

# **Journal of Indigenous Policy**

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*What Works – And Why the Budget Measures Don't*

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**Cover painting:**

**Artist:** Nancy McDINNY

**Title:** Markirra

**Medium:** Painting on canvas

**Size:** Medium

**Year:** 2014

**Statement:** On Oct 11 2014 Borrooloola Elders called a protest action to protect lands, waters, and sacred sites from destruction from mining, shale gas and pipelines to coincide with the Global Frackdown event opposing all forms of unconventional gas extraction. Community actions opposing fracking also took place in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs on the day. Borrooloola clan groups are concerned that the McArthur River has been poisoned with lead and zinc from the McArthur River Mine and that waste rock is on fire, poisoning the air and creating acidic runoff from the mine site. The action has been called to protect what healthy country is left for all communities in the region. Elder Nancy McDinny painted MARKIRRA as a story of resistance and part of the call for support and solidarity and clan unity. MARKIRRA depicts women dancing and singing near Markirra (White Ochre) Kangaroo Dreaming – one of the many threatened sites along the Carpentaria Highway just east of Borrooloola.

**Cover design and layout by Francisco Fisher.**

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## **Journal of Indigenous Policy**

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## **Why the Journal of Indigenous Policy?**

The Journal of Indigenous Policy has been established to provide a forum for intellectual discourse on Indigenous policy development and implementation as it affects the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. It is an initiative of a group of Indigenous professionals seeking to provide opportunities for a diverse audience to access the perspectives of a wide range of authors.

The most fundamental value guiding the publication of this journal is that we respect and recognise Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination as they define this right for themselves, their people and their communities. Genuine exercise and enjoyment of this right on a collective level requires policy to play a crucial role. All too often, when programs designed to support Indigenous peoples' advancement fail, poor policy development and implementation is a key collaborator.

Recognition of the right to self-determination must also be extended to the individual. So it is that while the *Journal of Indigenous Policy* maintains the highest editorial standards, this is also demonstrated in our respect for the personal choice of our contributors. For this reason readers may notice some fluctuations in the use of grammar and style by the authors.

It is the aim of the JIP to become a respected contributor to Indigenous policy discourse particularly within Indigenous community based organisations. JIP does not solely publish articles that have been peer reviewed although this option is available to any contributor who so chooses.

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## **Journal of Indigenous Policy - Issue 16**

### **What Works – and Why the Budget Measures Don't**

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## **FOREWORD**

This edition of JIP takes a different approach from other editions. It seeks to collate a series of responses and findings to illustrate two key issues:

What works: the criteria for good Indigenous policy development and service delivery; and using these criteria: how the recent budget was described and assessed by various groups.

Together, interrogation of these questions provides an interesting and compelling analysis of the material from different sources. The analysis and extracts chosen show what works and, against this background, provides space for reflection on current government directions.

The material is introduced but then presented in a way that has minimal additional commentary, allowing the reader to engage with the source material and draw their own conclusions.

Eva Cox has had a lifetime of working on public policy issues with a particular focus on impacts on marginalised or disadvantaged groups. She is currently an Adjunct Professor at the Jumbunna IHL Research Unit and we are delighted that she has overseen the collection of this material.

Professor Larissa Behrendt  
Director, Jumbunna I.H.L. Research Unit  
University of Technology, Sydney.

## **PART ONE**

### **WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK IN INDIGENOUS SERVICE DEVELOPMENT – AN ANNOTATED COMPILATION OF EVIDENCE**

EVA COX<sup>1</sup>

(With contributions from Terry Priest and May Rowe-Spencer)

Who knows and cares most about Aboriginal health? We do. So give us the funding and the knowledge and partner with us to enable us to be responsible for our own health and wellbeing.

-- Associate Professor Ted Wilkes Indigenous health researcher<sup>2</sup>

It is said that 'the greatest tragedy of failure is failing to learn from it'. But that seems to be the predominant history of Indigenous policies and programs. Until recently, evidence and evaluation have played only limited roles in Indigenous policy in Australia. The focus has tended to be on intuitive notions of doing good or avoiding harms — on the ends, rather than detailed analysis and review of alternative means.

-- Gary Banks, then Chairman of the Productivity Commission<sup>3</sup>

These quotes are indicators of the long term existence of unaddressed problems in the funding and designing of programs targeting Indigenous individuals and communities. They came after the Rudd 2008 apology to the Stolen Generation, which seems now to mark the high point of expectations of reform to policy processes even though it did not mark any significant change of approach to official Indigenous policies and funding. The Gillard government failed to make any significant changes to broad policy directions, adopting a bipartisan approach by following and extending many Howard initiatives such as the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). Despite establishing

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<sup>1</sup>Adjunct Prof Eva Cox is a sociologist who has taught research methods and policy at two universities and has twice run her own research consultancy. She has also worked with politicians and in senior public service positions and has engaged in policy making, evaluation, advocacy and bureaucratic implementation of programs. She delivered the 1995 ABC Boyer lectures on A Truly Civil Society. She is currently a Research Fellow at Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney.

<sup>2</sup><http://nacchocommunique.com/2013/08/02/naccho-health-news-fiona-stanley-the-secret-to-improving-aboriginal-healthcare/>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.pc.gov.au/research/conference-proceedings/better-indigenous-policies/media-release>

and funding the National Congress of Australia's First People,<sup>4</sup> there were no significant changes in how these policies were made.

The verbiage from the incoming government in 2013 has included claims by Prime Minister Tony Abbott that he will be the first to lead serious change in Indigenous affairs.<sup>5</sup> However, over a year later, the signs are that he has neither seriously addressed many of the procedural and other issues that inhibit effective programs, nor has he increased the funding and resources the programs need. The current funding round (2014) for the Indigenous Advancement Strategy shows similar problems to those identified in this publication and its implementation has been delayed.

This issue of the Journal of Indigenous Policy contains two separate but complementary annotated compilations of extracts from documents that offer evidence of what is wrong and what needs to be addressed. These are intended as resources for those seeking evidence for what works in different policy areas.

The first section is part of a longer term project on evidence based policy making, following up the Journal of Indigenous Policy (Issue 13) which showed that income management was not an effective program. This earlier volume documented procedural flaws in the establishment of the program which seriously diminished its potential to succeed or be helpful. This current volume follows up the wider issues of process that have been increasingly identified by the Federal Government's own main data collector on effectiveness, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). This organisation houses the Clearinghouse collection of data/reports on the COAG Closing the Gap programs and initiatives, and collates and comments on its collection. On the basis of this data, in 2011 AIHW released its criteria for what worked and did not work in program delivery processes for Indigenous people and communities.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore this first section is a compilation of resources, and is intended to be used as a reference document, rather than a single article. We hope that a range of people, active in the process of advocating and deciding policy, will find it

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<sup>4</sup><http://nationalcongress.com.au/>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/tony-abbotts-indigenous-vision-takes-shape/story-fn9hm1pm-1226694578569?nk=40c806701703ac2542d99528b9c21151>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/publications/>

useful. We have, therefore, provided a general introduction, followed by a collation of extracts from a range of reports to illustrate what works and what doesn't, and to provide easy access to proof of what has succeeded and failed across all important areas. This is so that readers can find the extracts more relevant to their areas of policy. Therefore: it is not designed to be read through as a single piece.

The second article in this journal also offers extracts and may be used in a similar way. It is a brief analysis and overview of the 2014 budget's specific Indigenous related and broader policies that are likely to disproportionately affect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As there is still limited clarity on whether some of the proposed changes will go through the senate and how some administrative re-organisation may alter the way things are done, we have focused on whether there is any evidence that the new government has made effective use of the 'what works' criteria their own advisers have identified.

As Gary Banks suggests above, failure to use evidence that is available is tragic and we hope that this volume will encourage the use of good evidence to improve outcomes, particularly by those who control both the money and power.

Eva Cox, Adjunct Professor, University of Technology, Sydney.

## **1.1 THE ISSUES AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM: What works in Indigenous Service Delivery**

The wellbeing of Indigenous Australians has made little progress in recent years despite the introduction of many new policies, programs and funds. Various pilot programs have shown limited good results. The Closing the Gap strategy (2008) has set clear statistical goals but the experiences of the last few years suggest that, despite often increased expenditure, most major Indigenous community and individual problems continue and even increase.<sup>1</sup> A recent example is the continued extending of many components of the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), despite showing few positive results. The response often blames failures on the problems in the 'flawed' recipient population rather than any serious questioning of whether there are identifiable errors in the way the current systems devise and deliver policies and programs.

There is limited official attention paid to procedural issues such as how politicians and bureaucrats implement the programs. Despite repeated feedback from community 'consultations' that there are problems with both the processes of designing the policies and programs and their delivery, there are few signs that these are seriously addressed. This is despite increasing evidence from a range of sources of what does work and what does not, and raises the serious question of why those in control do not incorporate processes that are shown to work.

The evidence clearly identifies that what doesn't work are poor processes: failures to work together on the designing, planning and delivering of effective policies and programs. The following evidence for change has been collated from a range of sources, but initially and primarily from official government and mainstream documents. This should lend serious weight to its use for making changes to current bureaucratic and political processes that would facilitate public discussion and goodwill. The changes that are needed are not party-political but seriously practical and backed by experts across the political spectrum. We hope that this compilation will be used to back up our simpler shorter briefing document to be widely distributed to institutions and communities on what is needed to change the current flawed modes of devising, funding and delivering Indigenous focused programs.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.dpvc.gov.au/publications/docs/closing\\_the\\_gap\\_2014.pdf](http://www.dpvc.gov.au/publications/docs/closing_the_gap_2014.pdf)

### **1.1.1 Using the evidence in accessible form**

This compilation is intended to be used as a reference source for back up data for both bureaucrats and community members who want more equitable, effective processes. It includes a series of relevant quotes chosen mainly from government sources so their content would be seen as unbiased and reliable.

By making this evidence available, there will be fewer excuses by the three main players (politicians, bureaucrats and community members) of not knowing what data is available. We suggest players in these organizations should adopt the criteria on offer, and use them to measure whether their designs for current and new projects fit the recommendations. This should be the starting point for all the decision making processes.

Those funding, designing and implementing such programs should therefore embed the AIHW criteria in their design to ensure decision making processes become more culturally informed, respectful and engaging than is the current practice. As the material below shows how failures to engage appropriately are major causes of poor outcomes, such changes are crucial to improving program outcomes.

We recommend that these government guidelines be taken on board by policy makers on an individual level, in order to address the problem at its source, as well as incorporated into the structures of pre-existing programs. We hope that this approach will engage all stakeholders in new ways and deliver more effective processes for designing and delivering policies and programs. The priority is to recognise that good service outcomes start with bottom up local involvement, cultural relevance and local joint decision making.

### **1.1.2 Defining the problem**

Debate on the effectiveness or otherwise of policies for redressing Indigenous disadvantage often fails to identify and address the possible contributions or difficulties of the processes that underpin the development and delivery of policies and programs. A large number of recent reports and media interest on such programs focus too much on the failures or limited success of many funded Indigenous programs. Public reporting and debate either quote failed government intentions or offer critiques of problems, failures and wasted funds of programs and policies.

The reporting too often assumes that if Indigenous programs fail despite the apparent good intentions of the funders, it is the failure of the targeted groups' commitment that results in poor outcomes. The focus is therefore often on blaming the victims for 'expenditures wasted', with presumptions that more central control is needed. Little or no attention is paid to other possible reasons for these consistent failures, such as errors in how the programs were designed and/or delivered.

Biases in reporting have continued as the media and politicians all fail to examine or consider other possible reasons for the limited positive results. The limited successes of Indigenous focused programs, for example increasing literacy and school attendance, should signal the likelihood of repeated errors in the way governments have devised and delivered effective programs. This primarily includes the failure to engage with target groups before decisions are taken.

It is clear that there is limited public discussion on how Indigenous-focused programs are, or should be, designed and delivered. The focus is on funding and intentions. Despite the availability of evidence of what has worked, what was working before its funding ceased, as well as current examples of what is still working, the new funding tends to over-ride and overlook experiences and lessons that could be learned. For example, the original NTER delivery has been widely criticised for its poor processes,<sup>2</sup> yet there is no evidence that suggests the Stronger Futures policies and programs followed a better, more effective process.

There is little general recognition in media, bureaucratic or political circles of the possible contributions of bad process to the problems of program failures. This omission continues despite consistent evidence in official and other reputable reports. Some of these documents, quoted below, question the adequacy of the usual processes used in design, planning and delivery implementation of Indigenous programs and policies.

Prominent among these critiques are publications by two of the Commonwealth government's most respected arbiters of the quality of service delivery and data collection: the Productivity Commission, which is tasked with reporting on *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*, and the government's own research advisor, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Both have produced publications which identify a wide range of problems in the process of the design and implementation of many such programs.

The AIHW is responsible for the *Closing the Gap Clearing House*, which collects and analyses the quality of reports on Indigenous programs. As part of its role in running the *Closing the Gap Clearing House*, the AIHW has developed a set of 14 criteria that outline what has and has not been effective in the design and implementation of programs which specifically target or serve Indigenous communities and individuals.<sup>3</sup> These criteria have been developed by the government's advisory agency to be used as benchmarks for assessing the competence and appropriateness of the processes adopted by the designers and implementers of such programs. Their documentation, quoted below, offers evidence based ways of improving the success rates of Indigenous programs that are running or intended to be run. The Productivity Commission has

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<sup>2</sup> Yu report: <http://www.nterreview.gov.au/>

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2011/what\\_works\\_to\\_overcome\\_disadvantage\\_2009-10.pdf](http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2011/what_works_to_overcome_disadvantage_2009-10.pdf)



accepted the validity of these criteria and often quotes them in its regular evaluations of official progress in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.<sup>4</sup>

These national government findings are similar to, and therefore supported by, recent reports from local NSW Indigenous communities to recent consultations by the NSW Government's Aboriginal Task Force. The consulted communities expressed their concerns with the programs on offer as well as the way in which these were planned and being delivered.<sup>5</sup> The critiques included the same negatives included in the AIHW criteria (see below) such as the failure to engage and respect criteria developed by local people, which suggests that these issues are legitimate, common and in need of attention.

This congruence of official views raises questions of why they have not been adopted officially by governments. These criteria and the wider critiques are not new, as the formal AIHW recommendations in 2011 have been based on material available over more than a few years in various reports and other forms. They certainly even pre-date the introduction of Stronger Futures programs which did not follow this process. The constant reporting of failed programs indicate that these serious criticisms have not been addressed let alone implemented or even noted by any governments' political or bureaucratic entities over the last few years.

Processes of design and implementation are not an exciting part of policy making and are too often ignored despite being a major factor in the success or failure of spending programs. Part of the problem has been increased demands of bureaucratic administrative procedures that become systemic rather than content driven, such as unrealistic financial timelines. The lack of media interest is another issue, as reporting on what are seen as boring process issues of how programs are designed and run, is not seen as sexy or of political interest.

The neglect of appropriate ways of designing and delivering Indigenous programs has resulted in further damage to the concept of good evidence based policy decision making. In sum, the consistently poor performance of so much Indigenous funding feeds into continuing, well publicised 'shock horror' reports on the limited successes of many so-called 'closing the gap' programs. Badly designed programs result in distorted decisions that misdiagnose assumed causes. This can end up in more top-down programs that police the victims rather than improving Indigenous life chances.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/111609/key-indicators-2011-report.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/111609/key-indicators-2011-report.pdf);

<sup>5</sup> Aboriginal Affairs (2012) Getting it right - The findings of the Round Two Consultations for the NSW, Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs. Aboriginal Affairs, Office of Communities, NSW Department of Education and Communities:  
<http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Getting-it-Right.pdf>

### **1.1.3 The Standard Setters and their criteria for what works**

This section looks at the suggested criteria for assessing processes of policy making and implementation which have been developed by the Governments' own agencies tasked with evaluating programs and setting performance standards.

The recommendations in this section show a rare consensus of views on what processes contribute to the success or otherwise of Indigenous targeted policies and programs. The sources draw on the recent relevant documentation by a wide range of respected government agencies, which clearly identify the serious limits of current funded services to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. The initial section below includes quotes from the Productivity Commission on *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*<sup>6</sup> and the AIHW Report for the *Closing the Gap Clearinghouse*,<sup>7</sup> which both reveal the limited progress and identify many problems in models of funding and operating that help to explain the costs of such programs and their poor results.

These studies reiterate past criticisms and again make recommendations on what works and what doesn't work. Current policy making, however, still shows little evidence that these proposed policy guidelines are being adopted by state and federal funders, and service deliverers. We offer the material in a consolidated format to remind and inform those in power that the many of the problems of failing programs may be of their own making.

#### ***The AIHW Criteria with Jumbunna commentary***

We start with the AIHW criteria of what works below, which we have expanded by offering examples from our own research and other local feedback. We suggest these fourteen items offer an excellent framework for effective decision making and service design processes. The criteria were developed by AIHW from their analysis of the many reports they received for their *Closing the Gap Clearinghouse*, and are therefore clearly evidence based. The criteria, nine for what works and five for what does not apply to the processes of both funding and designing Indigenous services to be delivered for, and sometimes by, local/Indigenous communities. They are useful for the funding of local services, including those directly delivered by government agencies or tendered to large mainstream services. They also set up frameworks for negotiating the processes of funding direct community services which are being, or are likely to be, used by Indigenous families and communities.

We suggest that local communities remind government agencies that the

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/indigenous>

<sup>7</sup>*Closing the Gap Clearinghouse* (AIHW, AIFS) 2011. What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: key learnings and gaps in the evidence. Produced for the *Closing the Gap Clearinghouse*, Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

criteria listed below meet the stringent academic standards used by AIHW in its advisory role. We suggest that public servants and advisers who operate in the funding, consulting and implementing of relevant programs become familiar with these criteria and adapt their current procedures to fit the criteria. We note that similar criticisms are also issues for many of the communities affected by badly designed and delivered programs that rely on the same flawed processes.

The material below combines the AIHW criteria (in bold)<sup>8</sup> with our input of examples from reports and anecdotal evidence on service delivery to Aboriginal communities. The commentary comes from some NSW community research by Jumbunna, reinforced by similar feedback in the summary results of the recent NSW Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs reports based on consultations in 14 locations.<sup>9</sup> More detailed reports from the taskforce are included in the next section. What is worth noting is the similarities between the top down reports from government experts and the bottom up criticisms that come from the grassroots and communities, as indicated in the following section as well.

## What works

- **Community involvement and engagement**  
This should start at the earliest practical point and consultations should be undertaken before any decisions are taken on services needed and how they should be delivered. There must be open discussion and listening. Feedback on decisions is crucial as is ensuring local people feeling engaged so local ideas are heard and appropriately incorporated.
- **Adequate resourcing for planned and comprehensive interventions.**  
Avoid further partial, short term and inadequate interventions that fail to effectively deal with the identified problems or do not operate for long enough to make a difference. Long term planning, funding and support for staffing are all essential for effective services. A far too common outcome is successful programs are often defunded and create future disillusionment.
- **Respect for language and culture**  
Design processes need to recognise and value the local leadership, culture and languages and ensure these are integrated. Local services work best when there is reciprocal respect and cultural embedding to ensure that outsiders recognise their importance.
- **Working together through partnerships, networks and shared leadership**  
This is the structural key to making programs work locally: the genuine sharing of formal and informal decision making and mutual recognition of joint interests, whether expressed as through self-determination or other forms of shared control.
- **Development of social capital**  
There needs to be adequate levels of trust and trustworthiness on all sides to allow people to work effectively and minimise the bureaucratic processes. The building of such relationships takes time so there should be limited use of

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<sup>8</sup>[http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/documents/annual\\_papers/what\\_works\\_to\\_overcome\\_disadvantage.pdf](http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/documents/annual_papers/what_works_to_overcome_disadvantage.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>Aboriginal Affairs (2012) Getting it right. Ibid.

FIFO designers and servicers and the avoidance of short term, high level turnover of staff.

- **Recognising underlying social determinants**  
Recent findings by the World Health Organisation suggest strongly that population wide social and health problems are usually derived from institutional and structural inequities that limit people's sense of control and autonomy, rather than personal or familial deficits. Therefore programs need to address local issues, structural problems and the effects of past histories as well as assisting with immediate needs.
- **Commitment to doing projects with, not for, Indigenous people**  
This is an important component of both effective delivery of services and improving the power imbalances that undermine benefits. Relationships need to be genuinely collaborative between funders, providers and recipients of services. Whether expressed formally in written agreements or informally in actual decision making and delivery, this engagement model is the core of effectiveness and goodwill. Decisions need to integrate Aboriginal knowledge and aspirations.
- **Creative collaboration that builds bridges between public agencies and the community and coordination between communities, non-government and government to prevent duplication of effort.**  
Services need to plan, listen to and engage with local communities to avoid the problems of too few or too many overlapping services that reduce the effectiveness of all providers. Some areas have high numbers of outside agencies operating in small or localised areas, fragmenting local goodwill and undermining the effectiveness of joined up programs.
- **Understanding that issues are complex and contextual**  
The proposals above oversimplify complex issues but hopefully offer a starting point for new approaches that are more inclusive and effective.

## **What doesn't work**

- **'One size fits all' approaches**  
This is a major flaw both in government programs as well as in some services and NGO groups. The administrative processes in larger organisations may see cookie cutter models as easier to manage, and apply them widely. These don't work as they fail the basics of most of the above criteria for what does work.
- **Lack of collaboration and poor access to services**  
As outlined above, multiple services in many locations fail if they are not locally connected and accepted. This may mean services are not seen as legitimate and are therefore not used or recognised as useful.
- **External authorities imposing change and reporting requirements**  
Many local services resent what they see as externally imposed changes to what they feel is working and the frequent reporting that is not even read in many cases.
- **Interventions without local Indigenous community control and culturally appropriate adaptation**  
This is a common complaint that breaches most of the criteria for what is working. External decision making, one size fits all design and delivered services are most unlikely to engage locals and develop the levels of trust and good will in local communities and/or with clients that make their services effective or even appropriately used.
- **Short-term, one-off funding, piecemeal interventions, provision of services in isolation and failure to develop Indigenous capacity to provide**

**services**

Short term inflexible funding may tempt bureaucrats and community groups but often undermines good relations and possible future engagement of local communities. Defunding some successful programs after pilots expire can create future resistance. The failure to plan, support and resource services as well as ensuring that local skills are developed, may also lead to local staff finding delivery too hard.

These criteria are described by AIHW as consistent with the service delivery principles for programs and services for Indigenous Australians (set out in Schedule D of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, effective February 2011).<sup>10</sup> They describe their role thus:

...the Clearinghouse's important contribution is the rigour and impartiality through which available data have been considered. The convergence between 'real world experience', government principles for action and the Clearinghouse's technical assessment builds confidence that emerging themes provide a solid basis for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

While these criteria cannot effectively cover the complex issues raised by self-determination, broader governance problems and other issues of significance to Indigenous communities, they raise important questions about processes. These, if adopted, would improve the main components of interaction between funders and designers of programs and policies and their targeted communities and recipients.

Questions remain as to why these criteria or guidelines have not been formally adopted or even publicly acknowledged as part of implementing the last Federal government's Closing the Gap strategy. There is now an opportunity for the new federal government to include these criteria in the new administrative structures they are developing to deliver programs. We look to the proposed new co-ordination processes to incorporate these. It is reasonable to predict that too many programs and policies will continue to fail to achieve intended political results or satisfy recipient communities because of identified failures in how they are devised and delivered. We therefore recommend that these criteria be seriously considered as the basis of a change to processes to improve the likelihood of effective programming.

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<sup>10</sup>[http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/health\\_indigenous/indigenous-reform/national-agreement\\_sept\\_12.pdf](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/health_indigenous/indigenous-reform/national-agreement_sept_12.pdf)

## **1.2 SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: THE NSW GOVERNMENT FEEDBACK ON WHAT CAN WORK**

The Clearinghouse processes above identified overarching themes for successful programs in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage, based on research reports and evaluations they have decided are methodologically valid. However, we note that these findings are highly congruent with a wide range of other views. Most of these include both significant Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders, and come from experiences they have had on the ground by applying community development principles and 'common sense' approaches. The congruence of top down and bottom up views are clearly identifiable in the following two extracts, taken from the reports mentioned above of feedback and consultations with a range of Indigenous communities, undertaken by the NSW Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>11</sup>

### **Community consultation report**

The NSW Taskforce Report on the local communities has adopted some changes in processes on the basis of their report. We hope that they will also take note of the useful criteria already developed. So far the signs are good, if they follow their own results and advice as is shown in the extracts below. P12-13 of the community consultation report show this:<sup>12</sup>

#### **6.1 Overview - Service Delivery and Accountability**

A total of 1,721 comments or responses were received on the MTAA Term of Reference related to improving service delivery and accountability in Aboriginal affairs

##### **6.1.1 Summary of Public Consultations**

*Aboriginal representation in decision-making, service design and delivery*

### **1.2.1 Local level**

It was emphasised throughout the consultations that Aboriginal people should drive and have ownership of services, from conception to delivery. Some submissions suggested ways to ensure that real partnering and collaboration with local Aboriginal communities is implemented. These included agencies and service providers entering into local MOUs with communities, the development of Aboriginal community service delivery protocols within government, and ensuring funding for programs was dependent on evidence of real collaboration and partnership, not "tick a box" consultation. It was also highlighted that Aboriginal communities need comprehensive data to be able to plan across a range of programs.

