmob House asked:

Why are our children denied real support to access therapeutic and clinical treatment for Volatile substance abuse and other drug use in Alice Springs?²⁷

4.37 Services such as that provided by Bushmob are obviously in great demand in the region. The committee urges both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments to provide adequate resources in order to effectively meet the current demand for youth specific treatment and residential facilities to address substance abuse and petrol sniffing issues.

Ilpurla Outstation

4.38 CAYLUS raised the issue of Ilpurla Outstation which accepts clients from all over the Northern Territory on mandatory treatment orders, bail and correctional services court orders from any community.²⁸ CAYLUS stated that Ilpurla requires targeted support and increased resources as:

At the moment, their lack of administrative capacity could have lead to a situation that threatens the ongoing capacity of the service. CAYLUS will continue to provide support to try to keep Ilpurla open as we know how crucial this service is, but we wonder why so far into the 8 point plan this key resource has received so little support from the initiative?²⁹

25 CAYLUS, *Submission 10*, p. 12.

26 CAYLUS, *Submission 10*, p. 11.

27 Bushmob House Inc., *Submission 19*, p. [1].

28 This is an important distinction as Mt Theo can only take Warlpiri clients for cultural reasons.

29 CAYLUS, *Submission 10a*, p. 2.

Recommendation 13

4.39 The committee reaffirms recommendation 17 from its 2006 report which called upon Commonwealth, state and territory governments to provide additional funding to new and existing rehabilitation facilities in order to provide a quality service while meeting current demand.

Tendering processes

4.40 Concerns with the processes used for awarding tenders for services in Indigenous communities was raised during the inquiry.

4.41 CAYLUS noted that they have run school holiday programs for over five years in many of the communities within the PSS zone. However recently the provision of school holiday programs was centralised and put out to a competitive tender to which CAYLUS contend they were not consulted about. The running of these programs was then awarded to Red Sun Solutions, based in Lismore, NSW. CAYLUS outlined the tender process in their submission:

The tendering has happened separately for several holiday periods...the first tender covering the Summer 2007/08 summer holiday period. CAYLUS...had spent several months preparing for provision of holiday programs... The Department of Health and Ageing funded CAYLUS to purchase a number of media kits specifically to use...CAYLUS briefed CAPSSU staff on a number of occasions about the progress of plans for the holidays. We contracted workers for a number of communities, sourced funds... In good faith we briefed CAPSSU staff about our preparations for the holidays and never once were told of the likelihood of a tender or an outside organisation being contracted. In early December only days before the commencement of our programs we found out through a third party of CAPSSUs plans. We were forced to withdraw programs... Subsequently we have established that this tender was funded at nearly twice the cost of the programs that we had planned.³⁰

4.42 At the committee's Canberra hearing CAPSSU disagreed with CAYLUS stating that:

CAYLUS certainly had discussions with a number of communities. We followed the process that we have to follow to go to a tender process to spend the money. They were invited to a tender and, from my recollection, they did not put in a tender for that particular one.³¹

4.43 CAYLUS were also particularly concerned that the funding model put out to tender was a 'one-size-fits-all' model which would result in:

30 CAYLUS, *Submission 10*, pp. 9-10.

31 Mr Steve Vaughan, CAPSSU, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 20.

...less local ownership of the programs as local people are less involved in the design and implementation.³²

4.44 The committee was particularly concerned with the selection of a non-local organisation with no previous experience in the geographical area. The committee is aware of the issues this can create as outlined by Mission Australia in chapter 2. In response to the awarding of this contract to an outside organisation, the committee asked CAPSSU what weight is given to an organisation's existing presence in the region when considering the awarding of the contract, CAPSSU replied:

We put quite a considerable weight on local knowledge and also on the contents of the responses to a tender process. That is what it is judged on...

