

INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

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Date received: 11/09/2008

NSW GOVERNMENT SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO THE SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE September 2008

The NSW Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Social Issues Committee's Interim Report on the Inquiry into Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage. This supplementary submission addresses the final chapter of the report titled 'Issues for consideration', and aims to provide further information in relation to issues identified by the Committee. Attached at the conclusion of this submission are corrections to some factual errors that have been highlighted by individual departments to bring to the attention of the Committee.

The NSW Government supplementary submission follows the form taken in Chapter 10 'Issues for Consideration', addressing the issues raised by the Committee in the sequence followed in that chapter.

1. MEASURING OUTCOMES

Issue 2, p 54 – The need for greater clarity in who has the overall leadership and responsibility for defining the performance indicators and delivering priorities under the New South Wales State Plan and Two Ways Together Plan, and how this leadership is translated into meaningful, measurable outcomes that are accepted by the Indigenous community, will be further considered in the Final Report.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) is the lead agency for Priority F1, the overarching priority to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people under the NSW State Plan.

The principal strategy for implementing this priority is *Two Ways Together*, the Government's ten year whole of government Aboriginal Affairs Plan, which is led by DAA. *Two Ways Together* identifies seven priority areas for action to address Aboriginal disadvantage: health, education, economic development, justice, families and young people, culture and heritage, and housing and infrastructure. The Government reports publicly against indicators covering these seven priority areas.

On 22 April 2008, the second *Two Ways Together* Report on Indicators was launched at Parliament House by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The report captures baseline and trend data on the outcomes gap between Aboriginal people and the general population in New South Wales against agreed indicators which align with the Productivity Commission's *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* reporting framework. The report includes information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics as well as numerous NSW Government agencies.

In addition to indicator reports on *Two Ways Together*, the Government also reports regularly under the State Plan. These reports include a smaller number of indicators measuring progress against F1, and also indicators measuring progress against a range of other the State Plan priorities of direct relevance to Aboriginal people. A further report under the State Plan will be released later in 2008.

For *Two Ways Together*, and for F1 as a whole, DAA exercises leadership through the Two Ways Together Coordinating Committee, which is accountable to the Chief Executives Committee. This leadership is demonstrated in the schematic representation of decision making structures for

Aboriginal Affairs in NSW previously provided to the Committee by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, but also attached here for reference.

As the chair of the Two Ways Together Coordinating Committee, DAA oversees the implementation of *Two Ways Together* strategies, and also ensures a consistent approach to monitoring outcomes and outputs of other relevant programs and reform initiatives, including the State Plan, Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault, and the COAG Indigenous Reform work.

DAA received funding in the 2008/09 State Budget to establish a small monitoring and evaluation unit (2 positions). This unit has an initial focus on the Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault, but is also assisting DAA more broadly in its role of leading the consistent and comprehensive reporting of outcomes for Aboriginal people.

In developing the above arrangements, the NSW Government has worked closely with the Aboriginal community to ensure that indicators are meaningful and accepted by Aboriginal people. In particular, the seven priority areas under *Two Ways Together* were negotiated with Aboriginal people, and the Two Ways Together Coordinating Committee includes Aboriginal representatives.

The Government has also put in place structures to encourage and support joint efforts with the community to plan and deliver solutions that accord with the priorities of Aboriginal people.

At the regional level, Regional Engagement Groups (REGs) with Aboriginal representatives have been established across NSW. At the local level, under the Building Community Resilience Strategy (an underpinning strategy for *Two Ways Together*) the Government is engaging with communities around priority setting, planning, service delivery and performance monitoring. In particular, local-level implementation of *Two Ways Together* is occurring in 40 partnership communities across NSW under the Partnership Community Program. Through this program, communities will be able to engage with government, as decision makers, around the targeting of service delivery, and the coordination of programs and effort. In partnership with communities, project officers will develop local action plans to guide government service delivery so that it meets local needs. DAA is currently developing guidelines for the program that will inform government engagement with communities, the development of local plans, and monitoring and reporting on those plans.

Issue 12, p 100 – The Committee will examine mechanisms for improving the reporting and accountability processes for community organisations.
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The NSW Government is committed to working with community organisations in order to improve reporting and accountability processes. Individual departments have developed programs and strategies to achieve this. Examples of these programs are as follows.

Department of Community Services

The DoCS Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) was published in 2006, and describes the new DoCS approach to monitoring non-government service providers' performance. Under this Framework, funded services are being monitored for:

- Compliance with the Service Agreement and Specification;
- The extent to which outcomes/outputs are achieved under the Service Specification; and
- Progress in implementing quality improvements.

DoCS is progressively implementing performance based contracting and monitoring in each of its funding programs, accompanied by training and development for funded services. This progressive approach allows DoCS to work more intensively with funded services to familiarise them with the reforms and develop their skill base. To support these reforms, DoCS is also introducing the Community Online Management System (COMS) in late 2008. COMS will significantly improve DoCS capacity in contract management, performance management and accountability reporting.

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care's (DADHC) Integrated Monitoring Framework provides comprehensive monitoring of funded organisations. Measures to improve reporting and accountability processes include, for example, the development of a web based service provider portal to assist communication between the agency and service providers. DADHC plans to develop a similar strategy to better address the specific needs of the Aboriginal community.

Recent DADHC initiatives with Aboriginal service providers include:

- The delivery of a 'good practice' workshop, relating to the Home and Community Care (HACC) Service Standards, to Aboriginal providers through the HACC and Community Care Aboriginal Gathering; and
- In consultation with this Gathering, customising a resource manual to assist voluntary boards of funded organisations. The resource manual – '*It's Your Business*' - is scheduled for delivery in the final quarter of 2008, supplemented by a learning and development strategy to support implementation. The learning and development needs of Aboriginal service providers will be addressed as a specific priority area for this strategy.

Aboriginal Housing Office

The Aboriginal Housing Office has been working to reform the Aboriginal Community Housing sector including improving reporting and accountability (see also under Issue 35, p 15 below). The reforms involve the consolidation of the sector from 230 small organisations mostly managing less than 15 properties to a smaller number of large, professionally-based organisations managing a sizeable number of properties; introduction of skills-based boards; and introduction of measurable improvement processes leading to accreditation. These reforms are helping better align Aboriginal community housing organisations with mainstream community housing nationally and internationally, and with Indigenous community housing in North America.

Department of Health

Also, as outlined under Issue 3 p. 28 below, the NSW Department of Health has, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH), implemented the Service Development and Reporting Framework. The Framework evaluates return on investment and streamlines performance management and reporting requirements for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services which are allocated grants for health service delivery.

Issue 15, p 108 – The Committee will review the methodology used to record the incidence of child sexual assault abuse in Aboriginal communities. The review will consider the existing arrangements used with respect to data collection and examine how it can be refined and improved.

A whole of government approach to tackling Aboriginal child sexual assault is a priority for the NSW Government, and has been demonstrated through the development of the Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault. The NSW Government agrees that data collection on this issue could

be improved, primarily by addressing the prevalence of underreporting child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities. This issue is discussed at Issue 45 below.

With regard to data collection methods, the Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce found that there are a number of issues with the way data is collected by NSW government agencies, including:

- inconsistent recording of Aboriginality;
- use of different key definitions across agencies;
- agencies recording data across different time periods; and
- information being lost because the categories used to collect data are sometimes ambiguous.

Specific actions and key milestones for the Interagency Plan have been developed and agreed to by participating agencies. Under Action 11 of the Interagency Plan, Police, Juvenile Justice and Corrective Services are working together to align data recording practices. Two new information brochures have also been developed to explain to police and Aboriginal people why it is important to disclose their Aboriginality. Under Action 27, Police, DoCS and NSW Health are currently trialling procedures for information sharing amongst Joint Investigative Response Teams, who undertake joint investigation of child protection matters.

Issue 17, p 119 – The Committee believes that the measurement of health priorities and the associated programs should be a key element of the New South Wales Government’s health strategy for Indigenous communities. The Committee will examine the need for more comprehensive measurement of health outcomes for Indigenous people.

Measurement of health priorities and evaluation of associated programs are key elements of the Government’s health strategy for Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal health indicators are an important component of the State Plan and *Two Ways Together*.

Health priorities within the State Plan with particular importance for Aboriginal communities include:

- S2: Improve survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness through improvements in healthcare;
- S3: Improve health through reduced obesity, smoking, illicit drug use and risk drinking;
- F3: Improved outcomes in mental health; and
- F5: Reduced hospital admissions.

In view of these targets elsewhere in the State Plan, Aboriginal health indicators are not reported under F1 itself. However detailed Aboriginal health indicators are reported in the *Two Ways Together* indicator reports. The 2008 report included fifteen health indicators for Aboriginal people, including life expectancy, infant mortality, birth weight, hospital admissions for infectious diseases, otitis media and conductive hearing loss, alcohol and tobacco consumption, child tooth decay, mental health and access to primary care.

The State Health Plan: *Towards 2010* also includes targets regarding Aboriginal health, and NSW has reporting obligations related to the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. NSW is working towards ensuring that data collection and reporting requirements under these various frameworks are consistent.

In recognition of the need for improved data on the effectiveness of interventions designed to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people, NSW Health promotes strategies to ensure that interventions are evaluated and that the results are used to identify and promote evidence-based

approaches to health service design and delivery. NSW Health monitors the quality of Aboriginal data collected and identifies strategies to improve the completeness of reporting on Aboriginality in its morbidity collections.

