

The Senate

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Select Committee on Regional and  
Remote Indigenous Communities

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Second report 2009

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## Abbreviations

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ACCHO</b>	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
<b>AFP</b>	Australian Federal Police
<b>AHW</b>	Aboriginal Health Worker
<b>AIFS</b>	Australian Institute of Family Studies
<b>AIHW</b>	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>ALGA</b>	Australian Local Government Association
<b>AMSANT</b>	Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory
<b>AOD</b>	Alcohol and Other Drug
<b>APY</b>	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yunkunyjatjara Lands
<b>ARIA+</b>	Accessibility/Remoteness Index Australia
<b>ATSIL</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
<b>CAALAS</b>	Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service
<b>CAYLUS</b>	Central Australian Youth Link Up Service
<b>CDEP</b>	Community Development Employment Projects
<b>COAG</b>	Council of Australian Governments
<b>DASSA</b>	Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia
<b>DEEWR</b>	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
<b>DET</b>	Northern Territory Department of Education and Training
<b>DFC</b>	State Department for Families and Communities
<b>DoHA</b>	Department of Health and Ageing
<b>DFEEST</b>	South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology



<b>EHSDI</b>	Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>FaHCSIA</b>	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
<b>GBM</b>	Government Business Manager
<b>ICC</b>	Indigenous Coordination Centre
<b>IEP</b>	Indigenous Employment Program
<b>MCEETYA</b>	The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
<b>MOS</b>	Mobile Outreach Service
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NAAJA</b>	North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
<b>NAPLAN</b>	National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy tests
<b>NATSIHS</b>	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
<b>NATSISS</b>	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
<b>NCETA</b>	National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction
<b>NPY</b>	Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
<b>NTEETA</b>	Northern Territory Education Employment and Training Authority
<b>NTER</b>	Northern Territory Emergency Response
<b>NTIYS</b>	Northern Territory Integrated Youth Services
<b>OATSIH</b>	Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
<b>PY</b>	Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation
<b>RAFCW</b>	Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers
<b>RDA</b>	<i>Racial Discrimination Act 1976</i>
<b>RTC</b>	Rural Transaction Centre
<b>RTO</b>	Registered Training Organisation

<b>SEAM</b>	Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure
<b>SIHIP</b>	Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure program
<b>SPP</b>	Special Purpose Payment
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

**3.27** The committee recommends that COAG make a concerted effort to improve the quality and scope of existing data collections on regional and remote Indigenous communities and urges all departments and agencies to routinely utilise the expertise of dedicated statistical agencies such as the ABS and AIHW when collecting and analysing data to ensure that it is consistent and accurate across all jurisdictions.

### Recommendation 2

**4.71** That the Commonwealth government increase access to alcohol and other drug detoxification, treatment and rehabilitation services across the Northern Territory, ensuring that there is ongoing support for individuals after they have accessed programs and services.

### Recommendation 3

**4.203** The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government review its overall communication strategy for regional and remote Indigenous communities with the view to making information available to communities on an ongoing and regular basis and in an accessible way. In the instance of the SIHIP program the communication strategy should provide information on how the decision to fund housing in the priority communities was made, as well as regular information on how the construction of this new housing is progressing.

### Recommendation 4

**4.228** That in communities without access to a local store licensed to accept the BasicsCard, alternative arrangements should be made so that people are able to access income managed funds at their local store. This could be in the form of a temporary arrangement with the store until the licensing process can be completed.

### Recommendation 5

**4.232** The committee recommends that in order to be licensed as a merchant for the BasicsCard, FaHCSIA make it a condition of license that roadhouses within the Petrol Sniffing Strategy Central Desert Region and feeder sites to this region sell Opal fuel.

### Recommendation 6

**4.256** The committee recommends that the Commonwealth commit to longer term program funding so that organisations can enjoy greater funding certainty and offer staff greater job security. This is especially the case in relation to organisations who have established relationships with funding bodies and good risk management strategies in place.

**Recommendation 7**

**5.31 That the Commonwealth and South Australian governments provide additional funding and appropriate support to the Homemakers Centres in the APY Lands so that all seven centres are operating at an effective level and that the Commonwealth government consider supporting similar Homemakers Centres in other remote Indigenous communities as a matter of priority.**

**Recommendation 8**

**5.49 That the Commonwealth Attorney-General's office undertake discussions with the South Australian government with a view to the South Australian government undertaking a review of the Magistrates Court Circuit on the APY Lands to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.**

**Recommendation 9**

**5.112 Recognising that access to numeracy and literacy training in regional and remote Indigenous communities is limited but given that it plays a fundamental role, the committee recommends that the Commonwealth government, in consultation with state and territory governments, prioritise the implementation of basic and appropriate adult literacy and numeracy programs in order to address the current identified need.**

**Recommendation 10**

**5.125 The committee recommends that the Northern Territory government review the high levels of custodial sentences in the Northern Territory and the reasons for recent increases as well as determine whether the non-custodial options available to magistrates and judges are sufficient.**

**Recommendation 11**

**5.133 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government coordinates, in cooperation with the relevant states and territories, a review of the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by family violence in Indigenous communities as well as the current unmet need for appropriate facilities and resources in the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara cross border region.**

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Terms of Reference

1.1 On 19 March 2008 the Senate resolved to appoint a Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities to inquire into and report on:

- a. the effectiveness of Australian Government policies following the Northern Territory Emergency Response,<sup>1</sup> specifically on the state of health, welfare, education and law and order in regional and remote Indigenous communities;
- b. the impact of state and territory government policies on the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities;
- c. the health, welfare, education and security of children in regional and remote Indigenous communities; and
- d. the employment and enterprise opportunities in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

### Inquiry process

1.2 As at 3 June 2009, the committee had received a total of 92 submissions. Fifty four of these were received since the committee last reported in 2008 and are listed at Appendix 1. The submissions are also available on the committee's website at [http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/indig\\_ctte/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/indig_ctte/index.htm).

1.3 In the lead up to the committee's second report, public hearings were held in Adelaide, Alice Springs, Katherine, Darwin and Canberra. The committee also visited several regional and remote Indigenous communities including:

- Broken Hill, Cobar and Dubbo in Western New South Wales;
- Amata in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, South Australia;
- Mutitjulu, Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and Alice Springs in Central Australia, Northern Territory; and
- Milingimbi in Arnhemland in the Northern Territory.

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1 The committee notes that the Northern Territory Emergency Response is now being referred to as Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory.

1.4 A list of organisations that appeared at its public hearings and which the committee visited appears at Appendix Two.

### **Future plans**

1.5 The committee intends to hold a public hearing in Sydney later in 2009 and to visit Kimberley communities and hold public hearings in Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek during 2009.

1.6 The committee also intends to visit regional and remote Indigenous communities and hold public hearings in Queensland in the later half of the year before the committee is next due to report on 26 November 2009.

### **Structure of the report**

1.7 The report contains five chapters, of which this is the first. The second chapter sets out the Commonwealth policy framework and overarching governance directing Indigenous Affairs policy in Australia. The third chapter contains a snapshot of the type of available data on the nature and status of regional and remote Indigenous communities.

1.8 Chapter 4 addresses the Northern Territory Emergency Response and details evidence presented to the committee and its findings at this stage of the inquiry. The fifth chapter case studies the impact of state and territory policies in relation to South Australia and the Northern Territory, the two jurisdictions in which the committee has had the chance to take evidence from the state government and from the Commonwealth.

1.9 While the committee visited both Western Australia and New South Wales, it has not had a chance to take evidence in relation to issues raised in these states and will defer its substantive report on Western Australia and New South Wales government policy until its next report.

### **Previous and current inquiries of relevance**

1.10 Since the committee last reported, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs tabled *Open for Business: Developing Indigenous enterprises in Australia*, its report of the inquiry into developing Indigenous enterprises. The report made 15 recommendations on Indigenous business strengths and competitive advantage, the role of government, industry and community programs, corporate incentives to trade and engage with Indigenous businesses and the pilot Indigenous Supplier Development Council.<sup>2</sup>

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2 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Open for Business: Developing Indigenous enterprises in Australia*, October 2008, pp. xv-xviii.

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1.11 The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is also currently undertaking an inquiry into community stores in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with a particular focus on:

- food supply, quality, cost and competition issues;
- the effectiveness of the Outback Stores model, and other private, public and community store models; and
- the impact of these factors on the health and economic outcomes of communities.<sup>3</sup>

## **Acknowledgements**

1.12 The committee appreciates the time and work of those individuals and organisations that provided written and oral submissions to the inquiry. Their work has assisted the committee considerably in its inquiry so far.

1.13 The committee would especially like to thank community elders, members and staff of agencies and organisations who spoke with them during the inquiry and who were generous with their time and information. The committee is also grateful to the many individuals and organisations in each location they visited who worked hard to make the committee's visits possible.

1.14 The committee would like to thank people and organisations in Broken Hill and Dubbo for meeting with them, and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and staff of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) for allowing them to participate in their leadership workshop in Cobar.

1.15 The committee would like to thank members of the Mutitjulu community and staff from Mission Australia for meeting them in conjunction with the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs in Mutitjulu on a Sunday afternoon, and representatives from Voyages and the GPT Group in Yulara who also met with the committee on a Sunday afternoon.

1.16 The committee's visit to Amata was greatly assisted by officers of the South Australian government. The committee thanks the South Australian government and FaHCSIA officers for attending this visit, and local staff and community members in Amata for allowing access to organisations and the community. The committee was grateful for the opportunity to visit the Amata Anangu School, and appreciated the tour given to them by staff and students.

1.17 Due to rain, the committee was unable to undertake its planned visit to Umuwa and regrets that it was unable to meet with members of the Anangu

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3 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Terms of Reference, <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/communitystores/index.htm>

Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Executive and staff from other organisations in Umuwa. The committee acknowledges the assistance of the APY Executive in arranging access to the APY Lands.

1.18 The committee was grateful for the opportunity to visit Milingimbi in May 2009 and thanks the Milingimbi community, staff of agencies and organisations for their time.

### **Further submissions**

1.19 The committee welcomes further submissions both in writing and orally. Submissions do not have to be long or detailed and may set out a community's or an individual's concerns in dot points. Additional details of how to make a submission are available at: [http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/wit\\_sub/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/wit_sub/index.htm)

1.20 The committee is also keen to encourage submissions from a broad range of people, especially people living in regional and remote Indigenous communities. For people who are not able to or do not want to make a written submission, the committee secretariat can arrange for a submission or evidence to be transcribed over the telephone via the committee's toll free number 1800 728 963. Interpreters are also available.



## Chapter 2

### Commonwealth Policy on Indigenous Affairs

2.1 There have been a number of significant policy announcements related to regional and remote Indigenous communities during 2008 and 2009. This chapter provides a summary of these policy announcements and developments that are most relevant to the committee's inquiry, as well as describing the overarching policy frameworks that the committee considers are impacting on the management of Indigenous Affairs at the Commonwealth level. It also sets out Indigenous specific funding that was announced by the Commonwealth government in the 2009-10 Budget.

2.2 One of the issues that has frustrated the committee, and which has been raised a number of times in meetings and in evidence<sup>1</sup>, is the seeming lack of a clear and transparent policy framework governing the operation of Indigenous Affairs in Australia. In this chapter the committee has attempted to bring together available policy statements and structures to describe the current state of Indigenous Affairs.

#### Closing the Gap policy

2.3 The 'Closing the Gap' policy was developed out of a three year campaign that commenced in 2005 with a coalition of non government organisations calling for strategies to 'close the gap' between the life expectancy rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

2.4 Following this campaign, in March 2008, the National Indigenous Health Equality Summit was held in Canberra. During this summit the Commonwealth government and Indigenous and non-Indigenous health organisations signed the *Close the Gap Indigenous Health Equality Summit Statement of Intent* (Statement of Intent). The committee notes that the Statement of Intent committed the Commonwealth government to working with health organisations to achieve equality in health status and life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by the year 2030.

2.5 The main signatories to the Statement of Intent were the:

- Prime Minister;
- Leader of the Opposition;
- Minister for Health and Ageing;
- Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs;

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1 National Rural Health Alliance Inc, *Submission 8*; Reconciliation Australia, *Submission 29*, attachment 3; Central Land Council, *Submission 92*; Professor Jon Altman, *Committee Hansard*, 17 November 2008.

- Presidents and Chairs of the four main Indigenous health peak bodies;
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation;
- Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association;
- Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses;
- Indigenous Dentists' Association of Australia;
- Presidents and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the four main mainstream health peak bodies;
- Australian Medical Association;
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners;
- Royal College of Australasian Physicians;
- Australian General Practice Network; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission (then the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission).

2.6 The committee also notes that during the National Apology to the Stolen Generations on 13 February 2008, the Prime Minister pledged a new national effort aimed at closing the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

This new partnership on closing the gap will set concrete targets for the future: within a decade to halve the widening gap in literacy, numeracy and employment outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous children, within a decade to halve the appalling gap in infant mortality rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and, within a generation, to close the equally appalling 17-year life gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous when it comes to overall life expectancy.<sup>2</sup>

2.7 This was followed by the Commonwealth's announcement of six targets intended to 'Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage'. These were:

- To halve the mortality gap between Indigenous children and other children under five within a decade;
- To provide access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities within five years;
- To halve the gap in literacy and numeracy achievement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students within a decade;
- To halve the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in rates of year 12 attainment or an equivalent attainment by 2020;

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2 The Hon Kevin Rudd, MP, Prime Minister, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 13 February 2008, p. 3.

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- To halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade; and
  - To finally close the shameful gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.<sup>3</sup>

2.8 These targets were adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) at their meeting of 2 October 2008.<sup>4</sup>

2.9 The committee notes that the Commonwealth government has outlined four pillars in its strategy to address Indigenous disadvantage. These are:

- all efforts in Indigenous policy must be governed by the sincere objective of closing the gap;
- resetting the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;
- rebuilding the everyday social norms that underpin strong families and healthy communities; and
- building of partnerships across all sectors of the Australian community to help to close the gap, where the wider community—including business, the education sector, sporting groups and the community sector at large—become partners in bringing about measurable change in Indigenous communities and Indigenous lives.<sup>5</sup>

### **Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Fiscal Relations**

2.10 COAG is the intergovernmental forum in Australia, comprising the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). On 29 November 2008 COAG agreed to the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Fiscal Relations* (Intergovernmental Agreement). This agreement is intended to provide an overarching framework for the Commonwealth's financial relations with the states and territories.<sup>6</sup>

2.11 The Intergovernmental Agreement commenced on 1 January 2009. Each Special Purpose Payment (SPP) made to the states and territories to carry out certain functions and services is associated with a National Agreement that contains

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3 The Hon Kevin Rudd, MP, Prime Minister, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 26 February 2009, p. 3.

4 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué – 2 October 2008*, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-10-02/index.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-10-02/index.cfm) (accessed 4 June 2009).

5 The Hon Kevin Rudd, MP, Prime Minister, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 26 February 2009, pp. 3-4.

6 Council of Australian Governments, *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations*, December 2008, p. 5, [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/index.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/index.cfm) (accessed 27 May 2009).

objectives, outcomes, outputs and performance indicators, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities intended to guide the Commonwealth and states and territories in the delivery of services across the relevant sectors. Under this Intergovernmental Agreement COAG has agreed to six new National Agreements—National Healthcare Agreement, National Education Agreement, National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development, National Disability Agreement, National Affordable Housing Agreement, and the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

### ***National Indigenous Reform Agreement***

2.12 The National Indigenous Reform Agreement is intended to drive the policies to 'close the gap' in Indigenous disadvantage. The Committee notes that COAG will next meet in Darwin on 2 July 2009, with this meeting stated as having a special focus on addressing Indigenous disadvantage. At this meeting COAG is due to consider an Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap to be incorporated into the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.<sup>7</sup>

2.13 The National Indigenous Reform Agreement sets out six 'building blocks' or platforms upon which COAG intends the reform agenda to be based. These are proposed to be:

- Early Childhood;
- Schooling;
- Health;
- Economic Participation;
- Healthy Homes;
- Safe Communities; and
- Governance and Leadership.<sup>8</sup>

2.14 The committee notes that the Commonwealth government has committed \$3.6 billion overall to the COAG National Indigenous Reform Agenda.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Council of Australian Governments, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, November 2008, p. 3, [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/index.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/index.cfm) (accessed 29 May 2009).

8 Council of Australian Governments, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, November 2008, p. 4, [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/index.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/index.cfm) (accessed 29 May 2009).

9 John Gardiner-Garden, Coral Dow and Michael Klapdor, *Budget 2009-10: Indigenous Affairs*, research paper, Australian Parliamentary Library, May 2009, p. 168, <http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/pubs/RP/2008-09/09rp33.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2009).

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## ***National Partnership Agreements***

2.15 COAG has also agreed to a number of National Partnership Agreements which are new forms of payments to fund specific projects and to facilitate and reward states and territories that deliver on agreed reforms. The committee notes that the financial arrangements will include incentive payments to reward performance.<sup>10</sup> The committee will attempt to monitor the amount and timing of these incentive payments as well as gauge the impact this approach is having on improving the effectiveness of state and territory government policies.

2.16 The National Partnership Agreements related to Indigenous service delivery include:

- Remote Indigenous Service Delivery;
- Indigenous Economic Participation;
- Indigenous Early Childhood Development;
- Indigenous Health; and
- Remote Indigenous Housing.

## ***Remote Indigenous Service Delivery***

2.17 Through this Agreement, the Commonwealth, the states and Northern Territory governments have agreed to improve access to government services including early childhood, health, housing and welfare services all through a single government interface.<sup>11</sup> This Agreement intends to provide \$291.2 million over six years with the Commonwealth government agreeing to provide \$187.7 million with the aim of improving access to services for Indigenous people living in 26 remote communities. The Commonwealth government has stated that it intends to create a new service delivery model in these communities to clearly identify service standards, roles and responsibilities that people living in these communities will be able to rely upon.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Council of Australian Governments, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, November 2008, [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/index.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/index.cfm) (accessed 29 May 2009).

11 Council of Australian Governments, *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery*, November 2008, [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/docs/national\\_partnership/national\\_partnership\\_on\\_remote\\_service\\_delivery\\_with\\_a\\_mended\\_schedule.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/national_partnership/national_partnership_on_remote_service_delivery_with_a_mended_schedule.pdf) (accessed 14 May 2009).

12 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Budget Statement – Appendix B*, 12 May 2009, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/corp/budgetpaes/budget09\\_10/indigenous/documents/closingthegap/appendix\\_b.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/corp/budgetpaes/budget09_10/indigenous/documents/closingthegap/appendix_b.htm) (accessed 2 June 2009).

2.18 The 26 communities chosen are:

*Northern Territory*

- (Ntaria) Hermannsburg
- Yirrkala
- Yuendumu
- Gapuwiyak
- Numbulwar
- Angurugu
- Umbakumba
- Milingimbi
- Gunbalanya
- Nguiu
- Ngukurr
- Galiwinku
- Maningrida
- Wadeye
- Lajamanu

*Queensland*

- Mornington Island
- Doomadgee
- Hope Vale
- Aurukun<sup>13</sup>

*South Australia*

- Amata
- Mimili

*New South Wales*

- Walgett
- Wilcannia

*Western Australia*

- Fitzroy Crossing and surrounding communities
- Halls Creek and surrounding communities
- The Dampier Peninsula, focused on Ardyaloon and Beagle Bay.<sup>14</sup>

2.19 While the committee is pleased to note the intention of this Agreement, it is concerned about the policy decision making process. As discussed in Chapter 4 there is a high degree of confusion and uncertainty about how these 26 communities were

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13 The committee has been advised by FaHCSIA that Coen and Mossman Gorge will also be included in the priority locations.

14 Commonwealth government, *Budget 2009 – 10*, May 2009, [http://www.aph.gov.au/Budget/2009-10/content/ministerial\\_statements/indigenous/html/ms\\_indigenous-03.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Budget/2009-10/content/ministerial_statements/indigenous/html/ms_indigenous-03.htm) (accessed 5 June 2009).

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chosen out the estimated 1 187 discrete Indigenous communities in Australia.<sup>15</sup> This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

### ***National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development***

2.20 At its July 2008 meeting the committee notes that COAG agreed to a National Partnership to address the needs of Indigenous children in their early years. The National Partnership commenced on 1 January 2009 with joint funding of \$564 million over six years to 2014, of which the Commonwealth government has committed to contributing \$489.6 million.

2.21 This Partnership is stated to be based on evidence that improvements in Indigenous child mortality require better access to antenatal care, teenage reproductive and sexual health services, child and maternal health services and integrated child and family services.<sup>16</sup>

2.22 The Partnership documents state that the Partnership will consist of three elements:

- Establishing a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres across Australia in areas of high Indigenous population and disadvantage;
- Increasing access to antenatal care, pre-pregnancy and teenage sexual and reproductive health programs by Indigenous young people; and
- Increasing access to, and use of, maternal and child health services by Indigenous families.

2.23 The committee notes that the Children and Family Centres are due to commence operation from June 2010.<sup>17</sup>

### ***National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children***

2.24 At a meeting on 30 April 2009 COAG agreed to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. The Framework seeks to deliver a substantial reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia and outlines priority actions for the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. These include a National Standard for Out-of-Home Care; improved support for young people leaving care; working closely together on enhanced service integration in key disadvantaged communities; and improved access to early intervention and prevention services,

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15 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Australia*, 2006 (cat. 4710.0).

16 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué – 3 July 2008*, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-07-03/index.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-07-03/index.cfm) (accessed 26 May 2009).

17 Council of Australian Governments, *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development*, November 2008, p. 7, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/20081002/docs/indigenous\\_early\\_childhood\\_NPA.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/20081002/docs/indigenous_early_childhood_NPA.pdf) (accessed 2 June 2009).

including quality child care for children at risk. It is intended that COAG will receive an annual report on the progress of the first three-year action plan.<sup>18</sup>

2.25 The committee notes that governments are set to develop an implementation plan to be considered in August 2009. This plan is intended to:

...be a key tool in measuring progress of the National Framework. All jurisdictions and stakeholders will be able to monitor progress against activities and milestones outlined in the Implementation Plan. A set of performance indicators will be developed as part of the Implementation Plan, providing another opportunity to monitor progress and outcomes. Reporting processes for the National Framework will provide an opportunity to streamline existing reporting processes to ensure greater levels of transparency.<sup>19</sup>

2.26 The committee looks forward to the development of performance indicators to measure progress in these areas and hopes they will go some way to assist in improving data collection and reporting on child protection issues.

### ***Health National Partnership***

2.27 The Health National Partnership was agreed on 29 November 2008 which commits to funding of \$1.6 billion over four years, with the Commonwealth committed to contributing \$806 million and the states and territories \$772 million. This is intended to assist in achieving the 'closing the gap' targets, to close the life expectancy gap within a generation and halve the mortality gap for children under five within a decade.

2.28 The Health National Partnership is described by COAG as 'a down payment on the significant investment needed by both levels of government to close the unacceptable gap in health and other outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians'<sup>20</sup> and is, according to COAG, focused on:

- reduced smoking rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- reduced burden of diseases for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;

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18 Council of Australian Governments, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, April 2009, p. 5, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2009-0430/docs/child\\_protection\\_framework.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-0430/docs/child_protection_framework.pdf) (accessed 9 June 2009).

19 Council of Australian Governments, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, April 2009, p. 36, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2009-0430/docs/child\\_protection\\_framework.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-0430/docs/child_protection_framework.pdf) (accessed 9 June 2009).

20 Council of Australian Governments, Attachment A to meeting of 28 November 2008, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-11-29/attachments.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/attachments.cfm) (accessed 2 June 2009).



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- increased uptake of Medicare Benefits Schedule-funded primary care services to Indigenous people with half of the adult population (15-65 years) receiving two adult health checks over the next four years;
  - significantly improved coordination of care across the care continuum; and
  - over time, a reduction in average length of hospital stay and reduction in readmissions.<sup>21</sup>

2.29 The Agreement states that these targets are to include delivering health checks to 55 per cent of the adult Indigenous population (around 155 000 people) over 5 years with about 600 000 chronic disease services delivered in the same period. The Agreement also commits to provide more than 90 000 Indigenous people with a chronic disease with a self-management program and around 74 500 Indigenous people with financial assistance to improve access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines.<sup>22</sup> The committee will follow the progress of this initiative and will attempt to gather further details on such issues as the number of Indigenous adults now receiving health checks, what chronic diseases are being targeted and the impact this is having.

### ***National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing***

2.30 The committee notes that all state governments and the Northern Territory government have agreed to a 10 year National Partnership on remote Indigenous housing, in which the Commonwealth government has committed to providing \$1.94 billion over 10 years (\$834.6 million over five years) in an attempt to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and the severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities.

2.31 The intended results of the housing package over 10 years are:

- construction of up to 4 200 houses and major upgrades and repairs to around 4 800 houses in the 26 communities referred to above at paragraph 2.18.
- improved tenancy management services to ensure rental houses are well maintained, rent is collected and support services are in place;
- economic development opportunities through increased local training and employment opportunities in construction and housing management;
- an ongoing maintenance and repairs program;
- upgrades to housing related infrastructure in remote communities, including town camps; and

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21 Council of Australian Governments, Attachment A to meeting of 28 November 2008, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-11-29/attachments.cfm](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/attachments.cfm) (accessed 2 June 2009).

22 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué – 29 November 2008*, p. 33, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/communique\\_20081129.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/communique_20081129.pdf) (accessed 2 June 2009).

- access to affordable accommodation options in regional centres to support employment, education and training opportunities in regional areas.<sup>23</sup>

2.32 The committee notes that the National Partnership also attempts to clarify the responsibilities of the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory governments, asserting that the states and the Northern Territory are to be the main deliverer of housing in remote Indigenous communities, through a standardised tenancy management and support framework.

2.33 The National Partnership commenced on 1 January 2009. The state, territory and Commonwealth governments have stated that they will work towards clearer roles and responsibilities and funding for municipal services and maintenance of infrastructure and essential services in remote areas.

2.34 The committee considers that clarity in funding and responsibility across states and territories is an area that has caused a great deal of confusion and significant inefficiencies and will monitor the progress made through this Agreement during the life of this inquiry.

### ***Indigenous Economic Development National Partnership***

2.35 Under the Indigenous Economic Development National Partnership the Commonwealth and state and territory governments have committed to investing \$228.8 million (\$172.7 million Commonwealth funding and \$56.2 million state and territory funding over five years) to assist up to 13 000 Indigenous people into employment.

2.36 The initiative is intended to create jobs in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidies through the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program. The Partnership also commits to a review of career development strategies for public sector Indigenous employment with the stated aim of increasing Indigenous public sector employment to reflect the Indigenous working age population share by 2015. All governments have also committed to strengthening current procurement policies with the aim of maximising Indigenous employment, skills development and business creation.

2.37 The National Partnership states that both Commonwealth and state and territory governments are investing significantly in capital development, procurement and service delivery through other COAG reforms, and that Indigenous workforce

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23 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Remote Indigenous housing investment*, Press release, 23 March 2009, [http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/remote\\_indigenous\\_housing\\_23mar2009.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/remote_indigenous_housing_23mar2009.htm) (accessed 2 June 2009).

strategies are to be built into implementation plans for all reforms to contribute to the closing the gap targets.<sup>24</sup>

2.38 The committee urges COAG to accurately record and report on the creation of these jobs and employee retention and will report on progress made through the Indigenous Economic Development National Partnership.

### **Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services**

2.39 The committee notes that on 27 May 2009 the Commonwealth government introduced legislation to create a statutory office for the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, as agreed by COAG. The Commonwealth government has committed \$9 million over four years to the creation of this office in its 2009-10 Budget.<sup>25</sup>

2.40 The Commonwealth government has outlined the role of the Coordinator-General as being responsible for the implementation of reforms in housing, infrastructure and employment in remote Indigenous communities, and is to report to the Commonwealth Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The Coordinator-General will formally report publicly twice a year on the development and delivery of remote services and on the progress that has been made in achieving the closing the gap targets.<sup>26</sup> The Minister has stated that '...the position will be given the authority to coordinate across agencies, to cut through bureaucratic blockages and red tape, and to make sure services are delivered effectively'.<sup>27</sup>

2.41 The committee notes that the Commonwealth government announced the appointment of Mr Brian Gleeson as the Coordinator-General on 18 June 2009. The Minister stated:

Mr Gleeson's broad experience will be invaluable in his role as Coordinator-General, with responsibility to drive the implementation of the Council of Australian Governments' reforms in housing, infrastructure and employment in remote Indigenous communities. I will be asking Mr

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24 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué – 29 November 2008*, p. 32, [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-1129/docs/communique\\_2008\\_1129.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-1129/docs/communique_2008_1129.pdf) (accessed 2 June 2009).

25 Commonwealth government, *Budget Paper No. 2*, 12 May 2009, p. 254.

26 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Office of Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services*, Press release, 27 May 2009, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jr\\_m\\_indigenous\\_coord\\_gen\\_27may09.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jr_m_indigenous_coord_gen_27may09.htm) (accessed 2 June 2009).

27 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Office of Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services*, Press release, 27 May 2009, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jr\\_m\\_indigenous\\_coord\\_gen\\_27may09.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jr_m_indigenous_coord_gen_27may09.htm) (accessed 2 June 2009).

Gleeson to include a special focus on implementing the Government's \$125 million Transformation Plan in the Alice Springs town camps.<sup>28</sup>

2.42 The committee will monitor the newly created role of the Commonwealth Coordinator-General in the implementation of the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. The committee asked the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) for information about the Transformation Plan at its Canberra hearing on 9 June 2009.<sup>29</sup> FaHCSIA have advised the committee that the Transformation Plan is intended to support the Commonwealth's 'closing the gap' targets in Alice Springs and involves \$125 million in expenditure. \$100 million of this is already announced expenditure from the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing for housing and infrastructure upgrades and reforms in the Alice Springs town camps. An additional \$25 million will be allocated to service delivery and housing assistance in the greater Alice Springs area to address homelessness. This includes temporary accommodation facilities.<sup>30</sup>

2.43 The committee is pleased that the Plan also intends to address coordination and service delivery issues and notes that:

The ongoing improved coordination of Government services and facilities in Alice Springs will also be part of the Plan...

...next steps include completing implementation of a governance framework, establishing implementation teams and plans, completing a service delivery analysis of relevant services in Alice Springs, identifying available funding further to the initial Government investment and compiling a communications and community engagement plan.<sup>31</sup>

2.44 The committee also notes that the Northern Territory government has announced a Northern Territory Coordinator-General position as part of its new *A Working Future* policy, further outlined in Chapter 5.

The Northern Territory cabinet has attributed some funding to us to set up a service delivery coordination unit, so we will be providing resources out of that service delivery coordination unit into the operations centre to jointly coordinate...The Coordinator-General has been appointed for the Northern Territory, Bob Beadman, so he will work with the Australian government's Coordinator-General, once that person is announced.<sup>32</sup>

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28 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Appointment of Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services*, Media Release, 18 June 2009. Available at: [http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/coord\\_general\\_18june2009.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/coord_general_18june2009.htm) (accessed 19 June 2009).

29 Senator Judith Adams, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 57.

30 FaHCSIA, answer to question on notice, 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

31 FaHCSIA, answer to question on notice, 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

32 Mr Kenneth Davies, Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 65.

2.45 The committee intends to monitor the overall effectiveness of the Coordinator-General positions and report on any significant changes to the coordination of remote service delivery that may result.

### **Measuring and reporting under COAG**

2.46 The committee notes that the COAG framework places strong emphasis on reporting requirements and includes the disaggregation of indicators by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status. This is intended to provide a clear picture of progress towards meeting the published targets.<sup>33</sup> In an attempt to provide consistency across the delivery of the National Partnership Agreements, the committee notes that COAG has agreed to service delivery and investment principles for remote areas which are intended to apply to all states and territories.

2.47 Performance indicators and benchmarks under each COAG target are yet to be developed. The committee notes that individual target trajectories are still being developed and are expected to be ready in time for the July 2009 COAG meeting.<sup>34</sup>

2.48 As the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs noted in her 2009-10 Budget Statement on 'Closing the Gap':

Improvements in data collection and analysis will be necessary at both a Commonwealth and State level to enable meaningful reporting against Closing the Gap targets. The Government is currently negotiating improved Indigenous data collection and collation at a Commonwealth and State level to support the implementation of a national performance reporting framework. This will enhance public accountability for funding under the new framework for federal financial arrangements agreed through COAG.<sup>35</sup>

2.49 The committee notes the allocation of \$1.5 million over three years for a clearinghouse which is intended to gather and disseminate evidence on effective policy interventions to address Indigenous disadvantage in the 2009-10 Budget. The state and territory governments have also committed to matching this funding.<sup>36</sup>

2.50 The committee agrees that more meaningful use of data is required however it is concerned that policy affecting Indigenous people is developed and then

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33 Council of Australian Governments, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, p. 4, [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/docs/IGA\\_FFR\\_ScheduleF\\_National\\_Indigenous\\_Reform\\_Agreement.rtf](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/IGA_FFR_ScheduleF_National_Indigenous_Reform_Agreement.rtf) (accessed 12 June 2009).

34 Council of Australian Governments, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, p. 12, [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/docs/IGA\\_FFR\\_ScheduleF\\_National\\_Indigenous\\_Reform\\_Agreement.rtf](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/IGA_FFR_ScheduleF_National_Indigenous_Reform_Agreement.rtf) (accessed 12 June 2009).

35 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians*, Budget statement, 12 May 2009, pp 7-8, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget09\\_10/indigenous/Documents/ClosingTheGap/closingthegap.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget09_10/indigenous/Documents/ClosingTheGap/closingthegap.pdf) (accessed 2 June 2009).

36 Commonwealth government, *Budget Paper No. 2*, 12 May 2009, p. 210.

implemented without having adequate regard to the evidence presented in the data. The committee's views on improvements to the collection and use of data are detailed further in Chapter 3.

### **Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report**

2.51 The committee notes that in April 2002, COAG commissioned a regular report against key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage from the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision which is supported by the Productivity Commission. Reports on Indigenous disadvantage were released in 2003, 2005 and 2007, and are intended to inform governments about whether policy, programs and interventions are achieving positive outcomes for Indigenous people.

2.52 The fourth edition of the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report is due to be released in mid-2009.<sup>37</sup> The Productivity Commission also produces a compendium on services relevant to Indigenous people as part of the annual Report on Government Services. The most recent compendium was released in April 2009.

2.53 The Report on Government Services is intended to focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of specific services while the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report focuses on outcomes for Indigenous people and does not report on individual government services. The reporting framework has been developed with two tiers: 'headline' indicators for the longer term outcomes sought; and a second tier of 'strategic change indicators' that are intended to be able to be responsive to government policies and programs over the short term.

2.54 The Indigenous Disadvantage Report describes the overall 'state-of-the-nation' outcomes for Indigenous people, with a view to all government departments and agencies together being responsible and therefore there is no reporting on an individual government agency basis. The committee notes that the Indigenous Disadvantage Report does not necessarily feature state and territory comparisons and nor does it focus on government service provision.<sup>38</sup>

### **Commonwealth government Budget 2009-10**

2.55 The committee notes that the Commonwealth government—in the 2009-10 budget measures relevant to regional and remote Indigenous communities—has primarily focused on 'closing the gap' policies through committing \$1.3 billion over four years. A significant proportion of this—\$807.4 million—is intended to be directed to initiatives under the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER),

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37 Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services 2009*, January 2009, p. 5.

38 Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services 2009*, January 2009, p. 3.



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which the committee now notes is referred to in the Budget Papers as 'Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory'.<sup>39</sup>

2.56 The 2009-10 budget measures cover four broad categories:

- economic participation;
- a focus on remote Australia;
- Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory; and
- resetting the relationship with Indigenous Australians.<sup>40</sup>

### *Economic participation*

2.57 In the 2009-10 Budget, the Commonwealth government committed \$202.4 million in net expenditure over five years to Community Development Employment Projects Program (CDEP) and the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) Reform.<sup>41</sup>

2.58 The committee notes that the intended changes to CDEP include the abolition of CDEP in non-remote areas within established economies from July 1 2009. The 2009-10 Budget Papers state that in communities with limited and emerging economies, the CDEP program will be restructured into two streams. This includes:

a Work Readiness Service stream that will provide a personal development pathway for job seekers from foundation skills to work readiness, including through the provision of up to 3,000 paid on-the-job work experience placements, with wage subsidies provided to work experience employers as an incentive to create these opportunities; and

a Community Development stream, which will fund community projects and build the capacity of local communities, service providers and enterprises.<sup>42</sup>

2.59 The committee notes the Commonwealth government's intent to invest additional resources in Indigenous economic participation and will be monitoring its success in creating jobs and supporting Indigenous people into employment. The committee also notes that savings of \$326.7 million over five years from the CDEP

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39 John Gardiner-Garden, Coral Dow and Michael Klapdor, *Budget 2009-10: Indigenous Affairs*, Research paper, Australian Parliamentary Library, May 2009, p.162  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/pubs/RP/2008-09/09rp33.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2009).

40 John Gardiner-Garden, Coral Dow and Michael Klapdor, *Budget 2009-10: Indigenous Affairs*, Research paper, Australian Parliamentary Library, May 2009, p.162.  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/pubs/RP/2008-09/09rp33.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2009).

41 Commonwealth government, *Budget Paper No. 2*, 12 May 2009, p. 211.

42 Commonwealth government, *Budget Paper No. 2*, 12 May 2009, pp. 211-212.

reforms will be 'redirected to fund the creation of more employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people.'<sup>43</sup>

### *A focus on remote Australia*

2.60 The committee notes that these budget measures have committed a total expenditure of \$89.1 million, mostly in health measures, with \$58.3 million over four years committed to improve eye and ear health services for Indigenous Australians. Some of this allocation is intended for rural and remote areas to help the 20 000 Indigenous children with severe middle-ear infections. The funding is expected to assist 1 000 extra operations to correct eye and ear problems, and establish more than 10 regional teams to help prevent cases of middle-ear infection in the Northern Territory. The committee notes this commitment and will monitor how many Indigenous children are assisted through this funding and how effective the regional teams are in addressing this serious issue affecting children in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

2.61 There is also a Commonwealth government commitment of \$11 million over four years to improve access to dental care services for Indigenous people in rural and remote areas. The committee notes that in order to achieve this improvement the Commonwealth government has announced a trial of mobile dental facilities.<sup>44</sup> The Commonwealth government has also committed to evaluating this trial and the committee will monitor any improvements in dental health.

2.62 The committee also notes that Dental Health Services Victoria stated in their submission that unless other determinants of oral health are addressed—such as nutrition, personal health practices and coping strategies, hygiene and socio-economic status—Indigenous people in regional and remote communities will continue to have some of the highest rates of oral disease.<sup>45</sup>

2.63 Finally, a further \$3.8 million is committed over four years to extend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services pathology program which the committee notes is due to end on 31 July 2009. This program aims to improve the management of diabetes by providing Indigenous communities with access to on-site blood testing at participating medical services sites.<sup>46</sup>

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43 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians*, Budget statement, 12 May 2009, p. 12, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget09\\_10/indigenous/Documents/ClosingTheGap/closingthegap.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget09_10/indigenous/Documents/ClosingTheGap/closingthegap.pdf) (accessed 24 June 2009).

44 Commonwealth Government, *Budget Paper No. 2*, 12 May 2009, p. 241.

45 Dental Health Services Victoria, *Submission 47*, p. 1.

46 Commonwealth government, *Budget Paper No. 2*, 12 May 2009, p. 251.



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### *Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory (NTER)*

2.64 The Commonwealth government has committed \$807.4 million over three years with the intention of continuing measures referred to as 'Closing the Gap' in the Northern Territory. As the committee noted earlier in this chapter this measure was previously referred to as the NTER. The committee notes that the Commonwealth government in the budget papers noted that the government is 'moving the NTER to a sustainable development phase to ensure measures will be effective in the long term'.<sup>47</sup>

2.65 \$34.6 million of the \$807.4 million has been committed over three years to facilitate engagement with Indigenous leadership, increase communications with communities, and for specific consultations prior to the intended lifting of the suspension of the operation of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1976* (RDA).<sup>48</sup>

2.66 The committee notes that other Commonwealth government commitments in the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory budget measures include:

- \$156.6 million over three years intended to continue law and order activities, such as funding 60 Northern Territory police officers to replace Federal Police officers deployed under the initial NTER, five permanent and ten temporary police stations, as well as activities supporting alcohol and pornography restrictions;
- \$131 million over three years intended to improve primary care services in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory with follow-up treatments of children for ear, nose and throat conditions and dental problems identified through NTER; the continuation of the Remote Area Health Corps which provides doctors, nurses and other health workers in remote areas; and an expansion of the existing outreach service that sends teams to treat children injured in abuse-related circumstances;
- \$105.9 million, primarily in 2009–10, intended to continue income management and financial advice to income support recipients;
- \$84.1 million intended to continue field operations, including the presence of Government Business Managers and interpreter services;
- \$80.2 million over three years intended to continue 81 night patrol services;
- \$45.7 million over three years intended to continue and expand education initiatives;

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47 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Towards a sustainable development phase: Discussion paper on Future Directions for the NTER*, Press release, 21 May 2009, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/future\\_directions\\_nter\\_21may09.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/future_directions_nter_21may09.htm) (accessed 25 June 2009).

48 The Commonwealth government's intention to reinstate the *Racial Discrimination Act 1976* is discussed further in chapter 4.

- \$37.5 million over three years towards the intended continuation of the School Nutrition Program;
- \$32.9 million over three years intended to continue family support services that include a mobile child protection team and the operation of safe houses;
- \$28.4 million over three years intended for youth diversionary services;
- \$18.3 million over three years intended to continue maintaining and improving community stores;
- \$11.2 million towards proposed additional houses for teachers in Indigenous communities;
- \$11 million over three years intended to continue whole-of-government co-ordination and program management and evaluation;
- \$10 million for a proposed Local Priorities fund in 2009-10 to address minor service and infrastructure gaps as part of planning and community engagement processes;<sup>49</sup> and
- \$9.1 million over three years intended to fund eight new crèches.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Resetting the relationship with Indigenous Australians***

2.67 The Commonwealth government has also committed \$64.2 million in expenditure which is stated to be for the purpose of creating a new relationship with Indigenous people.<sup>51</sup> This includes proposed funds of:

- \$26.6 million over four year for an Indigenous Healing Foundation which is proposed to help members of the Stolen Generation suffering trauma;
- \$13.8 million over four years which is intended to help members of the Stolen Generation find families and communities;
- \$13 million over four years for an Indigenous Electoral Education Program intended to improve Indigenous participation in the electoral system; and
- \$10.8 million to Reconciliation Australia for the stated purpose of education and awareness programs to foster better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

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49 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians*, Budget statement, 12 May 2009, p. 32, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publications/articles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget09\\_10/indigeno/us/Documents/ClosingTheGap/closingthegap.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publications/articles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget09_10/indigeno/us/Documents/ClosingTheGap/closingthegap.pdf) (accessed 7 June 2009).

50 John Gardiner-Garden, Coral Dow and Michael Klapdor, *Budget 2009-10: Indigenous Affairs*, Research paper, Australian Parliamentary Library, May 2009, pp. 164-165. <http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/pubs/RP/2008-09/09rp33.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2009).

51 John Gardiner-Garden, Coral Dow and Michael Klapdor, *Budget 2009-10: Indigenous Affairs*, Research paper, Australian Parliamentary Library, May 2009, p. 165. <http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/pubs/RP/2008-09/09rp33.pdf> (accessed 7 June 2009).

## Healing Foundation

2.68 As noted above, the 2009-10 Budget allocates \$26.6 million over four years for an Indigenous Healing Foundation.

2.69 The committee notes that FaHCSIA is currently undertaking consultations with organisations and individuals, and intends to conduct national community workshops for the purpose of gathering community input into the Foundation. The development team is comprised of nine individuals with expertise in Indigenous healing and issues related to the Stolen Generations.<sup>52</sup> The committee also notes that a report is expected to be provided to the Commonwealth government by 30 September 2009 on the consultations.

## National Indigenous Representative Body

2.70 As noted in Chapter 4 of the committee's first report in 2008, the Commonwealth government invited the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to convene a steering committee tasked with developing a preferred model for a national Indigenous representative body.

2.71 The committee notes that a number of workshops and consultations have been held nationally with the steering committee due to present its preferred model by July 2009 and to recommend an interim body for establishment from August 2009.<sup>53</sup>

## Statement of support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

2.72 The committee notes that on 3 April 2009 the Commonwealth government signed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with qualified support. The Declaration was originally endorsed on 17 September 2007, with 144 nations voting in support of the Declaration. At the time Australia was one of four countries that voted against the Declaration.<sup>54</sup>

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52 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/engagement/HealingFoundationDevelopmentTeam/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed 4 June 2009).

53 Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Final stage in consultations for a new national Indigenous representative body*, Press release, 14 May 2009, [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media\\_releases/2009/36\\_09.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2009/36_09.html) (accessed 10 June 2009).

54 The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday September 13 2007, by a majority of 144 states in favour, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States). There were 11 abstentions, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html> (accessed 2 June 2009).



# Chapter 3

## Overview of data on Indigenous wellbeing

3.1 This chapter will provide a broad overview of selected data on community wellbeing, including in areas of health, education, housing and community infrastructure, juvenile justice, employment and child protection across all states and territories with regional and remote Indigenous populations. The committee thought it useful to illustrate broadly some aspects of the wellbeing of Indigenous populations between both the states and territories in metropolitan and in regional and remote areas within each jurisdiction are being measured and reported.

3.2 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) there are two main types of data useful for evaluation purposes, these are statistical and administrative collections:

...statistical collections refer to data collected solely for statistical purposes, such as sample surveys and censuses...[and] administrative collections refer to data collected in the process of administering or evaluating a government or community program or service (i.e. the data are a by-product of an administration process).<sup>1</sup>

3.3 The main source of the data used for this report is the ABS' statistical and administrative collections as well as other sources such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.

3.4 A comprehensive table listing the range of data available on Indigenous communities was provided to the committee by the ABS and formed the basis of the table that can be found at Appendix 4 of this report.

3.5 As outlined in its first report, the committee uses the most widely accepted geographical definition of remoteness which is the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+). ARIA+ measures the remoteness of a locality based on the physical road distance to the nearest urban centre and classifies localities according to the following definitions:

- major city;
- inner regional;
- outer regional;
- remote; or
- very remote.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Submission 53*, p. [1].

2 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *First report 2008*, September 2008, p. 3.

3.6 The committee also wishes to note that data can be interpreted in many different ways and to suit the purposes of the user. The committee does not consider the data presented here to be a definitive and absolute picture of regional and remote Indigenous communities across the states and territories. Rather the committee intends for the data to present a broad illustration of the status and wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities.

### **Issues with current data collections**

3.7 During the committee's inquiry a number of submissions and witnesses presented evidence to the committee on the need for better and more extensive data collection at both national and state levels.<sup>3</sup> A focus on attaining more accurate and detailed data would assist in the assessment and monitoring of both the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities and the effectiveness of government policies and service delivery.

3.8 The ABS noted the importance of quality data in its submission, stating that:

To assess the impact and effectiveness of government policies on the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities, high quality evidence that is comparable over time and across jurisdictions is required. Targets will only provide motivators for improvement if there is data to show whether or not they are being met. Good data also provide the broader evidence base for understanding what interventions might be successful, and in which locations and situations.<sup>4</sup>

3.9 The committee firmly agrees with the ABS that accurate and relevant data must provide the evidence base for informing successful policies and to make progress towards increasing the wellbeing in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

3.10 The National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) noted that:

Improved knowledge and understanding of data...is important for several reasons. It allows benchmarks to be established against which programs can track progress. It allows goals to be set for improvements and it provides an empirical basis for the development of targeted interventions.<sup>5</sup>

3.11 The committee also notes that the Commonwealth Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, in an address to the National Press Club, highlighted the Commonwealth government's commitment to evidence and evaluation, which the committee agrees requires a commitment to accurate and extensive data collection.

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3 Australian Association of Social Workers, *Submission 4*; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission, *Submission 40*; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Submission 53*; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Submission 69*.

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Submission 53*, p. [1].

5 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, *Submission 44*, p. 5.

Inevitably there will be difficult decisions but all these decisions will be driven by one single criterion - evidence. This is the Government's obsession and we make no excuses for it. It is my abiding fixation and I readily acknowledge it.

All our policy decision-making will be based on a thorough, forensic analysis of all the facts and all the evidence. Once implemented, all programs will be rigorously and regularly evaluated. This is the principle I will impose across my portfolio.

