

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION TO
THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
REGIONAL AND REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

Submitted by

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MAY 2008

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1a effectiveness of Australian Government policies following the Northern Territory Emergency Response, specifically on the state of health, welfare, education and law and order in regional and remote Indigenous communities

General comments

While this Term of Reference makes specific mention of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), it does not seem that submissions are limited to discussion of the effectiveness of policies in the Northern Territory. This submission, therefore, makes brief comment on both Australian Government policies associated with the NTER and those adopted following this intervention.

Firstly, the steps taken as part of the NTER have, in most areas, yet to be accompanied by evidence that will enable an evaluation of their effectiveness. This may change when the Australian Government commissions an independent review of the intervention's effectiveness later this year. Important questions for this review to answer will include:

- how have welfare reforms impacted family and child health and wellbeing;
- how have alcohol bans in communities impacted on incidents of family violence;
- how have additional police resources affected community safety levels; and
- how have community health checks affected the overall health levels of, or the level of subsequent health care services provided to, community members?

While the impact of the NTER is yet to become clear, there is no doubt that it has brought certain issues into sharp focus, and not just in the Northern Territory. These include matters relating to community safety, child protection, housing and health. Additionally, other significant Australian Government policy changes to municipal services and Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) funding are also impacting communities across the country. These are having a significant detrimental effect on community functionality and governance arrangements (these issues are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this submission).

The new COAG agenda is further recognition of the high priority being given to issues affecting the wellbeing of Indigenous people.

The South Australian Government has a strong collaborative working relationship with the Australian Government in the area of Indigenous affairs. This relationship is governed by several joint structures and agreements, such as:

- the Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of South Australia;
- the Aboriginal Task Force (exploring agreed priorities through the drafting of an Aboriginal Strategic Plan);
- an Indigenous education agreement (Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Program agreement);
- the Agreement on South Australian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing between the State of South Australia, the Australian Government and the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Inc.; and
- the Indigenous Housing and Community Infrastructure Agreement.

While the two Governments are working to ensure mainstream service provision effectively responds to Indigenous needs, the South Australian Government believes there is still a role for Indigenous-specific services.

Areas of positive Australian Government impact

The Australian Government has provided valuable support that has impacted positively on health, welfare, education and law and order in South Australia's regional and remote communities, including funding for:

- police infrastructure on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, including police stations and accommodation;
- a substance misuse facility at the APY Lands community of Amata;
- rehabilitation day centres being developed in Port Augusta, Ceduna and Coober Pedy;
- the development and implementation of Community Safety Action Plans in regional communities such as Yalata, Koonibba and Gerard;
- establishment of an Enrolled Nursing Course for Indigenous people on the west coast (Ceduna);
- an extension of the Family Homemakers programs to an additional 4 communities on the APY Lands; and
- whole of School Intervention Strategies to engage local Indigenous communities in improving attendance, and literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Areas where further Australian Government support is required

The following areas would benefit from additional Australian Government investment and attention:

- coordinated regional accommodation and service centres in locations with significant transient Indigenous populations, for example Ceduna, Port Augusta, Coober Pedy and Adelaide;
- alcohol rehabilitation services and facilities in regional parts of the State, and establishment of links with existing State Government services such as the Aboriginal Substance Misuse Connection Program operated by Drug and Alcohol Services SA (DASSA) and funded by the Department for Families and Communities (DFC) and the Mobile Assistance Patrol jointly funded by DFC and SA Health;
- improvements in regional and remote Indigenous housing stock;
- training and support of Indigenous interpreters;
- ongoing funding support for the governance arrangements of communities and Indigenous organisations;
- building links with the State Government funded Aboriginal Youth Development Program which currently covers regional areas only;
- the need for additional funding for youth workers and associated housing in remote communities;
- activities for young people, including youth coordinators, programs, equipment and facilities;
- community centre buildings incorporating family centres in each community to provide activities and programs for families, people with a disability and the aged;

