



The Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs

Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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23 NOV 2009

Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion
Chair
Senate Select Committee on Regional
and Remote Indigenous Communities
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator the Hon Scullion

Thank you for your letter of 2 October 2009, on behalf of the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities (the Committee), inviting me to respond to various issues raised during the Committee's inquiry.

Please find enclosed responses to the specific issues mentioned in **Attachment A** to your letter.

I trust these responses will be of assistance to the Committee in finalising its report.

Yours sincerely

JENNY MACKLIN MP

Item: 1 - COAG National Partnership Agreements

Response required: *Whether any incentive payments have been made to states and territories?*

The term “incentive” is not meaningful under the new Federal Financial Framework. The three payment types under the framework are: Project Payments, Facilitation Payments and Reward Payments. There are no reward payments associated with any of the Indigenous specific NPs.

Indigenous Housing and Early Childhood payments are a mix of facilitation payments (up-front payments) and project payments (payment post the achievement of a milestone).

The following Indigenous-specific NPs do not have payments to the states:

- Indigenous Economic Participation;
- Indigenous Health; and
- Remote Service Delivery.

Item: 2 - Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services

Response required: *An update on progress made on housing and infrastructure upgrades at Alice Springs Town Camps and the use of \$25 million to reduce homelessness.*

On 29 July 2009, I announced that 40 year subleases had been agreed to by 16 of the 18 town camps in Alice Springs and steps were being taken to quickly finalise those leases to enable housing and infrastructure works to commence in early August 2009. However, some town camp residents subsequently brought legal action which sought to restrain both the execution of those agreed leases and to stop compulsory acquisition. Interim injunctions were obtained pending the resolution of a hearing held on 31 August and 1 September. A decision has not yet been handed down. I remain committed to finding a way to improve housing and living conditions in the town camps as quickly as possible and would prefer to proceed on the basis of agreed leases if possible.

The Government has continued with its substantial commitment under the Alice Springs Transformation Plan which includes over \$25 million for social services, \$11 million for a managed visitor accommodation facilities to reduce homelessness as well as \$13.4 million from the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan for additional managed accommodation targeted at people requiring accommodation for medical treatment including renal dialysis and transitional accommodation.

Progress includes:

- development of an intensive case coordination model in conjunction with Centrelink, which has commenced operation in the town camps;
- \$100,000 for an additional Alcohol Counsellor, who started work with Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) in September to fill a gap in alcohol treatment services;
- \$1.5 million for the CAAC to expand and improve its Targeted Family Support Service which provides intensive case management for individual families. Additional staff will include two social workers and two Indigenous case workers to expand its case management capacity from 15 to 50 families;
- Communities for Children Early Childhood and Family Support Project – a service provider is expected to be announced in the near future;
- installation of up to two demountables and an ablution block at the Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Programs Unit (CAAAPU);
- \$87,110 in further funding for the Alice Springs Town Council to continue dog control and licensing in the town camps until June 2010;
- \$13.4 million from the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan to construct three new short term accommodation facilities which will provide up to 97 new beds in Alice Springs. Construction of the first of these projects is due to begin in December 2009; and
- a preferred site to locate an additional short term visitor accommodation facility has been identified in Alice Springs and Northern Territory Government officials are seeking the relevant Ministerial approvals to purchase the site. Arrangements for the type and configuration of the accommodation units as well as the supported accommodation management model are progressing to ensure that some accommodation facilities can be quickly established as soon as the site is secured.

Implementation of the Alice Springs Transformation Plan is overseen by a Joint Steering Committee which comprises representatives of the Australian Government, Northern Territory Government, Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, Alice Springs Town Council and Tangentyere Council. The Coordinator-General receives updates on the implementation of the Alice Springs Transformation Plan.