The current Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform process provides an opportunity to further develop nationally consistent health outcome indicators related to closing the gaps in life expectancy and child mortality. The current NSW work under the State Plan and Two Ways Together, and work at the national level, will together contribute towards the progressive building of more comprehensive measures of health outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW. The NSW Government will continue to take these developments into account.

Issue 38, p 232 – The Committee believes that the lack of Aboriginal specific criminal justice priorities in the New South Wales State Plan needs to be addressed.

Achieving progress on criminal justice priorities for Aboriginal people in the State Plan is a priority for the NSW Government. Under State Plan Priority, F1(a) Safe Families, the Government's principal strategies for reducing the rate of domestic violence against Aboriginal children and families are being implemented, while other justice priorities for Aboriginal people are being implemented under priorities R1 (Reduced rates of crime, particularly violent crime), R2 (Reduced re-offending) and R3 (Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour). All are being monitored under Two Ways Together as a component of the State Plan.

At the time the NSW State Plan was introduced, the structure of Two Ways Together was changed to ensure it aligned with the NSW State Plan. CEOs agreed that the State Plan Priority F1 would focus on areas not targeted in other State Plan Priorities. Given the justice focus of State Plan Priorities R1, R2 and R3, it was agreed that F1 would not include strategies or targets around justice (with the exception of family violence). Furthermore, it was agreed that the Two Ways Together structure would monitor all State Plan priorities of significance to Aboriginal people, i.e. not only those under F1, but a total of 13 Priorities including R1, R2 and R3.

NSW criminal justice agencies such as the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Corrective Services, the NSW Police and the Attorney General's Department are actively working together to better articulate Aboriginal priorities under R1, R2 and R3, as well as in F1.

As indicated above, it is anticipated that State Plan targets will be reviewed in 2009, providing the opportunity to include more Aboriginal specific priorities at that time. The NSW Government would welcome any recommendations by the Committee concerning the inclusion of any specific new targets into the State Plan.

Issue 39, p 235 – The successful implementation of the Aboriginal Justice Plan is being hindered by the lack of clarity surrounding its current status and relevance to the New South Wales State Plan. The Committee will consider further the status of the Aboriginal Justice Plan and its proper implementation.

The Aboriginal Justice Plan (AJP) preceded Two Ways Together but was incorporated into it once Two Ways Together was developed. The cluster of key government agencies and Aboriginal peak bodies responsible for implementing the Aboriginal Justice Plan under Two Ways Together produced a set of headline targets relating to offending, re-offending and imprisonment rates developed in collaboration with the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. The Justice Plan aimed to reduce each indicator by 2.5% per annum from 2006 onwards, with the rate of appearance

in court, re-offending and incarceration of Aboriginal persons to fall by 16 percentage points between 2004 and 2013.

These targets relate closely, but are not identical, to the indicators for State Plan Priorities R1, R2 and R3, in that the State Plan does not yet articulate specific Aboriginal indicators in this area. At present, there is no formal linkage between the State Plan and the AJP. However, as described in relation to Issue 88 above, DPC, DAA and other relevant agencies are currently working on how best to articulate justice strategies and targets for Aboriginal people under the State Plan to inform the next iteration of the State Plan in 2009.

Issue 45, p 268 – The ability to address family violence and child sexual abuse issues is impeded by the high level of underreporting of these incidents by Aboriginal communities. The Committee will examine the reasons behind underreporting of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Consideration will be given to the level of government support for Aboriginal police officers and ACLOs. The Committee will examine the efficacy of early intervention programs targeted at male perpetrators.

The NSW Government has found from a number of inquiries that there is a range of interrelated issues resulting in underreporting of incidences of child sexual assault and family violence in Aboriginal communities. In addition to the normal reluctance felt by many children of any cultural background to disclose sexual abuse, Aboriginal people face extra barriers in making reports of child sexual assault. Reasons for the failure to report Aboriginal child sexual assault include:

- fear of the police response;
- fear that child protection authorities will remove the children;
- fear of racism and shame for the community and the victim;
- fear that jailed perpetrators will be subject to violence or death in custody;
- poor service responses in the past from Government agencies
- fear of reprisals from the perpetrator or relatives in small closed communities; and
- difficulties in communicating with legal staff and dealing with legal processes.¹

Such obstacles have been created as a result of historical fears and mistrust of the child protection and law enforcement systems, and will require a long term, ongoing commitment in order to overcome them. A response to child sexual assault that seeks only to improve services following a disclosure is not likely to be successful in reducing child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities. This cultural/historical context highlights that, until such time as Aboriginal community confidence in the criminal justice and service systems is enhanced, there is a need for “healing” activities (e.g. workshops, counselling etc) which assist individuals and communities to come to grips with the impacts of sexual assault on their lives and to move forward. Should the Committee wish to research this area further, DAA draws its attention to *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence Policy and Practice*² as a useful text.

The NSW Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities recognises these barriers to reporting and includes various measures to address them, in particular under Action 42 (developing options for removing impediments to reporting child sexual assault and family violence, including provision of financial assistance and support for families and carers), and the Ministerial Advisory Panel has identified this as an area for its focus. Action 81 under the Plan aims to develop a suite of culturally appropriate awareness raising programs that will target the causes and address the consequences of abuse, and has included extensive community consultation

¹ Stanley, J, *Child Sexual Abuse in Indigenous Communities*, presentation at Child Sexual Abuse: Justice Response or Alternative Resolution, 1 – 2 May 2003, Adelaide.

² Smallbone S et al, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence Policy and Practice*, William Publishing 2008

and the development of multimedia education packages. Addressing underreporting is a feature of Safe Families, which is outlined in more detail under Issue 14, at page 22 below.

With regard to government support for Aboriginal police officers and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs), the Police Commissioner launched the Aboriginal Strategic Direction in August 2007 to provide specific strategies for the NSW Police Force to address sexual assault. An Aboriginal Family Violence officer has been employed, and is currently developing an Aboriginal Sexual Assault Standard Operating Procedure for Police. The Direction supports the training of ACLOs and their better use in police inductions, mentoring, and training including cultural awareness training.

2. COORDINATED SERVICE DELIVERY

Issue 8, p 92 – The effective provision of essential services including water, sewerage and waste collection in Aboriginal communities that are not serviced by local government will be considered.

The NSW Government's initial submission to the Committee highlighted the successful Aboriginal Communities Development Program, and noted that the Minister for Water Utilities had commissioned a review of the suitability of current and alternative governance arrangements for the provision of town water supply and sewerage services in country NSW, which includes a number of areas with large Aboriginal populations.

The NSW Government recently announced \$6.295 million of capital works over three years to upgrade water and sewerage facilities in 22 Aboriginal communities across the State. Complementing this investment is recurrent funding over a minimum of 25 years for the ongoing monitoring and maintenance of water and sewerage systems in more than 60 discrete Aboriginal communities across NSW. While the NSW Government will provide for the capital works, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council has made a commitment to provide half of the service delivery costs associated with the operation, maintenance and monitoring of water and sewerage systems. This will include water disinfection, improvements to water quality, repairs to centralised sewerage systems and sub-surface irrigation, inspections and maintenance of pump stations and water treatments plants, maintenance and cleaning of sewer pumps and sewer mains, and collection and testing of water. This represents a combined investment of more than \$200 million in today's dollars.

The Government is also making a concerted effort to address waste collection services in Aboriginal communities. The *Aboriginal Lands Clean Up Program* is a partnership between the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) and local government councils that aims to improve the well being of Aboriginal communities and the environment through the removal of illegally dumped materials from Aboriginal owned lands. The implementation of deterrence measures and the building of relationships between stakeholders are other key focuses of the program. This program provides \$50,000 grants to be used in clean up and deterrence activities. DECC is currently working at completing two projects that ran during the 2007/08 financial year and has approved a further four clean up programs to be carried out and completed during 2008/09, involving:

- Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council and Kempsey Shire Council;
- Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council and Wyong Shire Council;
- Mogo Local Aboriginal Land Council and Eurobodalla Shire Council; and
- Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Land Council and Gilgandra Shire Council.

These projects will help the project partners to develop working relationships that will deliver beneficial environmental, cultural and community outcomes, as well as helping the entire community to appreciate the value of the land and its significance in people's lives.

DECC is also developing a new resource to support Aboriginal people in Caring for Country. The resource, entitled *Illegal dumping prevention and clean-up: Handbook for Aboriginal communities – consultation draft*, recommends actions to prevent and clean-up waste that has been illegally dumped on Aboriginal land. It consists of a written handbook accompanied by a 13 minute DVD which summarises the information contained in the handbook, using visual and oral media. Consultation drafts of the handbook and DVD were published in February 2008. Extensive

consultation has now been carried out with Aboriginal communities and DECC anticipates publishing the final version of the handbook and DVD in September 2008.

Issue 11, p 99 - The Committee will consider the need for a co-ordinated approach to identify communities' transport requirements and tailor additional services to meet those needs.

The NSW Government recognises that communities that are isolated geographically require tailored approaches to their transport needs, and it provides a range of community transport options. The purpose of community transport is to meet the needs of specific transport-disadvantaged groups in the community including isolated families, the frail aged, younger people with disabilities, and their carers. Community transport has given many transport-disadvantaged people access to recreation, shopping, medical care, social services and social contact, where conventional public transport systems are not generally considered viable or appropriate.