- enhancing the provision of comprehensive primary health care to Indigenous people by increasing the number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to remote and regional areas of need;
- supporting SA Government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to provide comprehensive primary health care, health literacy and culturally sensitive treatment and support services, which are key aspects of Aboriginal health system improvement;
- further support towards existing South Australian programs that have been successful in improving maternal and infant care in regional South Australia and support to extend successful models of maternal and infant care to other regional and remote communities;
- increased assistance to develop culturally responsive dental services that will improve health outcomes (in particular maternal and foetal health outcomes) in regional and remote Indigenous communities;
- improving the development and uptake of Medicare Benefit Schedule items related to Indigenous Health;
- supporting the development of a coordinated child protection framework across South Australia for Indigenous communities; and
- fostering an environment of cooperation and information sharing between Australian and State Government health services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. Sharing of data is important for identification, planning and outcome measurement.

1b impact of state and territory government policies on the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities

General comments

The response to this Term of Reference is framed in relation to the wellbeing of communities as a whole, rather than the individuals who comprise them. Accordingly, there is a focus on efforts to improve the governance of community councils and initiatives that improve community functionality.

The key Indigenous affairs priorities for the South Australian Government are those set out in the *Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs*, namely:

- Safer, Stronger Communities
- Housing and Infrastructure
- Education and Early Intervention
- Health
- Homelessness
- Economic Development
- Land, Environment and Culture
- Service Delivery

These are further focussed by the 9 Indigenous-specific targets in *South Australia's Strategic Plan*. The following targets have particular importance for regional and remote communities:

- T2.5 Lower the morbidity and mortality rates of Aboriginal South Australians
- T3.15 Resolve 75% of all Native Title claims by 2014
- T5.7 Increase the number of South Australians participating in community leadership and in community leadership development programs

- T6.1 Improve the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal South Australians
T6.9 Reduce overcrowding in Aboriginal households by 10% by 2014

While the South Australian Government is working with Indigenous communities to improve wellbeing and support their ability to function effectively and cohesively, this is often impacted by Australian Government policies and funding arrangements. Two recent examples are the changes to municipal services funding and CDEP, which have had a profound impact on the functionality of regional and remote communities, as well as on the ability of State Government programs and services to improve community wellbeing:

- Changes to municipal services arrangements, which have seen a discontinuation of funding to a number of regional communities in South Australia – for example Umoona (Coober Pedy) and Davenport (Port Augusta) – have undermined community governance structures, forcing staff reductions and the cessation of some services. While the Australian Government's new policy is for these services to be delivered by Local Government, there has been insufficient transition planning and Indigenous communities are suffering as a result.
- The decision of the previous Australian Government to discontinue CDEP in many regional areas has meant community administrations are no longer able to provide basic services or act as a first point of contact for government, service providers or other stakeholders. There are, of course, other implications for individuals, but these are addressed at Term of Reference 1d, below. It is important that the current Australian Government review of CDEP recognises its significance to regional and remote communities.

Areas of positive State Government impact

While positive results have been achieved in a number of the target areas identified above, in many program budgets mean that initiatives are restricted to specific client groups or locations. The following areas do, however, show potential to improve community wellbeing:

- infrastructure, particularly housing, where additional Australian Government funding has been secured for APY Lands housing, various items of community infrastructure have been upgraded, a broadband access program has been implemented and the SA Government has continued to roll-out new APY Lands electricity infrastructure;
- governance / capacity building / leadership, where the SA Government has delivered governance training for community councils and organisations and an SA Aboriginal Leadership Program has been developed – further progress is being hampered by Australian Government reductions in funding for community governance structures;
- streamlining of funding agreements, which has seen DFC and SA Health adopt simplified agreements to reduce administrative burden on community organisations funded by government;
- a coordinated approach to service provision, for example significant APY service improvements have been made through the joint Australian – South Australian Government Aboriginal Task Force, a joint intervention at Yalata Aboriginal community and the development of a Ceduna integrated service delivery model supporting the transient Indigenous population;
- the Native Title Claim resolution process, which had resulted in 16 area-specific Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and one Statewide ILUA being signed off as at 31 December 2007;

- healthy eating and lifestyle skills, through the Commonwealth-State Mai Wiru stores policy (APY Lands), which, with the support of Family Homemaker programs, has encouraged healthy eating in several communities;
- increased levels of State Government personnel in the areas of police, youth programs, welfare officers, family violence and safety and healthcare services; and
- alcohol management, where support has been provided to Indigenous landholding communities wishing to introduce dry areas and alcohol management strategies, for example Port Augusta, Coober Pedy and APY communities, however alcohol smuggling remains a challenge.