Spending buckets of money and hoping for the best, does not work - a point repeated again by Coroner Hope who says in the Kimberley there have been massive funding allocations with minimal accountability.<sup>6</sup>

3.12 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) also presented data in its submission to the inquiry which included both administrative and statistical data. The AIHW noted that the availability, representativeness and quality of data on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people in regional and remote areas is insufficient:

Some surveys are limited by the sample size and therefore the level disaggregation possible. Other surveys, ask different questions of people living in remote areas, reducing comparability. For administrative data sets the issues are more related to differences in the completeness of Indigenous identification by remoteness—with people living in remote and very remote areas being more likely to identify as Indigenous than those living in urban areas...Information on area of residence needed to derive remoteness categories is not available for many administrative data sources. For example, the juvenile justice and child protection data sets...cannot be disaggregated by geographical area below a very broad scale. The lack of specific locational information in some health and welfare administrative data sets makes it impossible to present information for Indigenous people by remoteness.<sup>7</sup>

3.13 The ABS in its submission outlined similar concerns to the AIHW.

Increased resources and support, from all levels of government, for improving identification of Indigenous people in administrative datasets is essential for the ABS and others to maintain the momentum for further progress in this area.<sup>8</sup>

3.14 Both the ABS and the AIHW also outlined particular concerns and problems with the collection of administrative data at the committee's Canberra hearing. The AIHW outlined some issues with collecting Indigenous data.

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6 The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Closing the Gap - Building an Indigenous Future*, Speech to the National Press Club, Canberra, 27 February 2008, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/closing\\_the\\_gap\\_27feb08.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/closing_the_gap_27feb08.htm) (accessed 9 June 2009).

7 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Submission 69*, p. 5.

8 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Submission 53*, p. [8].

Basically our problem with Indigenous data is two-fold. Usually with survey data, sometimes people who are under survey think across regions. They can ask the question in urban areas but they change the question slightly in remote areas, and that makes the data not comparable. Or sometimes they drop a question completely because they think it is too sensitive in remote areas and therefore we are not going to ask the question, in which case we have a gap...

...Our problem is really mostly with administrative data. Identification level can be variable by state and variable by remoteness. People in remote areas are more likely to identify as Indigenous...They are still involved in Indigenous cultural practices and so on. As you move into major cities this becomes less clear. Therefore it is very difficult when we look at health status by remoteness for us to separate the fact of identification or whether there is an actual change in health status between the two areas, really.<sup>9</sup>

3.15 The ABS noted particular concerns with administrative data collections, stating that:

When we work with administrative systems we are in the hands of the people who run those systems. We develop standards and we encourage people to adopt those standards. Indigenous identification is one of the issues in an area like criminal justice, but there is actually a paucity of data across-the-board in many of these areas, particularly where the administration is primarily with state and territory governments, which quite reasonably set up independent systems, have different legislative frameworks, and then we have to try to develop a national framework that fits around that. Our experience is that that takes a very long time and it does not go as fast as anyone, including us, would like it to.<sup>10</sup>

3.16 The Commonwealth Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, at the 2008 launch of a joint ABS and AIHW report on Indigenous health, also outlined what the government considers as the current inadequacies in data collection:

As the authors and drivers of policy we need quality data to know what works and what doesn't.

But there are glaring gaps in national data collection. For example this report only contains data on Indigenous deaths from the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.

This reveals serious gaps in the collection of essential information including Indigenous mortality. This must be addressed.

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9 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 13.

10 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 46.



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The Government knows that if we are to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage we must fill in the gaps in data collection.<sup>11</sup>

3.17 The Productivity Commissioner, in a presentation at the ABS NatStats conference in 2008, noted that improvement of the existing data collections on births and deaths, hospitals, Medicare, and school enrolment, as well as addressing the immediate gaps in data on crime victims and perpetrators and regional data was required to improve the measurement of outcomes for Indigenous people.<sup>12</sup>

3.18 The committee also notes that extensive gaps in baseline data exist in relation to the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). The report of the NTER review board noted that:

While considerable quantitative and qualitative data is available in the key areas of health, housing, education, policing and employment in remote Territory communities, it was clear that little or no baseline data existed to specifically evaluate the impacts of the NTER.

Apart from some initial scoping data, there was little evidence of baseline data being gathered in any formal or organised format which would permit an assessment of the impact and progress of the NTER upon communities. The lack of empirical data has proved to be a major problem for this Review and is an area that requires urgent attention.<sup>13</sup>

3.19 The Department of Human Services provided information in their submission on where income managed funds had been allocated, stating that:

As at 23 January 2009, a total of \$133,065,182.70 has been income managed, of which \$130,618,623.34 has been allocated by customers to various priority items. Food is by far the highest expense incurred by income managed customers. Representing just under 64 per cent, followed by housing at 9.5 per cent. This is further supported by anecdotal reports of more money being spent on food, children being well-clothed and fed, houses being furnished and roadworthy vehicles being purchased.<sup>14</sup>

3.20 At the Canberra public hearing the committee inquired as to how the department had collected this data and how it had established that the majority of income managed funds was being spent on food. The department responded:

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11 The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Launch of the AIHW/ABS Report: The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, 2008*, Speech, 28 April 2008, [http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/health\\_welfare\\_29apr08.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/health_welfare_29apr08.htm) (accessed 9 June 2009).

12 Robert Fitzgerald AM, Commissioner, Productivity Commission, *Measuring outcomes for Indigenous Australia*, ABS NatStats conference, 20 November 2008.

13 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board, *Report of the NTER Review Board*, October 2008, p. 16.

14 Department of Human Services, *Submission 70*, p. 11.

Ms Gaha—We know that 64 per cent of money has been spent in shops that primarily sell food. We cannot actually say every single item, because they also sell clothes...

Senator SIEWERT—Exactly. There are household goods and all sorts of things.

Ms Gaha—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—You do not actually know that 64 per cent has been spent on food.

Ms Gaha—No. We know that that amount of money has been spent in shops that primarily sell food.

Mr Tidswell—As the table said, it is the allocated funds. When we sit down with customers, as you are well aware, we work through to allocate to their priority needs. That is where that data is taken from.

Senator SIEWERT—That is where that comes from.

Mr Tidswell—Yes. It is not after sale.<sup>15</sup>

3.21 The committee notes that although there is anecdotal evidence to support an increase in money being spent in shops and retail outlets that sell food, as well as other approved items, it notes that there is no itemised data available from the use of the BasicsCard to identify what income managed funds have actually been spent on. It may not be accurate to say that almost 64 per cent of income managed funds are being spent on food as there is no system to record whether this actually occurs. The committee considers that this should be clarified when the Commonwealth government is reporting on the use of income managed funds.

3.22 The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) noted in its submission that it is 'committed to providing policy advice and implementation of programs based on the best available evidence'.<sup>16</sup> The committee notes that DoHA contracted the AIHW to collate and analyse the data from the NTER Child Health Check Initiative and the AIHW publicly releases the findings from the data every six months.

3.23 The committee agrees with the NTER Review Board that the quality of data collection and its use must be given urgent attention and that extensive consideration must be given to the methodology and process for collecting and analysing this data. The ABS outlined that high quality data is best obtained:

...when the procedures used are culturally appropriate and where the Indigenous community is highly engaged in the statistical process. This is particularly true for remote Indigenous communities. ABS, in its statistical collection activity, has developed, over a number of years, a national Indigenous engagement strategy to ensure that Indigenous communities are better engaged in the statistical process, understand the uses to which the

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15 *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 26.

16 Department of Health and Ageing, *Submission 75*, p. 3.

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statistical information is put in developing and evaluating policies that may impact on them, and have statistical information returned to them in ways in which they can use it.<sup>17</sup>

3.24 The ABS also cautions against the creation of additional new data collections suggesting that in order to meet the current requirement for good expansive data, governments should focus on improving the quality of existing collections through better 'application of appropriate data management principles, including the use of agreed definitions and classifications'.<sup>18</sup> Limiting the number of data collections would also avoid increasing the respondent load which is very important in Indigenous communities. As the ABS explained:

Improving the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians is a key focus for Australian governments. As the demand for evidence to support Indigenous policy making continues to grow, so does the load placed on the small Indigenous population by surveys and other research.

There is significant load placed on communities through the collection of administrative data required as part of, or in support of, particular service delivery programs. In addition, large-scale, national surveys such as the ABS collections described in paragraph 9 and surveys commissioned by other government agencies (state/territory and Australian government), which generally are not national but can also be quite onerous, add to the respondent load. However, research in Indigenous communities extends beyond statistical collections such as national surveys and censuses to include smaller-scale studies, for example, case studies which may be limited to one or two Indigenous communities. In an environment of slow change, as the research load on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population increases, so does the likelihood of the Indigenous population becoming disengaged from the data collection and statistical processes. This impacts on the ability to collect high quality, relevant information to inform policy and research.<sup>19</sup>

3.25 The committee agrees with the ABS and AIHW that better data collection and awareness of the importance of quality data is required. The committee also urges governments to consistently and rigorously familiarise themselves with available data and be disciplined in utilising the available data when developing and implementing policies. This was a particular issue highlighted in the NTER Review Board's report which noted that clearly identifying the size and composition of the Indigenous population was critical to be able to assess the NTER's effectiveness and the future resources required to achieve its objectives. However the NTER did not appear to use the ABS 2006 estimates of the Indigenous population in the NTER prescribed areas which was estimated at 44 229. The Review board found that internal NTER planning documents cited the population as 35 929, which according to the Review Board

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17 Mr Ian Crettenden, Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 42.

18 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Submission 53*, p. [1].

19 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Submission 53*, p. [5].

raised 'questions about the adequacy of the demographic base that has informed the NTER roll-out'.<sup>20</sup>

3.26 The committee is concerned that although quality data from the ABS was available it was not sufficiently utilised in the development of the NTER policies. As the ABS noted in its submission:

One of the legislated functions of the ABS (ABS ACT 1975) is to ensure coordination of the operations of government agencies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and related information. This includes avoiding duplication in information collection, attaining compatibility between statistics compiled by agencies, and maximising utilisation of information available for statistical purposes.<sup>21</sup>

The committee is deeply concerned that reliable data was available from the ABS but it was not used when the measures of the NTER were being developed.

### **Recommendation 1**

**3.27 The committee recommends that COAG make a concerted effort to improve the quality and scope of existing data collections on regional and remote Indigenous communities and urges all departments and agencies to routinely utilise the expertise of dedicated statistical agencies such as the ABS and AIHW when collecting and analysing data to ensure that it is consistent and accurate across all jurisdictions.**

#### *Undercount of Indigenous populations in the Census.*

3.28 The committee also notes that in its previous report it highlighted concerns regarding a substantial undercount of the Indigenous population in the 2006 Census.<sup>22</sup> The ABS advised the committee that they have made reforms and changes that will more accurately reflect the Indigenous population:

After evaluating the results from the 2006 census, and particularly undercount for the Northern Territory, WA and Queensland, we have set up a working group that comprised representatives from state and federal agencies, local government, various development commissions and Indigenous organisations to look at the issue surrounding the conduct of the 2006 census. As a result of that working group we came up with over 30 recommendations on how we could address some of those issues. Some of those recommendations have now been included in our plans for the 2011

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20 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board, *Report of the NTER Review Board*, October 2008, p. 17.

21 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Submission 53*, p. [1].

22 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *First report 2008*, September 2008, p. 11.

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Census and we will continue to work closely with that working group in the lead-up to the 2011 census.<sup>23</sup>

- 3.29 Some of the strategies the ABS are employing for the 2011 Census include:
- reducing the overall national under-enumeration rate for the Indigenous population by reducing the enumeration period for remote communities;
  - seeking earlier and ongoing engagement with Indigenous groups and communities and all levels of government;
  - expanding the current Indigenous Community Engagement Program;
  - employment of local engagement managers in areas where the ABS has had problems with enumeration such as Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, Tennant Creek and Mount Isa;
  - provision of a greater level of support for Indigenous people in completing their forms;
  - an expanded public relations campaign;
  - expanding the sample of remote Indigenous communities that are selected in the post enumeration survey;
  - employment of an additional 300 Indigenous people to provide assistance to Indigenous households in completing the questionnaires; and
  - establishment of 'flying squads' and mobile teams to travel to areas where problems have been identified during enumeration.<sup>24</sup>

3.30 The committee will continue to monitor the release of new data throughout the inquiry and will detail the findings of t

3.31 he new National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) which is due to be released in October 2009 in its next report.

### **Social and demographic context of Indigenous communities**

3.32 When comparing the wellbeing of Indigenous communities across the states and territories, an understanding of the different social and demographic contexts is important. There are substantial and very important differences across the states and territories which no doubt influence the way policy is developed and the method of service delivery.

3.33 Table 1 illustrates the dramatically higher proportion of Indigenous people that live in the Northern Territory compared to all other states.<sup>25</sup> For example, 30 per

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23 Mr Paul Lowe, Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 44.

24 Mr Paul Lowe, Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, pp. 44-45.

25 Note: The Australian Capital Territory is not included as it has no classified regional or remote areas.

cent of the total population of the Northern Territory are Indigenous but in all other jurisdictions the overall Indigenous population is less than 4 per cent. This large difference is again repeated when looking only at remote and very remote populations in each state and territory. In the Northern Territory 32 per cent of the remote population are Indigenous, compared with the next highest number in New South Wales at 19 per cent. This is similar to very remote areas of the Northern Territory where 74 per cent are Indigenous compared again with the next highest of Queensland and Western Australia at just under 40 per cent.

**Table 1: Demographic context of indigenous populations by state and territory**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	Aust
<b>% of population that are Indigenous</b>	2.24%	0.65%	3.54%	1.79%	3.45%	3.76%	30.39%	2.50%
<b>% of population in remote areas that are Indigenous</b>	19.73%	2.04%*	14.66%	2.65%	13.11%	4.91%*	32.19%	15.19%
<b>% of population in very remote areas that are Indigenous</b>	27.49%	N/A	39.80%	29.07%	39.27%	N/A	74.07%	47.45%

Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

\* Includes outer regional and remote areas

3.34 Table 2 presents data from the most recent 2002 NATSISS that identifies the proportion of Indigenous people in each state and territory that live on homelands and/or traditional country and who identify with a language group or clan. Again the Northern Territory has the highest percentage of its Indigenous population, at 38 per cent, who still live on homelands and/or traditional country followed by Western Australia with just over 26 per cent and New South Wales with 23 per cent.

**Table 2: Social context of indigenous populations by state and territory**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	Aust
<b>% of Indigenous people living on homelands/traditional country</b>	23.8%	14.9%	13.4%	16.1%	26.4%	N/A	38.0%	21.9%

Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

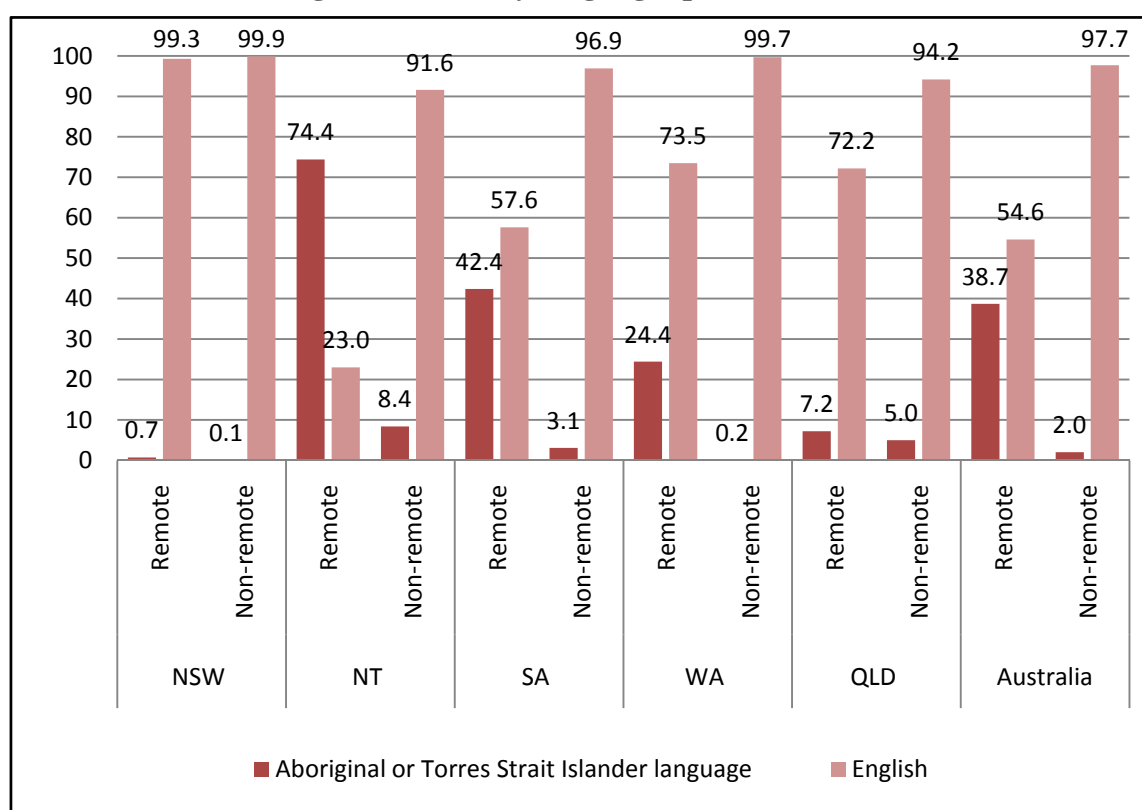
3.35 Table 3 below shows the percentage of the Indigenous population identifying with a tribal group or language group or clan in remote and non-remote areas in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. The table illustrates that New South Wales has the lowest percentage of Indigenous people identifying with a tribal group or language group or clan. The Northern Territory has the highest percentage of the population identifying with a tribal group or language group or clan, at almost 95 per cent in remote areas, followed by South Australia, remote areas in Western Australia and Queensland.

**Table 3: Identification with tribal group or language group/clan**

	NSW	QLD	SA	WA	NT	Aust
Remote	45.3%	65.4%	77.6%	68.7%	94.3%	76.6%
Non-remote	41.5%	53.0%	58.8%	40.8%	41.5%	45.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.7%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>63.3%</b>	<b>53.8%</b>	<b>88.4%</b>	<b>54.1%</b>

Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.36 Another significant area of difference between the states and territories in the social and demographic context is the percentage of Indigenous people who do not speak English as the main language at home, as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Primary language spoken at home**

Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.37 In New South Wales less than one per cent of Indigenous people in both remote and non-remote areas speak an Indigenous language as the main language at home, whereas in the Northern Territory almost three-quarters of Indigenous people speak an Indigenous language at home followed next by remote areas of South Australia with 42 per cent and Western Australia with just under one-quarter. Most of the other states also have sizeable differences between remote and non-remote areas except for New South Wales and Queensland where there is no significant statistical difference between the two populations.

3.38 Overall, this broad outline of some of the main data on the demographic and social context of Indigenous communities indicates that the Northern Territory has the largest remote Indigenous populations with the highest level of Indigenous language speakers and people living on homelands or traditional country. The committee notes that when developing and implementing policies and delivering services to Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory the government would face greater logistical challenges and costs than many of the other jurisdictions.

### **General wellbeing in regional and remote Indigenous communities**

3.39 The 2002 NATSISS and the 2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) collected data on the general, social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous communities including personal stressors, community issues, mental health, cultural identification and racism. The AIHW also reports on the wellbeing of Indigenous people including data on 'health, health determinants, welfare, access to housing and/or homelessness services, aged care and other services'.<sup>26</sup>

3.40 Figure 2 over the page illustrates some differences between states and territories in relation to the types of personal stressors experienced in the last 12 months by Indigenous people in remote and non-remote areas.

3.41 The types of stressors reported by respondents differ significantly according to remoteness. Figure 2 illustrates that Indigenous adults who lived in remote areas in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland were significantly more likely than other Indigenous adults to say that they had been a witness to violence, had a gambling problem, and/or had been involved in a serious accident. Remote areas in Queensland recorded the highest reported stressors across all five listed in the graph with over 50 per cent of respondents reporting overcrowding and alcohol or drug related problems as personal stressors followed with the next highest percentages in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia respectively. Only in New South Wales did a non-remote area report a higher instance of one of the stressors, that being alcohol or drug related problems, otherwise all other stressors were more prominent in remote areas.

3.42 The AIHW notes that the higher incidence of Indigenous people living in remote or very remote areas reporting stressors than those in major cities is most likely to be related to socioeconomic and environmental disadvantage:

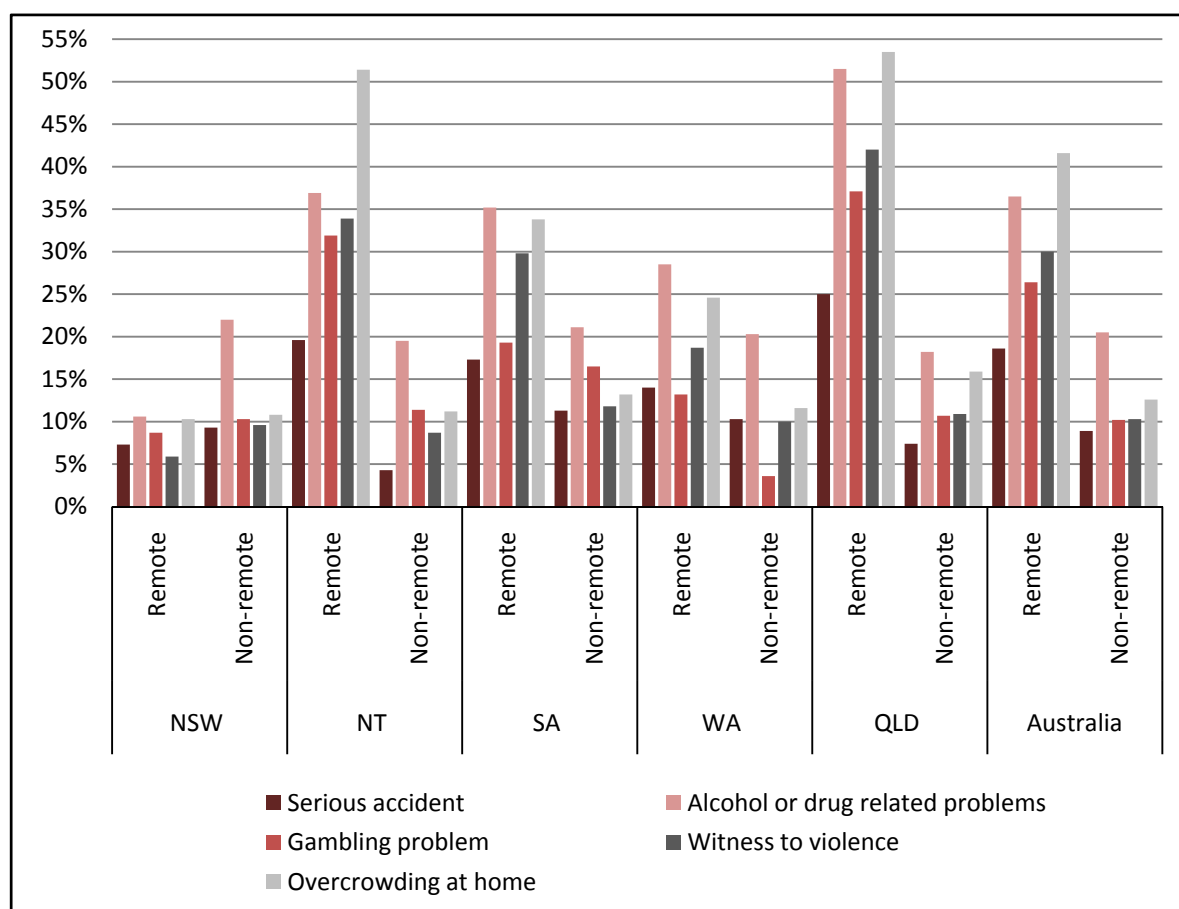
...for example, 2% of Indigenous houses are community rental housing in major cities compared with 55% in remote Australia, and more Indigenous clients received support for homelessness in regional and remote areas than in major cities.<sup>27</sup>

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26 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Submission 69*, p. 2.

27 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Submission 69*, p. 3.

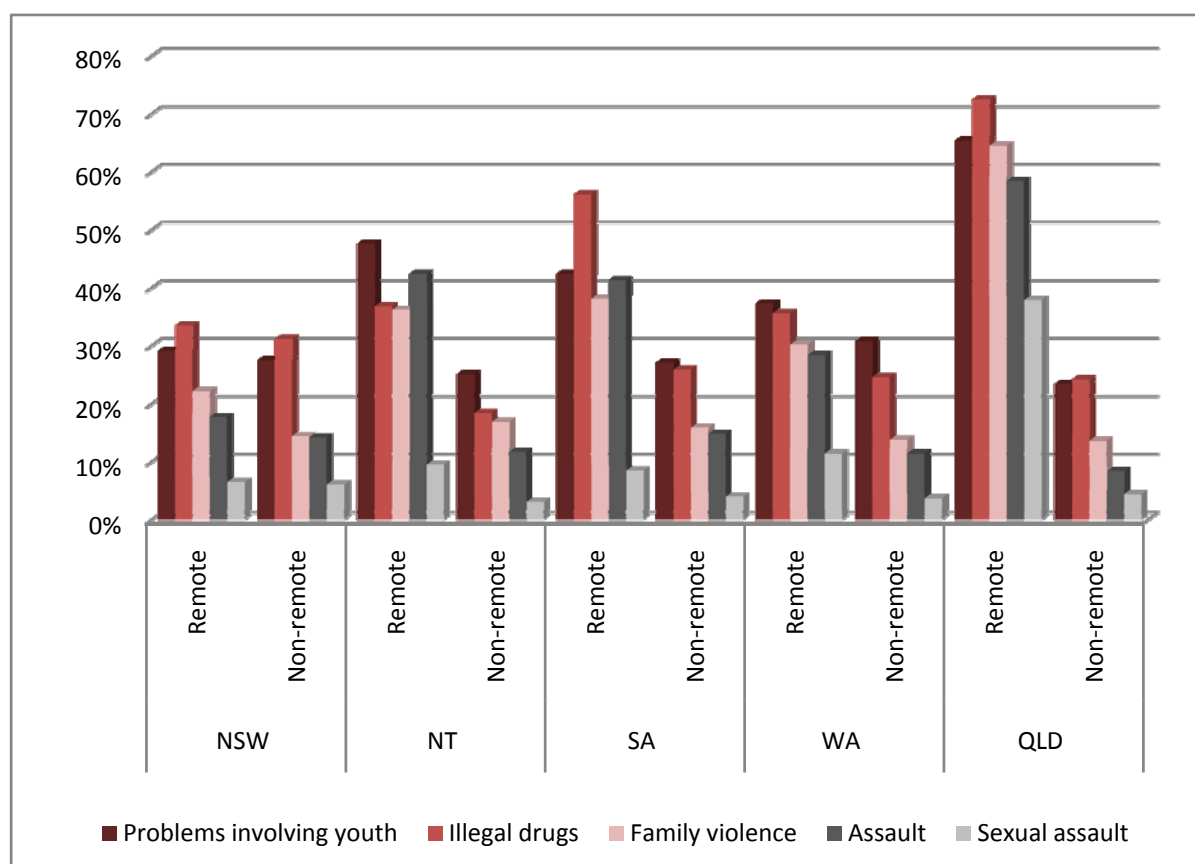


**Figure 2: Type(s) of personal stressors experienced in last 12 months**

Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.43 The NATSISS also surveyed the percentage of the Indigenous population over 15 years of age that reported neighbourhood and community problems in both remote and non-remote areas. The graph below illustrates a small section of the responses which again differ across jurisdictions. In New South Wales there was very little difference between remote and non-remote areas however in Queensland the difference is quite distinct with all of these reported in higher numbers in remote areas. The remote areas of Queensland reported the highest levels of all these community problems, with almost 40 per cent of respondents reporting sexual assault as a problem in remote areas of Queensland with the next highest in the Northern Territory at just under 10 per cent. Over 50 per cent of respondents reported that illegal drugs were a concern in remote Queensland and South Australia.

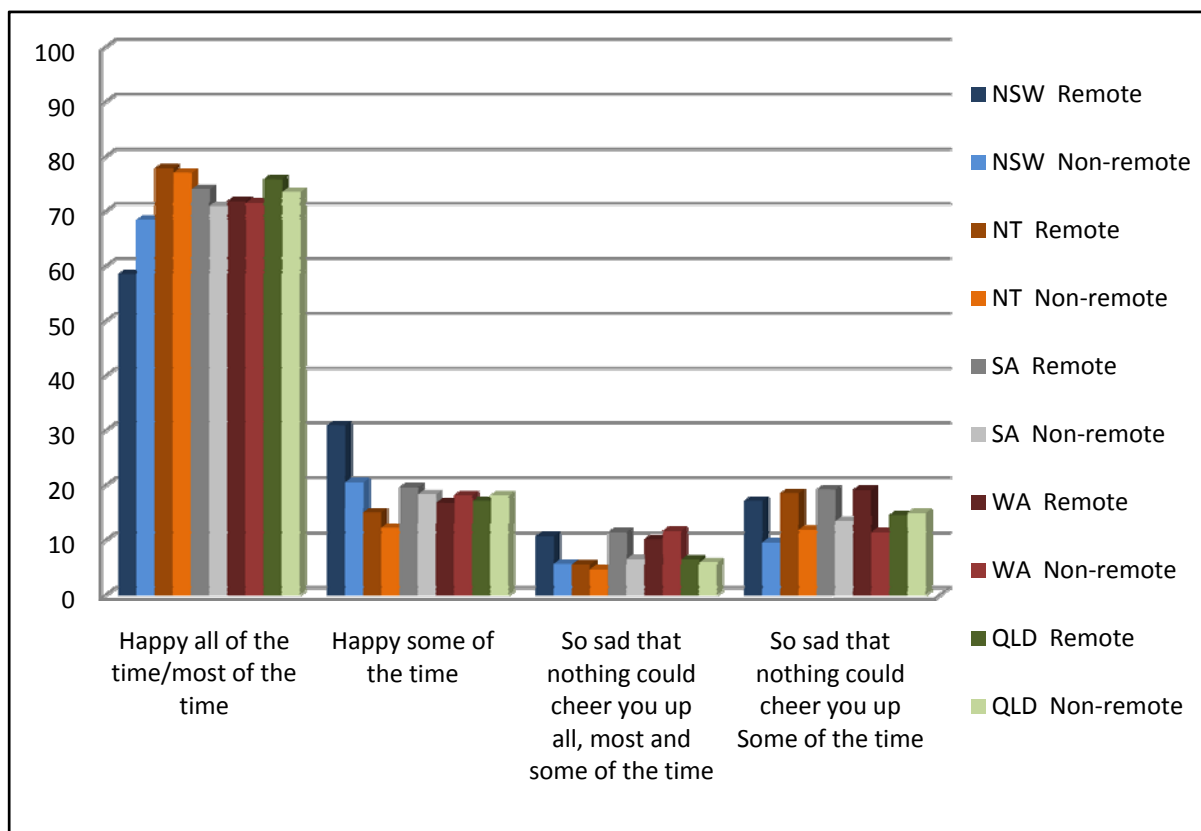
3.44 Also evident is the high rate of reported community and neighbourhood problems involving young people. Apart from remote areas of New South Wales, where it was just under 30 per cent, in all other jurisdictions over 30 per cent of respondents reported that young people were causing problems in the community, with remote Northern Territory reporting almost 50 per cent and remote Queensland again the highest at over 60 per cent.

**Figure 3: Neighbourhood/community problems reported, 2002**

Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.45 A similar result is also illustrated in the graph over the page which is a selection of positive wellbeing indicators taken from the most recent NATSIHS. Apart from New South Wales at least 70 per cent of respondents in the other states and territories were happy all or most of the time but more New South Wales respondents in remote areas reported being happy some of the time. The overall level of happiness reported in Indigenous communities was for the most part similar across the states and territories.

3.46 On the other hand Figure 4 below also provides data on sadness, with almost 10 per cent of respondents in remote areas of New South Wales and South Australia as well as both the remote and non-remote areas in Western Australia being so sad that nothing could cheer them up all or most of the time. Almost 20 per cent of respondents in remote New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia recorded being so sad that nothing could cheer them some of the time. However again, overall there was no sizeable difference across the states and territories in positive wellbeing even though many of the contributing factors—such as housing, safety and education—can differ significantly in the same areas.

**Figure 4: Selected indicators of positive wellbeing, by remoteness, 2004-05**

Source: ABS 2004-05 NATSIHS

3.47 The committee also notes the lack of data on the characteristics of Indigenous carers and their wellbeing. When asked at the committee's hearing in Canberra whether the AIHW was aware of any data on carers in Indigenous communities looking after the elderly population and people with disabilities, the AIHW responded:

We are not aware of anything specific in relation to Indigenous carers. We are doing some further work on carers at the moment, basically off administrative data sets for our biennial publication *Australia's Welfare*, which has not been published yet but may well have come up with further information. At this stage there is nothing further that we could suggest.<sup>28</sup>

3.48 The committee finds this lack of data and a seeming lack of any plans to improve this data concerning and urges the Commonwealth government to consider improving data collection in this area.

## Housing and community infrastructure

3.49 There is comparable data on housing and community infrastructure that again illustrates sizeable differences between the states and territories.

28 Dr Penelope Allbon, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 14.

3.50 The data illustrated here in Table 4 identifies that the Northern Territory has both the highest number of Indigenous people living in an overcrowded household and in a dwelling with major structural problems. For example in the Northern Territory only 39 per cent of Indigenous people live in a dwelling with no major structural problems whereas all other jurisdictions record that almost 60 per cent of Indigenous people live in a dwelling with no major structural problems. Overcrowding in the Northern Territory is three times greater than the national average and more than twice the rate of overcrowding in the state with the next highest rate, which is Western Australia.

**Table 4: Indigenous housing, 2004-05**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	Aust
% of Indigenous people Living in a dwelling with no major structural problems	64.3%	62.3%	64.3%	59.9%	59.2%	73.5%	39.5%	60.4%
% of Indigenous households that were overcrowded in 2006	9.0%	8.3%	13.6%	10.7%	14.2%	6.7%	33.7%	12.4%

Source: ABS 2004-05 NATSIHS

3.51 In regards to houses being connected to essential infrastructure, the AIHW's report on *Indigenous housing indicators 2005-06* found that:

The majority of discrete Indigenous communities in Australia were connected to an organised supply of water (99%), sewerage (98%) and electricity (97%). The Northern Territory had the largest number of communities not connected to an organised supply of these services, with seven not connected to water or sewerage and 20 not connected to electricity.<sup>29</sup>

3.52 The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report noted that data on access to clean water and functional sewerage needs to be collected on a regular basis to allow 'comparison between services in Indigenous communities and those delivered by major utilities'.<sup>30</sup>

3.53 The committee notes that although all states and territories need to focus on improving Indigenous housing there is a clear deficiency in the standard and availability of Indigenous housing in the Northern Territory when compared to the other jurisdictions with significant remote and very remote Indigenous populations. The committee notes that current Commonwealth and Northern Territory policy is focused on alleviating some of this housing distress by the selection of 15 out of the

29 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Indigenous housing indicators 2005-06*, October 2007, p. 13.

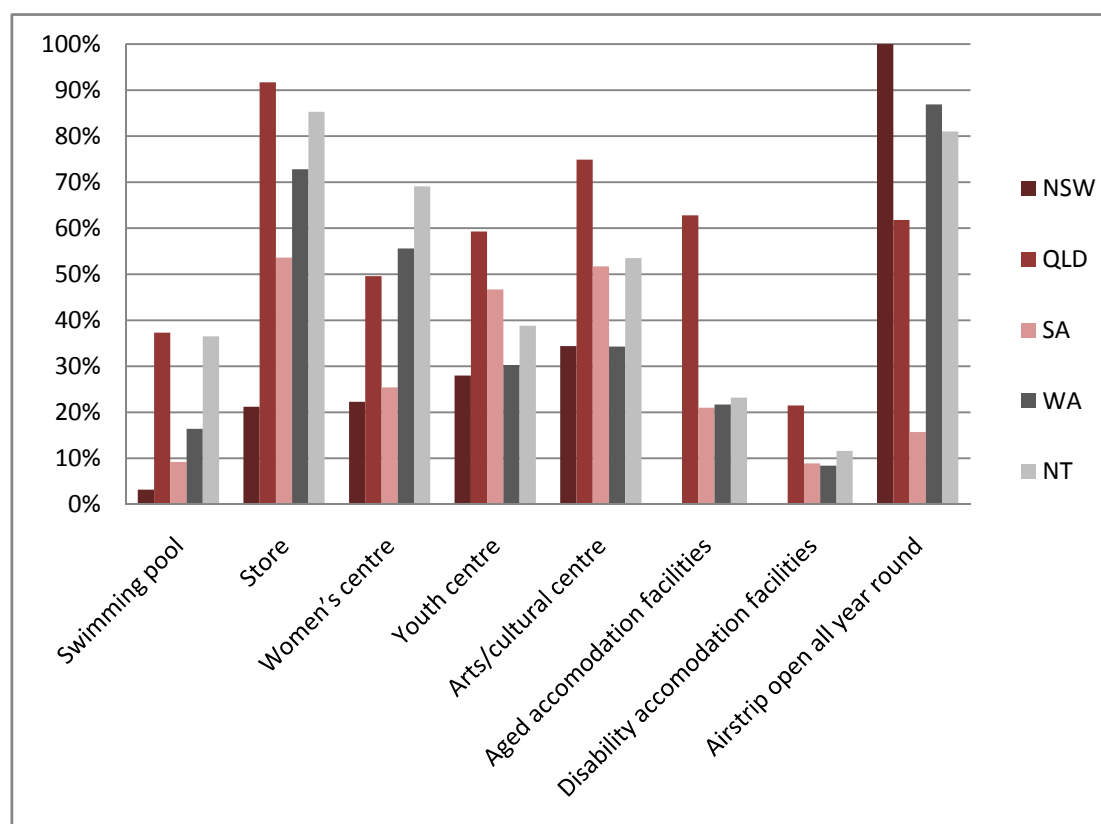
30 Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2007*, June 2007, p. 66.

26 priority communities earmarked for new housing being in the Northern Territory. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

3.54 The levels of community infrastructure and services provided in Indigenous communities also differ greatly between states and territories. As previously noted, the Northern Territory has the poorest housing figures, yet in some areas of access to community infrastructure it records some of the more positive outcomes. For example, as Figure 5 illustrates, the Northern Territory has the highest proportion of its Indigenous population in discrete Indigenous communities with a women's shelter and, along with Queensland, the highest recorded percentage for swimming pools.

3.55 The data presented in Figure 5 below suggests that access to youth centres is low across all jurisdictions with only Queensland having more than 50 per cent of its population of discrete Indigenous communities with access to youth centres. All the other jurisdictions all recorded less than 30 per cent. The lack of access to youth centres as well as other youth programs in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory in particular is supported by the Central Australian Youth Link Up Service's outline in their submission on the infrastructure needs in the Central Australian region of the Northern Territory.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 5: Proportion of reported usual population of discrete Indigenous communities with access to facilities, 2006**



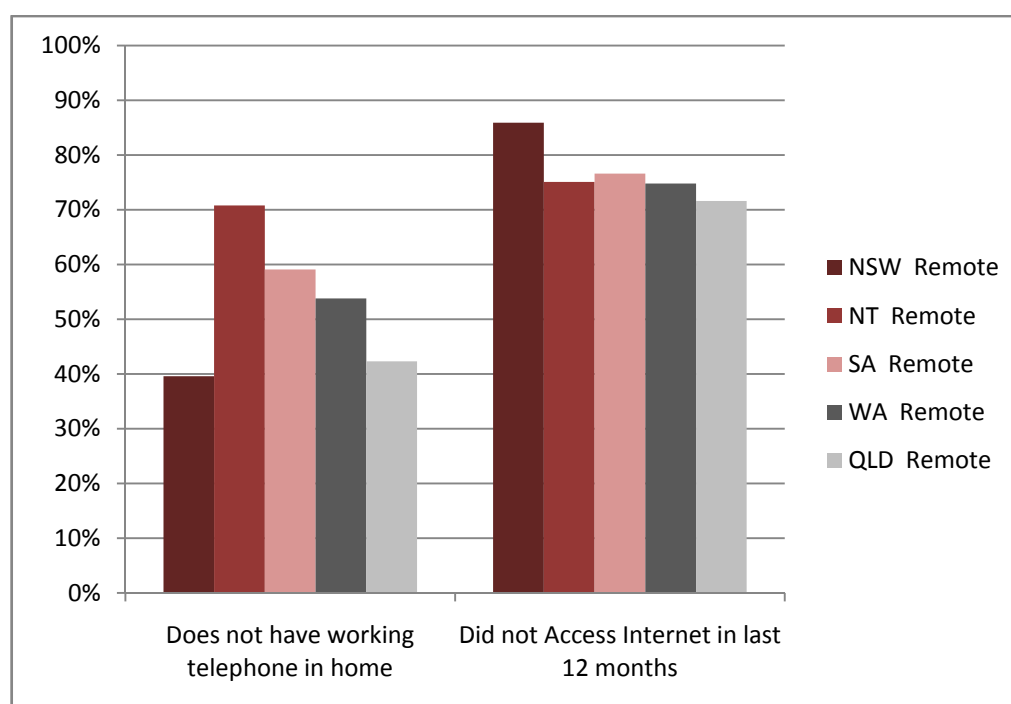
Source: AIHW 2008 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework report

31 See Central Australian Youth Link Up Service, *Submission 26*, pp. 50-54.

3.56 The committee also notes that Figure 5 illustrates that New South Wales recorded the lowest proportions across all four selected categories, recording almost half the availability/existence of community infrastructure of Queensland. For example New South Wales has no aged or disability accommodation facilities in its discrete Indigenous communities. All other states, apart from South Australia, also registered a very low proportion of access to both aged facilities and to disability accommodation facilities, with no state or territory recording more than 20 per cent of the reported usual population in discrete Indigenous communities having access to disability accommodation facilities.

3.57 The committee is concerned that the data indicates very low access to aged facilities and disability accommodation facilities in all jurisdictions in discrete Indigenous communities. Such facilities, as well as other respite facilities, are very important in any community in a regional or remote area. The committee discusses this further in relation to the NTER, and will pursue further investigations into aged care support and facilities in its remaining reports.

**Figure 6: Indigenous access to telephone and internet in remote areas**



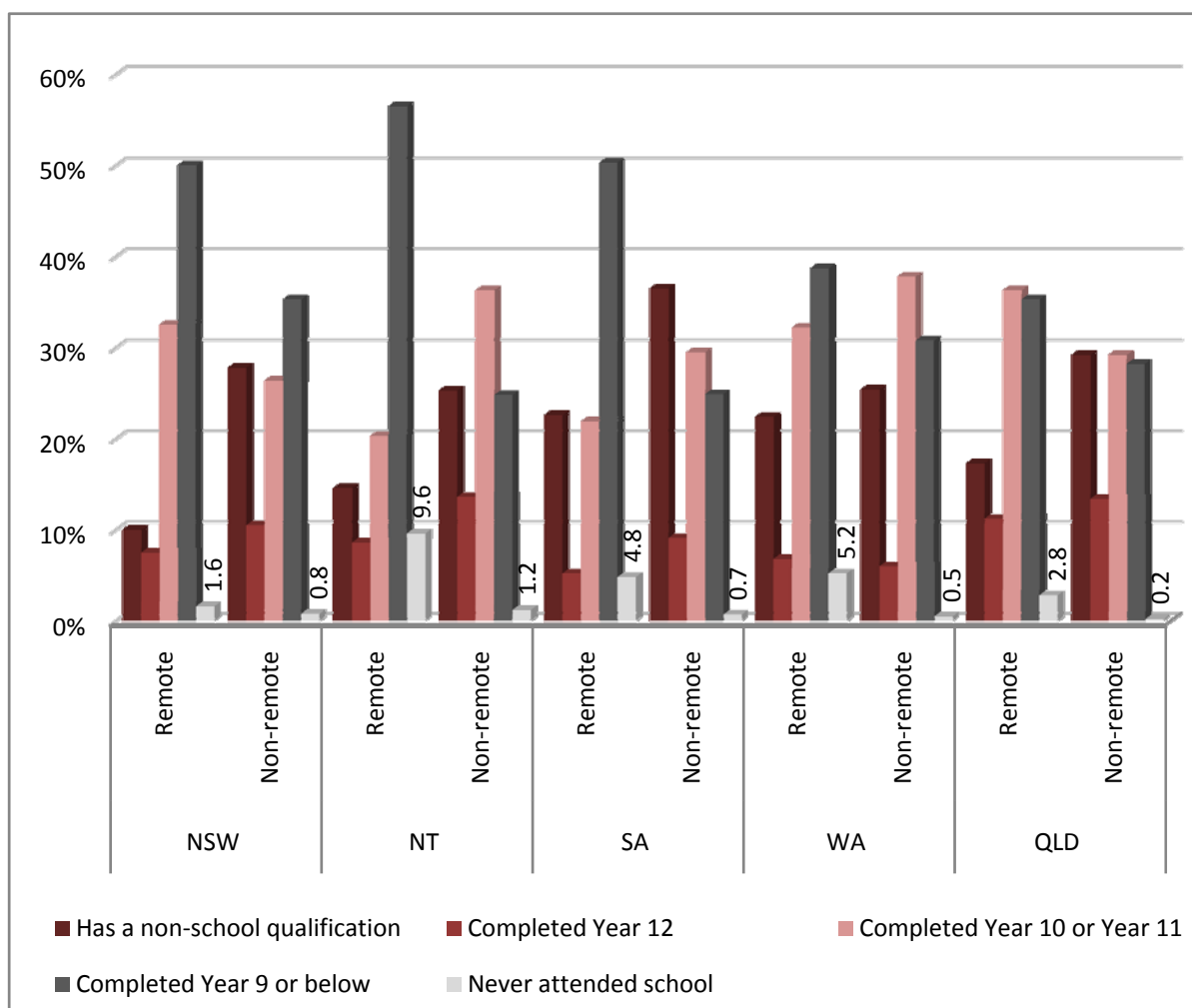
Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.58 Figure 6 above depicts access to telephones and the internet in remote areas across the states and territories. Access to the internet was comparatively limited across all jurisdictions with at least 70 per cent of people not using the internet in the last 12 months. However with telephone access in the home results were much more varied, with just over 70 per cent of Indigenous people in remote areas of the Northern Territory not having access to a telephone in their own home, compared to 40 per cent in New South Wales. Clearly a greater focus is required in bridging the 'digital divide' in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

## Indigenous educational attainment and standards

3.59 In the area of education the data again illustrates large differences between the standards of reported Indigenous attainment levels across the jurisdictions. The graph below outlines the educational attainment of Indigenous people aged over 15 years that were surveyed in the NATSISS. From this graph the highest proportion of Indigenous people who have never attended school live in remote areas of the Northern Territory, almost 10 per cent, followed by remote areas of Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and finally New South Wales with 1.6 per cent. Across all jurisdictions the number of people who never attended school was much lower in non-remote areas.

**Figure 7: Level of educational attainment of Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over, 2002**



Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.60 Figure 7 above also shows that remote areas in New South Wales have the lowest percentage of Indigenous people with non-school qualifications at just below 10 per cent. Only the remote areas of South Australia and Western Australia registered more than 20 per cent of Indigenous persons aged over 15 with a non-school qualification.

3.61 NCETA notes in its submission that:

Potential factors contributing to the low levels of Indigenous students' school retention rates include availability and accessibility of schools, especially secondary schools, racism at school, parents' negative experiences of schooling, wellbeing of the children (poor health, hunger, hearing difficulties, substance abuse), and the perceived quality and relevance of available schooling.<sup>32</sup>

3.62 The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test is another recent addition to nationally comparable data collections on educational achievement that specifically identifies Indigenous students and geographical locations. The committee notes the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has stated that the results of the NAPLAN tests will be used as performance indicators by the COAG Reform Council to measure progress against the Closing the Gap target to 'halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade'.<sup>33</sup>

3.63 The most recent tests for which results have been released were conducted in May 2008 for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia. This was the first time all students in the same year level have been assessed on the same test items across reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy in all states and territories. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in the report on the results of the 2008 NAPLAN tests stated that:

The tests broadly reflect the curriculum content across all States and Territories, and the types of test questions and test formats were chosen so that they would be familiar to teachers and students.

NAPLAN is an important innovation in national literacy and numeracy assessment in Australia. It reports the full range of student achievement against a common scale and uses a common set of tests to resolve the technical difficulties associated with equating State and Territory based tests.<sup>34</sup>

3.64 The NAPLAN results show that overall at all year levels Indigenous students were less likely to be achieving at or above the national minimum standards than non-Indigenous students. The report notes that across year levels:

...there is a decline in the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student mean scores for Reading, Spelling, Grammar and

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32 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, *Submission 44*, p. 6.

33 Council of Australian Governments, Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, November 2008, p. 8.

34 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Report: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy 2008*, September 2008, p. 2.



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Punctuation, but there is an increase in the differences for Writing. The differences in Numeracy are the same at each year level. The participation rate for Indigenous students declines as year level increases.<sup>35</sup>

3.65 The committee has outlined in this report the reading and numeracy results for Years 3 and 7 across all jurisdictions with remote and very remote populations. The results from the NAPLAN for these areas are illustrated Figures 8-11 on the following pages.

3.66 For the year 3 results in reading, remote and very remote areas in New South Wales and South Australia had the highest percentages of Indigenous students at or above national minimum standard, at around 70 per cent in remote areas and 60 per cent in very remote areas. However, in very remote areas in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory less than 40 per cent of Indigenous students were at or above national minimum standard, with the Northern Territory scoring around 14 per cent. Again in numeracy New South Wales and South Australia performed the best out of all jurisdictions in remote areas while in very remote areas only the Northern Territory recorded less than 50 per cent of students at or above national minimum standard.