The NSW Government administers three major community transport programs:

- The Home and Community Care (HACC) transport sub-program – for HACC clients
- NSW Community Transport Program (CTP) – which facilitates more effective use of existing transport services especially for clients facing temporary transport disadvantage, isolation and/or who are younger than the HACC client group; and
- Area Assistance Scheme (AAS) Community Transport 'pick-up' projects – up to two years' funding to develop community transport infrastructure so that an agency can then pick-up responsibility for ongoing funding.

During 2004-2005, some \$27.2 million was allocated to 134 organizations under these three programs. A number of these services directly target Aboriginal people. For example, DADHC currently funds nine HACC transport services auspiced by Aboriginal organisations. In 2007/08 these services received almost \$1 million in funding.

DADHC's planning for new transport services takes into account the special needs groups within the local population, including Aboriginal people. A substantial amount of the services expansion funding for 2007/08 was targeted to transport services for special needs groups. In addition, \$800,909 was allocated to 20 Aboriginal services, including \$30,000 recurrent to the Guriwal Aboriginal Corporation for community transport services.

DADHC and the Ministry of Transport are currently working together to establish an independent community controlled Aboriginal community transport service in south west Sydney. Once established, it is hoped that this will serve as a model for service provision across the State.

Transport is also critical for access to education services. As was highlighted in the NSW Government submission, the improvement of attendance rates for Aboriginal pre-school children is being targeted by implementing a pre-school transport service through F1(b) *Ensuring school readiness*. This approach has been introduced in five communities, assisting 90 children to attend pre-school.

Additionally, a number of agencies have jointly funded the Community Transport Organisation to establish the Aboriginal Transport Network. This Network was established in 2005 to provide support and information to Aboriginal transport workers employed in community transport projects through the Community Transport Organisation. The funding is being used to support and tailor service delivery by these workers through training in such issues as administration and governance, policy and procedure development; and budgeting.

Two Ways Together focuses specifically on the engagement of communities, including non-government services, with government. Peak Aboriginal organisations are key members of the Two Ways Together Coordinating Committee. At a regional level, Aboriginal communities participate in Regional Engagement Groups through regional representatives of peak Aboriginal organisations.

There are also several specific NSW Government initiatives that aim to improve the relationship between government and non-government services.

NSW Health

The NSW State Health Plan Strategic Direction 4 prioritises “building regional and other partnerships for health”. The NSW Aboriginal Health Partnership between the Minister for Health, the Department of Health and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC) provides the framework for the relationship between government and non-government services at the state level.

NSW Health also participates in a partnership arrangement with the Australian Government’s Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the AHMRC and GP NSW to facilitate collaborative working relationships between government and non-government services.

In addition, Area Health Services are required to:

- develop local partnerships with Aboriginal community organisations and to collaborate on service delivery to Aboriginal communities; and
- participate in the Regional Engagement Groups coordinated by DAA.

Department of Community Services

The Department of Community Services (DoCS) also has specific strategies in place which are focussed on the relationship between government and non-government services.

DoCS is moving towards working in a more collaborative way with Aboriginal organisations and communities in order to develop a range of targeted strategies and initiatives that meet their particular needs. One example is a partnership arrangement between DoCS, the lead agency under the Brighter Futures Program and a smaller Aboriginal agency in the Hunter Region. This Brighter Futures partnership aims to deliver early intervention services to Aboriginal families as well as build sound governance and financial management structures and processes in the Aboriginal agency.

DoCS recently undertook a survey of all Brighter Futures partner agencies on strategies they have in place to improve outcomes for Aboriginal families. The analysis of the findings will assist DoCS and its NGO partners to identify the best ways to successfully engage with Aboriginal families with a view to more broadly trialling successful approaches.

To develop more sustainable Aboriginal Out-of-Home-Care (OOHC) services, DoCS started the Aboriginal OOHC Service Capacity Building Initiative in 2006 with the engagement of an independent consultant to work in partnership with six Aboriginal OOHC funded services.

The aim of this initiative was to explore opportunities for Aboriginal OOHC service providers to build upon existing programs so they could become strong and sustainable providers of

OOHC for Aboriginal children and young people. Annual funding of \$2.6m (current) to Aboriginal OOHC service providers will increase by around \$10m, to increase the number of culturally appropriate OOHC placements available to Aboriginal children and young people in NSW by 227 placements.

Issue 21, p 144 – There are many successful initiatives undertaken by government to improve educational outcomes for small numbers of Indigenous students. The Committee will examine how these programs can meet a larger number of students and improve the outcome for Indigenous people as a whole.

In many cases, educational outcomes for Aboriginal students are not met due to poor school retention and completion. Although there are a variety of reasons for this occurring, it is recognised that Aboriginal student school retention and completion rates can be improved if Aboriginal students have access to:

- early learning opportunities and successful transition programs from prior-to-school to school and from primary school to high school;
- an education for the student which prioritises cultural appropriateness and relevance;
- a learning environment which is characterised by cultural awareness and understanding of Aboriginal peoples and cultures by educators, the broader school community and policy makers; and
- an education which prioritises community partnerships and engagement with the community.

The NSW Government is committed to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Through the COAG Productivity Agenda Working Group, NSW has committed to ensuring all Aboriginal four year olds in remote Aboriginal communities have access to a quality early childhood education program within five years. Work is continuing with the Commonwealth Government to develop implementation strategies for this commitment.

The NSW Department of Education and Training has developed, and is in the process of implementing, a sustainable and broad-ranging Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy to ensure that Aboriginal student educational outcomes match those of all students in NSW. The Strategy has been designed to focus the work of schools, colleges, regions, TAFE Institutes and state office directorates towards achieving the goal that, by 2012, Aboriginal student outcomes will match or better outcomes of the broader student population.

It should be noted, however, that the approach taken to doing business with Aboriginal people in NSW under *Two Ways Together* is a community-oriented, consultative process in which communities articulate their needs to Government, rather than vice versa. Therefore a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to improving educational outcomes should be avoided, given that different communities may perceive different needs. One example of a community-tailored approach is the 'ensuring school readiness' objective of F1, in which the strategic focus is on transporting young Aboriginal children to preschool in order to facilitate attendance. This strategy was initiated from the fact that the targeted communities had identified transport as a primary issue affecting school and preschool attendance in their particular community.

Therefore, within the Strategy, programs are being targeted to communities where there is particular potential to improve school retention and completion rates – those that currently experience early school disengagement and poor school outcomes for Aboriginal students. The Schools in Partnership initiative, the Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy, the Targeted School Initiative,

Kids Excel, Youth Excel and Aboriginal Student Scholarships (as outlined in the previous submission), all focus on improving engagement, attendance, retention, and literacy and numeracy achievement with the view to achieving educational success for Aboriginal students.

A key anticipated outcome of these targeted strategies is that participating school communities will value, respect and appreciate Aboriginal culture and student identity as an intrinsic part of each school's community culture. Evaluations of these programs, to determine their impact on priority areas, are expected at the end of 2008.

Issue 25, p 177 – The Committee will review appropriate service delivery models to effectively address obstacles to Indigenous employment.

The NSW Government agrees with the Committee's observation that the many significant barriers limiting Aboriginal people's access to employment opportunities are the responsibility of a range of government departments and therefore, that these barriers need to be addressed through a coordinated and holistic approach.

One example of such an approach is the Job Compacts program, which seeks to identify how government agencies, the private sector, industry groups, employment services, training providers and Aboriginal communities can work together to overcome local barriers and facilitate greater employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. 12 Job Compacts were established as of 30 June 2008: Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Blacktown/Mt Druitt, Campbelltown/Macarthur, Eastern Sydney, Redfern/ Waterloo, Tweed Heads, Illawarra, Dubbo, Newcastle/Hunter, Cobar (Mining) and a State-wide MOU. Job Compacts have been developed in a flexible manner so that they relate to location or industry specific circumstances. Signatories have made the commitment to take action to improve the participation of Aboriginal people in the local workforce, and to undertake steps to develop and maintain Aboriginal cultural awareness within their organisation. A number of Job Compact signatories have also committed to specific actions to support employment related strategies.

Another example of a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to addressing obstacles to Aboriginal employment is the NSW Government's Aboriginal Participation in Construction Guidelines, which commenced in January 2001. Updated and simplified guidelines came into effect from January 2007. These Guidelines were introduced to expand Aboriginal people's access to, and participation in, NSW Government-funded construction and related activities. By encouraging construction contractors to develop Aboriginal Participation Plans, the Guidelines assist private businesses to plan for and to increase their employment of Aboriginal people.

The Guidelines apply to all government construction projects and activities involving demolition, building, landscaping, maintenance, civil engineering, mining and heavy engineering. They are incorporated in the NSW Government Procurement Policy available on the NSW Treasury website and apply to all government departments, statutory authorities, trusts and other Government entities with the exception of State Owned corporations.

Agencies use the Guidelines:

- to determine which projects are priorities for Aboriginal participation;
- to categorise such projects according to the extent to which Aboriginal people will benefit from the completed project;
- as an inclusion in tender documents specifications for both contractors and subcontractors regarding Aboriginal participation;

- to guide how Aboriginal participation is included as a criterion for assessing the merit of tender proposals; and
- to monitor and collect data on actual participation.

Through the \$240 million Aboriginal Communities Development Program, DAA has utilised these Guidelines to support 15 Aboriginal building companies in the construction of Aboriginal housing and infrastructure since 2001. Over the next year, under State Plan Priority F1, the Guidelines will be used to tender for 15 construction projects which will include mandatory Aboriginal participation as a tender requirement.