Additionally, the State Government is seeking to adjust policies and services to accommodate emerging demographic trends. This means not only recognising the young age profile of the Indigenous population, but also its mobility. Servicing a highly mobile Indigenous population requires specific measures from government. In an immediate sense, it requires both transport and housing, but in a broader sense it requires better services in health, social and family support and education.

While some specific aspects of Indigenous mobility are difficult to plan for, much is undertaken on a cyclical basis or results from demographic trends which can be predicted. Evidence suggests that there is a trend for people from remote communities to move towards regional centres and for those in regional centres to move to large cities like Adelaide. Integrated service hubs are required and this approach is being developed and tested in Ceduna.

Priority issues for the SA Government

The following issues, while already attracting both Australian and South Australian Government planning and investment, remain priorities for improvement and need additional support from both governments to:

- increase funding to improve community governance arrangements, which needs to enhance skills of board members and administrators, as well as improve support services and accountability measures;
- further streamline funding agreements with Indigenous organisations to reduce the administrative burden, while maintaining and improving accountability, where these organisations are receiving funding from multiple government departments;
- provide greater government focus on community development and capacity building, including ensuring Indigenous communities are provided with the basic infrastructure and essential services necessary for them to operate as a functioning “township” – this will require improved Commonwealth-State arrangements for infrastructure funding, including a more equitable division of financial responsibility between State and Commonwealth based on a lifecycle assessment of an asset’s cost (the current arrangement that has the Commonwealth responsible for capital construction costs and the State responsible for ongoing maintenance costs does not equitably share the lifecycle cost of infrastructure);
- enhance consultative mechanisms and support clearer lines of communication to improve government-community interaction on planning, service provision and reporting;
- improve consistency in policies to end the current disparities in income, and the conflict in program eligibilities between Work for the Dole schemes, Centrelink entitlements and Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program payments;

- explore opportunities for increased benefits to communities from negotiated land use agreements, including Native Title resolution agreements and Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs);
- contribute to joint strategic planning, data sharing and service integration across Australian and SA Government health services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services; and
- provide a coordinated whole of government response to improving health outcomes for Indigenous South Australians, consistent with the “Health In All Policies” concept which recognises that many of the social determinants of health lie outside the remit of health services and requires all government agencies to review policy directions with the health of the community in mind.

1c health, welfare, education and security of children in regional and remote Indigenous communities

General comments

The South Australian Government is giving priority to supporting environments within which Indigenous children and young people can develop into healthy and productive adults. To be successful these efforts need the support of the Australian Government. Framing this area of work in South Australia are 3 specific targets in *South Australia’s Strategic Plan*:

- T2.5 Lower the morbidity and mortality rates of Aboriginal South Australians
- T6.1 Improve the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal South Australians
- T6.18 Increase yearly the proportion of Aboriginal children reading at age appropriate levels at the end of Year 1

The *SA Country Health Care Plan* is currently being developed by SA Health and will incorporate these targets which aim to positively impact on the health and development of Indigenous children and families. Key strategies proposed within the plan to assist in achieving these targets include increasing access to specialist paediatric services and expansion of the successful coordinated multi-disciplinary child development unit model across much of regional and remote South Australia.

The issue of healthy Indigenous child development is also a focus of the Australian Government and is a key component of the current COAG agenda. Promoting healthy and safe environments is a major thrust of this agenda, which is reflected in the work plan of the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

It is, however, important to recognise that various factors underpin Indigenous experience in the areas of child health, welfare, education and safety, including the provision of adequate housing, safe houses, community infrastructure and governance, essential services and healthy food. These are all areas where the SA Government intersects with the Australian Government and there is no doubt that more could be done to improve these areas in South Australia. It may be, however, that, at the present time, the increase in resources being directed to the Northern Territory means that less Australian Government funding is available for other states.