Item: 3 - Expanding Children's Services and Family Support

Response required: *An update on progress made in delivering these services*

Funding provided for the expansion of early childhood services in the Northern Territory (NT) was provided to four different service providers, for the period 2007-09. The funding in 2008-09 enabled greater numbers of Indigenous children (particularly those at risk of abuse and neglect) and families (around 265 parents/caregivers) to access these services which included:

- *Child nutrition prevention and intervention sessions* - to improve the health and well-being of babies and children;
- *Health education program about pregnancy* - breastfeeding and early parenting;
- *Support program to enhance parenting practices*
 - Strengthen family units
 - Develop children's social skills and
 - Reduce problematic behaviour; and
- *Alcohol and Drug rehabilitation program for families and children.*

New funding agreements for 2009-12 have been signed by four early childhood service providers, to enable them to continue these services.

Five new facilitated playgroups were established as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. Two Intensive Support Playgroup providers commenced the delivery of mobile playgroup activities and individualised family support in May 2009 and new funding agreements for 2009-12 have been signed to enable them to continue their services.

One Locational Supported Playgroup provider commenced the delivery of playgroups, targeted at vulnerable Indigenous families with young children living in regional areas, in May 2009 and two others commenced delivery in September 2009. Funding agreements were signed by all three service providers in 2008-09 (for two years) and new funding agreements will be entered into for the period 2009-12.

These playgroups are delivered from a fixed location using pre-existing facilities such as health or child care centres. Around 200 parents/caregivers participate in these five facilitated playgroups.

Item: 4 - Safe Houses

Response required: *An Update on the operation of safe houses in the Northern Territory*

To date, 21 of the 22 Safe Places have been opened. This includes two transitional houses in Alice Springs and Darwin, and 19 Safe Places in remote communities.

It is expected that the extensive refurbishment of the women's Safe Place in Angurugu will be completed by the end of December 2009.

Item: 5 – Safe houses

Response required: *An update on community consultation process for management and operation of safe houses*

All the Safe Places in remote locations are staffed by local people employed by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families. Remote staff are supported by a team of Safe Place Project Officers based in Darwin. This team:

- regularly travels to communities to provide face to face support; and
- provides daily telephone contact and support to Safe Place staff.

The Northern Territory Department of Health and Families advised that Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between Safe Places and other services such as Police and Night Patrols will be developed and adapted to the local community conditions. This will establish a formal cooperative framework for the provision of safety to women and children in the remote communities. Safe houses will be known as a neutral place for all women wishing to take an active part in stopping violence for themselves, their families and their communities.

The Australian Government is working with communities to take forward a range of enhancements to the Safe Place sites including:

- minor refurbishments;
- landscaping, aided by Greening Australia and using local workers; and
- painting, murals, children's play areas, outdoor seating, barbeque facilities etc that make families feel more comfortable using the facilities, and engage the community.

Items: 6 & 7 - Diversionary activities for young people

Response required: *An update on the development of a youth services strategy for the Northern Territory, addressing both capital infrastructure and recurrent funding for youth workers and diversionary programs*

Funding of \$28.4 million over three years was announced in the May 2009 Budget under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory *Youth in Communities* measure. This funding will contribute to the development of a comprehensive youth services infrastructure across priority Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. A total of \$8.79 million has been allocated to fund youth projects under this measure in 2009/10.

Milestone achievements to date include:

- an overarching strategic framework and comprehensive program guidelines for the Closing the Gap in the NT Youth in Communities funding measure has been finalised by my Department. A Senior Officers Group is being set up to provide NT and other Australian Government input into the development and implementation of this measure;
- four continuation projects have been approved for funding, to a total value of \$3.706 million. These projects will be funded over three years, and are expected to provide employment and training opportunities for approximately 44 youth workers across eight Remote Service Delivery townships, one Territory Growth township, and a number of other priority communities. Negotiation of funding agreements for these projects is currently underway, with the projects likely to commence implementation from late November 2009;
- work has also commenced on completing a survey of the NT Remote Service Delivery and NT Growth townships with Indigenous youth populations above the NT average. This survey will inform the funding of new projects under the Youth in Communities measure. The survey is expected to be completed by the first week of December 2009; and
- the call for applications to fund new youth projects under the Youth in Communities measure is on schedule for early December 2009, with agreements expected to be in place to commence projects by late January 2010.