There are also several agency based initiatives that aim to address obstacles to Aboriginal employment. An example of this is DADHC's Aboriginal State-wide Conference, held on 20-21 August 2008, for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. The Conference covered service delivery issues and professional development opportunities for staff and included the launch of the Department's Aboriginal Employment and Capabilities Framework.

The NSW Government is also addressing economic participation and welfare reform through the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform. The Working Group has been asked to bring forward sustainable reform proposals on this issue by the October COAG meeting.

Issue 29, p 194 – The Committee heard examples of businesses overcoming their skills shortages through employment and training schemes targeted at Indigenous workers. The Committee will further consider the strengthening of the relationship between corporations and Indigenous communities.

The NSW Government places a strong emphasis on the development of relationships between businesses and Aboriginal communities, which is demonstrated by the extensive programs that aim to support businesses in their establishment as well as the employment of Aboriginal people. Job Compacts, which was mentioned in the initial NSW submission, and highlighted in Issue 25 above, is one example of the development of relationships between business and Aboriginal communities. Further programs which focus on this are detailed below.

Department of State and Regional Development

The Department of State and Regional Development's (DSRD) Budyari Ngalaya First Peoples' Business Partnerships Program (which was briefly mentioned in the NSW Submission) links Aboriginal businesses with major corporations and other businesses to provide employment and contractual work for Aboriginal people. Support is provided for business partnerships between Aboriginal people and corporations that seek to employ Aboriginal people, involve Aboriginal firms in Government contracts, or buy products from Aboriginal firms. This program in 2006/07 secured over four million dollars in subcontracting work, creating more than 150 new jobs.

DSRD provides several other programs and services to Aboriginal businesses, supporting both businesses and their employees. These programs include:

- *Business Review.* The Aboriginal Business Review Program assesses the current situation of an Aboriginal enterprise and focuses on identifying steps to build the enterprise.
- *Aboriginal Business Growth.* This program supports Aboriginal businesses to grow by providing one-on-one business support to implement business development activities that will grow their business.
- *Aboriginal Business Link.* This program supports Aboriginal business owners to develop new markets through participating in industry trade shows, industry marketing and promotional opportunities. In 2007, this program supported four Aboriginal businesses to

undertake international market visits that led to sales of around \$325,000.

- *Aboriginal Youth Business Program.* The Aboriginal Youth Business program works towards encouraging an entrepreneurial culture in Aboriginal youth. Groups of Aboriginal youth running a small enterprise or interested in developing a business idea are provided with support to move to the next stage in the business life cycle. This support is provided by a Departmental approved business consultant.
- *Aboriginal Business Service.* This service is run in partnership between the Redfern Waterloo Authority and DSRD, to encourage and cultivate businesses. This service has assisted over 70 potential or existing enterprises over the past 2 years.

The Department has agreed to host an event for a delegation from the United States Minority Supplier Development Council in September 2008. Minority supplier councils are not-for-profit organisations which provide opportunities for small to medium sized businesses, which are majority-owned by a designated minority group, to compete to supply large corporate entities. This event will provide an opportunity to learn more about the United States Minority Supplier Development Council model and identify any initiatives which could be adapted for NSW.

Department of Environment and Climate Change

The Aboriginal Land Management for Biodiversity program is DECC implemented and Environmental Trust funded, and plans to integrate training and education of Aboriginal communities in business and environmental management to assist them participate in the Government's BioBanking scheme. This may be a useful model or case study in the longer term. The program committee has also discussed ways that the program could link Aboriginal people trained in Conservation and Land Management with employers in their local areas.

Issue 35, p 220 – Overcrowding is a fundamental problem within the Indigenous community. The Committee highlights the need for various providers and funding programs to work together strategically to provide affordable, appropriate housing for Indigenous people.

The NSW Government agrees that overcrowding is a fundamental problem within the Aboriginal community. Overcrowding is experienced by Aboriginal people due to a range of reasons, including a lack of affordable and suitable dwellings, the need to meet family and cultural responsibilities, and the increasing Aboriginal population in NSW. Overcrowding has negative consequences for health, education and family relationships, and can contribute to family violence.³ Addressing overcrowding as an issue in Aboriginal communities will contribute to achieving a number of the COAG *Closing the Gap* targets.

As outlined previously to the Parliamentary Inquiry, Housing NSW and the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) seek to ensure their policies are appropriate by entitling Aboriginal people to one extra bedroom to help them meet family and cultural responsibilities without experiencing significant overcrowding.

The Interim Report includes a comment from Housing NSW that overcrowding is a problem in the private sector rather than in Housing NSW properties (p.218), and also a comment that some Housing NSW accommodation is overcrowded but that Housing NSW is reluctant to acknowledge this (p.219). As previously advised to the Committee, household details held by Housing NSW for both public and AHO housing include the number of people residing in a dwelling and their

³ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) 2007, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*, Productivity Commission, Canberra

relationship and the number of bedrooms in a dwelling. These details allow Housing NSW to calculate the appropriate number of bedrooms, compared to the actual number of bedrooms, so that households can be allocated appropriately sized dwellings. However, it appears that some tenants under-report the number of people living in Housing NSW properties, to avoid the rent increases that may arise from notification of additional occupants. Thus, it is only possible to estimate the level of overcrowding in public housing households, rather than calculate it precisely.

In the private sector, estimating overcrowding in Aboriginal households is particularly difficult due to self reporting and identification methods used. Aboriginal households must self-identify – and some may choose not to. Other factors that may “hide” overcrowding in Aboriginal communities is the fear of ‘dobbing themselves in’ in relation to matters such as the calculation of Centrelink Rent Assistance, or acceptable household numbers to rental landlords.

At a more strategic level, overcrowding in social housing will inevitably worsen unless adequate funding is provided by the Commonwealth Government in urban areas and regional centres, as well as remote communities. At present the Commonwealth Government is reaffirming its position that the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation (ARIA) program will target the provision of housing for Aboriginal people living in remote parts of Australia. This will significantly disadvantage NSW where only 5% of Aboriginal people live in remote areas.

Funding previously provided to NSW under the program which preceded ARIA (the Community Housing Infrastructure Program) was \$13.25M per annum. Funding for NSW under the new program has yet to be determined, but there is a risk that it will be considerably less because of the focus on remote communities. The loss of this quantum of funding for Aboriginal people in urban areas and regional centres of NSW could result in an increase in both overcrowding and homelessness, as more families are forced to rely on private sector accommodation.

In terms of the provision of additional housing, it is important that any new supply of additional housing is delivered in a co-ordinated and streamlined manner and supports improved skill and efficiency in the Aboriginal community housing sector. As discussed under Issue 12, p.3 above, the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office is currently implementing a reform process across the Aboriginal community housing sector, to bring organisations to a financially sustainable size and to improve skills and service standards. Better skilled community providers will be better placed to deal with potential overcrowding and under-supply. Co-ordinated approaches to providing additional dwellings and reforming the Aboriginal community housing sector will assist in both maintenance of assets and in building a sector which is eventually positioned to leverage funds from the private financial sector, effectively borrowing to purchase additional properties.

<p>Issue 36, p 224 – The Committee believes that housing affordability is a fundamental obstacle to addressing the housing needs of the Indigenous community. The Committee will examine mechanisms to increase the availability of affordable housing.</p>
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Aboriginal people can experience greater obstacles to accessing affordable rental housing through the private rental market than non-Aboriginal people due to racism and other forms of discrimination. One alternative is the provision of government-subsidised affordable housing.

The NSW Government has signalled a priority around affordable housing and has released two stages of its Affordable Housing Strategy. On 30 April 2006, the Minister for Housing announced the \$420 million *New Directions for Social Housing for Older People*, the first stage of the Strategy. The second stage of the Strategy, *New Directions for Community Housing*, was

announced in December 2007. This stage is a five year strategy to promote the viability of the community housing sector and expand its role in the provision of affordable housing.

In March 2007, the NSW Government announced a range of initiatives including:

- \$49.8 million in funding to establish an Affordable Housing Innovations Fund to kick start investment in affordable housing; and
- \$70 million of funding directed to community housing providers to allow them to develop housing directly.

Early in 2008, the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments announced a new National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), which aims to increase the supply of affordable rental dwellings nationally by up to 100,000 new dwellings by offering an incentive to build and rent the dwellings at below market rates. The NRAS incentive comprises a Commonwealth Government contribution in the form of a \$6,000 tax offset or grant and a minimum \$2,000 State or Territory Government contribution in the form of cash and/or other in kind support. It will be provided annually for ten years on condition that the dwelling is rented to eligible low and moderate income households for at least 20 per cent below market rates for each of the ten years.

Under the Establishment Phase of the Scheme, two funding rounds will be announced. The first of these was opened in July 2008 and will conclude in September 2008, with the second funding round to be opened in October 2008. These funding rounds will allocate incentives for up to 11,000 dwellings. The Expansion Phase will begin with a third funding round in March 2009, with further rounds to be held as necessary until incentives for all remaining 39,000 dwellings have been taken up. Subject to demand, the Commonwealth Government will allocate incentives for an additional 50,000 dwellings from 2012 onwards.

In NSW, the state contribution will be provided in two forms, NSW NRAS A for not for profit registered community housing providers (which include many Aboriginal community housing providers) and NSW NRAS B for other organisations. Under NSW NRAS A, the NSW Government will utilise the Affordable Housing Innovations Fund to provide registered community housing providers with an upfront capital contribution of up to 40% of the total project costs. For the first two funding rounds, up to \$18.5 million will be made available by the NSW State Government.