While South Australia’s Indigenous population continues to experience significant disadvantage across the full range of social and economic indicators – particularly in regional and remote areas – there are some signs of improvement, for example:

- unemployment rates have dropped from 20.5% in 2001 to 16% in 2006 (Census figures);

- Year 8 to 12 retention rates increased from 32% in 2002 to 37.5% in 2006 (NATSIHS 2006);
- perinatal mortality rates (0-28 days; rate per 1000 births) have steadily declined from 23.3 in 1991-93 to 14.4 in 2003-05 (OID 2007);
- infant mortality rates (rate per 1000 live births) have dropped from about 20 in the early 1990s to less than 10 for each of the years between 2003 and 2005 (OID 2007); and
- petrol sniffing rates in the APY Lands dropped 83% between 2004 and 2007 (Nganampa Health survey figures).

Child Health

The SA Government, through SA Health, is working with the Australian Government, the health sector and Indigenous communities to improve maternal and child health outcomes. This is particularly challenging in regional and remote areas, as a range of access and cost issues act as barriers to effective service delivery. Also, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, which play a significant role in these areas, face particular issues of capacity.

Through the “Public Health Outcomes Funding Agreement” (PHOFA) investment and commitment from SA Government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, the Regional Family Birthing Program has positively contributed towards improved Indigenous maternal and infant care in regional SA since 2004. The success of this program has been acknowledged by COAG. This piloted intensive model of maternal care has achieved significant steps towards engaging and increasing access for at risk Indigenous women and families to culturally appropriate mainstream maternal care. Further Australian Government support would increase capacity to expand current limited caseloads in existing program sites and extend the model of care to other relevant regional and remote SA communities.

Poor dental health impacts on all body systems through infection and especially on maternal/foetal health and cardiac and renal systems. A collaborative approach across SA Government (SA Health) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sectors has been implemented to improve dental/oral health for the remote Indigenous community of Coober Pedy. The construction of a dental facility within the existing Indigenous health complex will enable dental services to be culturally responsive to the needs of the community. Australian Government assistance towards further culturally responsive dental services is required for improved Indigenous maternal/foetal health (as well as adult and children health) in regional and remote communities. This includes assistance towards health education programs that help reduce the fear of dental visits and teach people in these communities how they can prevent tooth decay.

SA’s Community Health Improvement Strategic Framework (SA Health) promotes enhanced service delivery and a coordinated approach to addressing the social determinants of Indigenous health at a local level. The Framework’s key objectives are to:

- reduce Aboriginal ill-health
- develop a culturally responsive health system
- promote Aboriginal health and wellbeing

The implementation of the Framework is underpinned by community development practice and theory. This requires:

- a commitment to community capacity building (this involves a three tier approach that values the inter-relationship between individuals, the communities in which they live and the systems which support them);

- influencing systemic change;
- assisting the development of leadership skills of community members;
- achieving the goal of self-management;
- local area planning and problem-solving; and
- sharing knowledge and experience.

The implementation of these principles is challenged at the regional and particularly remote levels. Further effort is required to improve the level of accountability of community health providers and their capacity to deliver on government priorities.

This has been acknowledged by the State Government and a variety of steps are being taken to improve child health in the regional and remote Indigenous population, including:

- increasing the availability and accessibility of child and maternal health care for Indigenous parents and their babies;
- implementing the Our Culture, Our Babies, Our Future Framework that provides guidelines for healthy pregnancy, birthing and infant care for Indigenous women;
- expanding the existing Regional Family Birthing Program in Port Augusta and Whyalla to a statewide Aboriginal Family Birthing Program;
- continuing the Family Home Visiting Program and the Universal Home Visiting Program, where nurses visit parents with newborn babies to conduct health checks and provide advice and support for early child development – at this stage the program is available in Adelaide, the Riverland, Port Augusta and Whyalla;
- further extending the Family Home Visiting Program in Rural and Remote South Australia, including the APY Lands;
- continuing to implement the “Every Chance for Every Child” Framework for improving the health and wellbeing of children and families;
- ensuring mainstream services are accessible to all, and actively respond to the emotional and social wellbeing needs of Indigenous people, particularly those living with serious mental illness and chronic substance misuse;
- developing strategies to promote healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and physical activity, particularly in rural and remote areas;
- providing SmokeCheck training for Aboriginal Health Workers across South Australia;
- providing culturally appropriate facilities for the training of Registered Nurses, Enrolled Nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and Allied Health Workers; and
- continuing to implement the Regional Aboriginal Integrated Social and Emotional (RAISE) wellbeing project to address the needs of Indigenous people living with a mental illness.

Child Welfare and Wellbeing

The State Government is treating child protection and welfare services as a top priority. This includes providing appropriate support and services for Indigenous children and families.

The *Layton Child Protection Review* (report tabled in the South Australian Parliament in March 2003) recommended a State plan for improving our care and protection system and for better outcomes for children. *Keeping Them Safe* – a \$210 million, five-year reform program for child protection – was one of the Government’s

responses to the Layton Review. The 2006 amendments to the *Children's Protection Act 1993* were the legislative response to the *Keeping Them Safe* program.

The *Children's Protection Act 1993* recognises that the principle concerns of our child protection system are to protect children from harm and ensure children in our care are nurtured and protected. Where a child's development is at risk, it provides for the prevention and early intervention responses that harness the resources of all the community.

The Act also established three statutory bodies to improve the monitoring of the care and protection of children:

- the Guardian for Children and Young People;
- the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee; and
- the Council for the Care of Children.

While these changes have moved child protection forward in South Australia, the recent reports of the SA Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry, including the report on the sexual abuse of children in the APY Lands, indicate that further work is needed with respect to policing, support services and systemic change. This is discussed further under the heading of 'Child Security', below.

Efforts are currently being made to better integrate early childhood development services. Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting provide universal, integrated and accessible early childhood programs that promote and improve the health, learning, development and wellbeing of South Australia's younger children and their families. There are currently 7 Children's Centres in SA, while plans are being progressed for another 13. Services and programs reflect community needs and include care and education from birth through to the early years of school. An outcomes framework for Children's Centres is being developed which includes an outcome area for Indigenous children and families to reduce disadvantage.

Other important services designed to improve the welfare and wellbeing of Indigenous children (and families) in regional and remote areas include:

- the Substance Misuse Community Resilience program that is engaging the Indigenous community through a "Grannies Group" and is designed to address substance misuse affecting Indigenous families;
- Department for Families and Communities (DFC) and Drug and Alcohol Services SA (DASSA) collaboration to enhance intervention initiatives in the Indigenous child protection field;
- Yaitya Tirramangkotti, which is a service dedicated to providing advice and assistance in cases involving the abuse of Indigenous children;
- the Kurlana Meyanna Karpandi service, which provides support to young Indigenous people in secure care;
- the Warulaiendi youth team, which is an intensive case management service for young Indigenous people involved in youth justice or who are at risk;
- Aboriginal Family Support Services Inc. and the Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service, which are funded by DFC through a tender process to provide a range of carer, respite and family support services;
- Relative, Kinship and Community Care, which provides specialised assessment and support services for relative and kinship carers;
- the award-winning work of the Port Augusta Aboriginal Families Team, which provides targeted intervention assistance for Indigenous families using a

flexible case management model (a similar program now operates in Murray Bridge);

- family violence safe houses, which exist in a number of regional areas, including Port Augusta and will shortly be introduced to other such as Coober Pedy; and
- DFC's Kumangka Padnendi, which assists Indigenous families to remain united, or to be re-united or re-connected using a therapeutic approach to child welfare issues that combines rapid crisis response and sustainable support.