The need for government to recognise that each community is different was reinforced. Submissions emphasised that consultation should be a genuine two way process, with on-going dialogue which fostered relationships. Concern was

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<sup>11</sup>[http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/data/files/MTAA\\_Progress\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/data/files/MTAA_Progress_Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>12</sup>Aboriginal Affairs (2012) Getting it right. Ibid

expressed that decisions that come from the top down do not include Aboriginal knowledge and community aspirations, and it was emphasised that no-one represents a community better than the people who live in that community.

The need for strong Aboriginal community governance, with good representation from all family and gender groups within the community, and from peak body representatives, was highlighted. It was stated that government needs to listen to community and consult with Elders, not outsiders. The importance of local planning was also highlighted because it is the only way to address local circumstances and community identified needs.

Submissions also highlighted the need to accept and recognise the diversity of views and opinions within Aboriginal communities. It was also noted that government consultation needs to be able to take account of broader community views if local governance arrangements do not represent the whole community.

A human rights based community development model was advocated as one way to ensure strong local Aboriginal community governance and control, and achieve improved outcomes through self-reliance and by empowering Aboriginal people to determine their own affairs at a community level.

The following is a more detailed summary of findings that was distributed to all other NSW government departments for their consideration in 2013.

### **1.2.2 NSW responses and recommendations of taskforce**

*(Note: comments in italics are not part of the original texts in the following sections where we compile quotes from other reports)*

#### **Improving Service Delivery and Accountability - Key messages from the community consultations undertaken by the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>13</sup>**

In the first quarter of 2012 the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs (the Taskforce) undertook an extensive consultation process with Aboriginal communities and stakeholders to provide input into Taskforce deliberations.

As part of this process, the Taskforce heard first-hand issues about the delivery and accountability of government-funded services and how service provision can be improved. The key messages arising from the community consultation are outlined below.

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<sup>13</sup><http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Key-messages-from-round-1-consultations-for-website.pdf>

While Taskforce deliberations are ongoing, the Taskforce has requested that this rich information be provided to all NSW Government agencies to inform the way services are planned, designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

### **Increasing Aboriginal representation in decision making, service design and delivery**

- Aboriginal people should drive and have ownership of services, from conception to delivery. Consultation should be a genuine two way process, with on-going dialogue which fosters partnerships.
- Each community is different and government needs to listen to community not outsiders. No-one represents a community better than the people who live in that community. Decisions that come from the top down do not include local Aboriginal knowledge and community aspirations.
- Strong Aboriginal community governance, with good representation within the community and from peak bodies, enables effective negotiation with government and non-government organisations (NGOs).
- The diversity of views and opinions within Aboriginal communities needs to be recognised and accepted. Consultation needs to take into account broader community views if existing local governance arrangements do not represent the whole community.
- Aboriginal involvement and leadership in decision making should be recognised and supported. In particular, the role of Elders within Aboriginal communities needs to be acknowledged. Engagement with young people about matters that impact them is also critical.
- Suggestions for how to ensure that real partnering and collaboration with local Aboriginal communities occurs included:
  - MOUs with local communities;
  - The development of Aboriginal community service delivery protocols;
  - Local planning which addresses local circumstances and community-identified needs;
  - Making program funding dependent on evidence of real collaboration and partnership, not 'tick a box' consultation; Supporting the participation of local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs), Aboriginal NGOs and Partnership Communities in government forums, particularly Local Aboriginal Interagency Networks that bring service providers together in Aboriginal communities; and
  - A leadership program to support the involvement of community members in boards and committees.

### **Strengthening the Aboriginal community controlled sector**

- Aboriginal community controlled NGOs are essential and effective in delivering culturally appropriate, locally driven, flexible and cost effective



services.

- Aboriginal NGOs should be supported to build their governance, leadership and organizational capacity to deliver more services to Aboriginal people.
- Aboriginal NGOs also need longer term, sustained support and investment to improve their service delivery.
- Suggested mechanisms to strengthen the Aboriginal community controlled sector included:
  - Preferred tendering arrangements for Aboriginal NGOs;
  - Decentralised funding processes and assessment of applications to ensure appropriate community and Aboriginal representation on assessment panels;
  - Tender selection being undertaken in individual communities so that the process can respond to actual community needs; and
  - Secondments of Aboriginal people cross the NGO, government and private sectors to build the capacity of all sectors.

### **Improving the quality, coordination and transparency of service provision**

- Long-term approaches are required to properly address many of the complex issues facing Aboriginal communities. Short-term funding and the discontinuation of successful Aboriginal programs results in the loss of local capacity, knowledge and experience.
- Program design should be evidence based and supported by comprehensive data for effective planning and evaluation.
- There is a need for greater collaboration and coordination of services. Different levels of government need to work together to avoid duplication and this needs to involve transparent and open dialogue with Aboriginal people.
- Greater coordination between Aboriginal and mainstream non-government service providers would also reduce intrusion and confusion for Aboriginal communities.
- Place-based and flexible approaches to funding allow for regional variations to address local needs in different communities and provide local program managers with the flexibility to respond to local issues as they arise.
- Holistic and flexible approaches to service delivery empower Aboriginal people and assist in addressing all aspects of a person's life and well-being.
- Greater transparency and regular feedback to Aboriginal communities is needed about the quality of services, performance of programs and the implementation of state and federal agreements.
- Suggestions for how to improve the quality, coordination and transparency of service provision included:
  - Funding agreements to include a requirement for services to engage with community, report on how many Aboriginal people access their services and develop access improvement targets;
  - Local service delivery plans developed by local Aboriginal community governance bodies and government with measurable targets, including

- expenditure and outcomes; public reporting on all programs, including the organisations responsible for the service delivery and the ratio of funding for Aboriginal and mainstream organisations;
- Publicly available and transparent audits of service delivery; and co-locating services where possible or holding multi-agency days to inform the community about key services available.

**Building cultural awareness and understanding**

- It takes time to develop the respect of Aboriginal communities, and this takes commitment and continuous engagement with communities to build relationships and trust.
- Service relationships with Aboriginal people need to involve a strong customer service with effective communication between agencies and their clients.
- Building cultural awareness and understanding is necessary to ensure that more appropriate services are developed and delivered. This involves improved Aboriginal cultural awareness and competency of staff at all levels within government agencies and service delivery providers. Suggestions included mentoring, localised cross-cultural education and cultural safety programs. Aboriginal and mainstream NGOs and government agencies must have culturally appropriate complaints procedures to meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

### 1.3 SOME PROGRAM BASED CRITIQUES: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK

The above section covered government wide general criteria on what works, this next section includes extracts from specific reports on particular program evaluations and critiques of these. These relevant extracts often illustrate the details of what makes programs work or not and how they function. Most have been extracted from recent and current documents from primarily Commonwealth agencies that evaluate commonwealth program delivery, including AIHW, the Australian National Audit Office, and the Ombudsman, but also include some recent NSW Government reports on its programs to show the universality of the process problems.

Some initial extracts come from summary documents/resource sheets put together by the staff of the AIHW Clearinghouse on Closing the Gap, which meta-analyse categories of deposited reports. Despite these summaries being collated and distributed to inform and be used by program specific areas to reform their processes, they seem not to influence processes as they should. The basis for our selecting extracts is to show the repeated similarities of examples, both good and bad, of 'what works' and 'what doesn't work' in many different policy contexts, and relate to a wide range of specific programs areas. The one below is a general set of principles.

#### A. 2013 AIHW Strategies and Practices for Promoting the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.<sup>14</sup>

*This document offers a useful set of general cultural recommendations that deal with wide ranging cultural differences that are not adequately acknowledged in the processes of planning and delivering services. It emphasises how Indigenous cultures take a holistic view of life and health; therefore, cultural, spiritual and social wellbeing are integral to the health of Indigenous people and list the issues that need to be considered:*

- The impact of colonisation, relocation of people to missions and reserves and the forced removal of children resulted in the dispossession and dislocation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from land and family. This has disrupted cultural beliefs and practices, and has adversely affected the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous people.
- In 2008, nearly one-third (32%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 and over reported high or very high levels of psychological distress, which was more than twice the proportion for non-Indigenous adults.
- International studies and Australian data indicate that Indigenous people

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2013/ctgc-rs19.pdf>

who are conversant in their own languages have better resilience and mental health. There are few well-conducted evaluations of Indigenous-specific programs whose purpose is to promote social and emotional wellbeing.

- A number of mainstream (non-Indigenous-specific) programs have been evaluated and shown to be effective in promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous people.
- Good practice principles highlight that programs are unlikely to be effective when:
  - They are not culturally competent and do not have a high level of Indigenous ownership and community supportThey operate in isolation from, or do not address the legacy of, past trauma, past and current racism and issues such as poverty and homelessness.

**From the AIHW Clearinghouse:<sup>15</sup>**

*These come from summary sheets based on multiple reports on categories of services that affect Indigenous families and communities and that would benefit from procedural changes, below.*

**What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: key findings**

***Early childhood services***

Early childhood services are a major funding area which is widely recognised as crucial to changing the often poor outcomes of children in later schooling. The current goals include an early increase in children attending such services. However, there is not much attention being given in many of the programs, including those covered by the Early Years Learning Framework, to processes of establishing and running such services in ways that engage and involve communities and parents. The implementation of more effective ways of working with parents and communities would not only increase enrolments but attendance and effective learning.

**What works**

- High-quality, holistic, early and family involved intervention and education.
- Teacher training.
- Cultural competence and cultural safety.
- Local involvement in program development.

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<sup>15</sup>Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW, AIFS) 2012. What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: key learnings and gaps in the evidence 2010-11. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

### **What doesn't work**

- Limited and lack of engagement with families.
- Services that do not fully engage the Indigenous community.
- Programs that are not adapted to the local cultural context.

### ***Healthy homes***

The following principles and practices are linked with good housing outcomes:

### **What works**

- Design and construction of Indigenous housing.
  - Culturally appropriate design.
  - Prioritisation of safety and health.
  - Local capacity building.

### **What doesn't work**

- Short-term or piecemeal programs.
- Design and construction: A centralised approach that doesn't contextualise particular local, cultural, social and environmental circumstances.
- Relocation of households during urban renewal.
- Inappropriate maintenance programs.
- Top-down interventions and disingenuous consultation processes.
- Failure to employ Indigenous staff.

### ***Governance and leadership***

The following principles and practices are again linked with the way things are done rather than the content:

### **What works**

- Culturally appropriate and culturally 'safe' services.
- Culturally competent service delivery
- Suitably qualified and experienced field staff
- A flexible approach to designing and funding initiatives.
- A community development approach to ensure shared and relevant programs.
  - Specifically, this includes applying a strengths-based approach.
  - A commitment to empower the community.
  - Supporting Indigenous staff.
  - Investing time and resources into ongoing community consultations.

*What Works and What Doesn't Work in Indigenous Service Development*

- Leadership development that incorporates core facets of Indigenous leadership styles.

**What doesn't work**

- Power inequalities.
- Inflexible funding and program requirements.

## 1.4 REPORTS ON SPECIFIC FUNDED PROGRAMS

*The following reports are specific to previously delivered programs and therefore highlight both the effective and ineffective aspects of their design and delivery. The extracts come directly from the original reports but bold has been used to emphasize the parts that are most relevant to process issues, both positively and negatively. Commentary is provided in italics.*

### 1.4.1 Early childhood

#### **A. 2012 AIHW Parenting in the early years: Effectiveness of parenting support programs for Indigenous families. Resource sheet no. 16 produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse.<sup>1</sup>**

This paper focuses on two types of parenting support programs. Firstly, parenting programs; short-term interventions aimed at helping parents improve their relationship with their child. Secondly, home visiting programs, which include various programs, supports and services delivered to a family by a person visiting the home.

Programs for Indigenous families ... need to consider: cultural practices associated with raising children; the need for community involvement and consultation; that mainstream parenting education and home visiting programs may not be appropriate for Indigenous communities; the use of Indigenous workers and cultural consultants to work alongside non-Indigenous workers; and a strong focus on relationship building and communication.

The following principles and practices are linked with parenting support programs for Indigenous families:

#### **What works**

- Use of cultural consultants in conjunction with professional parent education facilitators and home visitors.
- Long-term rather than short-term programs.
- A focus on the needs of both parents, carers and the child.
- A supportive approach that focuses on family strengths.
- Structured early intervention program content while also responding flexibly to families.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2012/ctgc-rs16.pdf>

### **What doesn't work**

- Programs that do not provide quality, structured content or sound delivery methods.
- Adapting 'mainstream' (non-Indigenous specific) programs for Indigenous families without community involvement or consultation.
- Programs that lack a strong focus on communication and relationship building.
- Failing to link families with other services in the community.

*This publication also provides examples of programs that 'work' for indigenous families, including home visiting and practices based on literature provided by SNAICC, which is important as AIHW recognises the input of the peak National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agency.*

### **B. Australian Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP).<sup>2</sup>**

The Australian Government is rolling out the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program, which is based on the US Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) program, in five Indigenous-controlled health services. The aim is to support women pregnant with an Indigenous child and their families.

### **C. Family Home Visiting Program (FHVP)**

A qualitative evaluation of the first 12 months of the Family Home Visiting Program (FHVP) in South Australia, which is also adapted from the NFP's program was ...conducted with 60 parents and extended family members. The aim of this study was to examine what is working well for families who are participating in the program.

Families valued the cross-cultural partnership of the FHVP nurses and Indigenous workers, and the in-home delivery and flexibility of the program was thought to encourage engagement in the program. The most important feature was reported to be the qualities of the staff, including honesty, friendliness, warmth, non-judgmental attitudes and listening skills, and the relationships they built with the families. The flexible and whole-family approach to the program was also highly valued by families. The cultural consultants were thought to be especially crucial for engaging families in the program.

These findings support previous studies that have found that including extended family members, being adaptable and responsive to family needs (McGuigan et al. 2003), and developing good relationships between workers and families (Kirkpatrick et al. 2007; Krysik et al. 2008) are key factors for successful home visiting programs. The importance of workers being from a similar cultural background has also been found to be a factor related to recruitment into home visiting programs...

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<sup>2</sup>[www.anfpp.com.au](http://www.anfpp.com.au)



A number of promising practices, including design and delivery, have been identified in the consultation paper published by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC 2004):<sup>3</sup>

### **What works**

#### Design:

- Use cultural consultants in conjunction with professional parent education facilitators and home visitors
- Use long-term home visiting programs rather than short-term programs
- Focus on the needs of both the primary caregiver and child
- Promote parenting and home visiting programs as being supportive to parents and families, and focus on family strengths within the program
- Use structured program content while also responding flexibly to families

#### Delivery:

- Programs must take into account the cultural norm in Indigenous communities of extended family, relatives and community being involved in raising children
- Programs for Indigenous families are likely to be more successful when there is community involvement
- There should be a strong focus on communication and relationship building
- There should be a focus on linking families with other services in the community
- The use of mainstream programs may not be appropriate for Indigenous communities.

### **1.4.2 Housing**

*A similar range of suggested criteria is offered for Housing, another area that constantly proves problematic.*

#### **A. 2012 AIHW Constructing and maintaining houses.<sup>4</sup>**

### **What works**

- Designing and constructing housing based on the established standards and accumulated knowledge in the National Indigenous Housing Guide (FaHCSIA 2008). This includes a process of consultation with the local community, and designing housing that meets the social and cultural needs of occupants.
- This requires design, construction and maintenance staff to have some cross-cultural awareness before they begin working in Indigenous

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<sup>3</sup>SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care) 2004. Indigenous parenting project: main report. Melbourne: SNAICC.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2012/ctgc-rs13.pdf>

communities.

- Most importantly, local community members are needed for training and employment, to help with consultation, translation and all aspects of the ongoing construction and maintenance program.

## **B. 2012 ANAO Indigenous Housing Initiative: The Fixing Houses for Better Health (FHBH) Program.<sup>5</sup>**

*The FHBH Audit found:*

Delivery of Indigenous housing programs is challenging. Housing needs tend to vary from community to community and also between houses within communities. Solutions must often be tailored to specific communities to be effective. In remote areas, construction and maintenance services face additional hurdles created by distance and limitations in local resources and capacity. The FHBH program sought to address these challenges by deliberately involving community members in repair and maintenance projects, and by focusing efforts at a household level. At the same time, the program was designed to allow a level of consistency to be achieved across communities through the use of a standardised assessment and work prioritisation model.<sup>6</sup>

**What works: *elements of the program that helped it be successful, stated in terms relevant to the AIHW criteria***

- *Tailored solutions to specific communities..*
- *Involve community members in repair and maintenance projects.*
- *Focus efforts at a household level. At the same time.*
- *Incorporate and use standardised assessment and work prioritisation models into programs to allow a level of consistency to be achieved across communities.*

### **1.4.3 Sexual Health**

*The evaluation identified the following as key features of successful sexual health programs*

## **A. 2013 AIHW Demonstration projects for improving sexual health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth: Evaluation Report.<sup>7</sup>**

**What works**

- Appropriate consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including community Elders, young people and health professionals.
- Engagement and developing partnerships with the community, organisations and services.

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<sup>5</sup>[http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/2010%202011\\_audit\\_report\\_no21.pdf](http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/2010%202011_audit_report_no21.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>ibid

<sup>7</sup><http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129542912>

- Culturally appropriate project design and implementation
- Project design, delivery and implementation that was flexible and adaptable.
- Staff who were respected by the community, accessible to young people, engaged well with young people, and were the same gender as the target group.

Recruitment and retention of staff was a significant challenge faced by many of the projects. Greater training and support need to be provided for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sexual health workforce to increase the available pool of people with the required skills.

All projects were successful in developing partnerships in order to use existing networks and resources, and to build on services and programs already operating in the community. Most projects established a mix of formal and informal partnerships:

- Formal partnerships, including memorandums of understanding (MoU), contracts and formalised supportive/collaborative arrangements
- Informal partnerships, including informal linkages, networks and information sharing arrangements. – possibly as a result of having locals ‘build on existing local capacity’

The findings are structured around the components project objectives:

- governance and management (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce) (program objectives 1, 2 and 6)
- risk reduction: education and resources (program objectives 2 and 4)
- service delivery (program objectives 3, 4 and 5).

Governance – The formation of governance arrangements involved building on existing local capacity and health service relationships. For example, the reference group formed by Congress was comprised of local senior Aboriginal men who represented the various language groups within the region and had knowledge regarding men’s cultural practices across the different regions. They were able to guide projects and provide advice on issues associated with the daily activities involved in meeting cultural obligations.

***Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service (ACMS)—Hey Bruz Project:***

Durri established a reference group consisting of local community representatives, and an advisory committee of Durri ACMS staff, which included doctors, nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW) and a youth worker to help inform the Hey Bruz project.

***SNAKE project managed by Marie Stopes:***

Marie Stopes managed the SNAKE project through the existing MSA management team, rather than establishing a specific steering committee for the project. The project was led by an Indigenous program manager, who sat on the

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) sexual health steering committee and the Wulumperi Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Unit steering committee at the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, both of which provided advice in relation to the SNAKE project.

***Ngaanyatjarra Health Service (NHS):***

The large number of partnerships formed contributed to the success of the KungkakuYangupalaku Healthy Relationships Project. Partner organizations with the same target demographic were particularly beneficial, particularly in terms of goal sharing and collaborating for events. For example, the weekly

***'Ngarandhi', Aboriginal Youth Safe Summer Survival Project  
'Ngarandhi' and Youth Health Clinic (SESDGP):***

Building relationships with the community and young people SESDGP—Aboriginal Youth Safe Summer Survival Project 'Ngarandhi' and Youth Health Clinic. At some stages of the project, SESDGP appropriately engaged and consulted with the community through a number of age- and gender-appropriate committees. For example, SESDGP consulted with the DIVAS group, young females aged 16–25, and LaPaDeadly's community advisory 18–35 years age group. During these consultations, the project name, Ngarandhi, was created by the community and translates in Dharawal language to mean 'Listen'. There was also an acronym developed—LAPAMOB which stands for 'learning about protection and making ourselves better'.

**What didn't work**

Other stages of the Ngarandhi project, however, lacked appropriate community consultation and, as a result, some sections of the community were not supportive of the project in the early stages. ... As a result, there was a lack of community consultation, particularly for the development of surveys to be used by peer educators to determine whether there was an increase in sexual health knowledge. The initial survey that was developed did not have widespread community support. During the second year of peer educators, the SESDGP Project Officer and the new Peer Education Coordinator spent a substantial amount of time rebuilding relationships and consulting with the community about appropriate data collection tools. SESDGP noted that there was an increase in the level of interaction, communication and direct contact with community members, which resulted in positive interactions and information exchanges with peer educators.

**1.4.4 Health and Ageing**

*The evaluation identified the following as key features of a program to minimise the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviour:*

## **A. 2013 AIHW: strategies to minimise the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviour.<sup>8</sup>**

### **What works**

- Community programs that focus on the social, emotional, cultural and spiritual underpinnings of community wellbeing can be effective in preventing suicide.
- A culturally adapted brief intervention comprising motivational care planning, has been effective in improving wellbeing and decreasing alcohol and cannabis dependence among Indigenous people with chronic mental illness, in three remote communities in northern Australia.

### **What doesn't work**

- Programs that are not culturally competent and do not have a high level of Indigenous ownership and community support.

There are three types of suicide prevention programs—those that build resilience, crisis intervention programs and post-vention programs...This resource sheet focuses on crisis intervention and post-vention programs.

## **B. The Yarrabah Family Life Promotion Program.<sup>9</sup>**

Yarrabah Family Life Promotion Program is an example of an effective community-based *suicide prevention* program that has decreased the number of suicides in the community and in comparison to other communities. Initially the focus was on crisis clinical support for individuals at risk of suicide, however over the next 2 years there was a gradual shift to a broader approach that focused on community wellbeing.<sup>10</sup>

Two programs that have not been rigorously evaluated, but suggest good practice are:

- *Alive and Kicking Goals!* is a project piloted in the Kimberley, Western Australia. It aims to prevent Indigenous youth suicide through the use of football and peer education. Volunteer youth leaders, who are well-respected sportsmen, undertake training to become peer educators. They educate young people in communities about suicide prevention and lifestyle and demonstrate that seeking help is not a sign of weakness. At the conclusion of the pilot, 16 young men had become peer educators.<sup>11</sup> The project is ongoing, but its impact on suicide numbers has not been evaluated.

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2013/ctgc-rs18.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>Ibid

<sup>10</sup>Hunter E, Reser J, Baird M & Reser P 1999. An analysis of suicide in Indigenous communities of North Queensland: the historical, cultural and symbolic landscape. Canberra: Department of Health and Aged Care.

<sup>11</sup>Tighe J & McKay K 2012. *Alive and Kicking Goals!*: preliminary findings from a Kimberley suicide prevention program. *Advances in Mental Health* 10(3):240–5.

- *Indigenous suicide prevention training forums* attended by Indigenous people and service providers in the Kimberley and North West regions of Western Australia have been shown to increase attendees' knowledge of depression and suicidal behaviour, their skills in working with depressed and suicidal Aboriginal people and their intentions to help.<sup>12</sup> *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*<sup>13</sup> identified the forums as providing culturally appropriate training in suicide prevention. The forums were also identified as promising in the literature review *Current approaches to Aboriginal suicide prevention*.<sup>14</sup>

An Indigenous adaptation of the MHFA training program has been developed under the direction of a reference group, comprising Indigenous health professionals and non-Indigenous health professionals, who specialise in Indigenous mental health and wellbeing. Both the 5 day Indigenous-specific MHFA instructor training program and the 14 hour MHFA community training program were found to significantly increase participants' mental health knowledge and confidence to help people with mental illness.<sup>15</sup> Participants in both training programs stated that the programs were culturally appropriate, empowering for Indigenous people and provided information that was relevant and important.<sup>16</sup>

A 2 year follow-up of 40 participants in community gatekeeper training workshops in an urban Indigenous community found that participants' intentions to help, and confidence in their ability to identify someone at risk of suicide, remained high.

### **C. 2012 AIHW Healthy lifestyle programs for physical activity and nutrition.<sup>17</sup>**

Being overweight or obese, being physically inactive and consuming a diet low

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<sup>12</sup>Westerman TG & Hillman SD 2003. Suicide prevention in Aboriginal communities: a best practice model of community driven prevention. Poster presented at the Suicide Prevention Australia conference, Brisbane, 12–15 June 2003

<sup>13</sup>Purdie N, Dudgeon P & Walker R (eds) 2010. *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*. Canberra: Department of Health and Ageing.

<sup>14</sup>Kirmayer LJ, Fraser SL, Fauras V & Whitley R 2009. *Current approaches to Aboriginal suicide prevention*. Culture and Mental Health Research Unit Working Paper 14. Montreal: Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry, Jewish General Hospital.

<sup>15</sup>Jorm A & Hart L 2008. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid (AMHFA) National Pilot Program: 2008 evaluation report*. Report to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Department of Health and Ageing. Melbourne: ORYGEN Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

<sup>16</sup>Kanowski LG, Jorm AF & Hart LM 2009. *A mental health first aid training program for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: description and initial evaluation*. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 3:10.