...The process that we have gone through with the tenderers is decided on what is in the tender document, on the judgment of the tender panel for the quality of service, the costings of that and what they are going to deliver.³³

4.45 The committee was also informed that there are no local people involved in the decision making process for a successful tender, the decisions are made by government officials based solely on:

...the documentation we receive from potential tenderers; how it complies with the tender's specifications, what they will deliver, when they will deliver certain services and the cost factor.³⁴

Recommendation 14

4.46 The committee considers the provision of successful programs in remote Indigenous communities to be a highly specialised area for which mainstream programs and 'one-size-fits-all' solutions are not necessarily appropriate. The committee recommends that in order to maximise local ownership and effectiveness of programs, the awarding of contracts in remote Indigenous communities must take into consideration a tenderer's:

- **on-the-ground presence, reputation and standing in the region;**
- **existing relationships, networks within the region and support or endorsement from communities; and**
- **ability to provide tailored programs to individual communities or groups of communities in response to the diverse cultural expectations, kinship systems and protocols of the region.**

Funding cycles and administrative burden

4.47 One issue that has been consistently raised with the committee as reducing the effectiveness of resources is the short term approach to funding programs and

32 CAYLUS, *Submission 10*, p. 10.

33 Mr Steve Vaughan, CAPSSU, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 19.

34 Mr Steve Vaughan, CAPSSU, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, p. 20.

organisations. The committee previously recommended in its 2006 report that all governments commit to longer term funding models. The Commonwealth government noted in its submission that this issue 'is currently the subject of work being undertaken by a Cross Agency Working Group which reports to the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs'.³⁵

4.48 The Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (ADAC) also raised the issue of short term funding at the committee's Adelaide hearing, stating that the petrol sniffing manuals and other resources on substance abuse they produce are not always available and 'tend to come to an end because, as you probably know, governments tend to have a short term agenda rather than a long term funding plan, and that has been part of the problem'.³⁶ ADAC recommend that when governments have:

...funding rounds or buckets of money available...it does not change the rules or let that bucket of money disappear. I will just give you a quick example—that is what happened with the alcohol and other drug training project. The funding came out of the Indigenous capacity building fund to start off with, which was a small fund that they had within DoHA. So that was actually funded—it was a national type COAG cost-shared project. It had some good results. For example, here in South Australia 11 workers have now graduated with certificate III. Unfortunately, when the next budget cycle came around that funding was taken and put into some other initiative. As it turned out it was tobacco. Therefore, groups like us could not access that money. When we tried to suggest that there was \$20 million, for example, for Aboriginal health workers and asked if we could actually access some of that money, we got told that we are not health workers. Maybe we are not, but we are allied professionals. It comes down to education and training. Government tends to change priorities on an ongoing basis, which makes it very difficult for committee groups such as us and others to keep abreast of the changes and also to be successful when it comes to seeking ongoing funding.³⁷

4.49 The NPY Women's Council also note that funding it receives for school summer holiday programs is:

...intermittent and comes from various sources, such as the SA Department for Families and Communities, the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.³⁸

35 FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, p. 7.

36 Mr Scott Wilson, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 17.

37 Mr Scott Wilson, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 20.

38 Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council, *Submission 11*, pp. 9-10.

4.50 CAYLUS stated in their submission that the government so far has not addressed this issue and continues to ineffectively manage available resources.

The federal government has still a lot to learn about managing money effectively, with its boom and bust funding cycles, the insecurity of ongoing funding, gaps between funding periods and a general high level of insecurity. It is ironic that Indigenous people were felt to need Income Management when the federal government is itself incapable of managing money efficiently. In many cases the NTER has compounded this problem with many departments currently unable to issue funding contracts of more than 12 months.³⁹

4.51 The Commonwealth government acknowledged in its submission that:

Many youth services in central Australia (like services elsewhere) operate under short term funding arrangements. Programs attempt to meet immediate need, build capacity and address underlying causes. However, underlying causes which have evolved over a significant period of time cannot be addressed by projects funded for a 12 month period...

...Consequences of the short term nature of the funding to youth services (including in central Australia) is that organisations and communities have difficulty planning for continuity of service provision, attracting qualified and experienced staff because they cannot offer long term employment, and that communities experience high turn over of workers.⁴⁰

4.52 The committee asked Associate Professor McDermott from the Flinders School of Medicine at its Adelaide hearing about the length of time programs should be funded to make them more effective. Associate Professor McDermott outlined that he could not specify an exact number of years but noted that many people report that even a three-year funding arrangement is not sufficient.