The NSW Government is also offering a contribution for all organisations eligible for NRAS, including private investors, developers or aged care providers. These organisations can apply for a payment of \$2,000 per year per unit of affordable housing delivered through NSW NRAS B. 3,000 of these incentives are available in the first two funding rounds.

Further funding for NRAS A and B will be considered during a review of the success of NRAS in delivering new supply in NSW to take place in early 2009.

Both Housing NSW (through the Office of Community Housing) and AHO are working to support community housing providers to improve their sustainability, to take on affordable housing roles, and to take advantage of the new NRAS. If mainstream and Aboriginal community housing providers deliver both social and affordable rental housing, tenants are able to transfer from social to affordable housing when income increases. The community housing providers benefit from offering both social and affordable rental housing because it improves their financial viability.

The AHO is progressively establishing Regional Housing Management Services across NSW. It is expected that small, under-performing Aboriginal community housing providers including some Local Aboriginal Land Councils will transfer the management of their properties to the Regional

Housing Management Services. These large Regional Housing Management Services would be well-placed to take advantage of NRAS and to manage affordable rental housing for Aboriginal people.

Issue 40, p 248 – There is a significant lack of support services for Aboriginal offenders, whilst in custody, prior to release, after release and in relation to drug and alcohol services. The Committee is concerned about this lack of appropriate service provision for Aboriginal offenders and will examine relevant initiatives.

The NSW Government considers that there is significant emphasis placed on support services for Aboriginal offenders in NSW. There are considerable support services offered to Aboriginal offenders by the Department of Corrective Services (DCS), Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Health. Drug and alcohol services in particular are widely offered to those who are incarcerated. Listed below are some of these strategies, but it is not an exhaustive list.

Department of Corrective Services

Support services prior to release and post release are provided both through custodial staff and Community Offender Services staff both in gaol and in the community. A number of DCS support programs, services and strategies are particularly focussed on Aboriginal offenders. One of these, Rekindling the Spirit, was detailed in the initial NSW Submission. Further examples of DCS's programs follow.

COS Drug and Alcohol Addiction Intervention Strategy

The development of an evidence-based Drug and Alcohol Addiction Intervention Strategy has been a major priority for the department over the last five years. As part of the Strategy, the Drug and Alcohol Addiction program and the Relapse Prevention program were launched by the Minister for Health in August 2005. These two programs are being progressively implemented throughout the state.

The Drug and Alcohol Addiction program is an eight-session program designed to change drug and alcohol dependence by addressing issues relating to resistance and denial. The program has been developed to meet the needs of medium to high-risk offenders. The Relapse Prevention program module follows the Drug and Alcohol Addiction program and aims to maintain drug-free behaviour by increasing situational self-efficacy.

In combination, these two programs provide an intensive pathway comprising at least the 80 to 100 hours of intervention demonstrated by research as being required to meet the needs of offenders who pose a medium to high risk to the community.

SMART Recovery

SMART Recovery is now operational in 14 centres. SMART is a structured self help program involving regular (once or twice weekly) meetings and training in specific tools and techniques to assist participants with enhancing and maintaining motivation to abstain from drugs and/or alcohol; coping with urges; problem solving; (managing thoughts, feelings and behaviours) and lifestyle balance (balancing short term and long term satisfactions). SMART is also being implemented in community settings throughout NSW. Offenders who participate in the SMART program while in custody will be able to link directly with community based SMART groups on their release.

Cessnock Correctional Centre: Phoenix Program

The Phoenix Program targets minimum security male inmates with less than 2 years of their sentence remaining. The 5 month program includes four core modules which use a cognitive

behavioural approach to address Relapse Prevention, Building Better Relationships, Breaking Barriers to Change and Anger Management. A range of elective programs is also offered including communication and interpersonal skills, stress management, and parenting skills.

Emu Plains: Personal Ownership Identification and Self Esteem (POISE) Program

The POISE program is a 12 week program for women with identified need for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The POISE program includes modules addressing relapse prevention, domestic violence, employment skills, finance and budgeting skills, anger management, self esteem, health and fitness and the "Life Management Program".

Ngara Nura Pre Release Therapeutic Community

Ngara Nura is a 6 month residential therapeutic community program located at Long Bay Correctional Centre. The program targets offenders at the end of their sentence who have significant alcohol and drug problems and addresses both alcohol and drug treatment and transitional issues.

Bolwara Transitional Centre for Women

Bolwara House opened in 2002 as a transitional program for women and is based at Emu Plains. Participants attend alcohol and drug treatment services (including methadone) in the community while living in a semi secure therapeutic community environment. Residents also participate in work and attend other health, and welfare services in the community. Bolwara's primary target is Aboriginal women with significant A&OD history.

Biyani Cottage diversion program

Biyani is an alternative to custodial sentencing for female offenders with mental health disorders or mild intellectual disabilities and co-existing alcohol and drug problems. The main focus of the Biyani program is to stabilise mental health and drug and alcohol issues and to help the women gain access to long-term community rehabilitation programs and resources. Potential program participants are female offenders who are either at a correctional centre on remand at pre-sentence stage or who have breached their parole and are serving the balance of parole.

Community Offender Support Program (COSP) Centres

DCS's COSP Centres are a non custodial community based service where offenders on parole or a community based sentence, can reside and participate in programs aimed at reducing re-offending, protecting the community and assisting in the re-settlement process through involvement in community services.

DCS COSP Centres target offenders who are at high risk of failing to gain and maintain suitable accommodation and/or access to community support services. COSP Centres also provide an opportunity to stabilize and provide enhanced supervision of offenders who may be experiencing difficulties in adjusting to community life, and who may otherwise breach parole. Offenders on Extended Supervision Orders may also be accommodated in COSP Centres. COSP Centre programs and services complement existing DCS strategies in addressing offender re-settlement needs.

Department of Juvenile Justice

Aboriginal young people make up a significant proportion of the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) client base in all of its service streams. For this reason, the vast majority of programs and services provided for juvenile offenders are suitable for and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal young people.

All programs delivered within DJJ are required to capture data on Aboriginal participation and there remains a strong focus on reviewing potential barriers to Aboriginal participation and where required, implementing strategies to improve participation and address what may be systemic barriers.

Additionally, DJJ is implementing a process to improve cultural competency training for staff and management across the department. A Senior Aboriginal staff member is developing this framework with a view to further improving understanding of cultural awareness, protocols, sensitivities and the ability to respond to emerging issues confronting Aboriginal young people in both a culturally appropriate and effective manner.

DJJ continues to be a leading employer of Aboriginal people in New South Wales (NSW), winning the Premier's Silver Award in 2006. In 2006/2007 10.5% of the total workforce across the Department was Aboriginal, in positions ranging from administrative, managerial and front-line. This is well above the benchmark of 2% set by NSW Workforce Profiling.

DJJ supports Aboriginal offenders in custody through both programs and community visits. One example of an elders' visiting program is the Aboriginal Aunties group, which has been visiting Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre fortnightly for about three years. The group usually consists of three Koori women who visit the detainees to provide mentoring support and to engage detainees in activities such as folklore, culture, art and other programs of interest. The centre strongly supports the program, which is particularly helpful for young detainees from rural and regional areas who find it difficult to maintain contact with their communities.

In addition to programs provided by DJJ, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) delivers education and training programs, such as the Aboriginal Cultural Arts Program, through the education and training units attached to all detention centres. DET programs also include remedial, general and vocational education, literacy and numeracy, personal development and TAFE, school certificate and higher school certificate courses.

DJJ also supports young offenders through the Post Release Support Program, a structured 12 week program designed to achieve an overall reduction in the number of young offenders who re-offend after release from a juvenile justice centre. The program supports young offenders released from custody by addressing barriers to their successful re-integration into the community, including those who are at risk of further contact with the juvenile justice system due to homelessness. It assists young people in securing and maintaining appropriate accommodation and in developing living skills, and provides case management. In the 2008/09 budget, the Department provided funding of over \$1.2 million for Post Release Support programs across the state.

Specific strategies, programs and services that target Aboriginal young people involved in DJJ services are listed below.

Aboriginal Strategic Plan

In 2007, the Department of Juvenile Justice embarked on a five-year Aboriginal Strategic Plan to better address the needs of Aboriginal young people in the juvenile justice system. The plan established a platform for well-coordinated and targeted interventions that promote both improved responsiveness and outcomes for Aboriginal young people. The Department explored evidence-based programs and services that provide culturally appropriate and effective interventions to Aboriginal young people, including alcohol and drug use programs.

Aboriginal AOD Program - Dthina Yuwali

Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs group work program, Dthina Yuwali, is the result of research, development and evaluated trials. Using a culturally appropriate methodology, the recently launched program, which was developed by Aboriginal staff, aims to address the links between alcohol and substance use and offending behaviour. The young people involved in the program track their behaviour like footprints, and then develop skills over three stages to manage their offending behaviour. The results of the pilot were extremely encouraging, with 25 out of the 29 young people successfully completing the program.

Intensive Supervision Program

A priority for the Department is addressing the high numbers of Aboriginal young offenders, and other young offenders aged between ten and sixteen years. To address the needs of these groups, the Department is enhancing current strategies and developing new programs to provide effective interventions, with initiatives such as the Intensive Supervision Program.