3.67 Figure 9 illustrates reading achievements for Year 7 students. The committee notes the very low percentage of Indigenous students that are at or above the benchmark in very remote areas in South Australia and the Northern Territory. In South Australia only 17 per cent were at or above the benchmark and in the Northern Territory it was just under 14 per cent. The Northern Territory government has previously acknowledged the need to improve Indigenous literacy and numeracy skills in a 2008 policy document:

The ability to read and write and to be numerate is the foundation for all school learning. Good literacy and numeracy skills are critical if young people are to complete their schooling successfully. These skills are also required if they are to participate fully in the economic and social development of the NT and the nation.

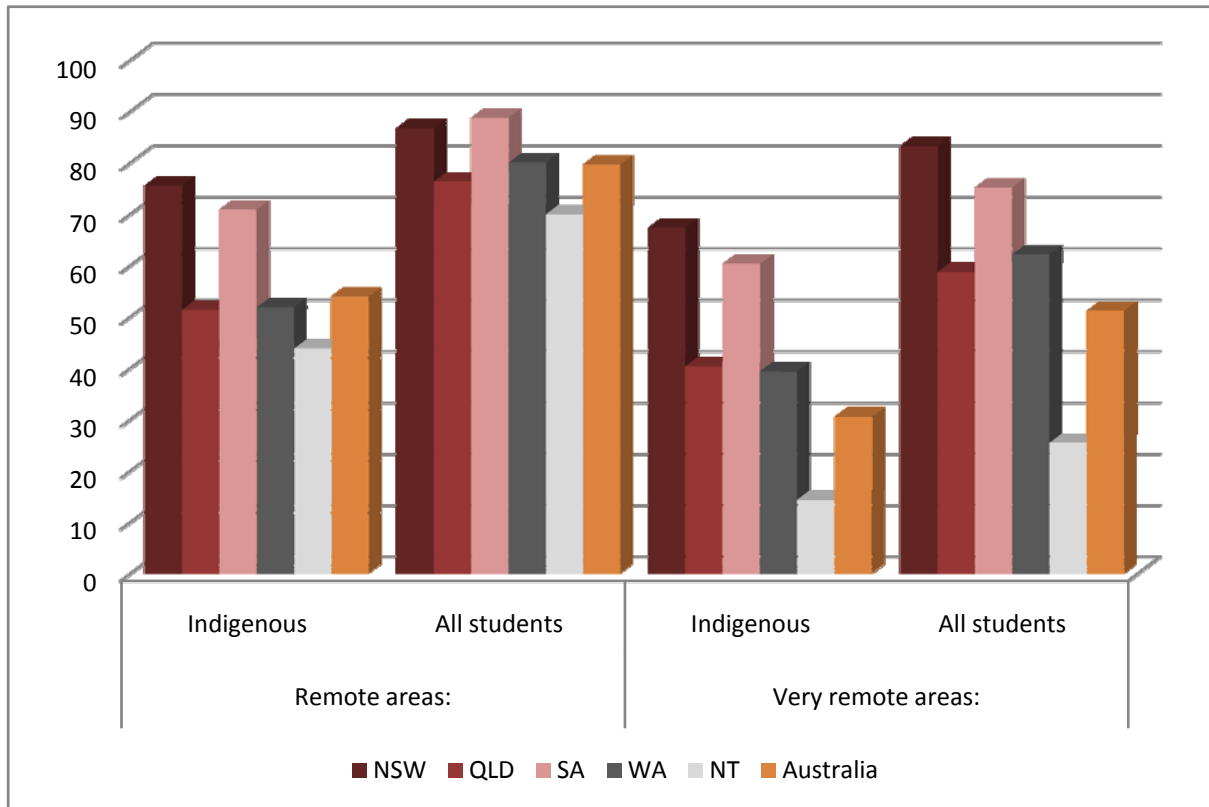
Despite substantial investment by the NT and Australian governments in supporting the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills for students, and the genuine effort of Department of Education and Training (DET) staff over many years to improve results, there has been no significant improvement in NT students' literacy and numeracy outcomes.<sup>36</sup>

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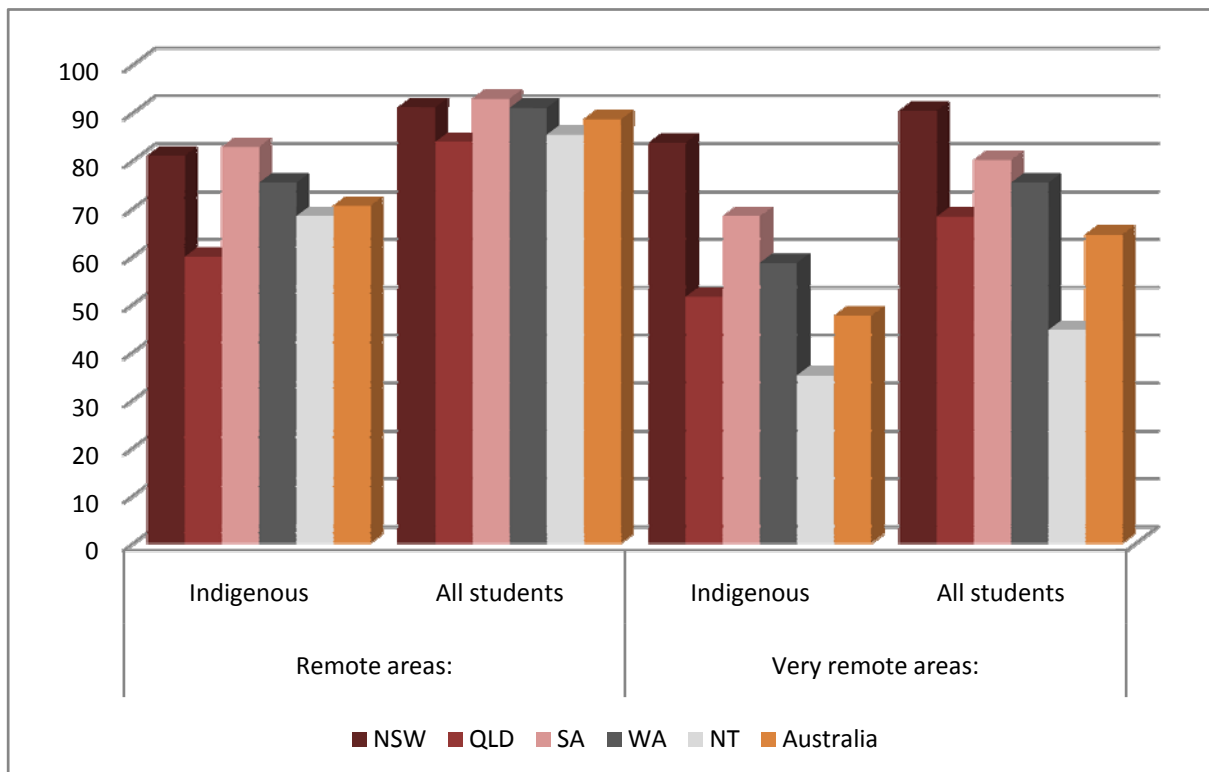
35 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Report: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy 2008*, September 2008, p. 203.

36 Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, *Compulsory teaching in English for the first four hours of each school day*, policy document No. 2008/2492, November 2008, [http://www.det.nt.gov.au/corporate/policies/curriculum\\_studies/CompulsoryEnglishFourHoursEachDay.pdf](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/corporate/policies/curriculum_studies/CompulsoryEnglishFourHoursEachDay.pdf) (accessed 18 June 2009).

**Figure 8: Percentage of Year 3 students at or above national minimum standard in reading, 2008**

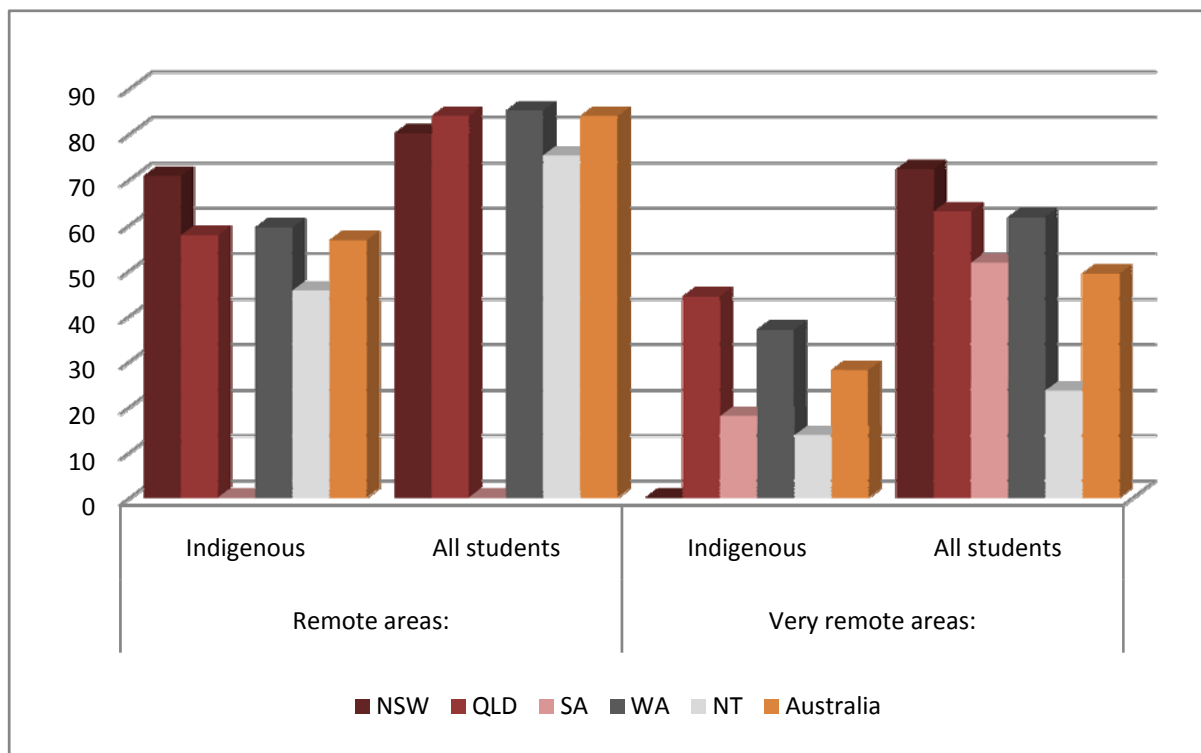


**Figure 9: Percentage of Year 3 students at or above national minimum standard in numeracy, 2008**



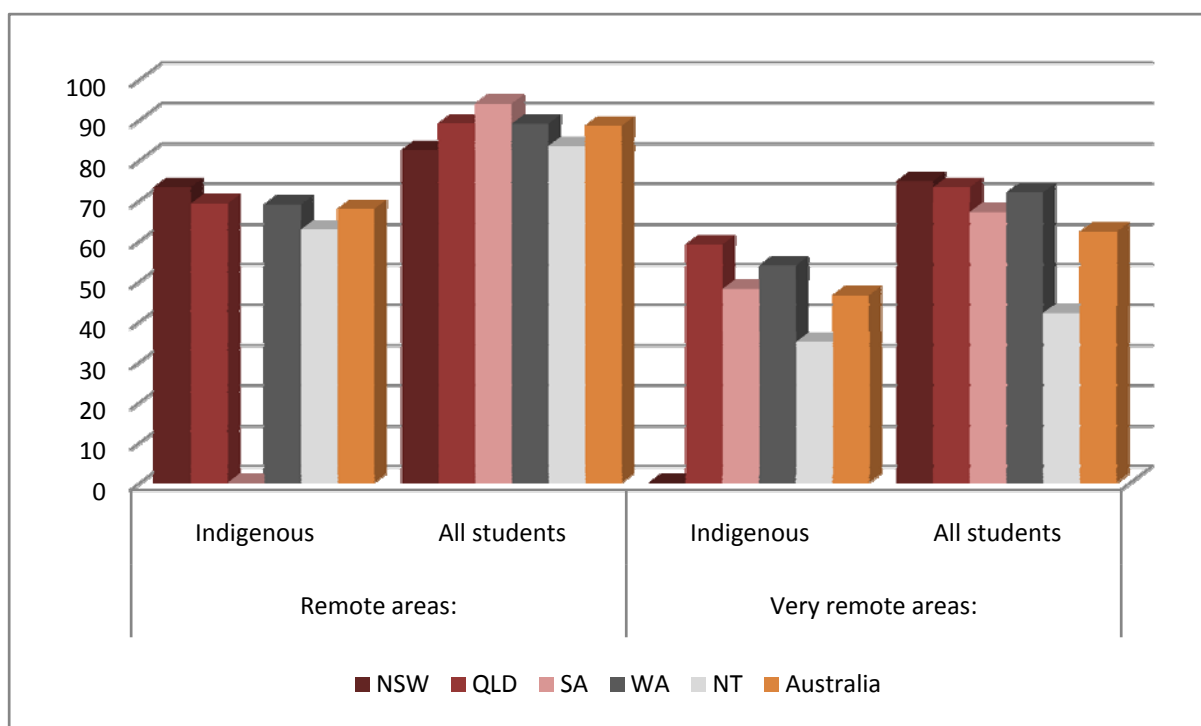
Source: MCEETYA 2008 NAPLAN

**Figure 10: Percentage of Year 7 students at or above national minimum standard in reading, 2008**



*Note: Where there are no results this indicates that the data was not published as there were no students tested or the number of students tested was less than 30.*

**Figure 11: Percentage of Year 7 students at or above national minimum standard in numeracy, 2008**



Source: MCEETYA 2008 NAPLAN

3.68 The MCEETYA report noted that the Year 7 results for reading and numeracy showed that:

In the Northern Territory, Indigenous students are one-quarter to one-third as likely to be achieving at or above national minimum standards in literacy domains and half as likely to be achieving at or above national minimum standard in Numeracy...

...the mean score for Indigenous students [across Australia] is substantially lower than that for non-Indigenous students, and is cause for major concern. In Reading, for example, the difference in the means across Australia is 74 points, the difference in the Northern Territory is 145 points and in Western Australia it is 83 points.<sup>37</sup>

3.69 In addition to student attainment, student attendance levels are another area of interest to the committee for comparison across the states and territories. The MCEETYA *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007* outlined the data on comparable school attendance across the jurisdictions for full time students in Years 1-10. The report noted that school attendance was 'a new performance measure and currently student attendance data is not collected uniformly across jurisdictions and schooling sectors'.<sup>38</sup> The report also noted that:

...due to variance in the systems in place for collecting student attendance data across the sectors and jurisdictions it is not yet possible to collect the data consistently across Australia in all jurisdictions/sectors.<sup>39</sup>

3.70 Figure 12 over the page depicts the attendance rates for government schools but the MCEETYA report did not disaggregate the data by remoteness area and did not list any source of such disaggregated data in the statistical annex.

3.71 The committee considers this is a priority area as the COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement has identified national, jurisdictional and geo-locational—the school's geographical location—school attendance rates as one of the two performance indicators to be used to measure progress against the Closing the Gap target to 'Halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020'.<sup>40</sup>

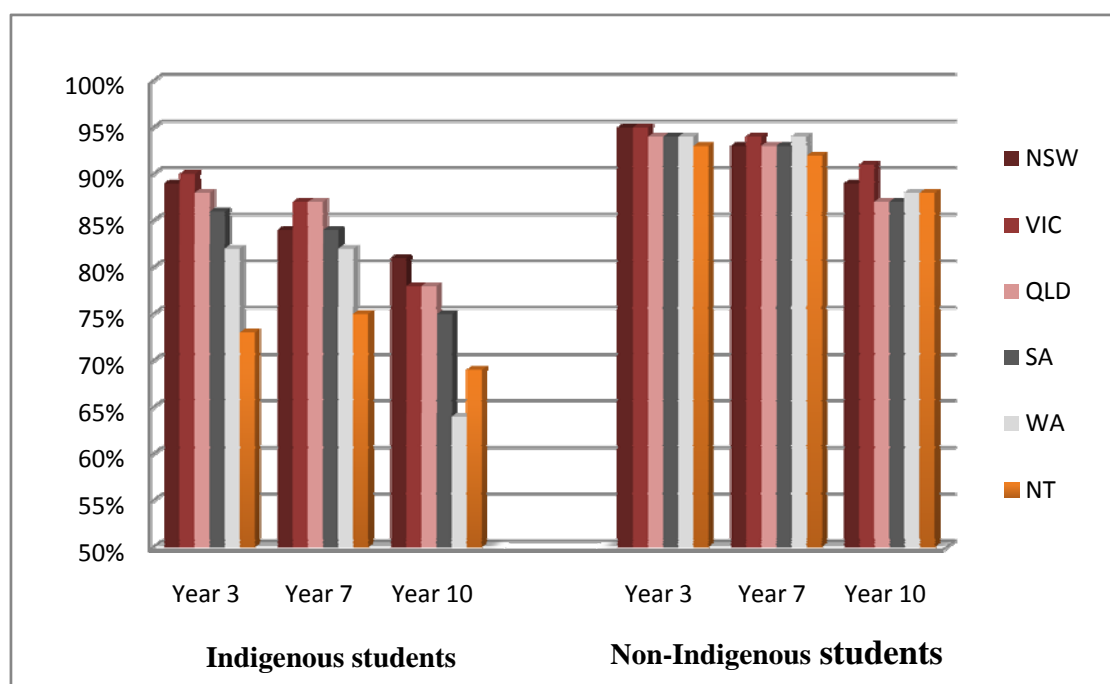
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37 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Report: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy 2008*, September 2008, p. 153.

38 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*, Appendix 1: Statistical annex, p. 47, <http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/anr2007/> (accessed 1 June 2009).

39 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*, p. 46.

40 Council of Australian Governments, Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations, *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, November 2008, pp. 10-11.

**Figure 12: Student attendance rates in government schools in 2007**

Source: MCEETYA 2009 National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007

3.72 In general, student attendance in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales tended to be higher than the other jurisdictions. The Northern Territory attendance rates were lower than those of other states for each year level. The Northern Territory had the lowest levels of attendance in all years for Indigenous students except in year 10 where Western Australia was slightly lower at just under 65 per cent compared to the Northern Territory's 68 per cent. The MCEETYA reported noted that the data indicated that:

...Indigenous students attended school at lower rates than non-Indigenous students, with the variation in attendance more pronounced in the later years of schooling. For some States and Territories, there was a difference of more than ten percentage points in attendance rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. In the Northern Territory, particularly from years 6 to 10, the difference was close to 20 percentage points.<sup>41</sup>

3.73 The committee notes that the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training has published its own school attendance data, which is provide below in Table 5, but this is not comparable to other jurisdictions. The committee acknowledges the particular logistical difficulties faced by the Northern Territory government with a high proportion of its Indigenous population residing in remote and very remote areas. However the committee is concerned that this data suggests that very little progress has been made since 2008.

41 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*, p. 46.

**Table 5: School attendance in the Northern Territory 2008-09**

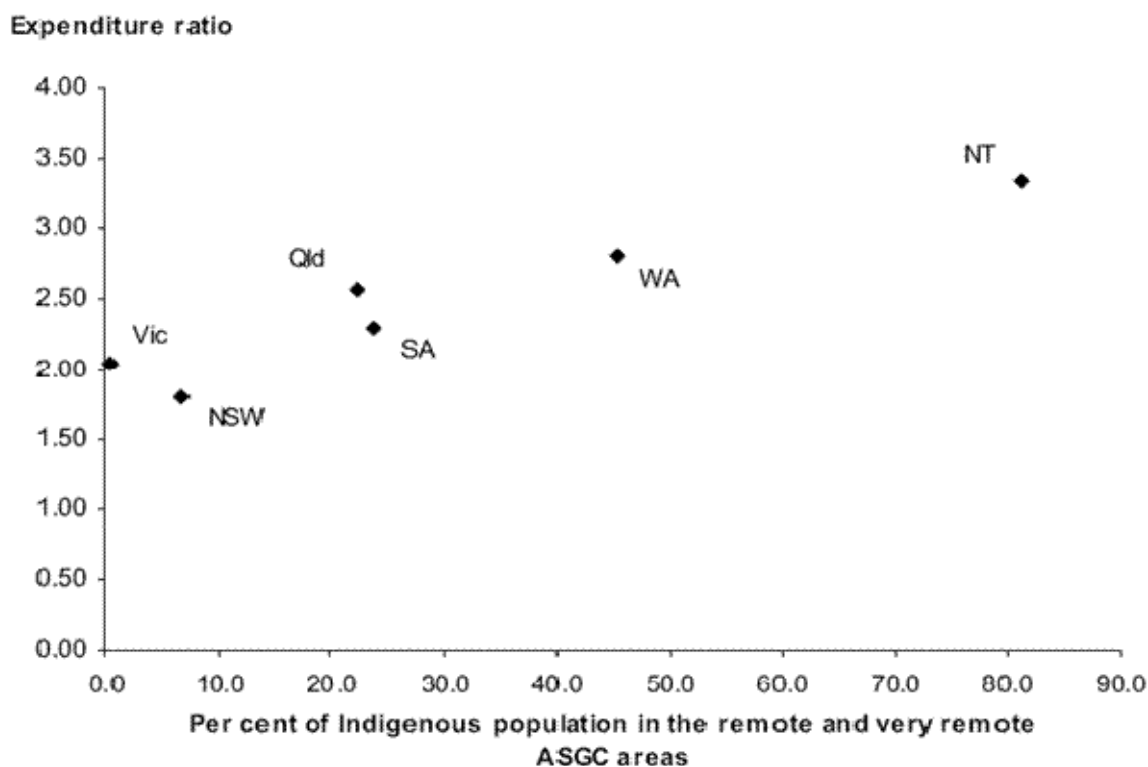
Geolocation	2008			2009		
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total
Provincial	81.1%	90.6%	88.7%	82.6%	91.9%	90.1%
Remote	81.9%	92.4%	87.7%	82.5%	92.7%	88.0%
Very Remote	65.7%	91.0%	69.1%	63.5%	90.1%	67.0%

Source: Northern Territory Department of Education and Training - Enrolments and attendance 2008-2009

### The health of the Indigenous population

3.74 The AIHW report *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2008 report* analyses data on the comparative state and territory government expenditure on health goods and services for Indigenous people. The report noted that the Northern Territory (\$5,461) and South Australia (\$4,011) had the highest average expenditure per person for Indigenous people. As Figure 13 below depicts, the increased expenditure is related to the proportion of the Indigenous population that reside in remote and very remote areas.

**Figure 13: Expenditure ratio on Indigenous health**



Source: AIHW 2008

3.75 The committee notes that there is no universally collected primary healthcare data currently available. At the committee's hearing in Canberra on 9 June 2009 the committee asked the AIHW if there was anything being done to address this vacuum:

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Generally in terms of primary healthcare data it is a difficult area to get data on. We have, say, seven million hospital separations a year that we collect data on but a great many more are primary care episodes. Filtering out and trying to get a useful data collection out of that is an interesting problem. A few months back we published a report towards primary healthcare data looking at what existing data there is because there are various electronic collections that do collect data. It is certainly something that we are hoping to do further work on. I think the Primary Healthcare Strategy will be a key document from which data collection will be launched because that overall policy will be clear about what needs to be collected. It is really a case of what should be collected. We are doing some work at the moment with the states and territories on trying to develop a national minimum dataset, that is the minimum number of standard items that should be collected in relation to primary healthcare and community health. We are certainly trying to take it forward.<sup>42</sup>

3.76 In terms of other basic health indicators available, the 2004-05 NATSIHS collected various data on Indigenous health in regional and remote Indigenous communities including information on general health, smoking, alcohol consumption, long term health conditions, oral health, Body Mass Index, immunisation and women's health issues.

3.77 The committee notes that very little data is currently available about the patterns and levels of alcohol and drug use by Indigenous people, especially amongst young Indigenous people. NCETA noted in its submission that it has undertaken investigation of data that examines the pattern of alcohol and drug use by school aged children. The study found that

Indigenous students were 1.27 times more likely to have used any illicit drug in the last year compared to non-Indigenous students (with age, gender, school type (Government, Catholic, Independent), self-rated academic performance, alcohol and tobacco use, socio-economic disadvantage, and language spoken at home controlled for).

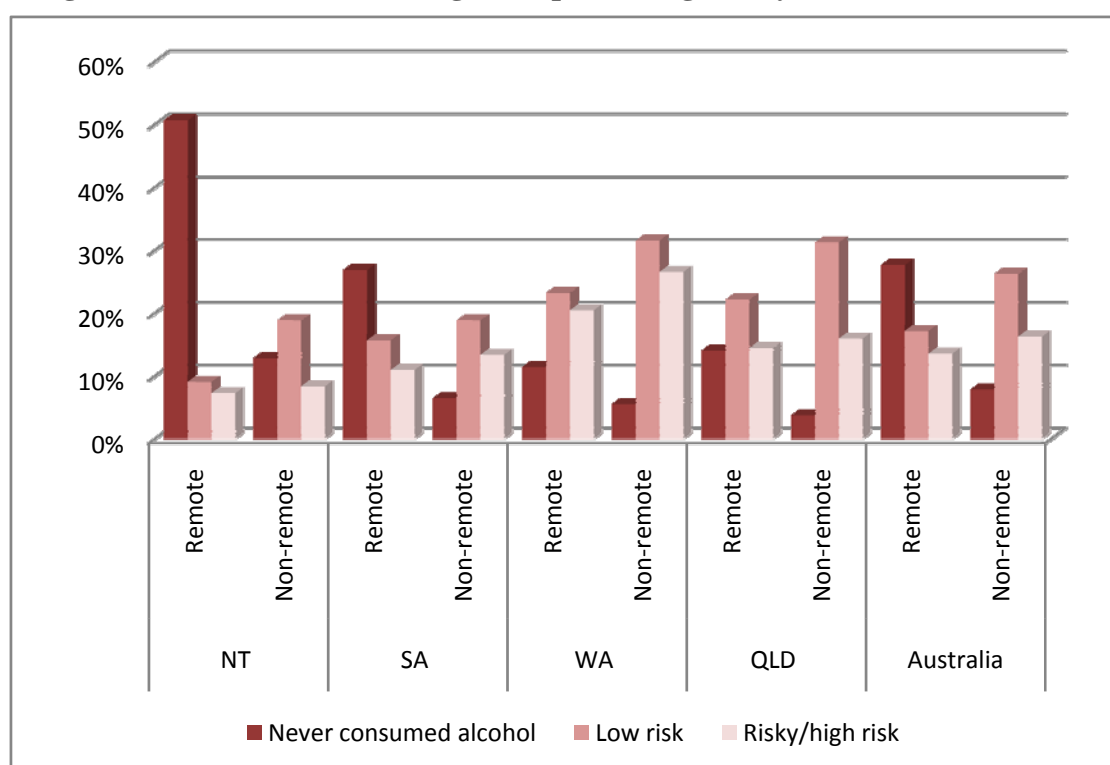
The most commonly used illicit drugs among Indigenous students were cannabis, inhalants, and tranquillisers.<sup>43</sup>

3.78 The NCETA noted that very little of the available data has been published and is currently preparing documents that report these findings. The committee looks forward to the release of additional data on the patterns of alcohol and drug use of young people and would also like to see the data reported by geographical location and on a state and territory level.

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42 Dr Penelope Allbon, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 12.

43 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, *Submission 44*, p. 4.

**Figure 14: Alcohol risk of Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over, 2004-05**

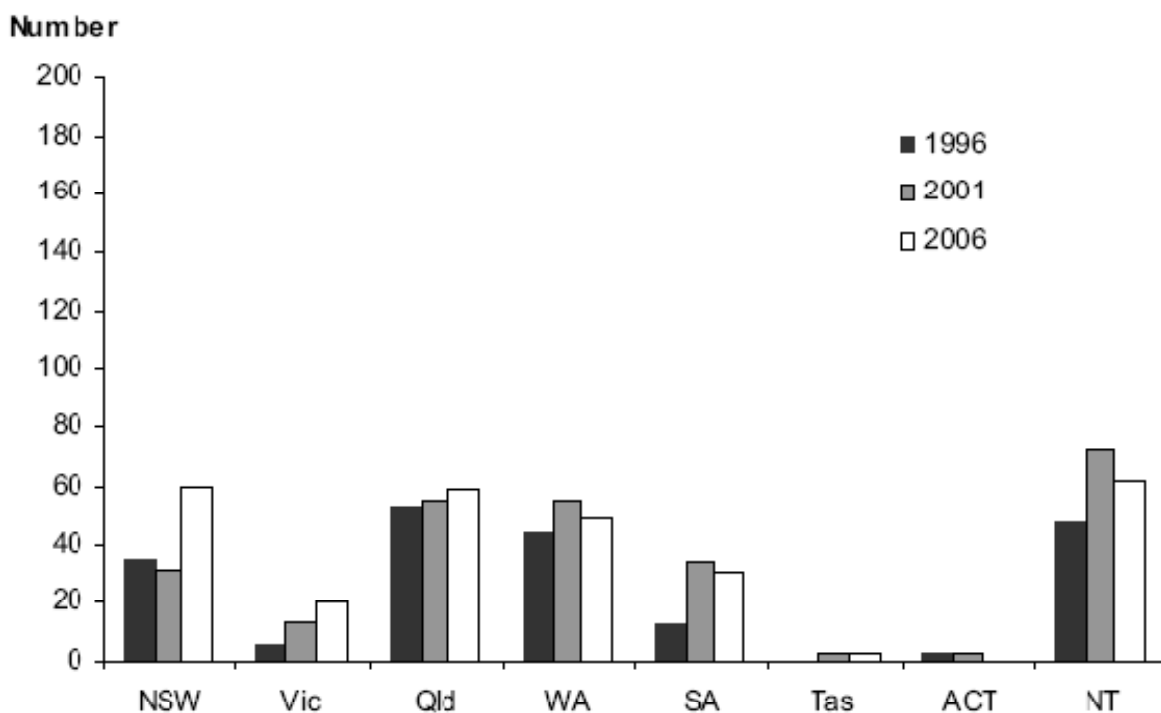
Source: ABS 2004-05 NATSIHS

3.79 Figure 14 above illustrates the alcohol risk of Indigenous people across states and territories and in both remote and non-remote areas. Of particular interest is that 50 per cent of Indigenous people in remote areas of the Northern Territory reported having never consumed alcohol which was far above any other jurisdictions either remote or non-remote. Overall a higher proportion of Indigenous people in remote areas had never consumed alcohol than in non-remote areas across all jurisdictions and there was less reported low risk, risky and high risk drinking in remote areas as well.

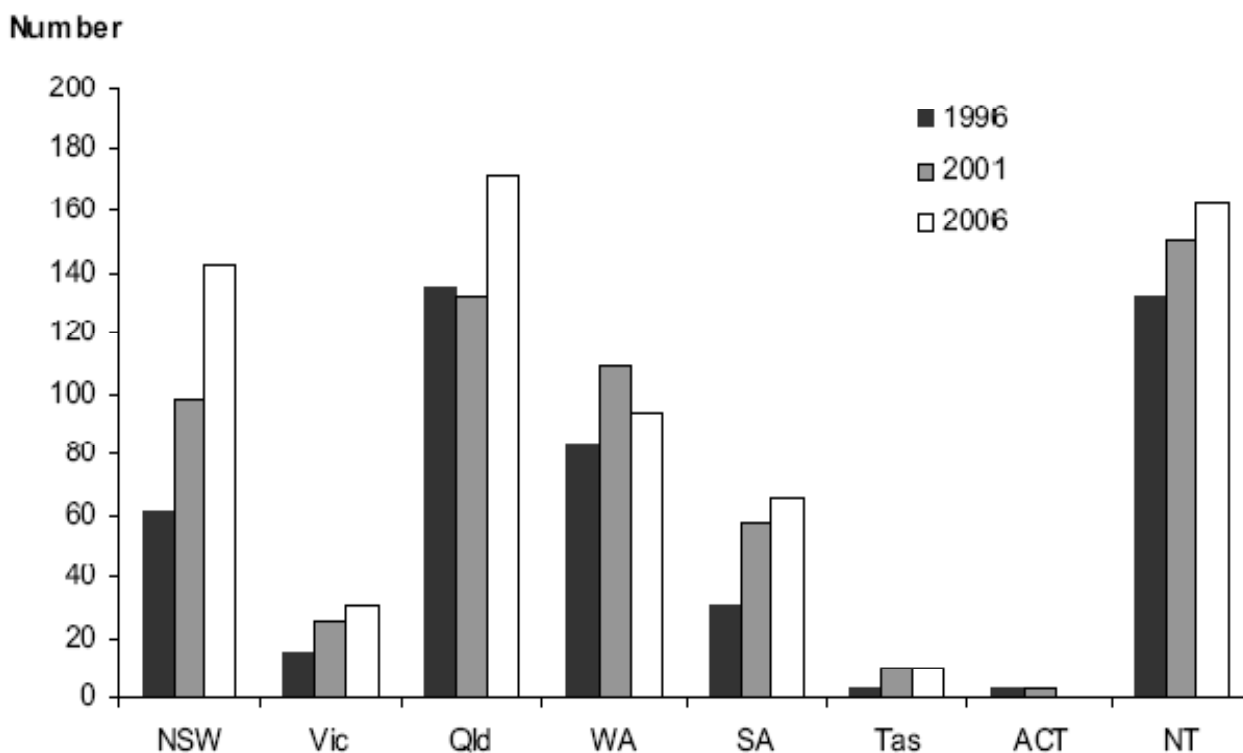
3.80 The committee also notes the data available on Indigenous health workers and the numbers of medical practitioners. As discussed in Chapter 5, the number of Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW) has been declining in some states and territories recently. This is also supported by data analysed by the AIHW which is illustrated over the page in Figure 15. As the graph shows, from 2001–2006 the number of male AHWs increased in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland but decreased in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. For female AHWs, numbers in New South Wales and Queensland increased by over 20 per cent in South Australia and the Northern Territory, slightly increased in the Northern Territory and South Australia but decreased in Western Australia.



**Figure 15: Male AHWs by state and territory, 1996, 2001 and 2006, Census.**



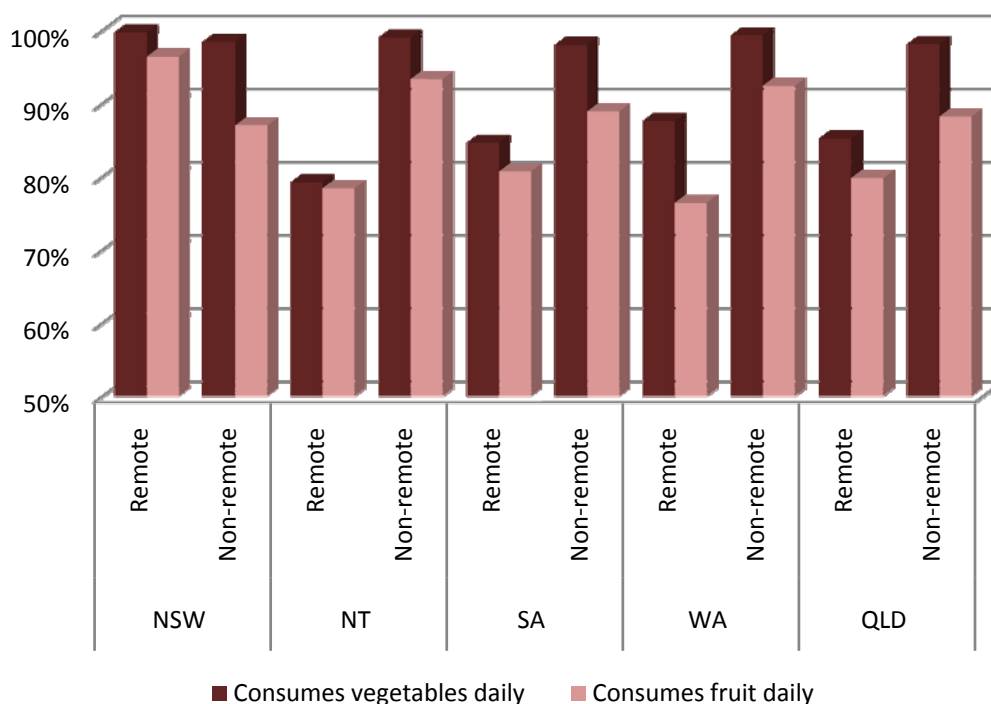
**Figure 16: Female AHWs by state and territory, 1996, 2001 and 2006, Census.**



Source: AIHW 2009 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health labour force statistics and data quality assessment.

3.81 In Figure 17 below, apart from New South Wales all remote areas had a lower reported daily consumption of fruit and vegetables than non-remote areas, with daily fruit consumption the lowest in remote Western Australia and vegetable consumption the lowest in the Northern Territory.

**Figure 17: Selected dietary habits of Indigenous persons aged 12 years and over, 2004-05**



Source: ABS 2004-05 NATSIHS

**Table 6: No. of psychiatric beds in public acute hospitals with psychiatric units per 100 000 people, 2004-05**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	Aust
<b>Inner regional</b>	12.9	11.7	22.7	0	5.8	20.1	N/A	14.4
<b>Outer regional</b>	0.4	4.7	16.4	0	14.7	0	23.8	9.3
<b>Remote</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.6	1.2
<b>Total all regions (including major cities)</b>	13.3	18.1	23.4	11.2	20.9	17.8	16.0	17.2

Source: AIHW (2007) *Mental health services in Australia 2004-05*

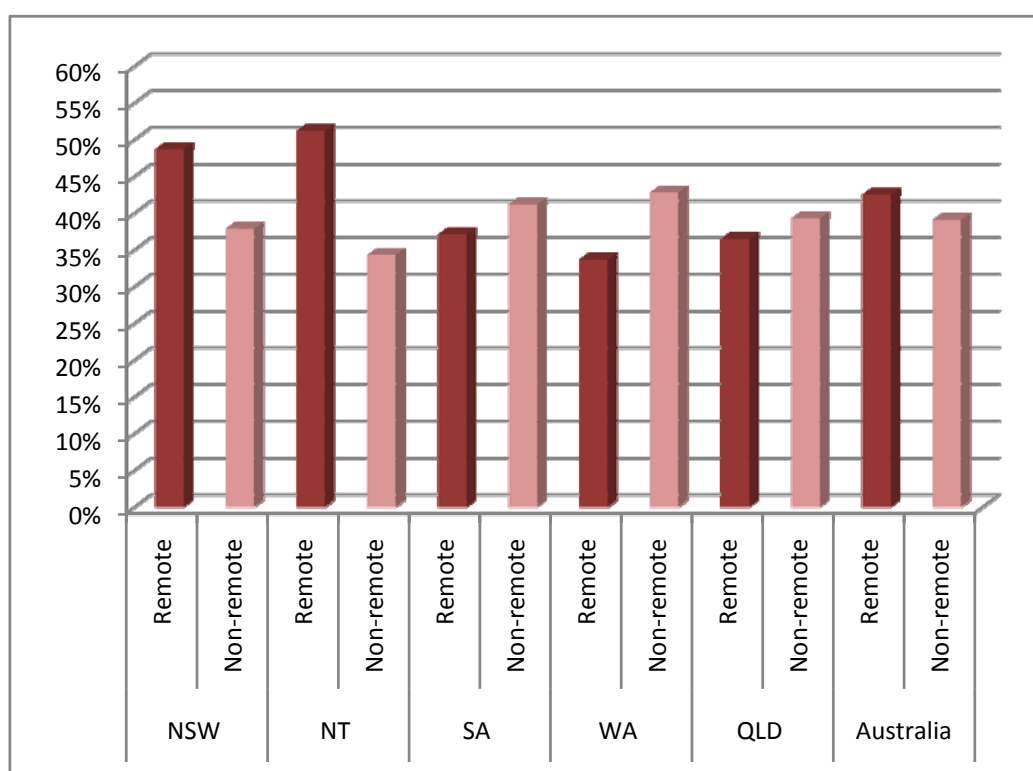
3.82 In terms of mental health, the AIHW released a comprehensive report on mental health services in Australia in April 2007. The aim of the report was to provide information on a wide range of mental health-related services provided in Australia, as well as the resources associated with those services. Although the report is not Indigenous-specific it does provide information on mental health facilities available by remoteness area as Table 6 above illustrates. Only the Northern Territory has

public psychiatric beds available in remote areas and it also has the most available per 100 000 people in outer regional areas. The committee was surprised to note that South Australia has no beds available in outer regional or remote areas.

## Employment

3.83 The ABS 2002 NATSISS also collected data on the size of the Indigenous labour force and the difficulties Indigenous people have finding employment. Figure 18 below outlines the percentage of Indigenous people not in the labour force by state and territory and remoteness. Remote areas of the Northern Territory recorded the highest percentages, just on 50 per cent, followed by the remote areas of New South Wales and the non-remote areas of Western Australia and South Australia respectively. In Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia the percentage of Indigenous people not in the labour force was greater, even if only slightly, in non-remote areas than in remote areas.

**Figure 18: Percentage of Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over not in the labour force, 2002**



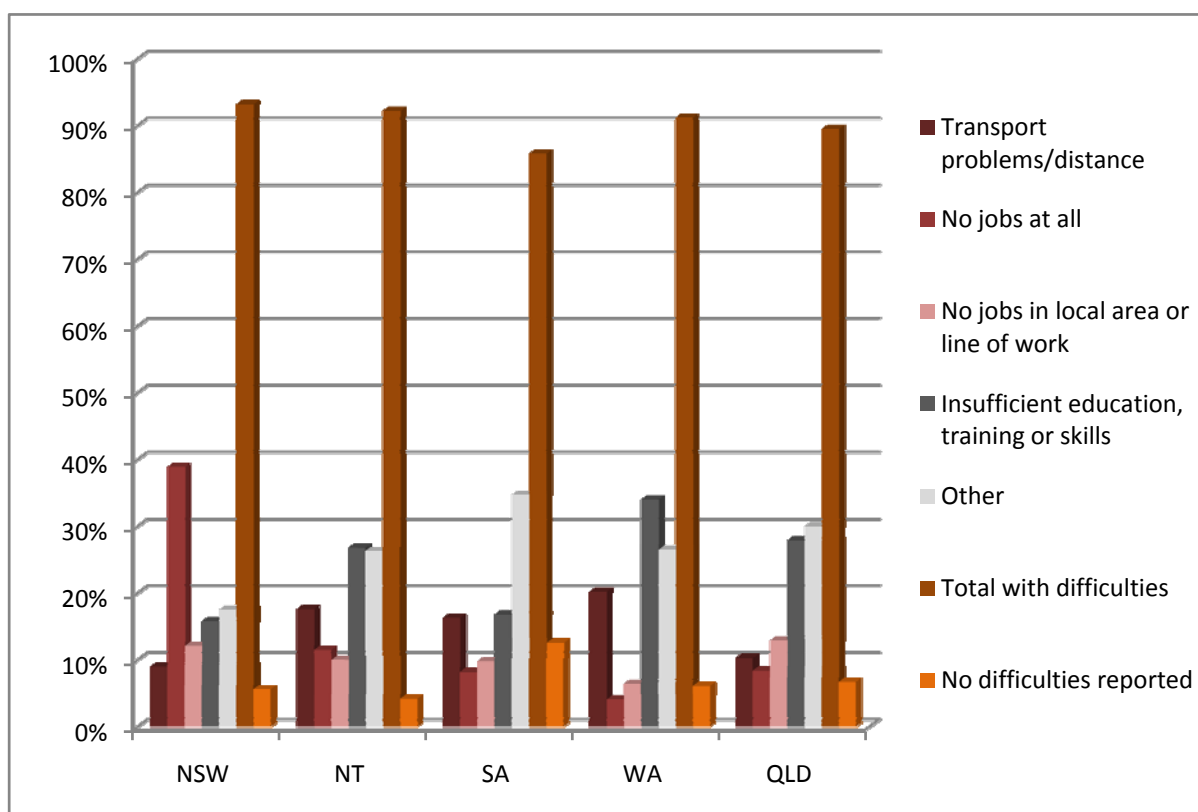
Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.84 Figure 19 over the page illustrates that over 80 per cent of unemployed Indigenous people in remote areas find it difficult to find work, rising to over 90 per cent in New South Wales where the most common barrier to finding work is that there are no jobs at all. However in the Northern Territory and Western Australia the greatest barrier is insufficient education, training or skills to find a job and this reason is second only to no jobs in local area or line of work in Queensland.

3.85 NCETA notes in its submission that:

Employment status and employment opportunities are key factors in the health and wellbeing of individuals and the communities in which they live. Employment status and opportunities are also heavily implicated in the risk of problematic alcohol and other drug use. So, from a prevention perspective, the need to ensure that adequate employment options exist is of fundamental importance.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 19: Main difficulty finding work for unemployed Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over in remote areas, 2002**

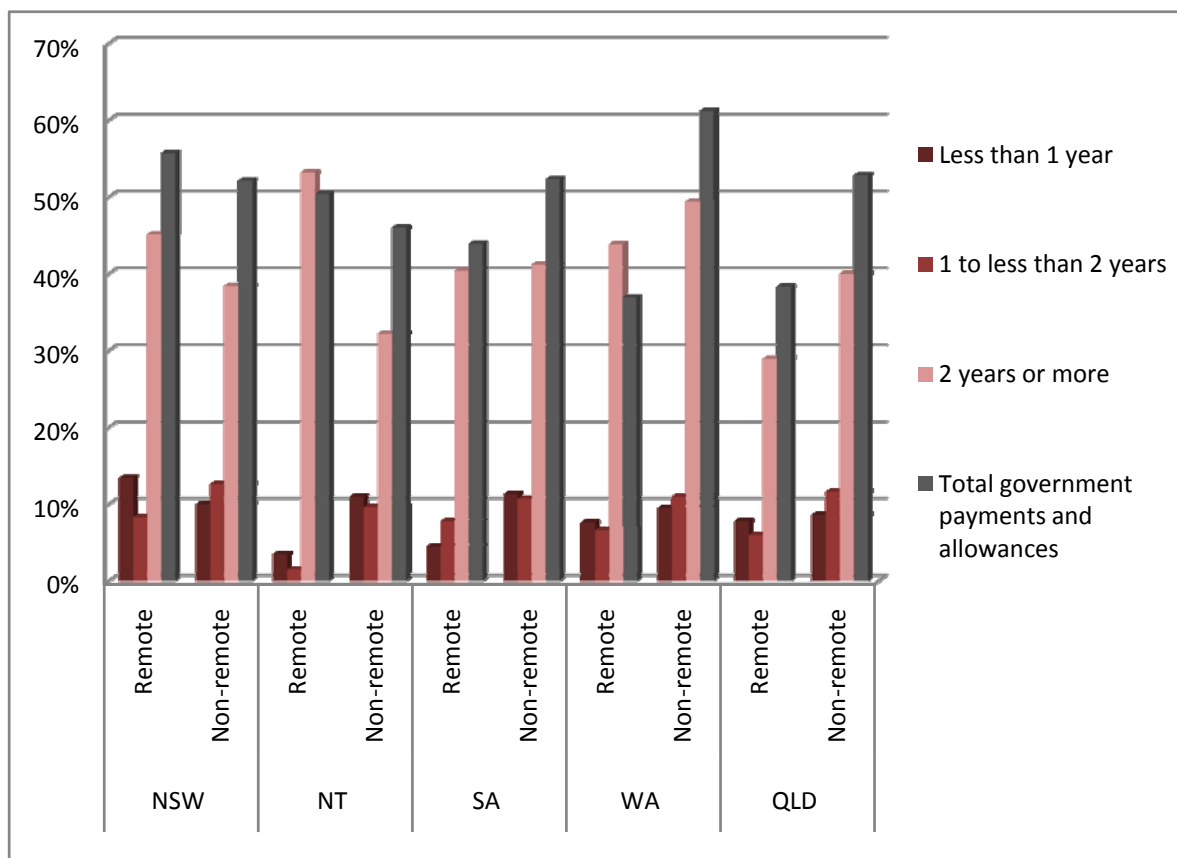


Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

3.86 Figure 20 over the page outlines the percentage of the total Indigenous population in remote and non-remote areas for which government pensions and allowances have been the main source of income. The majority of Indigenous people have been on government pensions and allowances for more than two years with a higher percentage of Indigenous people in Western Australia and Queensland in non-remote areas on government pensions and allowances than in remote areas. In remote areas in the Northern Territory and South Australia fewer than 5 per cent have been on government pensions and allowances for less than one year whereas in New South Wales is more than double that number at 13.5 per cent. Also of interest is that overall the Northern Territory has a smaller percentage of Indigenous people in remote and non-remote areas on government pensions and allowances than New South Wales.

44 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, *Submission 44*, p. 8.