<sup>17</sup><http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2013/ctgc-rs19.pdf>

in fruit and vegetables have been estimated to contribute 16%, 12% and 5% respectively to the health gap observed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.<sup>18</sup>

It is estimated that chronic diseases are responsible for 80% of the mortality gap between Indigenous and other Australians aged 35–74. These include cardiovascular disease (largely heart attack and stroke), diabetes, liver disease and lower respiratory tract disease, as well as cancers, mental conditions and renal failure (a result of chronic kidney disease)

#### **What works**

- In the Indigenous context, the community managed and initiated all the programs which were shown to be effective.
- Individual, family-based and group-based Indigenous lifestyle programs had positive health effects for periods of up to two years.
- Intensive lifestyle programs have been shown to be effective in reducing the incidence of diabetes developing among overweight non-Indigenous people with pre-diabetes.

#### **What doesn't work**

- Programs that do not have a high level of community ownership and support.
- Programs that operate in isolation from, or do not address, broader structural issues, such as poverty and lack of access to a healthy food supply.

#### **A good example:** *the Looma Healthy Lifestyle Project*

The Looma Healthy Lifestyle Project in Western Australia is still operating 18 years after its beginning, which is a testament to the commitment of the community. A health assessment of Looma residents undertaken in 2009 found that the prevalence of diabetes in the community had not increased since 2003. Children and young people in the community were found to be overwhelmingly healthy, with 84% of those under 18 being of normal weight, compared with 77% nationally (Caritas Australia 2011).

### **1.4.5 A Seamless National Economy**

#### **Reports from the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) and other non-service delivery departments evaluating other departments**

*These organisational reports focus on value for money and ability of the programs to meet the specified needs and therefore report back to departments on how they should make changes to what is not working. However, there is no*

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<sup>18</sup>Vos T, Barker B, Begg S, Stanley L & Lopez AD 2009. Burden of disease and injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: the Indigenous health gap. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 38(2):470–7.

*evidence that such findings are more broadly generalised to other programs that have similar failings but have not been evaluated. The following reports are on projects which were largely less effective than desirable. The first ones come from another federal government organisation with impeccable credentials for objective judgement of effective service delivery. Similar patterns appear in the audited programs below suggesting the constructions of what works are very similar across Government agencies.*

**A. 2009 ANAO: evaluation of the indigenous youth mobility program.<sup>19</sup>**

The Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (IYMP) is a program that has created education and training opportunities for Indigenous youth. DEEWR has worked collaboratively with service providers and continuously implemented improvements to the program in order to deliver better outcomes for Indigenous youth. IYMP is strongly supported by stakeholders. Because of the comprehensive service it provides in supporting Indigenous youth through education and training.

Stakeholder engagement was a key aspect of IYMP program implementation and ongoing program management. OEA found that a proactive and coordinated approach to stakeholder engagement was not a priority for DEEWR, and engagement was undertaken primarily on an 'as required' basis. As such, there was insufficient engagement with participants and strategic partnerships so IYMP operated largely in isolation from other DEEWR and Australian Government programs. While service providers were generally satisfied with the level of support provided by DEEWR, a more coordinated approach to stakeholder engagement would facilitate improved service delivery and overall program outcomes.

They recommended DEEWR review and update the current approach to stakeholder engagement and management. This review should include establishing a mechanism for capturing feedback from participants, which could be used to inform program planning and review of service delivery performance. DEEWR's response was that it needed more time to get the target number of commencements.

*The following material comes from the internal critique of programs on the basis of whether they do what they claim to do, not the merit of the programs themselves. It summarizes the criteria for good management which is also supported by other agencies.*

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<sup>19</sup>[http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_indigenous\\_youth\\_mobility\\_program.pdf](http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/evaluation_of_the_indigenous_youth_mobility_program.pdf)



## **B. 2012 ANAO capacity development for indigenous service delivery.<sup>20</sup>**

### **What works**

International development experience suggests that the most successful capacity development approaches are systematic with a long-term outlook, flexible and suited to the circumstances or context, and address capacity at multiple levels. For non-government organisations, this includes strategies to address capacity within organisations as well as factors in the external environment that influence capacity.

### **What doesn't work**

The departments are implementing a range of specific capacity development activities. However, none of the departments had an overarching policy which drew these efforts together or provided guidance for staff implementing the capacity development activities. This was also the case at a whole-of-government level where no overarching strategy for implementing a capacity development approach was in place.

In the absence of an overall strategy, the impact of individual initiatives within programs is likely to be limited, and may lead to duplication in implementation or a piecemeal approach. While there are some examples of capacity development through reforms and program-based initiatives within these departments, given the longstanding nature of many constraints, more attention is required to give fuller effect to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement and better support service delivery capacity in Indigenous organisations.

The Australian Government's Grant Management System (GMS), administered by FaHCSIA, indicates that over the period since July 2007, funding to Indigenous organisations was administered under 84 different programs, and most funding agreements with Indigenous organisations were worth less than \$60 000 and were for periods of less than 12 months. In addition, the 820 Indigenous organisations identified in the GMS were required to submit a significant number of reports in this period. The high number of short-term and small value grant funding agreements can make it difficult for organisations to predict future funding, in turn, making it difficult for organisations to attract staff and plan, as well as creating a high administration load for organisations and departments.

There is no framework across Australian Government departments to guide the implementation at a whole-of-government level of the relevant National Indigenous Reform Agreement service delivery principles covering investment in the capacity of Indigenous organisations.

... ..  
In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) made commitments

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<sup>20</sup><http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Audit%20Reports/2011%2012/201112%20Audit%20Report%20No26.pdf>

to investing in the service delivery capacity of Indigenous organisations under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA). Under the Service Delivery Principles for Indigenous Programs and Services, articulated in the NIRA, investment in the capacity of organisations, and promoting opportunities for Indigenous service delivery, is linked with the long-term sustainability of programs and services.

The objective of the audit was to assess the extent to which FaHCSIA, DEEWR and DoHA seek to reduce service delivery risks posed by capacity constraints in Indigenous organisations.

In addition to providing services, Indigenous organisations are often a form of local level governance and can play important roles in developing social capital. To this end, the NIRA also identifies capacity development as contributing to outcomes under the building blocks of 'governance and leadership' and 'economic participation'.

*The following report looks at both the shift in administration of many recipients of the program after the proposed changes and also raises issues of the lack of planning and setting of objectives that accompanied the shift and therefore undermined any rationale for the program. It is particularly interesting because it lists the many 'unknown' factors that meant evaluating the program effectiveness was not possible. While it doesn't detail the inclusion or otherwise of local people, there are many other reports that show that decisions were very much centrally based on almost all aspects. It also shows how a program can proceed without any serious evidence base on which to make decisions, despite extensive spending.*

### **C. 2013 ANAO Administration of New Income Management in the Northern Territory.<sup>21</sup>**

#### **What works**

From NTER Income Management to New Income Management:

FaHCSIA and DHS (the departments) effectively managed the transition from NTER Income Management to New Income Management. Consistent with one of the critical success factors set by the Government, by 31 December 2010 DHS had transitioned or exited the majority of NTER customers and commenced additional customers who became eligible under the new criteria.

#### **What doesn't work**

- **Matched Savings Payment**

Take-up of the Matched Savings Payment has been significantly lower than expected, with only 18 people having received the payment at 30 June

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<sup>21</sup>[http://www.anao.gov.au/~/\\_media/Files/Audit%20Reports/2012%202013/Audit%20Report%2019/201213%20Audit%20Report%20No%2019.pdf](http://www.anao.gov.au/~/_media/Files/Audit%20Reports/2012%202013/Audit%20Report%2019/201213%20Audit%20Report%20No%2019.pdf)

2012. This suggests that the payment is not having the intended impact on savings behaviour.

- **DHS Compliance program**  
DHS conducts a compliance program for third party organisations subject to contractual arrangements. The 2011–12 results showed that compliance rates were lower than the department’s desired level of 90 per cent, with 34 per cent of BasicsCard merchants reviewed (110 from 323 reviews) being found non-compliant. DHS has implemented a revised compliance program in 2012–13 to address identified process weaknesses.

There is no overarching framework that outlines the approach to quality assurance and how the different aspects collectively address the risks.

During 2011–12, a Commonwealth Ombudsman’s review and subsequent DHS internal taskforce identified a number of significant issues with the assessment of exemption applications, particularly concerning consistency and transparency in the decision-making process. DHS has since introduced a number of changes to its processes.

#### **What’s not known**

Due to the practical operation of Income Management, however, the departments are limited in their ability to determine if the notional allocations towards priority needs translate to actual spending on these goods and services.

The Act highlights that the scheme is intended to bring about a range of changes in individual and community behaviour. One of the overall aims of Income Management is to promote and support positive behavioural change and personal responsibility... Accordingly, there is scope for FaHCSIA to improve the existing reporting arrangements by developing and reporting on a range of key performance indicators that provide insights on the effectiveness of Income Management in meeting its legislative objectives.

Therefore, there is also scope for DHS to strengthen its internal monitoring and reporting arrangements by developing performance indicators that better measure the efficiency and effectiveness of Income Management service delivery.

#### **D. 2011 ANAO - Indigenous employment in government service delivery.<sup>22</sup>**

The audit objective was to assess the effectiveness of DEEWR’s and FaHCSIA’s administration of the Australian Government’s responsibilities under Element 1 of the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation (including the NT Jobs Package).

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<sup>22</sup><http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Audit%20Reports/2011%2012/201112%20Audit%20Report%20no4.pdf>

The audit scope did not include: an examination of the night patrol positions administered by AGD as they have previously been the subject of an ANAO audit; the identification and creation of jobs by state and territory governments; and job creation in the Torres Strait Islands.

## **What works**

### ***NJCP and NT Jobs Package***

The majority of jobs under the NJCP and NT Jobs Package were created through funding arrangements with small, non-government, Indigenous community organisations. These organisations were responsible for recruiting suitable employees and they have been effective in employing Indigenous Australians as per the intent of the NJCP and NT Jobs Package.

The recruitment methods used by service providers were effective in placing Indigenous Australians in the jobs created. Feedback from the service providers indicated that over 80 per cent of the positions were filled by people previously on CDEP, and all jobs were filled by Indigenous Australians. As an overall objective of the National Partnership Agreement is to create jobs for Indigenous Australians, the recruitment methods adopted were effective in contributing to the achievement of this objective.

Organisations in the Northern Territory advised the ANAO that the transition from CDEP to fully understanding the nature of employment took a long time (in many instances more than two years). The employers provided support and guidance in helping employees to understand their obligations and responsibilities under the new employment arrangements. This included:

- providing the new employees with standard induction training and explaining the organisation's code of conduct;
- providing work readiness training, including basic numeracy and literacy training;
- assisting employees with managing their finances and explaining employment conditions, such as the availability of leave and superannuation; and
- understanding the outside pressures and their impact on an individual employee's ability to meet their employment responsibilities. This often required the employer to be flexible in enforcing employment expectations, such as providing leave for cultural reasons ('sorry business' and other family caring responsibilities) at short notice.

An organisation in Queensland advised that new employees were transitioned into the job through explaining workplace responsibilities and gradually reinforcing obligations. As per the previous arrangements, the employer allowed employees to have relatives and children at the workplace. This was progressively reduced to lunch time only and then eventually not allowed

during work hours at all. Over time, employees understood and accepted that it was a place of work and that having family present was not appropriate.

### **What doesn't work**

For both jobs packages there was an assumption that training and professional development would lead to career mobility beyond the entry-level positions that were created. The jobs, however, were created in regional and remote communities that often have a limited economic base and limited opportunities for Indigenous Australians to pursue career development and alternative jobs outside of those created through the job packages. In this respect, the jobs would generally not exist without Australian Government support, and service providers raised concerns that the funding, in most cases, does not provide scope to advance employees to higher duties or to recognise the skills gained through the jobs.

The indicators developed measure the number of jobs created and filled, as per the high-level objective outlined in the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation*. While the indicators are useful in measuring the short-term goal of creating jobs from CDEP activities, they do not provide a direct basis for measuring the sustainability of the jobs or their long-term impact on Indigenous employment outcomes.

### **E. 2009 Department of Finance (OEA) Evaluation of the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) Program.<sup>23</sup>**

CDEP is an Australian Government funded program for unemployed Indigenous people in remote locations. It provides activities which aim to improve participant employability in order to assist them to move into employment outside the CDEP program. The overall aim of CDEP at the time of the evaluation was to assist Indigenous Australians to achieve economic independence.

The evaluation found that a number of providers have weak links to other programs and employers, other than the local indigenous corporation, which was heavily subsidised, and are primarily oriented inwardly to the community rather than the labour market. This arrangement constitutes an internal labour market and is unlikely to be an effective means of economic development or employment preparation.

CDEP is primarily a labour market program but it has been expected to address shortages of physical and human infrastructure normally provided by other providers and paid for by ratepayers or customers. The rationale for CDEP having a community development role is that the activities undertaken under that stream provide practical training and work experience for individuals at the same time as contributing to priorities of the community.

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<sup>23</sup>[http://www.anao.gov.au/~/\\_media/Uploads/Documents/evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_community\\_development\\_employment\\_projects\\_\(cdep\)\\_program.pdf](http://www.anao.gov.au/~/_media/Uploads/Documents/evaluation_of_the_community_development_employment_projects_(cdep)_program.pdf)

The goal of sustaining communities is not the same as placing participants in the best possible position for work. Nevertheless, CDEPs make a contribution to the communities in which they operate and, for example, are a major provider of community services in remote communities.

CDEP has been structured to have a community focussed role. Specifically, the PFAs allow for training to take place in community activities. These impact the community in three ways: by direct participants' activities; through CDEP businesses and through the subsidy that CDEP labour provides to businesses and government services that employ participants.

There are two broad challenges to the program. The first is the challenge to extend opportunities beyond the immediate labour market and explore these farther afield. The difficulty of adjusting is that the distance from employment centres is very great in most of communities in which CDEP operates. The second challenge is that where jobs are available locally, participants may not be able to take the positions because of lack of capacity.

The evaluation found that the outcomes from Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) are modest. The evaluation found that there are three main reasons for the outcomes: participants have a poor capacity for employment; the cultural and community context, including the intergenerational context, makes success difficult; and there are limited opportunities in most of the labour markets in which CDEP operates.

Evidence from the surveys indicates the presence of 'family obligations that flow from collectivist culture' and family pressures in the communities in which CDEP operates. This cultural pressure to share income may prevent work benefits accruing to the individual and weaken the incentives to work. The absence of a work culture was found in the survey of CDEP managers. CDEP managers were asked whether there were any difficulties in willingness to work - nine answered 'Yes' and two 'No'. High levels of mobility not associated with work and 'general lethargy' were reported as was the perception of the 'lack of relevance of a job in their lifestyle'.

The key issue arising from the evaluation is the need to be completely clear about what outcomes are sought from the CDEP program. For most of its existence CDEP has worked with two major objectives, employment outcomes and community development outcomes. Reforms made in 2009 to CDEP indicate that the Government expects most participants to be aligned to the Work Readiness stream, over the Community Development stream. Evidence from the case studies undertaken in this evaluation indicated that placements have been overwhelmingly in the community development stream. The evaluation concluded that CDEP can be improved and become more appropriate to the goals of real jobs and viable business enterprises if the following are addressed:

Providers focussed on preparing participants for real jobs, wherever these are offered by the labour market  
CDEP is sufficiently intense to overcome entrenched poor behaviour  
CDEP addresses intergenerational unemployment in remote communities by assisting participants to experience workplaces outside of the communities in which they operate

The Office also concluded that CDEP is not as well suited to address community development issues or economic development issues as these are not the same as labour market preparation issues and should be pursued separately.

**F. 2012 COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN: Review of Centrelink income management decisions in the Northern Territory: Financial vulnerability exemption and vulnerable welfare payment recipient decisions.<sup>24</sup>**

Income Management (IM) has applied in the Northern Territory (NT) since 2007. IM is designed to ensure that income support payments are used to pay for necessary goods and services rather than discretionary items and activities. Initially targeting Indigenous Australians living in remote and very remote communities, it has been applied across the entire NT, depending on a person's payment circumstances, since mid-2010.

IM decisions have far-reaching consequences for affected people, who are often geographically remote or isolated and among the least empowered to pursue review rights or complaints mechanisms. They may also be disadvantaged by language, literacy and knowledge barriers. To safeguard the rights of these people, Centrelink's IM decisions must comply with all legislative requirements, be supported by sound evidence and rigorous assessment, and meet policy objectives.

This report details reviews of two areas of Centrelink's IM decision making, namely: a) decisions to refuse to exempt people from IM because Centrelink has formed the view that there have been indications of financial vulnerability in the past 12 months b) decisions to apply IM to people because Centrelink social workers have assessed those people as vulnerable welfare payment recipients (VWPRs).

We reviewed IM decisions made by Centrelink between August 2010 and March 2011, finding a need for significant improvement in the two areas described above.

Some of the decisions we reviewed did not address all of the required

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<sup>24</sup>[http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/files/review\\_of\\_centrelink\\_income\\_management\\_decisions\\_nt.pdf](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/files/review_of_centrelink_income_management_decisions_nt.pdf) and media release <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/media-releases/show/206>

legislative criteria and lacked a sound evidence base. In addition, the letters designed to explain decisions were inadequate and unclear and failed to inform Centrelink customers of their review rights.

The report highlights that the initial decision-making tools and guidelines used by decision makers did not adequately assist them to meet legislative requirements. The review also identified problems with the use of interpreters, record keeping, training and dealing with review and exemption requests.

#### **1.4.6 National Security and Community Safety**

*The audit reveals the lack of processes that would have improved the capacity of the program to deliver on its intentions. The report is very critical of the processes for planning and delivering this relatively small program. Some selected extracts are included as examples.*

##### **A. 2011 ANAO: Northern Territory night patrols.<sup>25</sup>**

19... Engaging with Indigenous communities is an important step in developing appropriate program approaches and service delivery activities. Engagement provides an avenue for community input into proposed approaches and allows these approaches to be informed by local knowledge, ultimately contributing to more responsive service delivery.

The implementation plan developed by AGD included a community consultation phase, but this came after decisions had been made on the service delivery model, the program framework, and the engagement of service providers (including defining their scopes of service).

Note: Feedback to the ANAO from some stakeholders indicated that the initial implementation of night patrols did not allow for adequate community consultation or engagement, and in some cases, this impacted on the community ownership of the service.

20... The ANAO observed some instances where the standardised service delivery approach did not align well with community expectations and circumstances. AGD has recognised the importance of incorporating a more flexible approach to community service provision and has taken steps to enable this. However, service providers consulted by the ANAO were not aware of the flexibility available to them.

24... Recruiting and retaining local Indigenous people in night patrol positions is an ongoing difficulty. There are many reasons for this, including location, availability of skilled people, and cultural commitments affecting the availability of staff. Interviews with service providers indicated that there is a wide variety of experience and formal qualifications across the night patrol workforce and this, in conjunction with other factors, suggests that the training and support needs of patrollers vary across locations. In 2010–11, AGD has

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<sup>25</sup>[http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/2010%2011\\_report\\_32.pdf](http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/2010%2011_report_32.pdf)



implemented additional support mechanisms and is also working towards delivering a standard training suite. The ANAO encourages AGD to maintain an ongoing focus on the adequacy of support provided to patrollers, including appropriate training, ongoing mentoring, consistent resourcing, and adequate employment provisions.

25 ... Research suggests that the historical effectiveness of night patrols in achieving community safety outcomes derives from the cultural authority of patrollers and the targeting of community safety issues.

26. ... AGD advised that it provides guidance on minimum standards for night patrols' operation and service providers are required to determine the details of their operations in consultation with communities. However the arrangements for the management of service providers are focused more on the regional administration level rather than at community level...

#### **1.4.7 The NSW failures – state examples that indicate the wide spread of problems**

*The following evaluation is a report by a NSW government research unit on a NSW program. It continues to show failures to deliver and further raises issues for what is missing. However, it is necessary to state that lack of engagement is not included as part of the problem. The reasons for failure are mostly highlighted as lack of services, rather than lack of local engagement and cultural needs. This suggests that recent work by the NSW taskforce could be informing the criminal justice system's designs.*

#### **A. 2012 NSW OMBUDSMAN: Responding to child sexual assault in Aboriginal Communities. A report under Part 6A of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993.<sup>26</sup>**

##### ***Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal communities.***

The review is fourth in a series the Ombusman's office has completed over the past three years in connection with its audit of the implementation of the Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal communities. Each report has focused on the need to significantly improve the quality and efficiency of services delivered to Aboriginal communities. For several years, the office has highlighted that poorly integrated services, a failure to deal with chronic staffing shortages in high-need locations, and weak accountability mechanisms, undermine the ability of agencies to identify and respond effectively to some of the most vulnerable Aboriginal children in NSW.

##### **What didn't work**

- The single biggest investment under the Interagency Plan, the \$22.9 million

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<sup>26</sup>[http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/7961/ACSA-report-web1](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/7961/ACSA-report-web1).

Safe Families program, was intended to deliver an integrated agency response to child sexual assault in five communities in Western NSW. This program raised high expectations, but fell well short on delivery.

- The Interagency Plan also provided significant funds to improve the availability of forensic medical services. A key objective was to reduce instances of child sexual assault victims in rural and remote communities having to travel as long as four hours to be examined by a paediatrician and receive medical treatment. Despite allocating \$5 million to tackling this issue, the progress made was limited and ultimately did not solve the central concern.
- Capacity and effectiveness of a range of frontline services for all child sexual assault victims: In addition to Community Services' ongoing staffing shortages in high-need locations, NSW Health's sexual assault services are unable to meet the current demand for counselling. And the multi-agency vehicle for responding to child sexual abuse – the Joint Investigation Response Team – is also facing serious statewide resourcing challenges.
- While government agencies readily embrace the language of integrated service delivery, attempts to implement an inclusive approach to the development and implementation of major whole-of-government initiatives have been far from effective.

### **Ongoing challenges**

*Building strong and safe communities.*

- The repeated failure of government programs to support and promote the development of community initiatives highlights the need to try another approach. We recommend that the government should elevate the importance of this issue as part of its future strategies in the area of Aboriginal child sexual assault (and in connection with its key strategies in Aboriginal affairs more generally). As part of determining its future approach to community development, the government should provide better support to Aboriginal (and other community) leaders – particularly those in highly vulnerable communities – by funding non-government agencies with significant community development expertise, to work for, and in accordance with the instructions of, Aboriginal and other community leaders. If Government adopts this recommendation, the role of Aboriginal leaders (and the non-government agencies) would need to be effectively integrated into any place-based model that the government might ultimately adopt.
- Aboriginal leaders have told us that targeted healing programs for victims of child sexual assault are also essential, but so too is healing for the broader Aboriginal community – to address the effects of violence, trauma and dislocation associated with high levels of community disadvantage. Both our audit and the recent community consultations conducted by the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs have identified a strong desire on the part of Aboriginal people for healing to be formally recognised as a therapeutic response and for healing programs to be adequately supported.

- Improving staffing capacity in high-need locations ensuring that there are skilled and experienced staff in the locations where they are needed underpins the issues which we discuss throughout this report, from preventing child sexual abuse and building strong families and communities, to responding to victims and offenders when a report is made.
- Addressing Aboriginal disadvantage

*Investing in education and economic capacity*

- Engaging Aboriginal children in school
- Building economic capacity in Aboriginal communities

*Adopting place-based approaches to service planning and delivery:*

- Currently in NSW there are a range of plans and related initiatives aimed at addressing Aboriginal disadvantage, often developed in isolation and without a clear articulation of how they fit together. The various plans and commitments have a range of governance structures and reporting mechanisms in place which often overlap and sometimes even conflict. As a result, it is difficult to gain a sense of which elements of the array of existing plans remain relevant, or whether the disparate range of objectives and strategies they encompass are likely to achieve demonstrable improvements in the lives of Aboriginal people.
- We believe a centralised approach at the local level to decision making about the planning, funding and delivery of services is essential to address continuing disadvantage in Aboriginal communities. In order for this to be achieved, decision making processes for planning and funding, and the related governance arrangements, need to be jointly driven by federal, state and local government agencies working in partnership with key non-government and community representatives in building an effective place-based service system.

*Accountability and governance*

- Accountability and governance needs to be at the core of any future approach to tackling child sexual abuse, with strong governance across both child sexual assault initiatives, and initiatives which relate to improving the broader social determinants within Aboriginal communities.
- Throughout this report, we have discussed the vital role of Aboriginal leadership within local community settings. However, in addition to Aboriginal leadership (and associated governance arrangements) at the community level, it will be essential for government to put in place arrangements that recognise Aboriginal leaders' right to provide overarching strategic direction, and to receive detailed ongoing advice about the progress of major initiatives.
- We believe that legislation should be enacted to establish a NSW Aboriginal Advisory Council with responsibility for providing independent advice to government on the success of major initiatives in the area of Aboriginal affairs.

*This is another NSW program that failed to achieve its objectives despite good intentions. Time frames are part of the problem as the demand for short term, measurable results often undermines the achievement of good results.*

**B. 2011 Audit Office NSW: Two Ways Together NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan.<sup>27</sup>**

To date the Two Ways Together Plan (the Plan) has not delivered the improvement in overall outcomes for Aboriginal people that was intended. Stronger partnerships between the government and Aboriginal people are only beginning to emerge.

Some positive trends are developing, such as the increase in TAFE enrolments. The next steps are critical to delivering on the promises made when the Plan started.

Firstly, agencies need to be more publicly accountable. The Department of Premier and Cabinet tell us that a substantial level of effort is undertaken at a state level with initiatives being pursued through the NSW State Plan and various National Partnerships with the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, it remains the case that **if** agencies are given money they must be able to show at the end of the year how they spent it and how it has improved the wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

Secondly, there needs to be clear recognition that the local community is best placed to understand its own needs and be responsible for its own future. In this respect, the Two Ways Together Partnership Community Program is a promising development. The community governance bodies established under this program can bridge the gap between people who need services and those who deliver the services.