Item: 8 – School breakfast and lunch program

Response required: *An update on number of schools with an operational breakfast and lunch program and whether this is having a demonstrable impact on school attendance?*

As at 2 November 2009 there are 64 remote schools in the NT with an Australian Government funded School Nutrition Program in place. Of these, 59 are Government schools and five are NT Catholic Education Office schools.

SNP provides an estimated 7000 meals per day to the 4400 attending school students - 2600 breakfasts and 4400 lunches (based on August 2009 NT Dept of Education school enrolment and attendance data).

We have been advised that nearly all program contributions are made under Income Management (IM). As at 13 November 2009, of the 3782 IM Centrelink customers with school aged children 3209 (or 85%) were voluntarily contributing toward the School Nutrition Program.

A list of all schools with School Nutrition Programs in place is attached.

Whilst all schools provide lunch, not all schools provide breakfast. In some schools, parents provide breakfast to their own children, and in 14 schools breakfast is supplied under the Red Cross Good Start Breakfast Club initiative.

The goal of the School Nutrition Program in relation to school attendance is to “*contribute to improved school attendance and engagement by providing breakfast and / or lunch to children enrolled in Year 1 to Year 10 in [prescribed communities of the NT]*” (School Nutrition Program Administrative Guidelines, July to December 2009, p. 6 paragraph 2.3, emphasis added).

In its recent performance audit of the School Nutrition Program, the Office of Evaluation and Audit (Indigenous Programs) found that “*the number and relative importance of other factors impacting [on] student attendance and engagement makes it difficult for DEEWR to be able to attribute any changes in student attendance and engagement specifically to the implementation of SNP*” (OEA Performance Audit of the School Nutrition Program, June 2009, p.15 para 2.8).

Item: 9 – Support for Carers

Response required: *An update on processes for ensuring that eligible carers receive appropriate payments.*

The definition of a Treating Health Professional has now been broadened to include Indigenous health workers and other visiting medical services. This will enable Indigenous customers in Remote and Rural areas to have their Care Load needs assessed in their local community rather than having to travel considerable distances as was necessary in the past.

Centrelink is in the final stages of completing the Indigenous Carers DVD (Caring for Our People) in English and ten Indigenous languages to be distributed to RASC's and third party organisations. Centrelink is investigating running the Indigenous Carers DVD on NITV (National Indigenous TV) during peak times.

In addition, Centrelink is developing radio messages for regional and remote community radio stations.

NT GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN PRESCRIBED AREAS OF THE NT WITH AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDED SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM IN PLACE AT 2 NOVEMBER 2009 (n=59)