The Department has recently established a four-year Intensive Supervision (Pilot) Program (ISP) in Newcastle and Western Metropolitan Sydney. The ISP is a family focused treatment model based on Multi-systemic Therapy that has been independently evaluated as one of the most successful and cost-effective treatment models in the world for serious, repeat young offenders across gender, age, social and cultural backgrounds.

The program aims to:

- give families the tools they need to better parent their children;
- support families to take responsibility for the offending behaviour of their children and the negative influences that prohibit them from reaching their potential and living lawful and productive lives; and
- provide young people with strategies and tools to address their offending behaviour through a number of interventions, which include cooperative support/programs by a number of government and community agencies including schools, the Department of Community Services, Police and NSW Health.

ISP comprises two teams of specially trained juvenile justice staff, including Aboriginal Team Advisors, who work with serious, repeat juvenile offenders and their families in their home and community environment for up to 6 months. The teams work 24 hours per day, 7 days a week with the young offender and his/her family to address factors that contribute to offending.

The program is expected to help up to 70 families per year to deal with issues that are assessed as triggering or maintaining offending behaviour. Such issues may include substance abuse, financial problems, housing needs, family conflict and helping troubled young people establish a support network within their communities.

In Western Australia and in other countries, ISP has proven to be successful in working with Aboriginal communities as well as other cultural groups. This is particularly important in NSW where juvenile offenders who are Aboriginal are significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system.

Intensive Bail Supervision Program

The Department has implemented a state-wide Intensive Bail Supervision Program, which aims to reduce the increasing number of young people that are being held on remand pending a court outcome and that could be supervised more effectively and efficiently on bail in the community.

This program is based on the recognition that the period between arrest and sentencing presents a unique window of opportunity for the Department to intervene efficiently in order to divert young offenders from further offending.

The priority group for bail interventions are young people under fourteen years of age, young people of Aboriginal background and those who are at significant risk of being remanded in custody due to lack of stable accommodation or are in need of other supports in the community.

The Department provides resources for community-based staff to arrange accommodation, material aid and specialist staff not otherwise available to support the young person's compliance with their bail conditions. Resources are also allocated for the purpose of assisting individuals to gain access to mental health and Alcohol and Other Drug services.

Our Journey to Respect Program

Our Journey to Respect is a 12-session group work program for young male Aboriginal offenders, which aims to reduce the incidence of inter-generational violence. The program focuses on attitudes and behaviour related to family relationships and masculinity. Our Journey to Respect program is delivered in both the community and custodial settings.

Our Journey to Respect is the first intergenerational violence prevention program in NSW designed to provide Aboriginal young males with strategies to reduce elder abuse, particularly towards older family members.

Targets for Effective Change (Targets)

Targets is a comprehensive program that addresses offending behaviour. The program aims to address thinking and behaviour, and takes young offenders through a series of exercises on issues such as relationship skills, handling conflict, accommodation and employment. It can be delivered to both individual and group clients in community and custodial settings.

Effective Practice Framework

The Effective Practice Framework sets out the blueprint for DJJ's community based practice for the next 5 years.

The implementation of the framework will result in community staff receiving more comprehensive training; interventions with juvenile offenders being better focussed on risk of re-offending; and community staff working with families, as well as with the juvenile offender, to reduce the young person's re-offending risk. It will support the evaluation of programs, and those delivered to Aboriginal juveniles in particular, on the basis of their effectiveness so that the most successful programs can be expanded.

The implementation of effective practice is a phased process of cultural change and changes to practice, policy and procedures. The Framework's Aboriginal Reference Group will provide a forum to work in partnership with Aboriginal staff, the Aboriginal Strategic Coordination Unit and Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Committee, to inform practice to reduce re-offending amongst Aboriginal young offenders, and to monitor and provide advice on cultural responsiveness.

NSW Health

Aboriginal people in custody have access to all Justice Health Services

Mainstream drug and alcohol services are provided in all health centres in Correctional Centres and Juvenile Detention Centres. Justice Health provides the medical aspects of Drug and

Alcohol treatment in the custodial setting. This includes management of withdrawal, opioid treatment and other pharmacological interventions for the management and treatment of drug and alcohol issues.

In relation to pre-release and post-release, the Justice Health Connections Project, which has been in operation since September 2007, aims to improve continuity of care for recidivist clients of correctional centres with drug and alcohol issues, who are being released to the community. The project operates in all 32 correctional centres in NSW. In the September 2007 - June 2008 period, 1,395 clients have been referred to the service, of whom 1,154 have been assessed and had a treatment plan developed. As at 30 June 2008 there were 241 clients in the process of being assessed.

The Connections Project is a linkage model project that aims to link clients with relevant health and welfare service providers post release. The specifics of the post release care plan and support in the community are tailored to individual needs and circumstances. Where there are specific issues in relation to Aboriginal status these are taken into account when developing the plan in collaboration with the patient.

Justice Health has also recently established the Community Integration Team which aims to co-ordinate integrated, ongoing care for young people under the age of 18 with mental health and/or drug and alcohol problems currently held in custody in NSW, upon their release, to aid their successful integration back into the community. Although this is not specifically targeted towards Aboriginal young people, two of the three regions in which this program is currently operating (Orana and Riverina) have a high percentage of Aboriginal young people on the program.

Justice Health is currently developing a project in Wellington specifically for the diversion of Aboriginal people from custody to services in the community. Justice Health employs two Aboriginal Health Workers at Wellington Correctional Centre.

Justice Health is currently in the process of recruiting to an Aboriginal Mental Health Clinical Leadership position which will be focussing on boosting services for Aboriginal young people with mental health and drug & alcohol co-morbidity issues in contact with the criminal justice system.

To further bolster the delivery of services to Aboriginal people Justice Health is in the process of implementing the solutions identified via the Aboriginal Chronic Care Clinical Redesign project (Walgan Tilly). This project aims to:

- Improve access to chronic disease services for Aboriginal people
- Build collaboration between Aboriginal and mainstream chronic disease services
- Identify and share best practice in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people with chronic disease

This project will focus on the patient journey of the Aboriginal person (15 years and over) with and at risk of chronic conditions. It will focus on opportunities for creating linkages with the Aboriginal Community Controlled health sector, general practitioners and Area Health Service clinical streams including rehabilitation services.

3. PARTNERSHIP IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Issue 4, p 67 – The Committee will examine the issue of the provision of funding to community-controlled services and services which are delivered in partnership with the Indigenous community.

Responses above to Issues 12 and 18 relating to the reporting and accountability of community organisations and the relationship between government and non-government services detail the provision of funding to community organisations. Also included in these responses are departmental programs and strategies that have been developed by agencies in an effort to make the funding of non-government services transparent and performance based, ensuring that the process is both fair and subject to clear criteria.

Issue 16, p 118 – The effective provision of health services is a key issue in addressing the lifetime expectancy gap. The Committee will examine possible improvements to service delivery and opportunities to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

As mentioned in the response to Issue 18, the NSW Aboriginal Health Partnership between the Minister for Health, the Department of Health and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC) provides the framework for the relationship between government and non-government services at the state level. Also, as outlined under Issue 18 above, Area Health Services are required to:

- develop local partnerships with Aboriginal community organisations and to collaborate on service delivery to Aboriginal communities; and
- participate in the Regional Engagement Groups coordinated by DAA.

The Government agrees that the effective provision of health services is key to addressing the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people. Through the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform, the NSW Government has committed to close the life expectancy gap within a generation, and halve the gap in mortality rates for Aboriginal children under five within a decade. This is a partnership between all levels of government and Aboriginal communities.

Issue 30, p 195 – Inquiry participants recognised the important role played by Indigenous elders and their communities in providing support for Indigenous employment and youth programs. The Committee regards the building of trust and respect between Indigenous communities, government, and prospective employers as critical to the provision of Indigenous employment opportunities in the long-term.

The NSW Government agrees that Aboriginal elders and their communities play an important role in relation to employment and youth programs. Job Compacts, although in their early stages, place importance on the development of relationships between communities, government and business as they are critical to long-term employment opportunities.

As was mentioned in the Interim Report, the AHO's Aboriginal Housing Policy contains two program objectives relevant to community participation:

- To empower Aboriginal people and their communities in the planning and delivery of services; and
- To maximise consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the planning and delivery of housing programs.

AHO provides a phone service as well as community open days to facilitate community engagement.

Housing NSW is also committed to involving Aboriginal people in the housing design and delivery process and has structures in place for consultation with Aboriginal people, as noted in the Interim Report. Resitech, which is Housing NSW's asset services provider, undertakes its activities in a consultative and inclusive way, and involves tenants and community members in its activities.

The Committee may wish to note the recent AHURI report *Towards a design framework for remote Indigenous housing* which outlines principles for designing Indigenous housing with a focus on consultation. The report is available on the AHURI website (www.ahuri.edu.au).

4. FUNDING

The growth of the NSW Aboriginal population, as well as the areas in which the Aboriginal population predominately resides, impact heavily on the provision of funding for Aboriginal specific programs and services in NSW. As such, projections of population growth and demographics in NSW are useful in the discussion of the provision of funding.

NSW population growth

It is estimated that the Aboriginal population of NSW will grow by 35% between 2006 and 2021, implying an average growth rate of almost 2.0 percent per year during the next 15 years. In comparison the annual growth rate of the total NSW population in 2006 was estimated to have been 0.9 percent.⁴ It is estimated that the time taken for the Aboriginal population to double will fall from 44 years in 2006 to 32 years by 2021.