This Program gives the Aboriginal people in a geographic area a strong voice in planning and designing how their needs and aspirations are met. At the time of this audit these arrangements were in 16 communities and another 24 were planned. Even though they are still building their capacity, achievements are encouraging.

Media release:

“Agencies have struggled to establish, in a practical sense, how Government should partner with Aboriginal people. This has resulted in poor levels of engagement between agencies and Aboriginal people locally,” added Mr Achterstraat.

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<sup>27</sup>[http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/143/213\\_Two\\_Way\\_Together\\_Aboriginal\\_Affairs.pdf.aspx](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/143/213_Two_Way_Together_Aboriginal_Affairs.pdf.aspx)

“I recommend that the community governance bodies be given extra support. I believe there is a need to appoint an independent advisor to be a strong voice on issues that are fundamental to improving the lives of Aboriginal people”

- Incarceration rates have significantly worsened, although family violence rates have reduced.
- Aboriginal unemployment rate has grown but more Aboriginal students are enrolling in management and governance courses at TAFE.
- Literacy and numeracy rates remain poor, but school retention rates have improved slightly.

*NSW Schools and Education: Another failed program with a few signs of awareness but not enough.*

### **C. 2012 Audit Office NSW Improving the literacy of Aboriginal students in NSW public schools.<sup>28</sup>**

Examples of interventions schools use to improve the literacy of Aboriginal students:

#### **What works**

- A school community partnership agreement between the school, families and Aboriginal communities
- Aboriginal community members employed as in-class tutors
- pre-schools, transition to school programs assessments which make it possible to put programs in place for students as soon as they arrive in kindergarten
- personalised learning plans that are updated using NAPLAN results and input from parents, Year Advisers, the Aboriginal Education Officer and Head Teachers
- a school attendance plan, in consultation with parents and the Aboriginal community, which includes targets for improved attendance
- an Aboriginal Education Officer who can liaise with parents and build community relationships microphones worn by teachers and students or hearing loops to support students with hearing difficulties
- learning support staff to enable one-on-one attention in small classes or groups
- homework centres, libraries, *Books in Homes* programs and holiday study workshop
- individual professional learning plans for all staff, which includes training in *Reading to Learn* and *Accelerated Literacy*
- teachers employing Aboriginal learning processes such as story-telling, the use of symbols, ‘hands-on’ methods and emphasising relevance to

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<sup>28</sup><http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/Publications/Performance-Audit-Reports/2012-Reports>

community and country.

**What doesn't work**

- Targets are set for the literacy attainment of all students, and translated through to regions and schools. However, State targets for 'closing the gap' for Aboriginal students are not directly translated through to regions and schools. The State-wide target for closing the gap is not proving very useful at region or school level.
- The Department does not analyse the relative contributions of non-school factors to the literacy gap of Aboriginal students. As a result, it lacks an objective basis on which to allocate resources and assess what can reasonably be expected from each intervention.
- The Department lacks realistic targets that it can use to assess performance and guide the allocation of resources. Current timeframes for change do not appear reasonable, given the complexity of the factors affecting education outcomes.
- There are a number of ways to identify those children in need of additional support. There is a risk that these are not adopted in a timely manner, and may not be applied consistently within schools or between schools. As a result, there is no assurance that all Aboriginal students in need are identified in sufficient time.

## **1.5 THIRD PARTY ACCOUNTS AND COMMENTS**

*This section provides/draws on descriptions and evaluative comments from independent groups, neither involved in funding nor administration of the programs. They range across the political spectrums. These are a few of many other such critiques which also raised similar issue, so this is just a small sample that show similar results to the official versions.*

### **1.5.1 Schools and Education**

#### **A. 2013 NCVER (A M Dockery) cultural dimensions of indigenous participation in vocational education and training: New perspectives.<sup>1</sup>**

Using data from the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, this research provides new evidence on the interrelationships between Indigenous Australians' connection with their traditional culture and the nature of their engagement with vocational education and training (VET).

In particular, a more defined measure of culture has been developed, one which identifies four separate dimensions of cultural engagement: participation in cultural events; cultural identity; language; and participation in traditional economic activities. Previous findings relating to past educational attainments and participation in training are reassessed. The links between cultural attachment and current participation in education, as well as the benefits derived from education and training, are also explored.

#### **What works**

Stronger cultural identity appears to promote greater participation and achievement in education and training.

Compared with the earlier work, the evidence in this study of a causal effect flowing from cultural identity to outcomes is stronger. However, the extent of other unobserved factors, such as individual motivation and access to resources, is not clear.

Regardless of whether individuals live in remote or non-remote areas, and irrespective of their degree of cultural attachment, the results show very strong increases in the likelihood of employment and income with additional years of completed education.

Language is an issue: participation in education and training is higher for those without English language difficulties and who do not speak Indigenous languages. Lower income and employment outcomes are observed for those who speak an Indigenous language compared with those who do not,

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.ncver.edu.au/wsp/wcm/connect/7589713b-d212-4041-9fc2-fd1c087a7079/2209.pdf?MOD=AJPERES> (cached)

irrespective of gender or remoteness.

To promote a positive sense of cultural identity for Indigenous students in education settings requires respect for an affirmation of Indigenous students' culture. Coupled with evidence that a positive sense of identity is important for wellbeing more generally, the case can be made that material and activities to support this should be incorporated into curricula wherever possible.

No evidence is found that Indigenous Australians in remote areas or with stronger cultural attachment lack the incentive to participate in vocational education and training due to inadequate returns from gaining higher qualifications.

With the exception of the findings relating to speaking Indigenous languages, the results presented in this report are compatible with the hypothesis that stronger cultural identity promotes greater participation and achievement in education and training.

The existing literature suggests these findings may arise through a combination of associations between individuals' cultural identity and their outcomes and associations at the community level, whereby those communities with a stronger commitment to cultural continuity also provide an environment more conducive to participation in education and training. Where it is viable for curricula and models of delivery of education and training to incorporate elements that affirm and accommodate Indigenous people's culture, it follows that such practices are also likely to realise improved outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

An important contribution of this report has been to expand on the concept of cultural attachment used in earlier work and to distinguish four distinct dimensions to cultural attachment: participation in cultural events; cultural identity; Indigenous language use; and traditional economic activities. That these four dimensions represent distinct, constituent components of a broader concept of cultural attachment seems to hold across different socio-demographic contexts by gender, age and remoteness.

The measure developed to capture the cultural identity dimension correlates with recognition of homelands or traditional country; identification with a clan, tribal or language group; and importance of attending cultural events. Empirically isolating this factor as a key component of cultural attachment is important ...it appears to be closely aligned to the concept of self-identity or cultural identity, which the literature highlights as being important to psychological wellbeing, and as providing a possible causal link between enculturation and positive outcomes in a range of domains.

Stronger cultural identity is most robustly associated with having undertaken a course in numeracy, literacy and trade and labouring training, all of which seem vocationally oriented rather than culturally oriented and hence likely to



improve outcomes in the mainstream labour market.

The evidence is now clearer that cultural identity is something that can be harnessed to improve VET outcomes for Indigenous Australians and should not be seen as something that, of itself, somehow militates against educational achievement.

### 1.5.2 Health and Ageing

*This report is from an advocacy group that is not generally supportive of current official views. However, the summary echoes many of the internal criticisms in ANAO reports, albeit more critically framed.*

#### A. 2013 Close The Gap Steering Committee: Shadow report 2013.<sup>2</sup>

##### What works

- In November 2008, the Australian Government announced almost five billion dollars in National Partnership Agreements including the \$1.57 billion Indigenous Health NPA to back up its commitments with an active program for achieving health equality. The Indigenous Health NPA provides the ‘fuel’ (the funding) that drives the national effort to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality by 2030. Its renewal is essential to the implementation of the Health Plan.

“(It) requires partnership and the voices, expertise, leadership and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be central to the planning process. Such real and effective partnership is the greatest safeguard for ensuring the right plan is in place by the end of this year.”

- A shared sense of ‘ownership’ of the Health Plan between Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their representatives (including the ACCHS sector) is a critical outcome of planning process, and it is not capital that can be developed ‘post-event’.

“The Campaign Steering Committee believes the partnership so far manifesting in the SAG and the consultation process provides a firm foundation for this shared ownership of the Health Plan at the national, state/territory, regional and local levels from the start and believe this must continue throughout all stages of the planning and implementation of the Health Plan.”

It is vital to the achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality that funding levels are at least maintained, if not increased, over the next agreement cycle and beyond. “The deep-seated and complex nature of Indigenous disadvantage calls for policies and programs which are patient and supportive of enduring change (including in the attitudes, expectations and behaviours of Indigenous people themselves). A long-term investment approach is needed, accompanied by a sustained process of continuous engagement.”<sup>3</sup> “The Health Plan should address Aboriginal and Torres Strait

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<sup>2</sup> [http://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/ctg\\_shadow\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/ctg_shadow_report_2013.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Department of Finance and Deregulation, Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure:

Islander health in a holistic and comprehensive manner – including MH&SEWB, and a full address to the social determinants of health.”

.....

The development of the Health Plan is off to a promising start, and the importance of the Plan as a potential driver of health equality cannot be underestimated. But its development cannot be understood as merely a renewal of the existing National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003–2013 that also expires this year. The Health Plan should embody a new, rights-based and equality-focused mode of thinking and guide a multi-decade program of action if it is to be fit for purpose. Such a plan would be consistent with the multi-party commitment to close the gap by 2030.

Partnership is a fundamental element of the Close the Gap Campaign's approach to achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality. It is not something that can be 'added on' after the event. Not only is it a key element of the right to health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but it is also the best way of ensuring the Health Plan is both ambitious and yet practical enough to achieve health equality by 2030.

*This is commentary from a mainstream major NGO funded to deliver Indigenous services, an ever more common practice that raises its own issues of cultural competence.*

## **B. Benevolent Society – working with older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>4</sup>**

### **What works**

To us, health is about so much more than simply not being sick. It's about getting a balance between physical, mental, emotional, cultural and spiritual health. Health and healing are interwoven, which means that one can't be separated from the other

Dr Tamara Mackean, Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, quoted in Koori Mail, 2008.

Respect means ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in the planning and implementation process of policies, programs and services. Obtaining funding to establish services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families before relationships are forged is seen as disrespectful by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

NSW Aboriginal Community Care Gathering Committee, 2011, Challenge, Change & Choice, Policy Position, Recommendation 11.

The key foundation to building a relationship is respect and this is achieved through understanding ... when non-Indigenous people develop and demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their culture and spirituality, and the strength and resilience with which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have preserved their family connections, communities and culture, they are likely to establish respectful interpersonal relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families

SNAICC, 2010<sup>5</sup>

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Report to the Australian Government, 2010, p 15.

<sup>4</sup><http://apo.org.au/research/working-older-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.snaicc.org.au/\\_uploads/rsfil/02497.pdf](http://www.snaicc.org.au/_uploads/rsfil/02497.pdf)

### **Practice implications:**

- The great diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, peoples and communities means that appropriate and acceptable ways of interacting and communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will vary from community to community.
- Engaging with and developing partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations can be a key strategy for improving older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's access to community care.
- Cultural competence needs to be reflected in leadership and in the knowledge, values, skills and attributes of all staff within an organisation. Cultural competence training for staff of mainstream services will increase the likelihood that their services are sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Service provider organisations should make a commitment to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, so that clients can be looked after by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care workers when preferred.
- Consider undertaking an organisational audit of some of these issues to determine a service's strengths and weaknesses and where changes need to be made.

... when the *Koori Growing Old Well Study* (KGOWS) team works with Aboriginal communities, their first step is to make contact with local Aboriginal people. At this first contact, the team can ask who within the community is the most appropriate contact, and what to do in order to be invited into the community and introduced to the appropriate groups, organisations or members of the community to ask for approval to proceed further with consultation. Genuine consultation with honesty and respect is highly valued but can take time, and this needs to be factored into planning. ... It is also important to keep in mind that Aboriginal people often feel over-researched and over-consulted (particularly when they see little change or few tangible outcomes).

### **C. NSW Aboriginal Community Care Gathering Committee.<sup>6</sup>**

Leading practice in community care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people ensures that visits include time to build trust, a cup of tea, a chat. Often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are storytellers; and the details needed for assessments etc. are often in the story<sup>7</sup>

*Community care services for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:*

- *Consultation:* At an organisational level, building genuine relationships

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<sup>6</sup>NSW Aboriginal Community Care Gathering Committee, 2011, Challenge, Change & Choice, Policy Position, Guiding Principle 13. <http://ncoss.org.au/resources/120704-challenge-change-choice.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through respectful consultation is the cornerstone of developing appropriate, targeted and responsive services.

- *Access to community care services:* Many older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience problems accessing services. This may be because of social isolation, personal and health problems, or because available services are not perceived as culture-friendly. It is important not to make assumptions about the types of services preferred. Some people want their health and/or care needs met by Aboriginal controlled community services...Others may choose to use mainstream services, or mainstream services that employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. In some areas, especially remote areas, Aboriginal people have no choice about what type of service to access as there may only be one local provider.
- *Time:* Providing community care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may be more time consuming, intensive and complex than providing services to non-Aboriginal people. Additional time will often be required to build genuine trusting relationships.
- *Communication:* Respectful ways of communicating (including body language, seating position and use of certain words) may differ from community to community and region to region, especially between rural and remote areas.
- *Person-centred care:* Western approaches to person-centred care tend to focus on the individuality of the particular person receiving care, and of their immediate family members. A person-centred approach to community care practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would take into account the central importance of connection to family, kinship networks, communities and country (McMillan et al., 2010).
- *End of life:* Many older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live away from their original lands or country. This is often felt as a greater loss at times of stress, including towards the end of life. Many older people have a strong desire to go back to their country at these times, and doing so can be more important to them than receiving health treatment (Indigenous Palliative Care Project, 2009). Community care providers can play a role in facilitating this, in partnership with palliative care and other community health services, families and communities.

### **1.5.3 National Security and Community Safety**

*This report from an explicitly neo-liberal think-tank recognises the importance of the social factors to programs that work.*

**A. 2013 Centre for Independent Studies: Panacea to prison? Justice reinvestment in indigenous communities.<sup>8</sup>**

‘Justice Reinvestment’ is a school of thought that proposes redirecting money spent on prisons into programs that address the underlying causes of offending in communities with high levels of incarceration. It involves three steps: gathering data on offending and the criminal justice system; using the data to create justice maps (areas with the greatest concentration of offenders); and redirecting funds from corrective services to implement programs in ‘targeted’ locations to reduce offending and evaluating the effectiveness of the programs.

**What works**

- Evidence shows education and employment play a critical role in the high Indigenous incarceration rate. Improving educational outcomes should not be reliant on the diversion of funds from prison services but a basic right that states and territories should be covering in their education budgets.
- “The localised, community-focused approach characteristic of Justice Reinvestment is already a feature of Aboriginal Community Justice Groups in NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory.”

A recent study in Queensland in 2012 found the postcodes with the most chronic and costly offenders were in remote and very remote locations with a high proportion of Indigenous youth and high levels of disadvantage.<sup>9</sup>

Advocates of the Justice Reinvestment approach in Australia argue that reducing the use of prisons in the criminal justice system will free up corrections budgets to implement these initiatives:

- more parole options so that Indigenous offenders do not decline offers of parole because of difficulties in meeting reporting requirements and other conditions;
- more options for community corrections;
- working with existing community resources, such as community justice groups or restorative justice healing circles, to engage communities in creating Justice Reinvestment strategies;
- providing sustainable sources of funding for culturally appropriate, community owned programs, including Indigenous healing programs, residential drug and alcohol or anger management programs, mentoring, men’s and women’s groups, and bush camps;
- exploring a range of initiatives outside the criminal justice system, including housing, health and education programs.

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<sup>8</sup><http://test.cis.org.au/images/stories/policy-monographs/pm-134.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>Troy Allard, April Chrzanowski, and Anna Stewart, ‘Targeting Crime Prevention to Reduce Offending: Identifying Communities that Generate Chronic and Costly Offenders,’ *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* 445 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, September 2012).

The question for Justice Reinvestment supporters is to explain how it will be any different to existing community-based justice programs. Interviews with Aboriginal Community Justice Group Coordinators show that many recognised the programs they ran were band-aid measures at best (such as running midnight basketball for bored youth), yet they received very little funding to address what was really needed to reduce crime in their communities—better education and more employment opportunities (from personal interviews with Aboriginal community justice group coordinators as part of fieldwork).

*Below is an academic's review of a program in a narrative rather than formal academic mode that illustrates the way things work or do not.*

**B. 2013 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) ANU: Policing the frontier: Christmas in Borroloola.<sup>10</sup>**

**What works**

Community policing is fundamentally an alliance between the police and the community identifying and solving community problems together. The police are not the sole guardians of law and order; all members of the community become active collaborators in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of 'their community'. Community policing can have far-reaching implications bringing about change, improving people's circumstances and saving taxpayers' funds.

**What doesn't work**

A recent police operation in the Northern Territory community of Borroloola invites reflection on best practice for community policing and alcohol management. Community policing is fundamentally an alliance where the police and community identify and solve community problems together, with the essential ingredient being active participation. This is not always easy to achieve, as it often requires a profound change in organisational culture and practice.

“Both the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth Governments are currently trying to draft an Alcohol Management Plan, ‘a living progressing document’, and apparently desperately seeking the involvement of ‘the Aboriginal community’—some cynically say so the community consultation box can be ticked. Getting representative Aboriginal input is proving difficult. Aboriginal leaders say there's no point developing a plan that has no involvement from the people who drink.”

It's not illegal to bring alcohol into the open town of Borroloola, but it is illegal to take it into the Prescribed Areas—the Aboriginal Camps. The police—in their designation as community police officers—could have informed Aboriginal people at the Pandion depot that they couldn't take any hamper containing grog back to their homes, but instead they called in reinforcements

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<sup>10</sup><http://test.cis.org.au/images/stories/policy-monographs/pm-134.pdf>

from Katherine—some 670 kilometres away—and waited. They waited until Aboriginal people brought their Christmas hampers into the Prescribed Areas and then conducted, as they describe it on the Northern Territory Police Facebook page with accompanying photographs, a ‘detection and seizure operation’ that resulted in the seizure of ‘18 bottles of assorted spirits and 106 assorted spirits cans, and three vehicles’.

On 11 December, in response to the heavy-handed police tactics, and in the middle of a significant initiation ceremony, Garawa, Gudanji, Mara, Waanyi and Yanyuwa leaders and community members met with the police. Senior Aboriginal people were dismayed that they hadn’t been spoken to about a problem that was about to unfold. They were particularly aggrieved because they have been trying for years to manage alcohol in the town...while getting little support from government agencies.

In response to the meeting the police didn’t invite senior Aboriginal representatives to sit down with them and work things out. Instead, they erected a road-block outside one of the Aboriginal camps; the place where the most articulate and vocal critics of top-down policing live. One community leader, on his way to an initiation ceremony with old men was punished for not carrying his driver’s licence.

Note: The Garawa, Gudanji, Mara, Waanyi and Yanyuwa people are hoping the Northern Territory Police might learn something by reflecting on the principles of productive community policing.

*These guidelines below are an overview of innovative and exemplary research approaches and practice, undertaken with and by Indigenous communities that is relevant to crime and justice research.*

### **C. Australian Policy Online: Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse - Research Guidelines.<sup>11</sup>**

#### **What works**

Common themes are apparent in ethical guidelines for research with Indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on ethical conduct defines the core ethical value as respect for human dignity that is expressed in three principles – respect for person, concern for welfare, and justice (CIHR et al 2010)... In all these guidelines, emphasis is placed on respect and integrity, and with Indigenous people, reciprocity.

Canadian suggestions for good practice include:

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<sup>11</sup>[http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/indigenousjusticeclearinghouse\\_brief15research\\_2013pdf.pdf](http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/indigenousjusticeclearinghouse_brief15research_2013pdf.pdf)

- More robust and documented 'network' sampling in urban contexts, which are followed up over time.
- Quantitative research that generates policy oriented evidence of outcomes. Communities were interested in this type of research, arguing that qualitative research mainly assists non-Aboriginal researchers to understand the context and Aboriginal worldviews.
- Investment in "tools for sharing and socialization of evidence" including stakeholder meetings, presentations, videos, comics, radio coverage and scientific publications.
- Building Aboriginal skills and confidence to lead research so that Aboriginal researchers have the capacity to balance self-reflective cultural investment and practice with non-Indigenous empirical research methods<sup>12</sup>

Some of the more promising developments relate to collaboration and building networks of researchers, and local strategic approaches are required to ensure active participation of Indigenous people throughout the entire research process.

Within Australian jurisdictions and on a national scale, regular agenda setting for research on crime and justice issues should be undertaken with Indigenous people through the setting of institutional research and funding priorities. Improving mechanisms to integrate such research into crime and justice policy and practice could include building knowledge networks and brokers similar to that found in the health domain<sup>13</sup>

Further investment is required that incorporates sufficient resources and time to enable the building of partnership or collaborative approaches, and experimentation in method and product.

### **What doesn't work**

In many circumstances applications and research outputs are still assessed in terms of scientific quality not social benefit,<sup>14</sup> although this is changing with the NHMRC grant guidelines for medical and health research with Indigenous communities now requiring applicants to demonstrate community engagement, capacity building and benefit.

With the development of ethical guidelines and good practice frameworks, research should, and is, more likely to adhere to a core set of principles related to integrity, respect, reciprocity and mutual benefit. This has not however

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<sup>12</sup>Anderson N 2008. Directions in Indigenous resilience research. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*6(2): 201-208

<sup>13</sup>Benham D 2012. Integrating research into rural health policy and service delivery. Keynote address to the 3rd Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium: Building collaboration and excellence in rural and remote health research, Glenelg, South Australia, 19-21 June

<sup>14</sup> Henry J, Dunbar, T, Arnott A, Scrimgeour M, Murakami-Gold L 2004. Indigenous research reform agenda: a review of the literature. *Links Monograph Series: 5*. Darwin: Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health



translated into major transformations of the research business, more in the conduct of research practice. Instead, much of what has been produced by research bodies has involved system-oriented studies and/or commissioned evaluations of reforms.

...As a general rule, the methods employed for population and system-oriented research are quantitative and utilise large scale surveys and secondary analysis of administrative data. Program evaluations typically involve the application of mixed method approaches and often rely on the triangulation of different data sources and methods, whereas place or person-centred research is predominantly qualitative research.

Participatory action research, whereby the research participants work alongside the researchers to determine the purpose and outcomes of the research, can be applied to all research activities irrespective of the methodology but is more likely to be found in in-depth, detailed studies of place and of individual narratives, or stories. The common attributes of collaborative and participatory approaches are described as shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation towards community action<sup>15</sup>.

Recent responses that seek to improve all forms of research practice involving Indigenous people in Australia and internationally, include funding for Indigenous-specific research institutes, dedicated funding for Indigenous academics and research networks, and ethical guidelines. Today, Indigenous researchers argue the focus should be on working with Indigenous people who hold the knowledge and expertise of their circumstances past and present, and on positive change<sup>16</sup>.

Based upon researchers' reflections of their experiences, it is evident that there are often gaps between the theory of good research and practice.<sup>17</sup> Despite the best of intentions, there are inherent tensions between a commitment to the principles of participatory and ethical research and the expectations of funding agencies and academia. Strict adherence to ethical guidelines and research protocols does not necessarily translate into day-to-day good practice. Nor may there be the funding, capacity and timeframe to allow all parties to devote the energy and resources to follow through on the ideal.

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> Sherwood J 2010. *Do no harm: decolonising Aboriginal health research*. PhD thesis, University of New South Wales; Smith L T 1999. *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press; Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee and Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (SPEaR and ANZEA) 2007. *Report on the SPEaR Best Practice Māori Guidelines Hui 2007*.

<sup>17</sup> Blagg H 2011. *Journeys outside the comfort zone: doing research in the Aboriginal domain*, in Bartels L and Richards K (eds), *Qualitative criminology: stories from the field*. Sydney: Federation Press: 140-154; Davey and Day 2011; Sherwood 2010 *ibid*; Williams, E, Guenther, J and Arnott, A 2011. *Beyond informed consent: how is it possible to ethically evaluate Indigenous programs?* Paper to the NARU Public Seminar Series, Darwin, 23 November

From a non-Indigenous perspective, the research process can be difficult, subject to change and negotiation over time and the ceding of control and re-orientation in thinking.<sup>18</sup>

For Indigenous researchers, there can be significant challenges and difficulties associated with being placed in a cultural brokerage role.

There can be different notions of accountability – to the funding body, to the university and the scientific community – which may be sometimes at odds with the need to be accountable and respectful of Indigenous cultural priorities.

Some would argue that the politics make it too hard, the hurdles too great and the benefits negligible, but to opt out leaves space for inquiries, consultations, and media stories to inform public debate and government policy, uninhibited by the standards, core values and ethical principles of good research practice.