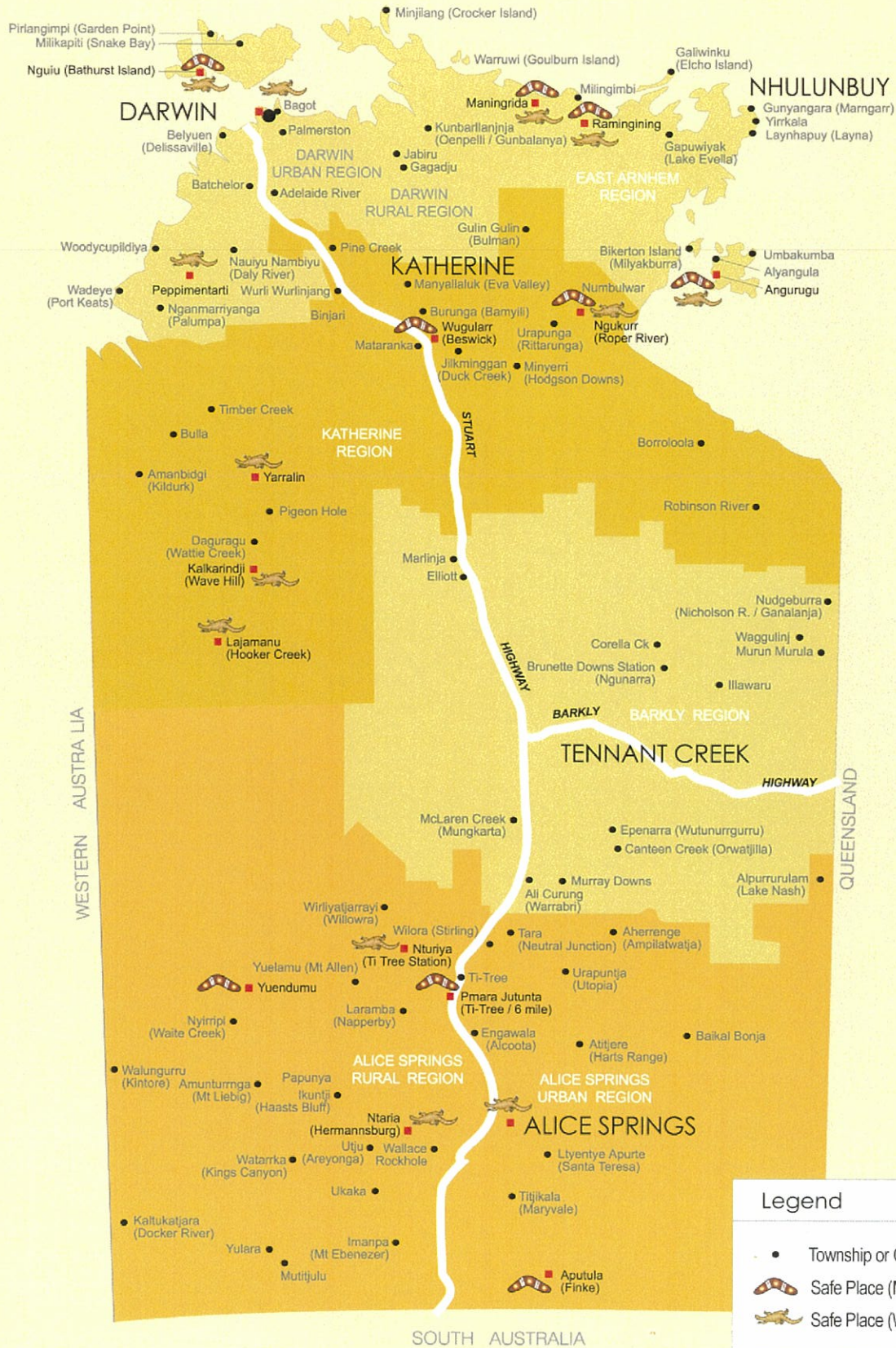
| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Alcoota School | Kalkaringi School | Peppimenarti School |
| Alcoota School | Laramba School | Pigeon Hole School |
| Alpurrurulam School | Lajamanu School | Pularumpi School |
| Amoonguna School | Mamaruni School | Ramingining School |
| Ampilatwatja School | Maningrida School | Robinson River School |
| Angurugu School | Manyallaluk School | Shepherdson College |
| Areyonga School | Milikapiti School | Stirling School |
| Barunga School | Milingimbi School | Ti Tree School |
| Belyuen School | Milyakburra School | Titjikala School |
| Bulman School | Minyerri School | Umbakumba School |
| Canteen Creek School | Mt Allan School | Wallace Rockhole School |
| Docker River School | Murray Downs School | Walungurru School |
| Epenarra School | Mutjitjulu School | Warruwi School |
| Finke School | Neutral Junction School | Watiyawanu School |
| Gapuwiyak School | Nganmariyanga School | Willowra School |
| Gunbalanya School | Ngukurr School | Woolianna School |
| Haasts Bluff School | Ntaria School | Wugularr School |
| Harts Range School | Numbulwar School | Yarralin School |
| Imanpa School | Nyirripi School | Yuendumu School |
| Jilkminggan School | Papunya School | |