I think we need to bite the bullet and say these things are going to take time but it took time to develop them, to arrive at where they are. Aboriginal people are patient if there is some progress being made. It is more about getting it right.⁴¹

4.53 Another element related to effectiveness of resources across a broad range of service provision areas is the multiple sources of funds and the associated reporting requirements. Evidence was presented to the committee that the arrangements are complex, taking time and energy away from service provision. For example, at the committee's hearing in Alice Springs, the committee heard that CAYLUS receives program funding from 12 different sources and that the duration of this funding appears to be uncertain. CAYLUS gave evidence that they were initially funded by the Department of Health and Ageing for a three year period but once this term ended

39 CAYLUS, *Submission 10*, p. 15.

40 FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, pp. 28-29

41 Associate Professor Dennis McDermott, Flinders University School of Medicine, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 105.

they were given contract extensions, initially two six month extensions which were extended by a further three months and then another nine months.⁴²

4.54 The Commonwealth government updated the committee on the steps it has taken to address this issue at the hearing in Canberra:

FaHCSIA is actively working with the other Commonwealth agencies in the space to try to fix what I would call the 'paper side' of red tape...It is not so much about whether you have a single contract, because you can have a single contract and if you have still got all the same reporting requirements that does not make it any simpler. For instance, we have been working on the performance indicators to come down to a much simpler set and quantity of performance indicators that would be more common across the programs particularly in the Indigenous space, although we are now working to try to introduce that into the rest of FaHCSIA as well.

At the moment we are also actively working to try to make the terms and conditions...simpler for the standard terms and conditions that apply certainly to all the FaHCSIA grants...We are working with the other Commonwealth agencies and Indigenous Affairs to see if we can get them agreed to there as well. So they are all steps in the right direction and I think that we are on the verge of making some progress there. It has taken us a while to get there but we are trying to carry a lot of people and a lot of organisations along with us.

Having said that, that is still only a step and there is still a lot of work to do...there are a smaller number of providers who have a large number of grants and certainly in Indigenous Affairs there are a number of providers who have that range of grants. While we try to do the top down and try to make the structure better, we are also looking at a local level, using the ICCs and our state networks to look at some of those providers who have particularly complex arrangements to see if, from the ground up, we can help make more sense of that. I would be the first to say that we have got an awful long way to go, but I do think we are starting to build some momentum in that space.⁴³

4.55 The committee considers that having to spend excessive amounts of time regularly chasing funding, with high levels of administrative demand placed upon service organisations by government departments, combined with the seeming inability or unwillingness of these departments to provide funding certainty to effective organisations creates unnecessary inefficiencies in the way resources are deployed.

4.56 The committee agrees with the Commonwealth government's observation that long term funding is required and notes that a number of reports have been commissioned by the Commonwealth as a way of better understanding what the

42 Mr Tristan Ray and Mr Blair McFarland, CAYLUS, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2008, pp. 24 and 25.

43 Ms Donna Moody, FaHCSIA, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2009, pp. 27-8.

problems are and what needs to be done, including the 2006 report by Morgan Disney titled *A Red Tape Evaluation in Selected Indigenous Communities* released in May 2006. The evaluation found that the administrative burden was greater when:

- applications for grants are required every year, rather than on a three year basis, with the latter requiring only an annual budget update.
- reporting is more frequent. However this is a necessary requirement when frequent reporting is used to monitor high risk organisations or projects.
- organisations use many sources of funds from two levels of government each with discrete reporting requirements and discrete contact staff.⁴⁴

4.57 Measures cited in the report being developed to reduce red tape include:

- Developing a plain language agreement;
- Developing a significantly reduced common set of performance indicators, that will assist measurement of project and program performance, while reducing demands on service providers;
- Improving the link between funds provided and accountability/reporting requirements;
- Facilitating performance reporting across program types, and across Australian Government Agencies; and
- Greater use of multi-year and multi-agency funding that will enhance the capacity of organisations to plan co-ordinated and longer term services.⁴⁵

4.58 The Commonwealth government's submission noted that the implementation of the evaluation's recommendations is:

...being oversighted by the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs and will see a reduction in administrative burden placed on community organisation, while maintaining an appropriate level of accountability.⁴⁶

Recommendation 15

4.59 The committee reaffirms the recommendation of its 2006 report that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments immediately provide long term, flexible funding, especially for successful programs already operating in communities, to address the sporadic nature and short term focus of current funding models.