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<sup>18</sup>Coram 2012; Davey and Day 2008; Nicholls 2009

## **1.6 SOME EXAMPLES AND IDEAS FOR BETTER PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES**

*The following extracts are examples of what is working and could work and offer ideas for why that is so. The latter is important because how the processes worked or would work is the missing bit when well-meaning people claim 'nothing works!' These processes become important in debates on possibilities for change and effectiveness.*

*The first extract below is included because it reports on differences of views between participants who claimed it increased their leadership capacities and the funders who wanted firm evidence, and so is an object lesson in different views of what is effective.*

### **1.6.1 Governance and Leadership**

#### **A. 2009 ANAO Performance audit of the Indigenous Leadership Program.<sup>1</sup>**

The objective of the Indigenous Leadership Program (ILP) is to strengthen Indigenous leadership capacity. The program is administered by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). The ILP comprises two programs:

- the Indigenous Leadership Development Program (ILDLP), which delivers leadership workshops for Indigenous people
- the Indigenous Women's Program (IWP), a grant program that seeks to enhance Indigenous women's leadership, representation, safety, well-being and economic status.

The objective of the performance audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of FaHCSIA's management of the ILP and to assess the extent to which the program's objectives are being achieved.

#### **What works**

The Australian National Audit Office found **the Indigenous Leadership Program to be successful, as far as it could determine, in its aims**. At the time of the audit, the data available indicated that participants were happy with the programme, and reported increased self-awareness, confidence, motivation and access to broader networks. These aligned well with the immediate goals of the programme; FaHCSIA staff also claimed knowledge of large numbers of former participants achieving the programme's intermediate and long-term goals, including filling formal leadership roles, but this data was not collected formally.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/performance\\_audit\\_of\\_the\\_indigenous\\_leadership\\_program.pdf](http://www.anao.gov.au/~media/Uploads/Documents/performance_audit_of_the_indigenous_leadership_program.pdf)

Tellingly, participant feedback often featured the value of having a safe place in which to learn and share stories, making the programme an example of the efficacy of engaging Indigenous leaders in the design and delivery stages of the program to ensure cultural appropriateness and understanding. The ILP was not flawless in this respect though, and the Office recommended steps to address the language barrier suffered by some participants (including investigating why the offer of an interpreter was not more widely taken up) as a means of improving on the 80% completion rate.

“The success of the Program has been in delivering a culturally appropriate program that provides flexibility in meeting the needs of a diverse range of Indigenous participants.”

[The programme] is strongly aligned with COAG’s policy priorities for leadership and governance but varies from the way the program has been described to OEA during the audit and the observed emphasis that the workshops have on personal development.... In this respect it would be appropriate to review the outcomes expected for the program as it is currently delivered and revise this to more accurately identify what can reasonably be expected of a program that focuses on a personal level and builds latent leadership capacity. Alternatively, FaHCSIA could review whether additional activities are required that, in addition to the current activities and approach are more targeted on the leadership typology identified in the rationale paper and promote active leadership development.

OEA found that ILDP participants do report increased self-awareness, confidence, motivation and networks. These outcomes align with the immediate outcomes articulated in the program’s program logic and monitoring and evaluation framework. These outcomes are delivered efficiently, with a modest average cost per participant.

The success of the Program has been in delivering a culturally appropriate program that provides flexibility in meeting the needs of a diverse range of Indigenous participants. ....

Participants commented favourably on the manner in which the ILDP combines Indigenous components with mainstream training concepts, Indigenous leaders’ involvement in the development and delivery of the ILDP, and the commitment of staff and facilitators.

Participants also commented favourably on the following aspects of the ILDP:

- Free registration for Indigenous Australians
- The experience of travel and the excitement of a new environment
- The opportunity to network with other Indigenous people from different locations and backgrounds to share knowledge and experiences offered a ‘safe learning environment’. Participants attributed this environment to the

facilitators' ability to understand Indigenous participants' life journeys. It was often suggested that the safe learning environment helped participants to "move forward in their journey" taking up the new lessons from the course.

Male and female facilitators were seen as role models for participants and contributed significantly in providing a safe and comfortable learning environment for participants. Indigenous leaders are subject to a different definition of 'leadership' to 'mainstream' leaders – for Indigenous people, "anyone who takes responsibility for things that go well is showing leadership".

### 1.6.2 Health and Ageing

*The extract below is written by a well-respected expert in health care on how a mainstream organisation was able to devolve the Indigenous programs to Indigenous researchers. As such, its success is worth noting in areas that often show little change.*

#### **A. NACCHO health news: Fiona Stanley: the secret to improving Aboriginal healthcare.<sup>2</sup>**

At the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research we made a commitment to employing and training as many First Nations researchers as we could, with the aim of giving the Aboriginal research agenda to them. Well-respected, nationally recognised elder Ted Wilkes put it simply:

Who knows and cares most about Aboriginal health? We do. So give us the funding and the knowledge and partner with us to enable us to be responsible for our own health and wellbeing."

It was clear he understood the social determinants of health better than anyone, so we concentrated on changing the culture within the institute to enable Aboriginal leadership to grow.

Engaging Aboriginal people in the development of programs and methods results in them getting exactly the services they need, in their environments and for their unique circumstances.

Sandra Eades joined the Institute as a PhD student in the mid-1990s, where she became one of the first First Nations people to secure a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant as leading chief investigator. She employed an outstanding group of Aboriginal health workers as research assistants to conduct a longitudinal study of first-time Aboriginal mums and their babies in urban Perth. This group of researchers proved Wilkes' approach.

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<sup>2</sup><http://nacchocommunique.com/2013/08/02/naccho-health-news-fiona-stanley-the-secret-to-improving-aboriginal-healthcare/>

The study successfully enrolled the mothers, and the institute was able to follow their babies in ways that would not otherwise have been possible. It was a true partnership between those with different types of knowledge. Its success convinced the institute that employing and training First Nations researchers and using their methods was essential for the success of the research agenda.

All these health workers-turned-researchers had been trained by another pioneering First Nations Western Australian health professional, Dr Joan Winch, who set up Marr Mooditj, the first Aboriginal health worker training program in Australia. Eades had a huge influence on the NHMRC with her roadmap for supporting Aboriginal health research. One brilliant idea from that and other public health strategic planning was Capacity Building Grants to redress this neglected area. In 2005, the Institute won the first such grant in Aboriginal health, with a team of 10 Aboriginal investigators: Michael Wright, Ted Wilkes, Helen Milroy, Sandra Eades, Ngiare Brown, Juli Coffin, Dawn Bessarab, Jan Hammill, Cheryl Kickett-Tucker and Glenn Pearson.

Over the five years of the grant most completed their PhDs and all have become leaders. A group of them, plus Pat Dudgeon and Rhonda Marriott, formed the group of eight chief investigators who subsequently secured NHMRC support for a Centre of Research Excellence in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing: *From Marginalised to Empowered*.

I recall helping to write this grant only to have it totally rewritten by the Aboriginal chief investigators. They were committed to a different paradigm of research methodology than mine. They wanted to conduct their own research projects with full engagement with Aboriginal community groups, shifting the power for participation at every stage — from the planning through to data collection, interpretation and implementation. I had instead written a good NHMRC quantitative application hoping that once we got the grant we could incorporate these more qualitative approaches.

I warned that NHMRC was not ready for such a radical proposal. I was wrong. The whoops of joy when they succeeded raised the roof. There are two major changes in this approach — the first is to truly engage with the people who are the intended recipients of the services that are needed. This demands familiarity with a well-developed, internationally accepted set of methods known as 'community participation action research'. There are well-established ways to do this, which have been used with the "Untouchables" (Dalits) in India and the First Nations in Nunavut (Canada). As a result, service delivery has been revolutionised.

It is not rocket science, but grounded in a self-evident truth: most of us only use the services we trust, that we feel we have some control over and that benefit our families and ourselves. Aboriginal people in this country have little experience of exercising such a fundamental power over the services deemed

appropriate for them. For many decades these services have been shaped by distant experts who thought they knew best.

Engaging Aboriginal people in the development of programs and methods results in them getting exactly the services they need, in their environments and for their unique circumstances. It also provides jobs, an additional advantage to them, which adds to the efficacy of the services. Aboriginal people will travel across the metropolitan area to attend an Aboriginal-controlled service.

This means that while the overarching principles of services can be developed centrally by government agencies — for example, early childhood learning is good for children to be ready for school, or complete vaccination prevents childhood infections, or sugary foods and drinks should be avoided to prevent type 2 diabetes — the way that these services are implemented should be done in collaboration with those who will be affected, the people themselves. Otherwise they simply do not work.

*The example below makes the case for the devolution of services, along the lines taken above, to be applied by government in agreeing to and funding of future health care. Given the current changes to Indigenous funding, the future of these carefully devised process is not clear.*

### **B. 2013 NACCHO Healthy Futures 10 point plan 2013-2030.<sup>3</sup>**

We recognise that five years on from setting targets to “Close the Gap”, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) have been responsible for many of the health gains achieved. While the evidence is limited, what is available suggests that ACCHOs compare favourably with mainstream services in terms of identifying risk factors, performing health checks, planning care, and managing and treating high-risk individuals.

While this is of no surprise to our sector, it reaffirms that the grassroots model of Aboriginal people working to improve the health of Aboriginal people must continue as the way forward. We are the solution to “Closing the Gap” and can make real differences to achieve generational change. The Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector is fast heading towards our jubilee when we’ll mark 50 years since the first Aboriginal Medical Service was established in Redfern, Sydney. Our ACCHO family is strong and passionate. With a current membership of over 150, we are all driven to improve the health and well-being of our families and communities. ...

Our services are a model of longevity and commitment – and represent the longest serving primary health model in the country. We have a proud record of delivering improved health outcomes in communities where other health services have failed and providing culturally safe alternatives to those in our

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<sup>3</sup>[http://www.naccho.org.au/download/naccho\\_health\\_futures/NACCHO%20Healthy%20Futures%2010%20point%20plan%202013-2030.pdf](http://www.naccho.org.au/download/naccho_health_futures/NACCHO%20Healthy%20Futures%2010%20point%20plan%202013-2030.pdf)

communities who are most vulnerable.

More than that, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations allow Aboriginal communities to regain some control of their health, and some self-determination, as set out in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous people. Significantly, we continue to employ, train and empower high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the communities in which they live.

NACCHO's 10-Point Plan has been created with the knowledge and experience of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector, from the communities and locations where the current health gains are being achieved.

I urge governments and NACCHO affiliates and members to ensure they adopt the targets and actions within the plan so we do not lose the momentum of our critical journey, providing the very best of services to our people. The ten points of the plan provide goals and actions that are critical to our health, communities and services; current and future policies must incorporate them to be successful.

We can make a difference. We can close the gap. But only if we continue to provide the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector with the means to do it.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.6.3 National Security and Community Safety**

*The extract below is from a community report from a research project completed by Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. It is included as further evidence of the awareness that local services deliverers and community members are very aware of the flaws in the processes of service funders and deliverers.*

#### **A. 2010 Factors affecting crime rates in Indigenous communities in NSW: a pilot study in Bourke and Lightning Ridge.<sup>5</sup>**

##### **Reforms to service delivery**

As in many other rural towns, there was a very forceful message that service delivery to rural and remote communities must change. Difficulties in recruitment are not going to lessen and innovative approaches are essential.

Considering the level of need in the community and the proportion of people said to be in crisis, holistic, long-term services that deal with all aspects of a person's need rather than compartmentalised service delivery was emphasised – services that 'wrap around' the whole person.

...

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<sup>4</sup>Justin Mohamed Chair, NACCHO

<sup>5</sup><http://www.jumbunna.uts.edu.au/pdfs/research/FinalCommunityReportBLNov10.pdf>



What was striking about this study was the clear assertion that the dismantling of Aboriginal authority through interventionist government policy, undermining of community resilience and the tyranny of bureaucracy had resulted in a fractured and conflicted community in Bourke. Racism and segregation compound poor self-esteem and stifled ambition. Almost the opposite was said of Lightning Ridge, which, notwithstanding its genuine problems, is a respectful and generally positive community.

Given the factors that were identified as contributing to undermining community resilience and community cohesion, it is unsurprising that the measures that were identified – in both communities – as necessary to combat crime are measures designed to build community capacity, strengthen relationships and foster self-esteem.

There was a forceful narrative around needing to restore authority to and recognise the legitimacy of Aboriginal institutions and solutions. As one person identified, “we have tried your way and it hasn’t worked.”

...

One theme – perhaps the central theme – emerging from the interviews and how communities might become more cohesive or resilient was the need for Aboriginal self-determination and autonomy.

...

## **Recognition/self-Determination/Autonomy**

### **Autonomy**

Greater autonomy was described as the solution in that it allows people the opportunity to accept responsibility, instead of relying on others to do it on their behalf. Being in control of your own destiny changes everything – “being accepted equally and not being undermined and all these things that go on behind the scenes. It’s having the opportunity to say we own this and not be controlled or supervised.”

Crucially, exercising self-determination and autonomy also requires room to learn, including from mistakes. Transparency and accountability are necessary but do not require suffocating levels of scrutiny. It was acknowledged that mistakes will be made but that the response should be support not condemnation.

### **Recognition of the Aboriginal justice system**

Circle sentencing was praised as a positive initiative but there was the suggestion that it doesn’t go far enough. The proposals for expansion revolved around moving beyond involvement in sentencing to utilising local knowledge about offenders, the nature of local crime and local circumstances to deal with the offender holistically. The current system was described as much too slow and not in keeping with Aboriginal conceptions of restorative justice.

### **Alcohol Management Plan**

The Bourke Alcohol Management Plan is a joint initiative of the police, the Bourke Alcohol Working Group and the Outback Division of General Practice. ...Several proponents of the Plan observed that Bourke is the first community in the western region to introduce an alcohol management plan and expressed pride in the proactive stance they had taken to a community wide problem. The strategy is being assessed by the George Institute for Global Health and a preliminary evaluation noted the 'overwhelming opinion' that restrictions had been an 'effective mechanism for addressing health and social impacts' and that the majority of interviewees supported its continuation. It reported a significant decrease in non-domestic alcohol related assault, while other categories of crime were reported as stable or no change and recommended the plan's continuation.

### **Land and culture**

Connection to country was repeatedly emphasised as fundamental to a thriving Aboriginal community, especially in Bourke.

### **Education and training**

Interviewees emphasised the importance of culturally appropriate education that focused on local history, in particular as it related to Aboriginal people and the place of Aboriginal people in building the prosperity of communities. Opportunities for young Aboriginal people to learn more about their culture and heritage were described as vital and numerous people recommended the establishment of a bush camp where young people could meet with elders and respected persons in a relaxed atmosphere. Importantly, they shouldn't have to wait until they got into trouble before they had the opportunity.

### **Housing and environment**

Addressing overcrowding and inadequate housing was repeatedly raised as a priority. The need for appropriate housing able to accommodate extended family was identified. Importantly, it was said that pleasant homes – the sort of homes that people can be proud of – was significant to encouraging well-being. The design should be developed through engagement with the Aboriginal residents and construction should provide employment and training opportunities. The maintenance budget should be a component from the outset. The broader physical environment was also raised as significant in its impact on well-being.

### **Reconciliation and community building**

One message that was delivered loud and clear in both communities was that the starting point for any meaningful relationship is formal recognition of the Aboriginal community; its institutions and history; understanding that these towns are on Aboriginal land, and of the sacrifices of the past and ongoing

sacrifices. The challenges of the communities need to be faced as communities in their entirety; there is nothing to be gained from the ‘not my problem’ mentality.

### **Health**

More locally based drug and alcohol counsellors are needed. The lack of consistency was highlighted as a problem. The difficulty in recruiting local health professionals was acknowledged and the need for flexible solutions highlighted. One suggestion was to recruit and train local case managers to support the fly in/fly out health professionals

## **1.7 THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL REPORTS: SOME EXTRACTS**

*The following extracts are from a range of Commonwealth government reports and have been included to show that they have some idea of the language and rhetoric but that this is not necessarily what happens - in fact it rarely does. They are selectively chosen to illustrate some of the difficulties of raising process issues because the government policy departments claim that they are following due process, despite the fact that it is certainly not the view of either its major standard setting agencies or of the recipient communities.*

### **A. 2013 FaHSCIA Closing The Gap: Prime Minister's Report**

*These extracts come from a summary document designed to showcase best items and good processes' intentions and are therefore not likely to be critical. They do however make frequent mentions of the need of consultation, self-management etc. Some examples of admissions of the rhetoric in the reports have been included to show shortfalls between the language and the results!*

*We note that attendance levels are not mentioned nor are any local engagement strategies, just provision of services. The report includes a lot of positive items which are not necessarily backed up by any data but which indicate at least the report writers know the right language for describing what should work.*

*This is the government account of the NACCHO consultation process covered in the last section. It shows a rare example of an apparently well thought through consultation process, which led to an agreement, according to community reports. It is still not clear whether the agreed plan will be implemented by the new Government. (January 2014)*

### **B. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan.<sup>6</sup>**

*This may have been appropriately handled*

A Stakeholder Advisory Group has been established to guide its development. The advisory group brings together representatives from state and territory governments and representatives with expertise in Indigenous health, the health sector, and the social determinants of health

An extensive community consultation process (which) is occurring prior to the drafting of the health plan. A series of 16 nation-wide community consultations were held in urban, regional and remote locations throughout October to December 2012. A separate consultation was also held at the National Centre

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<sup>6</sup>[http://www.naccho.org.au/download/naccho\\_health\\_futures/NACCHO%20Healthy%20Futures%2010%20point%20plan%202013-2030.pdf](http://www.naccho.org.au/download/naccho_health_futures/NACCHO%20Healthy%20Futures%2010%20point%20plan%202013-2030.pdf)

of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern, Sydney, from 19–22 September 2012 to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

*Another two examples below show that apparent understanding doesn't result in changed processes.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have also been heavily involved in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan—from its development to its implementation and monitoring.

The Government understands Indigenous communities and their needs differ across the country and that the most effective way to deliver services is to work with the communities and utilise local service providers wherever possible.

The Government also appreciates that to engage with and understand remote communities, staff should be living and working in these communities. Staff who are aware of local needs, know who's who and can understand their languages and customs.

### **Working together**

The Australian Government has embraced a partnership approach based on working with Indigenous communities to deliver positive change. The Government engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels—in communities and across regions, states, territories and the nation—to provide opportunities for local people to work on local projects and have more ownership and responsibility for the programs delivered in their communities.

*This is an interesting item as reports from on the ground communities in the NT have not indicated that the following positions have had much local support and trust.*

For this reason, the Government is continuing to build and improve its network of locally-based staff, including Government Engagement Coordinators and Indigenous Engagement Officers (or their equivalents), to provide vital on-the-ground links to local Indigenous communities—and build stronger relationships.

Government Engagement Coordinators are responsible for coordinating government business in the Indigenous communities where they are located. They work closely with Indigenous Engagement Officers who are drawn from the local communities and understand local culture and languages.

These staff work for Indigenous Coordination Centres and Regional Operations Centres which take a whole-of-government approach to service delivery and

feed back local knowledge to inform the development and implementation of policies and programs.

Government staff are continuing to consult with Indigenous people living in remote communities on major initiatives such as Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Remote Jobs and Communities Program, Remote Service Delivery and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing to hear their views about the programs, how effectively they are being delivered and the outcomes achieved.

Criticisms of this process are multiple including the documentation of the problems with the Stronger Futures so-called consultation. While it is possible that the views of the local communities on the proposals were 'heard', there is no evidence that these views affected any aspects of the proposals or its delivery.

**Why is it important?**

During the Stronger Futures consultations held in 2011, Aboriginal people requested improved face-to face relationships with government so that government can work more closely with them and for their views to be more actively conveyed to government.

The way that government manages its business in communities is important. It can support better local planning processes and governance, ensure that services are effective and accessible and enable government staff to work more effectively at a regional level.

The Abbott government claims it is setting in place systems which will correct some of these errors, yet the evidence so far is not convincing. We await the results of the IAS funding round.

## **PART TWO**

### **2014 Federal Budget Impacts on Indigenous Affairs**

The following compilation is based on the official announcements and initial reactions to the first budget by the Abbott government. We had hoped that the election of a Prime Minister who has claimed to be concerned about the failure to progress Indigenous wellbeing would have led to some positive budget options.

The budget is the annual statement by a government of its priorities and intentions. It should therefore reflect both the specifics of its spending and cuts, as well as stating how these decisions were made. New governments in particular should offer clear indicators of what their intentions are and how they intend to achieve them. In the Indigenous portfolio, the government's own advisers have shown the importance of starting with some statement about what communities want, what we know works and therefore what criteria have been used to assess whether the proposed changes have incorporated evidence and appropriate decision making.

Eva Cox August 2014

## 2.1 The 2014 Federal Budget

*This collection of documents, with our occasional comments, start with the official government line and then considers a range of critiques and news stories that clearly illustrate the lack of any evidence that these proposed changes were undertaken with any awareness of the evidence of what works or the recommended processes of their own advisers. Budget cuts were made without any serious discussion with affected groups and communities. Given the wealth of evidence on what works, the failure to take it into account in key budget decisions will mean that these changes are not likely to be effective.*

### A. The media release from the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, 13 May 2014.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Delivering our Commitments for Indigenous Australia*

The Abbott Government is honouring its commitments to make getting children to school, adults into work, and building safe communities the key priorities of policy for Indigenous Australians.

The 2014-15 Budget is part of the Government's Economic Action Strategy to build a strong, prosperous economy and a safe, secure Australia.

The Government is delivering \$18 million for the continuation of the Remote School Attendance Strategy, which is targeting 74 schools in remote communities across the country.

The 2014-15 Budget also delivers more than \$13 million for the Clontarf Foundation Academy to provide an additional 3,000 places for students to participate in the Sporting Chance programme which seeks to improve health, education, training and employment outcomes.

The Government will respond to the Forrest Review of Indigenous training and employment programmes later this year.

The 2014-15 Budget also delivers more than \$54 million for new police infrastructure to improve policing in remote communities which will help make more communities safer, particularly for women and children.

The Government is fixing the bureaucratic mess we inherited by transferring a multitude of programmes from eight different agencies to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). The 2014-15 Budget invests \$4.8 billion to replace more than 150 individual programmes and services with five streamlined broad-based programmes under an Indigenous Advancement Strategy with the sole objective of achieving real results in the Government's

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<sup>1</sup><http://minister.indigenous.gov.au/media/2014-05-13/delivering-our-commitments-indigenous-australians>



priority areas.

The five new Indigenous programmes will make it easier for organisations delivering services on the ground.

The five new streams are:

- a. Jobs, land and economy – getting adults into work, fostering Indigenous business and assisting Indigenous people to generate economic and social benefits from effective use of their land;
- b. Children and schooling – getting children to school, improving education outcomes and supporting families to give children a good start in life;
- c. Safety and wellbeing – ensuring that Indigenous people are healthy and enjoy the emotional and social wellbeing experienced by other Australians;
- d. Culture and capability – supporting Indigenous Australians to maintain their culture, participate in the economic and social life of the nation and ensure that organisations are capable of delivering quality services to their clients; and
- e. Remote Australia strategies – strategic investment in local, flexible solutions based on community priorities and remote housing and infrastructure. (emphasis added)

The new programmes will be implemented gradually over the first quarter of 2014-15.

The Government will transform delivery of services to Indigenous Australians by establishing a new Remote Community Advancement Network to deliver demonstrable improvements in school attendance, employment and community safety.

**This will support a new engagement with Indigenous people, allowing us to be more flexible with funding and to ensure it meets the aspirations and priorities of communities, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach (emphasis added).**

The Abbott Government will reform National Partnership Agreements to ensure money spent achieves results.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery will be replaced when it expires in June 2014 by the new Remote Community Advancement Network and bilateral arrangements with each state and territory. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing will be subject to more stringent conditions, based on Government priorities, negotiated bilaterally with each state and territory.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory will be revised in collaboration with the Northern Territory Government to place greater emphasis on results, rather

than process.

The Government is making decisions that repair the Budget, strengthen the economy and prepare Australia for the long term challenges before us.

*Note: This media release makes no mention of the cuts and program changes that save funding. Two of the new programs (highlighted above) suggest some recognition of the need for cultural recognition and engagement but the overall tone is that the government has decided that Indigenous spending will be focused on Indigenous programs that people and communities fit the dominant 'Australian' model of education, economic contributions, and lifestyle.*

*There is one sentence (highlighted above) in the media release that suggests the possibility that changes may respond to input from Indigenous people and this meets the recommendations in the AIHW criteria for genuine decision making and delivery partnership. Otherwise, there is an emphasis on school attendance and policing which indicate priorities.*

## **B. Federal Budget Summary by Reconciliation Australia 2014-15 Federal Budget Summary - May 13, 2014.<sup>2</sup>**

The 2014-15 Federal Budget outlines a total of \$549.4 million of savings from Indigenous programs. This includes \$15m from Congress and \$534.4m from program consolidation within Prime Minister & Cabinet (PM&C).

- It is not clear from the Budget what programs will be cut or consolidated as part of the changes within PM&C. There is very little detail on the savings within PM&C outlined in the Budget Papers.
- Minister Scullion's media release states there is \$4.8 billion in investment however there is no detail about where this investment is directed either within in the media release or Budget papers.
- A total of \$197.4 million of Indigenous specific spending measures are detailed in the Budget from the Department of PM&C. This spending is focused on policing and school attendance in remote communities and \$13 million for the Clontarf Foundation.
- An additional \$36 million of spending is outlined in the Budget for Indigenous specific programs from other portfolios.
- What's missing? There is no mention of funding for a further national partnership agreement on Indigenous health or investment for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. Funding for programs to reduce incarceration rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and a clear focus on this issue in policy and program frameworks is also missing.
- Most significantly there is confirmation of funding cuts to the National

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.reconciliation.org.au/news/2014-15-federal-budget-summary/>

Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

- There is no specific mention of the Empowered Communities initiative or any other specific funding measures other than those outlined below.