**Figure 20: Times that government pensions and allowances have been the main source of income in the last 2 years for Indigenous people aged 15 years and over, 2002**



Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

## Welfare and security of children and young people

3.87 The committee is unable to compare data on juvenile justice and child protection across states and territories in regional and remote areas. This is because, as the AIHW noted in its submission, :

...data on young people in juvenile justice facilities or under juvenile justice supervision can be disaggregated by state and territories but cannot be disaggregated by geographical location. The same is the case for children in the child protection system where the child protection data set does not allow for the reporting of the data by region or remoteness.<sup>45</sup>

3.88 The committee was particularly concerned with the limited data available in this area given that at the time of arrest and incarceration details on where the offence was committed and where the person resided would be recorded. The committee is also concerned with the lack of detailed data in this area given that juvenile detention

45 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Submission 69*, p. 7.

rates are one of the 12 Headline Indicators for the Productivity Commission's annual *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report.<sup>46</sup>

3.89 Although geographical regions within jurisdictions cannot be compared, the more general differences between states and territories can. The AIHW report on *Juvenile justice in Australia 2006-07* identifies that while rates of juvenile justice supervision:

...for non-Indigenous young people were similar across all states and territories, there was considerable variation in the rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Western Australia had the highest Indigenous rate, with around 80 per 1,000 Indigenous young people under supervision, followed by South Australia with 50 per 1,000...the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Victoria had the lowest rates, which ranged from 20 to 26 per 1,000.<sup>47</sup>

3.90 The report also notes that both Western Australia and Tasmania have had large increases in the rate of Indigenous people under supervision. In Western Australia, the rate of Indigenous young people under juvenile justice supervision:

...increased from 70 per 1,000 in 2003–04 to 80 per 1,000 in 2006–07...In contrast, the Indigenous rate decreased in South Australia from 62 to 50 per 1,000.<sup>48</sup>

3.91 The report outlines the average daily number of young people in detention by Indigenous status in each state and territory. On a daily average almost 90 percent of young people in detention in the Northern Territory are Indigenous followed by Western Australia with just over 70 per cent. It is also clearly evident that a further disaggregation of this data into remoteness areas would provide valuable information and allow better comparison between states with large urban populations and those with relatively large remote populations.

**Table 7: Average daily number of young people in detention 2006-07**

	NSW	QLD	WA	SA	NT	Aust
<b>Indigenous</b>	184	91	83	21	26	443
<b>Total all young people</b>	386	145	117	52	29	941
<b>% that are Indigenous</b>	48%	63%	71%	40%	90%	47%

Source: AIHW 2008

46 See Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2007*, June 2007, <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous/keyindicators2007/> (accessed 21 June 2009).

47 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Juvenile justice in Australia 2006-07*, August 2008, p. 32.

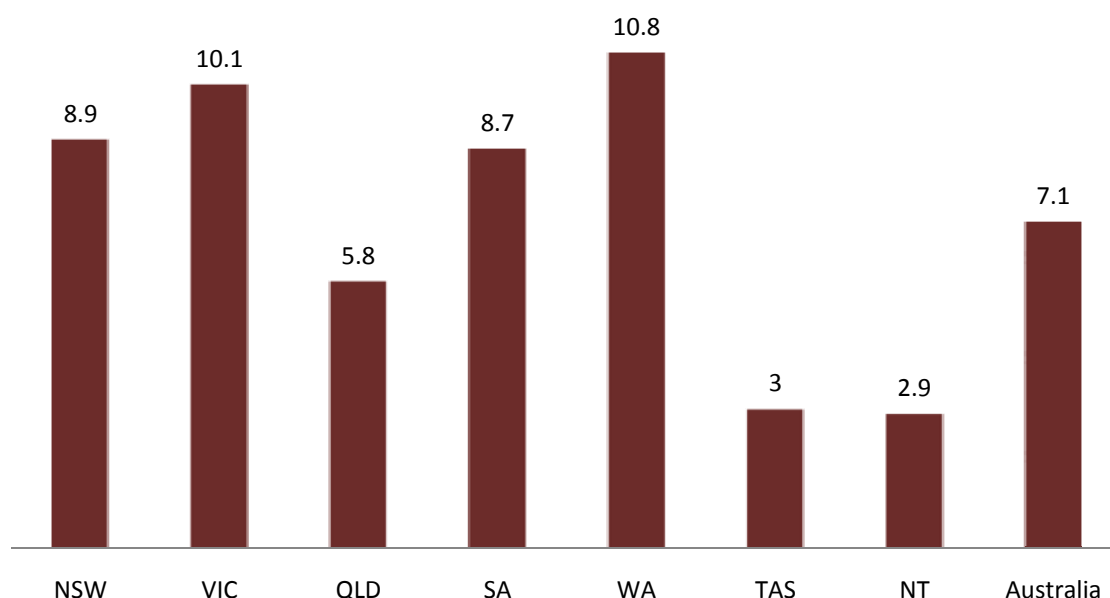
48 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Juvenile justice in Australia 2006-07*, August 2008, p. 36.

3.92 The committee's research has shown that there are similar problems with data collections related to child protection. The most recent *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report noted that existing data collections needed to be developed to:

...better reflect the underlying extent of child protection issues that are not necessarily apparent from administrative data on substantiations, notifications and orders.<sup>49</sup>

3.93 Figure 21 below illustrates the number of Indigenous children on care and protection orders in each state and territory, which differs greatly. It should also be noted that even though the Northern Territory has a low ratio it does not necessarily give a complete picture as it may also indicate a lack of services in remote and very remote areas where a substantial proportion of the Indigenous population reside.

**Figure 21: Ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous children on care and protection orders, July 2007**



Source: AIHW 2008

3.94 The AIHW's report *Child protection Australia 2006–07* also lists the type of abuse or neglect that is reported by state and territory. There are many notable differences, for example in Western Australia, 50 per cent of the notifications are for neglect while in Queensland it is 33 per cent and in Victoria it is 19 per cent. In addition South Australia only has 2.7 per cent of notifications for sexual abuse while Western Australia has 12.5 and the Northern Territory has almost 10 per cent. The Northern Territory and Victoria have by far the highest notifications for physical abuse with just over 30 per cent with the next closest at 22 per cent.

49 Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2007*, June 2007, p. 66, <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous/keyindicators2007/> (accessed 1 June 2009).

3.95 The comparisons with non-Indigenous children are also interesting as although Indigenous children across all jurisdictions have a higher percentage of notifications for neglect and for emotional abuse, excluding Queensland, while non-Indigenous children, with the exception of the ACT and Tasmania (for which the data should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of Indigenous children), have a higher percentage of notifications for sexual and physical abuse. It also must be noted that there may be substantial under-reporting of child abuse across all jurisdictions.

**Figure 22: Percentage of children aged 0-17 years who were the subject of substantiated notifications: type of abuse or neglect, by Indigenous status and state/territory, 2006-07**

Type of abuse or neglect	NSW	Vic <sup>(a)</sup>	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(c)(d)</sup>	ACT	NT
<b>Indigenous children</b>								
Physical abuse	16.5	31.3	22.6	19.6	10.0	9.7	15.8	30.1
Sexual abuse	8.7	4.6	4.9	12.5	2.7	19.4	3.9	9.9
Emotional abuse	37.1	44.8	39.5	17.5	50.0	9.7	39.5	30.1
Neglect	37.7	19.4	33.0	50.3	37.3	61.3	40.8	29.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Other children</b>								
Physical abuse	20.8	34.8	22.7	24.3	15.9	22.6	13.3	42.9
Sexual abuse	16.6	7.4	6.7	22.5	5.9	12.1	3.1	14.3
Emotional abuse	36.9	42.3	46.4	16.9	46.7	28.7	50.4	29.9
Neglect	25.7	15.5	24.2	36.3	31.5	36.5	33.2	12.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) Because of new service and data reporting arrangements, the Victorian child protection data for 2006–07 may not be fully comparable to previous years data. See AIHW (2008) for more information.

(b) 2006–07 data for Queensland are interim and will be revised in 2008.

(c) Data relating to substantiations in Tasmania for 2006–07 should be interpreted carefully because of the high proportion of investigations in process by 31 August 2007.

(d) The high number of children with an 'unknown' Indigenous status at substantiation in Tasmania makes the counts for both Indigenous children and other children unreliable.

*Source: AIHW 2008*

3.96 The committee notes that the Australian Institute of Family Studies, in its submission, outlined that:

A simple examination of the statistics showing an over-representation of Indigenous children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems does not answer why this occurs. Such correlational data need to be examined in detail to see whether there is something inherent in Indigenous populations, in the policies and procedures of authorities (such



as overt or covert racism, which may mean that problems in Indigenous families are more likely to be observed and come to the attention of authorities), or whether such overrepresentation can be explained by some other underlying causes (e.g., socio-economic disadvantage).<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusions from the data

3.97 Throughout the broad examination of some basic data on areas related to the terms of reference for the committee's inquiry, such as health, welfare, wellbeing, child protection and employment, what becomes obvious is the great difference between the status and wellbeing of Indigenous people across the country. It also provides some additional quantitative evidence to substantiate the constant pleas the committee receives from witnesses that there can be no one-size-fits-all solution as there is no one consistent problem across jurisdictions or communities.<sup>51</sup> This was also acknowledged recently by the Commonwealth Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in an address to the National Press Club:

The Government realises that there is no single solution to what is a systemic, complex problem. It just doesn't make sense to think that what works in one remote Indigenous community can be effectively transposed to another. This has to be tackled community by community, with local input and ownership.<sup>52</sup>

3.98 Providing an overview of some of the available data also illustrates the importance of good data collection and analysis for developing policy and assessing the needs of people who live in particular areas. Using accurate and relevant data specific to the location of the intended area of implementation is essential, as situations and needs can vary between remote and very remote areas as well as in regional areas. The committee notes that more work on improving data collection that can be disaggregated to regional locations and by remoteness areas needs to be undertaken.

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50 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 51*, p. 8.

51 Jennifer Walker, *Submission 15*; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 17*; Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Submission 24*; Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc, *Submission 28*; Mission Australia, *Submission 43*; Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, *Submission 48*; NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission 64*; Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 83* and *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009; Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 85*; Dr John Boffa, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Northern Territory, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009; Mrs Danelle Batchler, Kalano Community Association Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009; Assistant Commissioner Grahame Kelly, Northern Territory Police, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009; Mrs Leanna Haynes, Anglicare NT, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009; Ms Kandie Allen-Kelly, Australian Association of Social Workers, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009.

52 The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Closing the Gap - Building an Indigenous Future*, Speech to the National Press Club, Canberra, 27 February 2008, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/closing\\_the\\_gap\\_27feb08.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/closing_the_gap_27feb08.htm) (accessed 9 June 2009).



## Chapter 4

### The Northern Territory Emergency Response

4.1 This Chapter focuses on the committee's first term of reference: the effectiveness of Australian Government policies following the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), specifically on the state of health, welfare, education and law and order in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

4.2 While the previous Commonwealth government introduced the NTER measures, the current Commonwealth government has continued these measures. In its first report of September 2008, the committee reported its decision not to comprehensively inquire into and report on the NTER. This was because at the time, the NTER was under review by an independent review team led by Mr Peter Yu.<sup>1</sup> The report of this independent review will be referred to in this chapter as the NTER Review.

4.3 As the report findings of the NTER Review and the Commonwealth government's response have now been made publicly available the committee has been able to substantially inquire into the impact of the NTER. The committee's research and the evidence presented to it during this period of its inquiry is discussed below.

#### Summary of Northern Territory Emergency Response and measures

4.4 As the committee detailed in Chapter 3 of its first report, on 21 June 2007 the previous Commonwealth government announced a set of measures known as the Northern Territory Emergency Response. These measures were stated to be in response to *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.<sup>2</sup> This inquiry was co-chaired by Ms Patricia Anderson and Rex Wild QC and was conducted in order to find better ways of protecting Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory from sexual abuse. The report was publicly released by the Northern Territory government on 15 June 2007.

4.5 The NTER is a complex set of measures that apply across the Northern Territory. As the committee noted in its previous report, the announcement of the NTER was met with significant controversy. The committee considers that there is

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1 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *First report 2008*, September 2008, p .2.

2 Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred"*, 2007. [http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquiry/saac/pdf/bipacsa\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquiry/saac/pdf/bipacsa_final_report.pdf) (accessed 8 September 2008).

still a considerable amount of controversy surrounding the NTER and its implementation however there is also substantial support for a number of the measures.

4.6 Given the controversy and the fact that the NTER imposed sudden and significant changes on Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, a number of reviews and monitoring reports have been conducted and publicly released. These reports are discussed in the context of the committee's findings.

### ***Legislative basis***

4.7 The legislative package to provide the legal basis for implementation of the NTER comprised of five acts. Provisions of the NTER were excluded from the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (RDA). The legislative package that comprised the NTER was discussed in detail in the committee's first report.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Prescribed areas***

4.8 A key plank of the NTER legislation was the creation of 'prescribed areas'.<sup>4</sup> This definition is also referred to in other accompanying legislation. Prescribed areas include all freehold land held by a Land Trust under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, other Aboriginal communities described as Northern Territory Community Living Areas,<sup>5</sup> town camps declared by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs under the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* and any other area declared by the Minister to be a prescribed area.<sup>6</sup>

4.9 There is frequent reference to '73 prescribed communities'. This is because 73 larger settlements in the Northern Territory were targeted for the application of NTER measures. However the measures in fact apply to over 500 communities with over 70 per cent of Aboriginal people within the Northern Territory living in prescribed areas, with approximately 45 500 Indigenous people affected by the measures.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Affairs, *First report 2008*, September 2008, pp. 15-17.

4 See section 4, *Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Act 2007*.

5 Community Living Areas are a form of freehold title issued to Aboriginal corporations by the Northern Territory Government.

6 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, available at [http://www.facsia.gov.au/nter/docs/factsheets/overview/factsheet\\_nter\\_communities.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/nter/docs/factsheets/overview/factsheet_nter_communities.htm) (accessed 23 September 2008).

7 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 9, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

### ***Management and Administration***

4.10 The Northern Territory Emergency Response involves six Commonwealth government agencies working with the Northern Territory government. The measures and the responsible Commonwealth government agency is set out in the table below.

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Responsible Commonwealth agency</b>
<p>Improving child and family health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child health checks and follow up services</li> <li>• Child special services</li> <li>• Alcohol and other drugs response</li> <li>• Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative (EHSDI)</li> </ul>	Department of Health and Ageing
<p>Enhancing education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extra teachers</li> <li>• extra classrooms</li> <li>• expansion of literacy programs</li> <li>• Quality Teaching Package</li> <li>• school breakfast and lunch program</li> </ul>	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
<p>Supporting families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• programs to expand children's services and family support</li> <li>• new and improved safe houses for families experiencing violence</li> <li>• additional child-protection workers and Aboriginal family and community workers</li> <li>• diversionary activities for young people.</li> </ul>	<p>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</p> <p>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</p>
<p>Promoting law and order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more police in remote communities</li> <li>• bans on alcohol and pornography in prescribed areas</li> <li>• expanded night patrol services</li> <li>• additional legal services and interpreter services</li> <li>• child abuse intelligence desk</li> </ul>	Attorney-General's Department

<p>Housing and land reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixing up existing houses and cleaning up communities</li> <li>• five-year leases on Aboriginal townships</li> </ul>	<p>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</p>
<p>Welfare reform and employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• income management of half of people's welfare payments to ensure children's needs are met</li> <li>• licensing of community stores</li> <li>• Creating real jobs in communities outside Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)</li> <li>• increased participation in remote areas including</li> <li>• work for the Dole activities</li> <li>• Community Employment Brokers in communities</li> </ul>	<p>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</p> <p>Department of Human Services</p> <p>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</p>
<p>Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce</li> <li>• Government Business Managers to live in and work with communities</li> <li>• Logistical support from Defence</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Ombudsman support to the Northern Territory Emergency Response.</li> </ul>	<p>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</p>

4.11 The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) is the lead coordination agency. FaHCSIA convenes a cross-agency project management board which oversees coordination of the NTER.

### ***NTER Operations Centre***

4.12 The NTER Operations Centre located in Darwin is responsible for the implementation of the measures.<sup>8</sup> During the first 12 months the NTER was led by a Taskforce chaired by Dr Sue Gordon AM. Major General David Chalmers was appointed as the full-time operational commander of the NTER Operations Centre and

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8 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response: One Year On*, 20 June 2008, p. 9.  
[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/Documents/nter\\_review.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/Documents/nter_review.pdf)  
 (accessed 12 June 2009).

continued in this role until February 2009. Mr Michael Zissler was appointed in February 2009 to continue in this role.

4.13 In July 2008, the Taskforce was disbanded, with responsibility for the emergency response coordinated through the NTER Operations Centre and State Office of FaHCSIA in Darwin. Initially the Operations Centre planned and managed all levels of implementation of the NTER however the committee understands that the management of Government Business Managers has been transferred to the Northern Territory Office of FaHCSIA and is now the responsibility of FaHCSIA's Northern Territory Manager. Staff in Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) in the Northern Territory are to assist in the delivery of services.<sup>9</sup> The committee would like to clarify the role of ICC staff in the implementation of the NTER and will write to the Commander of the NTER Operations Centre seeking more information.

## **Reviews and reports on the progress of the NTER**

### ***NTER Taskforce***

4.14 The NTER Taskforce chaired by Dr Sue Gordon AM was set up to monitor the implementation of the NTER, provide advice to government, and promote public awareness of the NTER and its objectives. This Taskforce was in operation for one year and presented its report to the government in June 2008.<sup>10</sup> The report from the Taskforce was generally supportive of the NTER measures and their implementation. However it made recommendations in several areas.

4.15 The Taskforce noted that at some point income management should become voluntary and recommended that additional rehabilitation centres be established in regional and remote areas and that consideration be given to making these accessible for families where a family member is seeking to recover from addiction.<sup>11</sup>

4.16 The Taskforce also recommended that the number of police in communities should continue to be increased so that every community is adequately serviced by police.<sup>12</sup> It also recommended that governments give consideration to which communities were going to be sustainable into the future and provide a minimum standard of services in these communities. An additional recommendation was that

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9 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander, Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre, 26 May 2009.

10 NTER Taskforce, *Final Report to Government*, June 2008, p. 14, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/final\\_report\\_2008/Documents/nter\\_taskforce\\_report.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/final_report_2008/Documents/nter_taskforce_report.pdf) (accessed 16 April 2009).

11 NTER Taskforce, *Final Report to Government*, June 2008, p. 22, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/final\\_report\\_2008/Documents/nter\\_taskforce\\_report.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/final_report_2008/Documents/nter_taskforce_report.pdf) (accessed 16 April 2009).

12 NTER Taskforce, *Final Report to Government*, June 2008, p. 22, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/final\\_report\\_2008/Documents/nter\\_taskforce\\_report.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/final_report_2008/Documents/nter_taskforce_report.pdf) (accessed 16 April 2009).

communities be provided with greater access to mediation services to help people deal with often crippling disputes within communities.<sup>13</sup>

### ***NTER One year on report***

4.17 At around the same time as the Taskforce reported to the Commonwealth government, a report on the NTER's progress was released by FaHCSIA. This report was released on 20 June 2008 and was titled *The Northern Territory Emergency Response One Year On*.<sup>14</sup> The report described and reported what was occurring under each budgeted measure.

### ***Independent review of the Northern Territory Emergency Response***

4.18 On 6 June 2008 the Commonwealth government announced a three member independent review board to review the effectiveness and impact of the measures contained in the NTER. The NTER Review Board consisted of Mr Peter Yu as Chair, Ms Marcia Ella Duncan and Mr Bill Gray AM. The Review Board was supported by an independent expert group with secretariat support provided by FaHCSIA.

4.19 The terms of reference for the independent review were to:

- examine evidence and assess the overall progress of the NTER in improving the safety and wellbeing of children and laying the basis for a sustainable and better future for residents of remote communities in the NT, and in particular, in improving the education, health, community safety and employment outcomes for citizens, and particularly women and children, resident in remote communities and town camps in the NT;
- consider what is and isn't working and whether the current suite of NTER measures will deliver the intended results, whether any unintended consequences have emerged and whether other measures should be developed or ways of working applied to better address circumstances facing remote communities in the NT; and
- in relation to each NTER measure, make an assessment of its effects to date, and recommend any required changes to improve each measure and monitor performance.

4.20 The NTER Review Board Report was signed off on 30 September 2008 and was released by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs on 13 October 2008.

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13 NTER Taskforce, *Final Report to Government*, June 2008, p. 15, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/final\\_report\\_2008/Documents/nter\\_taskforce\\_report.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/final_report_2008/Documents/nter_taskforce_report.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

14 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response: One Year On*, 20 June 2008, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/Documents/nter\\_review.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/Documents/nter_review.pdf) (accessed 12 June 2009).



4.21 In its introduction, the Review Board reported on the seriousness of the lack of trust between Indigenous people and the Commonwealth government:

One thing is very clear to the Review Board: the way forward from the Intervention can not be based on a return to 'business as usual'. Both Aboriginal people and the Australian Government want a new relationship. The most fundamental quality defining that relationship must be trust. And for that to occur at the community level in the Northern Territory there must be an active re-engagement with the community by government. As we report, one of the impacts of the NTER was to fracture an already tenuous relationship with government.<sup>15</sup>

4.22 In summary the NTER Review found that the situation in Indigenous communities, described as a crisis when the NTER was announced in June 2007, was real and that it should remain as a priority for sustained attention and investment. 'The situation in remote communities and town camps was—and remains—sufficiently acute to be described as a national emergency. The NTER should continue'.<sup>16</sup>

4.23 The NTER Review found that the fact that the measures were based on race and that the *Racial Discrimination Act 1976* (RDA) was suspended from application of the NTER has been one of the most divisive elements. The committee notes that the Review Board felt that experiences of racial discrimination and humiliation as a result of the NTER were told with such passion that it was compelled to advise the Minister for Indigenous Affairs during the course of the Review that such widespread hostility to the Commonwealth government's actions should be regarded as a matter for serious concern.

There is intense hurt and anger at being isolated on the basis of race and subjected to collective measures that would never be applied to other Australians. The Intervention was received with a sense of betrayal and disbelief. Resistance to its imposition undercut the potential effectiveness of its substantive measures.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 7, [http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

16 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 10, [http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

17 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 8, [http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

4.24 It also found that support for the measures was dampened by the way in which they were imposed, with the NTER diminishing its own effectiveness 'through its failure to engage constructively with the Aboriginal people it was intended to help'.<sup>18</sup>

4.25 However, the NTER Review also found widespread support for many of the measures and gains made in addressing the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. Support for police stations in communities previously dependent on periodic patrols was high, as were measures focused on reducing alcohol related violence, increasing the amount and quality of housing, and increasing access to early childhood learning and education. Support for these programs was described by the NTER Review as being 'uncontentious'.<sup>19</sup>

4.26 The NTER Review also found that the benefits of income management were being experienced but there was resistance to its blanket and compulsory nature. The NTER Review recommended that this measure be made voluntary and imposed only in situations related to specific child protection measures and then made the subject of independent review.

### ***Recommendations of the Review***

4.27 There were three overarching recommendations from the NTER Review that were accepted by the Commonwealth government:<sup>20</sup>

- the Australian and Northern Territory governments recognise as a matter of urgent national significance the continuing need to address the unacceptably high level of disadvantage and social dislocation being experienced by Aboriginal Australians living in remote communities throughout the Northern Territory;
- in addressing these needs both governments acknowledge the requirement to reset their relationship with Aboriginal people based on genuine consultation, engagement and partnership; and
- government actions affecting Aboriginal communities respect Australia's human rights obligations and conform with the RDA.

4.28 The NTER Review also made some other broad recommendations that the committee considers worthy of outlining here. Other recommendations of the NTER

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18 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 10, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

19 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 10, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

20 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Future Directions for the Northern Territory Emergency Response*, 21 May 2009, p. 3 [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/future\\_directions\\_discussion\\_paper/Documents/discussion\\_paper\\_6.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/future_directions_discussion_paper/Documents/discussion_paper_6.pdf) (accessed 12 June 2009).

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Review will be discussed in the context of the committee's findings on the operation of the NTER to follow.

4.29 Adequate housing was considered by the NTER Review to be so fundamental to environmental health and safety that it recommended sustained, substantial investment of public funds in community housing. They found that this was dependent on security of tenure and where land was being compulsorily acquired, it should be subject to a 'just terms' payment.

4.30 The committee notes that the NTER Review found that the success of the measures of the NTER was not just about improving the individual measures but developing an integrated approach across all initiatives and all agencies involved.

Just as housing issues underpin community health, so policing issues intermesh with family support which, in turn, is intimately connected with child and family health.

Support for night patrols falls under the Law and Order measure. Safe houses fall within a separate measure: Supporting Families. This kind of artificial division reflects divided government agency responsibilities and funding sources. It is a chronic problem in establishing effective integrated services in Aboriginal communities.

If the various NTER measures are to operate as a genuine suite of measures there needs to be adjustments in the machinery of government enabling better coordination of services, greater responsiveness to the unique characteristics of each community and higher levels of community participation in the design and delivery of services.<sup>21</sup>

4.31 The protection of children was the reason given for the emergency introduction of the NTER. The NTER Review recommended development of community safety plans in each community to link police, child protection officers, teachers, health staff, Government Business Managers and other key service providers with community night patrols, safe houses and women's groups.

4.32 The lack of evidentiary material was cited by the NTER Review as a major problem. While it was found that there was considerable quantitative and qualitative data available in the key areas of health, housing, education, policing and employment it was clear that little or no baseline data existed to specifically evaluate the impacts of the NTER. It also found that at the time of the NTER Review a number of measures, such as education initiatives, safe houses, policing, night patrols and child services, were yet to be implemented in many communities.

4.33 Apart from some initial scoping data, there was little evidence of baseline data being gathered in any formal or organised format to permit an assessment of the

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21 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 10, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

impact and progress of the NTER upon communities. The NTER Review recommended the development of a single integrated information system to allow for regular measurement of outcomes of all government agency programs and services for Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.<sup>22</sup>

4.34 The committee is very supportive of better data collection and use although cautions against agencies developing their own administrative data sets without having regard to good data management principles. The committee's views on data collection and management have already been explored in Chapter 3.

### ***Monitoring Reports***

4.35 Monitoring Reports on the progress of the NTER were released by FaHCSIA for the periods August 2007–30 June 2008<sup>23</sup> and July 2008–December 2008.<sup>24</sup> These reports provide departmental progress against the NTER initiatives and are discussed further in this chapter.

### **Response to the NTER Review**

4.36 On 21 May 2009 the Commonwealth government issued a final joint statement with the Northern Territory government responding to the NTER Review. A majority of the recommendations were supported and will be discussed below. On the same day the Commonwealth government also released a discussion paper titled *Future Directions for the Northern Territory Emergency Response* (NTER Discussion Paper). This discussion paper outlines some of the actions the government will progress to amend elements of the NTER. However the committee notes that the Commonwealth government has made it clear that it is committed to continuing the NTER.

4.37 The Commonwealth government has also made it clear that it is committed to bringing forward legislation to repeal the provisions that exclude the operation of the RDA and the Northern Territory anti-discrimination laws. Further proposals contained in the Discussion Paper include:

- individuals being able to apply for an exemption from income management based on their family situation, financial abilities or record of behaviour;

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22 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 16, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

23 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *NTER Monitoring Report August 2007 – June 2008*, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/Documents/monitoring\\_report/monitoring\\_report\\_part1.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/Documents/monitoring_report/monitoring_report_part1.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

24 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *NTER Monitoring Report July 2008 – December 2008*, Available at: [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Pages/default.aspx) (accessed 13 June 2009).

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- new licensing assessments for community stores;
  - amended legislation in relation to the five-year leases over Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory to clarify the purpose and operation of the leases; and
  - allowing for community input and individual requests to be assessed in determining whether bans on alcohol and pornography should continue (as opposed to blanket bans).<sup>25</sup>

### **Northern Territory Emergency Response Measures**

4.38 The Commonwealth government has committed to continuing the NTER, albeit with amendments. The committee has heard strong views from people and organisations opposed to the NTER in principle. Most of this criticism centres on the displacement of the RDA and the lack of consultation and engagement with people the measures are designed to assist. Some measures, such as five year lease arrangements and income management remain controversial. However, the committee considers that there is a general level of support for measures that are designed to deliver improved services to communities and that these are services that do not necessarily rely on the legislative basis of the NTER.

4.39 It is now two years since the commencement of the NTER. The committee has had the opportunity to consider a range of evidence presented to it in the form of submissions, oral evidence in public hearings, through meetings and from a review of available material and research. This evidence and the committee's findings are presented below.

4.40 The committee cannot emphasise enough how strongly people feel about having the opportunity to be genuinely consulted and heard. The committee has repeatedly heard how aggrieved and disempowered people have felt through the NTER when changes and decisions have been made without involving people in the decision making or communicating effectively about these changes.<sup>26</sup> The committee considers that explicit communication strategies need to be built in to all programs, and that governments need to support service providers to be able to communicate effectively and regularly with the people they are being funded to assist.

4.41 A detailed consideration of the NTER measures is provided below.

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25 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Future Directions for the Northern Territory Emergency Response*, 21 May 2009, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/future\\_directions\\_discussion\\_paper/Documents/discussion\\_paper\\_6.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/future_directions_discussion_paper/Documents/discussion_paper_6.pdf) (accessed 12 June 2009).

26 Jenny Walker, *Submission 15*, Amnesty International Australia, *Submission 16*; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 17*, Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, *Submission 22*; Wardaman Aboriginal Corporation, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 108.

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### *Improving child and family health*

4.42 The health components of the Northern Territory Emergency Response include:

- Child health checks and follow up services;
- Child special services;
- Alcohol and other drugs response; and
- Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative (EHSDI).

4.43 Child health checks and follow up services, child special services and the alcohol and other drugs response commenced in July 2007 while the EHSDI commenced in July 2008.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Child health checks*

4.44 Child health checks involved medical teams visiting communities from July 2007 to deliver access to voluntary health checks for children up to the age of 16 years. The child health checks are based on the existing Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Child Health Check Item and assess a child's overall health and wellbeing.<sup>28</sup>

4.45 By 30 June 2008 the committee notes that the NTER had arranged comprehensive health checks for 9 428 children (55 per cent of the eligible children). Based on analysis of 8 324 child health checks, 88.2 per cent of children had one or more health conditions identified. The proportion of children with various conditions showed that 43.6 per cent had oral health problems such as untreated tooth decay, 10.2 per cent had four or more skin sores, 29.8 per cent had ear disease and 15.8 per cent had anaemia.<sup>29</sup>

4.46 The committee notes that in the Central Land Council's recent report, *Reviewing the Northern Territory Emergency Response: Perspectives from six communities*, found that:

Most people reported that after initial concern, most children in Titjikala, Papunya, Kintore, Hermannsburg and Yuendumu, and a large number of

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27 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 5, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

28 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response: One Year On*, 20 June 2008, p. 21 [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/Documents/nter\\_review.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/Documents/nter_review.pdf) (accessed 12 June 2009).

29 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 36, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).



adults, completed health checks. In general, people interviewed seemed positive about the health checks. For example, people in Yuendumu and Kintore commented:

*It was right yeah. I felt good about them visiting. They were checking children and that was right. Health checks good. People supported them here. The doctors explained what was going on. Did the checks through the clinic. People not afraid to bring their kids in to the clinic... Child doctor [paediatrician] has come out.*<sup>30</sup>

4.47 The NTER Review found that remote communities in the Northern Territory already had specific child health programs involving regular health checks. This was called the Growth Assessment and Action program and the Healthy School-Age Kids program. The Review also found that local health services regarded many of the health checks to be a duplication of services already offered and that the process entailed a high degree of administrative preparation and reporting, the burden of which was largely borne by local providers:

When CHCs were completed, all documentation was left for the local service to enter electronically; many local services were required to arrange transport for families to attend CHC clinics. All follow-up referrals and subsequent clinical, accommodation and transport arrangements remained with the local provider. In an already under-resourced sector this impact was substantial.<sup>31</sup>

4.48 Evidence presented to the committee confirmed this experience. As Associate Professor Dennis McDermott told the committee in Adelaide:

A number of our staff on the ground, academics and clinicians, said that very thing. They said child health checks were duplicating the processes already in place and sometimes people were referred to specialists, on too cautious a basis, for conditions that were already known<sup>32</sup>

4.49 Sunrise Health Service in Katherine in the Northern Territory also noted similar issues with the Child Health Checks in their submission:

First, the collective experience of practitioners in the field was largely ignored, and the checks resulted in data about health conditions that were already well known—and have been for decades.

Second, the great majority of practitioners that were brought in from outside the Territory—despite all the best intentions—were inexperienced

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30 Central Land Council, *Submission 92*, p. 55.

31 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 36, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

32 Associate Professor Dennis McDermott, School of Medicine, Flinders University, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 93.

in detecting conditions that are largely unknown in the urban/suburban environments from which they were largely drawn.<sup>33</sup>

4.50 The Central Land Council's review also identified concerns over duplication of services, noting that:

In some communities clinic staff reported that the NTER health checks were an unnecessary duplication of resources. For example, the health clinic in Titjikala reported that a month prior to the health checks the clinic had undertaken its own health checks of each child in Titjikala. Clinic staff in Papunya also raised the issue of duplication of health checks, stating that in Papunya children's health checks were up to date and the resources used to complete the health checks would be better directed in other areas.<sup>34</sup>

4.51 The referral phase following health checks was found to be 'sporadic' and dependent on the availability of funding and specialists rather than the needs of the child being referred. While the Commonwealth provided funding to the Northern Territory government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to conduct follow up treatment, the NTER Review found that at September 2008, approximately 60 per cent of children still required follow-up treatment.<sup>35</sup>

4.52 The Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc noted that the Child Health Checks in the homelands were provided by the Laynhapuy Health Service and were beneficial as it enabled the health service to bring forward the completion of an existing child health program. The main concern now 'is the capacity of follow up services by NT Health to capitalise on this screening process.'<sup>36</sup>

4.53 The NTER Review recommended urgent prioritisation of ongoing treatment for children with identified issues under the child health checks with a particular focus on dental treatment.<sup>37</sup>

4.54 The Monitoring Report released by the Commonwealth in June 2009 which reports on NTER activities up to December 2008 (Monitoring Report) reported that the main focus of the Child Health Check Initiative during the period 1 July to 31 December 2008 was the provision of follow-up care to children who had referrals from checks previously conducted. While preliminary data suggests that follow-up in

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33 Sunrise Health Service, *Submission 85*, p. 34.

34 Central Land Council, *Submission 92*, p. 56.

35 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 36, [http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_oter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report_oter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

36 Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc, *Submission 28*, p. 11.

37 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 39, [http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_oter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report_oter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).



primary health care has reached over 80 per cent of children, follow-up in more specialised areas, which requires the deployment of special facilities and staff, are progressing more slowly.<sup>38</sup>

4.55 Information provided to the committee indicates that at 28 February 2009, an estimated total of 13 286 valid Child Health Checks have been performed through the NTER and Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS) Item 708 since 1 July 2007.<sup>39</sup> The estimated Child Health Check coverage as at 31 December 2008 is 60 per cent.<sup>40</sup>

4.56 Data published by the Department of Health and Ageing and AIHW shows that referrals have been addressed in the following way:

- 78% of the 2 409 children referred to Primary Health Care Clinic;
- 44% of the 794 children referred to a Paediatrician;
- 37% of the 616 children referred to an ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialist;
- 50% of the 637 children referred for tympanometry and audiometry; and
- 22% of the 2 377 children referred for dental follow-up.<sup>41</sup>

4.57 The committee notes that the Monitoring Report acknowledges that while progress to refer children for specialist care has been made, it is slow and the figures indicate the high level of need for specialist services. The fact that many of the children who have received some follow-up care require further action is due to the chronic nature of many of the conditions being treated and real progress can only be made if the poor living conditions of many children are addressed.

#### *Child special services*

4.58 Child special services refer to the establishment of a service for children experiencing trauma as a result of child abuse. The central element of this is the establishment of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre Mobile Outreach Service (MOS)

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38 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 6, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 14 June 2009).

39 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre, 26 May 2009.

40 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 8, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 14 June 2009).

41 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 10, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 14 June 2009)

which commenced in April 2008.<sup>42</sup> It is intended to provide information, support, assessment and therapeutic services to victims or suspected victims of sexual abuse, and education and training on preventing, responding and supporting victims of child sexual assault.

4.59 The Review Board documented its concern about the capacity of such a small service with five staff to deliver direct and indirect services for the entire Northern Territory. It also found that there was little understanding of the service and its role in communities, with one example of a victim using the service who had been visited once but had no follow-up. Her family was unaware of why this was the case and seemed to indicate a lack of appropriate communication about the service and what it could provide.<sup>43</sup>

4.60 The committee also heard evidence that there was little understanding in communities amongst child care workers as to what support services were available. Speaking about research with child care workers undertaken by Batchelor Institute Dr Lyn Fasoli said:

Virtually all the childcare workers that we worked with said they had never been directly spoken to by any of the staff from the intervention to say, 'This is why we are here. This is how you might address child abuse issues that you detect in your children's service. These are the proper procedures for addressing a concern or an issue.' We found that the most surprising. I would have thought that children's services workers would have been the first port of call for people wanting to stop child abuse.<sup>44</sup>

4.61 The Monitoring Report states that teams of sexual assault counsellors and Aboriginal sexual assault workers are now operational in all Northern Territory regions and provide casework services, community education and professional development. In the period from 1 July to 31 December 2008 the MOS made a total of 38 visits to 11 communities and town camps and provided casework to children and families, as well as professional development and community education to service providers and community members.<sup>45</sup>

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42 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 6, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

43 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 37, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

44 Dr Lyn Fasoli, Associate Professor, Research Division, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 87.

45 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 11, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

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*Alcohol and other drug response*

4.62 The alcohol and other drug response was intended to increase access to alcohol and other drug detoxification, treatment and rehabilitation services across the Northern Territory. This was in recognition of the health impacts of the NTER alcohol bans in prescribed communities.<sup>46</sup>

4.63 The NTER Review found that there was broad support for increasing services related to alcohol and other drug treatment, and while it was too early to tell whether the additional resources had a significant impact, early results were promising.

4.64 Increased demand for withdrawal, treatment and rehabilitation services was anticipated and a target of 28 Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) outreach workers was set to be located at selected primary care and substance use services. As at July 2008, 20 AOD staff were employed in primary health care services, largely through Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services throughout the five regional centres of Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Darwin, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Four rehabilitation services were funded to increase the bed capacity and staff within their services and the Central Australian Alcohol Program Unit received funding to complete a women's residential facility at Alice Springs.<sup>47</sup>

4.65 The Monitoring Report indicated that two dedicated hospital beds for detoxification at both Katherine District and Tennant Creek Hospitals from September 2007 were made available and that 28 outreach workers in primary care and substance use services had been deployed. The committee noted at the hearing in Canberra that the information provided in the Monitoring Report on rehabilitation facilities was not sufficiently detailed. FaHCSIA officers responded:

Mr James—Yes. There is some information provided there on the measures that have been implemented. They do not go down to the detail that you are looking for.

Senator CROSSIN—No. That is not detailed enough for what I am after. When you talk about 'commenced provision of two dedicated hospital beds for detox'—two beds in Katherine and Tennant Creek—is that four beds altogether or one in each place?

Mr Yates—I cannot provide the answer on that, but our Health colleagues, I am sure, will be able to.

Senator CROSSIN—It is not in here, is it?

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46 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response: One Year On*, 20 June 2008, p. 21 [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/Documents/nter\\_review.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/Documents/nter_review.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

47 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 38, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

Senator ADAMS—I think it is—

Mr James—It says at both Katherine and Tennant Creek, so I think it is two in each, I think.

Senator CROSSIN—It says, ‘... to support these beds for an initial six weeks.’ What does that mean? If you are someone who is trying to be detoxed, you can sit in the bed for six weeks but after that you get moved on; is that what that means?

Mr Yates—The detailed operation of those arrangements is probably best directed to the health department.

Mr James—Yes. They provided this text.

Senator CROSSIN—It is not very clear, is it? It does not answer a lot of questions, does it?<sup>48</sup>

4.66 Key elements of the Alcohol and other Drugs Response introduced in 2007-08 are being continued in 2008-09 under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory measure. This includes increasing the AOD workforce in the primary health care setting, increasing the capacity for substance use treatment and rehabilitation, workforce development and evaluating the program.<sup>49</sup>

4.67 The committee received evidence that reinforced the importance of having an effective and well resourced strategy to reduce the harmful levels of alcohol and other drugs. The National Centre for Education and Training informed the committee about the evidenced links between levels of education and risky alcohol and drug use.

Clearly, education and literacy levels are important for a range of important reasons for a young person; not least of which is future life prospects. But, there is also an important link between education level and overall health status and the crucial link between education level and the use of alcohol and other drugs.<sup>50</sup>

4.68 The committee is concerned about the lack of available beds for alcohol treatment programs. Given that the manner and place in which people in prescribed areas can drink has been restricted, the committee considers that more places need to be made available not just for immediate treatment, but for follow-up support and ongoing treatment. As the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency state in their submission, while immediate legislative alcohol restrictions may have had 'a visible initial effect,

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48 *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 58.

49 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 12, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

50 National Centre for Training and Education on Addiction, *Submission 44*, p. 6.

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without the services to support people, such legislative changes can exacerbate problems<sup>51</sup>

4.69 The committee was advised that the Commonwealth government, through the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) provides funding to support a range of different service types including residential, non-residential, stand alone substance use services, sobering-up shelters and Aboriginal Medical Services. The total number of residential rehabilitation services in the Northern Territory is eight and as of 30 June 2008, there were 234 bed places in residential rehabilitation facilities.<sup>52</sup>

4.70 At its hearing in Canberra on 9 June 2009 the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) acknowledged that past models of treatment where people attended a facility for a short term did not work, and that a more sophisticated therapeutic model was required. Ms Lesley Podesta advised the committee that the Department was looking at other models.

We have also been trying to focus on some family settings and some women-only settings because we have high numbers of women with alcohol problems. A lot of the resi services tended to be full of men, which was not always the most appropriate setting. It is a bit more sophisticated. The other thing we have been investing in increasingly—and we will give you the capital works investment that we have put into the territory—is really improving the stock and the safety and security of some of those buildings. Some of them were not terrific.<sup>53</sup>

## Recommendation 2

**4.71 That the Commonwealth government increase access to alcohol and other drug detoxification, treatment and rehabilitation services across the Northern Territory, ensuring that there is ongoing support for individuals after they have accessed programs and services.**

### *Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative (EHSDI)*

4.72 The Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative is intended to provide \$99.7 million across the 2008-09 and 2009-10 years with the aim of increasing primary health care services and recruitment of more health professionals through the Remote Area Health Corp.<sup>54</sup> The Remote Area Health Corp was established in order to

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51 Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Submission 24*, p. 8.

52 DoHA, answers to questions on notice 9 June 2009 (received 17 June 2009).

53 Ms Lesley Podesta, DoHA, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 66.

54 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 7, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

strengthen primary health care services in remote communities in the Northern Territory through engaging health professionals. The committee understands that the Remote Area Health Corp is operated by a private company, Aspen Medical, the successful tenderer to operate the Remote Area Health Corp.<sup>55</sup> On 4 December 2008 the first deployment to the Northern Territory occurred with two registered nurses being deployed to Ampilatwatja. By 31 December 2008 the Remote Area Health Corp had deployed seven health professionals and all were registered nurses.<sup>56</sup>

4.73 The committee understands that the EHSDI is the subject of a memorandum of understanding between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT) over two years and attempts to build the capacity of primary health care services based on a model of regional service delivery.

4.74 DoHA has undertaken planning for the implementation of the EHSDI with the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families and AMSANT under the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Framework Agreement. The committee notes that the Monitoring Report states that consultations on the reform agenda are underway and funding for increased staff and primary health care services have been committed.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Supporting Families***

4.75 The measure involves:

- programs to expand children's services and family support;
- new and improved safe houses for families experiencing violence;
- additional child-protection workers and Aboriginal family and community workers; and
- diversionary activities for young people.

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55 Aspen Medical, *Aspen Medical awarded Remote Area Health Corps contract*, Press Release, 28 October 2008, <http://www.aspenmedical.com.au/Assets/Files/4a45db2b-f921-4158-b808-cb8034e86a5c.pdf> (accessed 13 June 2009).

56 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 15, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

57 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 15, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).



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*Expanding children's services and family support*

4.76 The NTER measures provided \$859 000 for five playgroups and \$400 000 to expand current and early childhood programs. Around \$4.2 million was allocated to funding for 10 new crèches in communities that had no learning and child care services for children under five years. Funding was also directed towards upgrades for up to 16 existing crèches with identified urgent health and safety concerns.

4.77 The committee understands that four new crèche facilities have been completed at Areyonga, Papunya, Lajamanu and Kaltukatjara and six upgrades to existing crèche facilities have been completed at Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Borroloola, Ntaria, Santa Teresa and Nyirripi.<sup>58</sup>

4.78 FaHCSIA has provided funding for 13 Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers (RAFCWs). The stated aim of this program is to assist communities and families to access appropriate services, provide support to services regarding child safety concerns and to support Northern Territory child services workers in local Indigenous communities. The committee notes that between September 2008 and 31 January 2009, the Northern Territory government recruited eight RAFCWs. One team leader, one project officer and one acting manager have also been recruited.<sup>59</sup>

4.79 The NTER Review found that it was difficult to get accurate figures on the provision of pre-school services in communities. Although a number of government schools are registered to provide pre-school services, delivery appeared to be ad hoc or at best an early childhood class tacked on to the school. Most communities visited by the NTER Review expressed a desperate need for early childhood services and family support programs, such as parenting programs, particularly to support young women, pre-schools, nutrition programs, childcare services, playgroups and crèches.<sup>60</sup>

4.80 The NTER included funding for five new facilitated playgroups and an expansion of Indigenous Children Program (ICP) and Invest to Grow (ItG) services in the Northern Territory. The playgroup funding is for two mobile Intensive Support Playgroups (ISPs) based in Tennant Creek and Katherine and for three Locational Supported Playgroups in Numbulwar, Milingimbi and Yuendumu.

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58 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander, Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre.

59 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 19, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

60 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 32, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

4.81 NTER funding was also provided for the expansion of three 'Invest to Grow' projects which were to include child nutrition prevention and intervention sessions with families with children at risk delivered by the NPY Women's Council; 'Core of Life', a health education program providing information about pregnancy, breastfeeding and early parenting delivered by Menzies Inc. and the 'Let's Start', a project to develop a preschool program in communities to support parents; enhance parenting practices; strengthen family units; develop children's social skills and reduce problematic behaviour to be delivered by Charles Darwin University.

4.82 The Monitoring Report states that funding agreements have been signed with service providers for the Tennant Creek and Katherine playgroups and that in the six months to 31 December 2008, 264 children and 92 parents and caregivers in the Tennant Creek and Katherine regions have participated in these playgroups. The Monitoring Report also states that at 20 May 2009, three of the five new playgroups were operational.<sup>61</sup> In addition, the Monitoring Report notes that funding agreements have also been signed with service providers for all three Locational Supported Playgroups. Yuendumu commenced operations in May 2009. The Milingimbi and Numbulwar services are still conducting consultations so these services have not yet commenced.<sup>62</sup>

4.83 The Indigenous Children Program (ISP) was formed in 2006 by a merger of previously funded programs providing support to families. Between February and 30 June 2008, 21 children 0-8 yrs and 15 parents and caregivers used this program. Between July and December 2008, 19 children 0-8 yrs, 3 children 9-12, and 11 parents and caregivers used this program.

4.84 Progress detailed in the latest Monitoring Report under the Invest to Grow projects includes:

- Child Nutrition Program at NPY Women's Council: From June 2008 to December 2008, the nutrition team delivered 37 prevention and intervention sessions to 307 participants for children at risk and provided 65 children and their families with essential food and health requirements in emergencies. From June 2008 to December 2008, 122 parents and caregivers participated in the ItG Child Nutrition Program, compared to 75 parents and caregivers who participated in 18 nutrition education sessions in the period January 2008 to June 2008.

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61 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 20, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

62 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 20, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).



- Core of Life run by Menzies Inc: This program provides information about pregnancy, breastfeeding and early parenting. In the period January 2008 to June 2008 five community forums were conducted in Wadeye, Groote Eylandt, Darwin, Alice Springs and Tiwi Islands, and facilitator training was conducted for twelve participants.
- Let's Start run by Charles Darwin University: This project aims to develop a preschool program in communities to support parents, enhance parenting practices, strengthen family units, develop children's social skills and reduce problematic behaviour. Let's Start has not yet commenced delivering the program.<sup>63</sup>

4.85 The committee looks forward to reporting on the progress of these important services in its next report. The committee has found that there is a large amount of community support for improving access to these services and if provided in ways that take account of local circumstances, people will use them. The committee agrees that supporting children in the early years is critical to their long term life chances and wellbeing. As the National Rural Health Alliance Inc states:

In child health, the broader issue is for Australia to develop world's best-practice programs for supporting pregnant women and their babies in the first few years of life. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, especially those living in rural and remote communities, should be the highest priority for government programs relating to maternal and child health. Access to maternal and child health nurses during a child's early years is vital in helping to prevent many of the aspects of non-healthy lifestyles that are linked to chronic disease.<sup>64</sup>

4.86 The Monitoring Report identified attracting experienced and qualified workers as the key barrier to this type of service delivery and stated that funding models for children and family services that include provision for competitive wages, high quality professional support and formal training, mentoring and professional development for local workers would go some way to addressing this issue.<sup>65</sup>

4.87 The committee is pleased that additional funding to continue these services to 2012 has been announced but questions what plans are in place to support workforce capacity, recruitment and housing for staff in early childhood and parenting services in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

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63 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 21, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

64 National Rural Health Alliance Inc, *Submission 8*, p. 7.

65 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p.22, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

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*Safe houses*

4.88 The Family Support package was allocated \$11.83 million in 2007–08 with the intent of establishing or expanding 22 safe houses and cooling off houses in 16 communities as well as increasing the capacity of safe houses in Darwin and Alice Springs. The committee notes that FaHCSIA has been allocated an additional \$9.5 million in 2008–09 to contribute to the project. The Monitoring Report stated that as at 20 May 2009, 17 out of 22 Safe Houses were operational.<sup>66</sup> At its hearing in Canberra the committee sought information from FaHCSIA on the detail of what being operational actually meant. FaHCSIA provided the committee with updated details and advised that there were now 19 'safe places' that were operational. A safe place was operational according to the following definition:

A safe house is defined as operational when the doors are open and it is accepting clients.