Child Education

The SA Government, led by the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), is effectively engaging Indigenous children, families and communities in the pre-school, primary and secondary education systems. Although Indigenous education outcomes remain below the wider school population, the following policies, programs and services are being implemented to close this gap:

- DECS Aboriginal Education Strategy 2005-2010 and initiatives that focus on the early years such as the Early Learning Program, Learning Together and Integrated Child and Family Development Centres;
- reshaping of the role of Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) to facilitate effective school, family and whole of community engagement (the focus of the new role of Aboriginal Community Education Officer (ACEO) includes a focus on student inclusion, wellbeing and identifying critical interventions that contribute to improving Indigenous student learning outcomes);
- every Indigenous student has the right to commence preschool at age 3;
- 83% of Indigenous children and students enrolled in DECS schools and preschools have a negotiated individual learning plan that focuses on improving attendance, literacy and numeracy outcomes;
- on entry to school, every student is tested to assess their skill development and provide information for individual learning plans which are monitored throughout primary and secondary education;
- the implementation of the Indigenous Student Support System (ISSS) database allows the identification of Indigenous students at risk, and provides opportunities for early intervention to address transience, attendance, behaviour management, and to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes;
- the Enter for Success Program provides access for every Indigenous student to enrol in the secondary school of their choice to support the transition from primary to secondary education;
- the Open Access College provides improved access to, and quality of, distance education through the establishment of an Indigenous SACE Support Program;
- the Pathways Project is a multi-trades program that targets a range of VET competencies, and is currently being trialled in collaboration with the SA Chamber of Mines and Energy (it will provide data and a model on which to base future programs that could focus on improving opportunities in VET courses for Indigenous young people in the resources industry); and
- DECS has implemented statewide literacy and numeracy strategies that are inclusive of Indigenous learners in an effort to improve outcomes, including the Accelerated Literacy Program, First Steps in Mathematics Program, Reading Recovery and Scaffolding.

Child Security

In May 2007, the SA Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry was extended to include a separate Inquiry into the sexual abuse of children on the APY Lands. The Commission provided its report to the State Government on 30 April 2008 and it documented major child safety issues throughout the APY Lands. This report is now under consideration, although the following immediate action has been taken with respect to the APY Lands:

- the Australian Government committed \$15 million for an additional police station and police housing;
- the SA Government is assigning an additional 8 police officers; and
- the SA Government has committed a further 5 child protection workers to the region.

The Inquiry was established to provide a better understanding of the nature and extent of child sexual abuse in remote Indigenous communities, something that has been very difficult to determine because of the perceived under-reporting of such abuse in those communities. The SA Government hoped that by establishing and providing victims with a confidential and supportive setting they would be more likely to come forward and speak about their experiences.

The Government is also developing an Aboriginal Child Protection Policy. This will provide a policy framework within which government and community services will deliver appropriate preventative and support services to those who may be affected by family violence. This policy will be informed by the report of the Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry.

Priority issues for government (State and Commonwealth)

Addressing the following issues will create positive generational change in Indigenous communities:

- promoting healthy and safe environments for Indigenous children;
- improving maternal and child health;
- improving school attendance, literacy and numeracy levels, and school attainment;
- improving the accessibility of health services for Indigenous people – this means both physical access and cultural appropriateness;
- improving economic participation;
- reducing rates of substance misuse and family violence;
- empowering communities to participate more fully in policy making and service delivery;
- encouraging emerging Indigenous leaders;
- streamlining funding arrangements and promoting sustainability by funding over longer periods;
- encouraging greater Indigenous involvement in and ownership of service delivery in regional and remote areas; and
- addressing underpinning issues associated with infrastructure, for example housing and safe houses, and areas such as access to healthy food.

1d employment and enterprise opportunities in regional and remote Indigenous communities

General comments

It is important to first acknowledge that not all locations have the same capacity to generate employment or business opportunities. Similarly, some locations have greater access to these opportunities in surrounding areas. A number of Indigenous communities in South Australia, particularly those in remote areas like the APY Lands have limited employment and business development options, although one or two industries have the potential to change this situation.