### **New Policy Announcements**

- **A new “Indigenous Advancement Strategy” comprised of five programs within PM&C.** The programs will include:
  - Jobs, Land and the Economy – focused on jobs, business and the use of land for economic development.
  - Children and Schooling – focused on school attendance, improving education outcomes, early childhood and families.
  - Safety and Wellbeing – focused on health and social and emotional wellbeing.
  - Culture and Capability – focused on maintaining culture, social and economic participation and that organisations are capable of delivering quality services.
  - Remote Australia Strategies- focused on strategic investment in local, flexible solutions based on communities priorities and remote housing and infrastructure.
- **A new “Remote Community Advancement Network” to be established within PM&C.**
- Health funding to be “refocused” under the “Indigenous Australians Health Programme”.
- The Government will respond to the Forrest Review of Indigenous Training and Employment later this year and the Treasurer has indicated that there are funds held in Contingency Reserve for these measures.
- The Government’s priorities remain “getting children to school, adults into work and building safe communities”.
- The Minister’s media release states that “the 2014-15 Budget invests \$4.8 billion to replace more the 150 individual programs and services with five streamlined broad-based programmes under an Indigenous Advancement Strategy”, however no detail is available.
- The Government will reform National Partnership Agreements “to ensure money spent achieves results”.
- The NPA on Remote Service Delivery will be replaced by the new “Remote Community Advancements Network” and bilateral arrangements with each state and territory.
- The NPA on Remote Indigenous Housing will be continued through a \$2.2 billion investment over five years with more stringent conditions based on government priorities and negotiated bilaterally with each state and territory.
- Stronger Futures will be revised in collaboration with the Northern Territory Government to place greater emphasis on results, however overall levels of funding looked to be maintained.

## **Savings Measures**

- **A rationalisation of Indigenous programs within the Department of Minister and Cabinet will result in savings of \$534.4 million over five years.** This includes over 150 programs being consolidated into a new Indigenous Advancement Strategy comprised of five programs focusing on Jobs, Land and the Economy; Children and Schooling; Safety and Wellbeing; Culture and Capability; and Remote Australia Strategies.
- \$409.2 million (over four years from 14/15) of these cuts will come from within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and \$3.5 m (over 4 years from 14/15) will come from the Torres Strait Regional Authority. The remainder will come from the Department of Health (\$165.8m over 5 years). The Health portfolio savings from this measure will be invested in the “medical research future fund”. There is no mention as to where savings from PM&C will be invested.
- **Cessation of funding for the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples – \$15 million over three years.** As previously flagged the budget confirms that funding for Congress will be ceased and redirected to “repair the Budget and fund policy priorities”.
- **Indigenous Languages Support Program – \$ 9.5m of savings over four years** This saving reduces the additional funds provided in the 2013-14 Budget to expand the Indigenous Languages Support Programme by around \$2.3 million per year. The ILS will continue to receive funding of \$11.1 million per year. This program is funded through the Attorney Generals Department.

## **Indigenous specific expense measures outlined in the Budget**

### **Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio:**

- **Clontarf Foundation – expansion \$13.4 million over four years** to fund an additional 3,000 places for boys to participate in the Sporting Chance Program. Includes \$300,000 over two years from 2014-15 for an independent evaluation of the Foundation’s Academy Program.
- **Community Engagement Police Officers in the Northern Territory - \$2.5 million over four years** to the Northern Territory Police for up to eight Community Engagement Police Officers in 2014-15 and four officers in 2015-16 – unclear whether this is an additional four. – unlikely given the funding is \$1m in 2014-15 then \$0.5m for the three years after.
- **Permanent Police presence in remote Indigenous communities – \$54.1 million over four years** to construct police infrastructure in up to seven remote communities in Queensland, WA and SA. An additional six police complexes will be constructed in the Northern Territory from existing funding of \$48.7 million allocated under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement. The Government will focus on Indigenous communities with populations of greater than 300 that do not currently have a permanent police presence or are not located within

a reasonable distance of the nearest police station. Government support will be contingent upon the States and the Northern Territory committing to provide sufficient ongoing policing resources to use the facilities. This measure delivers on the Government's election commitment.

- **Extension of the Remote School Attendance Strategy – an additional \$18.1 million over two calendar years** from 1 April 2014 to extend the Remote School Attendance Strategy to a further 30 remote Indigenous communities across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. The Strategy commenced in the second school term of 2014 and will conclude at the end of the 2015 school year. The cost of this measure will be met from within the existing resources of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This proposal builds on the measure titled Remote School Attendance Strategy announced in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2013-14. Further information can be found in the press release of 4 April 2014 issued by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs.
- **Outback Power – \$10.6 m over four years** to service up to 250 existing renewable energy systems in remote Indigenous communities in Queensland, Western Australia and the NT.

#### **Other portfolios:**

- **\$3.3m in 2014-15 to AIATSIS for digitisation of Indigenous cultural resources** via the Department of Education.
- **Additional funding of \$6.8m in 2014-15 for remote Indigenous students to attend non-government boarding schools** (through the Department of Education). The assistance will be provided to non-government schools with more than 50 Indigenous boarding students from remote or very remote areas or where 50 per cent of boarding students are Indigenous students from remote or very remote areas.
- **\$25.9m in 2014-15 for Indigenous teenage sexual and reproductive health and young parent support.** This funding will be provided to states and territories for health promotion and education and to provide clinical support for young mothers to continue activities currently funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development which ceases on 30 June 2014.

#### **National Partnership Agreements (NPAs)**

1. The only funding detailed in the Budget for the **National Partnership on Indigenous Health** post the 2014-15 financial year is for trachoma control services (\$4.2 million per year for three years until 2017-18) and for reducing acute rheumatic heart fever among Indigenous children (\$3.1m in 15-16 and \$2.7m in 16-17).
2. Funding under the **Stronger Futures** in the NT NPA, including the school attendance measure (SEAM) is detailed for a number of measures until 2017-18. The Stronger Futures funding announced in last year's budget of

\$3.4 billion over 10 years looks to be maintained.

3. There is no funding for the **National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Development** for the 2014-15 year or beyond other than the spending measure outlined above. This partnership provided funding up until 30 June 2014 for the establishment of 38 children and family centres across Australia by mid-2014
4. The **NPA on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education** has money held in the Contingency Reserve for additional funding in 2014-15 and 2015-16 subject to negotiations with states.
5. The **NPA on Remote Indigenous Housing** is detailed in the Budget until 2017-18 at a total of \$2.2 billion over five years.

**Many of these spending measures have strong social control components and include policing, truancy and school attendance measures. There is no evidence of discussion with affected communities or services of whether these funding and cutting proposals have been considered by those affected.**

### **C. Indigenous Health Services – media release.<sup>3</sup>**

*The Government reacted to media questions on whether its other health proposals would have negative effects on Indigenous people and issued the following media release to defend its policies. The emphasis is on front line, core essential services.*

#### **Media Release**

The Australian Government has a strong commitment to front line, core essential health service delivery, reducing red tape overheads and better supporting efforts to achieve health equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Media reports today indicate concern about the impact of a \$7 co-payment on Indigenous patients.

The Minister for Health Peter Dutton said it is important to remember that in addition to funding support under Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, many services receive funding and support through other Indigenous health programmes.

“The Government will be spending almost one billion dollars on specific Indigenous health programmes, Medicare and PBS items. This includes \$520 million in grant funding for Indigenous health organisations in 2014-15.” Mr Dutton said. “In addition to this amount state and territory governments provide considerable funding for Indigenous health services.

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<sup>3</sup>[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/20F0C26B83DCB979CA257CDE00204E64/\\$File/PD037.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/20F0C26B83DCB979CA257CDE00204E64/$File/PD037.pdf) - PDF 238 KB

“Given the amount of money being administered by Indigenous health services I am keen to get a better understanding of the concerns being raised and of how the funding is being translated into front-line support.”

“It is important to be clear as to why organisations believe they would not be able to provide services for those most in need. I will be keen to see the analysis of where the funding is being spent” Mr Dutton said.<sup>4</sup>

Australians need to know that we have ensured those in need and the vulnerable will be protected. If that patient is a concession card holder or a child under 16, then they will only be expected to pay the \$7 contribution a maximum of 10 times in a calendar year (including out-of-hospital pathology and diagnostic imaging services). GPs remain able to set their own fees and will have discretion as to whether they charge the \$7 patient contribution.

#### **D. The Parliamentary Library briefing.<sup>5</sup>**

*The 2014–15 Budget included a significant reorganisation of Indigenous affairs and an overall funding reduction while not offering a lot of detail about either, or about the Government’s intentions with respect to some relevant National Partnerships.*

The Budget foreshadowed more than 150 Indigenous programs, grants and activities being consolidated into five broad-based programs (jobs, land and the economy; children and schooling; safety and wellbeing; culture and capability; and remote Australia strategies) and funding being reduced by \$534.4 million over five years.<sup>6</sup> This is in line with the National Commission of Audit (NCoA) finding ‘too many disparate and fragmented Commonwealth Indigenous programmes’ and seeing ‘significant scope for consolidation and rationalisation.’<sup>7</sup>

There is no detail regarding the consolidation and how savings will be achieved in the Budget papers, but the split across agencies is:

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/content/health-mediarel-yr2014-dutton037.htm>

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201415/Indigenous](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201415/Indigenous)

<sup>6</sup>The budget figures in this article have been taken from the following document unless otherwise sourced: Australian Government, Budget measures: budget paper no. 2: 2014–15, <http://www.budget.gov.au/2014-15/content/bp2/html/index.htm>, 2014, accessed 16 May 2014.

<sup>7</sup>National Commission of Audit, *Towards responsible government: phase one*, [http://libils2/uhtbin/cgiisirs.exe/x/0/0/57/5/3?searchdata1=818002%7bCKEY%7d&searchfield1=GENERAL%5eSUBJECT%5eGENERAL%5e%5e&user\\_id=WEBSERVER](http://libils2/uhtbin/cgiisirs.exe/x/0/0/57/5/3?searchdata1=818002%7bCKEY%7d&searchfield1=GENERAL%5eSUBJECT%5eGENERAL%5e%5e&user_id=WEBSERVER), February 2014, pp. xxv, liv, 176–177 and 216, and *Towards responsible government: phase two*, [http://libils2/uhtbin/cgiisirs.exe/x/0/0/57/5/3?searchdata1=818002%7bCKEY%7d&searchfield1=GENERAL%5eSUBJECT%5eGENERAL%5e%5e&user\\_id=WEBSERVER](http://libils2/uhtbin/cgiisirs.exe/x/0/0/57/5/3?searchdata1=818002%7bCKEY%7d&searchfield1=GENERAL%5eSUBJECT%5eGENERAL%5e%5e&user_id=WEBSERVER), March 2014, pp. 97–98, accessed 16 May 2014.

- \$409.2 million less for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- \$121.8 million less for the Department of Health (reduction of \$165.8 over the first four years then increase of \$44.0 million in the fifth year)—with savings to be invested in the Medical Research Future Fund, and
- \$3.5 million less for the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

Responses to these measures have included Reconciliation Australia's call for the consolidation to 'be informed by evidence and a proper evaluation of existing programs' and for savings arising from the consolidation to 'be reinvested in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable First Australians'. Reconciliation Australia has expressed particular concern about the cut to the Indigenous health budget, and questioned which programs would be affected.<sup>8</sup>

Other Indigenous affairs related budget measures include:

- Cessation of funding for the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples resulting in savings of \$15.0 million over the next three years (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet). This is in line with a recommendation by the NCoA that reasoned 'it duplicates existing Indigenous representative advisory bodies'.<sup>9</sup> Reconciliation Australia believes the Congress had been 'a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and that 'ongoing Government support is necessary until a representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is well established and self-sustainable'.<sup>10</sup>
- Reducing by \$9.5 million over the next three years the allocation for Indigenous languages support (Attorney-General's Department)—discussed further in Arts and Culture.<sup>11</sup>
- New expenditures in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio include:
  - \$54.1 million over the next four years for police stations to be built in seven remote Indigenous communities in Queensland, Western Australia (WA) and South Australia
  - \$18.1 million (to be met from within existing resources) for the continuation and extension of the Remote School Attendance Strategy
  - \$13.4 million dollars over the next four years to provide 3,000 additional places for Indigenous boys in the Clontarf Foundation Academy sports program
  - \$10.6 million over four years to service up to 250 existing renewable energy

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<sup>8</sup>Reconciliation Australia, Budget a mixed bag for reconciliation, <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/news/budget-a-mixed-bag-for-reconciliation/>, media release, 14 May 2014, accessed 16 May 2014.

<sup>9</sup>National Commission of Audit, phase one, op.cit., p. 175, accessed 16 May 2014.

<sup>10</sup>Reconciliation Australia, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>[http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201415/Arts](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201415/Arts)



systems in remote Indigenous communities in Queensland, WA and the Northern Territory (NT) and

- \$2.5 million over four year to engage Community Engagement Police Officers in the NT.
- Additional funding in the Department of Education portfolio includes:
- \$6.8 million in 2014–15 for non-government schools with more than 50 Indigenous boarding students from remote or very remote areas or where 50 per cent of boarding students are Indigenous students from remote or very remote areas and
- \$3.3 million in 2014–15 to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to continue digitisation of Indigenous cultural resources.
- The Health portfolio includes funding of \$25.9 million in 2014–15 to states and territories for programs addressing teenage sexual and reproductive health, continuing activities currently funded under the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development*.
- With respect the National Partnership Agreements (NPAs):
  - Further funding for the *NPA for Indigenous Early Childhood Development*, due to expire on 30 June 2014, is not provided for, save as noted above
  - The *NPA on Remote Indigenous Housing* and the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory NPA* both have allocations until 2017–18
  - The *NPA on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes* that expired in June 2013, is not mentioned (neither are meeting the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013–23) and
  - The *NPA on Remote Service Delivery* is, when it expires in June 2014, to be replaced with a new Remote Community Advancement Network in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and bilateral arrangements with each state and territory.

The Government has not yet explained how the new arrangements would work. However further changes would seem to contradict the advice of Brian Gleeson, the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, in his last biannual report, January 2014:

If there is one message I want Governments to hear from this report it is: Do not press the reset button! ... If we continue to start over again the foundations previously laid will be pulled up time and again, never allowing enough time or energy to build the structure required to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.<sup>12</sup>

The Budget did not directly address the future of Indigenous Business Australia and the Indigenous Land Council, the subject of a February 2014 review, or of

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<sup>12</sup>Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, Final Biannual Report, [http://www.cgris.gov.au/userfiles/file/ogris\\_9th\\_report.pdf](http://www.cgris.gov.au/userfiles/file/ogris_9th_report.pdf), January 2014, p. 4, accessed 16 May 2014.

Indigenous employment and training programs, the subject of a current review.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to direct measures, many of the Budget's wider health and social security changes could be expected to have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous people, given higher rates of chronic disease and lower levels of employment.

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<sup>13</sup> See EY (Ernst and Young), Review of the Indigenous Land Corporation and Indigenous Business Australia, [http://www.dpmc.gov.au/PUBLICATIONS/docs/EY\\_final\\_report\\_review\\_of\\_ILC\\_IBA.PDF](http://www.dpmc.gov.au/PUBLICATIONS/docs/EY_final_report_review_of_ILC_IBA.PDF), 17 February 2014 and website for the Review of Indigenous Training and Employment Programmes, <http://indigenousjobsandtrainingreview.dpmc.gov.au/>.

## **2.2 General Commentary On The 2014 Budget And Its Implications**

### **A. This budget could devastate Indigenous Australians - Mick Gooda.<sup>14</sup>**

From cuts to youth welfare to the new Medicare co-payment, the budget will have a profound impact on Indigenous Australians. Mick Gooda asks, will the Federal Government speak to Aboriginal leaders before proceeding?

I have spoken with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders since the release of the federal budget. Everyone I have spoken with is concerned about its potential impact on this nation's First Peoples. We fear there is a very real prospect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will suffer as a direct result of the budget announcements.

Like many other sections of the community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are concerned by the proposed withdrawal of Commonwealth investment in education and hospitals. I am concerned Australia is heading towards two-tier education and health sectors which divide the haves from the have-nots.

However, it is the changes to the welfare system, particularly youth welfare, which could have a devastating impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The proposal to deny young people access to the dole for six months of the year is cruel. It won't address what is a very complex issue in youth unemployment. All it will do is further marginalise an already marginalised sector of the community.

Experts and welfare groups have argued, correctly, I fear, that the changes to the youth welfare system could lead to a spike in the crime rate. Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are already 28 times more likely to be in youth detention than other Australians. And when the cuts to Aboriginal Legal Services are added to this mix, the multiplier effect means this crisis risks becoming a catastrophe.

The proposed co-payment for visits to the doctor and the proposed increase in co-payments to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) are another cause of great anxiety. It is not as simple as paying a single \$7 co-payment to see a doctor. This is because if a patient also requires a blood test and an X-ray, that's an additional \$7 for each item. All of a sudden what is tagged as a simple \$7 co-payment becomes a \$21 out-of-pocket expense. The costs escalate even further if you have a couple of sick kids who also need these services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access Medicare services at a rate

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-20/gooda-this-budget-could-devastate-indigenous-australians/5462748>.

which is almost one third lower than what is required on a needs basis. Our people need encouragement to access medical services, not more barriers. Increasing out-of-pocket expenses for health care will further entrench barriers to equitable healthcare.

Proposed cuts to anti-smoking initiatives are a further cause for concern and a severe example of short-termism. Tobacco smoking is the most preventable cause of ill-health and early death among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The reduction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smoking rates by 10 per cent over the past decade demonstrates that positive change is possible. Nevertheless, smoking is an intractable behaviour and efforts to reduce smoking rates require long-term effort. The proposed cuts to anti-smoking initiatives must be revisited.

The budget also flags a new wave of upheaval in Indigenous Affairs. Over 150 Indigenous programs and activities will be collapsed into five new program areas and \$534.4 million will be cut from the budget over five years. I support the reduction of red tape. However, the Coalition gave a pre-election commitment to examine programs to make sure they are directly working to meet the Closing the Gap targets, with any savings identified to be reinvested in Closing the Gap activities.

The budget savings to be achieved through program rationalisation have not been, as promised, maintained in Indigenous Affairs or Closing the Gap. Instead, the health savings are to be invested in the Medical Research Future Fund and other savings will be going to the budget bottom line. This reversal of a pre-election promise should be addressed, particularly in light of the Prime Minister's stated commitment to be the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs.

The impact the budget will have on Indigenous services, organisations and outcomes is unclear, and these proposals have been developed with little or no input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representative organisations.

I have said several times this year that there is a new maturity in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait leadership, one where we recognise there are major problems with Australia's economy, one where we recognise that every sector must contribute, including ours.

The Federal Government has outlined its intention for a new engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To achieve this goal, surely it must at least have a discussion with us before proceeding with a radical re-shaping of government policy that so profoundly affects us?

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership stands ready for this conversation with Government. All it takes is an assurance that we will be heard.

## **B. Cash for jails: Tony Abbott's budget for Indigenous Australia**

With its budget, the Abbott government has made clear what it means by Indigenous 'advancement': fewer services, and more funding for lockups - Amy McQuire<sup>15</sup>

The 12 year old Aboriginal boy was small for his age, but appeared even smaller as he sat in handcuffs, shadowed by two burly police officers in the north-western NSW town of Bourke. I was watching as a white magistrate, a fly-in worker who usually lives in the rich suburbs of Sydney, deliberated on whether to send him to detention.

His offence? Police had caught him out on the streets late at night, in breach of his bail conditions, and had thrown him in the watchhouse in the early hours of the morning. The reason he was out on the streets? It was safer than being at home. The magistrate didn't want to send him back to his family, but with no other option, he was leaning towards placing him on remand as he waited for a court date.

It's a common situation. About 80% of young people in custody on remand don't go on to receive a custodial sentence<sup>16</sup> within 12 months – meaning a large proportion of Aboriginal youth are locked up simply because there is nowhere else for them to go. Many of them have been taken from their families at rates now higher than the days of the Stolen Generations.<sup>17</sup>

The distressing number of Aboriginal children in juvenile detention is a consequence of a complex mix of factors, like poverty, the harsh realities of the NSW bail act<sup>18</sup> and, I would argue, the crippling apathy of state and federal governments.

Sadly, in small towns like Bourke, the streets can be like a prison. Society builds virtual walls around you according to the circumstance of your race and geography. It's hard to break out of these confines, and it becomes even harder if you come into contact with the justice system at an early age.

Towns with large Aboriginal populations also have a large police presence. They are meant to protect the vulnerable, but over policing only adds to the worrying rates of Indigenous incarceration. How can you achieve equality when you are locking up Aboriginal population at rates that beggar belief?<sup>19</sup>

Since the end of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody,

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<sup>15</sup><http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/16/cash-for-gaols-tony-abbotts-budget-for-indigenous-australia>theguardian.com, Friday 16 May 2014 09.19 AEST

<sup>16</sup>[http://www.lawreform.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/agdbasev7wr/lrc/documents/pdf/cref129\\_ba35.pdf](http://www.lawreform.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/agdbasev7wr/lrc/documents/pdf/cref129_ba35.pdf)

<sup>17</sup><http://tracker.org.au/2014/03/the-lost-generations/>

<sup>18</sup>[http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol\\_act/ba197841/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ba197841/)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/4717444.html>

Indigenous incarceration rates have jumped in every state and territory:<sup>20</sup> 90% in the NT, 53% in NSW, and 50% in Western Australia.

On Tuesday night, the scared eyes of that small 12 year old boy in Bourke were chief on my mind as I read over the budget papers, wading through doublespeak like “rationalisation”, “savings”, “efficiencies” and the most offensive of them all: “advancement”.<sup>21</sup>

Aboriginal Australia anticipated a tidal wave of cuts, but seeing more than half a billion dollars ripped out from under a people who have been chronically underfunded for decades still sent shockwaves through our communities (although budget analysis shows Labor has historically been the biggest offender in underfunding Indigenous affairs if you look at total Indigenous expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure).

We already knew the Coalition were cutting \$13.4m from Aboriginal legal aid.<sup>22</sup> The cuts will undeniably affect frontline services across the country, where Aboriginal people already have trouble accessing appropriate legal aid. Any hit to already underfunded services drip down to children like that 12 year old boy in Bourke.

I saw nothing addressing these distressing rates in the number tables of the budget. I saw nothing to slow the torrents of Aboriginal hurt across the country. Instead I saw this: more than \$54m pumped into boosting police infrastructure in remote communities. No funding re-directed into keeping blackfellas out of jail, but more for those who will keep locking them up.

Put simply, you don’t make communities<sup>23</sup> safer by locking up their men, in many cases for the “victimless crime” of driving unregistered or unlicensed. You make them safer by investing in adequate health, housing, employment and education opportunities – measures which aren’t explained in these budget papers.

That’s just the beginning. There was no indication in the budget papers of which programs and organisations will have their funding hit by the huge cuts to health. More than \$160m will be pulled from Indigenous health funding, which is not surprising, given Abbott’s track record<sup>24</sup> in this area. As health minister in the Howard government, he presided over a \$460m Indigenous

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<sup>20</sup><http://tracker.org.au/2011/08/hard-labor/>

<sup>21</sup><http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/05/13/government-dramatically-reduce-indigenous-programs>

<sup>22</sup><http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/05/legal-aid-indigenous-body-urges-coalition-to-say-where-cuts-will-be-made>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.indigenousjustice.gov.au/db/publications/293001.html>

<sup>24</sup><http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-13/budget-2014-534-cut-to-indigenous-programs-and-health/5451144>

health shortfall<sup>25</sup> over a time period when Peter Costello boasted of almost \$100bn in budget surpluses.

Abbott's "new engagement" with Aboriginal people is just fluff. It's paternalism in sheep's clothing. If you are wondering why Aboriginal people scoff at his claims to become the prime minister for Indigenous affairs, you only have to look to 2006, when he called<sup>26</sup> for a "new paternalism" to put an end to the "rhetoric of self-determination". That assault against self-determination, against the rights of Aboriginal people to control their own lives and affairs, is in the background of any reading of these budget papers.

In a media release, Scullion talks about the government investing "\$4.8bn" to streamline more than 150 individual programmes and services into the so-called Indigenous advancement strategy, "with the sole objective of achieving real results in the government's priority areas". That's just it: the government's priority areas. Not priority areas determined by Aboriginal people themselves. The Abbott government has made it clear in this budget that it will define what "advancement" means to Aboriginal people.

The decision to de-fund our only national elected Indigenous body – the national congress of Australia's first people and replace it with the hand-picked Indigenous advisory council only adds to this narrative. The national congress isn't ATSIC, but to pull funding from our only nationally elected representative body is a disgrace.

And if you believe Indigenous advisory council head Warren Mundine has any say over the government's direction in Indigenous affairs, think again. It's clear the real power lies with the Indigenous affairs minister Nigel Scullion; Mundine has already had to back down from clashes with the minister<sup>27</sup> on issues like the legal aid cuts and his calls for a radical overhaul of the office of registrar of Indigenous corporations. He has also been unable to make a dent in the Coalition's plan to repeal section 18c of the *Racial Discrimination Act*.