44 Morgan Disney & Associates Pty Ltd., *A Red Tape Evaluation in Selected Indigenous Communities*, Final report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, May 2006, p. 6.

45 FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, p. 29.

46 FaHCSIA, DoHA, DEEWR and AGD, *Submission 14*, p. 29

Recommendation 16

4.60 That governments and departments within governments, work to design application and accountability processes which avoid duplication and reduce the number of contracts that service providers are required to enter into and aspire to a single contract where possible. This is to minimise the reporting and administrative burden on service providers. The committee notes that governments should aspire to providing a single contract where possible.

Adult education services for ex-sniffers

4.61 While the committee was visiting Papunya the school raised the issue of providing basic literacy classes to adults who had missed much of their education due to petrol sniffing. These people were now too old to return to school and existing adult education classes were too advanced for their literacy and numeracy levels.

4.62 The provision of adult education is quite a significant gap in rehabilitation services in many communities as CAYLUS outlined at the Alice Springs hearing:

It is extremely common, particularly in the west of the highway where there was really chronic sniffing for more than a decade. Basically a whole generation of kids who were not getting a great education anyway just did not get any sort of education. They were sniffing all night and sleeping all day. On the odd occasions they turned up for school, their behaviour was not very good...It becomes a really uncomfortable environment for young people to be in, so they basically opt out.

About a month after the sniffing really stopped in Papunya...16 teenage boys turned up at school and said, 'What have you got for us?' The school had to send them away because they just did not have anything to offer to them, not only because they suddenly had a big influx of people—more than they could cope with because they did not have the staff—but also because those kids had no background whatsoever in education and there was not the flexibility in the school system to work with them...⁴⁷

4.63 Mission Australia was also asked whether this was an area they had been allocated resources to address. Mission Australia agreed that this:

...is the group that we are struggling with. I have said that on a couple of occasions. The key for us is to engage with the Job Network providers to provide prevocational training that will lead to a job. It is difficult. With the current employment services delivery set up there is very little contact between Job Network providers and people who need their services on communities.⁴⁸

47 Mr Blair McFarland, CAYLUS, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2008, p. 20.

48 Mr Paul Phyland, Mission Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2008, p. 70.

4.64 The NPY Women's Council stated that one of the selection criteria for the NTYISP was to provide educational opportunities for disengaged youth.⁴⁹ To date the Council has not observed any such educational initiatives however they are aware of Mission Australia's plans to increase the use of job network providers.

4.65 The committee also recognises that Job Network providers may not have the appropriate resources to address this issue as much of the prevocational training available is too advanced for some of the ex-petrol sniffers, as some have no literacy or numeracy skills. Community members in Papunya advised the committee that some of the young people can only sign their name with an 'X'. These young people require specific and intensive remedial education in order to prepare them for prevocational training.

Recommendation 17

4.66 That additional resources be provided for adult education classes in communities where the reduction in petrol sniffing has created a need for these services, and that appropriate adult education engagement and training methodologies are used, delivered by qualified adult educators.

Resources for early childhood services and nutrition

4.67 Another issue that the committee believes is important to effectively strengthen and support communities and which has arisen during this inquiry is greater support and resources for early childhood programs, services and nutrition. Dr Brian McCoy stated in his submission that:

A further issue, as with all agencies within the region, lies in their resources and capabilities to take a 'whole of family' and 'whole of community' approach to petrol sniffing that would enable some of the underlying causes of petrol sniffing to be addressed. As with earlier comments it would seem difficult, if not impossible, to address petrol sniffing behaviour by young people if wider family and community needs are not also addressed.⁵⁰

The submission from Maggie Kavanagh also recommended that more support be given to Balgo for early childhood, parenting and nutrition awareness programs.⁵¹

4.68 The committee observed the importance of adequate resources for a 'whole of family' approach when it visited the Homemakers' Centre in Amata on the APY Lands. This centre provides nutritious meals for babies, children and their mothers and works with the health clinic to get information on which mothers need assistance and which children are 'failing to thrive'. The committee was advised that the centre provides an essential and unique service in the community and before it was

49 Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council, *Submission 11*, p. 8.