Increasing workforce participation is a fundamental component of developing the South Australian workforce and meeting the demand for skills and labour.

A disproportionate share of the Indigenous population faces barriers to participation in the workforce. National Census of Population and Housing (2006) data indicates that the unemployment rate for the 16,265 Indigenous South Australians aged 15 years and over was 16.0% as compared to a 4.8% rate for non-Indigenous people. At the same time, the labour force participation rate for Indigenous South Australians was 48%, compared to a 62.6% rate for non-Indigenous people, while 19.7% of Indigenous South Australians held a non-school qualification compared to 29.9% of all persons in South Australia.

Additionally, Indigenous enterprises often have broader obligations to sustaining and enhancing social relations and maintaining kinship, rather than solely as a means for developing infrastructure or increasing wealth. Acknowledgement also needs to be given to the tension that can sometimes exist between individual ownership and community ownership. For example, successful enterprises that have been developed through the efforts of a particular family or clan may not then be convertible to wider community ownership despite the advantages this may present.

The Australian Government plays an important role in this area of Indigenous employment, training and business development. Initiatives that provide training pathways into employment, for example STEP (Structure Training and Employment Projects), and those that provide finance to establish and grow Indigenous businesses, for example funding through Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), are in significant demand in regional and remote South Australian communities. Also of significant importance is the CDEP program.

The ability of remote and regional communities to generate employment is impacted by government policy, local economic conditions, community capacity, areas of competitive advantage and private sector activities. For communities that have limited scope for generating employment, the CDEP program is critical. Not only does it provide income support to community members, but also it supports a range of municipal and community development functions ranging from landscaping to child care.

Similarly, municipal services funding, provided under the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), not only provides local employment as part of the delivery of municipal services, but also it provides important financial support to community council governance structures. Recent changes in Australian Government policy to CDEP and municipal services funding have impacted negatively on the governance of communities. Without functioning community councils, the ability of communities to generate employment or establish business ventures is significantly reduced.

Notwithstanding these issues, the South Australian Government's Indigenous employment priorities are captured in the following *South Australia's Strategic Plan* targets:

- T1.26 Reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal unemployment rates each year
- T6.24 Increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the South Australian public sector, spread across all classifications and agencies to 2% by 2010 and maintain or better those levels through to 2014

While target 6.24 is directly controllable by the State Government, the various factors already discussed will affect the progress made against target 1.26.

Regardless, the best prospects for income generation in regional and remote areas appear to be in mining, cultural tourism and arts and crafts, although government remains a significant employer. These industries have already proven their value, for example through arts and craft activities at Ernabella Arts (an APY Lands arts centre), tourism at Head of Bight and mining at Roxby Downs.

Areas of positive SA Government impact

While recognising the challenges that still exist, the SA Government has successfully progressed a range of initiatives to benefit Indigenous people, particularly those in regional and remote areas. These have included:

- pursuing Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) to provide opportunities for Indigenous people in areas including the fishing industry, resources, and possibly land management;
- ensuring Indigenous people benefit from growth in the mining, defence and building industries;
- the Young Indigenous Entrepreneurs Program, which is a small business training program for young Indigenous people administered by the Department of Trade and Economic Development;
- supporting growth and development of Indigenous enterprises by increasing access to mainstream financial services and private equity;
- increasing the opportunity for new Indigenous enterprises to be successful by assisting them in the development of management skills and other training assistance (including through an increase in TAFE lecturers in the APY Lands from 2 in 2001 to 10 in 2007);
- brokering partnerships between Indigenous enterprises and the private sector;
- promoting Indigenous tourism;
- contributing additional enterprise development funding on the APY Lands through various agencies, including Arts SA, the SA Tourism Commission and the Department of Trade and Economic Development;
- attracting Indigenous people into careers in Health through SA Health's Cadetship program;
- adopting a culturally appropriate and supportive learning environment for Indigenous people training as Registered Nurses, Enrolled Nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and allied health professionals through Pika Wiya Health Service's Unique Centre of Learning in Port Augusta, through a similar Centre in Port Lincoln and through prospective Centres in the Riverland and Ceduna; and

- including a workforce component in the previously mentioned dental health strategy in Coober Pedy that will enable local community members to train as dental assistants and provide a career pathway in dental services.