Mundine remains the Australian newspaper's chief rent-a-quote, but the wages of the Indigenous advisory council would be the best budget saving the Abbott government could make in Indigenous affairs. Of course, none of this matters to Aboriginal kids like that 12 year old boy from Bourke. Most likely he will not see the "savings" and "efficiencies" boasted by the Abbott government.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://bahsl.com.au/old/pdf/CloseTheGap.Report.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/abbott-in-call-for-new-paternalism/2006/06/20/1150701552947.html>

<sup>27</sup> <http://tracker.org.au/2014/01/abbott-mundine-and-the-main-game/>

### **C. NACCHO Media Release – Concern over impact of the Budget on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.<sup>28</sup>**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples will suffer disproportionately under the 2014 Federal Budget, according to the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples.**

“General and specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander measures in the Budget are already causing considerable anxiety amongst our peoples,” said Congress Co-Chair Kirstie Parker.

Our people are amongst the sickest, poorest and most marginalised Australians, so the pain of some measures will be felt especially hard by us.

These include the introduction of GP co-payments and raising of the pension age, coupled with a cut of more than half a billion dollars to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs over the next five years. Yet another major overhaul of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, no long-term funding certainty for our health and legal services or clarity around measures to Close the Gap, and undermining of Congress as the only national independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative body.<sup>29</sup>

Ms Parker said scant detail had been provided in relation to the major overhaul of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs under a new ‘Indigenous Advancement Strategy’, and the reduction of about 150 existing programs to just five.

We strongly support a reduction in red tape and duplication. However, in the absence of more information and any clear funding guidelines or criteria for that handful of programs, it is difficult to determine how a cut of nearly \$550 million over five years to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs is justified. Days after the Budget, our peoples are in virtually no clearer position than we were before.

Our community controlled health organisations have been offered no more than 12 months funding. Of course, that’s better than nothing but it’s no way to build longevity or attract and retain high quality staff. We join others in seeking clarification as to how the Government will deliver on its promised commitment – in terms of funding and national leadership – to Close the Gap.

Our legal services and family violence prevention legal services will bear cuts they can ill-afford as they struggle to address the chronic over-representation of our people in the criminal justice system and protect victims of family violence, especially our women and children.

This is the manifestation of Commonwealth confusion on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples needs and expenditure that we believe will damage rather than enhance our people’s lives.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup><http://nacchocommunique.com/2014/05/16/congress-2014-budget-response/>

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.



Ms Parker, who is also Co-Chair of the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples already experienced roughly twice the burden of ill-health as other Australians.

So, anything – such as a GP co-payment – that further deters our peoples from managing their illness together with their doctor will inevitably compound our already higher rates of hospitalisation for chronic or acute conditions. That’s bad news for both us and the public purse,” she said.

The pension age is to be lifted to 70 years but we’re unaware of any consideration being given to the fact that, with the average life expectancy of our men at 69.1 years and for our women 73.7 years. That’s roughly ten years less than the general Australian population – our people will be lucky to make it to retirement age, let alone collect superannuation.

We call upon the Government to think more deeply about its plans, and to ensure it values and utilise the expertise that exists within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities. We want the Government to move forward in genuine partnership with us.<sup>31</sup>

Discontinuation of \$15 million set aside in the Budget Forward Estimates for Congress from 2014-17 amounted to censorship of independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices by stealth, Ms Parker said.

The Government has said that it is willing to meet with and receive advice from Congress and we welcome this. However, it feels very much like our independent national representative body is being tolerated rather than supported.

Our members have always aspired for Congress to be financially independent from government and self-sustaining in the long-term and this has not changed. It is sad that, whereas it was always clearly identified that an estimated ten years of investment and support was needed for us to achieve sustainability in a measured way, it was just three years before this particular government ‘pulled the plug’.

The fact that the Government flagged this decision in December makes it no less nasty. However, while confirmation of it is a definite blow to Indigenous self-determination, it is by no means a knockout punch for Congress. Our membership continues to grow and, with restructuring already undertaken and considerable belt tightening, we expect our reserves to sustain us for the next two to three years while we work to diversify our funding base.

As well as seeking ongoing support from our membership, we will be appealing to decent, fair-minded Australians to do what this Government apparently won’t – to champion and support an independent representative voice for our peoples, chosen by our peoples.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup><http://nacchocommunique.com/2014/05/16/congress-2014-budget-response/>

## 2.3 The Effects On Particular Programs

### 2.3.1 Early Childhood

#### **A. Budget cuts will hurt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families - *Statement by SNAICC Chairperson, Sharron Williams***

**SNAICC: Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care - 15 May.**<sup>33</sup>

Cuts announced in the Federal Budget on Tuesday will place even more pressure on some of the most disadvantaged citizens in Australia - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families - and reduce their access to some crucial services. SNAICC believes the cuts to Indigenous early childhood education and care, health and legal services seriously compromise the Abbott Government's Closing the Gap efforts and will inflict even more stress on our families and communities.

SNAICC is extremely disappointed that the Australian Government will not fund the 38 Aboriginal Children and Family Centres beyond June 2014. The Government's decision to turn its back on these critically important services means their funding and future is now in the hands of state and territory governments - many of whom say they cannot feasibly fund them over the long-term. This is a serious setback for our children, families and communities.

...

The Australian Government has also announced a \$3.7m cut to the Budget Based Funding program, under which the vast majority of Indigenous community-controlled early childhood services are funded. ...<sup>34</sup>

#### **B. Nikinpa Aboriginal Child And Family Centre – Toronto At Risk Of Being Victim Of Abbott's Budget - June 1, 2014.**<sup>35</sup>

The Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Toronto is at risk of closing its doors next month because the government failed to commit further funding in the budget to the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, which expires next month. The centre has only been open for about a month.

The centre provides clinic rooms for GP services, as well as antenatal care and education; child health check-ups and immunisation; chronic healthcare services; family referrals; counselling and parenting classes, as well as child

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<sup>33</sup><http://www.snaicc.org.au/news-events/fx-view-article.cfm?loadref=32&id=1436>

<sup>34</sup>ibid

<sup>35</sup><http://realnewsone.com/2014/06/01/nikinpa-aboriginal-child-and-family-centre-toronto-at-risk-of-being-victim-of-abbotts-budget/>

care for over 30 kids. These are services that are designed to improve the early childhood outcomes of Indigenous children in the local area, giving them the best possible start in life.

In addition to this, the centre is home to an IT room used to teach computer skills to seniors, and meeting rooms which are used to provide Aboriginal employment services, tenancy advice and a meeting place for Westlakes elders. Also opened recently is the centre's four-room early education and care service, which runs in conjunction with Hunter TAFE to provide on-site delivery of certificate III in children's services.

The Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, who is also minister for indigenous affairs has made clear his intentions – He is abandoning the families and communities in Toronto that rely on this centre. Tony Abbott declared himself the Prime Minister for Indigenous affairs, but his budget of broken promises has gutted half a billion dollars from programs that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

When in government Labor provided \$6½ million through the agreement to build The Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Toronto. Local Federal Labor MP, Pat Conroy, is fighting to keep the centre open. In a statement to the Federation Chamber he said “This is a really valuable service for our community, one which we simply cannot afford to lose”

### **C. APY Program SA<sup>36</sup>**

A small-scale but ground breaking program on South Australia's APY Lands is producing stunning results in early childhood education, in a region with amongst the poorest educational outcomes in the nation.

Instead of waiting until pre-school to begin lessons, Aboriginal children are getting learning from birth - and by the time they reach school age they're surpassing children years ahead of them.

However, as Karen Ashford reports, those involved in the project have been told no further funding's available to keep it going.

It sounds like hi-jinx, but this roomful of two-year-olds at the Ernabella Family Wellbeing Centre are actually building vital life skills.

It's the initiative of retired teacher Jude Crabtree - who at 70 years old is irrepressibly energetic about the potential for special learning programs for babies.

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<sup>36</sup><http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/05/12/funding-cut-jeopardises-innovative-aboriginal-learning-program>

Some 50 years in the classroom taught her that the western approach to education was too formal and started too late for Anangu children.

It's very much play based and based on the visual arts, because we know that the strengths of the Aboriginal painters is coming through so strongly in their children. So I think it's because I'm making such a connection between the cultural side of what's going on in Aboriginal education - a thing that worries me is perhaps we haven't been looking at the children's strengths at the, the community strengths - we've been far to perhaps focused on literacy and numeracy without thinking of using the arts as a conduit. So my belief is that we are maybe missing out on some very, very important learning activities and some structures that could change the way the education is rolled out to children, particularly in I think in remote communities.

Three years ago she determined to harness the renowned artistic skills of families as a catalyst for learning.

The result is the "Anangu families as first teachers program", developed in consultation with parents who are being encouraged to be their children's earliest educators.

Anangu have given the program their own name "itinintitjuta" which means "all the clever little children".

NamiKulyuru is a grandmother who thinks the program is transforming lives. "When I'm coming in this building I see lots of kids, babies, doing painting with their mother and that way they learning from looking at people doing painting."

Mums, dads and grandmas spend weeks creating brightly-coloured books featuring photographs of the children amidst hand drawn art and their young life story.

(Starts in Pitjantjartjara,) "would you like me to print that off? And maybe we can do her own page? Wouldn't that be good? Isn't that beautiful."

Some 140 of them have been made - crafted by parents then sent south to the Adelaide Hills, where they're printed on tough laminated paper, capable of withstanding the rigours of the bush.

Mothers like Rachelle Nelson says her daughter Mekisha wants to read because the story is all about her.

She's shyly proud of the two-and-a-half year old's development.

"She's quick, very quick, she loves doing things. Loves singing, yeah she loves art as well, she like drawing, making things."

Crucially, the books are written in English and read back to children in both

English and Pitjatjantjara, their first tongue.

"Jude at one years old... (then speaks in Pitjantjantjara).

Sue Record is the Principal of the Ernabella School, and as it happens, has a master's degree in neuroscience and cognitive psychology.

One of the things we know is that when kids are learning a new language it's easier to learn from a young age, right from birth if they're learning two languages it's really easy. So for me this is kind of like that's great because it's getting the kids exposed, and they're reading in English, they've got motivation to read because it's about them, so I see that as a real benefit as well.

But it's not just the language.

Sue Record says even coming to grips with books - something rarely kept in Anangu homes - is a valuable learning process.

What's the front cover? Where do we begin reading? Which way do we go? Where do we go next? Which way do we hold the book? I've seen a little boy who got the book this way, and I was thinking it really highlighted for me that child didn't have a lot of understanding around just a simple thing like holding a book and where to start, that we take for granted. And I think this will embed those learnings that we do take for granted in kids from an early age and that's just going to set them up - it's a great start because it's not some book doesn't mean anything to them, it's actually a book about me, and this book is amazing and my mum made it and I'm really proud of it and the message is books are great!

ItiNintiTjuta is having a dual impact.

Parents are re-engaging in English skills that may have become rusty since they left school, as well as setting a learning foundation for their children.

Early signs of writing are emerging in two and three-year-olds, who are developing the fine motor skills needed to hold pens.

"(child sounds) how exciting - she's done so many "W" she's worked it out hasn't she - ninti girl! she's clever."

The Principal of the Pipalytjatjara school Ngaire Benfell says some three-year-olds about to enter pre-school have capacities in advance of school children twice their age.

Well I'll give you an example of a child who has been consistently with the program with her mum and she is transitioning now into preschool and what we have observed is just outstanding. Her readiness for a learning situation and her articulation, her English language is just really outstanding. Her confidence and her ability to engage in a more formal setting is outstripping those who have not been part of the program - so we are really starting to see the follow on and what is going to be hopefully be the domino effect of this program that will carry on right through the years of schooling.

The program's architect Jude Crabtree says the results have exceeded even her expectations.

She believes that instilling an early love of learning could be a key to reducing truancy and encouraging children to stay at school right through to year 12.

The early signs are promising.

A reception teacher was saying when the little ones came up from preschools, because don't forget we started this three years ago and some of those children are now going into reception - that she felt some of those reception children were even more advanced than her year twos. So we can see if we can keep this program going and keep the momentum up we know that when the children do go into the school system that we will start to see an improvement in the literacy and numeracy levels.

Sue Record says the initiative has the potential to transform an entire generation's approach to knowledge.

Because having control of language is power, and that's what indigenous people need. So it's great thing to start here, I can't imagine how amazing it's going to be for these kids when they get to year ten and they've had this amazing start around language and literacy.

Sue Jenkins, an internationally-respected paediatrician who's consulted in developing nations around the globe, has independently assessed the pilot program's performance at regular intervals since 2010.

They're learning about colour, they're learning about texture, they're developing pre-literacy skills because they're hearing English language spoken and the books are mostly written in English. So when the parents read to them they're learning some English and by the time they get into school it won't be an unfamiliar language to them. There are pre-numeracy skills there, they're learning about sorting and matching and shapes and all those mathematical concepts. There's a lot goes on that the average observer might just see as play but actually there's a heap of stuff going on.

She thinks Jude Crabtree has succeeded because she spent several years teaching in the region and has built a rapport with communities.

This bond of trust enabled the development of the program to be driven by Anangu, and as a result it's been accepted and owned by communities with an enthusiasm Dr Jenkins says would be the envy of many other programs.

You've got to make sure it's culturally appropriate, you got to make sure there's community ownership, ideally these programs are built from the bottom up, if you don't have community ownership you know the people don't come. Government is very good at coming in and putting - well meaning people design programs, come and put them into places where the community says actually that's not what we want, we've got other pressing priorities.

So I think you've got to be careful about transposing a model which works wonderfully in one setting into something which is completely different. You've got to do the consultation and needs assessment."

The benefits aren't confined to the classroom.

Other agencies on the lands like health and social workers are seeing a ripple effect as children learn basics like washing their hands and brushing their teeth, grasp the importance of routines, and learn social skills.

Meredith Clark was the coordinator of the Ernabella Family Wellbeing Centre, where she helped Jude Crabtree deliver the ItiNintiTjuta program.

I'd love it to continue. In a remote area we don't get a lot of opportunity for programs. It's expensive for organisation to run a program out here but this is one that's tailored for Anangu families. It takes on board the strengths of Anangu in terms of their design and creative skills and allows them to use that in terms of working on their literacy.

But it's a dream that appears to be dashed, despite its extraordinary impact on children's learning, its widespread support by child professionals across the APY Lands, and most importantly, its proven engagement with Anangu.

The federal government had provided 700-thousand dollars over three years for the "Anangu families as first teachers program".

Communities were recently told the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' budget line for such projects has expired.

This was just before the federal government's Audit Commission acknowledged that "remote Australia's very high disadvantaged Indigenous population, cultural complexity and dispersed settlement pattern requires a dedicated policy and service delivery response".

The Commission further stated that "issues such as retaining the right staff, coordinating services, and working with particular cultural norms in more remote areas should be addressed".

Contracts for Jude Crabtree and Meredith Clark were not renewed, both instead taking other positions on the Lands.

Meredith Clark says it's a squandered opportunity that could have been a conduit for even bigger things.

It's something that does engage the kids here and, you know, why not take advantage of some of those things that do really get them switched on, and whether it be the kids or the mums, and use that as the means to get some of the outcomes that we're

looking for.

Supporters of the project see a faint glimmer of hope from the South Australian government.

Education and Child Development Minister Jennifer Rankine says she's interested in assessing the "Anangu as first teachers" initiative to see whether it might complement the state's existing early learning programs.

Much will still depend on the federal budget.

Minister Rankine says even if the state adopts the project, it would still require some indirect federal funding through pre-school and Indigenous early childhood programs - and these may be at risk.

And to add to the disappointment for Anangu mothers, the Ernabella family centre now has no one to run it, so it, and its sister centres at Amata and Fregon lay virtually idle.

Purpose-built facilities worth millions, doing little for the families who desperately need them.

#### **D. SNAICC: Where to now for Aboriginal Child and Family Centres?<sup>37</sup>**

The Australian Government's decision not to fund the 38 new Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) beyond June 2014 is devastating news — and seriously undermines the Government's efforts under Closing the Gap, particularly its new target to improve school attendance of Indigenous children. The ACFCs represent a \$300m investment by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). It's a considerable investment that acknowledges the importance of providing more support in the critical early years of a child's development, as well as an acceptance that mainstream fee-based services are not a viable option for many of our children and families.

Some of the ACFCs began operations two years ago, others have officially opened their doors in the past two months, having worked from temporary premises. Others are yet to officially open and one — Palmerston ACFC in the NT — is still under construction.

But centres are already having an impact, providing quality early childhood education grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and — just as important — integrated related services for families such as maternal

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<sup>37</sup><http://www.snaicc.org.au/news-events/fx-view-article.cfm?loadref=32&id=1447> 21 MAY 2014 | SNAICC NEWS



health and family support programs.

Despite the Australian Government's decision, SNAICC will continue to campaign for long-term sustainable funding for the centres and keep up pressure on Canberra on the issue.

In the short term, SNAICC will continue to assist the 38 ACFCs in their dealings with state and territory governments to secure funding to enable them to continue to deliver crucial services to our children and families.

In the most recent developments on the future of ACFCs beyond June 2014:

- The Queensland Government has agreed to fund ACFCs for 12 months; and WA and Tasmanian governments have agreed to fund the ACFCs in their respective states until 31 December 2014.
- New South Wales ACFCs have sent a petition (also signed by SNAICC) to the state Minister for Family and Community Services, Gabrielle Upton, calling for an urgent decision on the issue. There are unconfirmed reports that the NSW Government will offer a two-year funding agreement to ACFCs.
- In Victoria, the Thomastown ACFC, SNAICC and Whittlesea Council have written to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell, seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the situation. A meeting is scheduled for 30 May 2014.

The CEO of BubupWilam for Early Learning Aboriginal Child and Family Centre at Thomastown, Lisa Thorpe, said her centre had had a major impact on children, families and the local Aboriginal community since its opening in February 2012.

Three years ago there was only one (Aboriginal) child in the local primary school next door. Now they have 20. That's us just being here and families are starting to engage with us, feel safe with the education system and start sending their children. The secondary school is starting to grow with the Aboriginal population as well," Lisa told *New Matilda* magazine.

We are doing what we do with education, but the spin offs in the community are huge.

Lisa said BubupWilam's successes had been acknowledged, which had made its uncertain funding future even more frustrating.

Nita Roberts, Centre Manager of the Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre on the NSW north coast said the lack of commitment by both levels of government was "threatening our organisation's obligation to the local Aboriginal Community."

We are now in the process of laying off staff and looking at winding down our

childcare centre which has over 79 children attending. This means that children settled in over the passed four months will be disadvantaged in their early learning, education, health and wellbeing...

Once again our Aboriginal Community is facing broken promises in regards to their children's education, health and well-being and assistance to supporting their parents.

***Update on Aboriginal Child and Family Centres.*<sup>38</sup>**

The Australian Government's decision not to fund the 38 new Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) beyond June 2014 is devastating news — and seriously undermines the Government's efforts under Closing the Gap, particularly its new target to improve school attendance of Indigenous children. ACFCs across Australia — some of which have only recently opened — have been left to deal with their respective state and territory governments to seek urgent funding to continue operating.

Recent developments at the state level include:

- The Tasmanian and WA governments have agreed to fund the ACFCs in their respective states until December 2014; and the Queensland Government will fund ACFCs until 30 June 2015.
- The New South Wales government looks likely to make a 1-2 year commitment to services, however, this will only cover approximately half of services' current operating budgets. This is certain to have significant impacts on the number of staff employed, child enrolments and programs offered.
- In Victoria, the Thomastown ACFC, SNAICC and Whittlesea Council met with ministerial staff on 30 May 2014. As yet no solution has been determined for the two Victorian services, although the Department of Education are working with the ACFCs to investigate possible funding models post June 30.

In the short term, SNAICC will continue to assist ACFCs in their dealings with state and territory governments to secure funding so that they can continue to deliver crucial services to children and families. And despite the Australian Government's decision, SNAICC will continue to campaign for long-term sustainable funding for centres and keep up pressure on Canberra on the issue.

For more information, see the SNAICC policy pages.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>[www.snaicc.org.au/e-news/snaicc-e-bulletin/186-2014-06-10.html](http://www.snaicc.org.au/e-news/snaicc-e-bulletin/186-2014-06-10.html)

<sup>39</sup><http://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-advocacy/dsp-landing-policyarea.cfm?loadref=43&txnid=36&txnctype=post&txncstype=>

**E. Media Release - Proposed changes to Budget Based Funded program will have negative impact on our children and families.<sup>40</sup>**

**Statement by Geraldine Atkinson, SNAICC Deputy Chairperson (Early Childhood) 13 June 2014**

SNAICC is extremely concerned that recommendations in the review of the Budget Based Funded (BBF) program have the potential to drastically change the program's focus and have a detrimental impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The BBF program funds some 270 Aboriginal early childhood services, which provide an array of services beyond child care — including nutrition, transport, family support, health and early intervention programs.

SNAICC identifies particular concerns across the following areas of the BBF review:

***Service sustainability and the transition to Child Care Benefit<sup>41</sup>***

SNAICC is highly concerned about the emphasis placed on BBF services eventually becoming self-sustaining. While SNAICC believes BBF services should be supported to seek additional funding, this recommendation ignores the reality that many of these services operate in disadvantaged communities where a mainstream, self-sustaining child care model, that relies on the community paying, is not feasible. The review appears to contradict its own recommendation when it identifies that these services are usually located in communities where the market is unable to support the viable operation of the service.

Linked to this, SNAICC is extremely concerned with the recommendation that some BBF services be transitioned to Child Care Benefit (CCB) funding. While there are limitations in the current BBF model, simply shifting services to the mainstream childcare funding model is clearly not the answer.

Many services and sector experts have reinforced to SNAICC compelling reasons why the model would be incompatible for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services. Likely impacts include:

- Decline in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children participation due to raised costs and heightened administrative requirements;
- Limited support for children with additional needs; and
- Increased need for services to admit high, fee-paying enrolments, rather than focusing on children most in need.

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<sup>40</sup>[http://www.snaicc.org.au/\\_uploads/rsfil/03310.pdf](http://www.snaicc.org.au/_uploads/rsfil/03310.pdf)

<sup>41</sup>ibid

***Requirement to charge fees<sup>42</sup>***

Key to BBF services' ability to deliver culturally-centred care to some of Australia's most vulnerable communities is that they generally charge little or no fee, recognising that this is critical to enable access for their families. However, among the review's eight recommendations are that a service fee requirement be introduced.

SNAICC is highly concerned that charging fees will limit participation of the most disadvantaged families and children. Many BBF services do currently charge fees. Those that don't, do this for a reason —namely that they understand that charging a fee would limit participation in vital early childhood and family support programs.

SNAICC does, however, support the recommendation that where services do choose to charge fees, the amount be set by the service based on the profile of the community and the families who attend the service.

***Refocusing of program objectives<sup>43</sup>***

SNAICC is concerned that the review does not include a focus on urban centres in addition to regional and remote services. Evidence clearly indicates that there are still disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations within urban centres. We maintain that there is a strong need for culturally appropriate, integrated and affordable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services within urban, regional and remote areas.

We are also highly concerned that the review recommends a shift of the program objective to be limited to child care and early learning services — this change ignores the need for multifunctional and integrated early years and family support services, such as the Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) model.

We also dispute the assumption that the existence of the National Quality Framework negates the need for culturally competent services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This need still exists, regardless of the existence of the NQF. The review has ignored the unique strengths of community-controlled services in family and community engagement, passing on culture, and supporting positive cultural identity for young children. It has also ignored the contribution of these services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development and employment.

SNAICC does however support the emphasis on embedding quality and continuous improvement practices within BBF services, and agrees that

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<sup>42</sup>ibid

<sup>43</sup>ibid

measures need to be taken to “reduce administrative burden and improve the effectiveness of administrative obligations to benefit services and departmental management.”

In conclusion, SNAICC strongly believes that any reform of the BBF program must respond to and seek to address the persistently low educational, health and wellbeing outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Any changes to the current non-mainstream early childhood education and care model must ensure that they advance rather than undermine these outcomes.

### **2.3.2 Health**

(See also previous article in this issue)

#### **A. NACCHO**

**The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) has welcomed continued funding for the 150 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services around Australia announced/confirmed in Budget 2014.**

Justin Mohamed, Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, said the Aboriginal population is growing and demand for services is increasing at more than 6% per year. “The 2014 Budget funding means we can continue to provide high quality, culturally appropriate health care to our people for another year,” Mr Mohamed said today. “However, we also need long-term planning and budget resources to build on recent health gains and create lasting improvements to the health of Aboriginal people.

There is great risk that the introduction of a \$7 co-payment for doctor’s visits will create new barriers to healthcare for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, including additional red tape for Community Controlled Health Organisations. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are low income earners and suffer the highest level of chronic disease, requiring regular GP visits. State and territories have also been given the green light to charge for hospital emergency visits, creating a dangerous situation where people may not present for serious medical treatment for fear of the cost. We will get the most benefit from policy that encourages Aboriginal people to seek medical attention and seek it early, not make it even harder for them to get the care they need.