50 Dr Brian McCoy, *Submission 7*, p. 3.

51 Maggie Kavanagh, *Submission 18*, p. 5.

operational every week there were babies were being hospitalised for malnutrition. This undoubtedly has implications for the ongoing health and cognitive development of children and young people in the community.

4.69 The committee understands that there is a funding shortfall for these centres of approximately \$300 000 per year. The South Australian government advised the committee that an additional \$200 000 would be provided to the centres as it has:

... an absolute commitment to the homemaker centres...It is a way that we can make sure that, in particular, very young babies can get looked after from a food security point of view. On the lands, as in any other remote community, that is extremely important.

There has been a lot of research done both here and overseas around food security and we know that, between the time that babies get weened and the time that they start walking, there is a gap where they cannot reach for food themselves. The homemaker program provides a way that we can teach young mums and dads about the necessity of providing high-quality food and also increases the availability of food for that section of the community.⁵²

4.70 The committee considers such centres to be an essential part of supporting and strengthening communities and urges all governments to commit to providing adequate resources to ensure that each community has a similar facility or programs in place and that existing centres are able to provide a quality service to the community.

Continued monitoring

4.71 The significance of the problem of petrol sniffing, the irreversible damage it does to young people and the effect it has on communities is such that the committee considered it necessary to revisit the issue to ensure that the government's response has been adequate and effective. So while much practical progress has been made the committee notes that a number of the recommendations of the committee's earlier report have either not as yet been implemented, or not implemented to the extent recommended by the committee.

4.72 In particular, the committee made recommendations (Recommendations 1 and 3) to ensure that there is ongoing monitoring of the recommendations of previous inquiries and reports relating to petrol sniffing and substance abuse. The Commonwealth government's submission made reference to these recommendations but did not outline whether any consideration had been given to them or not.

4.73 The committee notes that no additional resources have been given to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to annually review the implementation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and Coroners' recommendations as listed in the committee's previous report. CAYLUS

52 Ms Kim Petersen, South Australian government, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 54.

noted that if the committee's previous recommendation was implemented it would provide 'ongoing scrutiny and ensure better implementation'.⁵³

4.74 In addition since the committee last reported there have been two further reports that identified substance abuse as a structural factor that impacts on the prevalence of sexual abuse in Indigenous communities. These are the:

- *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred"*, the Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse; and
- *Children on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yunkunyjatjara (APY) Lands Commission of Inquiry – A report into sexual abuse by Commissioner Ted Mullighan to the South Australian Government in April 2008.*

4.75 The committee believes that these reports and their recommendations provide a comprehensive framework for addressing many of the contextual issues and underlying problems that lead people to sniff petrol and abuse substances. Ongoing monitoring of progress towards implementing these recommendations is essential to ensure that recent gains in this area are sustained in the long term.

We do not want to go back to the state that we were in. We live with the fear that other sources of drugs, or whatever, will come into our communities.⁵⁴

4.76 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will also ensure accountability and avoid the need for similar inquiries and reports in the future. As the committee stated in its previous report:

The Committee does not want the recommendations of this report to be added to the already long list of recommendations that have been read, commented on but not fully implemented. It is time to effectively address the underlying causes of petrol sniffing through a sustained effort by all levels of government and through community commitment. The lessons learnt from successful programs must be heeded and implemented in other communities where petrol sniffing is killing Indigenous youth and disrupting the social fabric of communities.⁵⁵

53 CAYLUS, *Submission 10*, p. 14.

54 Janet Inyaka, NPY Women's Council, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2008, p. 43.

55 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Beyond petrol sniffing: renewing hope for Indigenous communities*, June 2006, p.19.

Recommendation 18

4.77 The committee reaffirms recommendation 3 of its 2006 report that the Commonwealth government provide adequate additional resources to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to monitor and report annually on the progress towards implementing the above mentioned recommendations until the Commissioner can report that all recommendations have been sufficiently addressed.

Conclusion

4.78 This report clearly sets out some of the remaining areas of need, based on the evidence provided to this committee from governments, communities and other stakeholders. The committee therefore looks forward to its recommendations being embraced by the Commonwealth government as part of the continuing evolution and success of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy.

Senator Claire Moore
Chair

March 2009