- The Women's safe houses each have an adult worker and a children's worker
- The Men's Cooling-off Places each have an adult worker and a youth worker
- Wherever possible a pool of casual workers is also employed to work after hours in the safe houses.

Safe Places are staffed between 10 am and 6 pm. Outside of these hours Safe Place staff can be contacted (usually by the Night Patrol or Police) to open the Safe Place if needed.<sup>67</sup>

4.89 While the committee regards the operation of more safe places as positive, it is concerned that the operating hours of 10 am to 6 pm may not be the times when the safe places are needed most, and that having to call upon staff to open the facility in late evenings and early mornings may place a great deal of pressure on these staff. The committee also notes that in an answer to a question on notice in relation to night patrols, FaHCSIA advised that activities undertaken by a night patrol service may include relocating a person to a safe environment such as a 'recognised safe house'.<sup>68</sup> Given that this will occur at night or early in the morning, the committee considers it highly likely that there will be demand to staff safe places overnight.

4.90 The committee will monitor the operation of safe houses and publish its findings when it tables its next report in November 2009.

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66 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 18, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

67 FaHCSIA, answers to questions on notice 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

68 FaHCSIA, answers to questions on notice 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

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4.91 The Review Board visited communities with newly installed women's safe houses and men's cooling off places. The NTER Review reported that facilities in most locations consisted of steel shipping containers arranged to form a quadrangle where meetings and gatherings could be held. The facilities included office space, accommodation spaces and amenities. None were operational during the NTER Review period.

4.92 Feedback from communities to the NTER Review indicated that few people were consulted on either the design or location of the facility. Many women told the NTER Review that they would not use the safe houses as they were 'more like detention centres'.<sup>69</sup> One community rejected the container-style accommodation and secured commitment for a house to be designated and fitted out as a safe house. Some communities already had their own facilities.

4.93 At its hearing in Alice Springs the committee heard that the lack of consultation on the safe houses was impacting on their utility.

Women have been calling for safe houses in their communities for a very long time. There have been several houses operational in a couple of communities in Central Australia for a long period of time. However, it is my understanding that...an internal audit undertaken by the government in 2004 shows that none of those safe houses were operating in the way that they were funded to. There has never been any formal review or research into the effectiveness of the model. Once it was a priority for the federal government to build safe houses in communities, and they spent lots of money in doing that however, there was no research or experience to show how that might work or look on a remote community. Also, the federal government gave a very tight time frame for that money to be spent.

From the Northern Territory's perspective, the program was rolled out but there was absolutely no consultation with the services on the ground about how those services might look or be developed. For example, the person who was responsible for rolling out that program was invited to the Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network, which includes every service that provides for that group of women and men. We invited them on many occasions over nine months to come and talk to us about how that might work, and we did not get one visit from that group. That has now been rectified. There are new people in that job, and I think the NT has gone a long way towards rectifying that problem. However, the safe houses are already built in communities, and I have never been able to find out why the particular communities that have a safe house actually got them...

The more concerning thing is that there is no practice model attached to these buildings. Providing that type of service in a remote community is extremely difficult and nuanced. If you are hiring local women to work in that service, those women are going to need ongoing support. If you are

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69 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 33, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

working in a community where people's kinships and cultural relationships are pivotal and central to their daily lives, obviously that is going to impact on their ability to run a safe house. People need access not only to training but to ongoing support to talk through decisions and to manage a crisis, because it will be quite dangerous for those workers in those small communities.<sup>70</sup>

4.94 The committee notes that the reasons given in the Monitoring Report for using shipping containers as the preferred option to deliver the safe houses was because they were deemed to be the most efficient and effective way of addressing an immediate need in communities. It was also stated that the containers offered a higher level of building security than demountables, were cyclone coded, quick to construct and less expensive to retrofit.<sup>71</sup>

4.95 The committee understands that safe houses or cooling off places will often be used by people with a high level of distress and who possibly present with a risk of self harm and that providing adequate training for staff is a serious issue. The NTER Review noted that adequate staff training had not been addressed in the design of either the facility or the management of the program. In addition, little of the information that was supplied to the NTER Review was about either the role of safe house staff or, more importantly, how all these initiatives were to be coordinated to form part of an integrated plan for the community.<sup>72</sup>

4.96 The committee regards having sufficient support in place for workers and the community as critical to the success of safe houses, as well as to the health and safety of workers. As Dale Wakefield, Coordinator of the Alice Springs Women's Shelter told the committee:

The more concerning thing is that there is no practice model attached to these buildings. Providing that type of service in a remote community is extremely difficult and nuanced. If you are hiring local women to work in that service, those women are going to need ongoing support. If you are working in a community where people's kinships and cultural relationships are pivotal and central to their daily lives, obviously that is going to impact on their ability to run a safe house. People need access not only to training but to ongoing support to talk through decisions and to manage a crisis, because it will be quite dangerous for those workers in those small communities.<sup>73</sup>

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70 Ms Dale Wakefield, Alice Springs Women's Shelter, *Committee Hansard*, p. 47.

71 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p.18, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mo\\_n\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mo_n_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

72 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 33, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

73 Ms Dale Wakefield, Alice Springs Women's Shelter, *Committee Hansard*, pp. 47-48.

4.97 The committee agrees with the NTER Review's recommendation that where safe houses have been installed, the Northern Territory government, the relevant service provider and each community should agree about their management, duty of care, liability and integration with associated services before they become operational, and as further safe houses are installed there be consultation with the relevant community on these issues.<sup>74</sup> The committee notes that this recommendation was accepted by both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments and the committee will monitor whether the construction of future safe houses follows this procedure.

*Additional child-protection workers and Aboriginal family and community workers*

4.98 The committee understands that the Northern Territory government was already in the process of reforming its child protection system including expanding child protection services and legislative reform at the time of the introduction of the NTER. Thus the NTER funding built on this process and contributed to the establishment of a mobile child protection team (MCPT). Based in Darwin the MCPT's intended role is to investigate child protection reports in remote communities in order to try and address the backlog of investigations and to support local offices with increased workloads. The MCPT was intended to provide 10 child protection workers, a coordinator and an administrative officer.

4.99 The Monitoring Report states that fifty communities have been visited by the Mobile Child Protection Team and 459 cases investigated. At 31 December 2008, two child protection workers and one administration assistant had been recruited. The committee notes that the levels of staffing on this team have been fluctuating and there has been a high turnover of staff. The committee understands that the positions have been difficult to keep filled due to the high level of qualifications sought, the remoteness of the work and the short-term nature of the contracts. A recruitment round occurred recently with four new workers employed and two to be contracted shortly.<sup>75</sup>

4.100 The committee questions why workers are being offered short term contracts if there is committed longer term funding available. The committee considers that providing effective services in remote locations is so important that this should be addressed as a matter of priority.

4.101 The NTER Review recommended that the Northern Territory government engage immediately with Aboriginal communities to strengthen child protection

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74 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 35, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

75 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 19, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

arrangements and deal with reported cases of abuse, and that funding priority be given to enable Aboriginal communities to build community integration and ownership of a child and family safety system that has the capacity to interface effectively with government agencies.

4.102 The NTER Review stated that this should be implemented through community safety plans which link police, child protection, teachers, health staff, GBMs and other key service providers, with relevant community organisations such as night patrols, safe houses and women's groups the community safety plans should ensure that programs and services directed at child safety and wellbeing are appropriate and relevant to the community and have a high level of visibility and transparency.<sup>76</sup>

4.103 The committee notes that the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments accepted these recommendations.

#### *Diversionary activities for young people*

4.104 This measure aimed to address the high levels of alcohol and drug abuse among young Aboriginal people living in remote communities and is largely a capital and infrastructure investment program with some funding directed to local youth activities. A three part youth alcohol diversionary implementation strategy was developed and FaHCSIA reported that \$8.5 million was funded across 95 projects.

4.105 Due to insufficient capacity, the planned Alice Springs Town Camp Youth Diversion Project did not go ahead so the Commonwealth government funding for this component was reallocated to the Indigenous Youth Flexible Funding Component. The committee notes that non-capital projects funded under this measure included the establishment of a Youth Development Network, the conducting of 20 youth-specific activities across 15 non government providers, as well as school holiday programs across 10 communities.

4.106 The NTER Review found that while a number of communities mentioned the benefits of upgrades to existing facilities there was also widespread comment about the persistent lack of ongoing youth services. This was especially so for communities that only received youth activities as part of a holiday program. Also, some communities, while benefiting from better sporting or recreational facilities, did not have the benefit of a youth worker.<sup>77</sup>

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76 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 35, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

77 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 34, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).



4.107 The committee notes that in its submission CAYLUS provided a list of ongoing youth service requirements across both the NTER prescribed communities and all other remote communities in the Northern Territory central desert region. CAYLUS' estimate was that \$7.2 million over three years is required for wages and \$11.15 million is required for capital.<sup>78</sup>

4.108 The committee agrees with the NTER Review's recommendation that a comprehensive strategy needs to be developed and implemented for youth development services to address both capital infrastructure and recurrent funding, linked to a wider community development framework. This recommendation was accepted by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments and the committee will follow any progress made towards developing such a strategy.

4.109 In 2007-08 a total of \$8.5 million was allocated to establish the Northern Territory Regional Youth Development Network in the West Arnhem and Daly River regions (auspiced by Red Cross Australia). This network was intended to provide a flexible funding pool for youth diversion projects and provide holiday programs in central Australia.

4.110 In 2008-09 a total of \$8.8 million was allocated to one youth diversion program, comprising two components. Component one consisted of \$2.1 million for the intended continuation of the Northern Territory Youth Development Network aimed at improving the quantity, quality and cohesion of its youth activities. The committee notes that funding for the Northern Territory Youth Development Network was released to Red Cross Australia on 29 October 2008.

4.111 The Monitoring Report states that Red Cross Australia had consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and communities to develop a network of youth services and it employs local coordinators in 13 communities who work part time to assist service providers with the implementation of their programs. The committee notes that delays in implementation were impacted by recruitment of key Red Cross Australia project staff, the close down over Christmas and selection negotiations with providers.<sup>79</sup>

4.112 Component two of the program consisted of \$6.7 million intended for infrastructure and youth programs in Central Australia. Payments began in November 2008 after funding agreements were negotiated in the first part of the 2008-09 financial year. These projects target young people 12 to 18 years of age to build the youth services infrastructure, offer culturally appropriate social and recreational activities and provide local employment and training opportunities. A key priority for

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78 CAYLUS, *Submission 26*, Attachment 2 CAYLUS Costing Of Youth Program Needs in Central Australia.

79 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 23, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

services this year is to work in partnership with the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training to support better attendance at school.

4.113 The committee notes that Mission Australia was funded \$7.97 million to provide youth services over three years in just four communities, those of Aputula (Finke), Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Kaltukatjara (Docker River) through the Northern Territory Integrated Youth Services Project (NTIYS). Mission Australia noted in their submission that:

The level of funding of the NTIYS acknowledges the true cost of providing sustainable services in remote communities. Mission Australia's 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. Mission Australia's experience with this initiative also highlights that contractual arrangements for many of the programs delivered in the NT and other remote communities should be 5 to 10 years, rather than annual or even three year funding. The timeframes required for change, coupled with the necessary investment in staff and infrastructure requires such an approach.<sup>80</sup>

4.114 Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS) noted the importance of youth services, stating that increasing the facilities and resources would:

...be very positive for the current safety and future potential of the at-risk group and for the wider society in which they live. The group would have access to safe, educational, socialising activities. Our experience gained in addressing inhalant abuse in this population has shown us that the majority of people will take other options if they are available in their communities. The existing models demonstrate this, especially the Mount Theo project, which has been going for 13 years and has made substantial improvements to the quality of life of young Walpiri people.<sup>81</sup>

4.115 The committee does not consider that it is able to form a view on the success or otherwise of youth program funding at this stage as the services appear to be in their infancy. The committee regards youth services as essential for community wellbeing and will report on progress in their next report.

### ***Enhancing education***

4.116 The enhancing education initiatives were intended to be carried out mainly through an MOU between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments which committed them to working collaboratively. Enhancing education is intended to deliver:

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80 Mission Australia, *Submission 43*, p. 8.

81 Mr Blair McFarland, Central Australian Youth Link Up Service, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 3.



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- extra teachers;
  - extra classrooms;
  - expansion of literacy programs;
  - Quality Teaching Package; and
  - school breakfast and lunch program.

4.117 The Review was advised that in June 2007 approximately 8 000 children were enrolled in 69 schools in the 73 NTER communities. At least 2 500 of these children were not attending school regularly. As many as 2 000 children of school age were not enrolled in education at all.<sup>82</sup>

4.118 The committee notes that planned measures to quarantine 100 per cent of welfare payments of parents whose children were not attending school did not go ahead.<sup>83</sup> However a program called the Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure (SEAM) is currently being trialled in six communities in the Northern Territory: Katherine, Katherine Town Camps, Tiwi Islands, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Wadeye and Wallace Rockhole. The SEAM program attaches conditions to income support payments, and if parents on income support are not sending their children to school, it is possible their payments could be suspended.<sup>84</sup>

4.119 While visiting the Ntaria School the committee heard how cumbersome the administrative process surrounding SEAM appeared to be. It also heard that many of the children in the community who weren't attending school did not appear on the list provided to the principal because their parents were not on income support.<sup>85</sup>

4.120 The NTER Review found that there was a great degree of despair in communities at the low levels of educational outcomes experienced by many children in Indigenous communities. They concluded that the Northern Territory education system was in crisis.<sup>86</sup> The committee has also heard during this inquiry that staff in

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82 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 29, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

83 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 29, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

84 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure (SEAM)*, <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/proserv/welfarereform/Pages/ImprovingSchoolEnrolmentAttendance.aspx> (accessed 15 June 2009).

85 Committee meeting notes, Ntaria, 30 April 2009.

86 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 30, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

schools and community members are frustrated by the lack of progress being made.. The committee discusses this issue in greater detail below.

*Extra teachers and classrooms*

4.121 The NTER provided funding for an additional 200 teachers in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory government has advised the committee that the Commonwealth government committed \$98.8 million over five years to provide an additional 200 teachers to work in remote community schools, with around 50 teachers recruited and deployed in Northern Territory government and Catholic schools.<sup>87</sup> They also advised that the Northern Territory is expected to receive \$196.6 million over three years, of which at least \$7 million will specifically be used for new classrooms in NTER communities. With the intention of helping to attract and retain teachers, the Commonwealth government has committed to providing the Northern Territory with a further \$11.2 million in 2009-10 for the construction of up to 22 additional houses for teachers in the remote NTER communities. This is in addition to the ten teacher houses that will be built in Wadeye, announced by the Australian Government in October 2008.

4.122 The committee will report any progress made towards increasing teacher numbers with these additional resources in its next report.

4.123 The additional classrooms measure was aimed at providing additional classrooms in schools where increased enrolment and attendance may have placed pressure on existing infrastructure. As detailed in Chapter 5, the need for sufficient infrastructure to be able to accommodate students is critical to be able to attract and retain students. The committee observed this directly in Ntaria where there has been a dramatic increase in secondary enrolments without sufficient classrooms and equipment to teach secondary programs and more importantly without sufficient ablution facilities to cope with the increased volume of students.

*Expansion of literacy programs and Quality Teaching Package*

4.124 The committee notes that the Commonwealth government's rationale for the accelerated literacy program measure was to give additional funding support to Northern Territory education providers to help them manage the anticipated increases in school enrolment and attendance as a result of the NTER. The objective was to put in place a number of regionally based specialist teams to provide professional development training to improve literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students in remote communities.

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87 Northern Territory government, additional information provided at hearing, 22 May 2009.

4.125 The objective of the quality teaching package is to 'provide training, mentoring, in-classroom support and the acquisition of additional teaching skills through professional learning and training incentives'.<sup>88</sup>

4.126 While the committee is supportive of initiatives that develop and support better learning outcomes for students they were concerned to hear about the apparent lack of uniformity between programs being taught in different schools.

We are also concerned about the lack of uniformity in the educational system. There are three communities where students travel a lot. At one school they are doing AL, accelerated literacy; at another school they are doing First Steps, which is a Western Australian literacy program; and then at another school the teachers are writing their own literacy programs. We know that the kids are travelling. We know that they move between the communities, and every time they change they go into a different literacy program. It is similar for maths as well.<sup>89</sup>

4.127 The committee also repeatedly heard about how important it was for schools to have sufficient teachers who are trained to work with students whose first language is not English (ESL).<sup>90</sup> The committee is concerned that the Northern Territory government staffing formula for remote schools does not take into account students' ESL needs but is encouraged that the government is currently preparing a submission for Cabinet to increase staffing based on ESL numbers.<sup>91</sup>

#### *School breakfast and lunch program*

4.128 The school nutrition program, which provides breakfast and lunch, is designed to increase attendance at schools. According to the Commonwealth government, the rationale was drawn from the Little Children are Sacred report which recommended that a school nutrition program be established. The Monitoring Report stated that as at December 2008, 71 schools across the 73 prescribed communities have a school nutrition program. This is up from the June 2008 figures where there were school nutrition programs established in 55 communities and 8 town camp areas.<sup>92</sup> The committee will follow up on the number of schools that are in the prescribed areas that

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88 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 111, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

89 Ms Haidee McKittrick, Rivers Region Youth Development Service, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p.73.

90 CAYLUS, *Submission 26*, p. 8.

91 Northern Territory government, additional information provided at hearing, 22 May 2009.

92 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 17, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

do not yet have a nutrition program and what the percentage increases are with each subsequent monitoring report.

4.129 The committee received evidence that as of 20 May school nutrition programs were in place in 69 communities, and that a total of 185 positions have been created in these communities. Of these, 149 Indigenous people have been employed which equates to an Indigenous take-up rate of 81 per cent. Thirty-six people are employed as supervisors or coordinators and of these, 12 people or 33 per cent are local Indigenous people. The school nutrition program prepares an estimated 3 477 breakfasts and 4 560 lunches each school day; a total of 8 037 meals. At 1 May, of the 3 655 income managed Centrelink customers in the Northern Territory with school aged children, 2 999 or 82.1 per cent were making a voluntary contribution to the school nutrition program.<sup>93</sup>

4.130 The NTER Review found that on the information available to them, there was no evidence that linked the program with increased attendance. The Review compared 17 schools that had a school nutritional program for more than six months with 19 schools that had only just received it or where school nutrition was yet to be established. The NTER Review found that attendance had declined or was unchanged in two thirds of the long exposure schools while in two thirds of the short exposure schools it had increased. The NTER Review concluded that school attendance is related to factors other than the availability of the school nutrition program.<sup>94</sup>

4.131 The Monitoring Report indicates that there has been little change in attendance rates from December 2007 to December 2008. The combined attendance rate for Primary and Secondary School students was 63% in December 2007 compared to 61% for December 2008.<sup>95</sup>

4.132 Even though there may not be any evidence to link the provision of meals at school with increased school attendance the committee considers that providing regular, healthy meals to children and having the engagement of their parents and other members of the community facilitated through this program can only be beneficial. This was also supported by anecdotal evidence the committee heard from teachers and parents in the communities of Milingimbi and Ntaria. The fact that many parents were making voluntary payments to the program through their Centrelink arrangements is also to be commended.

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93 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander, Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre, 26 May 2009.

94 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 30, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

95 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 16, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).



*Community meeting in Milingimbi*

4.133 The committee also heard from many witnesses that the school nutrition programs had been received as a positive development and was an aspect of the NTER that was welcomed. The Victoria Daly Shire, responsible for communities within the vicinity of Katherine, noted that:

...the school nutrition programs are very positive. Some more work could be done around those in terms of getting better facilities and the like. But that again has been a very positive thing.<sup>96</sup>

4.134 When the committee asked Sunrise Health Service about the school nutrition programs they noted that it is reaching a lot of children but confirmation of its effectiveness is not yet possible:

We know that we have good engagement and that good numbers of people turn up. In terms of...evaluation, at the moment we are trying to get our anaemia rates down. We have quite a sustained program around that. Probably in another six months time I will be able to more accurately answer that because anaemia is one of those instant, key performance indicators as to whether things have changed for the good or not.<sup>97</sup>

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96 Mr Gregory Arnott, Victoria Daly Shire Council, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 9,

97 Ms Irene Fisher, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 38.



***Promoting law and order***

4.135 Measures include:

- more police in remote communities;
- bans on alcohol and pornography in prescribed areas;
- expanded night patrol services;
- additional legal services and interpreter services; and
- child abuse intelligence desk.

***More police***

4.136 A primary objective of the NTER was to provide for more police and police stations, and to give police additional powers. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) and state police forces have provided additional police officers to work with Northern Territory police and are under their command. The committee notes that before the NTER, 38 police stations serviced remote communities in the Northern Territory. Between July 2007 and February 2008, 18 additional temporary police stations were built under Taskforce THEMIS in the NTER communities. Sixty three additional police have been deployed since the NTER was announced in June 2007; 45 AFP and interstate police and 18 Northern Territory police. Four existing police stations have also been upgraded.<sup>98</sup> The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs provided the committee with an update on the number of police in each community, and where there is no police presence in the community, which station the community is serviced by and the distance to the nearest police station. This information is provided at Appendix 7.

4.137 There was clear evidence to the NTER Review that more police were welcome, and that communities without a police presence should be provided with them. The NTER Review expressed concern that even in communities that did have police, the current numbers were not adequate. For example many communities only have two police who are expected to provide 24-hour, 7-day-a-week service. The committee also heard that in Milingimbi there is still no permanent police presence in this community and that if there is an incident police have to attend from Ramingining by which time the incident is over.

4.138 The committee notes that even though the NTER Review received information about the criteria used to determine the locations of the new THEMIS police stations, which included issues such as the existing picture of criminality, any prior needs assessment and the strategic importance of the location, it found that there

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98 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 24, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

appeared to be significant inconsistencies regarding the allocation of police. They gave the following example:

Tennant Creek, a town with a population of about 33007, has 39 police officers (one police officer to 85 people), compared to Wadeye with a population of approx 22208 which has seven police (one police officer to 317 people) and Maningrida, with a population of approx 30009, which has two police officers (one police to 1500 people).<sup>99</sup>

4.139 Expert advice sought by the NTER Review indicated that it was too early to tell whether the additional police presence was preventing crime in the prescribed areas, with the only empirical conclusion to be drawn from available data being that a police station is now operating and that crime is being reported. It does not allow for the actual crime to have been measured before and after the establishment of the station.<sup>100</sup>

4.140 The committee notes that one factor identified by the additional police presence has been the increase of reported incidents. While not all of these may proceed to prosecution, additional police means that a higher level of incidents are being reported and investigated.

4.141 There was a small increase in the number of alcohol related incidents reported to the police across the NTER region from 1 994 in the last six months of 2007 to 2 180 in the last six months of 2008. The Monitoring Report notes that more than 100 per cent of the increase was accounted for by the THEMIS stations which means that non-THEMIS stations must have had some decreases in incidents during the period. The number of substance abuse incidents also rose from 177 in the last six months of 2007 to 224 in the last six months of 2008.<sup>101</sup>

4.142 The level of domestic violence reported to police across the NTER area remains high. The number of domestic violence related incidents reported to police rose from 902 in the last six months of 2007 to 1163 in the last six months of 2008. In the 18 THEMIS communities, the level of reported domestic violence incidents increased significantly, from 120 in the last six months of 2007 to 266 in the last six months of 2008. The THEMIS communities accounted for 55 per cent of the increase in the total number of domestic violence incidents from the last six months of 2007 to the second six months of 2008. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

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99 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 26, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

100 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 26, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

101 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 25, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

4.143 There is a high level of assault (relative to population size) across the NTER communities but the committee notes there is little evidence of any increase in the number of cases lodged in court or convictions since the introduction of the NTER. The Monitoring Report concludes that more time is required to form a view about on this issue.<sup>102</sup>

4.144 The committee notes and is concerned that child protection data is not available at the NTER community level. However data is available for Indigenous children across the whole Northern Territory. In 2007-08, Indigenous children in the Northern Territory were six times as likely as other children to be the subject of a substantiation of a notification of abuse and neglect. The rate of substantiation of a notification for Indigenous children aged 0-16 in the Northern Territory rose from 16.8 per 1 000 children in 2006-07 to 23.7 per 1 000 children in 2007-08. Substantiations for Indigenous children were most likely to reflect neglect (36.5%), followed by emotional (27.1%) and physical abuse (21.8). Sexual abuse accounted for 14.5 per cent of substantiations for Indigenous children in the Northern Territory in 2007-08, which is an increase of 4.6 percentage points from 2006-07. Some of this data is presented and discussed further in Chapter 3.

4.145 The Northern Territory Department of Justice holds data on lodgements in court for sexual assault and convictions for sexual assault across the NTER communities on a consistent basis back to the 2005-06. This allows a comparison to be made for first 18 months of the NTER until the end of December 2008 with the 18 month period to the end of December 2006. However it is important to note that most convictions in the Northern Territory relate to offences committed outside the NTER communities.

4.146 The number of sexual assault cases lodged in court relating to offences committed in the NTER communities rose from 39 in the 18 months to the end of December 2006 to 45 in the 18 months to the end of December 2008. The number of convictions for child sexual assaults committed in the NTER communities for the first 18 months of the NTER stands at 17. This compares to 8 convictions in the 18 months ended December 2006. There were 7 convictions for child sexual assault committed in the NTER communities in the six months to the end of December 2008 compared to 8 convictions in the six months to the end of December 2007. The committee notes that not all convictions for child sexual abuse in the NTER communities relate to offences committed by Indigenous people.<sup>103</sup>

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102 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 26, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

103 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 29, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).



4.147 This was also noted by the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission at the committee's Darwin hearing:

I will also make the point, just for your interest, that we have an increased number of children abused not just in the Indigenous community; most of our cases recently are non-Indigenous and to do with sexual abuse in the community. It should not be just targeted in the Indigenous community. It is a real problem across-the-board.<sup>104</sup>

4.148 Notification of child neglect is far more common than sexual assault in the NTER communities. The data below should be treated with some caution as it is based on reports to police that may be unconfirmed. There has been a significant increase in the number of reports collectively referred to as 'child abuse' made to police from across the NTER communities however this may be explained by an increased police presence, not necessarily that greater levels of neglect or abuse are occurring.

4.149 There has been a significant increase in the reported number of incidents of abuse relating to child welfare in from the last six months of 2007 to the last six months of 2008. The category 'child welfare' relates to issues that would generally be considered to be child neglect. The total number of incidents of child abuse in the NTER communities rose, from 74 in the last six months of 2007 to 124 in the last six months of 2008. The 18 THEMIS communities accounted for around 36 per cent of the increase in the number of child abuse reports made to police from 2006-07 to 2007-08.<sup>105</sup>

4.150 One of the issues associated with a greater police presence is obviously an increased capacity for police to apprehend offenders and also for people to make reports. The committee considered evidence that indicated that incarceration rates imposed on individuals for relatively minor offences were increasing. The Northern Territory already has a very high Indigenous incarceration rate and the committee is concerned that people may be receiving custodial sentences unnecessarily. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

4.151 The committee believes that consideration should be given by the Northern Territory government to a review of custodial sentences to ensure that they are being used appropriately, and that magistrates and judges have sufficient non-custodial options available to them when sentencing.

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104 Ms Susan Cox QC, Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 29.

105 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 29, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

*Bans on alcohol and pornography in prescribed areas*

4.152 Pornography and alcohol were restricted in prescribed areas by the NTER. Pornography is classified under two levels of 'prohibited material' and offences were created for possessing and supplying prohibited material in prescribed areas. The Little Children are Sacred report found that there was a strong association between substance abuse, particularly alcohol, and the sexual abuse of children. Before the NTER, legislation and other initiatives such as dry areas and alcohol management plans were already in place in many communities.

4.153 The committee notes that submissions to the NTER Review indicated that large numbers of people have continued to drink outside the prescribed areas and some people from remote communities have travelled into larger regional towns to escape the restrictions on drinking, bringing their families with them. This has resulted in increased demand on shelters and community organisations to care for women and children if they can not get back to communities. Other issues considered by the NTER Review were increased safety concerns for children when parents are moving further away to drink and leaving their children for longer periods, or taking children to drinking areas, and an increase in illicit drug use especially cannabis, because alcohol was no longer available.

4.154 The committee also heard evidence that the NTER had led to pressure on carers who were being affected by people leaving their children in the community while they left to drink. These carers are usually '...grandmothers and they already had quite a heavy caring role, looking after multiple care recipients; but now they are also looking after many others—it is usually grandchildren—because the parents have drifted into town.'<sup>106</sup>

4.155 Despite these issues the NTER Review considered that arrangements restricting the supply of alcohol in prescribed areas and within the Northern Territory should remain in place.<sup>107</sup> The committee agrees with this finding and also the NTER Review's recommendation that alcohol supply, demand and harm reduction strategies be implemented urgently to ensure the sustainability and long-term success of the alcohol restriction measures and also that comprehensive alcohol management plans be finalised in all relevant communities.<sup>108</sup> The committee also notes that these recommendations were supported by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments.

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106 Ms Chrissie Nichols, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 6.

107 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 24, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

108 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 12, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

4.156 The Monitoring Report states that alcohol management plans based on a principle of harm minimisation are now being implemented in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Palmerston and Katherine with Alcohol Management Plans in progress for Jabiru, West Arnhem, Darwin, Borroloola, Timber Creek, Maningrida and Elliot.<sup>109</sup>

4.157 The committee heard evidence that restricting drinking has led to drinking areas being established outside the prescribed communities. Often these areas are near highways which put people at risk of being hit by vehicles.<sup>110</sup> Mr Barry Robinson from Barunga community told the committee of incidences where people fall asleep on the road, putting themselves in great danger. Mr Robinson advocated moving drinking areas away from roads.<sup>111</sup>

I am worried about my countrymen in Beswick, Barunga and Eva Valley. They lie on the road and there is no-one to help them or bring them back to the community. I tried the night patrol but nothing has happened. I am flat out running from Barunga with my little car and picking people up when they are finished with their grog and taking them back—sometimes three or four times, even eight times. I cart them back in my car till daybreak to bring my countrymen home to safety...If we could get a safe house there, the night patrol could go out to the Roper Highway to pick people up and take them back to the safe house and leave them there for the night. That way we would not have to worry; we would know our countrymen were being picked up and taken back to the community. They can be let out in the morning to have tea and they can be sent home...At the moment, they are lying everywhere on the road. In Roper Creek during the wet season it is an unsafe area. People get drowned and float down the river...I am asking at this hearing today: I need that drinking place to be moved back to Four Mile Creek. It is closer to walk from there back to Barunga.<sup>112</sup>

4.158 The committee notes that the Monitoring Report states that it is difficult to obtain data on the actual level of alcohol consumption across the NTER communities. This is because it is not possible to simply observe changes in sales data by location given takeaway sales outside the NTER communities. The NTER only restricts alcohol consumption in prescribed areas so there is nothing preventing people from leaving the prescribed areas to consume alcohol. The Northern Territory Department of Justice holds data on the volume of alcohol sales (pure alcohol in litres) for twelve

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109 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 34, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

110 Roper Gulf Shire Council, *Submission 86*, p. 1.

111 Mr Barry Robinson, *Submission 89*, p. 1.

112 Mr Barry Robinson, Barunga Community, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 44.

outlets for both 2007 and 2008. Eight of these twelve premises saw the volume of alcohol sales drop from 2007 to 2008.<sup>113</sup>

4.159 The committee regards this as promising however it considers that if the intention is to reduce alcohol consumption for harm minimisation purposes then governments have to tackle the supply problem. As CAYLUS states: 'the solution is simple: if you want people to drink less alcohol, sell them less'.<sup>114</sup>

4.160 The Northern Territory Police and Northern Territory government reported to the NTER Review that the legislative changes in relation to pornography offences introduced were difficult to enforce. As at May 2008 five offences were referred from the Northern Territory Police and only one matter had gone to court.

4.161 In addition, the committee notes that during the NTER Review the alcohol and pornography signs placed at the perimeter of prescribed communities stating that alcohol and pornography were prohibited attracted a lot of criticism. It was suggested to the NTER Review that while the signs may have deterred visitors from bringing alcohol and pornography into communities, they did not deter locals and had the perceived effect of labelling Aboriginal people as alcoholics and paedophiles.<sup>115</sup>

4.162 The committee notes that the NTER Review heard that information on the signs was regarded as complex and made little sense to people for whom English is a second or third language.<sup>116</sup> The committee agrees with the NTER Review's recommendation that the Commonwealth government should consult with communities to replace the signs to make them more effective. The Commonwealth government has agreed to this recommendation and the committee understands that progress has been made in altering the signs.

#### *Expanded night patrol services*

4.163 Additional funds for night patrol services to be extended to all 73 communities under the NTER were provided. The aim of Northern Territory night patrol services was to help communities deal with violence and people at risk of harm. The committee notes that many communities already had night patrol services in operation although the NTER Review stated that an extra 50 were required.

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113 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 27, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

114 CAYLUS, *Submission 26*, p. 7.

115 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 25, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

116 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 25, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

4.164 By 15 August 2008, 46 night patrols were operating in communities with 27 more in the process of being set up. Local shire councils have been tasked with managing the night patrol services. Like all service providers in remote Indigenous communities, recruiting staff to fulfil key roles is a serious problem and this issue, along with delays getting vehicles had contributed to the delay in establishing night patrols.<sup>117</sup>

4.165 As many of the night patrols were not operational at the time, the NTER Review made no comment on their impact. However the Monitoring Report provides updated data on the operation of night patrols and states that at 20 May 2009 there were night patrols operating in 70 communities, with three communities still in the consultation phase. The committee notes that from July to December 2008 the night patrols transported 36 220 people.<sup>118</sup>

4.166 FaHCSIA has provided updated information to the committee which states that there are currently 71 active night patrol services in the NTER communities. Two communities, Mount Liebig and Wallace Rockhole remain in consultation.<sup>119</sup>

4.167 The committee has heard that there is in general, a high level of support for night patrols. Mr Gregory Arnott from the Victoria Daly Shire told the committee: 'I think the positives to come out of the intervention include the funding of the night patrol. I think that is very positive. It has had a really good impact.'<sup>120</sup>

#### *Additional legal services and interpreter services*

4.168 It was anticipated that the implementation of law and justice measures under the NTER would lead to higher demand on the existing resources of Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Services. The aim of this measure was to respond to this increased demand. The Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service is a Northern Territory government service jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments, with the aim of providing Indigenous people and relevant service providers with access to interpreters for legal assistance within the judicial system.

4.169 The committee notes that additional staff have been recruited to the service and the service itself has reported a significant increase in the use of interpreters, and additional funding of \$800 000 allocated for 2008–09 in recognition of the continued

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117 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 27, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

118 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 30, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

119 FaHCSIA, answers to questions on notice 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

120 Mr Gregory Arnott, Victoria Daly Shire, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 9.

growing demand for interpreters as a result of the NTER. The NTER Review found that the additional workload has primarily been as a result of income management.<sup>121</sup> In the period 1 July 2008 to 31 December 2008, 2 518 people sought access to an interpreter, an increase (39.7%) from the same period in 2007.<sup>122</sup>

4.170 Additional legal services were funded in anticipation of an increase in the legal assistance needs arising from the NTER. The NTER Review found that the NTER, especially the increased police presence, appeared to have had a flow-on effect to the justice and corrections systems. In 2007–08 criminal listings in the Magistrates Court rose by 12 per cent throughout the Territory over the previous year. There was also a 15 per cent increase in listings in the Alice Springs region.

4.171 The NTER Review considered that it was not really possible to estimate what proportion of the increase in court activity is attributable to the NTER as implementation of alcohol and drug diversionary programs would have also contributed to the increase in court listings as well. Uncertainty of the source of the increases in court listings is also discussed in Chapter 5.

4.172 The committee notes that alcohol management issues have also demanded substantial extra resourcing from legal services, especially in relation to explaining how the laws on alcohol management have changed and the additional police powers. Services reported increasing demand for legal assistance for welfare rights issues as a result of the new income management arrangements.<sup>123</sup> They also report that the anticipated increase in prosecution of child sex offences has not occurred, but there have been increases in prosecutions of teenagers for under-age consensual sex, and for traffic offence matters, many of which are leading to terms of imprisonment due to unpaid fines.<sup>124</sup> This is discussed further in Chapter 5. The Monitoring Report states that between 1 July 2008 and 31 December 2008 legal service providers handled 398 NTER related matters, including 81 advices, 83 duty lawyer services and 234 cases.<sup>125</sup>

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121 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 27, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

122 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 35, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

123 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 28, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

124 Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, *Submission 22*, p.4; Ms Susan Cox QC, Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 29.

125 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 35, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).



4.173 The committee notes that demand for legal assistance in the area of welfare rights issues as a result of the new income management arrangements is also increasing. Some services report that many of their clients are feeling overwhelmed by the child welfare system and the nature of the bureaucracy.

4.174 The committee also notes that—like all service providers—recruitment of new staff has been a consistent problem. The uncertainty of the continuation of funding from one year to the next has meant that services have only been able to offer one year contracts, which decreases the attractiveness of the position to potential applicants. A significant period of time was required at the beginning of the NTER to find staff for these legal service positions, and to build up new networks and relationships of trust in the communities.<sup>126</sup>

#### *Child abuse intelligence desk*

4.175 The NTER provided funding to the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) to explore the establishment of a national Child Abuse Desk to be part of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Database which was to be accessible to all law enforcement agencies. The NTER Review was advised that funding has not been provided for this initiative for 2008–09 and that the ACC was seeking alternative funding to renew the project.

#### *Housing and land reform*

4.176 Measures under this initiative include:

- fixing up existing houses and cleaning up communities; and
- five year leases on Aboriginal townships.

#### *Compulsory acquisition and five year leases*

4.177 The NTER Review found that the primary objective of this measure was for the Commonwealth government to take possession and control of the larger Indigenous communities through the compulsory acquisition of the land area by the grant of an exclusive five year lease to the Commonwealth of Australia.<sup>127</sup> The committee notes that the NTER provides for the compulsory acquisition of leases over 64 specified communities and allows the government to acquire further leases by regulation.

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126 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, pp. 30-31, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

127 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 113, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

4.178 All leases expire on 18 August 2012 regardless of when they began. The terms and conditions of the leases give the Commonwealth government exclusive possession of the leasehold area. The NTER permits the Minister to determine additional terms and conditions, an example of which were approved in August 2007 giving wide ranging control of the land to the Commonwealth.

4.179 The underlying freehold title to the land remains unaffected by the five year leases and pre-existing interests in the land are preserved.<sup>128</sup> The NTER Review found that there was considerable confusion about the five year leases.

4.180 The finding of the NTER Review was supported by the committee's own experience during visits to communities, especially in Ntaria. The committee subsequently asked the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in writing what FaHCSIA's communication strategy was for ensuring that people are informed about the leasing arrangements in Communities. The Minister responded:

- Under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, Land Councils have a statutory role in the grant of any lease on Aboriginal land. Land Councils ensure that traditional owners have been identified, consulted and given consent, that other Aboriginal people affected have also been consulted, that the terms and conditions of the lease are reasonable and that legal requirements are fully addressed.
- The Northern Territory (NT) Chief Minister wrote to the Central Land Council (CLC) on 30 July 2008 requesting housing precinct leases over Hermannsburg, Yuendumu and Lajamanu. To ensure traditional owners were apprised of the full range of options at consultations, the Secretary of FaHCSIA wrote to the CLC on 18 September 2008 setting out the basis on which it would be prepared to enter into a whole-of-township lease for Hermannsburg. These letters each set out the key lease terms for the CLC to use in consultations with traditional owners and residents.
- Governments respect that it is primarily the role of Land Councils to communicate with land owners about leasing so do not negotiate directly with Aboriginal land owners. However the requirement for secure tenure to underpin government investment in new housing and infrastructure is outlined in the broader Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) communications strategy.<sup>129</sup>

4.181 The committee is concerned that this process is not providing effective or sufficient communication to communities as a whole and as the leases are initiated by

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128 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 39, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

129 The Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, committee correspondence 12 May 2009 (received 24 June 2009).



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the Commonwealth government the committee believes it should take a more active role in communicating its policies within communities.

4.182 The NTER Review concluded that the original intention of the compulsory five year leases was to enable urgent maintenance and upgrading of existing housing and infrastructure with a longer term objective to make future funds for Aboriginal housing dependent on the grant of a long-term lease by the Aboriginal owners to the Commonwealth, thereby securing control over the housing and infrastructure assets.<sup>130</sup> This is also the committee's understanding of the intent of the leases.

4.183 The committee notes that when first introduced the NTER removed the permit system that required permits to enter Aboriginal land within prescribed areas. Last year the Commonwealth government moved to reinstate the requirement for permits in prescribed areas that was removed previously by the NTER laws. This legislation was defeated in the Senate.

4.184 Homeland communities and outstations are not included in the NTER for the purposes of five year lease arrangements, although other measures such as income management apply. The NTER Review found that excluding homelands and outstations from the five year lease arrangements left these communities in a vacuum, and urged the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments to clarify their position.<sup>131</sup> As the Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc says in their submission: 'In short, homelands are subjected to many of the more controlling measures under the NTER, but are unlikely to benefit from any increased government investment.'<sup>132</sup> The committee discusses homelands and outstations in more detail in Chapter 5.

#### *Fixing up houses and cleaning up communities*

4.185 This measure consisted of the repair and upgrade of a range of infrastructure that required urgent attention. It was a response to the much reported poor state of infrastructure in communities. Community clean up was an intense short term activity to make communities safer and healthier. It targeted the 73 prescribed communities but excluded outstations. It enabled the repair of immediately dangerous conditions, general minor repairs, painting, rubbish removal and a summary report of works. The NTER Review was advised that 3 046 properties had been surveyed to assess the need for repairs and that repairs had been carried out. Minor repairs were done to 2 995 properties. The Monitoring Report provides updated data that indicates that a total of 3 274 buildings were surveyed. 'Make safe' repairs were carried out on 2 801 buildings

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130 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 113, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

131 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 40, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

132 Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc, *Submission 28*, p. 10.

and minor repairs were carried out on 2 814 buildings. The committee notes that all repair work has now been completed.<sup>133</sup>

4.186 The NTER Review considered many instances put to them where repairs to houses were unnecessary as they were 'on the contractor's list'. There were also concerns that due to the large volume of work being given to contractors external to the community this had grossly inflated prices, making it poor value for money.<sup>134</sup> This was also substantiated by evidence provided to the committee. Mr William South told the committee of an instance where a tap that had been replaced a few weeks earlier was replaced again:

We were thinking, 'What is going on here?' This is serious stuff. A brass garden tap which I replaced six weeks earlier they replaced again. They charged \$30 for the tap and \$52.50 for the labour. It cost me, or the community, \$6.13 and it took me about three minutes to put it on. That is wrong.<sup>135</sup>

4.187 Ms Lesley Podesta, from the Commonwealth Department of Health agreed:

...reality if there is a capital works project that is funded by the Australian government, the prices go crazy. We try to keep the market honest and reasonable about this. We try not to put billions of dollars into it because it just increases the prices everywhere. We try to be very realistic and pragmatic about building, keeping the costs within a contained environment, so that we just do not do this kind of: let us spend this much money here and have a Taj Mahal and the next one will be a Taj Mahal, and the tradies know that we are funding it so they increase the prices. We do try to be very tough about containing those costs and we get a good deal now. We have really ironed out some of the people who used to make a lot of money out of individual services because they were in a remote community. That is part of the reason we do the investment plan, doing as much as possible, contracting a number of service builds, and having contracts that are very tough on deliverables so that we get good value for that money.<sup>136</sup>

4.188 The committee is encouraged that DoHA has a process in place to manage this and urges all government agencies to do the same.

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133 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 42, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

134 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 42, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

135 Mr William South, Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 64.

136 Ms Lesley Podesta, Department of Health and Ageing, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 70.

4.189 The NTER Review recommended that payment of just terms compensation to Aboriginal landowners for the acquisition and use of their property without consent from the date of the original acquisition be made, and that rent be paid to the Aboriginal landowners. The Commonwealth government has accepted this recommendation and asked the Northern Territory Valuer-General to determine a reasonable amount of rent which the Commonwealth will pay.<sup>137</sup>

4.190 As previously mentioned, the NTER Review found that overcrowding and the appalling state of housing in most communities was impacting upon the life chances of children and the wellbeing of communities generally. Funding for new housing was not part of the NTER however the Commonwealth government's Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) announced after the NTER is relevant to the success of many of the measures under the NTER as it provides funding for a new housing program.

4.191 The committee notes that SIHIP is a partnership between the Commonwealth government and the Northern Territory government and is intended to deliver around 750 new houses including new subdivisions, demolition of 230 uninhabitable houses, 500 housing upgrades, essential infrastructure to support new houses and improvements to living conditions in town camps.<sup>138</sup>

4.192 The Commonwealth government has stated that appropriate land tenure arrangements must be in place before construction can commence. Leases are already in place at Nguuu, the Tennant Creek Town Camps, and the three Groote Eylandt region communities of Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra. Housing precinct leases have also been agreed for Maningrida, Galiwinku, Gunbalanya and Wadeye. The Monitoring Report states that as leases have been agreed in many communities design and community consultation activities are now proceeding in 48 communities across the Northern Territory.<sup>139</sup>

4.193 In the Commonwealth government's response to the NTER Review, it committed to a staged transition from compulsory five year leases over communities to voluntary lease arrangements. Current long term lease negotiations focus on the 15 communities identified for major SIHIP capital investment. However, voluntary leases will also be progressively offered to other communities.

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137 *Australian Government and Northern Territory Government Response to the Report of the NTER Review Board*, May 2008, p. 4, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/response\\_to\\_reportNTER/Documents/Aust\\_response\\_1882953\\_1.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/response_to_reportNTER/Documents/Aust_response_1882953_1.pdf) (accessed 23 June 2009).

138 FaHCSIA, *New Remote Housing System - NT*, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/housing/pages/newremote\\_housing\\_system.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/housing/pages/newremote_housing_system.aspx) (accessed 23 June 2009).

139 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 38, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

4.194 The committee notes that negotiations at Ngukurr and Numbulwar are in early stages and it is anticipated the Northern Land Council will commence consultations with the three remaining priority communities (Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi, Yirrkala) in mid 2009. The Central Land Council is continuing to work with traditional owners and community members of the three central communities, Hermannsburg, Lajamanu and Yuendumu, where major SIHIP works have been allocated. A sublease with Tennant Creek Town Camps was signed by Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation on 20 October 2008 and additional housing funding of \$6.5 million announced on 28 October 2008.

4.195 The committee also observed a high level of confusion surrounding the SIHIP program. People questioned why 26 large communities around Australia were earmarked for resources,<sup>140</sup> 15 of these in the Northern Territory, and on what basis this decision was made. The committee asked the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs this question. The Minister responded:

COAG has already agreed priority remote service delivery locations 15 of which are in the NT...These were identified between the Commonwealth and the relevant State/NT government. The locations will also be locations for initial housing investment.

In identifying further priority locations for housing investment the Government will take into account the national principles for investment in remote locations agreed to as part of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery. These principles take into account:

- significant concentrations of population;
- anticipated demographic trends and pressures;
- the potential for economic development and employment; and
- the extent of pre-existing shortfalls in government investment in infrastructure and services.

In the NT the priority communities are larger communities with high housing needs and where the greatest impact can be made with the available funds. The intention is to maximise the role of priority communities as service hubs. These communities will receive new houses, major housing upgrades and improved housing related infrastructure through the SIHIP.

In addition to those communities which will receive major capital works in the NT a further 57 communities in the NT will receive housing refurbishments.

4.196 Advice provided to the committee indicates that other communities and townships (beyond the Remote Service Delivery sites) will continue to receive

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140 Note: the SIHIP program is not the only housing program which provides funds for housing in Indigenous communities there are also other funds available delivered through other Commonwealth and state and territory housing programs.

government support and services.<sup>141</sup> The committee notes that this response still does not provide details on how COAG decided on the priority communities and whether the criteria outlined for identifying future priority locations may have also informed the decision. The committee will pursue this issue further throughout its inquiry.

4.197 The committee also notes that the Minister advised that the decision on the priority communities had already been made by the time the data from the detailed assessment of individual buildings that occurred under the Community Clean Up program was compiled and so it was not a factor in the decision.<sup>142</sup>

4.198 The committee heard that there is also a high degree of suspicion that the promised number of houses would not be built, and that they would be built under such inefficient administrative and contractual arrangements that they would cost an exorbitant amount per house.<sup>143</sup>

4.199 The Monitoring Report states that 'work is continuing toward reaching lease agreement for Alice Springs Town Camps'<sup>144</sup> however in late May 2009 negotiations between the Commonwealth and Tangentyere Council, responsible for managing the town camps, in relation to a \$125 million housing funding program broke down. It was a condition of the funding that the Tangentyere agree to a 40 year lease with tenancy management to be conducted by the Northern Territory government. Tangentyere had agreed to the lease but not the management of tenancy arrangements by the Northern Territory government. Instead they proposed that tenancy be managed through the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company, a company that in the process of being established with Commonwealth government assistance. The Commonwealth government did not agree.

4.200 Tangentyere has until 29 June 2009 to make submissions to the Commonwealth otherwise the Minister has announced that she will use provisions under the NTER legislation to compulsorily acquire the land permanently.<sup>145</sup>

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141 The Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, committee correspondence 12 May 2009 (received 24 June 2009).

142 The Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, committee correspondence 12 May 2009 (received 24 June 2009).

143 Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 83*, p. 1.

144 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 38, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

145 See Paul Toohey, *Macklin lays down law on town camp seizures*, *The Australian*, 25 May 2009 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25532508-5006790,00.html> (accessed 12 June 2009); The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Tangentyere Council, Alice Springs town camps, Central Land Council*, Transcript of Interview, 11 June 2009 [http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jm\\_t\\_tangentyere\\_council\\_11june09.doc.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/jm_t_tangentyere_council_11june09.doc.htm) (accessed 12 June 2009).

4.201 Some commentators have suggested that this action contradicts the Commonwealth's announcement to reinstate the RDA.<sup>146</sup> 'Special measures', initiatives targeting certain racial or ethnic groups facing persistent disadvantage and which treat certain racial or ethnic groups differently on the basis that this will be of benefit to them, are permitted under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to which Australia is a signatory. The Convention is given force in domestic law through the RDA. Under the Convention, State parties are obliged to get the informed consent of Indigenous peoples in making decisions that affect them and special measures must be deemed necessary and temporary.

4.202 The committee heard evidence that there was a high degree of confusion over leasing arrangements and people question why they need to agree to change landholding arrangements to get housing.<sup>147</sup> Some people regard this as coercive and it reinforces a sense of distrust with what the Commonwealth government is proposing.<sup>148</sup>

4.203 The committee considers that the state of housing and environmental health in communities should rightly be described as an emergency. As one clinician noted in a submission to the inquiry:

I think it is vital that we work to insist on the supply of more housing and infrastructure as a meaningful and practical step for resolving the problems in the bush. If you are any parent white or black living in a household of 20 other people with limited sanitation facilities and income then your ability to protect your child from the ravages of recurrent strep infections, rheumatic fever, kidney disease, ear infections, trachoma, intestinal parasites, dental caries, anaemia, malnutrition or sexual predators is severely compromised whether you are drug and alcohol affected or not. If you have no where else to go and no one to offer reliable long-term assistance or protection what choice do you have but to continue to put up with it? As important as we doctors like to think we are, most of the major health advantages in our dominant culture have actually been achieved by plumbers, carpenters, civil engineers and teachers.<sup>149</sup>

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146 Alison Vivian and Larissa Behrendt, *Is Macklin ignoring her own legal advice on town camps acquisition?* Crikey, 16 June 2009, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/06/16/is-macklin-ignoring-her-own-legal-advice-on-town-camps-acquisition/> (accessed 23 June 2009).

147 Committee meeting notes, Ntaria 30 April 2009.

148 See also, The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission, *Negotiation not Coercion needed in the Northern Territory*, Press release, 15 June 2009.

149 School of Medicine, Flinders University, *Submission 45*, p. 5.



### Recommendation 3

**4.204** The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government review its overall communication strategy for regional and remote Indigenous communities with the view to making information available to communities on an ongoing and regular basis and in an accessible way. In the instance of the SIHIP program the communication strategy should provide information on how the decision to fund housing in the priority communities was made, as well as regular information on how the construction of this new housing is progressing.

#### *Welfare reform and employment*

4.205 Measures include:

- Income management;
- Licensing of community stores;
- Creating real jobs in communities outside Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP);
- Increased participation in remote areas including work for the Dole activities; and
- Community Employment Brokers in communities.

#### *Income management*

4.206 People receiving Centrelink payments who live in prescribed areas became subject to compulsory income management of half their Centrelink payments and all of most advances, lump sum payments and the Baby Bonus. This measure was imposed universally within the prescribed areas. As noted by the Review, there were no opportunities:

...extended to those living in the affected communities to negotiate their way out of the imposed regulation of their income, if they could demonstrate their ability to responsibly manage their income. The only determinant was whether an individual lived in a prescribed area on 21 June 2007.<sup>150</sup>

4.207 The committee notes that many problems with store cards and the BasicsCard have been reported. The BasicsCard is issued by Centrelink and allows people who are subject to income management to access their quarantined money at approved stores and merchants. It cannot be used to purchase alcohol, tobacco, pornography,

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150 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 20, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

gambling products or gift vouchers. It cannot be used to get cash out, lay-by goods or for 'book up'.<sup>151</sup>

4.208 The NTER Review found that as cards don't carry any security provisions which would limit their use to the authorised welfare recipient, they can be misused and exchanged for cash which undermines the income management scheme. They also heard examples of how in some instances, cards were not being redeemed for their full amount and many customers, through lack of understanding, did not take advantage of their full entitlement.<sup>152</sup> This is consistent with evidence put to the committee during this inquiry.

4.209 The committee notes that BasicsCards had not been implemented at the time of the NTER Review though evidence provided to it has confirmed similar issues. However many witnesses have noted that there is growing acceptance of the BasicsCard as people become more familiar with it.

It is working really well. I see a lot of food getting back to the houses, and that is really good to see. They are getting used to it as time goes on, whereas before they were really worried about the money and all that access, but give them time and they will make use of it. It is used better now and is getting the food back to the kids.<sup>153</sup>

4.210 A report detailing the perspectives of six communities affected by the NTER and commissioned by the Central Land Council found that amongst survey participants, there was almost equal support for and against income management with 51 per cent of survey participants in favour of it and 46 per cent opposed to it.<sup>154</sup>

4.211 This report also found that income source was a factor influencing people's level of support for income management with people on wages most supportive of income management.

4.212 Advantages associated with quarantining arrangements included:

- increased household expenditure on food and children;
- reduction in drinking;
- young men are contributing to family food;
- reduction in gambling; and

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151 Centrelink, *BasicsCard*, [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co514\\_0807/\\$file/co514\\_0807en.pdf](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co514_0807/$file/co514_0807en.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

152 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 21, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

153 Councillor Tony Jack, Mayor, Roper Gulf Shire Council, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 49.

154 Central Land Council, *Submission 92*, p. 19.



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- facilitates saving money (including through the use of store cards).
- 4.213 Disadvantages associated with quarantining arrangements included:
- not enough discretionary cash;
  - blanket reform is discriminatory;
  - problems with accessing quarantined money;
  - incompatibility with population mobility;
  - lack of choice;
  - administrative restrictions on the use of quarantined money; and
  - cost shifting to Aboriginal people and community staff to deal with the new arrangements.<sup>155</sup>

4.214 Evidence gathered for the report also indicated that if income management was better directed towards people with alcohol, gambling or substance misuse problems, there is some evidence to suggest that Aboriginal people would be more supportive of it.<sup>156</sup>

4.215 The NTER Review found that even though there was considerable criticism of this measure many people believed that it provided an opportunity to manage their income and the family budget in a way that was beneficial. Anecdotal evidence indicated that more food was being purchased and that tobacco sales had decreased at community stores.<sup>157</sup> The NTER Review recommended that the blanket application of compulsory income management cease and that it be available on a voluntary basis to community members who choose to have some of their income quarantined for specific purposes, as determined by them. It was also recommended that compulsory income management should only be applied on the basis of child protection, school enrolment and attendance.<sup>158</sup>

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155 Central Land Council, *Submission 92*, pp. 19 – 20.

156 Central Land Council, *Submission 92*, p. 20.

157 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 21, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

158 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 23, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

4.216 This recommendation was not supported by the Commonwealth. Instead the Commonwealth has announced that it will consider options to allow people to apply for an exemption from income management.<sup>159</sup>

4.217 The Monitoring Report stated that at 2 January 2009, a total of \$124.5 million had been income managed. Of this, \$119.9 million was allocated to priority goods and services with the assertion that most money was allocated to food (62%), rent (10%), store cards (9%) and clothing and footwear (5%).<sup>160</sup>

4.218 One of the issues of concern to the committee is that there is no real way of knowing how much income managed money is being spent on food or other items. At its hearing in Canberra Centrelink advised the committee that most of the income managed money was being spent on food. However, the committee has formed the view that this is not actually the case. This is referred to in detail in Chapter 2.

4.219 At 15 May, 36 102 BasicsCards have been issued overall, with a total of 17 335 customers issued with a card and 18 767 being replacement cards.<sup>161</sup>

#### *Licensing of community stores*

4.220 The NTER legislation provides for the licensing of community stores. The licensing regime attempts to address a long history of problems with stores, focused mainly on the quality of services provided by many community stores and the integrity of their financial management. 'Poor quality food, limited ranges and exorbitant prices have characterised many stores in many communities.'<sup>162</sup>

4.221 The NTER Review found that standards between stores varied and that even in some licensed stores prices were high and food quality was low. Many people believed that they were seriously disadvantaged by the poor standards of their local stores. The NTER Review expressed the strong view that where people have no option but to spend a major portion of their income at specific outlets, there is a heavy responsibility upon the government to ensure that those outlets operate in accordance with high standards. The NTER Review recommended that the system for licensing

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159 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Future Directions for the Northern Territory Emergency Response*, 21 May 2009, pp. 11-12 [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/future\\_directions\\_discussion\\_paper/Documents/discussion\\_paper\\_6.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/future_directions_discussion_paper/Documents/discussion_paper_6.pdf) (accessed 12 June 2009).

160 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 45, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

161 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander, Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre, 26 May 2009.

162 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 21, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

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community stores be continued with a requirement for there to be an audit of each licensed store every six months to ensure that high standards of governance were being applied, there was a range of good quality products, appropriate health standards were being applied and local employment strategies were pursued. It also recommended that the Commonwealth government examine ways to address the unacceptably high prices in stores.<sup>163</sup>

4.222 Both of these recommendations were supported by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments in their joint response to the NTER Review.

4.223 The committee understands that licences are issued to community store operators who have a reasonable quality, quantity and range of groceries and consumer items, including healthy food and drinks available and promoted at the store; can demonstrate the capacity to participate in the requirements of the income management regime; and have sound financial structures, retail and governance practices.

4.224 At its Darwin hearing the committee heard evidence that some communities, while having access to a store, do not have access to a licensed store. This means that to use their income managed funds they have to travel out of the community. For very remote and isolated communities, this places a large cost burden on people whose income is being managed. The committee was provided with the example of Mapuru where people have to charter a flight to Elcho Island in order to use their income managed funds.

At Mapuru there is a shop that is willing to operate the BasicsCard facilities but somehow they will not let it. So people have to fly in and it costs \$500 return on a charter flight. There is no regular passenger transport or RPT run: they have to pay \$250 to fly in and \$250 to fly back. Then they probably buy \$150 worth of food and stuff.

4.225 The committee has asked FaHCSIA if information is collected on the number of people and communities who do not have direct access to a licensed store. FaHCSIA has advised that 13 NTER communities do not have a licensed store and that is because there is no store within their particular community boundary.<sup>164</sup>

4.226 When asked about the situation in Mapuru and whether temporary arrangements could be made for residents whose income was being managed to access these funds at their local store, FaHCSIA provided the following response:

There are currently only a small number of the (approximate) 60 residents of Mapuru who are being income managed.

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163 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 23, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

164 FaHCSIA, answers to questions on notice 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

Access to food, and the cost of bringing in food or getting to a food source, is not new for the Mapuru homeland residents. The residents have previously advised FaHCSIA (prior to the commencement of income management) that they shop fortnightly at the stores in Galiwinku and Gapuwiyak and hunt for their fresh food locally. The dry food sold at the Mapuru Co-op (when it was trading) supplemented this.

Centrelink has worked with income managed customers in Mapuru to ensure access to food that meets each individual's circumstances. This includes, for example, assisting customers to access income managed funds to travel to Galiwinku, Elcho Island and Gapuwiyak (where the BasicCard can be used) to purchase a wider variety and range of fresh, dry and perishable foods than is available at the Mapuru Co-op (as some residents have always done). Customers may also use the BasicsCard when they travel to other areas of the Northern Territory.<sup>165</sup>

4.227 FaHCSIA also advised that the on-site licensing assessment of the Mapuru Co-op will be conducted in late June 2009, and it is expected that the assessment will not be completed until mid July 2009. The committee was also advised that it was FaHCSIA's policy that generally, unless a store in a prescribed area meets FaHCSIA's licensing requirements, then stores are not able to participate in the income management regime.<sup>166</sup>

4.228 The committee considers that it is unfair for people who live in a community with a store not to be able to access their income managed funds at that store, and that prior to income management, people would have been able to spend their money in the store if they chose to do so. Income management has meant that this choice has been removed from them. The committee looks forward to learning of the outcome of the licensing process at Mapuru.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**4.229 That in communities without access to a local store licensed to accept the BasicsCard, alternative arrangements should be made so that people are able to access income managed funds at their local store. This could be in the form of a temporary arrangement with the store until the licensing process can be completed.**

4.230 The committee understands that it is possible for roadhouses to participate in the licensing scheme but that they are generally only licensed to sell fuel. The committee sought information at its hearing in Canberra on 9 June 2009 about whether roadhouses that do not sell Opal fuel, a non-sniffable alternative fuel, are licensed.<sup>167</sup> The committee understands that Laramba Store is licensed and has been advised that Ti Tree Roadhouse is currently approved to accept the BasicsCard for the

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165 FaHCSIA, answers to questions on notice 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

166 FaHCSIA, answers to questions on notice 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

167 *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 53.

purchase of fuel and motor vehicle expenses.<sup>168</sup> The committee is concerned that sniffable fuel can be purchased at licensed stores using the BasicsCard in the Petrol Sniffing Strategy Zone, especially given the concerted effort to have all retailers selling non-sniffable fuel in Central Australia and the destructive effect sniffing can have in Indigenous communities. The committee also heard that regular unleaded sniffable fuel is not an excluded item under the income management policy.<sup>169</sup>

4.231 The Department of Health has advised the committee that there are ten known sites in and around the designated Petrol Sniffing Strategy Central Desert Region that continue to refuse to supply Opal fuel. This includes four sites in the designated Central Desert Region and six sites that are located in areas that could be considered as feeder sites to the Central Desert Region. These sites are:

- Laramba Store;
- Maryvale Station;
- Ti Tree Roadhouse;
- Tilmouth Well Roadhouse;
- Cadney Park;
- Jervois Roadhouse;
- Rabbit Flat Roadhouse;
- Ross River Resort;
- The Dangi Pub (Urandangi); and
- BP Laverton Motors.

4.232 It should be noted that the Outback Store located in Ti Tree community commenced supplying Opal fuel on 1 June 2009. Ti Tree Roadhouse continues to refuse the supply of Opal fuel.<sup>170</sup>

## **Recommendation 5**

**4.233 The committee recommends that in order to be licensed as a merchant for the BasicsCard, FaHCSIA make it a condition of license that roadhouses within the Petrol Sniffing Strategy Central Desert Region and feeder sites to this region sell Opal fuel.**

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168 FaHCSIA, answers to questions on notice, 9 June 2009 (received 22 June 2009).

169 Ms Michelle Wilson, FaHCSIA, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 59.

170 DoHA, answers to questions on notice, 9 June 2009 (received 17 June 2009).

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*Creating real jobs in communities outside Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)*

4.234 The previous government policy decision was to phase out CDEP (as provided for in amendments made by the *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Act 2007*) and to progressively replace it with other employment services such as real jobs, training or Work for the Dole. Remote area exemptions were also lifted from job seekers from July to December 2007. In December 2007 the current government placed a moratorium on the phasing out of CDEP and in April 2008 announced the reintroduction of CDEP as an interim measure, pending reform of the program.

4.235 These reforms have now been announced. CDEP will continue only in remote locations with two streams to be used to support people to increase their chances of employment: 'Work Readiness Services' are to help job seekers develop skills and move away from CDEP while 'Community Development' is to support communities and organisations.<sup>171</sup>

4.236 The NTER Review found that changes to CDEP caused a great deal of confusion and that while policy makers and social researchers engage in a debate about the place and value of CDEP, it considered that that 'for many Aboriginal people, CDEP currently represents the only opportunity to obtain work in which they can achieve a sense of satisfaction in contributing to the wellbeing of their communities'.<sup>172</sup> They also considered that as with any program, the quality of the CDEP outcomes will depend on the competence of those responsible for implementing it and the effectiveness of the mechanisms put in place to monitor its administration.

4.237 The NTER Review recommended that CDEP should incorporate relevant training components to address the minimal literacy and numeracy levels of most participants, which diminish their job readiness. This recommendation was only partially supported by the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments. They have stated that literacy or numeracy training is not necessarily compulsory but should be supported for those who need it.<sup>173</sup> This issue is discussed further in Chapter 5.

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171 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *NTER Monitoring Report July 2008 – December 2008*, Part Two p. 55, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Pages/default.aspx) (accessed 13 June 2009).

172 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 21, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

173 *Australian Government and Northern Territory Government Response to the Report of the NTER Review Board*, May 2008, p. 4, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/response\\_to\\_reportNTER/Documents/Aust\\_response\\_1882953\\_1.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/response_to_reportNTER/Documents/Aust_response_1882953_1.pdf) (accessed 23 June 2009).



4.238 The Review also found that the decision by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments and new shire councils in the Northern Territory to discontinue subsidising their services with CDEP and paying full wages with full entitlements to their employees was a very significant step to deliver real jobs. The committee heard evidence of this when it met with the McDonnell Shire Council. Eighty percent of the Shire's workforce are locally engaged Aboriginal staff.<sup>174</sup>

4.239 Evidence to the committee indicated that conversion of CDEP places to permanent jobs had a beneficial effect, especially through jobs for rangers under the Working for Country program. Mr Ric Norton from Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc told the committee:

the...area where we have done very well out of the intervention is the expansion of our ranger program. We have been quite successful in picking up the converted CDEP jobs under the Working for Country program. We already had some in train prior to the intervention and then we have picked up some of the expanded positions since the intervention, so we now have quite a substantial ranger program. We see that as a very strong asset of our organisation.<sup>175</sup>

4.240 The committee also observed this when meeting with the Tjuwanpa Rangers in Ntaria (Hermannsburg). The committee heard that the Working for Country program funded by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, has led to two full time and eight part time jobs for rangers. The committee considers the Tjuwanpa Rangers to be a very successful program providing an important role in the community and good skills development for young men in the community.



*Members of the committee with the Tjuwanpa Rangers at Ntaria*

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174 Committee meeting notes, Central Australia, 29 April 2009.

175 Mr Ric Norton, Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May p. 42.

4.241 The Monitoring Report indicates that a total of 1 907 jobs were created up to December 2008 with almost 79 per cent (1 498) of these in Commonwealth government service delivery. The remainder (409) have been in local government service delivery. All of these positions have been filled by former CDEP participants.<sup>176</sup>

*Increased participation in remote areas including Work for the Dole activities*

4.242 Work for the Dole is designed to assist people improve their chances of employment by providing work experience. NTER 'Work for the Dole' participants are required to attend continually during their period of unemployment rather than six months out of 12 months for non-NTER job seekers. Since 1 August 2007, a total of 134 Work for the Dole activities have been undertaken across the NTER prescribed communities. 70 per cent of all activities have occurred across 53 communities; 27 per cent in town camps and the remainder in outstations. Between June and December 2008, 11 activities were completed and 56 are still in operation and 2 066 people commenced on the program.

4.243 The committee notes that the Monitoring Report states that a lack of participation has been an ongoing issue. Attendance rates are around 30 per cent and of those who commence in an activity approximately only a third attend at least once per fortnight. This compares to a national attendance rate of 60 per cent. There is anecdotal evidence to indicate that compliance action continues to have little impact as an incentive to ongoing participation in employment programs.<sup>177</sup>

*Community Employment Brokers in communities*

4.244 The role of Community Employment Brokers (CEBs) has been to coordinate the delivery of employment related services and to help find people jobs. The NTER Review was highly critical of this measure, finding that there was little evidence that their roles were being used effectively. At 15 September 2008 there were 30 CEBs servicing 55 communities and associated outstations and two town camp regions. The Review concluded that the high degree of scepticism within communities it visited about the role of CEBs meant that resourcing these positions should be reconsidered.<sup>178</sup>

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176 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 49, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

177 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 51, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

178 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 12, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).



4.245 The NTER Review recommended that Community Employment Brokers should focus on mentoring and case management, especially with CDEP participants as well as on coordinating activities between education and training providers and Job Network providers.<sup>179</sup> The committee notes that this recommendation was not supported as CEBs will cease on 1 July 2009.

### *Coordination*

4.246 This measure involved the establishment of the following:

- Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce;
- Government Business Managers to live in and work with communities;
- Logistical support for the NTER;
- Community engagement; and
- Ombudsman support to the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

#### *Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce*

4.247 The Taskforce operated for one year and reported to the government. The Taskforce's report is discussed earlier in this Chapter.

#### *Logistical support for NTER.*

4.248 The primary objective of the coordination measure was to provide administrative, logistical and other procedural support for the implementation of the other NTER measures. This was done through the establishment of an NTER Operations Centre. The Review found that there was no doubt that the Operations Centre was a very effective mechanism for cutting through the many logistical and administrative impediments associated with the roll-out of the major programs such as child health checks and income management. However this left very little room for consultation and engagement with communities.

4.249 As discussed above, administrative arrangements have changed slightly so that the Operations Centre is now delivering most of the NTER measures but GBMs are managed by the Northern Territory State Office.

4.250 The NTER Review, as well as this committee, heard many examples of how the 'siloes' operation of government departments and the inability of agencies to communicate and coordinate effectively.

We found that communities continue to struggle under an ever increasing demand for meetings with unfamiliar faces representing government and NGO providers seeking 'consultations' on complex and unfamiliar

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179 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 23, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

programs, who fly in and fly out on a daily basis and give no sense of a coordinated or planned engagement with the communities.<sup>180</sup>

4.251 The NTER Review recommended that the Operations Centre continue under civilian management with the necessary authority and delegation from the Prime Minister and Chief Minister to drive and coordinate implementation across both Australian and Northern Territory government agencies delivery of services to Aboriginal communities. This has been done.

4.252 The committee has been overwhelmed by the scale of complaints it has received about the level of bureaucracy involved in delivering and accessing services. The committee notes that this issue does not just apply to the NTER but has application across the country. This issue has caused a great deal of frustration in relation to the NTER, especially as people struggled to comprehend the changes in the early stages of the NTER. Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc put it this way:

Funding uncertainty due to policy changes, interim measures, shifting responsibility between Commonwealth, Territory, and Shires means the organisation cannot plan effectively for 12 months ahead, and the uncertainty about job security and viability of programs and work effort is demoralising. This impacts on staff turnover and hence program delivery and expenditure on recruitment.<sup>181</sup>

4.253 This was further reinforced to the committee when it visited Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi, an organisation delivering a range of services to support families, children and young people in Central Australia. The committee heard that organisations like Waltja were being crippled by short term funding, the lack of funding certainty and the short term nature of programs. Waltja advised the committee that organisations like theirs need 5-10 years to really embed and make programs effective. It takes time to build relationships, put support in place in remote communities, train and support staff. The committee heard that for Waltja, the administrative cost of programs is expanding without any corresponding increase in funding. Every year funding bodies ask Waltja for feedback – what's working well, what's not working well. Each year Waltja tells funding bodies that the administrative burden is too onerous but nothing changes.<sup>182</sup>

4.254 These experiences are supported by the findings of the Australian National Audit Office review of whole of government Indigenous service delivery. The review found that where a number of departments were involved in funding organisations and projects, suitable administrative arrangements had yet to be developed to deliver coordinated and efficient funding and monitoring arrangements.

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180 Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board Report, 30 September 2008, p. 44, [http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report\\_nter\\_review/docs/Report\\_NTER\\_Review\\_October08.pdf](http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/docs/Report_NTER_Review_October08.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

181 Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc, *Submission 28*, p. 10.

182 Committee meeting notes, Central Australia, 29 April 2009.

While a 'header' agreement is available for jointly funded projects, each department which is a signatory has its own schedule including accountability, reporting and acquittal requirements. These individual departmental accountability requirements detract from the ICC/whole of government focus, and the level of duplication involved adds to the administrative demands on Indigenous communities. The development of suitable funding models with Indigenous communities has the potential to improve the effectiveness of ICC operations and reduce the administrative demands on Indigenous communities.<sup>183</sup>

4.255 The committee also heard evidence of a lack of coordination and follow-through with new resources and infrastructure the NTER provided to communities. For example CAYLUS outlined a situation in Papunya where:

The GBM found that there was a room full of computers at the NTEETA building—the Northern Territory education, employment and training building—...that the intervention had donated to Papunya. They just sat there; they literally had not been used because there was no-one to use them. The shire service manager is completely overloaded and is not going to take on the technical intricacy of setting up an internet cafe situation...The potential legal implication of running that sort of thing is enough to make them say no, so we hired some people with lots of IT experience...we have hired him and his company to run IT training programs in that facility. The GBM made that possible. He sourced the place and has been really supportive of it. I have to speak highly of his efforts to make this happen to address that adult education vacuum.

It is working really well. They have all of the computers going. Before this, they literally had not been turned on since they had been dropped in there; the instruction manuals were still in plastic bags...He is now running an internet café...and it was exactly the demographic that we are trying to get. One of the issues we were talking about is that that demographic is now bringing along their little kids and so he has a movie running in one corner to amuse the kids while their parents learn how to type, how to use the internet and how to engage with the wider world. It has been really successful.<sup>184</sup>

4.256 The committee considers that given how hard it is for organisations to attract and retain staff, discussed throughout this consideration of the NTER and acknowledged by governments themselves, barriers to effective recruitment should be addressed and a reduction in the administrative burden place on organisations made.

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183 ANAO Audit Report No.10 2007–08, *Whole of Government Indigenous Service Delivery Arrangements*, p. 25.

184 Mr Blair McFarland, CAYLUS, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, pp. 10-11.

## Recommendation 6

**4.257 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth commit to longer term program funding so that organisations can enjoy greater funding certainty and offer staff greater job security. This is especially the case in relation to organisations who have established relationships with funding bodies and good risk management strategies in place.**

### *Government Business Managers (GBMs)*

4.258 There are currently 60 GBMs servicing 73 prescribed communities, Borroloola and town camps in Darwin, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs.<sup>185</sup> GBMs are responsible for the coordination of Commonwealth government services provided in Indigenous communities and support the implementation of the NTER. GBMs are intended to develop a detailed understanding of the community in which they work, the service delivery and funding arrangements. Information provided to the committee from the NTER Operations Centre indicates that GBMs are intended to be the 'face of the Australian Government intervention in the Northern Territory at the community level.'<sup>186</sup>

4.259 Responsibilities of GBMs include:

- Working with relevant agencies, including ICC staff, to coordinate Commonwealth government services and to maximise the benefits of all Commonwealth funding provided to the community;
- Advising the Regional Director and Operational Centre on the revision of service delivery or replacement of service providers where current provision is not functional;
- Working with Northern Territory government and local government services to ensure co-ordinated service delivery;
- Providing the key liaison and consultation point in communities, including communicating the NTER measures at the local level and working collaboratively with other Australian and Northern Territory government agency representatives on the ground;
- Providing regular reports to the Regional Director and key stakeholders on the progress of initiatives and advising where further measures might be required in the community; and
- Where appropriate, working with key stakeholders to support the implementation of transition strategies, including in relation to local government reforms in the Northern Territory.

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185 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre, 26 May 2009.

186 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander, Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre, 26 May 2009.



*Members of the committee meeting with Mr Rob Hathaway, the GBM in Milingimbi*

4.260 Information provided to the committee indicates that the GBMs also have trouble shooting role. In their coordination role across all Commonwealth government agencies they are expected ensure that Commonwealth agency staff work under their guidance and 'optimise timing, sequencing and connections with other initiatives being pursued by the Australian Government to achieve maximum leverage; and ensure effective and orderly engagement with the community'.<sup>187</sup>

4.261 The NTER Review found that GBMs were having varying degrees of impact, this was also corroborated by evidence the committee heard. While some were engaging the community in meaningful ways, some remained distant from the people they were supposed to be supporting. The NTER Review recommended providing community development training to GBMs and renaming them as Community Development Managers. This recommendation has not been supported on the basis that their role is to coordinate whole of government service delivery.<sup>188</sup>

4.262 The NTER Review also recommended that the senior government officials based in a community report directly to the Operations Centre. While the Commonwealth and Northern Territory government's response states that this is supported this does not seem to have occurred as the committee understands that GBMs continue to report to the Northern Territory State Office of FaHCSIA.

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187 Correspondence provided to the committee from Mr Michael Zissler, Commander, Northern Territory Emergency Response Operations Centre.

188 *Australian Government and Northern Territory Government Response to the Report of the NTER Review Board*, May 2008, p. 4, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/response\\_to\\_reportNTER/Documents/Aust\\_response\\_1882953\\_1.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/response_to_reportNTER/Documents/Aust_response_1882953_1.pdf) (accessed 23 June 2009).

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*Community engagement*

4.263 The Community Engagement measure provided funding for the employment of up to 20 Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO) positions throughout the Northern Territory. As at 31 December 2008 there were 19 IEOs in 19 communities.<sup>189</sup> Charles Darwin University has been contracted to design and deliver a targeted Indigenous community engagement training program for the IEOs.

*Ombudsman support to the Northern Territory Emergency Response.*

4.264 The Ombudsman's Office was provided funding in 2007 to investigate complaints arising from the NTER and to provide an oversight role in relation to the implementation and administration of the NTER measures. The Monitoring Report states that from June 2007 to 26 March 2009, the Ombudsman's Office received approximately 700 complaints relating to the NTER or other Indigenous programs. The most common theme was the issue of communication, consultation and general provision of information.

4.265 The complaints received by the Ombudsman's Office include:

- confusion about what people can and cannot purchase using their BasicsCard;
- confusion about where people can use their cards;
- the difficulties people face with accessing account balances on their cards and transferring money onto their BasicsCards;
- confusion surrounding what people can use their income managed funds for;
- ongoing concerns that everyone who lives in a prescribed community is subject to income management despite their personal or individual circumstances;
- general communication issues surrounding income management and people's individual accounts, allocations and circumstances;
- concerns that people have difficulty in accessing Centrelink and managing their affairs including income management allocations, balances, personal information;
- concerns about interpreters not being available when either using the telephone service or when people visit the Centrelink offices;
- concerns that information is not in the appropriate languages;
- wait times on the hotline, cost of these calls when using mobiles, the difficulty some people have in understanding how to use the phones;

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189 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, p. 58, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mon\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mon_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).



- concerns about overcrowding in houses;
- discrepancies, inconsistencies and unreasonable rent amounts;
- delay with repairs and maintenance issues;
- people not knowing about leasing arrangements and how they will personally be affected by the new measures;
- concerns that community residents are not consulted on the running of the school nutrition program; and
- lack of employment opportunities for local Indigenous people.<sup>190</sup>

4.266 The committee considers that it is important that people affected by government decisions have an outlet to complain about these decisions and that the Ombudsman provides an important service. The committee also supports the introduction of legislation to allow people affected by decisions made in relation to income management to appeal these decisions. This legislation is currently before the parliament.<sup>191</sup>

### **Commonwealth policy issues not addressed under NTER measures**

4.267 The committee heard considerable and compelling evidence about the needs for increased aged care and disability services as well as additional support for carers. Carers Australia presented evidence on how much unpaid support carers, particularly young people and older people, were providing in communities and how their needs appeared to have been overlooked during the NTER.

4.268 Carers Australia also asserted that many people who should be eligible for carers payments did not have access to them. The committee raised this with the Department of Human Services and Centrelink at their hearing in Canberra. It was acknowledged that there was likely to be people who were eligible for carer's payment who were not accessing it and that this was an issue being addressed.

...for a variety of reasons our Indigenous customers have accessed the Newstart payment in the past rather than disability or carer's and that that changed once the remote area exemptions were lifted in remote areas and people had to comply with the participation regime, and we saw Indigenous people starting to apply for other payments. I think—and I am sure my colleagues in FaHCSIA would agree with me—that together we have identified a number of barriers in the way the policy is formulated as well

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190 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Northern Territory Emergency Response Monitoring Report*, Part Two, June 2009, pp. 63-64, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/mon\\_report/Documents/NTER\\_Mo\\_n\\_Rep\\_Part%202.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Documents/NTER_Mo_n_Rep_Part%202.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2009).

191 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Future Directions for the Northern Territory Emergency Response*, 21 May 2009, p. 5, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/future\\_directions\\_discussion\\_paper/Documents/discussion\\_paper\\_6.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/future_directions_discussion_paper/Documents/discussion_paper_6.pdf) (accessed 12 June 2009).

as the way the form is put together and service delivery occurs that makes it harder for some Indigenous people to access carer and disability. It has to do with not having access to doctors or shared care. Many of the Indigenous languages do not have a term for ‘disability’ or ‘carer’, because it is part of the family cultural network. We have been doing some work with our colleagues in FaHCSIA around ways to make those payments more accessible to our Indigenous customers. I would be happy to get you some more information on that and answer your specific questions. It is certainly an issue that in general we have been concerned about.<sup>192</sup>

4.269 The committee is pleased to note that Centrelink and FAHCSIA are aware of this issue and have a process in place to address it. The committee will further consider progress made on this issue in its next report.

4.270 While visiting Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi the committee heard about the brokerage service run by Waltja to buy things that people with disabilities need—such as clothes, mattresses, tarps and shade, billycans, blankets and firewood which are the main items that people ask for. Workers at Waltja told the committee that they would like to move away from providing such basic things and instead provide therapeutic items such as ramps and other equipment but because people are desperate for even the most basic of items, this is what the money is spent on.

4.271 Waltja expressed great concern that old people are not being cared for properly. In many cases, carers are very old or disabled themselves and some elderly and disabled people are still living in tin sheds without plumbing, shade, toilets, windbreaks, heating or cooling, fridges or stoves.<sup>193</sup>

4.272 The committee shares this concern and considers that the needs of carers, people with disabilities and older people require focused attention. The committee will report further on available services in its next report.



*Members of the committee with staff and members of Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi*

<sup>192</sup> Ms Jo Gaha, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 22.

<sup>193</sup> Committee meeting notes, Central Australia, 29 April 2009.



## Chapter 5

### Effectiveness of South Australian and Northern Territory government policies

5.1 So far during its inquiry the committee has visited regional and remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory. The committee has also received submissions from South Australian, New South Wales and Western Australian government departments working in the area of Indigenous affairs in those states.<sup>1</sup> The committee has also held public hearings in South Australia and the Northern Territory and has heard evidence from the South Australian and Northern Territory governments.

5.2 The committee has not as yet been able to hold public hearings in New South Wales or Western Australia and is yet to visit or hold public hearings in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania. As noted in Chapter 1 the committee plans to hold further public hearings in Sydney, the Kimberley region in Western Australia and visit and hold hearings in Queensland before the tabling of the next report on 26 November 2009.

5.3 In consideration of the committee's future planned visit and hearing program, this report will concentrate on the jurisdictions of South Australia and the Northern Territory in relation to the effectiveness of state and territory government policies on the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities.

#### South Australian government policies

5.4 Segments of the South Australian government's submission and policy initiatives were discussed in the committee's previous report, as it was received in June 2008. Some of the areas discussed in the committee's previous report included South Australian and Commonwealth government relations, primary health care, child protection and employment.<sup>2</sup>

5.5 In addition, since the last report the committee has had the opportunity to visit the community of Amata in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yunkunyjatjara (APY) Lands

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1 See The Hon Jay Weatherill MP, South Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, *Submission 27*; NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission 64*; Department of Corrective Services, New South Wales, *Submission 68*; Western Australian Department of the Attorney General, *Submission 71*; Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia, *Submission 76*; and Department of Indigenous Affairs, Government of Western Australia, *Submission 90*.

2 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *First report 2008*, September 2008, pp. 27-28; 29-30; 40-41 and 51-52.

and hold a public hearing in Adelaide. There have also been numerous submissions from organisations in South Australia.

### ***Housing and accommodation facilities in South Australia***

5.6 The South Australian government in its recent report, *Progress on the Lands: Update on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands*, identified housing as its number one priority, specifically:

To reduce overcrowding, and the social and health problems it causes, by expanding the housing construction program to deliver more and better quality housing to Anangu. Employment opportunities that exist in the building and construction activities on the Lands should also be identified and pursued.<sup>3</sup>

5.7 The committee notes that in October 2006 there was a \$25 million APY Lands housing construction program announced by the Commonwealth and South Australian governments. Subsequently the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), as noted in Chapter 2, agreed to the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing which has allocated \$291.49 million over 10 years for new housing and major upgrades and repairs in South Australia with the focus on the two priority communities of Amata and Mimili in the APY Lands.<sup>4</sup> This housing package will be delivered by the South Australian government's Office for Aboriginal Housing in the State Department for Families and Communities (DFC). Both of these announcements for new housing have indicated that local Indigenous people will be employed as part of the construction process.<sup>5</sup>

5.8 The committee was advised by the South Australian government that discussions were continuing between it and the Commonwealth government on whether the original \$25 million housing package would be subsumed into the COAG housing partnership and clarification on this issue is expected within the next few months.<sup>6</sup>

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3 South Australian government, *Progress on the Lands: Update on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands*, October 2008, p. 3.

4 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Remote Indigenous housing investment*, Press release, 23 March 2009, [http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/remote\\_indigenous\\_housing\\_23mar2009.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/remote_indigenous_housing_23mar2009.htm) (accessed 2 June 2009).

5 See The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Remote Indigenous housing investment*, Press release, 23 March 2009; South Australian government, *Progress on the Lands: Update on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands*, October 2008, p. 3.

6 Department of the Premier & Cabinet, South Australian government, answer to question on notice, 4 March 2009 (received 16 March 2009), p. 6.

5.9 The committee also inquired about the progress of the \$25 million housing package over the two and a half years since the announcement. The South Australian government advised that:

At the moment what has happened is that all the leases have been signed for the land that will be used to build the new houses. Agreements have been reached with APY around what houses will be renovated. We have traditional owner approval for the building of new houses.<sup>7</sup>

5.10 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide noted in its submission that although these commitments had been made there were no identifiable targets or timeframes to measure progress, especially in regards to training and employment opportunities. UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide also noted that when the South Australian government was asked what training and employment opportunities would be provided as part of the program, the response in January 2009 was:

...that it was difficult to estimate the likely numbers of fulltime and part-time jobs that would be generated through the program as a number of employment strategies were still being investigated.

UCW-Adelaide also asked the State Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST) for information on its efforts to deliver training in housing construction and maintenance through APY TAFE. In a reply dated 22 January 2009, the Department noted that in 2008, no APY TAFE students had obtained a housing construction and maintenance-related qualification.<sup>8</sup>

5.11 The committee also asked the South Australian government at the hearing in Adelaide—given that past attempts to provide training and jobs through housing packages have failed—how it is going to ensure that it happens with the existing and new COAG housing packages, to which the government responded:

I think probably having stronger MOUs and stronger management mean it actually will happen. For us in the department, we are very committed to making that happen...that is something the Department of the Premier and Cabinet...will certainly be monitoring really closely.<sup>9</sup>

5.12 The South Australian government noted that it has been undertaking a skills audit across the APY lands to identify people who have qualifications and skills in order to match them against future projects, not just housing projects, so that people are equipped with a variety of skills and have a greater choice of employment.

A major component of the skills audit is to identify the gaps in the projected service provision needs of communities across the lands. The audit is about how needs match with existing skills and what training modules need to be

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7 Ms Kim Petersen, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 64.

8 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

9 Ms Kim Petersen, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 68.

developed to ensure that we have a workforce that suits whatever those future service needs are.<sup>10</sup>

5.13 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide however recommend in their submission that:

...the [South Australian] government's overarching goals for training and employing Anangu in housing construction need to be broken down into real and measurable targets and timelines and that transparent reporting and evaluation processes should be established.<sup>11</sup>

5.14 The committee is concerned that since the original announcement in 2006, and with further new funding and housing to be delivered through COAG, that there are no specific details available on the number of jobs and types of training to be made available or over what timeframe these commitments are expected to be delivered. Providing local employment opportunities and training to Indigenous people through housing construction and maintenance is a vital aspect of increasing wellbeing in regional and remote Indigenous communities as well as providing the community with essential skills and greater self-reliance.

5.15 The committee also raised the issue of staff housing at the Adelaide hearing. The South Australian government confirmed that a lack of staff housing was recognised as an issue across all government departments. The South Australian government stated that it is currently doing a housing audit to establish the housing needs for government and non-government organisations in order to provide accommodation for program staff, 'because that affects everything you do on the lands'.<sup>12</sup> The committee will report on the findings of the audit once it is made publicly available.

5.16 The committee also notes that there has been some progress made with providing transitional accommodation centres in South Australia with the establishment of centres at Port Augusta and Ceduna. UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, although it welcomes the establishment of these centres, notes that stated plans to establish:

...similar centres in Coober Pedy and Adelaide...have stalled as the partnership funding from the Commonwealth has not been finalised.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Rehabilitation services***

5.17 The South Australian government, with funding assistance from the Commonwealth, constructed a substance misuse facility in the APY Lands community

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10 Ms Nerida Saunders, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 68.

11 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

12 Ms Kim Petersen, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 64.

13 Ms Sue Park, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 2.

of Amata. The Commonwealth government contributed \$3.3 million in conjunction with \$965 000 from the South Australian government for the facility's construction with the South Australian government required to provide annual recurrent funding of \$1.4 million. The facility opened in August 2008 with the Commonwealth and South Australian governments stating in a joint press release that:

...Commissioner Ted Mullighan's inquiry into child sexual abuse had made it clear that tackling substance abuse was fundamental to keeping children and families safe.

"Helping people overcome the scourge of substance abuse is crucial to protecting children from neglect and abuse," Ms Macklin said...

...Mr Weatherill said the facility was another step in the State Government's strategy to rebuild APY Lands communities, which began with its intervention on the Lands in 2004.

"We are rebuilding communities by reducing substance abuse and delivering better health and welfare services," Mr Weatherill said.<sup>14</sup>

5.18 The South Australian government outlined the purpose of the facility at the Adelaide hearing, stating that:

That facility has two functions. The facility provides a residential component for up to 10 clients at any given time. The facility actually has an outreach program. The outreach program will visit every one of those communities over a period of time and will see clients in every one of those communities. Once it is established that the client actually needs a longer period of time for rehabilitation, it works with that client and then the client can actually attend a residential program.<sup>15</sup>

5.19 The committee had the opportunity to visit the new substance misuse facility in Amata on the APY lands in March and was impressed with the facility. The committee was advised that the design of the facility as well as its location was decided in consultation with the local community. The committee commends the Commonwealth and South Australian governments for committing these funds to provide access to alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation facilities in remote areas. However some concerns were raised during the inquiry over the delays with construction and the ongoing staffing and running of the facility.

5.20 The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council noted at the committee's hearing in Alice Springs that:

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14 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Hon Jay Weatherill MP, South Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, APY Lands Substance Misuse Facility officially opened, Press release, 12 August 2008, [http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/apy\\_land\\_12aug08.htm](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/apy_land_12aug08.htm) (accessed 24 June 2009).

15 Ms Kim Petersen, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 39.

...we do not think it is being used to its fullest capacity and it is, unfortunately, only for South Australian residents...

...it has been hard for them to get staff there, which we predicted. This is this issue of going around and asking people what they want and where they want something to be without necessarily considering the objective factors like whether you will be able to get staff, whether you will be able to get anyone to work there and whether you should look at somewhere out of Alice Springs or in Alice Springs. I think it was probably a little bit ill thought out.<sup>16</sup>

5.21 The Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council South Australia also noted issues with staffing of the Amata facility as well as other remote rehabilitation facilities, stating that:

When the government decided to go down the track of having something in the north, albeit that it took quite a few years, we were quite excited about that. Our issue is that the Aboriginal workers that I am talking about that would be placed in these sorts of areas need to have some formal training...

...it is about having the skilled workers out there. Again, it is a community person—who may be called a diversionary worker or the drug and alcohol worker—and they might also run the youth service because they have not got a youth worker out in the community at the time. So that person is overworked. It could be a husband and wife who want to help but who end up doing everything, such as driving the buses to all the carnivals or the football on the weekend and things like that. So with the diversions, they are there but they have not happened correctly—in the right manner or time. Certainly, that is what I have seen in some of the communities out there...<sup>17</sup>

5.22 The committee also notes that a recent newspaper article based on information obtained by a South Australian parliamentarian under Freedom of Information legislation revealed that since August 2008:

...only four patients have been admitted for an average of five days. Another 39 people officially described as being "not in need of substance abuse assistance" also have used the facility.<sup>18</sup>

5.23 The committee notes that the South Australian government is in the process of developing rehabilitation day centres in Port Augusta, Ceduna and Coober Pedy.<sup>19</sup> The South Australian government also notes in its submission that additional support from the Commonwealth government:

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16 Ms Vicki Gillick, NPY Women's Council, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 78.

17 Mr Christopher Perry, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 23.

18 Joanna Vaughan, 'Only four patients since it opened', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 22 April 2009, p. 13.

19 The Hon Jay Weatherill MP, South Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, *Submission 27*, p. 3.

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...would allow the South Australian government to provide alcohol rehabilitation services and facilities in regional parts of the State, and establish links with existing services such as the Aboriginal Substance Misuse Connection Program operated by Drug and Alcohol Services SA (DASSA) and funded by the Department for Families and Communities (DFC) and the Mobile Assistance Patrol jointly funded by DFC and SA Health.<sup>20</sup>

5.24 The committee believes that the establishment of the rehabilitation facility in Amata so far serves as an example of the complexities involved in providing rehabilitation services in remote Indigenous communities and illustrates that the acceptance of the facility and its ultimate success can not be expected immediately. The experience in Amata should be used to inform future decisions on the location and construction of new rehabilitation facilities as well as the expectations of how these facilities will operate and be staffed. The committee urges all governments to continue to invest in appropriate rehabilitation services as a large gap in access to these services and facilities in regional and remote Indigenous communities remains, as the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council South Australia noted:

There really are not enough services, besides that one on the Pit land. There are not a lot of drug and alcohol or rehabilitative type services outside of Adelaide. Even when you come to Adelaide for Indigenous-specific rehabilitation around, for example, illicit drugs, there is none. It is difficult.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Homemakers centres***

5.25 While in Amata, the committee also had the opportunity to visit the Homemakers Centre. The committee was very impressed with the outcomes the Centre has achieved in the community with very few resources or paid staff. The centre's two main programs focus on nutrition to tackle the 'failure to thrive' for infants and babies and providing meals and assistance for elderly members of the community. The committee heard that carers and other family members were attending regularly and that on average 16 babies a day were being seen at the Centre. The committee was advised that before the Centre was established, around six children a week were flown out of the community for malnutrition, which is no longer the case.

5.26 At the committee's hearing in Adelaide the South Australian government noted the importance of the role that the Homemakers Centres have:

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

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20 The Hon Jay Weatherill MP, South Australian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, *Submission 27*, p. 3.

21 Mr Scott Wilson, Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, pp. 22-23.

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. There has been a fair bit of research done overseas around food security and we are starting to do some research in Yalata with the University of Adelaide. There seems to be a link between young babies and really young people who had an absence of food in their early years and type 2 diabetes.<sup>22</sup>

5.27 The committee also notes that the Mullighan Inquiry into child sexual abuse on the APY Lands concluded that the Homemakers Centres:

...appear to the Inquiry to be doing very good and important work. Many witnesses and, indeed, Families SA, also praised their effectiveness. The ultimate goal should be for individual communities and families to be sufficiently empowered to take control of the issue of child sexual abuse.<sup>23</sup>

5.28 The South Australian government also advised the committee that each of the Homemakers Centres, as from April 2009, will employ two trainees funded jointly by the Commonwealth and South Australian governments.<sup>24</sup>

5.29 However, given the success and importance of these Centres there are concerns with the ongoing funding of these services. Overall there are seven Homemakers Centres on the APY Lands of which the committee understands only four are 'operating at various levels of functionality'.<sup>25</sup> UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide raised concerns in their submission that the Homemakers Centre program was to have a \$300 000 funding shortfall due to the cessation of Commonwealth funding in 2008.<sup>26</sup> The committee inquired about this shortfall at the Adelaide hearing and was advised that the South Australian government would provide a \$200 000 'top-up' for the program.<sup>27</sup> The committee is concerned that there is still not enough funding for these essential centres which provide people with important life skills. As UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide noted:

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22 Ms Kim Petersen, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 54.

23 Hon EP Mullighan QC, *Children on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Commission of Inquiry – A report into sexual abuse*, April 2008, p. 129

24 Department of the Premier & Cabinet, South Australian government, answer to question on notice, 4 March 2009 (received 16 March 2009), p. 6.

25 *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 54.

26 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Submission 63*, p. 9.

27 Ms Kim Petersen, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 53.



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...it seems ludicrous to be spending \$25 million on new houses and losing \$300,000 for a homemaker program to give you the skills to live in those houses.<sup>28</sup>

5.30 The issue of some of the employees in the Homemakers Centres being on Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) payments was also raised with the committee. The South Australian government advised that there were ongoing discussions between it and the Commonwealth government in relation to:

...the CDEP program and how many of those CDEP participants would be picked up in full-time employment under both Commonwealth and state government responsibility. Those negotiations are happening, and particularly—in our instance—in terms of what would be the state’s responsibility regarding the number of people who would be converted into full-time employment. Those conversations are also occurring in relation to those employees being public servants.<sup>29</sup>

### **Recommendation 7**

**5.31 That the Commonwealth and South Australian governments provide additional funding and appropriate support to the Homemakers Centres in the APY Lands so that all seven centres are operating at an effective level and that the Commonwealth government consider supporting similar Homemakers Centres in other remote Indigenous communities as a matter of priority.**

#### ***Rural Transaction Centres***

5.32 In 2003 seven Rural Transaction Centres were planned for the APY Lands as part of the COAG Indigenous Trial initiative in the APY Lands. The committee had the chance to visit the PY Ku centre in Amata. The Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (PY) Media Aboriginal Corporation, in its submission, outlines the process by which the PY Ku Network was established:

In early 2003 the Department of Health and Ageing funded the APY Land Council to engage a consultant to develop a business case and funding submission for the establishment of a Rural Transaction Centre (RTC)...  
...At a General Meeting of Anangu Pitjantjatjara in August 2003, the decision was made to name the proposed network the PY Ku Network (Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjaraku – “for the people”).

The PY Ku Network was endorsed by the APY Lands COAG Steering Committee as a formal COAG Indigenous Trial initiative in September 2003.<sup>30</sup>

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28 Mr Jonathan Nicholls, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 10.

29 Ms Nerida Saunders, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 57.

30 Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (PY) Media Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 66*, Attachment 1, pp. 1-2.

5.33 The proposed locations were at Iwantja, Mimili, Kaltjiti (Fregon), Pukatja (Ernabella), Amata, Watarru, and either Pipalyatjara or Kalka. The aim of the PY Ku Network was to provide:

- a range of government and non-government services to communities;
- training and employment for local Anangu;
- public access internet facilities; and
- office, meeting, conference, video-link, internet and administrative support facilities for government staff and visiting professionals.<sup>31</sup>

5.34 It was also intended that the PY Ku Network would improve access to state government services, including motor vehicle registration and licensing, fine payments, and accessing birth, marriage and death certificates.<sup>32</sup>

5.35 PY Media, who manage the PY Ku network, noted in their submission that the Commonwealth government has already spent over \$4.5 million on the establishment of the PY Ku Network, but that without a commitment to adequate recurrent funding the PY Ku Network can not be sustained beyond June 2009.

Endorsement of PY Ku as a COAG initiative required the commitment of a range of government departments across both levels to provide an integrated approach to both establishing and operating the Network. There was an expectation of a whole-of- government approach to providing recurrent “foundation” funding during the operational development phase; a situation that never eventuated. The Network’s infrastructure has been established and Anangu staff are now employed.

Without the necessary recurrent funding PY Ku will fail and Aboriginal staff will be retrenched.

For many years warnings have been issued to government regarding the inability to develop fee-for-service business without the necessary recurrent “foundation” funding. These warnings have been ignored and the PY Ku Network has been expected to survive on occasional one-off fund injections. Government agencies are reluctant to deliver services through an organisation that cannot prove long term financial viability.<sup>33</sup>

5.36 The Women’s Legal Service South Australia Inc provided an example to the committee of the importance of the services that the PY Ku Network provides in the remote APY Lands communities:

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31 Urbis Keys Young, *Review of the COAG Trial in the APY Lands*, March 2006, p. 10, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/coag\\_trial\\_site\\_reports/sa\\_apylands/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/coag_trial_site_reports/sa_apylands/Pages/default.aspx) (accessed 17 June 2009).

32 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Submission 63*, p. 10; Urbis Keys Young, *Review of the COAG Trial in the APY Lands*, March 2006, p. 10, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/coag\\_trial\\_site\\_reports/sa\\_apylands/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/coag_trial_site_reports/sa_apylands/Pages/default.aspx) (accessed 17 June 2009).

33 Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 66*, p. 4.

In the communities people cannot just access legal advice easily. We have a free call number for anyone to ring us from the community but they may not have access to a phone if the PY KU is closed down. Likewise, they cannot call the police.<sup>34</sup>

5.37 At the committee's hearing in Adelaide the committee inquired about what work the South Australian government was doing with the PY Ku Network:

The rural transaction centres to date have basically been managed by the Commonwealth and not necessarily the state. The Commonwealth are currently working with PY Media and PY KU to look at how they can actually develop those centres further. From your visit on the lands you would understand that some are not fully functioning right now. There are probably two centres that are currently open for an extended period of time. I think you are absolutely right, Senator: there is a great deal of opportunity to use those centres for a whole range of purposes, whether that is in developing Anangu employment or getting a whole range of government services happening from those centres. We are currently working with the Commonwealth and PY KU to see how those centres can be better utilised.<sup>35</sup>

5.38 The South Australian government's 2008 report on the progress on the APY Lands also noted that:

Service SA is working with PY Media to provide access to a range of state government services including applications for birth certificates, driver's licences, car registration etc. through the PY Ku network.<sup>36</sup>

5.39 When asked about the PY Ku Network the South Australian Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Minister Jay Weatherill—as reported in a recent newspaper article—noted that:

...service delivery in remote Aboriginal communities was difficult. "That is why we are proposing a new regional authority to improve the operation of services in the APY Lands."<sup>37</sup>

5.40 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide outlined its concerns regarding the delays to the establishment of the Centres and the transfer of government services.

The PY Ku Network was originally scheduled to be up and running by June 2006. After many delays and setbacks the first PY Ku centre opened at Amata in late 2007. The sixth and final centre opened at Watarru in September 2008...

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34 Women's Legal Service South Australia Inc, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 77.

35 Ms Kim Petersen, Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, pp. 50-1.

36 Department of Premier and Cabinet, Government of South Australia, *Progress on the Lands: Update on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands*, October 2008, p. 14.

37 Joanna Vaughan, 'Facilities wasted in Lands', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 30 May 2009, p. 45.

...On 21 July 2008, PY Media confirmed that no State government services had been transferred to any of the PY Ku centres and that Centrelink services remained the only Federal government services accessible from the centres...

...as of 13 February 2009, it was still not possible for Anangu to access any State Government services from any of the PY Ku Centres.

UCW-Adelaide has strong concerns that delays in transferring services to the PY Ku centres are undermining the long-term viability of a flagship project that was originally supposed to provide ongoing employment for up to 30 Anangu.<sup>38</sup>

5.41 PY Media noted in its submission that it has now frozen all PY Ku recruitments resulting in many positions, including supervisory positions, not being filled. In addition, the Mimili PY Ku Centre will remain closed. PY Media also noted the Network's importance in providing employment in the communities, stating that:

Over the last six months twenty-one Anangu staff have been employed at various stages and have worked a total of 6,243 hours.

These Aboriginal staff will lose their positions.

Given that many of these staff are completing Level 2 and 3 Business Administration traineeships, losing them will be a shame.<sup>39</sup>

5.42 PY Media recommend that one of the solutions is for funding to be sourced from the COAG National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery.<sup>40</sup>

5.43 The committee is concerned that employment and training opportunities may be lost on the APY Lands if the PY Ku Network, or an equivalent Network, is not provided with adequate funds and support to run Rural Transaction Centres. The committee urges both the Commonwealth and South Australian governments to look at funding possibilities for these Centres, as well as clarifying and supporting strong governance structures.

### ***Services for women and victims of crime***

5.44 The Women's Legal Service South Australia made a submission to the inquiry and appeared before the committee at its Adelaide hearing. Women's Legal Service South Australia raised concerns about the large number of women who are victims of crime on the APY Lands and the lack of safe houses, police, an understanding of the court system and interpreters is negatively impacting on their wellbeing.

I think probably the main challenge and the highest area of need is for women who have been assaulted...There is a complete lack of services for women and victims of crime on the Lands in terms of culturally appropriate

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38 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Submission 63*, p. 11.

39 Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 66*, p. 5.

40 Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 66*, p. 5.

services and services that have the resources to provide interpreters to ensure that women can get the appropriate advice at the end of the day.

NPY Women's Council has employed an interpreter but that is not necessarily on a full-time basis, and each time we attend on the Lands we cannot be sure that there will be an interpreter there. People attending before the Magistrates Court may not have an interpreter so they are faced with legal issues without understanding. English may be the third or fourth language for people in the Lands, so the issues are extreme.<sup>41</sup>

5.45 The committee notes that although the South Australian government has significantly expanded the police presence on the APY Lands, with some funding provided by the Commonwealth government, the Women's Legal Service notes that police number are still too low to cover the large distances and a lack of safe houses and shelters in communities puts some women in a position where:

...they must flee communities because of fear of violence or retaliation from family or other community members. Women have fled to the south from communities for protection or north to Alice Springs and other communities in the NT. Safe houses and protection of Police can not be taken for granted in communities.<sup>42</sup>

5.46 The Women's Legal Service also raised the issue of a concerning spike in homicide figures on the APY Lands of women who have been killed or severely injured by intimate partners. The submission stated that:

- In the 12 years to 2006, 10 NPY women were homicide victims.
- In the 17 months since May 2007, a further six NPY women were homicide victims.
- In five of these six homicides, head injuries were the cause of death and intimate partners are facing criminal proceedings in relation to the death.
- Women from the NPY region are 67 times more likely to be a domestic violence related homicide victim.
- Fists, feet, iron bars, star pickets, sharp sticks, rocks, tyre rims and tyre levers were used in 68 per cent of cases. The offender delayed getting help for the victim in all cases.<sup>43</sup>

5.47 The committee inquired into why there has been a recent spike in the number of intimate partner homicides. The Women's Legal Service responded that they were unaware of specific reasons which is why they wrote to the South Australian state and Commonwealth governments calling for:

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41 Women's Legal Service South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 71.

42 Women's Legal Service South Australia, *Submission* 62, p. 71.

43 Women's Legal Service South Australia, *Submission* 62, pp. 4 and 6.

- A Review of the Magistrates Court Circuit on the APY Lands; with particular emphasis on processes to identify if these services meet the needs of the victims of violence and if not, what changes may be required and how may they be implemented;
- An Inquiry into Violence against Women on the NPY Lands (giving consideration also to the impact of violence upon children); and
- A Death Review Panel to review deaths caused by Family Violence, with priority directed to deaths of Aboriginal women, particularly those living remotely.<sup>44</sup>

5.48 Further discussion of the situation in the Northern Territory regions of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara area and Alice Springs, as well as a recommendation to for Commonwealth government on this issue, is discussed later in this chapter.

## **Recommendation 8**

**5.49 That the Commonwealth Attorney-General's office undertake discussions with the South Australian government with a view to the South Australia government undertaking a review of the Magistrates Court Circuit on the APY Lands to ensure its ongoing effectiveness.**

### *Government accountability*

5.50 While in South Australia the committee noted a unique service that UnitingCare Wesley provides called the Anangu Lands Paper Tracker project. This project tracks:

...the implementation of state and federal government commitments to Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara peoples across South Australia. In addition to the APY Lands it tracks government activities on the Maralinga Lands, at Yalata community on the west coast and at the Umoona community in Coober Pedy...the main goals of the project are to make it easier for Anangu to talk with governments as equal partners, to make decisions for themselves from a position of knowledge and strength and to participate in broader debates about their future. We believe the project provides an independent forum of accountability.

Since it began in mid-2007 the Paper Tracker project has tracked progress made against more than 80 government commitments and areas of identified need. Importantly, the project highlights both the good and the bad. As well as posting comprehensive information on our website we distribute an e-newsletter that now goes out to more than 700 subscribers. Last year, in an effort to make it easier for Anangu to access the information we have collected, we produced two radio shows in partnership

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44 Women's Legal Service South Australia, *Submission 62*, p. 5

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with PY Media. Portions of each show were broadcast in both English and the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages.<sup>45</sup>

5.51 The committee notes that this project provides a single source of both South Australian state and Commonwealth government commitments and policies regarding Indigenous people in South Australia. Given the high degree of frustration people feel about the lack of information and apparent lack of coordination between government agencies, the committee considers this to be a good monitoring and accountability tool for Indigenous communities in South Australia. The committee urges governments to consider supporting the establishment and operation of similar independent government monitoring and accountability projects in other states and territories.



*Senate Select committee on regional and remote Indigenous communities in Amata, South Australia*

### **Northern Territory government policies**

5.52 Although Chapter 5 of this report focuses on the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) and will discuss many of the issues in regional and remote Indigenous communities, this Chapter discusses the impact of Northern Territory government policy affecting the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities that were raised with the committee and which are not directly related to the NTER.

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45 Mr Jonathan Nicholls, UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2009, p. 3.

## *A Working Future policy*

5.53 Released on 20 May 2009, the Northern Territory's *A Working Future* policy focuses on developing 20 of the largest remote communities as 'Territory Growth Towns' to provide 'services and amenities like any other similar-sized towns elsewhere in Australia'.<sup>46</sup> Remote communities to be developed are: Maningrida, Wadeye, Borroloola, Galiwin'ku, Nguiu, Gunbalanya, Milingimbi, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Angurugu/Umbakumba, Gapuwiyak, Yuendumu, Yirrkala, Lajamanu, Daguragu/Kalkarindji, Ramingining, Hermannsburg, Papunya, Elliott and Ali Curung. See Appendix 5 for a map of the 'Territory Growth Towns'.

5.54 The Northern Territory government outlined the policy at the committee's hearing in Darwin:

Working Future is a strategy and framework that will drive government investment and activity to grow 20 identified communities into well-serviced townships. The townships will operate as hubs, servicing many of the nearby outstations and homelands. It is anticipated that 33,000 people, 24,000 people residing in towns and 9,000 people in residing in 300 small communities and outstations located within a 50-kilometre radius will be serviced through the Working Future.

This accounts for around 50 to 60 per cent of the territory's total Indigenous population and approximately 80 per cent of the Indigenous population residing the territory's urban centres. The policy also notes that remote service delivery will be improved through 'one-stop shops' to be established initially in 15 of the 'Territory Growth Towns' for both Northern Territory and Commonwealth government services.<sup>47</sup>

5.55 The policy also states that the Northern Territory government will focus on remote service delivery.

Coupled with that is a national partnership agreement on remote service delivery which targets 15 remote locations. This agreement is with the Australian government in the Northern Territory and aims to improve access to services, provide simpler access and better coordinated government services for joint service delivery structures and local implementation plans that identify service delivery priorities for each location.

It is hoped that these partnerships will substantially increase economic and social participation in the communities. The 15 locations that have been selected under this remote service delivery program are 15 of the larger

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46 Paul Henderson, Northern Territory Chief Minister and Alison Anderson, Northern Territory Minister for Indigenous Policy, *A Working Future: Real Towns, Real Jobs, Real Opportunities*, Joint press release, 20 May 2009, <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewRelease&id=5584&d=5> (accessed 13 June 2009).

47 Mr Kenneth Davies, Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 51.



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communities identified for substantial housing funding, and they are also aligned with the Northern Territory's 20 territory towns approach.<sup>48</sup>

5.56 The policy outlines the Northern Territory government's intention to reduce red tape through the employment of a Northern Territory Coordinator General for remote service delivery.<sup>49</sup> The committee notes that this is a similar position to the recently announced Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) Coordinator General outlined in Chapter 2. The committee will monitor with interest the improvements and effectiveness that both of these positions may have on remote service delivery.

5.57 The policy also promises to improve funding arrangements and acknowledges that the provision of funds on an annual basis makes planning difficult. It undertakes to 'put in place a new way of allocating funding that is fair and that provides certainty for communities'.<sup>50</sup> The committee welcomes this announcement and will monitor and report on any funding changes and the effects the changes may have on service delivery. The committee also hopes that this commitment to change from the Northern Territory will further encourage the Commonwealth government to make a similar commitment to the reform of funding cycles and the way that programs are administered by Commonwealth departments.

5.58 The Northern Territory government has outlined in the policy document that it intends to:

- Work to increase employment and economic development through 'private investment' including 'local people owning their own businesses and homes' and developing a long-term Indigenous Economic Development Strategy;
- Develop a Remote Integrated Transport Strategy; and
- Commit to annually reporting against the 'Closing the Gap' targets and implement a special evaluation of remote service delivery.<sup>51</sup>

5.59 The Northern Territory government summarised its vision of the *A Working Futures* policy at the committee's hearing in Darwin:

We think Working Futures is quite a sophisticated policy platform. It picks up the land issues, economic development and the transport strategies as well as the outstations and the townships. The whole focus behind this is about working with the Australian government to maximise the impact of

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48 Mr Kenneth Davies, Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, pp. 51-2.

49 Northern Territory government, *A Working Future – Outstations/homelands policy*, headline policy statement, May 2009, [http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote\\_services.html](http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote_services.html)

50 Northern Territory government, *A Working Future – Outstations/homelands policy*, headline policy statement, May 2009, [http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote\\_services.html](http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote_services.html)

51 Northern Territory government, *A Working Future – Outstations/homelands policy*, headline policy statement, May 2009, [http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote\\_services.html](http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote_services.html)

the dollars that are coming into the Northern Territory and to make a difference on the ground. In five years time, we want those towns to look a whole lot different from the way they look now.

We want them to have a business centre, a motor vehicle registry and we want students or children to have a real address—a house with an address—and we would like to see a postal service in place. We would like to see the rubbish runs being done really in the same way you would see in an equivalent regional town elsewhere.<sup>52</sup>

5.60 Part two of the strategy on outstations and homelands is discussed below.

### *Outstations and Homelands*

5.61 On 20 May 2009 the Northern Territory government also announced its new outstations and homelands policy as part of the *A Working Future* policy. Previously the Northern Territory government, since self-government in 1978, had responsibility only for major Indigenous communities with the Commonwealth government retaining responsibility for outstations and homelands. However in September 2007—as discussed in the committee's previous report<sup>53</sup>—a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments on Indigenous Housing, Accommodation and Related Services was signed which provided \$793 million in funding on the basis that the Northern Territory government would take over responsibility for the delivery of services to homelands and outstations.<sup>54</sup>

5.62 The committee notes that there has been a considerable delay between the Northern Territory government assuming responsibility for homelands and outstations and the release of its policy.

5.63 In the policy statement the Northern Territory government noted the importance of 'the contribution of outstations and homelands to the economic social and cultural life of the Territory'. The Northern Territory government states that existing homelands and outstations will have their funding levels maintained however it will not develop any new outstations and homelands.<sup>55</sup>

5.64 At the committee's hearing in Darwin the Northern Territory government noted that the MoU with the Commonwealth government:

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52 Mr Kenneth Davies, Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 65.

53 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No. 1 2008*, September 2008, Chapter 4, pp. 33-35.

54 Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth government and Northern Territory government, *Indigenous Housing, Accommodation and Related Services*, September 2007, paragraph five.

55 Northern Territory government, *A Working Future – Outstations/homelands policy*, headline policy statement, May 2009, [http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote\\_services.html](http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote_services.html)

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...provided \$20 [million] to the territory for outstations for each year for 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 financial years. A funding disbursement methodology is being determined as part of that outstations policy. On top of the \$20 million, there is additional funding which also is set aside to support outstations through CDEP funds and also through Bushlight programs.<sup>56</sup>

5.65 However the committee also notes, as Greg Marks outlined in his submission, the MoU did not include 'any requirement that any of this money previously earmarked for outstations need be spent on outstations'.<sup>57</sup> The committee will monitor and report on the Northern Territory government's funding of homelands and outstations in future reports.

5.66 The Northern Territory government has also stipulated in the policy document this it will not be providing funding for additional housing—which the committee notes the Commonwealth is not doing either—stating that as the land is privately owned it is not suited for a public housing model and that owners of houses on private and communal land will primarily be 'responsible for repairs and maintenance of their assets, including water supplies'.<sup>58</sup> This policy position was reiterated at the committee's hearing in Darwin.

We are understanding that we need a really solid policy platform that everybody understands and that we can stick to—creating towns, not communities, and shifting away from communal housing to private ownership, and saying to people on outstations that there is a limit to the resourcing that is available and that while we are not going to shift you off the outstations, we cannot continue to build resources and houses on what is essentially private property. We have to target expenditure and that is a big change.<sup>59</sup>

5.67 The committee notes that there was considerable confusion and fear surrounding the release of the Northern Territory government's homelands and outstations policy. Mr Greg Marks noted in his submission that:

It is clear that the Northern Territory has not sought responsibility for outstations at this time and that it is concerned at its capacity to cope especially given the backlog in infrastructure. It would also appear from press reports that there is considerable disquiet in the Aboriginal

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56 Mr Kenneth Davies, Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 52.

57 Mr Greg Marks, *Submission 30b*, p. 16.

58 Northern Territory government, *A Working Future – Outstations/homelands policy*, headline policy statement, May 2009, [http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote\\_services.html](http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/remote_services.html)

59 Mr Kenneth Davies, Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 66.

community about the transfer of responsibility for outstations to the Northern Territory.<sup>60</sup>

5.68 At the committee hearing in Darwin the Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated noted that although the homelands schools were not under threat, it was their view that the Northern Territory government's policy would eventually result in the end of the homelands:

The discussions with the territory government earlier this week and the agenda laid out in the National Partnership Agreement basically say there is no scope for further investment and growth of homelands, particularly in the area of housing. If you stop housing, you stop growth and you condemn people to continued overcrowding. If you cannot invest in the infrastructure and you cannot invest in the housing, those homelands have no future. It may not happen tomorrow. It may not happen next year. That is the effect that those decisions will have...There is no immediate threat, but it raises big questions about the future.<sup>61</sup>

5.69 The Ramingining Homelands Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation outlined their concerns about the availability of housing funding available for homelands and outstations in their submission, noting that the benefits of the Commonwealth funding will not reach them.

The Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure program (SIHIP) introduced as part of the Emergency Response, has effectively marginalized those Indigenous people who live in the Homelands rather than in the "prescribed communities."

These people, who suffer the same problems of overcrowding and inadequate levels of maintenance funding for their housing as those who live in the communities are not to receive any of the benefits of the SIHIP. We believe this to be patently unjust, if not discriminatory...Additionally, while the Ramingining housing stock will eventually be brought up to an acceptable living standard, there is to be no new houses built despite ample evidence of chronic overcrowding.<sup>62</sup>

5.70 The committee asked whether any of the Laynhapuy Homelands would be within a 50km radius of one of the 'Territory Growth Towns' or service hubs, to which Mr Norton replied that out of the 25 permanently occupied homelands they look after:

...there may be a couple that fall within 50 kilometres of a major centre. I think Ramingining, Nhulunbuy and Bulman would fall within 50 kilometres of Gapuwiyak, but they are completely inaccessible during the wet season. Amongst the older Laynhapuy homelands, Bawaka would be within that 50 kilometres, but again it is pretty inaccessible during the wet season and you

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60 Mr Greg Marks, *Submission 30b*, p. 16.

61 Mr Ric Norton, Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 38.

62 Ramingining Homelands Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 77*, pp. 4-5.

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would spend about an hour and a half driving across sand to get there. All the rest of ours fall outside that radius, so the idea of Yirrkala being a hub and upgrading the road network is really not very practical.<sup>63</sup>

5.71 Members of the Acacia Larrakia community that appeared before the committee in Darwin were under the impression that the Northern Territory government policy was going to stop funding to outstations and people are now 'worried that they have to move into the town system'.<sup>64</sup>

5.72 When in Ntaria (Hermannsburg) the committee also met with representatives from the Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre which supports 42 outstations around the Ntaria area. Questions arose as to who was responsible for housing maintenance and repairs on these outstations. The committee wrote to the Northern Territory government to inquire if they had responsibility for repairs and maintenance. The Northern Territory government responded that it does not accept responsibility for repairs and maintenance of houses in outstations and homelands but it does currently contribute to maintenance and management through grants to Shire Councils and organisations like the Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre. The Northern Territory government noted that in 2008/09, for the 141 houses that Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre manages, it received \$236 000 for housing maintenance and \$70 500 for housing management. The Northern Territory government anticipated that for 2009/10 it would receive a similar amount but beyond this the new outstations policy is to dictate the level of funding.<sup>65</sup>

5.73 The committee notes that as the new policy states that owners of houses on private and communal land on outstations and homelands are now responsible for maintenance and repairs it is again unclear if this funding for housing management, repairs and maintenance to the Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre will continue.

5.74 The committee has observed and considered evidence that indicates a high degree of uncertainty in relation to outstations and homelands. Residents are concerned about their future. Now that the policy has been released the committee encourages the Northern Territory government to implement a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure that people living in outstation and homeland communities and service providers understand the policy and its affects.

### ***School education***

5.75 The committee visited schools in both Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and Milingimbi whilst in the Northern Territory.

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63 Mr Ric Norton, Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 39.

64 Mr Joseph Jeffrey, Acacia Larrakia Community, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 108.

65 Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory government, answers to questions on notice, 12 May 2009 (received 22 May 2009).

5.76 The school at Ntaria has dramatically increased its attendance rates. For example, the committee was advised that last year there were six secondary aged students at school and now there are 60. While the committee acknowledges that the increase in school attendance is a great achievement it has created new challenges as the school does not have the facilities available to meet this higher level of attendance.

5.77 The Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS) also noted in their submission:

...often remote schools are under-resourced and could not operate effectively if all the youth of the community did attend. The NT Education Department has a policy of reducing teachers at a remote school when attendance drops. This means schools capacity to provide a stimulating environment is reduced when it should be being increased.<sup>66</sup>

5.78 The committee wrote to the Northern Territory government to inquire about their plans to meet the increased resource requirements due to higher attendance levels in Ntaria, a situation which the committee is pleased to report is not solely confined to Ntaria. The Northern Territory government provided detailed expenditure for Hermannsburg in their response:

NTARIA SCHOOL	Estimate	Status
Three classrooms provided since July 2008 as a priority from the NTER funding for supplementary initiatives.	\$1.2 million	Completed
Various minor works including connecting paths, and a shed	\$53k	Completed
Installation of Relocatable ablutions facility	\$46K	Completed
Acoustic treatment to primary classrooms	\$100k	In progress by public tender
Capital Works item to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the home economics area and;</li> <li>Expand the administration area and staff room;</li> <li>Comprises \$401k NT and \$100k AG funding.</li> </ul>	\$501 091	Approved by Minister and awaiting approval from Treasurer
Primary school building covered outdoor learning area extensions to classrooms.	\$125k	Application in Round 2 BER funding. Decision expected late May.
Demolish older building and build new pre school.	\$2 million	Application in progress for Round 2 BER funding. Decision expected early June.
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Science Learning Centre. Note that this is a competitive bid process.	\$1.9 million	Will submit funding application as part of the NT bid. Decision expected August.

Source: Department of Education and Training, answers to questions on notice.

5.79 The Northern Territory government also outlined more general expenditure on education in the Northern Territory through the 'Closing the Gap' funding which includes:

- \$6 million for classrooms;
- \$10 million for homeland upgrades or new schools;
- \$20 million to upgrade 15 Community Education Centres (or large community schools) over 4 years;
- \$1.2 million for Counselling offices; and
- \$43 million for government employee housing (all employees including teachers) over four years.<sup>67</sup>

5.80 The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs also provided the committee with updated information on the education services and programs available in communities in the Northern Territory. This information is provided at Appendix 6.

5.81 The Northern Territory government advised the committee that it was focusing on raising participation levels for Indigenous students in remote schools for the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy Tests (NAPLAN) tests. As the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET) noted at the Darwin hearing:

...we have really focused on literacy and numeracy and getting students in our remote schools ready for the NAPLAN assessments. Our big focus this year was on participation. When you have students with an ESL background and who come from homes where they may not be speaking English a lot of the time, they find it very hard to sit down and do these formal assessments.

Our staff out in the remote areas have been spending a lot of time this year preparing the students and the communities for the assessments which have just taken place. We are very hopeful that we will have a much better participation rate this year. I am not sure about the results because the experience has shown in Indigenous communities in the Kimberley, for instance, when the participation rate in the national assessments went up, the results went down because you had a lot more students who had never had an assessment before and who were doing it for the first time.<sup>68</sup>

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67 Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory government, answers to questions on notice, 12 May 2009 (received 22 May 2009).

68 Dr Kevin Gillan, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, pp. 53-54.

*Teacher/student ratios in remote schools*

5.82 On its visit to Amata in South Australia, the committee observed the success of the Amata School in securing adequate teaching staff. The committee noted a relatively higher ratio of teachers to students in South Australia in comparison to the Northern Territory. On this basis the committee wrote to the Northern Territory government to inquire whether the student/teacher ratio for remote schools took into account the English as a Second Language (ESL) needs of students in these remote schools.

5.83 The Northern Territory government's response indicated that the student/teacher ratio for remote schools is the same as for all other schools, which is:

- 22:1 for Years T-6
- 17:1 for Years 7-9
- 14:1 for Years 10-12.<sup>69</sup>

5.84 However remote schools are assigned Assistant Teachers for primary classes on the basis of 1:22 students to assist the teacher and large remote schools are allocated specialist ESL teacher positions based on student achievement data against ESL scales, with a Curriculum Access factor is applied to smaller schools, which generates extra teaching staff.<sup>70</sup>

5.85 The Rivers Region Youth Development Service stated at the committee's hearing in Katherine that:

We believe that education in remote locations is substandard, and we do not understand why we accept this. Student-teacher ratios when teaching English as a second language are set at 10 to one, whereas when you are teaching in remote schools you have 25 students and one teacher, so it is more than double the ESL student-teacher ratio.<sup>71</sup>

5.86 The Northern Territory government's response also noted that the NTER funded an additional 170 teachers across the 73 prescribed communities with a view to decreasing the student/teacher ratio to 10:1. The committee notes that a ratio of 10:1 is more than halving the current student/teacher ratio for primary schools and if applied across the board in the Northern Territory it would double the number of teachers teaching primary classes and substantially increase the number of teachers required for the secondary years.

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69 Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory government, answers to questions on notice, 12 May 2009 (received 22 May 2009).

70 Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory government, answers to questions on notice, 12 May 2009 (received 22 May 2009).

71 Rivers Region Youth Development Service, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 73.



5.87 CAYLUS also outlined the importance of ESL teachers in remote schools and suggested ways to provide more assistance:

Remote schools need experienced English as a second language (ESL) teachers to be able to provide an education to youth who do not speak English as a first, or even second language. Perhaps the NTER could look at encouraging such teachers to spend some time in the remote schools, possibly on a rotational basis the way some Health Services use doctors. This would not require such a high level of commitment from the teachers, but would bring vital skills into the region that could make a real difference to educational outcomes.

Similarly, structured university student volunteer programs could provide tutoring and other services in the remote communities, and possibly develop a workforce for the future.<sup>72</sup>

5.88 DET also noted that it is in the final stages of preparing a submission to the Northern Territory government Cabinet on a student-based staffing allocation system for introduction in 2010 which would provide for substantial increases in allocations to schools with high proportions of ESL learners. The response notes however that this proposal has not yet been considered by Cabinet and is not confirmed.<sup>73</sup>

5.89 The committee will monitor the situation with student/teacher ratios and urges the Northern Territory government to consider increasing the ratio for remote schools and areas with high ESL requirements.



*Senator Moore at Ntaria (Hermannsburg) School in the Northern Territory.*

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72 Central Australian Youth Link Up Service, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 8.

73 Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory government, answers to questions on notice, 12 May 2009 (received 22 May 2009).

*Outstation and homeland schools*

5.90 There was also considerable discussion and concern regarding outstation and homeland schools, especially in light of the newly announced Northern Territory government policy initiatives.

5.91 The issue of the closing of homeland and outstation schools was raised with the committee in Ntaria. The committee inquired about the reasons for these closures given the importance of a school to maintaining outstation community life.

The two homeland outstations that I think you are referring to. Red Sandhill was one, which was closed in 2007 due to declining enrolments and changes to the management of the school, and Kulpitharra is the other one, and that was closed in 2006 after a six months period when no students had presented to go to school. This was after several years of very low enrolments and attendance.<sup>74</sup>

5.92 The Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated also noted the importance of homeland schools in their submission:

Our members are very clear that they want their children to be educated in schools in the homelands for as many years of schooling as is possible.

Parents regard sending their children to Yirrkala or Nhulunbuy as very undesirable as it takes them away from all the positive and supportive family and kinship relationships, away from culture, law and the structures for discipline...Sending children away to boarding schools has been tried by some parents, but this has proven to not be very successful.<sup>75</sup>

5.93 DET outlined at the committee's hearing in Darwin that they are committed to homeland schools and that:

Where the facilities or the number of students and people in the community has diminished, obviously we work with the community to come up with a solution. We do not just barge in and close down a facility. I think the last school that closed was Warrego...Yes, two years ago, next to Tennant Creek, and that had four students.<sup>76</sup>

5.94 DET also noted that:

Last year we also appointed a director of homelands education. That is a completely new position. We have been aware that we need to lift our game there. Our director is looking at doing a scope through all of the homelands that have learning centres to look at the facilities but also at the quality of

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74 Dr Kevin Gillan, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 62.

75 Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated, *Submission 28*, p. 18.

76 Dr Kevin Gillan, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 64.

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the programs. He works in very close collaboration with the regional directors.<sup>77</sup>

### ***Adult numeracy and literacy***

5.95 The committee has noticed during the course of this inquiry that there is a large deficiency in many remote communities in the availability of adult education programs, especially those that provide basic literacy and numeracy. This was also reported by the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs' recent inquiry into petrol sniffing in central Australia.<sup>78</sup>

5.96 The committee is of the view that there is a real need for adult education classes and programs in regional and remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, as well as other states, as very often people need to undertake literacy and numeracy training before they can undertake the formal Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses. Senator Siewert outlined the situation at the committee's hearing in Darwin:

...the issue that has been raised with us, which is not just a Northern Territory issue, is that what people are finding is they need to do some literacy and numeracy training before they even start some of the other VET courses, but they are not able to get funding for provision of those classes because they are not registered at any certification level. I have been to various schools that are getting around this basically because they are just going above and beyond and they are squeezing limited resources to run extra classes at night and things like that. However, it is only for so long that you can do that and that is not sustainable in the long term.<sup>79</sup>

5.97 The Northern Territory government noted that they were extending the provision of VET in remote schools, but there was no elaboration on whether these programs would contain numeracy and literacy training or at what levels.

...our remote VET provision has been very successful in getting some of the students who had left back to school. We are extending that across the territory this year and next year across six communities. We are extending it to 10 and then to 12 communities. It is a very expensive option but it is working.<sup>80</sup>

5.98 The committee welcomes this extension of the VET in schools as the Rivers Region Youth Development Service noted:

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77 Dr Kevin Gillan, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 53.

78 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Grasping the opportunity of Opal: Assessing the impact of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy*, March 2009, p. 90.

79 Senator Rachel Siewert, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 54.

80 Dr Kevin Gillan, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 58.

...yearly for the past few years there has been \$7 million worth of VET in Schools applications to deliver those vocational skills, but there is only \$2 million to go around the whole Territory, so there is a vast shortage in delivering those skills within the school and the community.<sup>81</sup>

5.99 The Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated also confirmed the need for such literacy and numeracy classes in their homelands in the Northern Territory, stating that a skills audit by local literacy and numeracy trainers estimated that:

...the average adult English literacy and numeracy levels on the homelands are about Grade 3. The challenge to redress this basic adult educational disadvantage, much less addressing vocational training needs, is enormous. Unless there is a significant investment in enabling remote organisations to recruit adult literacy, numeracy and oracy trainers, it will take decades to overcome this disadvantage, and will consign at least two generations to a lifetime of social exclusion and dependence.<sup>82</sup>

At the committee's hearing in Darwin the Laynhapuy Homelands Association further expended on the issue:

...we were looking at two groups of 30. The reality is, even if you could get that level of resources, you are looking at about 24 or 25 years before you could provide literacy and numeracy training to all the adults in the homelands...The problem is huge. It is a massive issue and it will take decades to solve and it will not be solved with \$100,000 here and \$100,000 there for 12-month projects...

...the literacy and numeracy is a critical barrier. We have a number of construction trainees and apprentices. In the past we have had them in our mechanical workshop. Very few of them can do certificate 3. They do not have the literacy and numeracy. They might have the technical skills but they do not get through the certificates.<sup>83</sup>

5.100 CAYLUS advised the committee of some adult education programs they were supporting at the moment:

...there is one we are also supporting in Harts Range or Titjula. We are doing it in collaboration with a Victorian university who run a SWIRL program, which is about literacy. They send people up to communities to work with people on literacy...It is part of their uni course... They are, with our help, placing two students in Harts Range for the year to manage a type of internet cafe. It is not an internet cafe yet because Telstra still has not delivered the dish even though it was ordered in November last year...[and] the shire service manager has made it compulsory for all the CDEP people to do two hours on the computers every day as part of their CDEP. It is a

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81 Mr William Daw, Rivers Region Youth Development Services and Alderman, Katherine Town Council, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 74.

82 Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated, *Submission 28*, p. 15.

83 Mr Ric Norton, Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 45.

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really sensible thing to do: if you have the resource, direct people towards it.<sup>84</sup>

5.101 The committee notes however that the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments' approach to the provision of adult education and numeracy and literacy programs in remote communities in the Northern Territory is piecemeal and uncoordinated.

5.102 The Rivers Region Youth Development Service also noted the lack of coordination:

There are numerous programs that are not connected, and there is no uniformity in how they are presented. We hear through different seminars we go to about all these wonderful programs, and it is really hard to find out if they will be available in all of our communities or some of our communities and in what sort of time frame they will be able to service them. For example, there is a work ready program that DET fund, Group Training Northern Territory, but at the moment that is only in Darwin. They have increased their funding but they have not had to increase the area that they service.<sup>85</sup>

5.103 When DET was asked about this issue at the Darwin hearing it agreed that it was aware of the issue and the need in communities. DET noted that even though the schools within the communities are interested in providing these services they can not get access to Commonwealth government funding available for adult numeracy and literacy through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). This is because:

...as a territory government department we cannot access those funds. Only a private registered training organisation is able to access those funds. We cannot get any of our RTOs in the territory interested enough to be able to go out, access those funds and work in the community...For instance, we would love to get one of our RTOs to Min Min, but my understanding is that they have to be private RTOs.<sup>86</sup>

5.104 The committee is concerned that access to this funding is not flexible enough to meet the demands of remote Indigenous communities where there are fewer private Registered Training Organisation (RTO) operating. The committee also notes that many of the local schools which are already working in communities with established relationships may be best placed to provide additional adult education classes.

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84 Mr Blair McFarland, CAYLUS, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 13.

85 Ms Haidee McKittrick, Rivers Region Youth Development Service, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 72.

86 Dr Kevin Gillan, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, p. 54.

5.105 The Victoria Daly Shire noted that they have been able to work with DEEWR in obtaining funding for adult numeracy and literacy for people already in employment, although the Shire noted that they are not currently running any literacy or numeracy programs for unemployed people.

We are setting up a program through which people who are currently in jobs but who are in jeopardy in those jobs will be mentored. They may not have the skills to continue in their jobs. I do not mean that we would terminate them but often, in our experience, people who are not ready for those jobs resign very quickly because they find it too stressful and they do not have the work culture to continue. So this program will enable those people to be mentored. Part of the mentoring program is identifying their learning needs and working with them through their employment to increase their numeracy and literacy skills. The other part to that is that the new CDEP program will have a training component which will include numeracy and literacy. In our night patrol program all the patrol officers are doing a Certificate in Community Services and, where people are identified who do not have the numeracy and literacy required for those jobs, they will go through a numeracy and literacy program to increase their skills. It will take them to a level they call occupational numeracy and literacy, so it is enough to fill out a form et cetera.<sup>87</sup>

5.106 The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education noted that basic literacy and numeracy skills were also affecting the efficacy of VET training. This has been recognised in communities, as the Batchelor Institute noted:

A lot of communities we have travelled to have virtually asked for all of the different trade areas to actually incorporate literacy with their programs so that they can understand the language of that profession as well. That does not seem to be happening. You have a lot of RTOs that are always keeping them separate in terms of the literacy programs running solely compared with the other programs, and never incorporating both.<sup>88</sup>

5.107 The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education also raised a further issue for the Northern Territory with the change to national VET training packages. This has reduced the appropriateness and effectiveness of VET training in the Northern Territory as the national training packages are developed and delivered:

...these days, in Victoria for education and training in Melbourne and other big cities. Five years ago, and even last year, there was still the last of the NT training qualifications floating around in the VET sector, and any Indigenous community training we did was largely an NT qualification designed for the Aboriginal community context. NT government stopped funding those, and the federal system has meant a national training package that has overridden all of those qualifications. We have to do a lot of work to make that sort of qualification fit into any of the world context of the

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87 Mr Gregory Arnott, Victoria Daly Shire, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p.7.

88 Mr Patrick Anderson, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 93.

people we work with, and so there are some big gaps in assumed knowledge that we need to overcome. A large part of it is for us to say, ‘How can we get that skill base established through our training and how else can we include in that the stuff that is necessary to be able to read the book, numeracy and literacy?’ There does not seem to be enough funding associated with numeracy and literacy training alongside skill development training...There is close to zero flexibility in the VET sector nationally.<sup>89</sup>

5.108 Given this scenario the Batchelor Institute recommends that there be an increase in the funding in the Northern Territory of non-accredited training to address the literacy and numeracy gaps.<sup>90</sup>

5.109 The committee asked Mr Michael Zissler, the Commander of NTER Operations Centre if he was aware of the need for adult literacy and numeracy classes in remote Indigenous communities.

There are considerable resources around adult education but different communities are doing things in different ways...[there] are a number of programs that I have encountered, but whether it is consistent across the board, again I could not comment...Some of them do have school Edukits, but town camps clearly do not. I just do not want to deceive you there.<sup>91</sup>

5.110 The committee was concerned that although it seems that all levels of government are aware of the need for adult literacy and numeracy education—the NTER Taskforce report also recommended that adults in remote communities have access to literacy and numeracy programs<sup>92</sup>—there is no coordinated or sustained effort matched with adequate funding to provide these programs.

5.111 The committee notes that formal classes and classroom based programs will not be suitable for everyone, and may in fact further reinforce negative experiences of education. The committee is aware of a range of non-formal literacy programs running all over the world that successfully and rapidly lift literacy and numeracy levels. The committee encourages governments to investigate the methodology used in these programs, to ensure that programs are appropriate and run by qualified adult educators.

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89 Professor Peter Stephenson, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 92.

90 Professor Peter Stephenson, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 92.

91 Mr Michael Zissler, NTER Operations Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2009, pp. 47-48.

92 Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce, *Final Report to Government*, June 2008, p. 20, [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter\\_reports/final\\_report\\_2008/Documents/nter\\_taskforce\\_report.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/final_report_2008/Documents/nter_taskforce_report.pdf) (accessed 9 June 2009).

## Recommendation 9

**5.112 Recognising that access to numeracy and literacy training in regional and remote Indigenous communities is limited but given that it plays a fundamental role, the committee recommends that the Commonwealth government, in consultation with state and territory governments, prioritise the implementation of basic and appropriate adult literacy and numeracy programs in order to address the current identified need.**

### *Incarceration rates and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services*

5.113 The Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS) and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)—the two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) in the Northern Territory—raised their concerns at the hearing in Darwin regarding the dramatic increase in incarceration rates in the Northern Territory.

In June last year the rate was 568 per 100,000. That was almost 3½ times the national average and the figures have continued to rise dramatically since then. In the last quarter of 2008 the figure is already at 629 per 100,000 and we anticipate that the next quarter figures are going to be even higher because in the December quarter of 2008 the daily average number of prisoners was 993 and by early February 2009 the number of prisoners was approximately 1,120. This is an extremely dramatic rise.<sup>93</sup>

5.114 NAAJA and CAALAS note however that publicly available statistics do not provide any definite answers as to why the rate has increased. However ABS statistics do confirm that court lists have increased and that the increases in charges have been for relatively minor types of offending. The main increase has been seen in the following three types of offences in the 12 months to 30 June 2008:

- traffic offences;
- offences against justice (breach of domestic violence orders, breach bail, escape custody, breach of orders); and
- public order offences.<sup>94</sup>

5.115 In their supplementary submission NAAJA and CAALAS provided some statistics on Northern Territory magistrates courts and the non-custodial sentences they impose:

...68% of the 70% of non-custodial sentences are made up of Fines (62%) and Good Behaviour Bonds (6%). That leaves community supervision and community work as accounting for just 2% of all sentencing outcomes. This

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93 Ms Helen Wodak, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 13.

94 Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Submission 24a*, p. 4.



rate dropped from 3% in 2007/08, which is the rate it had been since at least 2003/04.<sup>95</sup>

5.116 NAAJA and CAALAS also provided some possible reasons as to why the Northern Territory has such a high incarceration rate and why it has increased, these include:

- an over reliance by the courts in the Northern Territory on custodial sentences, more than three times the national average;
- very few community supervision and community work orders due to a dearth of targeted, rehabilitative, non-custodial sentencing outcomes;
- a lack of restorative justice options;
- a change in bail laws; and
- an increase in police numbers and therefore more prosecutions (police files have increased 25 per cent since 2007/08 and 57 per cent since 2006/07<sup>96</sup>) and subsequently more custodial sentences;<sup>97</sup>

5.117 NAAJA and CAALAS stated that the Northern Territory government has promised increased funding for community courts to extend this restorative justice option to a total of 10 communities. The Northern Territory government stated in its Closing the Gap report that community courts are now operational in Darwin, Nguiu, Milikapiti, Pularumpi and Nhulunbuy and have recently been held in Galiwin'ku and Yuendumu and are planned to extend to Wadeye, Maningrida and Alyangula communities.<sup>98</sup> NAAJA and CAALAS stated that progress on this has been very slow.<sup>99</sup>

5.118 NAAJA and CAALAS believe that it is possible to extend non-custodial options including community based work orders, as CAALAS stated at the Darwin hearing:

There is scope for those to be used a lot more than they are. I suggested some time ago to look at increasing community based options. There was an attempt to expand the way that home detention orders could work, so that people could serve them out within a community. There is a lot of

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95 Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Submission 24a*, p. 3.

96 Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Submission 24a*, p. 4.

97 Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, pp. 13 & 16.

98 Department of the Chief Minister, Northern Territory government, *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: Progress Report 2007-08*, 2009, pp. 8 and 10, [http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/download/CTG\\_report.pdf](http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/download/CTG_report.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2009).

99 Ms Helen Wodak, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 13.

scope for that to happen, so that people can serve community based orders in the community where they originate from.<sup>100</sup>

5.119 The Northern Territory police agreed that more needs to be done to support rehabilitation and reduce incarceration but that capacity was limited:

Rehabilitation services are something we just do not have at the levels that we need. We do not have a capacity, or have not had a capacity in the past, to even run basic anger management courses for people who are prisoners in jail for less than six months for domestic violence offences. These are the sorts of things that we need to start really thinking about and investing a lot of money and energy into so that the solutions are broad, cover a whole spectrum and deal with the whole range of issues but involve interventions and rehabilitation. Locking them up and throwing away the key is not a solution.<sup>101</sup>

5.120 The Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission also stated that rehabilitation is a key area that requires greater capacity in order to reduce incarceration rates:

There needs to be rehabilitation aimed at offenders in their communities and not outside the communities. I understand that there will be offenders who need to be in jail for a long time and they will need to be taken out of the communities, but the majority of offenders do not need to be removed from the communities. They need to be rehabilitated... We just do not have the resources in the Territory, in the correctional services, which is aimed at those sorts of programs... having people locked up for long periods of time, the whole of the criminal justice framework is towards not giving people bail easily, keeping them on remand, keeping them in prison and giving them sentences with minimum non-paroles that are high. Eventually people have to get out and they have to be able to deal with the community from which they come. This is not being addressed. We really need a lot more officers out in the communities where people can do community work orders. I have not seen anyone do a community work order for years. They just do not get them.<sup>102</sup>

5.121 In their submissions NAAJA and CAALAS note that given the increased workload as a result of increased incarcerations rates, Commonwealth operational funding is inadequate and does not increase sufficiently each year in order to cover increases in costs, which is exacerbated by the Northern Territory government's 'refusal to provide any funding to an ATSIL'.<sup>103</sup> The committee notes the important work that the ATSIL services perform and are pleased to hear that some additional

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100 Mr Mark O'Reilly, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 14.

101 Assistant Commissioner Grahame Kelly, Northern Territory Police, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 76.

102 Ms Susan Cox QC, Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 31.

103 Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Submission 24*, p. 21.

funding has been allocated to NAAJA and CAALAS through the \$3.0 million Northern Territory Welfare Rights Outreach Project, however at the time of writing their supplementary submission at the end of May 2009 they had been unable to confirm what extra funding they had received, which makes forward planning difficult.<sup>104</sup>

5.122 The Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission also noted that the increase in incarceration numbers has been a further drain on their resources:

The other problem that we see, from the commission's point of view and our resources, is the growing imprisonment rate and the inappropriateness of long-term prison for a lot of these offenders. There should be a much bigger focus on rehabilitation. I have been saying it for 30 years, but it really needs to be done out of jails and in the community. Nothing happens very well in prison for all sorts of reasons, and our Indigenous prisoners are there short term, mainly for driving offences and for minor assaults. There is not enough time to turn them around on anything, but it does increase the prison numbers. We have really felt that on our resources.<sup>105</sup>

5.123 The committee believes that consideration should be given by the Northern Territory government to a review of custodial sentences to ensure that they are being used appropriately, and that magistrates and judges be provided with sufficient non-custodial options available to them when sentencing. The committee also believes that the resourcing of legal services in the Northern Territory needs to be reviewed in light of the increase in arrests and court listings.

5.124 This issue is also noted in Chapter 4 of this report in relation to the NTER measure to increase the police presence in the Northern Territory.

### **Recommendation 10**

**5.125 The committee recommends that the Northern Territory government review the high levels of custodial sentences in the Northern Territory and the reasons for recent increases as well as determine whether the non-custodial options available to magistrates and judges are sufficient.**

#### *Domestic violence and women's shelters*

5.126 The Alice Springs Women's Shelter raised the issue of inadequate resourcing for women's shelters in Central Australia.

Demand for our service has increased over the time of the intervention in the last 18 months. Last financial year we saw a 30 per cent increase in the number of children attending the shelter, and that trend has continued this year, with a further 18 per cent increase in the second half of last year.

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104 Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, *Submission 24a*, p. 9.

105 Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 21 May 2009, p. 29.

Unmet demand has also increased over that period of time. In the second half of last year we were unable to provide support for 255 women and 122 children who sought support. This year the situation has got even more urgent. In the first three months of this year we have already knocked back 158 women and 100 children who sought the support of the Alice Springs Women's Shelter.<sup>106</sup>

5.127 The Alice Springs Women's Shelter also noted similar statistics to the Women's Legal Service South Australia regarding the extent of violence against women in Central Australia. The Women's Shelter noted that out of their clients:

The rates of physical assault are extremely high...We did a recent file review which showed that 20 per cent of our clientele had received a stab wound at some time in their life and that they are most at risk of domestic violence homicide in Australia. It is also important to note that we often work with women over long periods of time. Ten or 20 years is not unusual period of time. We are starting to see the second and third generations of the same families coming back to the shelter.<sup>107</sup>

5.128 However, in contrast to the situation in the APY Lands, the Alice Springs Women's Shelter stated that:

I would say that the severity of domestic violence has decreased... We are certainly not seeing a decrease in the number of assaults as far as I can see but we are certainly seeing fewer stab wounds and we have not had the same level of homicides. But there was still one woman murdered last year by her husband. It is still a significant risk for the women that we work with.<sup>108</sup>

5.129 The NPY Women's Council also noted that the level of reporting of domestic violence has increased:

Clearly, in our region there is much more of a willingness to report than there was when the service started 14 years ago...You have also had a domestic violence police unit in Alice Springs...I think the message is starting to get out there and...Yes, the homicide rates in Alice Springs are down—thankfully they are, because in the space of a year we had five women from our region killed. Two of those homicides occurred in Alice Springs town camps which our members consider to be extremely dangerous places. One woman was from Mutitjulu and one was from Western Australia. In fact, the perpetrators, both of whom were the partners of the women, have now been sentenced. We still have another three or four homicide matters waiting to be finished.<sup>109</sup>

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106 Ms Dale Wakefield, Alice Springs Women's Shelter, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 46.

107 Ms Dale Wakefield, Alice Springs Women's Shelter, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 46.

108 Ms Dale Wakefield, Alice Springs Women's Shelter, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 50.

109 NPY Women's Council, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 76.

5.130 The Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit informed the committee that funding for programs for domestic violence perpetrators is also lacking, noting that:

...insufficient Government programs have been set up to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence in Indigenous communities. Whilst there are some effective programs running, they are not frequent or widespread enough. For example, whilst the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (“NPY”) Lands’ Cross Border Indigenous Family Violence Program, which services the Papunya community, has proven to be an extremely effective model, it only has the resources to run approximately ten programs per year with a maximum of 15 participants per program. Covering an area of around 450,000 km<sup>2</sup> with approximately 10,000 inhabitants, ten programs providing for a total of 150 people per year is not enough to effectively address the high rates of domestic violence occurring in Indigenous communities.<sup>110</sup>

5.131 The committee inquired into what happened when the women's shelter turned people away, and what the consequences of inadequate facilities and resourcing were. The Alice Springs Women's Shelter advised that they have no choice but to send women and children:

...back to where they were. There are really very few other options. We try very hard, when we are full and we cannot take somebody, to do a safety plan with them, to look at where they might be safe and what other support they have in town. Access to other crisis accommodation has got even worse in town over the last little while with the closure of Mount Gillen. The Aboriginal hostels now have up to a month's wait. Some of the other cheap accommodation in town is very hard. It is very hard for us to access motel accommodation. Yesterday we had to ring around for somebody that we wanted to put into motel accommodation. On three occasions we were asked if the person we were referring was Aboriginal and then we were told that they did not have a room. We finally got accommodation for that woman. Trying to access other accommodation is almost impossible. Often the best we can do is to provide women with a taxi voucher, make sure they know how to call the police and send them back to where they were.<sup>111</sup>

5.132 The committee considers that to have a significant number of women and children—158 women and 100 children so far this year, from the Alice Springs Women's Shelter—turned away with a taxi voucher and returned to the unsafe and violent situation they were seeking refuge from is grossly unacceptable.

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110 Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit, *Submission 81*, p. [2].

111 Ms Dale Wakefield, Alice Springs Women's Shelter, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 52.

## Recommendation 11

**5.133 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government coordinates, in cooperation with the relevant states and territories, a review of the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by family violence in Indigenous communities as well as the current unmet need for appropriate facilities and resources in the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara cross border region.**

### *COAG Chronic disease initiative*

5.134 The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Northern Territory raised concerns with the new COAG commitment designed to 'deliver more health professionals to Indigenous communities, expand health services, and help tackle key risk factors like smoking'<sup>112</sup> through providing a significant amount of the money earmarked to General Practice (GP) providers. Congress believes that COAG is taking a one-size-fits-all approach to delivering these primary health services:

The problem that we have in the Territory is that a significant amount of the COAG money has already been earmarked for private general practice through new practice enhancement payments as well as through divisions. COAG said that nationally 70 per cent of service to Aboriginal people is delivered by private GPs. That figure is disputed. It might only be 50 per cent...In the Territory, it would be less than five per cent of services...and that is almost all in Darwin...So why would you go down the road of investing in divisions of general practice and putting all these initiatives in for private general practice in the Northern Territory? It does not make sense.<sup>113</sup>

5.135 Congress noted that it and the Northern Territory government are in agreement that the COAG proposal is not appropriate for the Northern Territory.

We and the Northern Territory government are working in absolute collaboration on this so that we achieve a needs based allocation to whoever the provider is. If the provider is a state health department, they get the money for primary health care; if the provider is a community, they get the money. We achieve equity, irrespective of the provider...

...We have raised it with Nicola Roxon. We are trying to get them to understand that geographically there is not a GP on every corner in major centres...because in effect it is going to create another barrier to access.

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112 The Hon. Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister and Hon. Nicola Roxon, Minister for Health, *\$1.6 billion COAG investment in Closing the Gap*, Joint press release, 30 November 2008, <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr08-nr-nr164.htm> (accessed 15 June 2009).

113 Dr John Boffa, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Northern Territory, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, p. 33.

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They are going to have all this money given to GPs over here when Aboriginal people live out there, so it is going to widen the gap.<sup>114</sup>

5.136 The committee is concerned that Congress and the Northern Territory government's established process for delivering primary health care in regional and remote Indigenous communities may not be used to deliver substantial new Commonwealth 'Closing the Gap' funds. The diversity between the states and territories, as outlined in Chapter 3, illustrates that national statistics do not necessarily reflect the situation across and within each state and territory.

### ***Aboriginal health workers review***

5.137 While the committee was visiting the Western Aranda Health Aboriginal Corporation in Ntaria it was made aware of the issue of Aboriginal Health Worker (AHW) registration which now requires a Certificate IV level for which many potential workers do not have the literacy levels to complete. The committee asked whether the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Northern Territory, who deliver primary health services, were aware of this issue with AHWs. Congress noted that this issue has been raised with them several times and that the problems started when:

...Aboriginal health worker training, probably more than seven years ago...became a part of the Australian national framework process where there are certain literacy requirements and people have to have a base level of literacy to be able then to enrol in the course. It is a Certificate IV course, an 18-month program, and the nature of that training has substantially contributed to a lack of health workers being able to reach accreditation. They have to get accredited and then through the Certificate IV course. Once they complete that, they then have to apply for registration through the Northern Territory Health Care Worker Registration.<sup>115</sup>

5.138 The committee notes that the Northern Territory is the only state with a registration system for AHWs. Although being registered allows AHWs in the Northern Territory to provide services on a 'for and on behalf of' basis under particular items in the Medical Benefits Schedule—covering immunisation, wound management, antenatal services and the monitoring and support of patients with a chronic disease care plan<sup>116</sup>—it is also a barrier to increasing AHW numbers.

5.139 Congress advised the committee that the Northern Territory government has commissioned an independent review into Aboriginal health worker training,

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114 Dr John Boffa, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Northern Territory, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, pp. 33-34.

115 Dr John Boffa, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Northern Territory, *Committee Hansard*, 1 May 2009, pp. 36.

116 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health labour force statistics and data quality assessment*, Catalogue no. IHW 27, April 2009, pp. 45-46.

recruitment and retention in the Northern Territory which the committee welcomes and will report on when the review is made public.



# Appendix 1

## List of Public Submissions and Tabled Documents received since the committee's first report of 2008

- 38 Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ACT)
- 39 Luurnpa Catholic School (WA)
- 40 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NSW)
- Supplementary information*
- Statement by National Council of Churches in Australia: 'Indigenous people also have the right to dignity and honour', tabled at hearing 13 November 2008
- 41 Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (NSW)
- Supplementary information*
- Attachment 1
- 42 Ms Carrol-ann Maher (NSW)
- 43 Mission Australia (NSW)
- 44 National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (SA)
- 45 School of Medicine, Flinders University (SA)
- 46 Community Child Care (VIC)
- 47 Dental Health Services Victoria (VIC)
- 48 Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (NSW)
- 49 Central Victorian Group Training Company Incorporated (VIC)
- 50 Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VIC)
- 51 Australian Institute of Family Studies (VIC)
- 52 Diabetes Australia (ACT)
- 53 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ACT)
- 54 Carers Australia (ACT)
- 55 Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales (NSW)

- 56 TAFE NSW (NSW)
- 57 Indigenous Land Corporation (ACT)
- 58 Torres Strait Regional Authority (QLD)
- 59 Shire of East Pilbara (WA)
- 60 Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (ACT)
- 61 NSW Reconciliation Council (NSW)
- 62 Women's Legal Service SA Incorporated (SA)
- 63 UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide (SA)

*Supplementary information*

- Attachment 1

- 64 New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW)
- 65 Mr Chris Garstone (WA)
- 66 Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media Aboriginal Corporation (SA)

*Supplementary information*

- Attachment 1

- 67 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (ACT)
- 68 Department of Corrective Services, New South Wales (NSW)
- 69 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (ACT)
- 70 Department of Human Services (ACT)

*Supplementary information*

- Attachment 1
- Attachment 2

- 71 Western Australian Department of the Attorney General (WA)
- 72 Chamber of Minerals and Energy (WA)
- 73 Anangu Pitjantjatjara Services Aboriginal Corporation (SA)
- 74 Mr Keith Gregory (NT)

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- 75 Department of Health and Ageing (ACT)
- 76 Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia (WA)
- 77 Ramingining Homelands Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation (NT)
- 78 NT Shelter (NT)
- 79 Mr John Greateorex (NT)
- 80 Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation (NT)
- 81 Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit (NT)
- 82 Dr Bernard Hickey (NT)
- 83 Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation (NT)
- 84 Australian Education Union (ACT)
- 85 Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (NT)
- 86 Roper Gulf Shire Council (NT)
- 87 Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory (NT)
- 88 Outback Stores (NT)
- 89 Mr Barry Robinson (NT)
- 90 Department of Indigenous Affairs, Government of Western Australia (WA)
- 91 Friends of Bilingual Learning (NT)
- Supplementary information*
- Attachment 1
- 92 Central Land Council (NT)

## **Answers to Questions on Notice**

### **Hearing 14 November 2008**

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

### **Hearing 4 March 2009**

South Australian Government

Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Incorporated

### **Hearing 9 June 2009**

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Department of Health and Ageing

## **Appendix 2**

### **Witnesses who appeared before the committee at public hearings**

*Thursday 13 and Friday 14 November 2008*

*Parliament House, Canberra*

#### **Committee Members in attendance**

Senator Adams

Senator Crossin

Senator Johnston

Senator Moore

Senator Scullion

#### **Witnesses**

##### **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission**

Mr Graeme Mundine, Executive Secretary

Ms Gabrielle Russell-Mundine, Project Officer

##### **Minerals Council of Australia**

Ms Melanie Stutsel, Environment and Social Policy

Ms Sarah Fuller, Assistant Director, Social Policy

##### **National Rural Health Alliance**

Mr Gordon Gregory, Executive Director

Mr Andrew Robert Phillips, Policy Advisor

##### **Professor Jon Altman**

##### **Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary

Ms Amanda Cattermole, Group Manager, Indigenous Remote Service Delivery Group

Ms Donna Moody, Group Manager, Program Performance Group

Mr Matthew James, Branch Manager, Performance and Evaluation Branch, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination

Mr Gavin Matthews, Welfare Payments Reform Branch, Families Group

**Wednesday 4 March 2009**

**Town Hall, Adelaide**

**(Held in conjunction with Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs)**

**Committee Members in attendance**

Senator Bilyk

Senator Boyce

Senator Humphries

Senator Johnston

Senator Moore

Senator Scullion

Senator Siewert

**Witnesses**

**UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide**

Ms Sue Park, Chief Executive

Mr Jonathan Nicholls, Senior Policy Officer

**Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council SA**

Mr Scott Wilson, Director

Mr Christopher Perry, Project Office, Making Tracks

**BP Australia**

Mr Gavin Jackman, Director, Government Affairs

Mr Chris McKenzie, Fuels Marketing Programme Manager

**South Australian government**

Ms Nerida Saunders, Executive Director, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, Department for The Premier and Cabinet

Ms Kim Petersen, Director Remote Communities, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division, Department for The Premier and Cabinet

**Women's Legal Service SA Inc**

Ms Marilyn Wright, Senior solicitor/co-ordinator

Ms Zeta Ngor, solicitor in Port Augusta

Mrs Grace Miller, Aboriginal Women's Community Worker

**National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction**

Professor Ann Roche, Director

**School of Medicine, Flinders University**

Associate Professor Dennis McDermott, Indigenous Health

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*Friday 1 May 2009*  
*Voyages Resort, Alice Springs*

**Committee Members in attendance**

Senator Adams  
Senator Crossin  
Senator Moore  
Senator Scullion  
Senator Siewert

**Witnesses**

**Central Australian Youth Link Up Service**

Mr Blair McFarland, Coordinator

**Central Australian Aboriginal Congress NT**

Ms Stephanie Bell, Director  
Ms Helen Kantawara, Chairperson  
Ms Betty Carter, Congress Committee  
Dr John Boffa, Public Health and Medical Officer

**NT Chamber of Commerce (Alice Springs Branch)**

Ms Kay Eade, Executive Officer  
Ms Julie Ross, Chairperson

**Alice Springs Woman's Shelter**

Ms Dale Wakefield, Coordinator

**Tangentyere Council Inc**

Mr William Tilmouth, Executive Director  
Mr John Adams, Manager, Family and Youth Services  
Miss Barbara Shaw, Mount Nancy town camp resident

**Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPY)  
Women's Council**

Ms Margaret Smith, Chairperson  
Ms Julie Anderson, Director  
Ms Vicki Gillick, Coordinator

**Ms Leonie Cameron**

**Mental Health Association of Central Australia**

Ms Claudia Manu-Preston, General Manager

Ms Christine Kipps, Clinical Psychologist

Ms Laurencia Grant, Life Promotion Program Manager

**Central Australian Mental Health Service**

Dr Anne Noonan, Consultant Psychiatrist

Dr Marcus Tabart, Consultant Psychiatrist

*Wednesday 20 May 2009*

*Katherine Town Council Chambers, Katherine*

**Committee Members in attendance**

Senator Adams

Senator Moore

Senator Scullion

**Witnesses**

**Victoria Daly Shire Council**

Councillor Donald Wegener, Mayor,

Mr Gregory Arnott, Director, Corporate and Community Services

**Katherine Town Council**

Councillor Anne Shepherd, Mayor

Mr Geoff Brooks, Chief Executive Officer

**Mimi Arts and Crafts Aboriginal Corporation**

Mrs Barbara Ambjerg Pedersen, Manager/Coordinator

Ms Marilyn Nakamarra, Art worker

Mr Jim Croker, Art worker

**Sunrise Health Service**

Ms Suzi Demos, Projects and Communications Officer

Ms Irene Fisher, Chief Executive Officer

**Roper Gulf Shire Council**

Councillor Tony Jack, Mayor

Mr Michael Berto, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Barry Robinson, Chairperson, Barunga Community



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**Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation**

Mr Tony Jack, Councillor

Mr William South, Chief Executive Officer

**Rivers Region Youth Development Services**

Mr William Daw, Board Member, Rivers Region Youth Development Services; and  
Alderman

Ms Haidee McKittrick, Remote Project Officer

**Mr Barrie Goedecke****Kalano Community Association Incorporated**

Ms Carol Dowling, President

Mrs Danelle Batchler, Manager, Expanded Money Management Services

Mr Rodney Hoffman, CDEP Manager

Ms Andrea McDonald, Manager, Expanded Money Management Services

Mrs Rosslyn Weetra, Team Leader, Expanded Money Management Services

**Charles Darwin University, Katherine Campus**

Mr Paul Francis Fitzsimons, Director, Regional and Remote

Professor Steven Raymond, Larkin Pro Vice Chancellor, Indigenous Leadership

Mr Timothy Biggs, Team Leader, Agriculture and Rural Operations Studies

**Wardaman Aboriginal Corporation**

Mrs May Rosas, Chair

Ms Marie Allen, Member

Miss Helena Raymond, Administration

Mr Damien Sing, Treasurer

*Thursday 21 May 2009*

*Northern Territory Parliament House*

**Committee Members in attendance**

Senator Adams

Senator Crossin

Senator Moore

Senator Scullion

Senator Siewert

**Witnesses****NT Shelter**

Ms Toni Vine-Bromley, Executive Officer

**North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) & Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS)**

Ms Priscilla Collins, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Glen Dooley, Principal Legal Officer

Mr Julian Johnson, Managing Civil Solicitor

Mr Mark O'Reilly, Principal Legal Officer

Ms Annabel Pengilley

Ms Hannah Roe, Board Member

Ms Helen Wodak, Advocacy Manager

**Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission**

Ms Suzan Cox, QC, Director

Ms Fiona Hussin, Coordinator, Policy and Projects

**Laynhapuy Homelands Association Incorporated**

Mr Barayuwa Mununggurr, Chair

Ms Yananymul Mununggurr, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Richard Norton, General Manager

**Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce**

Mr Christopher Young, Chief Executive

**Outback Stores**

Mr John Kop, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Danyelle Bodaghi, New Business Manager

**Northern Territory Police**

Assistant Commissioner Grahame Kelly

Acting Commander Wayne Harris

**Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education**

Professor Peter Mark Stephenson, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research

Mr Patrick John Anderson, Senior Adviser, Community Engagement

Dr Lyn Fasoli, Associate Professor, Research Division

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**Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation**

Ms Ilana Eldridge, Chief Executive Officer  
Dr Catherine Holmes, Principal Researcher

**Acacia Larrakia Aboriginal Corporation**

Mr Martin Ferguson  
Mr Joseph Jeffrey, Community Member  
Ms Kathleen Jeffrey, Community Member

*Friday 22 May 2009*

*Northern Territory Parliament House*

**Committee Members in attendance**

Senator Adams  
Senator Moore  
Senator Scullion  
Senator Siewert

**Witnesses****Mr John Greateorex**

**Mr Yingiya Guyula**, Lecturer, Yolngu Studies, School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Charles Darwin University

**Anglicare NT**

Ms Coralie Nichols, Chief Executive Officer  
Mr Gavin Coehn, Program Manager  
Mrs Leanna Haynes, Program Manager  
Ms Ann Buxton, Executive Manager, Youth, Family and Remote

**Darwin Aboriginal Rights Coalition**

Mr Maurie Japarta Ryan, Private capacity; and Darwin Aboriginal Rights Coalition  
Mr David Suttle, Consultant  
Mr Ronnie Agnew, Knuckey Lagoon Community  
Ms Joy White

**NTER Operational Command**

Mr Michael Zissler, Commander, NTER Operations Centre, and Group Manager,  
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Ms Laura Toyne, Director, Community Stores, Department of Families, Housing,  
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

**Northern Territory Government**

Mr Kenneth Davies, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of the Chief Minister

Dr Kevin Gillan, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Education and Training

## **Appendix 3**

### **People with whom the Committee met on Site Visits**

**17-18 November 2008**

**NSW – Broken Hill, Cobar, Dubbo**

***Monday 17 November 2008***

- Broken Hill Family Violence Prevention Legal Service, Broken Hill
- Maari Ma Health Service, Broken Hill
- Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, Cobar

***Tuesday 18 November 2008 - Dubbo***

- Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation
- Dubbo City Council
- Dubbo Aboriginal Community Working Party
- National Rural Health Alliance
- UnitingCare Burnside Child and Family Team Office
- Allira Aboriginal Childcare Centre

**1-3 March 2009**

**Northern Territory – Mutitjulu, Yulara**

**South Australia – Amata, Adelaide**

***Sunday 1 March 2009 – Mutitjulu and Yulara***

- Mutitjulu community
- Mission Australia
- Voyages and GPT Group

***Monday 2 March 2009 - Amata***

- Substance Misuse Facility
- Amata Anangu School
- PY Ku Rural Transaction Centre
- Homemakers Centre

- Tjala Arts Centre
- Voyages Ayers Rock Resort
- GPT Group

***Tuesday 3 March 2009 - Adelaide***

- Better World Arts

**29 April – 1 May 2009**

**Northern Territory – Alice Springs, Ntaria (Hermannsburg)**

***Wednesday 29 April 2009 – Alice Springs***

- Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation
- MacDonnell Shire Council
- Yuendumu Social Club Store

***Thursday 30 April 2009 - Ntaria***

- Tjuwanpa Rangers
- MacDonnell Shire Council and Advisory Board
- Western Aranda Health Aboriginal Corporation
- Ntaria School
- Bryan Mckain, Government Business Manager
- Youth Shed

**19-22 May 2009**

**Northern Territory – Millingimbi**

***Tuesday 19 May 2009***

- Mr Rob Hathaway, Government Business Manager
- Mr James Gaykamangu, Yolngu Elder
- Milingimbi Community Education Centre
- ALPA Store
- Milingimbi community meeting
- East Arnhem Shire

## Appendix 4

### Indigenous data sources

Topic Area	Type of Collection	Data Owners	Output/ Geography	Timing/ Frequency	Data Reporting/Comments
Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER)	Administrative- various	Various Australian and Northern Territory Government agencies	Northern Territory intervention areas	Aug 07- June 08	<p>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA):</p> <p><i>Monitoring Report - Measuring progress of NTER activities, August 2007 to 30 June 2008</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/mon_report/Pages/default.aspx</a></p> <p>Data sources and key performance indicators are highlighted in Part 2 Appendix and include data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health, education</li> <li>• law and order</li> <li>• sexual assault</li> <li>• housing</li> <li>• income management</li> <li>• employment</li> </ul>
	Administrative - NTER Child Health Check data	Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)	Northern Territory intervention areas		<p>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and DoHA:</p> <p><i>Progress of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Child Health Check Initiative</i></p> <p><a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/ihw/pnterchci/pnterchci.pdf">http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/ihw/pnterchci/pnterchci.pdf</a></p> <p>Provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of health checks</li> <li>• patient demographics</li> <li>• health conditions diagnosed</li> <li>• referrals and vaccinations</li> <li>• children requiring follow ups</li> </ul>

Topic Area	Type of Collection	Data Owners	Output/ Geography	Timing/ Frequency	Data Reporting/Comments
Housing	Statistical - Census of Population and Housing	ABS	Collection district (CD) level	5-yearly Last conducted in 2006	<p>ABS: <i>Census of population and housing</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/Home/census">http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/Home/census</a>            Can provide information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overcrowding</li> <li>• tenure, landlord type, rent and mortgage repayments</li> <li>• dwelling structure, number of bedrooms.</li> </ul>
	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	ABS	State territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted in 2002 (2008/09 collection underway)	<p>ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2002</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/</a>            The survey provides the following information on housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tenure type, landlord type, rent/mortgage payments</li> <li>• household facilities, number of bedrooms</li> <li>• major structural problems</li> <li>• repairs and maintenance conducted in last 12 months.</li> </ul>
	Statistical - Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS)	FaHCSIA (collected by ABS)	Discrete Indigenous communities	Last conducted in 2006	<p>ABS: <i>Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4710.0Main+Features22006">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4710.0Main+Features22006</a>            Collects the following data on discrete Indigenous communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• current housing stock, dwelling management and selected income and expenditure arrangements of Indigenous organisations.</li> <li>• details of housing and related infrastructure in discrete Indigenous communities such as water quality and supply, electricity supply, sewerage systems, drainage, rubbish collection and disposal.</li> </ul>
	Administrative - FaHCSIA housing dataset	FaHCSIA	State/territory	Data access on request	<p>AIHW: <i>National Housing Assistance Data Repository</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/housing/assistance/data/index.cfm">http://www.aihw.gov.au/housing/assistance/data/index.cfm</a>            The FaHCSIA Housing Dataset holds data on those in receipt of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). A copy of the dataset is provided to AIHW each year and added to the National Housing Assistance Data Repository.</p>



	Administrative - Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)	State/territory SAAP agencies	National for Indigenous data	Annual Latest release 2005-06	<p>AIHW: <i>Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/housing/sacs/ndca/index.cfm">http://www.aihw.gov.au/housing/sacs/ndca/index.cfm</a></p> <p>The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection is a nationally consistent information system that combines information from SAAP agencies and State/Territory and Commonwealth funding departments. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funding, level of support/support provided</li> <li>• client demographics, meeting the needs of clients</li> </ul>
	Statistical - National Social Housing Survey	AIHW	State/territory	2005, 2007	<p>AIHW: <i>The National Social Housing Survey</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/housing/somih_survey.cfm">http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/housing/somih_survey.cfm</a></p> <p>The surveys provide data for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amenity/location, customer satisfaction, tenant satisfaction with service delivery, dwelling condition,</li> <li>• tenant needs and tenant characteristics such as household composition and labour force participation.</li> </ul>
	Administrative - Fixing Houses for Better Health Program	FaHCSIA	Data available for participating communities	Ad-hoc	<p>AIHW: <i>Fixing houses for better health (FHBH) dataset</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/datacubes/fhbh.cfm">http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/datacubes/fhbh.cfm</a></p> <p>Provides data on the FHBH program. This program is designed to improve the houses and household conditions in rural and remote Indigenous communities across Australia.</p> <p>The data provides information about the quality and health standards of a community's housing stock.</p>

Topic Area	Type of Collection	Data Owners	Output/ Geography	Timing/ Frequency	Data Reporting/Comments
CDEP	Administrative - CDEP	FaHCSIA			Data available on request.
	Statistical - Census of Population and Housing	ABS	Collection district (CD) level	5-yearly Last conducted in 2006	<p>ABS: <i>Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/7E338A84EC8B3D1ECA257418000E41AD?opendocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/7E338A84EC8B3D1ECA257418000E41AD?opendocument</a></p> <p>ABS Census data can be used to gain information on CDEP participants as questions are asked about CDEP participation. The actual numbers of participants may be understated but the characteristics of those who did state that they were a CDEP participant will still provide important information.</p>
	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted in 2002 (2008/09 collection underway)	<p>ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/</a></p> <p>ABS NATSISS data can be used to gain information on CDEP participants as questions are asked about CDEP participation. The actual numbers of participants may be understated but the characteristics of those who did state that they were a CDEP participant will still provide important information.</p>
Outstations and small communities	Statistical - Census of Population and Housing	ABS	Home/census Collection district (CD) level	5-yearly Last conducted in 2006	<p>ABS: <i>Census of population and housing</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/">http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/</a></p> <p>Provides demographic details about outstations and small communities.</p>
	Statistical - Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS)	FaHCSIA (collected by ABS)	Discrete Indigenous communities	Last conducted in 2006	<p>ABS: <i>Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4710.0Main+Features22006?OpenDocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4710.0Main+Features22006?OpenDocument</a></p> <p>CHINS can provide information for discrete Indigenous communities on:  <i>Indigenous Housing Organisations (IHOs)</i>: management, income, expenditure, housing stock, acquisitions and disposals of housing over the past 12 months.  <i>Communities</i>: Population, needs planning, health and public facilities, water supply, electricity/gas supply, transport, and communication.</p>

Topic Area	Type of Collection	Data Owners	Output/ Geography	Timing/ Frequency	Data Reporting/Comments
<b>Substance abuse and its impact on community wellbeing and the safety of children</b>	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted 2004-05	<p>ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4715.0Main+Features12004-05?OpenDocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4715.0Main+Features12004-05?OpenDocument</a></p> <p>For persons over 18 years the NATSIHS provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• smoking</li> <li>• alcohol consumption</li> <li>• substance use (non-remote only)</li> <li>• social and emotional wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p>There are also data for children aged over 12 years on diet and exercise, as well as information for children aged 0-17 on health conditions such as Asthma, heart conditions, eyesight, hearing problems, long term health conditions and Injuries. Information on health services used those aged 0-17 are also collected.</p> <p>Breast-feeding questions for children under 3 are asked.</p>
	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted 2002 (2008/09 collection underway)	<p>ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/</a></p> <p>For persons over 15 years the NATSISS provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• smoking, alcohol consumption, substance use</li> <li>• social and emotional wellbeing, family stressors</li> <li>• neighbourhood/community problems</li> <li>• if respondents have been the victim of physical/threatened violence</li> <li>• arrest/imprisonment in the past 5 years.</li> </ul> <p>There are also questions about children aged 0-14 about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sleep and nutrition</li> <li>• child health services</li> <li>• life events (social interaction, accommodation in times of stress or crisis etc).</li> </ul> <p>Maternal health questions are asked of mothers with children aged 0-3 years. These include questions about smoking, drinking and substance use while pregnant.</p>

	Administrative - National minimum data set for alcohol and other drug treatment services	Australian Government and state and territory health authorities	Due to data quality issues only aggregate reporting at a national level is reliable. Some lower level reporting is possible in specific states and/or territories	Annual Latest release 2006-07	<p>AIHW: <i>National minimum dataset available for Alcohol and drug treatment</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10590">http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10590</a></p> <p>Provides data on publicly funded alcohol and other drug treatment services and their clients, including information about the types of drugs for which treatment is sought and the types of treatment provided. Indigenous clients can be identified.</p> <p>However, some community health areas have low quality or no service use data.</p>
	Administrative - Hospital separations data State and territory health authorities	State and territory health authorities	State/territory	Annual Latest release 2006-07	<p>AIHW: <i>National Hospital Morbidity Database</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/hospitals/nhm_database.cfm">http://www.aihw.gov.au/hospitals/nhm_database.cfm</a></p> <p>Provides data on the number of Indigenous hospitalisations related to alcohol use. The quality of data varies between states and territories. Some state data cannot be used reliably.</p>
	Administrative - State/territory police offence records, state coronial records	State/territory police agencies, coroners	National level for Indigenous data	Annual Latest release 2006-07	<p>Australian Institute of Criminology: <i>National Homicide Monitoring Program</i>  <a href="http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/mr/01/">http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/mr/01/</a></p> <p>Provides information on the number of alcohol and drug influenced homicides.</p>
	Administrative - National Child Protection (NCP) data collection	State and territory child protection and support services	State/territory	Annual Latest release 2006-07	<p>AIHW: <i>National Child Protection (NCP) data collection</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10566">http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10566</a></p> <p>Provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations</li> <li>• children on care and protection orders</li> <li>• children in out-of-home care.</li> </ul> <p>Indigenous status of children can be identified.</p> <p>However, the quality of data on Indigenous child protection varies between states and territories. Some state data cannot be used reliably.</p>

	Administrative - National Perinatal Data Collection	State/territory health authorities	State/territory	Annual Latest release 2006	<p>AIHW: <i>Australia's mothers and babies</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10634">http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10634</a></p> <p>Provides estimates of Indigenous smoking rates during pregnancy, for all states/territories except Victoria. There is work in progress to collect consistent data on alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy.</p>
	Administrative - Drug and Alcohol Service Report (DASR) data collections	DoHA	Applicable to Drug and Alcohol Service Report (DASR) organisation locations	Annual Latest release 2005-06	<p>DoHA: <i>Drug and Alcohol Service Report (DASR) data</i>  <a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-oatsih-pubs-dasr-2005-2006">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-oatsih-pubs-dasr-2005-2006</a></p> <p>Service level data is collected by questionnaire from the 40 Australian collections</p> <p>Government funded stand-alone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander substance use services. The information collected includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• episodes of care provided</li> <li>• service resources</li> <li>• staffing profiles</li> <li>• the broad range of activities undertaken to help prevent and treat substance use covering a twelve month period.</li> </ul>
	Statistical - National Drug Strategy Household Survey	AIHW	National level for Indigenous data due to small sample	Last conducted in 2007	<p>AIHW: <i>National Drug Strategy Household Survey</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10674">http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10674</a></p> <p>Provides information for people living in non-remote areas, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drug use prevalence</li> <li>• drug-related behaviours and incidents</li> <li>• support for drug-related policy and legislation.</li> </ul>

Topic Area	Type of Collection	Data Owners	Output/ Geography	Timing/ Frequency	Data Reporting/Comments
Mental health services	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted in 2004-05	<p>ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4715.0Main+Features12004-05?OpenDocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4715.0Main+Features12004-05?OpenDocument</a></p> <p>Adults over the age of 18 were asked selected questions from the SF.36 and the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale.</p>
	Administrative - Hospital separations data	State/territory health authorities	State/territory	Annual Latest release 2006-07	<p>AIHW: <i>National Hospital Morbidity Database</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/hospitals/nhm_database.cfm">http://www.aihw.gov.au/hospitals/nhm_database.cfm</a></p> <p>Can provide data on the number of Indigenous hospitalisations related to mental and behavioural disorders. The quality of data varies between states and territories. Some state data cannot be used reliably.</p>
	Statistical and administrative - various mental health related sources	State/territory health authorities, AIHW, ABS, DoHA	Due to data quality issues only aggregate reporting at a national level is reliable. Some lower level reporting is possible in specific states and/or territories	Latest release 2005-06	<p>AIHW: <i>National Community Mental Health Care Database</i>  <a href="http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10594">http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10594</a></p> <p>The Mental Health Care Database provides information on the number of mental health service contacts for Indigenous peoples. However, numbers are understated due to reporting issues.</p> <p>The <i>Mental health services in Australia 2005-06</i> publication contains information about both Indigenous and non-Indigenous mental health services. It uses an array of administrative and survey data sources. However, only Indigenous status data for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and public hospitals in the Northern Territory have been included due to data quality issues.</p>

Topic Area	Type of Collection	Data Owners	Output/ Geography	Timing/ Frequency	Data Reporting/Comments
Access to education facilities	Statistical - Census of Population and Housing	ABS	Home/census Collection district (CD) level	5-yearly Last conducted in 2006	ABS: <i>Census of population and housing</i> <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/">http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/</a> Provides data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of school age children</li> <li>• number of children attending school</li> <li>• number of adults studying</li> </ul>
	Statistical - Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS)	FaHCSIA (collected by ABS)	Discrete Indigenous communities	Last conducted in 2006	ABS: <i>Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities</i> <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4710.0Main+Features22006?OpenDocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4710.0Main+Features22006?OpenDocument</a>  Provides data on access to schools and other educational facilities in the discrete Indigenous communities surveyed.
	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted in 2002 (2008/09 collection underway)	ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)</i> <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/</a>  Provides data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full time/parttime of adults/children</li> <li>• educational participation of Indigenous children</li> <li>• reasons for not attending school, if applicable.</li> </ul>
	Administrative - National Schools Statistics Collection	ABS (data provided by state, territory and Australian Government education departments)	State/territory Annual	Latest release 2007	ABS: <i>The National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC)</i> <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/10782996EC272F0FCA2572FE001D9184?opendocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/10782996EC272F0FCA2572FE001D9184?opendocument</a>  Provides aggregated data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school enrolments</li> <li>• school attendance</li> <li>• school/staffing profile</li> </ul>

Statistical/administrative- National Preschool Census	Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)	Information is currently available at national and state/territory level, Statistical Districts and MCEETYA classification areas of Metropolitan, Provincial and Remote areas	Annual Latest release 2007	<p><i>The National Preschool Census</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/F38F636C3009D757CA2572FE001D61D2?opendocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/F38F636C3009D757CA2572FE001D61D2?opendocument</a></p> <p>Provides information on preschool student enrolments, with a focus on Indigenous students. The collection counts enrolled students if they were on the roll during the census week and had attended a preschool education program in the last month.</p>
Administrative - Higher Education Student Statistics Collection (HESSC)	Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)	State/territory	Annual Latest release 2007	<p>DEEWR: <i>Higher Education Student Statistics Collection (HESSC)</i>  <a href="http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/higher_education_statistics_collection.htm">http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/higher_education_statistics_collection.htm</a></p> <p>Provides data on student enrolments and student load. Administrative – National Vocational Education and Training Provider collection VET providers National Centre for Vocational Education Research</p> <p>National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER): <i>National Vocational Education and Training Provider collection</i>  <a href="http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/publications/2019.html">http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/publications/2019.html</a></p>
Administrative - National Vocational Education and Training Provider collection	VET providers	State/territory	Annual Latest release 2007	<p>National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER): <i>National Vocational Education and Training Provider collection (NVETPC)</i>  <a href="http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/publications/2019.html">http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/publications/2019.html</a></p> <p>Provides data on Vocational Education and Training (VET) enrolment rates and attainment rates.</p>



Topic Area	Type of Collection	Data Owners	Output/ Geography	Timing/ Frequency	Data Reporting/Comments
<b>Indigenous enterprise and employment</b>	Statistical - Census of Population and Housing	ABS	Home/census Collection district (CD) level	5-yearly Last conducted in 2006	<p>ABS: <i>Census of population and housing</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/">http://www.abs.gov.au/WEBSITEDBS/D3310114.nsf/</a>            Provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• labour force status</li> <li>• self-employment</li> <li>• industries/occupation of employment</li> <li>• hours worked</li> </ul>
	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted in 2004-05	<p>ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4715.0Main+Features12004-05?OpenDocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4715.0Main+Features12004-05?OpenDocument</a>            Provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• labour force status (incl. CDEP)</li> <li>• duration of unemployment</li> <li>• hours usually worked</li> <li>• full time/part time status of employment</li> </ul>
	Statistical - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	6-yearly Last conducted in 2002 (2008/09 collection underway)	<p>ABS: <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/</a>            Provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• labour force status (incl. CDEP), duration on CDEP</li> <li>• duration of unemployment, hours usually worked</li> <li>• full time/part time status of employment</li> <li>• job security</li> <li>• employment sector</li> <li>• reasons not looking for work, difficulties finding work</li> <li>• whether work allows for cultural responsibilities</li> <li>• access to employment support services</li> <li>• reason did not use employment support services</li> </ul>

	Statistical - Labour Force Survey	ABS	State/territory and remoteness areas	Annual Latest release 2007	<p>ABS: <i>Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Experimental Estimates from the Labour Force Survey</i>  <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/203A6267794D53EECA2570AB0082C2F0?opendocument">http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/203A6267794D53EECA2570AB0082C2F0?opendocument</a></p> <p>Provides information about the labour force characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians using the Monthly Labour Force Survey. The estimates use methodological and definitional differences when compared with other sources of Indigenous Labour Force data, such as the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing, the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), and the 2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS). The differences in the methodologies used affect the comparability of the estimates.</p>
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## Appendix 5

### Map of Northern Territory government's proposed 'Territory Growth Towns'





## Appendix 6

### Levels of schooling provided in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory

Community Name	School Name	Pre School	Primary	Middle Years 7-9	Senior Years 10-12
Acacia Larrakia	Batchelor Area School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ali Curung (Alekarenge)	Alekarenge School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alpurrurulam (Lake Nash)	Alpurrurulam School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Amanbidji (Kildurk, Mailuini)	Amanbidji School	No	Yes	Yes	No
Amoonguna	Amoonguna School	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ampilatwatja (Ammaroo)	Ampilatwatja School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Angurugu	Angurugu School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Finke (Aputula)	Finke School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Areyonga	Areyonga School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Atitjere (Hart Range, Arteyerre)	Harts Range School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barunga (Bamyili)	Barunga School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belyuen (Delissaville)	Belyuen School	Yes	Yes	No	No
Beswick (Wugularr)	Wugularr School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Binjari	Serviced by Katherine	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bulla	Bulla Camp School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Bulman (Gulin Gulin)	Bulman School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Engawala (Alcoota)	Alcoota School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Galiwinku (Elcho Island, Galiwin'Ku)	Shepherdson College	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gapuwiyak (Lake Evella)	Gapuwiyak School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gunbalanya (Oenpelli)	Gunbalanya School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gunyangara (Marngarr)	Yirrkala Homeland School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji)	Haasts Bluff School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imangara (Murray Downs)	Murray Downs School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Imanpa	Imanpa School	No	Yes	Yes	No
Jilkminggan (Duck Creek)	Jilkminggan School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kalkaringi/Daguragu (Kakarinji, Wave Hill are aliases for Kalkaringi)	Kalkaringi School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kaltukatjara	Docker River School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Kintore (Walungurru)	Walungurru School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Kybrook Farm	Serviced by Pine Creek	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lajamanu	Lajamanu School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laramba	Laramba School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Maningrida	Maningrida School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manyallaluk (Eva Valley)	Manyallaluk School	Yes	Yes	No	No
Milikapiti (Melville Island)	Milikapiti School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Milingimbi	Milingimbi School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Milyakburra (Bickerton Island)	Milyakburra School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No



Community Name	School Name	Pre School	Primary	Middle Years 7-9	Senior Years 10-12
Minjilang (Croker Island)	Mamaruni School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Minyerri (Minyerri, Hodgson Downs)	Minyerri School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mt Liebig (Watiyawana, Watiyawanu)	Watiyawanu School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Mutitjulu	Mutitjulu School	No	Yes	Yes	No
Naiyu (Nambiyu, Daly River)	St Francis Xavier School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Nguiu (Bathurst Island)	Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ngukurr	Ngukurr School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ntaria (Hermannsburg)	Ntaria School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nturiya (Ti Tree Station – not Ti Tree township)	Ti Tree	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Numbulwar	Numbulwar School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nyirripi (Waite Creek)	Nyirripi School	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canteen Creek (Owairtilla)	Canteen Creek School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Palumpa (Nganmarriyanga)	Nganmarriyanga School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Papunya	Papunya School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peppimenarti	Peppimenarti School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Pigeon Hole	Pigeon Hole School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Pirlangimpi (Garden Point)	Pularumpi School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Pmara Jutunta (covering Ti Tree)	Ti Tree	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ramingining	Ramingining School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rittarangu (Urapunga)	Stirling School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Robinson River (Mungoorbada)	Robinson River School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Santa Teresa	Ltyentye Apurte	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tara (Neutral Junction)	Neutral Junction School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Titjikala	Titjikala School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Umbakumba	Umbakumba School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wadeye	Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wallace Rockhole	Wallace Rockhole School	Yes	Yes	No	No
Warruwi (Goulburn Island)	Warruwi School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Weemol	Bulman School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Willowra	Willowra School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Wilora	Stirling School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wutungurra (Wetenngerr, Epenarra)	Epenarra School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Yarralin	Yarralin School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Yirrkala	Yirrkala Homeland School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yuelamu	Mt Allan School	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yuendumu	Yuendumu School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Appendix 7

### Police in Northern Territory Indigenous communities

Community Name	Police Station Providing Service and Nominal Number of Police	Number of actual Police located in the community	Approximate distance to nearest permanent police (km)
Ali Curung	Ali Curung (3)	7 (3xNTPO, 2 x ACPO) + (2 x AFPO)	
Alpurrurulam (Lake Nash)	Alpurrurulam - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Amoonguna	Alice Springs		20
Ampilatwatja	Ali Curung (3)		100
Angurugu	Angurugu PP - Alyangula (15)	1 (ACPO)	
Areyonga	Ntaria (5)		60
Arlparra	Arlparra - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Atitjere (Hart Range)	Hart Range	2 (NTPO)	
Barunga	Barunga PP -Maranboy	2 (ACPO)	
Belyuen	Humpty Doo (5) / Palmerston AH (50)		60
Beswick	Beswick PP - Maranboy	2 (ACPO)	
Binjari	Katherine (55)		20
Bulman	Bulman - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Bulman (Gulin Gulin)	Maranboy (2)		140
Canteen Creek	Ali Curung / Tennant Creek (29)		160
Daguragu	Kalkaringi (5)		20
Finke	Finke - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Galiwinku	Galiwinku	5 (3xNTPO, 2 x ACPO)	
Gapuwiyak (Lake Evella)	Gapuwiyak - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Gunbalanya (Oenpelli)	Gunbalanya	5 (2 x NTPO, 1 x ACPO) + (2 x AFPO)	
Haasts Bluff	Haasts Bluff - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Hermannsburg	Ntaria	5 (3xNTPO, 1xACPO)	
Imanpa	Imanpa - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Jilkminggan	Mataranka (2)		40
Kalkaringi	Kalkaringi	3 (2xNTPO, 1xACPO)	
Kaltukatjara (Docker River)	Yulara (5)		200
Kintore (Walungurru)	Kintore (3)		
Lajamanu	Lajamanu	3 (2xNTPO, 1xACPO)	
Laramba	Yuendumu (5)		100
Maningrida	Maningrida	5 (3xNTPO, 2xACPO) + (3 AFPO)	
Milikapiti	Milikapiti PP - Pirlangimpi	2 (ACPO)	
Milingimbi	Maningrida (5)		80
Minjilang	Minjilang - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Minyeri	Minyerri - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Mt Liebig (Watiyawana)	Papunya (3)		



Community Name	Police Station Providing Service and Nominal Number of Police	Number of actual Police located in the community	Approximate distance to nearest permanent police (km)
Mutiŋjulu	Mutiŋjulu - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Naiyu	Daly River (3)		
Nguiu	Nguiu	5 (3xNTPO, 2xACPO)	
Ngukurr	Ngukurr	3 (2xNTPO, 1ACPO)	
Numbulwar	Numbulwar - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Nyirripi	Nyirripi - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Palumpa (Nganmarriyanga)	Wadeye (7)		
Papunya	Papunya	3 (NTPO)	
Peppimenarti	Peppimenarti - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	60
Pirlangimpi	Pirlangimpi	2 (NTPO)	
Pmara Jutunta	Ti Tree (3)		20
Ramingining	Ramingining (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Santa Teresa	Santa Teresa - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Titjikala	Santa Teresa (2) / Finke (2)		100
Umbakumba	Umbakumba PP - Alyangula	2 (ACPO) - 2 Vacant	
Wadeye	Wadeye (7)	6 (1xNTPO, 5xNTPO, 1ACPO)	
Warruwi	Warruwi - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	120
Willowra	Willowra - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	80
Yarralin	Yarralin - (THEMIS [3])	3 (1x NTPO, 2 x AFPO)	
Yirrkala	Nhulunbuy (18)		40
Yuendumu	Yuendumu (5)		40
Yuendumu	Yuendumu	5 (1xNTPO, 2xNTPO, 2xACPO)	

Column 2 includes the Community name and the 'establishment' figures for that community (the nominal number of Police).

Column 3 provides a breakdown of the actual police numbers (as at 11 June 2009)  
Key: NTPO - Northern Territory Police Officers; AFPO - Australian Federal Police Officers; ACPO - Aboriginal Community Police Officers.

Note: Where there are two localities in column 2, the first is an outpost facility and the second is the actual police station. The numbers in column 3 relate to the outpost.

For the larger stations there is no information included in column 3 due to the dynamic nature of police numbers in these stations.

THEMIS - This Taskforce was the combined police response to the need for extra policing in the NTER communities.