It is also vital that the Federal Government guarantees the \$80-90 million cut across Aboriginal Health does not impact on-ground services and Aboriginal health outcomes. Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations have a proven track record in providing a range of quality employment and education opportunities for Aboriginal people and boosting local economies. Given cuts to Aboriginal health and employment budgets they are even more valuable – providing employment and training opportunities to our people which in turn boost local economies and tackle some of the huge barriers to Aboriginal people achieving economic independence and

quality of life. Healthy communities keep our kids in school, keep our adults in the workforce and allow great opportunities for Aboriginal contributions to the economy and broader community, Mr Mohamed said.<sup>44</sup>

## **B. Close the Gap Campaign.<sup>45</sup>**

The Close the Gap Campaign welcomes the Federal Government announcement that it will develop a strategy to implement the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan by the end of this year.

Close the Gap Campaign Co-Chair, Kirstie Parker, described the Health Plan as ‘a bold initiative’, which followed comprehensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their representative organisations.

The plan envisages an Australian health system free of racism and inequality. It sets a precedent for public policy by investing in accessible health care systems that are culturally safe, effective, high quality and affordable,” said Ms Parker, who also Co-Chairs the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples.

The Health Plan recognises the central importance of culture to health and wellbeing. Critical social determinants of health such as education, employment and housing are acknowledged as key drivers of health outcomes.

Health is holistic and interrelated to the social determinants. We know, for example, that the health sector is the largest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Health Plan could enhance this positive outcome by supporting a strategy that improves health and employment outcomes.<sup>46</sup>

Close the Gap Campaign Co-Chair and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda, said the Health Plan articulates priorities to close the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy gap by 2030.

Commissioner Gooda said an effective implementation plan is the essential next step.

The Health Plan contains a commitment that implementation will include measurable benchmarks and targets. We need to set targets so that we can measure progress. Just as the Health Plan was developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their representative organisations, it is important we implement this plan in partnership, he said.<sup>47</sup>

Commissioner Gooda said the Close the Gap Campaign remains concerned about some of the 2014 Budget measures, including the impact of the GP co-payments.

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/stories/indigenous-health-plan-secures-government-support>

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*

However, a Budget proposal to develop a new funding methodology for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health offers an opportunity.

The Health Plan and the proposed funding methodology should align. We need to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input in this process, said Mr Gooda.<sup>48</sup>

The Close the Gap Campaign is Australia's largest public movement for health equality. It is a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health and human rights organisations.

### **C. Indigenous health leaders say co-payments must be scrapped, as new #noGPtaxcampaign launched – Crikey.<sup>49</sup>**

In growing opposition to Federal Budget health measures, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders** met in Canberra today for crisis talks about the implications of last week's Federal Budget and have called for proposed GP and other co-payments to be scrapped, saying they risk widening the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous health. See their statement below.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda today also wrote** about his concerns about the Budget, saying changes to benefits for young unemployed people could have a devastating effect on young Indigenous people and that GP co-payments are "another cause of great anxiety". See his article for *The Drum*.<sup>50</sup>

Health Minister Peter Dutton later released a statement in response to concerns about Indigenous health, saying

Given the amount of money being administered by Indigenous health services I am keen to get a better understanding of the concerns being raised and of how the funding is being translated into front-line support.

It is important to be clear as to why organisations believe they would not be able to provide services for those most in need. I will be keen to see the analysis of where the funding is being spent.<sup>51</sup>

In another move, a campaign is being led by **Professor Fran Baum**, professor of public health from Flinders University and PhD student **Clare Phillips**, against both the GP co-payments and the use of those payments to largely fund

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<sup>48</sup>ibid.

<sup>49</sup><http://blogs.crikey.com.au/croakey/2014/05/20/indigenous-health-leaders-say-co-payments-must-be-scrapped-as-new-nogptax-campaign-launched/>

<sup>50</sup><http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-20/gooda-this-budget-could-devastate-indigenous-australians/5462748>

<sup>51</sup><http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2014-dutton037.htm>

a new \$20 billion medical research fund. The campaign – titled No GP Tax in our name! – says:

Medical and public health researchers who work day in and day out to cure disease and keep us healthy should not be used as an excuse to undermine Medicare and penalise the poor. And researchers should not have to face the prospect that their funding may come at the cost of reducing services to those.<sup>52</sup>

**Aboriginal health leaders wrote:**<sup>53</sup>

The Aboriginal community sector will not agree to turn our backs on the most disadvantaged and disempowered.

A coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations calls on the Australian Government to recognise that a co-payment is against the principles of health equity outlined in the *Statement of Intent to Close the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes*.

The suggested co-payments run counter to the findings of the World Health Organisation’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. Australia’s health policies and funding should reflect those findings.

Introducing co-payments will not serve to close the gap in health outcomes; it will only widen the gap between our people and the rest of the community.

We reject the introduction of co-payments because they will increase inequality.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people already experience considerable health disadvantage
- for every dollar spent on non-Indigenous Australians now, only 60 cents is spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- international evidence confirms the most efficient way to contain health care costs is a robust universal primary health care system
- the sustainability of Australia’s robust not for profit health sector, which currently supports the most vulnerable in our community, is threatened by this move.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Aboriginal Medical Services:

- are the regular source of care for persons without social capital
- are an embodiment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination
- represent a sound investment in not only health outcomes, but economic participation, employment and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

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<sup>52</sup><http://blogs.crikey.com.au/croakey/2014/05/20/indigenous-health-leaders-say-co-payments-must-be-scraped-as-new-nogptax-campaign-launched/>

<sup>53</sup>ibid.



Islander people; the health industry is the single largest employer of Indigenous Australians.

We are calling for an immediate scrapping of the MBS and PBS co-payments scheme.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health sector will not agree to turn our backs on the needy, disadvantaged and desperate.

We welcome the opportunity to have further constructive conversations with government. We call on our partners, colleagues and all concerned Australians to stand with us at this critical time, concluded Ms Tongs.<sup>54</sup>

#### **D. Language programs: ‘Muting Indigenous language support only widens the gap’<sup>55</sup> - *By Rachel Nordlinger and Ruth Singer***

Indigenous languages are under attack yet again. The federal budget, released on May 13, includes a substantial reduction of A\$9.5 million over four years<sup>56</sup> for the Indigenous Languages Support Programme (ILS)<sup>57</sup>, which will now be funded at A\$11.1 million a year. The ILS assists language-related initiatives across Australia and provides important employment opportunities for Indigenous communities.

The Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory,<sup>58</sup> released the day after the budget, also has as one of its principle recommendations that the primary school curriculum be delivered (only) in English.

That’s despite the many submissions to the review process arguing for the benefits of bilingual education for children whose first language is not English. Research shows clearly that bilingual education, which combines a first language and English, is the best way to teach Indigenous children how to be

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<sup>54</sup> The statement is signed by:

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), Lowitja Institute, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA), Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA), National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) and Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia. Institute, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation(NACCHO), Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA), Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA), National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) and Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia. The Public Health Association of Australia also attended.

<sup>55</sup><http://theconversation.com/muting-indigenous-language-support-only-widens-the-gap-27105>

<sup>56</sup> [http://www.budget.gov.au/2014-15/content/bp2/html/bp2\\_expense-05.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2014-15/content/bp2/html/bp2_expense-05.htm)

<sup>57</sup> <http://arts.gov.au/indigenous/ils>

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.education.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/37294/A-Share-in-the-Future-The-Review-of-Indigenous-Education-in-the-Northern-Territory.pdf](http://www.education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/37294/A-Share-in-the-Future-The-Review-of-Indigenous-Education-in-the-Northern-Territory.pdf)

literate and competent in English – a view also held by indigenous educators.<sup>59</sup>

The most recent blows for Indigenous languages come despite the fact that an enormous body of evidence, as outlined below, highlights the importance of Indigenous languages for the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people.

The 2012 federal government inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities produced the *Our Land, Our Languages* report,<sup>60</sup> which has as its first recommendation that:

... the Commonwealth government include in the Closing the Gap framework acknowledgement of the fundamental role and importance of Indigenous languages in preserving heritage and improving outcomes for Indigenous people.

This is supported by recent studies showing that Indigenous youth who speak an Indigenous language have substantially better physical and emotional wellbeing,<sup>61</sup> engage far less in risky drug and alcohol use,<sup>62</sup> and have lower rates of suicide.<sup>63</sup>

But if Indigenous languages are so central to improving outcomes for Indigenous people, and can have such significant impacts on health and wellbeing, why are they not supported by government and educational policy?

The answer lies in the monolingual mindset<sup>64</sup> that grips much of mainstream Australia (and, indeed, most of the English-speaking world). This mindset sees monolingualism, in English, as the norm and the ideal.

Comments along these lines are easy to find on any website that talks about Indigenous or minority languages, including the following two, prompted by an excellent *buzzfeed* post about languages in Australia:<sup>65</sup>

I personally think the world should try to blend eventually to a single language. Wouldn't everything be so much easier? It makes perfect sense for all of us worldwide to speak together ... I don't understand why people are so against the idea. (Tommy Holland, 18/2/2014).

Also:

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<sup>59</sup><http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-12/indigenous-educator-calls-for-bilingual-programs/5448206>

<sup>60</sup><http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au-house-committee--atsia-languages2-report-full-report.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> <https://researchers.anu.edu.au/publications/72986>

<sup>62</sup><http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbytitle/B17FA314CB42BC6CCA257A060023413D%3FOpenDocument>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S088520140700010X>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/SS/article/view/4651>

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.buzzfeed.com/simoncrerar/this-real-australian-language-map-will-blow-you-away>

I don't find it inherently bad that most people can communicate in English in Australia. Speaking a common language promotes mutual understanding and harmony. (Sage Stone, 18/2/2014)

What this common view misses is that people can communicate in the same language without it being their only language. Speaking multiple languages is a common human condition, and one that the human brain is very well-equipped to handle. Across the world, speaking multiple languages is the norm.

Monolingual English speakers (such as many of us in Australia) are in the overwhelming minority: there are now significantly more people<sup>66</sup> who speak English as a second, third or fourth language, than as a first (and only) language.

The misplaced monolingual bias of mainstream Australia drives a devaluing of Indigenous languages in public policy. It assumes Indigenous people need to make a choice between speaking an Indigenous language and engaging with mainstream Australia.

Speaking an Indigenous language is seen as a deficit; a problem to be fixed, and an impediment to interacting with English-speaking Australians. This then leads policy makers to attribute failings in the education of Indigenous children to the languages they speak, or to treat language-related programs as expendable despite the well-established benefits to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people.

Putting Indigenous Australians in this position threatens their cultural safety,<sup>67</sup> challenges their sense of identity and belonging, and reinforces a feeling of isolation from mainstream Australian society and culture.

The best way to ensure that speakers of Indigenous languages have the opportunity to participate in mainstream Australia is to support their traditional languages.

English for Indigenous Australians needs to be seen as an addition rather than a replacement. Indigenous Australians don't need to make a choice between speaking their own languages and engaging with mainstream Australian society: it is possible for them – as with anyone – to do both.

Children who grow up speaking an Indigenous language are more likely to learn English and English literacy in a bilingual educational program than an English-only program. Supporting Indigenous communities to continue to speak their own languages, while also providing opportunities to learn English as an additional language, will ultimately lead to more equitable outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-faq-the-english-language.htm>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.naccho.org.au/promote-health/cultural-safety/>

The first step is to change the monolingual mindset of policy makers and the Australian community. Only then will we be able to truly close the gap.<sup>68</sup>

### **2.3.3 National Security and Community Safety**

#### **A. Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT 14 May 14:<sup>69</sup>**

The 2014 Federal Budget was delivered to the Australian public this week. ... Aboriginal Legal Services and three other federally funded legal services were already cut by \$43.1 million over four years when the mid-year Budget was announced in December 2013. That translated to a cut of \$13.4 million over four years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services around the country, or locally, a 4.5% cut to our ALS budget. Following the December 2013 announcement, ALS began making some adjustments to absorb the cuts ...

#### **B. Indigenous Prisoner Program Cut - Tuesday, June 17, 2014 - 09:30<sup>70</sup>**

The Aboriginal Legal Services (NSW/ACT) is the latest community service organisation to lose Federal Government funding for one of its frontline programs.

According to ALS (NSW/ACT), the Federal Government has cut funding after June 30 to its Prisoner ThroughCare program, a frontline service it says assists Aboriginal men, women and children leaving jail integrate back into daily life.

The announcement follows cuts to many community organisations including the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples,<sup>71</sup> Refugee Council of Australia,<sup>72</sup> Australian Youth Affairs Coalition<sup>73</sup> and youth employment program Youth Connections.<sup>74</sup>

ALS (NSW/ACT) said the Prisoner ThroughCare program was a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and was in its eighth year of operation.

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<sup>68</sup><http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/programs-services/closing-the-gap>

<sup>69</sup>[http://www.alsnswact.org.au/news\\_items/110](http://www.alsnswact.org.au/news_items/110)

<sup>70</sup><http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2014/06/indigenous-prisoner-program-cut>

<sup>71</sup><http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2014/06/new-indigenous-fund-tackle-budget-cuts>

<sup>72</sup><http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2014/05/morrison%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98vindictive%E2%80%99-cut-refugee-advocacy-rcoa>

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2014/05/australian-youth-affairs-coalition-defunded>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2014/04/youth-employment-program-chopping-block>

The organisation said it employed one administration officer and five case workers, who through a case management approach assisted pre and post release prisoners in NSW and ACT to get out of jail, and stay out.

Phil Naden, CEO of ALS (NSW/ACT), said the new cuts had come as a shock.

Six months ago the Australian government brutally stripped our budget by 4.5 per cent over four years, and now we're facing even more cuts, this time with a program that is solely, purely 'frontline'," Naden said.

We have heard so many public statements by government, in the lead up to and after the 2014 Budget, that no frontline services in Indigenous Affairs would be cut."

Our Prisoner ThroughCare field staff are engaged in vitally important work on the frontline to assist people leaving prison avoid further recidivism, and these public statements do not reflect what our Prisoner ThroughCare staff were accomplishing.

Naden said he had contacted the funding body, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to express his disappointment.

Although only \$500,000 per annum to run, we have little expectation the Government will reverse their decision, he said.

We are already preparing to absorb a big funding cut to our operations, announced in the Government's mid-year budget in December 2013.

Cost-saving measures are one thing, but a direct hit to frontline services - losing the whole Prisoner ThroughCare unit - well that's just disappointing.

We carry great sadness for the departing staff of our Prisoner ThroughCare Unit.

And for the Aboriginal people who were benefiting from using this service, we're truly sorry, and we can only hope the government will see the light once again, and fund this necessary service for our most vulnerable citizens.

## **2.4 Commentary on the Consequences: Abbott's Back To The Future Policy For Aboriginal Advancement - by Jon Altman.<sup>75</sup>**

**The more things change, the more they stay the same. Professor Jon Altman weighs in on the latest worrying policy development from the Abbott Government.**

The 2014–15 Federal Budget is a horror budget for Indigenous Australians because many Indigenous people are especially vulnerable residing in communities that are neglected, still facing many barriers of racial discrimination and exclusion, and living in deep poverty.

There has been much public debate about the likely negative impact on vulnerable Australians of social and welfare policy measures embedded in the Budget that will see increasing inequality.

But there has been little recognition of just how much worse this will be for Indigenous people because of over-representation among the vulnerable.

If proposed measures pass Senate scrutiny and are implemented, many Indigenous people will inevitably be condemned to live in deeper poverty and their children and grandchildren will face bleaker futures as a neglected Indigenous underclass.

Embedded in the Abbott government's first budget are some chilling echoes of the confrontationist approach of John Howard with the 1996 National Commission of Audit (an instrument replicating Margaret Thatcher's UK Audit of 1983) which was followed by unjustified cuts of \$460 million to the ATSIC budget and gave rise to a hostile political relationship that endured until ATSIC was abolished in 2005.

Also buried in the 2014–15 Budget papers are indications of a fundamental shift in policy that has received little public attention in part because it is concealed deep within the Budget Statement for the Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio as Outcome 2: Indigenous and summarised in just two pages (35 and 36).

Some of this change has been foreshadowed in new administrative arrangements announced in September 2013 that saw radically altered departmental responsibility for Indigenous affairs with most Indigenous specific programs centralised in the Prime Minister's Department and overseen by the self-proclaimed Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs. Counter to the rhetoric, however, many programs still remain with mainline agencies including Attorney-General's, Education, Employment, Health, Human

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<sup>75</sup><https://newmatilda.com/2014/06/17/abbotts-back-future-policy-aboriginal-advancement>

Services and Social Services.

Most focus to date has been on the 150 programs transferred to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet as the agency taking primary responsibility for Indigenous affairs.

Following the Budget these have been streamlined into five broad areas that reflect the priorities of the government: ensuring children go to school; adults work; Indigenous business is fostered; the ordinary law of the land is observed; and Indigenous culture is supported.

Note that these are quite explicitly identified as the priorities of the government, not of the intended beneficiaries of programs.

The five areas are Jobs, Land and Economy; Children and Schooling; Safety and Wellbeing; Culture and Capability; and Remote Australia Strategies.

Each area highlights that it will focus ‘particularly on remote communities’, which suggests that the Remote Australia Strategies might be redundant. They are bundled together under the broad rubric Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

The Prime Minister’s Indigenous Advisory Council optimistically anticipates in its Budget 2014–15 Communiqué<sup>76</sup> that the \$534 million cut in Australian Government Indigenous Expenditure will be absorbed by reducing the costs of administration.

At the level of political rhetoric this all looks quite rational. This is precisely why some critical analysis is required.

To begin, the broad framework of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy appears to replace the ubiquitous COAG Closing the Gap<sup>77</sup> framework based on cooperative, even collaborative federalism and a series of National Partnership Agreements. The terminology of advancement resonates with post-Enlightenment, evolutionary and colonial implications: advancement to what: Assimilation? Sameness?

As Amerindian scholar Vine Deloria Jnr warned long ago in *Custer Died for our Sins* (1969) equality must not be confused or conflated with sameness; ‘civil rights’, he noted, ‘is a function of man’s desire for self-respect not for equality’.

The discourse around this advancement strategy indicates an ideological and moral crusade by the Abbott government to ‘develop’ and ‘advance’ the

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<sup>76</sup>[https://www.dpnc.gov.au/indigenous\\_affairs/indigenous\\_advisory\\_council/communique/communique\\_14052014.cfm](https://www.dpnc.gov.au/indigenous_affairs/indigenous_advisory_council/communique/communique_14052014.cfm)

<sup>77</sup> [https://www.coag.gov.au/closing\\_the\\_gap\\_in\\_indigenous\\_disadvantage](https://www.coag.gov.au/closing_the_gap_in_indigenous_disadvantage)

Indigenous people of remote Australia.

This is fundamentally a retrograde shift of policy to the conservative comfort zone, targeting the 20 per cent of the Indigenous population who live in remote communities, highly visible and easy to target, discursively at least.

And these are the people perceived in most need of transformational advancement and norms reshaping on a number of grounds.

So-called discrete Indigenous communities are almost invariably located on or adjacent to Indigenous land, claimed under land rights and native title laws because of proven continuity of custom and connection to country.

These are the people who have norms and values that are most strongly connected to kin, community and country. They are perceived as the last bastion of alterity and cultural difference, that openly challenges the conservative neoliberal vision to transform all Australians into highly individualistic and materially acquisitive neoliberal subjects.

Delving into the specifics of the new approach raises a number of important questions about its coherence and consistency of which the policy architects may not even be aware. So let me raise a few.

On jobs, land and economy, what exactly are the jobs and commercially viable businesses anticipated? And why is it that Indigenous people should be able to garner economic benefit from land that was only available for claim because of its limited commercial value? Where is the focus on local competitive advantage and alternate forms of economy?

On school attendance, will attendance particularly in remote communities, improve education outcomes and provide a pathway to jobs and the good life where people live? The emphasis on attendance begs too many questions on appropriate curricula, forms of pedagogy, bilingual education and learning on country for a future on country.

On applying 'the ordinary law of the land', particularly in remote communities, what room is there for applying competing customary laws with local legitimacy? What are the risks that enhanced policing will merely enhance interaction with the criminal justice system or unproductive policing practices like the ordinary law of vehicle registration?

On supporting Indigenous Australians to maintain their culture, is this limited to the high culture or is it inclusive of everyday culture, including participation in religious and mortuary ceremonies?

And while strategic investments focused on flexible local solutions under



remote Australia strategies sounds admirable, what happens if there is a mismatch between Government and community priorities?

Some early answers to these difficult questions have been provided by Nyunggai Warren Mundine, the Abbott government's principal adviser, a black spokesman recruited to help formulate and then justify the government's crude campaign of advancement. He gets numerous 'exclusives' in the mainstream media and more air-time to promote the government's approach than the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs.

In a headland speech 'Improving employment outcomes in remote Australia' delivered in Darwin a week after the budget, Mundine inadvertently illustrated some of the flaws and conflicts in the new approach. One assumes that the government concurred with his views as their anointed and remunerated Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Council.

Mundine suggests that remoteness is not a barrier to employment in remote Indigenous communities. He wants to see communities opened up to the free market and land tenure privatised and yet simultaneously wants to see local jobs reserved for local people who after following realistic plans and pathways he imagines will eventually replace all outsiders, turning communities into Indigenous-only places.

Such pathways will need Indigenous people to modify their unacceptable contemporary cultural practices such as participating in prolonged mourning rituals for the numerous deceased so as to better meet competitive labour market requirements. And local customary practices of sharing with kin will need to be curtailed.

So much for supporting the maintenance of culture.

Finally, Mundine suggests the aims of all organisations will need to be redefined to ensure delivery of outcomes in jobs, education and making communities safer as prioritised by government, or else be defunded. This makes a mockery of community priority setting and seriously risks destroying many successful Indigenous organisations.

Such hyperbole and inconsistency in Mundine's views could be readily dismissed except that they match the new framework.

At the national level the Abbott Government approach signals a return to the bygone notion of practical reconciliation: advancement focuses on absolute rather than relative wellbeing.

One suspects that the difficult policy of Closing the Gap is being abandoned and replaced by a focus on absolute improvement, a task that is tolerant of

growing inequality even if it succeeds.

However, as the just-released COAG Reform Council's report on Indigenous reform and performance<sup>78</sup> shows Indigenous people everywhere are deeply disadvantaged and massive gaps in socioeconomic outcomes remain.

There is no evidence whatsoever that Indigenous people living in non-remote Australia - 80 per cent of the Indigenous population - gain equitable access to mainstream services.

Ultimately the 'new' crusade promoted by the Abbott government seeks to promote the advancement of Indigenous peoples to assimilation or disappearance. It is as blunt and brutal an approach as the 1960s policy of assimilation.

What is especially insidious about this new crusade is that the government is dismantling institutions like the COAG Reform Council<sup>79</sup> and defunding the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples<sup>80</sup> that might respectively provide independent assessment of its performance or assess its political legitimacy according to global human rights standards.

Instead the diabolical mess of current policy will be monitored and evaluated from within government.

The German philosopher GWF Hegel is the attributed source of the adage 'History shows that we never learn from history'.

Evidently, this applies to the newest Australian government experimental project of improvement that replicates past failures based on assimilationist imposition rather than self-determining negotiation.

*Jon Altman is a professor in economics/anthropology at the Australian National University, Canberra. A version of this article appeared in the June 2014 final print edition of Tracker magazine.*

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<sup>78</sup>[https://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/Indigenous Reform 2012-13 Five years of performance 30 April 2014.pdf](https://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/Indigenous%20Reform%202012-13%20Five%20years%20of%20performance%2030%20April%202014.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/media/releases/2014-05-13>

<sup>80</sup> <http://nationalcongress.com.au/taking-the-foot-off-the-pedal-will-endanger-efforts-to-close-the-gap/>

## GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editor/s encourages contributions in the form of articles, reports, commentaries, viewpoints, book reviews and poetry for both the *Journal of Indigenous Policy* and *Ngiya: Talk the Law*. All enquiries regarding contributions should be directed to:

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### Submission Process

1. Contributions can be sent to: [jumbunna.journals@uts.edu.au](mailto:jumbunna.journals@uts.edu.au) and should include postal and phone details; and
2. All articles are assessed for suitability for publication by the editor/s. Articles for *Ngiya: Talk the Law* are evaluated by two academic referees with expertise in the relevant field. Feedback on suitability for publication and any suggested revisions will be provided to authors for consideration. Note that we generally do not accept contributions that have been published in other publications.

### When preparing contributions please note the following:

1. Contributors should additionally submit an abstract of approximately 150 words as well as brief biographical details of the author(s)
2. **Articles** should be between 4 000 and 10 000 words in length. **Book Reviews** should be no more than 3 000 words. Under certain circumstances the editors will accept longer articles
3. The accuracy of quotes, titles, names, dates, footnotes and citations are the responsibility of the author.

### Style Guide

1. Contributions are to be submitted in Word for Windows 6.0 or 7.0
2. **Citations** – refer to the Australian Guide to Legal Citation (Third Edition) by *Melbourne University Law Review* and the *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 2010  
<<http://mulr.law.unincome.managementelb.edu.au/go/aglc>>.

3. **Font** – please provide articles in Times New (W1); headings should be in 15 point; text should be in 13 point; footnotes and quotes should be in 11 point. If different levels of headings are used, they should be consistently formatted: main heading - 15 point bold, upper case; first sub-heading – 13 point bold, title case; second sub-heading – 13 point italics, title case.
4. **Page setup** – top, 2.54cm; bottom, 2.54 cm; left, 3.17 cm; right, 3.17 cm; gutter, 0 cm; header, 1.25 cm; footer, 1.25 cm
5. **Formatting** – single spaced; justified with a line space between each paragraph.