

ISSUE: CLOSING THE GAP AND THE NT GENERATIONAL PLAN FOR INDIGENOUS TERRITORIANS

Recommendations:

1. The NT Generational Plan be expanded to include all Territorians.
2. The NTG encourage tertiary accredited cultural education for all NTG employees engaged in policy development and implementation, or service delivery involving Indigenous Territorians.

Background:

Issues surrounding Indigenous peoples and their involvement in the broader social, political and economic development of the Northern Territory are complex and of national significance. The future development of the Northern Territory is dependent upon the successful engagement of our Indigenous peoples in economic, social and political challenges. To make a difference Indigenous Territorians must be meaningfully and respectfully engaged by governments. However current policy decisions and program implementation are based on assumptions that reflect scant understanding and little respect for Indigenous aspirations, values and culture.

Current situation:

The NT Government has placed the issues of Indigenous disadvantage and equitable economic participation on the COAG agenda. This makes a strong public statement that necessitates action. Currently public servants have limited understanding of the behaviours, protocols, languages and cultural backgrounds, and little or no understanding of the aspirations and goals of the Indigenous population. There are no incentives or encouragement for public servants to gain these understandings. Given the current demographic trends in the Northern Territory, it would seem timely to promote avenues that will promote intercultural understandings and awareness. This can easily be achieved by placing successful completion of Fee for Service units or the Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Knowledges as **Highly Desirable** in the selection criteria for identified positions in the NT Government. Units selected for study would reflect employee work responsibilities. Charles Darwin University's School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems (SAIKS) is ideally positioned to offer the appropriate training and education necessary for the NTG to achieve this visionary goal.

Such a progressive step would provide a leading example to all Territorians of the need to take the NT's Indigenous peoples seriously as social, economic and political equals within the wider NT community. This initiative makes a bold statement that the NTG is not only interested to engage Indigenous Territorians but most importantly that it is willing to act.

Budget Implications:

The addition of a formal university qualification under the Highly Desirable section in the selection criteria for all public servant positions will have insignificant budgetary impact as study is only recommended not mandatory, and could be placed within the existing approved study guidelines.