Within this general increase there will be an increase in the percentage of the NSW Aboriginal population aged 15 to 29 (from 24.7% in 2006 to 29.5% in 2021) while the percentage of the working age Aboriginal population 15-64 yrs will increase from 58.1% to 61.7%.

Trends in Western NSW

It is estimated that the Aboriginal population of the (previously ATSIC) regions west of the Great Dividing Range will rise in line with the NSW Aboriginal population. For example, in Kamilaroy, the population of Aboriginal people will increase by 5,277 from 14,545 to 19,822 between 2006 and 2021. However over this time, the Aboriginal population of Kamilaroy will remain at 9.8% of the NSW Aboriginal population.⁵

Regional towns in NSW

While the Aboriginal population in Western NSW will increase in line with the overall Aboriginal population in NSW, demographic trends within the region will see many more Aboriginal people living in regional towns.

Many regional towns are experiencing significant in-migration of Aboriginal people, drawn primarily from western and northern areas of the state and from smaller towns, while at the same time there is an out-migration of non Aboriginal people drawn to the coastal areas. Combined with natural Aboriginal population increase, this has already led to a large relative increase in the Aboriginal population of these towns with major implications for future demand for Government services.

In some regional towns the only population growth has been due to an increase in the numbers of Aboriginal people. For example between 1996 and 2001:

- the Aboriginal population of Broken Hill increased by 50.5%, while the non- Aboriginal population fell by 5.9%; and
- the Aboriginal population of Wilcannia increased by 14.4% while the non-Aboriginal population fell by 6.5%⁶

Many of these towns are characterised by low levels of Aboriginal employment, low education outcomes, poor health outcomes and higher levels of engagement with the criminal justice system.

⁴ Indicative New South Wales Indigenous Population Projections 2006 to 2021, *NSW Aboriginal Housing Office*, 2008

⁵ As above.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics census table based on Local Government Area

Other towns remain predominantly non-Aboriginal, but the majority of their population growth is now due to an expansion of Aboriginal numbers.

For example between 1996 and 2001:

- the Aboriginal population of Dubbo increased by 29.7%, and non-Aboriginal by 4%;
- the Aboriginal population of Orange increased by 39.2%, non-Aboriginal by 5.1%; and
- the Aboriginal population of Tamworth increased by 39.5%, non-Aboriginal by just 1.5%⁷

These towns are emerging demographic “hot spots” in the sense that Aboriginal population dynamics require that planning for future service provision acknowledges the towns’ changing demography.

Decisions regarding equitable allocation of resources are complicated by the rapid changes in population growth described above and the challenges associated with developing appropriate weighting factors to account for variations in the cost of service delivery and need in different geographic areas.

Issue 1, p 45 – Although the majority of Aboriginal people in Australia reside in New South Wales, this is not reflected in the level of Federal funding received by New South Wales. This impacts on the State’s ability to implement priorities under the Federal-State Overarching Agreement on Aboriginal Affairs 2005 – 2010, the NSW State Plan and the Two Ways Together plan.

The NSW Government agrees that funding from the Commonwealth Government has not always proportionately reflected the high number of Aboriginal people who reside in NSW. This is detrimental to the implementation of priorities under the State Plan and Two Ways Together. This concern has arisen again in recent months, in COAG work on Indigenous Reform in particular in relation to Commonwealth funding for Indigenous housing.

For a decade, the Commonwealth has focussed Aboriginal-specific housing funding under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement on non-metropolitan areas. This is anticipated to worsen, given the expected replacement of the Community Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP) with the remote-oriented Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation Program, which is expected to further decrease funding for housing for Aboriginal people in urban areas. (See also Issue 35 above.)

The provision of Indigenous education funding by the Commonwealth Government is also subject to criteria that disadvantage NSW. For example, as the majority of NSW Aboriginal school students reside in metropolitan locations, they do not attract the more generous rural and remote supplementary assistance. In addition, grants for metropolitan Aboriginal school students were no longer eligible for indexation between 2005 and 2008. Other States and Territories that have more rural and remote Aboriginal school students attract the rural and remote supplementary assistance.

Issue 3, p 59 – The Committee will look at the effectiveness and assessment of funding programs that are temporary and intermittent in nature.

Whilst the NSW Government recognises that the Committee is concerned about the nature of short term funded programs, pilot programs and programs which are developed specific to an area, these

⁷ Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research As above.

can enable the effective direction of funds and provide valuable information on the success of a program. In relation to Aboriginal communities, there is a particular need for programs or strategies to be developed in consultation with the community, tailoring the approach to suit those to whom the program aims to cater. As a result, programs are not always compatible with different communities, and therefore do not need to be expanded into other areas.

The extent to which funds are recurrent is often related to their source and to the purpose for which they are provided. It is important to note that non-recurrent funding is a mechanism for ensuring that there is flexibility in an environment characterised by limited resources, to respond to emerging needs and priorities and to support innovation.

An example of the NSW Government's commitment to effectively evaluating funding programs is demonstrated by NSW Health who, in collaboration with the Office of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH), has introduced the Service Development Reporting Framework. This evaluates return on investment and streamlines reporting requirements for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

Issue 7, p 87 – The Committee will examine the need for ongoing funding for environmental health programs, after funding for the Aboriginal Community Development Program ends in 2009.

As outlined under State Plan Priority F1(c), the NSW Government is committed to ensuring that all Aboriginal communities have equitable access to environmental health systems. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs recently announced a \$205 million commitment to upgrade water and sewerage infrastructure, and provide for ongoing operation and maintenance for 25 years, in Aboriginal communities across NSW in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. In addition, pilot clean up programs are being evaluated and DECC is providing grants of \$50,000 for four new clean up programs in 2008/09. To assist in their implementation, an Environmental Health Project Group has been established to oversee all these projects related to Priority F1(c)). Further details of these programs have been provided under Issue 8.

The Housing for Health Program, managed via a partnership between NSW Health and DAA (details of which were provided as part of the initial submission to the Inquiry), is also an essential component of the NSW Government's efforts to address the environmental health needs of Aboriginal communities.

Issue 14, p 108 – The Committee will seek evidence of the appropriate levels of funding and services to reduce the incidence of and ameliorate the effects of child sexual abuse, including the implementation of the interagency plan in response to the *Breaking the Silence* report.

The NSW Government response to the "Breaking the Silence" Report includes the NSW Government's Interagency Plan to tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities. This response is led by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and partner agencies, including NSW Police Force, Attorney General's Department, Department of Corrective Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Community Services, NSW Health, Department of Education and Training, Aboriginal Housing Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet and Housing NSW. The NSW Government is committed to implementing the Interagency Plan's 88 actions which will be delivered to communities during 2007-2010 and \$30 million from existing agency resources has been identified to implement it. A progress report on implementation of the Interagency Plan is expected to be released in late 2008.

The 2008/09 budget allocated an additional \$22.9m over four years for the Safe Families Program. The Safe Families Program allows for the expansion of the Focus Community work under the Interagency Plan from the original four communities to nine communities.

Under the Safe Families Program, each of the five new focus communities will receive community engagement, child protection, early intervention and prevention, law enforcement, and individual and family support services. These will be delivered with a strong interagency approach to ensure joined up services are provided. Through the inter-agency Regional Coordination Management Groups, DAA will work with agencies at the local level to identify further opportunities for cross-agency and innovative service delivery and to maximise coordination across local service systems.

The Program will be implemented in a phased manner across the communities to mitigate difficulties associated with:

- ensuring adequate community engagement work ahead of service provision to enhance community support and ownership of this strategy;
- attracting, recruiting and training multiple staff simultaneously; and
- sourcing scarce residential and office accommodation.

Phasing will also enable learnings and experiences from implementation in early sites to be incorporated into the implementation of the Program in subsequent sites. An action learning component will be built into the Evaluation Framework to support this approach.

Issue 22, p 148 – The need to provide and fund long-term education services with Indigenous specific focus and the necessary funding will be considered.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) allocates significant resources through both recurrent and specific short term funding. DET maintains its commitment to ensuring that resources are focused on improving learning outcomes for Aboriginal students.

The Government's first submission to the Inquiry included considerable detail about long-term education services with an Aboriginal focus.

Issue 26, p 185 – The Committee will examine the funding of employment programs to ensure skill development and retention rates.

The NSW Government's key focus in developing employment programs is the development of skills in Aboriginal people and ensuring that employment retention rates are improved. NSW's Job Compacts program focuses on these elements, and has been detailed elsewhere in this submission. In the Interim Report, the Committee appears to be focusing primarily on the funding of Commonwealth employment programs such as STEP and CDEP.

One area in which NSW has developed a number of programs that aim to ensure skill development and high retention rates is the public sector. Two examples of Departments which have developed these programs follow.

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

The enhanced Aboriginal Residential Support Worker (RSW) Disability Recruitment and Development program has been developed to ensure Aboriginal people who are long-term unemployed are provided with a structured induction, training and mentoring program. The

program leads to a recognised qualification and work experience. The program has been highly successful in engaging Aboriginal people and their communities in the pilot location (DADHC's Southern Region).

A key component of this Program has been DADHC's close work with Indigenous Employment Centres, which assisted DADHC in identifying suitable candidates with whom DADHC could work to develop their job readiness. This Program is being implemented across DADHC's six Regions in 2008/09 and 2009/10 and is expected to generate 180 jobs for Aboriginal people. All regions will seek to work closely with Aboriginal organisations to promote DADHC employment.