Also, supporting workforce participation outcomes through publicly funded vocational education and training to increase skills and employability for target groups continues to be a priority for the SA Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST).

The SA Government will participate, along with the private and aged care sectors, in using the recently announced Australian Government Productivity Places Program's 50,000 Vocational Education and Training places for health (COAG Health VET), to improve skills and capability across the health service continuum. While this does not include any places quarantined for Indigenous people, there is an identified priority for "disadvantaged" groups in Australia. The COAG Health VET is therefore a welcome opportunity for Australian and state and territory governments to work together in building a skilled and qualified Indigenous workforce in regional and remote communities.

DFEEST also supports a range of training and employment initiatives matching Indigenous people with local job opportunities where there are labour and skills shortages through the *South Australia Works* initiatives; career development services in the Upper Spencer Gulf (with a specific focus on Indigenous young people and older people) and the very successful Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program which has an annual intake of 55 people with 150 currently supported by the program.

The *South Australia Works* (Indigenous programs) initiative generates pathways to employment by providing support and opportunities through job training, work placements, recruitment, leadership training and career enhancement.

The program also assists Indigenous people gain employment through trade based apprenticeships in the private sector, improves vocational education and training outcomes for Indigenous people and helps build the economic independence of Indigenous communities.

In 2007/08, 1,688 Indigenous people participated in work programs with 806 gaining employment.

An additional 517 Indigenous people undertook accredited or non-accredited training at Tauondi Aboriginal College and a further 450 participated in the Aboriginal Employment Program with 200 gaining employment in the public and private sectors.

Other outcomes in 2007/08 include:

- 771 Indigenous people participated in *South Australia Works in the Regions* with 336 gaining employment;
- 60 Indigenous people were assisted through the Employment Assistance Program with 35 gaining employment; and
- 197 Indigenous people participated in other *South Australia Works* programs with 120 gaining employment.

DFEEST also maintains and services the Aboriginal Employment Register which links approximately 2,000 clients with public and private sector up-skilling, training and new employment opportunities.

An Aboriginal Access Centre (through TAFE SA Regional) was established in 2008 and supports Indigenous students through a case management approach in training and employment programs in regional, remote and metropolitan South Australia. The Access Centre has recently established a number of Pre-Employment Programs targeting the mining sector in Coober Pedy, Ceduna, Port Lincoln and Port Augusta.

There are approximately 750 Indigenous students in TAFE SA with many of these supported by the Access Centre, as well as enrolled in wider TAFE programs.

Finally, the SA Government recently established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Aboriginal Workforce Development chaired by the Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education. This across-government group will:

- ensure that Indigenous skills development is linked at all educational levels to emerging opportunities for Indigenous employment;
- capitalise on regional and remote employment opportunities;
- create employment opportunities by generating economic development involving Indigenous owned land and assets;
- develop public sector training and employment pathways; and
- establish a network of partner organisations willing to assist with Indigenous workforce development from education and training to employment.

Priority issues for government (State and Commonwealth)

The key issues remaining to be addressed with respect to Indigenous employment creation and business development are:

- ways of improving adult literacy and numeracy levels;
- strengthening pathways from school to vocational education and training, higher education and employment;
- boosting employment and training services in areas of major development, e.g. Olympic Dam and Iluka mines;
- strengthening industry support for Indigenous employment initiatives, particularly in areas experiencing skills shortages;
- capitalising on opportunities to expand horticulture ventures on the APY Lands, e.g. building on the success of the Amata and Mimili Reedy Creek pilots;
- increasing the number of Indigenous people working in the various service sectors (although this is occurring to a certain extent through initiatives such as the various SA Health scholarships and local recruitment priorities of other key agencies); and
- exploring additional opportunities in mining, land management and cultural tourism.

While these activities would primarily be State Government led, buy-in from the Australian Government is essential if significant outcomes are to be achieved.