NT CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE SCHOOLS IN PRESCRIBED AREAS OF THE NT WITH AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDED SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM IN PLACE AT 2 NOVEMBER 2009 (n=5)

Ltyentye Apurte CEC
Murrupurtiyanuwu
OLSH Thamarrur
St Francis Xavier's School
Xavier CEC

Attachment B – Item 1

Safe Places in Aboriginal Communities



Attachment C

Item 2 (b): Organisations funded by the Northern Territory Government and providing Youth Services

| ORGANISATION | SERVICE |
|---|---|
| WEST ARNHAM SHIRE COUNCIL | GUNBALANYA YOUTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM |
| ANGLICARE NT | YOUTH DROP IN & ACTIVITY ZONE (YDIAZ) |
| ANGLICARE NT | HEALTH CONNECTIONS FOR YOUTH |
| AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY- NORTHERN TERRITORY DIVISION | THE SHAK - SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM |
| AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY- NORTHERN TERRITORY DIVISION | E-CRUZ YOUTH RECREATION |
| BRAHMINY GROUP PTY LTD | BRAHMINY FOUNDATION YOUTH CAMP PROGRAM 01/7/2009 - 30/06/2011 |
| CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CONGRESS INCORPORATED | AFTER HOURS YOUTH DROP IN CENTRE |
| GAP YOUTH CENTRE ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | GYC MANAGEMENT |
| HUMAN SERVICES TRAINING ADVISORY COUNCIL INC. | COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NT YOUTH AFFAIRS NETWORK (NTYAN) |
| MISSION AUSTRALIA | KATHERINE YOUTH BEAT |
| MISSION AUSTRALIA | ZERO TO TEN SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM |
| MISSION AUSTRALIA | DARWIN AND PALMERSTON YOUTH BEAT |
| MISSION AUSTRALIA | DARWIN AND PALMERSTON YOUTH BEAT |
| MISSION AUSTRALIA | YOUTH BEAT DARWIN AND PALMERSTON |
| MT THEO-YUENDUMU SUBSTANCE MISUSE ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | WILLOWRA COMMUNITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM |
| TANGENTYERE COUNCIL INCORPORATED | ALICE SPRINGS CIRCUIT BREAKER YOUTH CAMP PROGRAM |
| TANGENTYERE COUNCIL INCORPORATED | AFTER HOURS YOUTH RECREATION |
| YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION INC. (DU) | THE SISTERS PROJECT |
| ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES INC. | CRISIS ACCOMMODATION |

| ORGANISATION | SERVICE |
|---|---|
| YOUNG MENS CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION KATHERINE INC | YMCA KATHRINE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT UNIT PROGRAM |
| YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION INC. (DU) | THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE YOUTH DIVERSION SCHEME |
| ANGLICARE NT | THE DEPOT (DHCS STABILISATION, ASSESSMENT AND TRANSITIONAL (SAT) PROGRAM |
| ANGLICARE NT | CHILD YOUTH RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICE (CYRSS) |
| CREATE FOUNDATION NT | CREATE NT |
| ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES INC. | YOUTH HOUSING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM |
| ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES INC. | AMPE AKWEKE |
| YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION INC. (DU) | CASY HOUSE: INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVED LINKAGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CRISIS ACCOMODATION |
| ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES INC. | CRISIS ACCOMMODATION |
| ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES INC. | YOUTH HOUSING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM |
| ALICE SPRINGS YOUTH ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES INC. | AMPE AKWEKE |
| ANGLICARE NT | ANGLICARE YOUTH HOUSING PROGRAM - PALMERSTON & RURAL |
| ANGLICARE NT | ANGLICARE YOUTH HOUSING PROGRAM - DARWIN |
| SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY SERVICES INC. | YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES - KATHERINE |
| YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION INC. (DU) | CASY HOUSE |
| YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION INC. (DU) | INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS |