

Chapter 2

Commonwealth Policy on Indigenous Affairs

Introduction

2.1 This chapter outlines national Indigenous policy and program developments since the committee's last report in November 2009. In particular, this chapter examines the status of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 'Closing the Gap' in Indigenous Disadvantage initiative.

2.2 This chapter also looks at key Indigenous housing, education, health and employment and enterprise initiatives across the nation since the committee's last report.

2.3 The Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion wrote to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, on 24 February 2010 with a series of questions on notice and follow up from previous reports. The response was not received in time to incorporate in this report. The Minister's evidence will be included in the committee's final report which will be tabled in the second half of 2010.

Clear and Transparent Strategy

2.4 In its second report, the committee outlined its overall frustration, which had been raised a number of times in meetings and in evidence, with the lack of a clear and transparent policy framework governing the operations of Indigenous affairs in Australia.¹

2.5 The committee retains its concern that there is no publicly available, clear and transparent policy framework for Indigenous affairs in Australia. The committee notes that without a publicly available framework the following issues are of concern:

- (a) the extent to which government initiatives are evidence based and accord to world's best practice;
- (b) the potential for misunderstanding about the range of measures that governments are committed to implementing;
- (c) a misalignment of programs in similar locations;
- (d) slow implementation of initiatives; and
- (e) an inadequate understanding of the overall amount of funding being provided to Indigenous communities.

1 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 2*, p. 5.

2.6 Nevertheless, in its continued meetings with state and territory officials, the committee notes that the COAG Closing the Gap initiative is driving much of the work of the Commonwealth, respective jurisdictions and at the community level. The committee notes the positive response from and commitment by all levels of government to implement the COAG initiative and the focus on closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

2.7 The committee has also noted a change in the levels of transparency of the COAG initiative. For example, the public release of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services' Six Monthly Report² and COAG's public response to the report³ have been positive improvements.

2.8 This chapter outlines key activities over the past six months. It also outlines areas that the committee will explore in its final report.

Closing the Gap Policy

2.9 On 2 October 2008 COAG agreed to a \$4.6 billion national investment in six targets areas to reduce Indigenous disadvantage as part of the Closing the Gap initiative.⁴ The COAG targets are to:

- (i) close the gap in life expectancy within a generation;
- (ii) halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five by 2018;
- (iii) provide early childhood education access for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities by 2013;
- (iv) halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018;
- (v) halve the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment for Indigenous 20–24 year olds by 2020; and
- (vi) halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018.⁵

2 Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Six Monthly Report*, July-November 2009.

3 Council of Australian Governments Website, Working Group on Indigenous Reform, Progress Status Report, Addressing the Recommendations of the First Six Monthly Report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes (accessed on 29 April 2010).

4 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 5.

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

2.10 Under the COAG Remote Indigenous Service Delivery Agreement, the Australian, state and territory governments agreed to improve access to services to meet the above six targets in 29 priority communities. These communities were selected to 'provide the scope for innovative approaches to be trialled and for what works to be replicated in other locations.'⁶

Progress in Closing the Gap

2.11 On 11 February 2010, the Prime Minister delivered a Statement to the House of Representatives on the Government's progress in 'Closing the Gap' on Indigenous disadvantage. The Prime Minister indicated that there has been 'a slow path to change' but there is action across all levels of government.⁷

2.12 The Prime Minister also noted that there were some signs of improvement in:

- (a) life expectancy;⁸
- (b) child mortality;⁹
- (c) year twelve attainment;¹⁰ and
- (d) the employment gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians.¹¹

2.13 The Prime Minister's report notes that there are mixed results for early childhood education and a significant gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous student literacy and numeracy levels.¹²

2.14 The Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services' Six Monthly Report also notes that while there is evidence of some results so far, progress has been slow:

While progress is being made, the expectations created by the Apology and the November 2008 COAG reform are very high.

One year after COAG's commitment to critical new investments in education, health and housing, there is some evidence of the substantial

6 Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Six Monthly Report*, July-November 2009, p. 5.

7 The Hon Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 11 February 2010, p. 1169.

8 The Hon Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister, Closing the Gap Report, p. 15.
<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/general/Documents/ClosingtheGap2010/closingthe-gap2010.pdf> (accessed 28 April 2010).

9 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 17.

10 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 26.

11 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 30.

12 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 30.

benefits flowing through to individual communities, but people are impatient for more. In areas where the agreed implementation lead times are longer, Commonwealth, State and Territory departments advise that significant planning is occurring in preparation for the roll out of investments. However, in some cases, agencies are unable to show how much and where these new resources will flow.¹³

2.15 The committee is concerned by the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services's findings that in some cases, agencies are unable to show how much and where new program resources are likely to be provided.¹⁴ The committee considers that this demonstrates the lack of understanding of decisions by employees who are responsible for program implementation. This comment also reiterated the committee's view that there needs to be an overarching framework for Indigenous Affairs in Australia.

2.16 The committee's last reports outlined that governments and communities were conducting significant project planning and preparation in late 2008 and throughout 2009 for initiatives that will be implemented in regional and remote Australian communities (for example, housing and health initiatives). The committee considers that tangible outcomes on the ground in regional and remote Indigenous communities **must** occur in 2010 given the amount of effort that has been placed into program development and planning.

2.17 Accordingly, the committee will outline overall progress on the COAG Closing the Gap initiative in its final report and provide advice on whether or not Commonwealth, state and territory governments are meeting their targets and achieving what they set out to undertake.

Baseline Data to Support the Closing the Gap Initiative

2.18 The Prime Minister recently reiterated a continued concern that the committee has previously highlighted about the lack of comprehensive data and the impact that this has had on tracking progress and achieving the six COAG targets:

The report I table today...demonstrates the challenges of accurate data –to track our progress to closing the gap – and thereby meet our targets.¹⁵

2.19 Indeed, the committee's very first recommendation in its second report concerned the lack of available data to enable governments to monitor the impact its policies are having on the ground. The committee outlined the need for a concerted

13 Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Six Monthly Report*, July-November 2009, p. 5.

14 Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Six Monthly Report*, July-November 2009, p. 5.

15 The Hon Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 11 February 2010, p. 1169.

effort to improve the quality and scope of existing data collections on regional and remote Indigenous communities.¹⁶

2.20 Almost one year later, the committee considers that there is still a lack of baseline data in many areas as evidenced by the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report. For example: there is no data to accurately measure child mortality; early childhood education rates are based on 2008 figures; and Indigenous employment rates are based on data taken from between 2002 and 2008.¹⁷

2.21 The committee reiterates its concern that there needs to be a concerted effort to improve the quality and scope of existing data collections on regional and remote Indigenous communities if governments are to accurately measure the tangible improvements that are being made across the nation.

2.22 The committee notes that the COAG Reform Council will develop a *National Indigenous Reform Agreement: Baseline performance report for 2008–09* for publication in June 2010.¹⁸ The report is anticipated to provide a baseline assessment against the six targets for the COAG Closing the Gap initiative. The committee hopes that this report will provide baseline data against which to measure future COAG programs in conjunction with the work of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services.

Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

2.23 The committee had also hoped that the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, which was announced in the 2009–10 Budget, would provide a cumulative evidence base to monitor progress on program implementation, identify gaps and help to coordinate research/evaluation. In its last report, the committee committed to following up with the Australian Government on the utilisation of information provided by the Clearinghouse.¹⁹

2.24 The Clearinghouse website was launched on 31 October 2009. The website currently provides:

- (a) A general collection of reports relevant to the COAG building blocks;
- (b) A smaller quality assessed collection of research and evaluations with assessments of the evidence;

16 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 2*, pp. 25 - 61.

17 Prime Minister's Report 2010, *Closing the Gap Report*.

18 Council of Australian Governments Reform Council Website
http://www.coag.gov.au/crc/report_timeframes.cfm (accessed 24 April 2010).

19 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 15.

- (c) A register of research and evaluations conducted across Australia (in progress or conducted in the past three years); and
- (d) A helpdesk, e-newsletters, news features and calendar of events.²⁰

2.25 Through the committee's use of the website, it has found that for many topics, the most relevant and up to date information is not always available. This is despite the fact that reports, data and statistics are on other government, university and community sector agency websites.

2.26 The committee therefore considers that there should be further efforts by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to ensure that the Clearinghouse is kept up to date with accurate information and research papers. All respective stakeholders who produce relevant information, statistics and reports should also be encouraged to be proactive in providing information to the AIHW to assist in the development of the Clearinghouse. This will enable policy makers to use the website to develop evidence based policy and fully utilise the \$2.5 million²¹ that the Australian Government has committed to implement this project.

2.27 The committee further considers that the website should include information on the evaluation of programs at all levels of government so that policy makers can have quick access to lessons learned during other program rollouts so the same mistakes are not repeated. The committee has not had the benefit of evidence from the AIHW but will seek to report further on the Clearinghouse in its next report.

Recommendation 1

2.28 The committee recommends that all Australian Government and state/territory agencies, provide the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare with reports and publications as they are published, as well as statistics on an annual basis, to ensure that the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse is a relevant evidence base for policy makers.

COAG's 7 December 2009 Meeting

2.29 COAG met on 7 December 2009 and considered two Indigenous related issues:

- (a) food security in remote Indigenous communities; and

20 Closing the Gap Clearinghouse <http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/> (accessed 10 May 2010).

21 2009-10 Budget Papers, *The Policy Challenge*, http://www.ato.gov.au/budget/2009-10/content/ministerial_statements/indigenous/html/ms_indigenous-02.htm (accessed 29 April 2010).

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- (b) A report from the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services.²²

Food Security

2.30 At its meeting on 2 July 2009, COAG requested the development of a national strategy to address food security in remote Indigenous communities.²³ At their 7 December 2009 meeting, COAG agreed to a new National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities.

2.31 The Strategy outlines five actions to increase the consumption of healthy foods and reduce the diet-related burden of disease for Indigenous people in remote Australia and help close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage by:

- (a) developing National Standards for stores and takeaways servicing remote Indigenous communities in the areas of retail management, financial management, governance, infrastructure, food and nutrition policy, food preparation and food safety;
- (b) developing options for a National Quality Improvement Scheme, for consideration by COAG in mid-2010;
- (c) encouraging stores incorporated under State and Territory Associations Incorporations laws to incorporate under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006;
- (d) developing a National Healthy Eating Action Plan for remote Indigenous communities for consideration by COAG by mid-2010; and
- (e) developing a National Workforce Action Plan to improve food security through fostering an appropriately resourced, trained and supported workforce for consideration by COAG also in mid-2010.²⁴

2.32 COAG agreed to pilot this Strategy in up to ten remote Indigenous communities. The communities have not yet been announced.

2.33 The committee is pleased to see a commitment to develop a national response to food security in remote Indigenous communities. The committee continues to hear evidence about the severe lack of high quality, regular, reliable and affordable food in remote Indigenous communities.

22 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué* – 7 December 2009. http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-12-07/ (accessed 24 April 2010).

23 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué* – 2 July 2009. http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/index.cfm#closing (accessed 24 April 2010).

24 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué* – 7 December 2009.

2.34 The committee heard that the cost of a basket of staple foods varies considerably with other similar stores in the same settings. Food prices can be up to 18 per cent higher in some stores with comparable situations.²⁵

2.35 The committee's most recent visit to Queensland demonstrates that prices remain prohibitively high. Witnesses indicated that the price of an avocado is often around \$6²⁶ and petrol is \$2.09 per litre.²⁷ One local council member in Weipa said it was almost impossible to live:

It is virtually impossible to be able to provide the requirements of a family of that size on the same money that you are getting if you are in, say, Sydney with all the shopping options you have available to you. That translates across to petrol, rents, electricity—everything is expensive up here.²⁸

2.36 Further, in the Torres Strait, the high cost of goods can be as much as \$150 per person per week for basic staples. Fruit and vegetables are also often limited in supply and sell out quickly.²⁹

2.37 In its submission to the committee, Diabetes Australia was concerned at the disproportionately large number of Indigenous Australians suffering from diabetes and chronic disease in regional and remote Australia due to the lack of nutritious food:

Increased cost and limited availability of health food choices such as lean meats, fresh fruit and vegetables and whole grains make it very difficult to make healthy dietary choices...energy dense processed foods high in saturated fat, sugar and salt are more readily available for a cheaper price.³⁰

2.38 The National Rural Health Alliance was also concerned about the lack of quality food, particularly for pregnant women:

There are currently serious deficiencies relating to the supply of fresh food in some remote areas. It is fundamental to human rights and health that all pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, babies and children in rural and (particularly) remote areas have access to adequate affordable nutritious food.³¹

2.39 The committee is of the view that work being put into the COAG National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities should place a high

25 Dr Rosalie Schultz, *Submission 108*, p. 1.

26 Councillor Joseph Elu, Northern Peninsular Area Regional Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2010, p. 4.

27 Committee notes, Family Resources Centre, Bamaga, 13 April 2010.

28 Mr Shane Bousen, Weipa Town Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 12 April 2010, p. 19.

29 Torres Strait Regional Authority, *Submission 52*, p. 8.

30 Diabetes Australia, *Submission 52*, p. 4.

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

value on practical solutions that make a difference on food price, quality and availability in Indigenous communities.

2.40 The committee notes the work of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' inquiry into Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Community Stores.³² This inquiry made 32 recommendations about the situation in remote Indigenous communities. This committee considers that the House of Representatives inquiry report should be fully utilised in the COAG work to develop a National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities.

2.41 The committee also heard evidence from Professor Hurriyet Babacan from the Cairns Institute who told the committee about the need to look at agriculture to not only support economic development but provide for a sustainable diversified food supply:

Agriculture has been declining and people are looking at whether we can diversify the agricultural base. Mareeba had a small and run-down TAFE. The state government, the community cabinet, were up here about three weeks ago. They are investing some \$8 million into an agricultural college to look at growing alternative crops in this area and developing the skills to develop marketing niches—sometimes the crops can be grown, but marketing involves a whole set of skills. So I think there are some opportunities for Aboriginal people to tap into that. They are often overlooked.³³

2.42 The committee considers that it is important for a food strategy to look to self sustaining small scale agriculture, permaculture or market gardening. The committee understands that this may not be practical in all regional or remote communities due to the poor condition of the soil and the level of rainfall. Nevertheless, the committee considers that there should be innovative solutions canvassed in the strategy to promote a source of nutritious food in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 2

2.43 The committee recommends that the COAG work on the National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities include an analysis of alternative agriculture to improve the affordability, quality and availability of fresh fruit and vegetables in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

32 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Everybody's Business, Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Community Stores*, November 2009.

33 Professor Hurriyet Babacan, Cairns Institute, *Committee Hansard*, 14 April 2010, p. 32.

Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services

First Six Monthly Report

2.44 The 7 December 2009 COAG meeting considered the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services first Six Monthly Report.³⁴ The first Six Monthly Report outlines a baseline description of services in each of the 29 regional and remote Indigenous communities where COAG is focusing their initial efforts. In particular, the report outlines comparative service tables for each community. As outlined above, the committee has been concerned at the lack of baseline data on the COAG Closing the Gap initiative for some time.

2.45 The committee considers that the Coordinator General's first Six Monthly Report provides a clear benchmark and baseline against which to measure future developments and improvements. The committee considers that the first Six Monthly Report provides clear indicators about which services are and which are not provided in each of the different communities. This sort of reporting is conducive to assessing progress on the ground.

2.46 The committee is of the view that this type of information should be available for all regional and remote Indigenous communities. Such a report would be extremely beneficial in comparing all communities. It would inform budget prioritisation as well as allocation of programs and services. It would also allow for governments and independent reviewers to ascertain the positive impact that additional funding has on service and infrastructure delivery on the ground. It would further enable more adequate evaluation of programs and policies.

2.47 The committee acknowledges that there would be additional costs associated with producing such a report in its initial stages. Nevertheless, following a review of the Coordinator General's first Six Monthly Report, the committee is of the view that this work would be extremely valuable in providing a benchmark to judge future performance.

2.48 The committee understands only 149 discrete regional and remote Indigenous communities have over 200 residents.³⁵ The committee therefore recommends expanding the remit of the Coordinator General to all of these communities. If expansion of the Coordinator General's mandate to all of these communities proves difficult, the committee considers that FaHCSIA should further analyse ways to increase baseline data across a range of regional and remote Indigenous communities in Australia.

34 The report is available at the Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services Website: <http://www.cgris.gov.au/site/report.asp> (accessed 24 April 2010).

35 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey Data, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4710.0Main+Features12001?OpenDocument> (accessed 11 May 2010).

2.49 The committee considers that a report on these communities would likely result in significant financial savings from better directed and targeted programs. The committee also notes that some states and territories as well as local government authorities already compile data on regional and remote Indigenous services that should be utilised in the development of such a report.

Recommendation 3

2.50 The committee recommends that the Australian Government expand the remit of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services' reporting mandate for basic service and infrastructure in all regional and remote Indigenous communities with over 200 residents. The committee considers that the Coordinator General should be afforded additional resources to undertake such an expanded reporting role.

2.51 The committee notes that COAG has published a response outlining actions to address the issues raised in the Coordinator General's Six Monthly Report. The committee is pleased that governments have made this response public. The committee is also pleased with the swift action that governments have committed to undertake to respond to the report.

2.52 The committee understands that the Coordinator General's Six Monthly Report will also be utilised by all governments and local communities to develop a community based local implementation plan. As the Coordinator General said at the 12 February 2010 Senate Estimates Hearings:

Each local implementation plan will...draw upon my report, community feedback, and it will have a comprehensive action plan ... to address health, education, housing etc.³⁶

2.53 The committee supports the development of practical implementation plans in each of the 29 Remote Service Delivery communities to respond to the Coordinator General's Report and other local priorities. The committee also notes that by the time of the next Coordinator General's Report, all local implementation plans should be finalised.³⁷

2.54 The committee is encouraged by the planned consultation with local communities to develop the local implementation plans including the dedication of a liaison officer to assist communities with their plans.³⁸ The committee also

36 Mr Brian Gleeson, Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Hansard*, 12 February 2010, p. 7.

37 Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Six Monthly Report*, July-November 2009, p. 2.

38 Council of Australian Governments Website, *Working Group on Indigenous Reform, Progress Status Report, Addressing the Recommendations of the First Six Monthly Report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services*, p. 8.
http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes (accessed on 29 April 2010)

encourages the public release of local implementation plans. The committee continues to hear evidence from communities that they were not consulted on different project. This was recently confirmed in the committee's visit to Queensland. Ensuring that consultation plans are made public prior to consultation commencing ensures communities that consultation is best practice.

2.55 The committee notes that many of the targeted 29 remote Indigenous communities already have existing community development plans, action plans or local strategic priorities. The committee emphasises the need for any new implementation plan to:

- (i) take into account existing community plans and priorities;
- (ii) acknowledge existing community governance arrangements;
- (iii) undertake appropriate consultation with the community, state, territory and local governments, non government and community organisations; and
- (iv) have the ability to be implemented without excessive bureaucracy.

2.56 The committee looks forward to hearing the progress and outcomes of consultation with Indigenous communities. The committee will follow up on progress with the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services in its last report.

Recommendation 4

2.57 The committee notes the consultation being undertaken in developing local implementation plans but considers that as a matter of practice, consultation plans which are not readily accessible to the public should be made public prior to consultation being undertaken.

Council of Australian Governments 19 and 20 April 2010 Meeting

2.58 At its meeting of 19 and 20 April 2010, COAG considered a range of issues relating to health. At this meeting, COAG noted:

...the progress made on Indigenous health issues since the 2008 National Healthcare Agreement. The reforms agreed today aim to contribute to the improvement of health outcomes for Indigenous Australians through greater integration between hospital, general practice and primary health care services; governance structures focused at the local level; and public hospital funding mechanisms that recognise the needs of regional and remote areas.³⁹

39 Council of Australian Governments *Communiqué* –19 and 20 April 2010
http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes (accessed on 28 April 2010).

2.59 At this meeting, COAG also noted the Working Group on Indigenous Reform's progress status report addressing the recommendations of the 4 December 2009 report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services.⁴⁰

2.60 As noted above, the committee is pleased that COAG has committed to develop responses to the Coordinator General's first Six Monthly Report, including the following agreed or completed key actions at the national level:

- (a) articulation of the role of local government in the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery;
- (b) local implementation plans to be agreed by all three levels of government;
- (c) nomination of a liaison officer in each priority location to streamline coordination with Regional Operations Centres and assist in developing local implementation plans;
- (d) more visible and responsive policing in the Remote Service Delivery communities, including more regular reporting;
- (e) improvements to Centrelink transactional and case management services in the Remote Service Delivery communities;
- (f) more flexible funding approaches which aggregate departmental funding into a master contract with each of the Remote Service Delivery communities;
- (g) support for leadership and governance training across the Remote Service Delivery communities as well as training for government personnel working with communities; and
- (h) the development of a paper for COAG on the options for more effective planning and streamlining of infrastructure investment in Remote Service Delivery communities.⁴¹

2.61 COAG also agreed to amend the National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery to recognise the important role local government or other municipal service providers have in ensuring the effective delivery of the Partnership in each priority community, with the detail of these service provider commitments to be captured in a local implementation plan for each priority community.⁴² Further analysis of this issue is discussed below.

40 Council of Australian Governments *Communiqué* –19 and 20 April 2010.

41 Council of Australian Governments *Communiqué* , 19 and 20 April 2010.

42 Council of Australian Governments *Communiqué* , 19 and 20 April 2010.

Progress with Indigenous Housing, Education, Health and Employment/Enterprise Targets

2.62 Since the committee's last report, there has been progress on a range of initiatives. Key issues of interest to the committee's terms of reference are outlined below.

Housing

Progress with the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

2.63 On 30 November 2008 COAG committed to \$1.94 billion in new funding over ten years (\$834.6 million over five years) to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and the severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities.⁴³ The National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing commenced operation on 1 January 2009.

Delays with the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

2.64 Throughout 2009, there was much confusion about the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program. The Prime Minister acknowledged the confusion of these programs in his Closing the Gap Statement:

This is why, when evidence of unacceptable delays in our major Indigenous housing program in the Northern Territory last year, the Government took unprecedented action to get the program on track.⁴⁴

2.65 Following media and public criticism of the project, the Australian Government established an Office for Remote Indigenous Housing in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.⁴⁵

Improvements to the Partnership

2.66 The Australian Government also started the process of placing senior officials into each of the state capital cities or in some cases, into state housing departments to 'make sure that we see an improvement in delivery of remote Indigenous housing'.⁴⁶

43 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 11.

44 The Hon Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 11 February 2010, p. 1170.

45 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 'Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services (Six Monthly Report)', *Transcript*, 4 December 2009.

46 'Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services (Six Monthly Report)', *Transcript*, 4 December 2009.

2.67 On 7 December 2009, COAG agreed to the renegotiation of the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing. The Australian Government indicated that the following improvements would be made:

The renegotiation will enable a more competitive process for allocation of funding by the Commonwealth for capital works and provide strong incentives for the States and the Northern Territory to progress the construction of new housing, repairs and maintenance in remote Indigenous communities over the remaining eight years of this National Partnership...

The Commonwealth has worked in good faith to agree implementation plans and capital works plans with each jurisdiction. Work that has already been agreed for this financial year will continue under current arrangements.

COAG noted that the Prime Minister has written to Premier's and the Chief Ministers outlining in detail the terms of the negotiation.

Negotiations on the revised agreement will begin as a matter of priority, with a view to the revised agreement coming into effect from 1 July 2010.⁴⁷

2.68 The Australian Government has committed \$120 million in 2009–10 to build 320 new dwellings and to significantly upgrade 587 dwellings.⁴⁸ FaHCSIA indicated in the 12 February 2010 Senate Estimates Hearings that 15 new dwellings had been completed; 154 houses were underway; 240 refurbishments were either underway or completed.⁴⁹

2.69 The committee notes the revised arrangements for the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. Nevertheless, the committee remains concerned with the slow pace of government action in building new, upgraded or renovated houses. This is especially concerning given the evidence that the committee heard in Queensland (Chapter 3 refers) that outlines continued slow progress in rolling out housing that has been agreed to by either Commonwealth or state/territory governments.

2.70 The committee therefore thinks that the Commonwealth should immediately publish its progress in providing Indigenous housing in regional and remote Indigenous communities and that this information be updated on a monthly basis so that the committee and other concerned members of the public can track progress.

47 The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister and The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 'Renegotiation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing', *Joint Press Release*, 7 December 2009.

48 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Portfolio Budget Statement, p. 129.

49 Ms Amanda Cattermole and Dr Jeff Harmer, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Hansard*, 12 February 2010, p. 20.

2.71 The committee has not heard evidence that indicates appropriate consultation has been undertaken with communities about the level of local employment that projects will create as part of the housing initiative. The committee is concerned about the level of information that communities are provided during implementation of initiatives. The committee continues to hear anecdotal evidence from communities about the lack of consultation with councils about housing programs. For example, the committee heard frustration from communities in its recent trip to Weipa and Bamaga, (Chapter 3 refers). This will be an area for further investigation by the committee.

Recommendation 5

2.72 The committee recommends that on a monthly basis the Australian Government publish the number and location of new, rebuilt or refurbished homes completed under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing program.

Recommendation 6

2.73 The committee also recommends that the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services conduct a detailed analysis of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing in his next six monthly report.

Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program

2.74 The Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) is a \$672 million coordinated Indigenous housing agreement between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments across 73 remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. The program will deliver:

- (a) 750 new houses;
- (b) 230 rebuilds of existing houses; and
- (c) 2,500 refurbishments.

2.75 This project forms part of the overall COAG funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.⁵⁰ Three construction company consortia known as 'Alliances' were engaged to deliver the program. A target of 20 per cent has been set for Indigenous employment across the program.⁵¹

50 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 42.

51 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 42.

SIHIP Review

2.76 The Government acknowledges that there has been slow progress with the implementation of SIHIP and accordingly on 24 July 2009, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory commissioned a review to assess how to improve SIHIP.

2.77 The review considered criticisms that the program:

- (a) has been slow to deliver housing;
- (b) the governance is overly bureaucratic; and
- (c) the overall cost is too high.⁵²

2.78 The review found that the overall project was sound, but that it needed to be substantially overhauled in order to meet proposed targets:

The overall program design is sound. While certain high level aspects of the program must be addressed these have been identified early enough to ensure the program meets its objectives within the original timeframe.⁵³

2.79 The review provided six recommendations to optimise delivery of housing under the SIHIP program:

- (a) stronger leadership in the delivery of the program by the Australian Government;
- (b) the Australian Government take on a leadership role in community engagement in conjunction with the Northern Territory Government;
- (c) further analysis of lessons learnt from the first round of the Package Development Report be implemented for future development;
- (d) targets and timelines be made public; and
- (e) governments direct appropriate resources to: transitioning Indigenous employees under SIHIP into ongoing employment and effective property and tenancy management.⁵⁴

2.80 On 31 August 2009, The Australian and Northern Territory Governments accepted all the findings and recommendations of the review.⁵⁵ The review also raised

52 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Northern Territory Government, *Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program – Review of Program Performance*, 28 August 2009, p. 5.

53 *Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program – Review of Program Performance*, 28 August 2009, p. 5 – 6.

54 *Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program – Review of Program Performance*, 28 August 2009, p. 34.

issues which have implications for the overall National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing.⁵⁶

2.81 FaHCSIA provided a progress update on SIHIP at the 12 February 2010 Senate Estimates Hearings:

Dr Harmer—Because of the initially poor performance of SIHIP and Minister Macklin's concern about the performance of states and territories, she proposed a renegotiation of the national partnership to put more restrictions on the states and territories in terms of being accountable for progress. I will let Ms Cattermole explain this, but we have undertaken those negotiations. We initially thought it was going to be quite difficult, given that the agreement had only been signed in the relatively recent past.

However, with a great deal of work by Ms Cattermole and her people, we have been very successful in carrying out Minister Macklin's instructions. I will let the officers update you as to where we are at.

Ms Cattermole—The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, as you know, sits across all of the jurisdictions and the SIHIP component is now subsumed into that as one part. As Dr Harmer said, there was a decision taken at COAG last year to renegotiate the national partnership and that has been a very positive and relatively speedy process and that has recently been agreed. The Prime Minister has written to first ministers this week seeking their final agreement to that renegotiation. What it does is focus more on a strong performance focus for jurisdictions around ensuring that they deliver the capital works activity on time and within the budgets that have been agreed across the national partnership.⁵⁷

2.82 The SIHIP program target aims for 150 new houses to be completed; 1000 rebuilds and refurbishments and a minimum of 20 per cent Indigenous employment on site workforces by 31 December 2010.

2.83 As at 1 February 2010, FaHCSIA advises that 2 new houses have been completed with 54 underway; 70 rebuilds and refurbishments have been completed with 80 underway and achievement of 35 per cent Indigenous employment on site workforce.⁵⁸

55 The Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and The Hon Paul Henderson, MLA, NT Chief Minister, 'Improving Indigenous Housing in the NT', *Joint Press Release*, 31 August 2010.

56 'Improving Indigenous Housing in the NT', *Joint Press Release*, 31 August 2010.

57 Ms Amanda Cattermole and Dr Jeff Harmer, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Estimates Hansard*, 12 February 2010, p. 27.

58 'Improving Indigenous Housing in the NT', *Joint Press Release*, 31 August 2010.

Post Review Assessment of SIHIP

2.84 On 10 March 2010, the Australian Government released a Post Review Assessment of SIHIP.⁵⁹ The Post Review Assessment outlines the progress of SIHIP from August 2009 to March 2010. The overarching finding of the Post Review Assessment is as follows:

Based on available documentation, data and consultation with stakeholders, the PRA finds that despite a lag in achievement of construction targets up to February 2010, the changes put in place as a result of the Review are geared to achieving SIHIP's key targets by 2013, with the bulk of the outputs expected to be delivered over the next two years.⁶⁰

2.85 The committee notes the review found improvements in a range of areas over the past six months, including:

- (a) improvement of program managers in delivery;
- (b) stronger communication between government, the Alliance Partners and Indigenous communities;
- (c) improvements in policy guidelines and management systems; and
- (d) strong Indigenous employment outcomes.⁶¹

2.86 The committee is concerned at the Post Review Assessment's conclusion that the overall condition of housing following completion of renovations will remain substandard:

The budget of \$75,000 per dwelling is based on this premise and is generally insufficient for a comprehensive refurbishment. In many cases, these works alone will be insufficient for public housing occupancy standards to be achieved and maintained as a foundation for "normalising" social housing delivery. Public housing occupancy standards are effectively a pre-requisite to being able to collect adequate rent revenues to sustain repairs, maintenance and effective tenancy management in remote communities. This issue is recognised by program managers and ways of addressing it are being considered, but at the time of the PRA there is insufficient evidence that SIHIP functional assessments and other processes to provide repairs and maintenance can be integrated seamlessly or cost effectively.⁶²

59 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Website http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/housing/sihip_pra/Pages/default.aspx (accessed 12 March 2010).

60 *SIHIP Post Review Assessment*, March 2010, p. 4.

61 *SIHIP Post Review Assessment*, March 2010, p. 4.

62 *SIHIP Post Review Assessment*, March 2010, p. 4.

2.87 The committee notes that on 17 March 2010, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced a new independent, expert quality assurance team to inspect and assess new houses and refurbishments delivered under SIHIP in the Northern Territory. The Minister noted that:

The new team will make sure all work is completed to appropriate standards, and will operate in addition to existing checks already regularly made over the course of SIHIP construction and refurbishments.⁶³

2.88 The Minister also noted that the 'Australian Government will continue to take the necessary steps to drive continuing improvements in the delivery of Indigenous housing programs.'⁶⁴

2.89 The Minister further noted that the following additional steps will be undertaken to improve the SIHIP project:

- (a) employment of an additional 20 asset management officers and tenancy officers to operate in remote communities; and
- (b) additional resources to assess the existing condition of houses and improve baseline data to accurately measure improvements achieved through refurbishments.⁶⁵

2.90 The committee notes the Australian Government's efforts to improve the SIHIP initiative but remains concerned about the quality, workmanship, safety and reliability of the housing, renovation and other construction being undertaken under the program.

2.91 The committee will also follow up in its next report with information about how the 20 Asset Management Officers will contribute to the overall functional rollout of the SIHIP program in the Northern Territory.

Role of the Private Sector in Housing Delivery

2.92 The committee is further concerned with the anecdotal reports from some communities that suggest the private sector is charging excessive fees for government funded housing projects. The committee will seek to follow up on these reports with FaHCSIA in its next report.

63 The Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; The Hon Warren Snowden, MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery and The Hon Chris Burns MLA, NT Minister for Public and Affordable Housing, 'Further Improvements to NT Indigenous Housing Program', *Joint Press Release*, 17 March 2010.

64 'Further Improvements to NT Indigenous Housing Program', *Joint Press Release*, 17 March 2010.

65 'Further Improvements to NT Indigenous Housing Program', *Joint Press Release*, 17 March 2010.

Further Deliberations on Housing

2.93 There are a range of concerns about government housing programs that have been raised with the committee in public reports and in evidence from regional and remote Indigenous communities.

2.94 During this reporting period, the committee has not had sufficient time to hear evidence from the Australian Government and, in the case of SIHIP, the Northern Territory Government.

2.95 The committee intends to hear evidence from the Australian Government and Northern Territory officials to consider these issues in further detail. The committee will then look to provide further analysis in the committee's final report. Among other issues, the committee will look to analyse:

- (a) the overall progress of the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing, including SIHIP;
- (b) the outcomes of the SIHIP Post Review Assessment;
- (c) the overall quality of new, rebuilt or refurbished homes under the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing;
- (d) whether or not SIHIP meets public housing occupancy standards;
- (e) the role of the Asset Management Officers under SIHIP; and
- (f) the evaluation mechanisms for private sector construction companies.

Municipal Services

2.96 Under the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing, the Australian Government as well as state and territory governments have agreed to work towards clearer roles, responsibilities and funding for municipal services. They have also agreed to the ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and essential services in remote Indigenous communities. New arrangements will be in place from 1 July 2012.⁶⁶

2.97 The committee noted in its last report that it was concerned that the 2012 implementation date 'may mean that no progress is made in the next two years. Given the poor condition of municipal services that the committee encountered in the Kimberley, the committee considered this to be an urgent priority. 'The committee retains this concern.⁶⁷

66 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 87.

67 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 87.

2.98 The committee is advised that under the National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery, it was agreed that a national audit of municipal and essential services would be undertaken to assess the level of outstanding need for these services in remote Indigenous communities.

2.99 The committee is pleased that this audit is taking place, given its findings in its last report about the lack of understanding about who was responsible to provide municipal services in Western Australia.⁶⁸ However, the committee will be concerned if this audit does not occur quickly. The committee also hopes that local implementation plans that are now meant to be agreed by all three levels of government⁶⁹ ensure that this issue is adequately addressed and appropriate funding provided.

Education

2.100 In 2009, there were approximately 155 500 Indigenous full time students which is 4.5% of total students in Australian schools.⁷⁰ The Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Statement indicated that there still remains clear educational gaps, particularly in childhood education as well as literacy and numeracy levels.⁷¹ For example, in 2008, 63.4 per cent of Indigenous students compared with 92.6 per cent of non-Indigenous students were at or above the national minimum standard for Year 5 reading, a 29.2 per cent gap.⁷²

National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

2.101 At its July 2008 meeting, COAG agreed to a National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.⁷³ This Partnership commits \$564.6 million over six years from 1 January 2009. This includes the development of 35 children and family centres to provide early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous children and families.

68 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 85-93.

69 Council of Australian Governments Website, *Working Group on Indigenous Reform, Progress Status Report, Addressing the Recommendations of the First Six Monthly Report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services*, p. 6.
http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes (accessed on 29 April 2010)

70 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4.221.0 – *Schools in Australia, 2009*, 16 March 2010.
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4221.0?OpenDocument> (accessed on 25 March 2010).

71 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 19.

72 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 21.

73 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 2*, p. 11.

2.102 Appearing at the 12 February 2010 Senate Estimates Hearings, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations outlined the most recent development in the National Partnership:

... we will be providing funding in 35 or thereabouts locations and working with the states and territories to roll out those children and family centres, which in many cases will have a preschool component.⁷⁴

2.103 Further, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations considers that they are on track in the implementation of the Partnership:

We think they are on track and that there is time to achieve the objectives of the national partnership. Obviously, the whole process of community consultation, particularly when you are talking about Indigenous communities and the design of services that will be, if you will, purpose-built and designed for the particular circumstances of a given community, is absolutely critical to get that to happen. Our sense is that, overall, the exercise is on track.⁷⁵

2.104 The committee notes the announcement of some of the 35 Children and Family Centres but would like to see priority delivery of all 35 Children and Family Centres.⁷⁶ The committee heard a range of evidence in its recent visit to Queensland that reaffirms the committee's long-held view about the fundamental importance of early childhood development and learning (outlined in Chapter 3). The committee therefore hopes that the government places a high priority on rolling out the 35 Children and Family Centres to regional and remote communities in need of additional services. The committee will follow up on implementation in its next report.

Indigenous Education Action Plan

2.105 In its third report, the committee agreed to provide an update on the progress of the Indigenous Education Action Plan.⁷⁷ At their meeting in July 2009, COAG agreed to the development of an Indigenous Education Action Plan by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA).⁷⁸

74 Mr Michael Manthorpe, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Hansard*, p. 80.

75 Mr Michael Manthorpe, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Hansard*, p. 88.

76 For example: The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education. Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and The Hon David Bartlett MP, Tasmanian Premier and Minister for Education and Skills, '\$8m Children and Family Centre for Bridgewater', *Joint Press Release*, 29 April 2009.

77 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 7.

78 Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué* – 2 July 2009.

2.106 In December 2009, MCEECDYA called for submissions on a draft national Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010–2014. In doing so, MCEECDYA provided a public draft for comment.⁷⁹

2.107 The Indigenous Education Action Plan outlines how MCEECDYA will work to achieve the COAG Closing the Gap targets. The Plan provides for activities that will be undertaken at the national, state and local level to close the gap between the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

2.108 An initial draft of the plan was circulated to Indigenous education consultative bodies and a number of leading Indigenous educators for preliminary comment prior to public release. The plan will be finalised by mid 2010.⁸⁰

2.109 The plan focuses on six areas:

- (a) readiness for school;
- (b) engagement and connections;
- (c) attendance;
- (d) literacy and numeracy;
- (e) leadership, quality teaching and workforce development; and
- (f) pathways to real post school options.⁸¹

2.110 The plan provides aggregated national targets and goals based on the Closing the Gap priorities. It then outlines the actions that will be undertaken by each state and territory government to reduce the gap in Indigenous education disadvantage.

2.111 The committee is pleased to see a strong focus on improving evaluation and data of schools performance in the plan. In particular, the commitment to the development of an annual report outlining progress against the plan; an in-depth analysis of cohorts of Indigenous students; improvements to national education data sets and an evaluation of the Indigenous Education Action Plan in 2013 is commendable.

2.112 The plan indicates that 'engagement with Indigenous parents, students and communities is central to the design and delivery of programs and services'.⁸² Given

79 Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs website http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/indigenous_ed_action_plan_2010-2014_consultation,29978.html (accessed 30 April 2010).

80 Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs website, [http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/resources/IEAP_Stage_Two_Consultation_Draft_\(2\).pdf](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/resources/IEAP_Stage_Two_Consultation_Draft_(2).pdf) (accessed on 27 April 2010).

81 Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs website, [http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/resources/IEAP_Stage_Two_Consultation_Draft_\(2\).pdf](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/resources/IEAP_Stage_Two_Consultation_Draft_(2).pdf) (accessed on 27 April 2010).

the committee's consistent evidence about the key role of parents and the need to strongly promote learning at home, the committee is pleased with the focus on parents and learning. The committee's most recent evidence on the value of parents involvement in children's education in Queensland is discussed in Chapter 3.

2.113 The committee is also pleased to see a commitment to consult closely with the Indigenous Education Consultative Body in order for the plan to remain relevant and flexible to the changing needs of Indigenous students.

Australian Government's Sporting Chance Program

2.114 On 11 February 2010, the Australian Government announced an expansion of its Sporting Chance Program to support Indigenous students' engagement with school.⁸³ The Sporting Chance Program uses sport and recreation as a hook to better engage Indigenous boys and girls in their schooling to improve educational and employment outcomes.

2.115 The Government indicates that there were 42 Sporting Chance projects in 2009 including 37 school-based sports academies and five engagement strategies, supporting about 9 000 students. In 2010 an additional 17 sports academies will commence across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria, supporting about 1000 students, which will bring the total supported under the program to some 10 000.⁸⁴

2.116 The committee notes the introduction of the program and the impact for Indigenous students in remote and regional Australia and is pleased to note the anticipated increase in school attendance given these programs. The committee is also of the opinion that similar programs should be provided for students who have other interests. For example, a suggestion was made in Bamaga, that a similar program be introduced for students who are interested in the arts:

We have got to realise that some kids do not like to play sports, so we might work in with our director of community services, who is actually working with me right now in trying to develop the sports program, to identify some kids who are maybe interested in arts.⁸⁵

82 Draft Indigenous Education Action Plan (2010-2014), Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Website [http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/resources/IEAP_Stage_Two_Consultation_Draft_\(2\).pdf](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/resources/IEAP_Stage_Two_Consultation_Draft_(2).pdf) (accessed on 27 April 2010).

83 The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister, The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Sport, 'Sporting Chance Expansion', *Joint Press Release*, 11 February 2010.

84 'Sporting Chance Expansion', *Joint Press Release*, 11 February 2010.

85 Councillor Peter Lui, Northern Peninsular Area Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2010, p. 14.

2.117 The committee would like to see additional consideration given to programs for children in other extra curricular activities such as the arts.

Recommendation 7

2.118 Noting the success of the Sporting Chance Program, the committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate programs for other extra curricular activities such as a program for students interested in the arts.

National Indigenous Knowledge Centre

2.119 On 19 and 20 April 2008, the Australian Government convened a 2020 summit at Parliament House in Canberra. The summit brought together 1000 participants from across the nation and generated more than 900 ideas.⁸⁶ In the Australian Government's response to the 2020 summit which was released on 22 April 2009, one of the nine commitments was the first steps towards an Indigenous Cultural Education and Knowledge Centre.⁸⁷

2.120 On 4 February 2010, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced that consultations had begun for the feasibility study into a National Indigenous Knowledge Centre.⁸⁸

2.121 The committee has heard a range of evidence over the course of its inquiry about the need to respect, support and understand Indigenous culture as the oldest continuing culture in human history. For example, General Dave Chalmers, the former head of the Northern Territory Emergency Response noted the importance of culture and development.⁸⁹

2.122 The Kimberly Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre indicated the need for culture to be part of Commonwealth, state and territory planning; that governments need to take into account culture in providing funding and that governments should 'commit to levels of funding that are commensurate with genuine recognition that culture needs to be placed at the centre of the COAG planning processes and is vitally important for intrinsic and extrinsic reasons'.⁹⁰

2.123 In their submission, the Western Australian Indigenous Traditional Culture and Healing Project also indicated a strong desire to 'have access to their culture and

86 2020 Website. <http://www.australia2020.gov.au/> (accessed 24 April 2010).

87 The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister, 'Government response to the Australia 2020 Summit', *Press Release*, 22 April 2009.

88 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 'Indigenous Knowledge Centre Study Underway', *Press Release*, 4 February 2010.

89 Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, *Submission 37 b*, p. 3. and *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2009, p. 89.

90 Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, *Submission 37 b*, p. 4.

its essential values whether they live permanently or are temporarily residing in the city or in the regional areas'.⁹¹ They also demonstrated the importance of technology as a way to link up people to their cultural heritage:

Let me put this model to you. What we want is an established centre in Perth which will give regeneration and a buzz inside the people who attend. It will become like a watering hole where they get some education and they get tools to help themselves when they are back in their communities—and it will help the communities. We do not only want to establish that centre. Being an RTO and doing distance learning is one of our specialties, so we have the infrastructure in place for distance learning and we have state-of-the-art technology. We can have 10 webcams come in at once and we can have a number of people online. That is a facility that we already have. We can do distance learning in other countries as we are well established.⁹²

2.124 The committee notes that the National Indigenous Knowledge Centre proposal is subject to further consultation. The committee considers that given the evidence provided by the West Australian Indigenous Traditional Culture and Healing Project that is currently undertaking a similar project in Western Australia, it is important for the National Indigenous Knowledge Centre to be able to provide communication links between Indigenous Australians and the Centre. The committee sees a key role for technology based solutions to support the understanding of, and respect for, Indigenous cultures.

2.125 The committee will follow the progress of the National Indigenous Knowledge Centre proposal in its next report.

Employment and Enterprise Opportunities

2.126 Australia's 'tyranny of distance' impacts most on regional and remote Indigenous communities and has a distinct impact on employment prospects. As outlined in the committee's first report, employment is one of the best ways to drive economic development and make a difference to some of the entrenched social problems in regional and remote Indigenous communities.⁹³

2.127 Nevertheless, the Prime Minister's 2010 Closing the Gap Report indicates progress in reducing the Indigenous unemployment rate is slow. Currently, 35.5 per cent of the Indigenous workforce age population is not in the labour force.⁹⁴ Further the levels of diversification of employment for Indigenous people living in remote and regional Australia are far less diverse than with urban Indigenous Australians.

91 West Australian Indigenous Traditional Culture and Healing Project, *Submission 98*, p. 3.

92 Mr Vasudeva Barnao, West Australian Indigenous Traditional Culture and Healing Project, *Committee Hansard*, 9 October 2009, p. 15.

93 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 1*, p. 49.

94 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 30.

2.128 Changing this situation will require developing creative models for community development and a strong commitment by governments, business and the community in each and every Indigenous community.

2.129 The committee recognises that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to enhance Indigenous employment opportunities. Nevertheless, throughout the communities that the committee has visited in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, those communities that are most successful have developed a range of different pathways from basic education and specific training to employment.

COAG National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Economic Participation

2.130 COAG's National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Economic Participation was signed in February 2009. This National Partnership is designed to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018.⁹⁵

2.131 The National Partnership involves complementary investment and effort by the Australian Government as well as state and territory governments to significantly improve opportunities for Indigenous people to engage in private and public sector jobs by:

- (a) creating jobs in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidies through the Community Development Employment Projects program;
- (b) increasing public sector employment to reflect Indigenous working age population share by 2015;
- (c) building Indigenous workforce strategies into implementation plans for all COAG reforms contributing to the closing the gap targets; and
- (d) strengthening government procurement policies to maximise Indigenous employment.⁹⁶

2.132 The committee is concerned at the overall slow progress to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

2.133 Under COAG's Closing the Gap initiative, the Australian Government has indicated that between 1 July 2009 and 31 January 2010 18 000 Indigenous Australians were placed into work by Job Services Australia.⁹⁷ This has been

95 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 11.

96 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 11.

97 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 48.

underpinned by the Australian Government's funding commitment of \$750 million for the reformed Indigenous Employment Program.⁹⁸

2.134 Nevertheless, as the Prime Minister noted, Australia is falling short of meeting COAG's target. A faster reduction in the gap than has been recently achieved is required to fulfil the COAG target.⁹⁹

Australian Employment Covenant

2.135 The Australian Employment Covenant (AEC) is an initiative aimed at securing 50 000 sustainable jobs for Indigenous Australians – including in remote and regional Australia. The AEC is a three-way initiative between Australian business; the Australian Government and Indigenous Australians. The AEC is designed to:

Provide the leadership and the facilitation to drive the collaborative efforts of industry, Indigenous leaders and Government in an aspiration to secure 50,000 sustainable jobs filled by Indigenous Australians;

Ensure participating Australian employers (“AEC Employers”) formally guarantee to provide sustainable employment for Indigenous Australians on successful completion of pre-employment job specific training funded by Government to the AEC Employer’s specifications. The AEC Employer guarantee includes access to post job placement support through individual mentoring in the work place; and

Encourage AEC Employer workplace culture and practices directed at improving the recruitment, retention and development of Indigenous participants. The Employment Covenant will, through a network of patrons, ambassadors and champions at national, state and regional levels, support AEC Employers at all levels in the nation’s economy in this drive.¹⁰⁰

2.136 The committee acknowledges that a target of 50 000 jobs in two years is ambitious. The last report from the AEC on outcomes as at 31 January 2010 states that there are a total of 16 939 job commitments from employers, 622 Indigenous job seekers have commenced in employment and, of those 622, 88 have been in employment for more than 26 weeks.¹⁰¹

GenerationOne

2.137 GenerationOne is a campaign to encourage mainstream, grass roots involvement for all Australians to contribute solutions to break the Indigenous poverty trap in this generation. The campaign has a practical focus in obtaining employment

98 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 48.

99 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 30.

100 Ms Jo Wood, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Estimates Hansard*, 12 February 2010, p. 42.

101 Mr Robert Griew, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Estimates Hansard*, 12 February 2010, p. 44.

for Indigenous Australians. It encourages education and training that leads to real employment outcomes.¹⁰²

2.138 The committee notes that the GenerationOne campaign is undertaking a national road show which will include regional and remote Australia. The committee is supportive of and encourages involvement in GenerationOne and the achievement of 50 000 jobs for Indigenous Australians, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Government Ambassador for Business Action and Indigenous Employment Forum

2.139 The committee notes the Government's commitment of 11 February 2010 to establish a Government Ambassador for Business Action to encourage the private sector to play an active role in Indigenous employment as part of the \$3 million Business Action Agenda.¹⁰³

2.140 At this stage, the committee is unsure of the linkages between the Ambassador and the Government's commitments under the Australian Employment Covenant, GenerationOne and Indigenous Business Australia. The committee will closely follow the progress of the Government Ambassador for Business Action and provide analysis of this position in its next report.

2.141 The committee also notes that on 24 February 2010, the Government hosted an Indigenous Employment Forum with representatives from corporate Australia to bring government, business and partner organisations together to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage in economic participation. The Prime Minister indicated that the forum was all about how we can change attitudes and how business can get a better understanding of how to attract, and importantly, retain Indigenous workers.¹⁰⁴

2.142 The committee is supportive of any attempt to improve Indigenous employment in Australia.

Community Development Employment Projects

2.143 The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme commenced in 1977. As outlined in the committee's first report, the CDEP was designed to support Indigenous Australians to achieve economic independence.¹⁰⁵

102 Additional information can be found at: <http://www.generationone.org.au> (accessed 24 March 2010).

103 The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister, the Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *New Ambassador For Business To Help Close the Gap*, Press Release, 11 February 2010.

104 The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister, 'Speech at the Launch of Generation One', Speech, 19 March 2010.

105 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 1*, p. 55.

2.144 In July 2009, the Australian Government provided \$202.4 million over five years to reform the CDEP and the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP). The reforms were designed to make progress in meeting the Government's targets of halving the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade. The Government has indicated that the reformed programs will provide greater linkages to universal employment services for all Indigenous Australians.¹⁰⁶

2.145 Current participants in remote areas will still be able to access CDEP wages until 30 June 2011 to support their transition to the new arrangements. Current participants will be required to move to income support after 1 July 2009 if they take a break from CDEP for more than 2 weeks, excluding approved leave. From 1 July 2009 all new CDEP participants in remote locations will not be eligible to receive CDEP wages but may instead be eligible to receive an Income Support Payment.¹⁰⁷

2.146 The committee has heard both positive and negative commentary about CDEP since the changes to the scheme. Some have seen the changes to the scheme as positive on the grounds that CDEP did not benefit communities and entrenched a system of handouts. One witness commented that in some communities:

All they have ever known for the last 30 years is a government program called CDEP¹⁰⁸

2.147 Other submissions have commented that the negative view of CDEP should be reversed because CDEP provided for an employment pathway for those people in regional and remote Australia without ready access to jobs:

There must be a shift in Government perception away from the negative view of CDEP, to one where it is considered as a positive way of providing worthwhile employment to community members in their communities. This has not been achieved in the Government's recent review of CDEP. We believe that part of the Government's main agenda concerning CDEP is that by transitioning CDEP participants from CDEP wages to Centrelink benefits then they can be Income Managed. There has been enough subterfuge around this subject for too long.¹⁰⁹

2.148 In its recent trip to Queensland the committee heard a range of views on CDEP. These views are outlined in Chapter 3.

106 FaHCSIA 2009-10 Budget, Closing the Gap - Community Development Employment Projects Program (CDEP) and the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) reform http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publications/articles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget09_10/indigenous/Pages/09_CDEP_IEP_Reform.aspx (Accessed on 1 March 2010).

107 Centrelink Website <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/services/cdep.htm#about> (accessed on 17 April 2010).

108 Councillor Peter Lui, Northern Peninsula Area Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 April 2010, p. 8

109 Ramingining Homelands Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 77*, p. 4.

2.149 For regional and remote communities, the Government's figures indicate that since the 1 July 2009 CDEP reforms, the following results have been achieved:

- (a) the Indigenous Employment Program has placed 28 300 Indigenous people, an increase of 18 per cent over the equivalent period in the previous year;
- (b) 1236 CDEP participants have been placed in Commonwealth funded positions;
- (c) 306 participants have placed in state funded positions;
- (d) \$228 million has been invested by the Commonwealth; and
- (e) 90 per cent of 8 903 CDEP participants in remote areas are now enrolled with Job Services Australia providers, who will support them for movement into the mainstream labour market.¹¹⁰

2.150 The committee notes alternative investment to replace CDEP programs such as the 1 March 2010 investment of \$172.4 million over three years to build the skills of Indigenous Australians through a range of training, mentoring and community development projects across 500 remote Indigenous communities.¹¹¹ The committee also notes funding provided in the 2010–11 Budget that reforms CDEP in the communities of the Torres Strait.

2.151 The committee considers that beyond 30 June 2011, the Australian Government will need to have a long term strategy for addressing employment and the likely corresponding impacts on employment levels in regional and remote communities. The committee notes that the Australian Government is currently working on this project and notes the budget allocation for CDEP training initiatives outlined in the 2010–11 Budget below.

Mentoring and Leadership

2.152 Throughout the committee's inquiry, there was much evidence about the positive role that mentoring plays as a support function for Indigenous people entering employment.¹¹² Mentoring and support provide needed advice on a whole range of issues, including:

- (a) the stresses and strains of a workplace or different training;
- (b) how workplace environments affect learning;
- (c) emotional intelligence; and

110 Mr Robert Griew, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Estimates Hansard*, 12 February 2010, p. 44.

111 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, 'Building Skilled Australians in Remote Indigenous Communities', *Press Release*, 1 March 2010.

112 For example: Mr Gregory Arnott, *Committee Hansard*, 20 May 2009, p. 7.

(d) specific subject-matter expertise.

2.153 The Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services also indicated the strong need for leadership in communities. As he commented in the recent Senate Estimates Hearings:

Unless we improve the leadership within some of these communities, it is going to be very hard for governments to get progress. From my point of view, it is one of the high priorities for us in early 2010 to say, 'Get that right. Get the communities working together. Give them ownership etcetera.' From that, you can build on getting greater success through the government's support.¹¹³

2.154 The committee acknowledges the work of the Government in promoting Indigenous leadership programs. Since 2004, over 6 000 Indigenous Australians have already participated in leadership development and as a result they have experienced positive changes in their lives and futures.¹¹⁴

2.155 The committee also notes the intention of the Australian Government to promote Indigenous leadership by holding more than 50 leadership development workshops over the next six months to foster stronger relationships with hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia.¹¹⁵

2.156 The committee further notes the COAG response to the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services Report that commits to providing ongoing governance and leadership training for individual communities.¹¹⁶

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access

2.157 In its last report, the committee outlined the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access. This agreement seeks to provide public internet access facilities in remote Indigenous communities with limited or no public internet access; create a program for maintenance and support of public internet access in those communities commencing in 2011–12 and offer training in computer and internet use in up to 60 remote communities a year.¹¹⁷

113 Mr Brian Gleeson, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Estimates Hansard*, 12 February 2010, p.9.

114 The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Website: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/leadership/Pages/indigenous_leadership_development_opportunities.aspx (accessed 20 March 2010).

115 The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Website: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/leadership/Pages/indigenous_leadership_development_opportunities.aspx (accessed 20 March 2010).

116 Addressing the Recommendations of the First Six Monthly Report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, p. 19.

117 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 9.

2.158 Under this Agreement, the Commonwealth is providing \$6.97 million over four years to New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory to improve public internet access and provide basic computer training.¹¹⁸

2.159 The Australian Government expects that in 2009–10, over 45 remote communities are expected to receive public internet access facilities and training under this initiative.

2.160 The committee considers that provision of high speed broadband internet provides enhanced opportunities for Indigenous Australians to access government services, advice on a range of issues such as health and education as well as linkages to possible employment or marketing of small business ideas to local government and should be encouraged.

Health

2.161 The Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report indicates some improvements in life expectancy and infant mortality. As at 2008, the gap between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians life expectancy was 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females.¹¹⁹ The gap for infant mortality is 103.7 infant deaths per 100 000 children aged 0–4 years for non Indigenous and 204.8 infant deaths per 100 000 children for Indigenous Australians.¹²⁰

2.162 According to the National Indigenous Health Equality Council, the Australian Indigenous infant mortality rate has been declining and the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous infants has been narrowing. 'If current trends continue, we could reduce infant mortality rates to the same level as non-Indigenous rates by 2018'.¹²¹

2.163 The Prime Minister has stated that since 2007–08, the Australian Government has increased its annual expenditure by 57 per cent on Indigenous specific health programs.¹²²

118 Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Website, http://www.dbcde.gov.au/funding_and_programs/indigenous_communications_program (accessed 10 May 2010).

119 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 13.

120 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 13.

121 National Indigenous Equality Council, *Child Mortality Target*, 2010, p. 19 [http://www.nihc.gov.au/internet/nihc/publishing.nsf/Content/708998BA2BBDDACBCA2576D40022B38C/\\$File/child_mortality_target.pdf](http://www.nihc.gov.au/internet/nihc/publishing.nsf/Content/708998BA2BBDDACBCA2576D40022B38C/$File/child_mortality_target.pdf) (accessed 15 March 2010).

122 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap Report, p. 42.

National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes

2.164 The National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes was agreed on 29 November 2008. It provides \$1.6 billion over four years with the Australian Government contributing \$806 million.¹²³

2.165 The Australian Government's contribution will be spent on a Chronic Disease Package to manage the chronic diseases faced by Indigenous Australians.

2.166 Under this agreement, the Government has agreed to:

- (a) more than 133 000 additional health checks;
- (b) 400 000 additional chronic disease management services for Indigenous people with a chronic condition;
- (c) support for over 50 000 Indigenous patients with a chronic disease to better self manage their condition; and
- (d) financial assistance to improve access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines to over 70 000 Indigenous people.¹²⁴

2.167 In the committee's third report, an update was provided on some of the initiatives under the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes but the committee noted that many initiatives had yet to commence.¹²⁵ This section of the report outlines some of the major Australian Government announcements since November 2009.

Indigenous Smoking

2.168 A focus of the Partnership Agreement is on reducing smoking rates among Indigenous Australians. The Australian Government had previously agreed that as smoking rates still remain alarmingly high, they require a long-term commitment if success is to be achieved.¹²⁶

123 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 2*, p. 12.

124 The Hon Warren Snowden, MP, 'Health Care Boost for Indigenous Australians', *Press Release*, 1 July 2009.

125 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 28-30.

126 2009-10 Department of Health and Ageing Portfolio Budget Statement, p. 71.

2.169 On 5 March 2010, the Australian Government announced 14 sites across the country will benefit from a \$10.7 million funding round to promote innovative anti-tobacco campaigns and prevention strategies to 14 community sector agencies.¹²⁷

2.170 On 17 February 2010, the Australian Government announced the inaugural National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking.¹²⁸ The Government advised that the National Coordinator's role will be to:

- (a) lead and mentor the tackling smoking workforce being established under the Federal Government's \$100 million COAG Tackling Smoking initiative to reduce the incidence of tobacco smoking in Indigenous communities;
- (b) provide advice and insights which assist to shape policy and program directions in Indigenous tobacco control;
- (c) play a key role in evaluating the Federal Government's \$14.5 million Indigenous Tobacco Control Initiative to ensure successful pilot programs are translated into improved services on the ground; and
- (d) advocate the importance of, and best practice approaches to, reducing smoking in Indigenous families, communities and workplaces.¹²⁹

2.171 The committee continues to hear evidence about the devastating impact of smoking on life expectancy of Indigenous Australians:

Aboriginal deaths from smoking are 20% higher than the rest of the community as anti-smoking messages are not targeting Indigenous communities...To be effective anti smoking and other health messages need to be culturally specific to Indigenous communities.¹³⁰

In 2008, 47% of Indigenous Australians smoked, down from 51% in 2002. This is still twice the non-Indigenous smoking rate. Unlike the non-Indigenous population, the smoking rate is similar across all regions, age groups and males and females including during pregnancy. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers smoke at around 3 times the rate of non-Indigenous mothers (52% compared with 16%).¹³¹

127 The Hon Warren Snowdon, MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery, '\$10.7 Million to Combat Indigenous Smoking', *Press Release*, 5 March 2010.

128 The Hon Warren Snowdon, MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery, 'New National Coordinator to Tackling Indigenous Smoking', *Press Release*, 17 February 2010.

129 'New National Coordinator to Tackling Indigenous Smoking', *Press Release*, 17 February 2010.

130 Australian Association of Social Workers, *Submission 4*, pp.4,11

131 National Indigenous Equality Council, *Child Mortality Target*, 2010, pp. 12. (accessed 15 March 2010).

2.172 In its evidence to the committee, the AIHW indicated that it was probably too early to see the results of any preventative action on Indigenous smoking rates:

Senator SIEWERT—You raise the issue of smoking in your submission. In some states, and I think nationally too now, there are some efforts around smoking in Aboriginal communities. Are you starting to notice any impact from those programs?

Dr Allbon—It would probably be too early at this stage. We rely basically on the ABS's national health survey and the NATSI, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health survey for that information. The national health survey is conducted every three years and the NATSI every six years. There would be no survey vehicle that would pick that up at this stage.

Dr Al-Yaman—The other source of data that we use to complement that is our peri-natal data collection which collects that data annually. It can pick up smoking during pregnancy. This does not go as long as the survey. If you look at the survey data over the last 10 years, there has been no change in smoking among Indigenous Australians. It has been at 50 per cent and it has not changed at all. As to the peri-natal data, we still have not seen much change yet, but that is more recent. Collection of data of smoking during pregnancy is more recent than that collection.¹³²

2.173 The committee acknowledges the difficulty in determining whether government investment in Indigenous smoking initiatives is making a difference. The committee considers that the \$100 million COAG Tackling Smoking initiative should be focused on evidence based program implementation.

2.174 Before providing further funding, the committee considers that the lessons learned from the current \$10.7 million funding round to promote innovative anti-tobacco campaigns and prevention strategies should be circulated to all state and territory jurisdictions.

2.175 In the medium to long term, the committee hopes that the Government will evaluate performance of its investment against the data in the Australian Bureau of Statistic's national health survey and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health survey. The committee considers that this is particularly relevant given that the committee continues to hear about competing health demands such as the incidence of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and the significant and continued abuse of alcohol and other illicit substances in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 8

2.176 The committee recommends that the evaluation mechanisms that underpin COAG's investment of the \$100 million Tackling Smoking initiative be

132 Dr Penny Allbon and Dr Fadwa Al-Yaman, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Committee Hansard*, 9 June 2009, p. 13.

publicly released to ensure that this funding provides a tangible difference on the ground in communities.

Indigenous Outreach Workers

2.177 As part of the COAG work on health, the Government has funded 83 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Workers across Australia. This forms part of the 160 positions that are being funded under a \$42 million commitment to build the capacity of the Indigenous health workforce over four years. In turn, this forms part of the \$805.5 million Indigenous Chronic Disease Package.¹³³

2.178 The Indigenous Outreach Worker's role will encompass the following:

Ms Powell—The Indigenous outreach workers will all be Indigenous. They will be providing culturally specific services through a variety of health promotion and chronic disease management programs.¹³⁴

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Workers will help increase community engagement with health services, including increasing the uptake of Indigenous health checks and identifying Indigenous people who would benefit from improved access to health services.

In addition, they will assist Indigenous people to access other health services, including follow-up care, specialist services and community pharmacies.¹³⁵

2.179 The committee has heard the value of having Indigenous Outreach Workers coming to or based in communities that provide health services. In particular, the committee notes that for some remote areas, this is a much preferred method than having to travel to doctors or hospitals for minor ailments or advice on different health options. For example, the Western Australia Country Health Service highlights the value of outreach services for regional and remote communities:

Ms Freebairn—It is not purely mental health issues. A lot of it has been social issues that have impacted on people's mental health. We are a secondary mental health service, so we look after people with serious mental illnesses, such as psychosis, major depression and, of course, when people are actively feeling suicidal. So we have been involved in that way. We have also been working closely with all the other services that are here—with the South West Aboriginal Medical Service, SWAMS, and the hospital and we have been doing outreach service in the community and seeing people there, which makes it easier for them to access our service

133 The Hon Warren Snowdon, MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery, '83 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outreach workers to be placed around the country', *Press Release*, 17 February 2010.

134 Ms Linda Powell, Department of Health and Ageing, *Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Hansard*, 12 February, p. 51.

135 '83 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outreach workers to be placed around the country', *Press Release*, 17 February 2010.

rather than coming to the hospital or to the clinics. We found that to be a huge barrier to people coming to the services in the past, but our figures are showing that we are seeing a lot more people now within the community.¹³⁶

2.180 The committee notes the importance of Indigenous Outreach Workers and the value that they can provide. The committee considers that it is important to have adequate training and support for the Outreach Workers as well as some level of consistency throughout Australia. The committee also considers that Outreach Workers need to have support mechanisms to allow for continuous improvement; an understanding of new and emerging medical issues and best practice evidenced based treatment.

2.181 In its recent visit to Queensland, the committee heard about the important role of Outreach Workers bringing together a range of services to tailor health support and broader social and emotional wellbeing services for individual clients. Further analysis of the situation in Queensland is at Chapter 3.

2.182 The committee also considers that the Australian Government should encourage and facilitate a professional support network for Indigenous Outreach Workers.

2.183 The committee has heard consistent information from a range of Australian Government officers about the strong need for pre-deployment training and post-deployment support. The committee therefore considers that common guidance should be developed not only for Indigenous Outreach Workers but for all Australian Government funded workers deployed in regional and remote Indigenous communities. Workers should be provided with a toolkit and mechanisms to cope with the substantial challenges in working with regional and remote Indigenous communities.

Infant Mortality

2.184 As part of efforts to reduce the gap in infant mortality, on 11 February 2010 the Government committed \$9.1 million over three years for ten new mothers and babies services. The ten new services are in addition to the 43 funded under the New Directions program to give Indigenous babies and their mothers' better access to:

- (a) pre and post pregnancy care;
- (b) standard information about baby care;
- (c) practical advice and assistance with breastfeeding, nutrition and parenting;
- (d) monitoring of developmental milestones, immunisation status and infections; and

136 Ms Meredith Freebairn, *Committee Hansard*, 8 October 2009, p. 8.

- (e) health checks and referrals for treatment for Indigenous children before starting school.¹³⁷

2.185 Throughout the course of its inquiry, the committee has heard a range of evidence about the need for more support for women during the first years of a baby's life in order to reduce the infant mortality rate.

2.186 The committee was concerned to discover in its recent trip to Queensland, that for the entire Cape York region, there was no birthing facility and that all mothers needing to give birth were required to go to Cairns for an extended period. This raised issues with young mothers being away from their communities with a lack of a dedicated support network:

If you are going with a child and you have three kids at home, English is your second language and you have no financial base, and they lob you in Cairns with four nights paid accommodation at a hostel, then you are on your own. You may have the kids with you or you may not. Dad cannot go to work now—if he does—and there they are.¹³⁸

2.187 The committee also heard that in communities such as Cherbourg, there is a reluctance for some women to leave communities to go to hospital early and they then give birth in less than ideal conditions in regional and remote communities:

It is a huge problem. The girls do not want to go to Kingaroy, and sometimes they hang on, which really puts their babies at risk, because they do not want to go.¹³⁹

2.188 The National Rural Health Alliance indicated that support for mothers and babies should be the highest priority for government programs relating to maternal and child health, particularly in regional and remote Australia. The Alliance indicated that this is vital in helping to prevent many of the factors that can cause chronic disease.¹⁴⁰

2.189 The National Rural Health Alliance further made the point that nurses and midwives and other health professionals delivering support for mothers and babies also need significant support in delivering the quality services that they provide:

Many of the nurses and midwives currently distributed across rural and very remote areas, including in many Indigenous communities, do their work in situations where there are no other health professionals. Nursing

137 The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Hon Warren Snowdon, MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery, 'More Support For Indigenous Mums and Bubs', *Press Release*, 11 February 2010.

138 Mr Peter Graham, Weipa Town Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 12 April 2010, p. 13.

139 Mrs Jenni Anderson, Barambah Health Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 16 April 2010 p. 27.

140 National Rural Health Alliance Inc, *Submission 8*, p. 6.

organisations believe that the *Health Equity Plan* underestimates the nursing workforce required to adequately serve Indigenous communities. Certainly, greater support for the nursing workforce should be a central part of plans to improve regional and remote Indigenous health.¹⁴¹

2.190 The committee supports the national effort on early intervention in child and maternal health and for healthy parents, including through mothers and babies services in regional and remote Australia. This is particularly important given the evidence that the committee gathered in Queensland on the incidence of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder which is outlined in Chapter 3.

2.191 The committee stresses the absolute importance of mothers and babies programs as a positive response to reducing infant mortality. The committee considers that this is even more paramount in regional and remote areas that do not have close access to hospitals or major medical facilities that provide support and outreach services.

Opal Fuel Initiative

2.192 The committee is convinced of the fundamental importance in providing non-sniffable Opal fuel to target petrol sniffing in regional and remote Australia.¹⁴² The committee is supportive of any new initiatives to provide Opal fuel to regional and remote communities that have problems with petrol sniffing. The most serious consequences of long term brain damage and other significant chronic disease is important to prevent.

2.193 The committee is therefore pleased to see the Government's 3 March 2010 announcement of an additional \$2.3 million dollars to rollout Opal fuel in the Goldfields region of Western Australia to help curb petrol sniffing in the region's Indigenous communities through an Opal fuel subsidy over four years.¹⁴³ The committee also notes the additional funding announced in the 2010–11 Budget which is outlined in the last section of this chapter.

2.194 The committee is concerned that sniffing still remains a significant issue. For example, in the committee's recent visit to Queensland the committee heard evidence

141 National Rural Health Alliance Inc, *Submission 8*, p. 5.

142 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 2*, p.120-121; Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, pp. 64,108.

143 The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and The Hon Warren Snowdon, MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery 'Australian Government Tackles Petrol Sniffing In Remote WA', *Joint Press Release*, 3 March 2010.

in Cherbourg about the number of children in the community sniffing including one child that had recently caught alight whilst sniffing, causing significant burns.¹⁴⁴

2.195 The committee notes that the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing provides assistance with the supply of Opal fuel to any community that requests it. The committee was concerned that a number of communities are still not aware of this fact.

2.196 The committee intends to hear evidence from the Department of Health and Ageing on the COAG health reforms for analysis in its final report. The committee will also collect evidence on the progress of the initiatives outlined above.

National Indigenous Representative Body

2.197 On 22 November 2009, the Australian Government announced support for a national Indigenous representative body and announced that \$6 million will be provided to establish the body and \$23.2 million will be provided for operation of the body.¹⁴⁵

2.198 On 2 May 2010, the Congress was officially incorporated and work has begun to establish the operations of the company by eight founding directors who form a National Executive.

2.199 Members of the Council are: Mr Tom Calma, Ms Megan Davis (Co-Chair), Mr Wesley Enoch, Ms Mary Graham, Ms Nalwarri Ngurruwutthun and Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney (Co-Chair).¹⁴⁶

2.200 The committee notes the progress with this initiative and looks forward to seeing the National Indigenous Representative Body operationalised to make a valuable contribution to the representation of the views of Indigenous Australians.

2.201 The committee notes the progress with this initiative and looks forward to seeing the National Indigenous Representative Body operationalised to make a valuable contribution to the representation of the views of Indigenous Australians.¹⁴⁷

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance

2.202 On 9 March 2010, the Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs announced the establishment of a

144 Ms Rhonda Sandow, Gundoo Day Care Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 16 April 2010, p. 7.

145 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 18.

146 Australian Human Rights Commission, 'New Congress to Represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders', *Press Release*, 2 May 2010.

147 Australian Human Rights Commission, 'New Congress to Represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders', *Press Release*, 2 May 2010.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance.¹⁴⁸ Minister Macklin said that:

This alliance of Indigenous women and their organisations from across the country will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to bring forward the concerns and issues from their communities, in their own words, with their own agendas, and their own solutions. It will be funded under the Office for Women's National Women's Alliances program, and established by Indigenous women, with initial support from the YWCA. So far it includes strong women and their organisations from Adelaide to the Torres Strait, Sydney and Melbourne to the NPY lands. In coming months it will be reaching out to Indigenous women right across Australia for support, including other impressive Indigenous women leaders who made applications under this program. Over the next year we expect it will grow significantly in membership, in skills and strength. It will be made stronger with rigorous debate and diversity in its ranks. My colleague Minister Tanya Plibersek and I are both passionate about giving a strong voice to Australian women, including Indigenous women. So your voice can be heard on issues like violence, drug and alcohol abuse, on issues like the social and emotional problems that are affecting family relationships.¹⁴⁹

2.203 The committee notes the development of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance and looks forward to following the development of this Alliance.

Criminal Justice – 'First door right door'

2.204 In its third report, the committee indicated that it would follow up on the development of the 'first door must be the right door' service delivery model following a roundtable on Indigenous safety that was conducted on 6 November 2009. The committee understands that proposals are expected to be considered at the April meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, as well as out of session by the Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management – Police later this year.¹⁵⁰ The committee looks forward to hearing the outcomes from these deliberations.

Government Funding Flexibility

2.205 The committee has repeatedly heard about the difficulty with funding arrangements across each jurisdiction. In the committee's last report, New South Wales and Western Australia informed the committee of difficulties caused by

148 The Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, 'Opening Address at Straight Talk 2010', *Speech*, 9 March 2010.

149 The Hon Jenny Macklin, MP, 'Opening Address at Straight Talk 2010', *Speech*, 9 March 2010.

150 Secretariat discussions with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 10 May 2010.

funding arrangements for service delivery currently put in place by governments.¹⁵¹ The committee's last report indicated that the following three issues were problematic:

- (a) Communities require greater flexibility in funding arrangements to allow more efficient use of funds;
- (b) short term funding arrangements significantly limited the effective operating duration of a project, leading to inefficiencies and a higher risk of failure; and
- (c) reporting obligations represented an excessive burden on organisations.¹⁵²

2.206 In the committee's most recent visit to Queensland, this issue was again raised as a serious concern by a range of community organisations and universities.

2.207 The evidence in Queensland indicated that excessive amounts of time were spent in developing grant applications. Indeed one university indicated that all they had done this year (January to April 2010) was write grant applications.¹⁵³

2.208 The Queensland Police Citizens Youth Welfare Association also commented on the inability to undertake work on the ground due to the significant failures of the funding cycle:

If we continue the way we are going in relation to having to have grants, our administration will increase and our operation on the ground will decrease. We need to have central funding. People want us to continue to deliver and change the cycle that has been involved, especially while the alcohol management plans are in place. I know I cannot continue to write the grants. I have just done it for the Commonwealth. We are writing all the time. We have professional grant writers to assist us to do that. Then we have to employ administrators to administer the grant. There has to be another way, especially in Indigenous communities, for long-term service providers if there is going to be longevity of more than three years.

2.209 The committee recognises the dilemma of delivering efficient use of funding on the ground in communities whilst upholding the necessary accountability, transparency and efficient use of government funding.

2.210 The committee again notes the report by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health Services (the Overburden Report) that found Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Service are 'funded in more complex ways, and from more

151 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 127.

152 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 127.

153 Dr Roxanne Bainbridge, Cairns Institute, *Committee Hansard*, 14 April 2010, p. 30.

resources, than equivalent mainstream health care organisations, and that this is a barrier to providing responsive care, and brings heavy overhead costs.¹⁵⁴

2.211 This was confirmed in evidence from the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, that demonstrated the complexity of their system of funding:

We have a list of reports to provide that are linked to different funding. We tend to get funding from the Commonwealth government in one lot and we may get funded for a couple of one-off projects. From Queensland Health, we get funding from this bit, this bit, this bit, this bit and this bit. They are trying to pool all those funds and give us one report to do—as we now have to report to each different area; they are trying to improve that. But at the moment, yes, we do have a list of funders as long as your arm and a list of reports as long as your other arm. That is from our secretariat side of it. I do not know about the health service side.¹⁵⁵

2.212 In their evidence to the committee, Boystown also commented on the difficulty of the current funding system that is based on short term outcomes rather than taking a long term view of community development:

The current model of short-term funding for the provision of services is not conducive to achieving long-term outcomes, with providers of services having to move from one short-term funding round to another with little accountability or visibility of outcomes achieved. Short-term funding can also include unrealistic timelines for the delivery of projects, increasing the stress levels of both the provider of the service and the community itself.¹⁵⁶

2.213 The committee does however note and commend the Australian Government's announcement of 11 February 2010 to develop a flexible funding pool to support high priority projects in 29 remote Indigenous communities.¹⁵⁷

2.214 The committee considers that this is an example of the flexibility that government can provide local communities to accelerate development. This funding pool was developed in response to the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services identification of excessive funding red-tap and the 'inability to tailor programs to local circumstances as hindering implementation'.¹⁵⁸

154 Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, *Report No 3*, p. 132.

155 Mr Dion Tatow, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, *Committee Hansard*, 15 April 2010, p. 112.

156 Ms Tracy Adams, Boystown, *Committee Hansard*, 15 April 2010, p. 72.

157 The Hon Kevin Rudd, MP, Prime Minister; The Hon Julia Gillard, MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Social Inclusion; The Hon Nicola Roxon, MP, Minister for Health and Ageing and The Hon Warren Snowdon MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, 'Flexible Funding Pool for Remote Service Delivery', *Joint Press Release*, 11 February 2010.

158 'Flexible Funding Pool for Remote Service Delivery', *Joint Press Release*, 11 February 2010.

2.215 The committee has long held the view that Indigenous communities are best placed in determining their own priorities for funding community infrastructure. This pool of funding responds to the specific needs of individual communities. The committee considers that it is important to ensure that there are high levels of community consultation prior to delivery of services or infrastructure in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

2.216 The committee also notes the commitment by COAG to examine the use of more flexible funding approaches which aggregate departmental funding into a master contract with each National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery community to:

- (a) align service delivery and provide some flexibility to modify inputs to help achieve the Closing the Gap outcomes; and
- (b) streamline reporting and reduce red tape.¹⁵⁹

2.217 COAG agreed-in-principle to this recommendation and provided the following justification:

Flexible funding can support a whole-of-government approach to service delivery in Indigenous communities that is streamlined, coordinated and community-oriented. There are a range of flexible funding and contract reform initiatives that are already in place or are currently being implemented. The parties will work together to further explore models for flexible funding. The parties will also examine opportunities and options appropriate to each jurisdiction to better align service delivery, streamline reporting and reduce red tape, whilst maintaining accountability and quality of services. Aggregating funding into a 'master contract' is an option that can be considered as part of this process.¹⁶⁰

2.218 The committee considers that funding of Indigenous service delivery remains a serious and significant issue. The committee therefore considers that COAG should place a high priority on effective resolution of funding issues both within the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery communities and more broadly within all government service delivery in regional and remote Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 9

2.219 Given the evidence that the committee has received about problems with funding models, the committee considers that COAG should expedite implementation of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services' recommendation to examine the use of more flexible funding approaches which

159 Addressing the Recommendations of the First Six Monthly Report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, p. 17.

160 Addressing the Recommendations of the First Six Monthly Report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, p. 17.

aggregate departmental funding into a master contract with each National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery community.

New Budget Initiatives 2010–11

2.220 On 11 May 2010, the Australian Government handed down the 2010-11 Budget. Due to the lack of time between the announcement of the Budget on 11 May 2010 and the tabling of this report on 13 May 2010, the committee lists the key **new** Indigenous related 2010–11 Budget initiatives outlined in Budget Paper Number 2.

Housing

Home Ownership Program — transfer of funding from the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program

2.221 The Government will transfer \$56.0 million of unutilised capital from the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land (HOIL) program to the Home Ownership Program (HOP) while further land reform takes place on Indigenous land in remote communities. This will enable more people to access the oversubscribed HOP. The measure will enable greater flexibility in the use of housing funds to improve the housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians.¹⁶¹

Education

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan

2.222 The Government will provide \$15.4 million over four years to support the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014. The Action Plan will set out an agreed national approach to meeting the Closing the Gap targets through initiatives that aim to strengthen the education outcomes of Indigenous students.¹⁶²

School Enrolment and Attendance Trial — continuation

2.223 The Government will provide \$3.4 million for a one-year extension of the School Enrolment and Attendance Trial announced in the 2008–09 Budget. This measure will extend the duration of the trial in existing locations in the Northern Territory and Queensland to 30 June 2011. The aim of the trial is to increase the level of school enrolment and school attendance.¹⁶³

161 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 124.

162 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 77.

163 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 96.

Skills for Sustainable Growth — Foundation Skills package — workplace and community language, literacy and numeracy — expansion

2.224 The Government will provide \$28.7 million over four years to provide up to 9500 additional workplace and 8000 additional community-based language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) training places. Funding for community-based projects will deliver up to 8000 additional training places to be provided through short courses in innovative community settings such as neighbourhood houses, men's sheds, mothers' groups, Indigenous support organisations and community colleges.¹⁶⁴

Employment

Indigenous public sector employment strategy for non-Australian Public Service agencies

2.225 The Government will provide \$1.6 million in 2010–11 for initiatives to increase Indigenous employment across Commonwealth agencies that are not part of the Australian Public Service. There are 90 agencies not part of the APS such as the Australian Federal Police.¹⁶⁵

Business Skills for Visual Artists (National Arts and Crafts Industry Support element) — continuation

2.226 The Government will provide \$4 million over four years to continue the National Arts and Crafts Industry Support (NACIS) element of the Business Skills for Visual Artists program. The primary focus of NACIS is to support the operational costs of Indigenous art centres. It also supports the delivery of professional development and business skills for Indigenous visual artists.¹⁶⁶

Community Development Employment Projects — indexation reform

2.227 From 1 July 2010, the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program will be indexed by a Wage Cost Index (WCI) consistent with Government indexation arrangements for all programs with substantial wage costs. This will replace the current arrangement whereby the program is annually indexed by a combination of the Consumer Price Index and the non-farm GDP deflator. This is expected to reduce expenses by \$9.3 million over four years.¹⁶⁷

164 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 102.

165 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 85.

166 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 111.

167 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 121.

CDEP — redirection

2.228 The Government will reduce funding under the CDEP program by \$3 million in 2010–11. This funding will be redirected to other government priorities. CDEP will retain \$905.4 million over four years from 2010–11 to continue to provide comprehensive access to work readiness activities and community development projects.¹⁶⁸

Reform of CDEP program in the Torres Strait

2.229 The Government will provide \$44.3 million over four years to reform the CDEP program in the Torres Strait to bring it into line with the national reforms implemented on 1 July 2009. The CDEP reforms will have an increased focus on work readiness, getting more people into jobs where opportunities exist, extending local training opportunities and promoting community development.¹⁶⁹

Child Care

Budget Base Funded Child Care Services — improved standards

2.230 The Government will provide \$59.4 million over four years to improve the existing infrastructure of budget base funded (BBF) long day care centres and increase the qualifications of staff in all BBF child care services. Ongoing funding for maintenance of qualifications and infrastructure will also be provided. BBF child care services operate in areas where the child care market is unable to provide places, largely in rural, remote and Indigenous communities.¹⁷⁰

Health

National Health and Hospitals Network — General practice and primary care — establishing Medicare Locals and improving access to after hours primary care

2.231 The Government will provide \$416.8 million to establish a nation-wide network of Primary Health Care Organisations to be known as Medicare Locals, and improve access to after hours primary care. Medicare Locals will be responsible for improving the delivery of primary care in local communities by better connecting hospital, general practices, allied health, aged care and Indigenous health services, making it easier for patients to get the care they need, after hours.¹⁷¹

168 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 121.

169 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 131.

170 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 79.

171 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 175.

National Health and Hospitals Network — General practice and primary care — improved primary care infrastructure

2.232 The Government will provide \$355.2 million over three years to improve access to primary health care by establishing an additional 23 GP Super Clinics and providing approximately 425 grants to expand existing general practices and primary care, community health and Indigenous medical services, to deliver GP Super Clinic style services.¹⁷²

National Health and Hospitals Network — Prevention — national tobacco campaign — more targeted approach

2.233 The Government will provide \$27.8 million over four years to fund anti-tobacco social marketing campaigns to groups within the community that have been harder to reach by traditional methods.¹⁷³

National Congress of Australia

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples — establishment

2.234 The Government will provide \$29.2 million over five years from 2009–10 to establish the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. The new national representative body will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage directly with government on policy development and the performance of government programs.¹⁷⁴

Law and Justice Advocacy Development program — redirect funds to establish the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

2.235 The Government will redirect funding from the Law and Justice Advocacy Development (LJAD) program. This measure will provide savings of \$1.2 million over five years to help offset the cost of establishing the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (the new national Indigenous representative body was announced on 22 November 2009). Funding of \$12.2 million over five years from 2009–10 will remain available under the LJAD program to support Indigenous organisations to undertake advocacy, research and community-level education in relation to law and justice issues.¹⁷⁵

172 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p.176.

173 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p.185.

174 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p.127.

175 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 52.

Indigenous Communities Strategic Investment program — reduction

2.236 The Government will reduce funding for the Indigenous Communities Strategic Investment program by \$48.3 million over five years from 2009–10, with these funds to be used towards the establishment of the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples and a Flexible Funding Pool to support the implementation of the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership. Remaining funding for the Indigenous Community Strategic Investment program of \$78 million over four years from 2010–11 will continue to be available to fund individual and community capacity building activities.¹⁷⁶

Criminal Justice

Northern Territory policing presence — staged transition

2.237 The Government will provide \$9.2 million over two years (including capital funding of \$6000 in 2010–11) to the Australian Federal Police to extend the deployment of officers to the Northern Territory as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response.¹⁷⁷

National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force — continuation

2.238 The Government will provide \$6.6 million over two years to the Australian Crime Commission for continuation of the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force. Focus will be placed upon those Indigenous communities at high risk of exposure to organised crime, family violence and abuse.¹⁷⁸

Improving Access to Justice

2.239 The Government will provide \$154 million over four years to increase the resources available to legal assistance service providers. The funding will help implement the Government’s Strategic Framework for Access to Justice through increasing resourcing for legal aid commissions, community legal centres and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.¹⁷⁹

176 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 126.

177 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 60.

178 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 53.

179 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 53.

Income Management

A new scheme of income management in the Northern Territory

2.240 The Government will provide \$410.5 million over six years (including \$6 million in 2014–15) for a new scheme of income management in the Northern Territory. The new scheme will commence from 1 July 2010. Participants in the new scheme will include:

- (a) people aged 15 to 24 who have been in receipt of certain welfare payments for more than three of the last six months;
- (b) people aged 25 and above on specified welfare payments such as Newstart Allowance and Parenting Payment for more than one year in the previous two years;
- (c) people referred by child protection authorities; and
- (d) those assessed by Centrelink social workers as requiring income management because of financial crisis or domestic violence.¹⁸⁰

Income management in cases of child neglect and by voluntary choice — continuation of trial

2.241 The Government will provide \$17.4 million in 2010–11 (including capital funding of \$28 000) to continue the trial of income management in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and metropolitan Perth. The trial was first announced in the 2008–09 Budget and commenced in November 2008. The trial will be amended to be consistent with the new scheme of income management in the Northern Territory, in that 50 per cent of welfare payments (70 per cent in child protection cases) and 100 per cent of lump sum payments are quarantined.¹⁸¹

Funding

Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Flexible Funding Pool — establishment

2.242 The Government will provide \$46.0 million over three years to establish a Flexible Funding Pool to support the implementation of the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership agreement that targets 29 remote Indigenous communities.

2.243 The Flexible Funding Pool will allow the Government to respond flexibly and quickly to Indigenous communities' priorities as identified in Local Implementation

180 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 119.

181 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 125.

Plans. The Local Implementation Plans will be agreed with Indigenous communities, State and Territory governments and the Commonwealth Government.¹⁸²

Infrastructure

Remote Aviation Infrastructure Fund — priority airstrips upgrades

2.244 The Government will provide funding of \$5.9 million over two years to upgrade up to 19 remote airstrips from the ‘Charter’ safety standard to the higher ‘Regular Public Transport’ safety standard. The upgrades will help ensure that the remote Indigenous communities served by these airstrips have access to regular passenger transport services, as well as medical services and essential supplies.¹⁸³

Broadcasting

National Indigenous Television — continuation

2.245 The Government will provide \$15.2 million in 2010–11 to continue funding for National Indigenous Television (NITV) for one year. The funding will provide certainty to the organisation for its immediate future while a review of the Government’s investment in the Indigenous broadcasting and media sector, including NITV, is undertaken. NITV is Australia’s only dedicated provider of Indigenous television content.¹⁸⁴

Research

Cairns Institute Tropical Innovation Hub — contribution

2.246 The Government will provide \$19.5 million over two years to James Cook University as a contribution towards the construction of a new \$44 million research facility (the Cairns Institute — Tropical Innovation Hub) on the university’s Cairns campus. The new facility will support 125 research staff working on issues of significance to the tropics, including marine and climate science, public health, social and community welfare and Indigenous development.¹⁸⁵

182 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 132.

183 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 223.

184 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 114.

185 Budget Paper No. 2, Budget Measures 2010-11, p. 226.