Department of Health

Since 2006, NSW Health has employed 109 Aboriginal people in the Trainee Enrolled Nurse (TEN) Program. NSW Health fully funds the TEN Program and DEEWR contributes further funding to assist Aboriginal students with training and retention. To-date, 58 Aboriginal TENs have graduated, 33 are currently studying and 18 have withdrawn.

Since 2004, NSW Health has employed 48 Aboriginal undergraduate nursing and midwifery cadets. 10 Aboriginal cadets have graduated with a degree in nursing or midwifery, 20 are currently studying and 11 have withdrawn. The remainder have deferred their studies. The NSW Public Sector cadetship program is funded by Department of Premier & Cabinet, while NSW Health funds the work placement component.

In response to disproportionate under-representation of Aboriginal people in the environmental health workforce across NSW and Australia, and even more so at the professional level, NSW Health established the Aboriginal Trainee Environmental Health Officer (ATEHO) Program in 1997. Over the last ten years eight trainees have graduated from the Program with a degree in environmental health.

NSW Health, with some assistance from the Commonwealth Government in the early years of the program, has funded both the workplace and university elements of the Program. The Area Health Services receive funding to employ and support the trainees over a six year period, and are then committed to provide two years employment as an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) once the trainee has graduated.

The training program is the only one of its type operating in Australia. The program contributes to NSW Health's commitment to improving Aboriginal representation in the workforce and assists in increasing the numbers of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) in a field where there are significant staff shortages nationally, and particularly in rural NSW. The employment of Aboriginal EHOs has been critical in addressing issues with housing and infrastructure in Aboriginal communities associated with high rates of infection, injuries and chronic disease.

NSW Health is in the process of commissioning a formal review of the program, the terms of reference for which will include consideration of opportunities for its enhancement.

Note that some health programs, whose focus is not employment generation, may offer opportunities for skill development which could enhance longer term employment options. For example, Housing for Health could offer training opportunities through which community members could gain the technical skills required to assess housing hardware and to sustain capacity to repair and maintain properties.

Issue 32, p 207 – An issue for further consideration will be the equitable distribution of funds and co-ordination of programs for social housing in New South Wales, between urban, regional and rural areas, to better address unmet housing needs of Indigenous people.

The NSW Government is very aware of the needs of Aboriginal people in all geographic locations in New South Wales, and is cognisant of the need to ensure that funding is allocated based on need and current and projected demand.

In some parts of the Interim Report the role of mainstream housing products and services appears to be under-stated. The NSW Government provides both Aboriginal-specific and mainstream housing products and services to Aboriginal people, including the full range of housing products and services provided by Housing NSW.

The NSW Aboriginal Housing Office has undertaken an analysis of the housing need for Aboriginal people until 2011. This analysis identified very significant challenges in meeting growing demand. Findings include:

- By 2011, the Aboriginal social housing dwelling needs gap will be over 4,700 dwellings, of which around 93 percent will occur in urban areas and 7 percent in remote areas;
- As at 2008, the Aboriginal social housing dwelling needs gap in NSW is 4022 dwellings comprising 3758 dwellings in urban NSW and 264 dwellings in rural NSW.
- As at 2008, the cost of bridging the Aboriginal social housing dwelling gap is \$910 million, and, by 2011, the cost of bridging the gap is expected to be \$1.105 billion.
- Overcrowding is a dominant feature of Aboriginal housing in urban areas. It is estimated that at least 1,898 additional dwellings are required to address urban overcrowding in 2008.

See also issues 35 and 1 above, in relation to the Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation (ARIA) program.

The Commonwealth Government recently announced the extension of the current Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement (CSHA) and the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreement. This has secured funding for Aboriginal-specific and mainstream housing assistance in New South Wales until the end of December 2008, while the negotiation of a National Affordable Housing Agreement, which will replace the CSHA, is underway.

Through the processes that have been put in place to progress work on COAG's commitment to *Close the Gap*, meeting the housing need of Aboriginal people has been identified as a building block for addressing other areas of disadvantage of Aboriginal people including education, health and employment. The NSW Government is working to ensure that the National Affordable Housing Agreement addresses issues relating to housing and housing related services in urban, regional and remote locations, and that the Commonwealth Government acknowledges the unmet housing needs of Australia's largest Aboriginal population in New South Wales.

Issue 37, p 225 – The Committee is concerned that, given the demand for housing and consequent overcrowding and health issues, that funding for necessary maintenance of properties is provided.

The Interim Report states that the funding of maintenance for the Aboriginal Housing Office is an ongoing issue. As mentioned in the response to Issue 35, the Commonwealth Government's decision to discontinue funding for the Community Housing Infrastructure Program and the introduction of the ARIA program is expected to lead to a significant fall in overall funding for Aboriginal housing in NSW. The NSW Government is working to ensure that the new National

Affordable Housing Agreement provides a framework for sustainable and well-maintained social housing.

Issue 42, p 254 – The Committee is concerned that there are insufficient resources available for Circle Sentencing courts and highlights this issue for discussion.

The NSW Government is committed to providing alternative options in the justice system for Aboriginal people. This requires a focus on community consultation and consideration of evidence demonstrating success in reducing re-offending.

A recent evaluation of Circle Sentencing by the Attorney General's Department has identified five major areas to strengthen that program:

1. Increasing the numbers of Aboriginal offenders referred to Circle Sentencing;
2. Ensuring greater consistency in the type of offenders referred to Circle Sentencing;
3. Improving follow up of offenders after Sentencing;
4. Ensuring greater consistency in the operation of the program; and
5. Better support for Circle Sentencing Elders.

Changes that will be made to the program include:

- Increasing the participation rate,
- Targeting those offenders who would most benefit from participation in a circle,
- Better provision of appropriate support services, such as drug and alcohol treatment, to offenders who participate in a circle,
- Development of a formal approach to training and support for respected Aboriginal participants,
- Better support and assistance for Circle Sentencing Project Co-ordinators to ensure they are able to spend more of their time engaging with offenders, victims and the community,
- A new "Best Practice Guide" to ensure a consistent approach to the administration of the program and the follow up of offenders, and
- A commitment to active and ongoing monitoring of the program and the follow-up of offenders. This monitoring will include bringing participants back before the Circle to report on their progress if necessary in the circumstances.

The Department currently provides \$1.1m per annum to support the operation of Circle Sentencing. This provides a total of \$100,000 to each location where Circle Sentencing operates, with a proportion of the total funding provided to the Magistracy to cater for court time that is dedicated to Circle Sentencing matters. The Department also provides reimbursement for out of pocket expenses for community representatives that participate in Circle Sentencing.

The Department has initiated discussions with the Department of Health at a federal and state level to increase access to rehabilitation and treatment services for Circle Sentencing clients post sentence. Contributions from those agencies will effectively provide increased resources to the program by increasing the capacity of Circle Sentencing to meet the needs of offenders post sentence.

5. EMPLOYMENT, MENTORING AND TRAINING

Issue 19, p 123 – The Committee will review the adequacy of training and scholarships for Indigenous health workers in more detail.

The NSW Government has made a significant contribution to the training of Aboriginal health workers through its commitment to provide a site for the Aboriginal Health College at Little Bay and a contribution of \$6.4 million towards the construction budget through Landcom. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs made an additional contribution of \$1.5 million to assist with the capital works component of the college.

In addition, the Department of Health and Department of Education and Training provide a range of programs and initiatives that are targeted to training Aboriginal health workers. These are outlined below.

Department of Health

NSW Health is dedicated to ensuring access to formal qualifications for Aboriginal health workers, in line with the national development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Competency Qualifications within the Health Training Package, to enable the growth of a workforce skilled to deliver services to Aboriginal communities. NSW Health is currently assessing the number and educational levels of Aboriginal health workers within the NSW Health workforce.

Current NSW Health initiatives include the Aboriginal Environmental Health Officer training program (detailed at Issue 26) and the Aboriginal Population Health Scholarship Program. This Scholarship Program supports two Aboriginal students studying a Bachelor of Arts or Science in Population Health at the University of Wollongong. The scholarship includes \$23,000 each year over three years, plus work experience placement with the Area Health Service. The Program was evaluated positively after the initial 3 year period and recurrent funding was allocated to it. The Program is currently recruiting for a second round of scholarship holders for 2008-2010.

NSW Health has also committed \$100,000 of funding for undergraduate nursing and midwifery scholarships each year, including 50 new Aboriginal Nursing Cadetships. In the last financial year this program placed 10 registered nurses. A further 22 positions are being finalised.

Department of Education and Training

Through TAFE NSW, extensive training is provided to Aboriginal people in the health and community services area. Specific TAFE courses targeting Aboriginal health workers include Certificate III in Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care, Certificate IV in Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Practice), and Statement of Attainment in Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs Work.

Hearing problems among Aboriginal children can lead to serious learning difficulties. TAFE NSW Institutes are supporting the increased early detection and treatment of this health problem to reduce its incidence, through specialised courses to train Aboriginal health workers in regional NSW to screen Aboriginal children for Otitis Media. Up to 2007, the Institutes delivered a Statement of Attainment in Audiometry. This is now being replaced with a Certificate IV in Audiometric Assessment.

Aboriginal enrolments in TAFE general health-related courses in 2008 are shown in the following table.

Aboriginal enrolments in TAFE general health-related courses, NSW, 2008

Health Services Assistance	45
Enrolled Nursing	111
Aged Care Work	190
First Aid	190
Dental Assisting	14
Pathology	7
Alcohol and Other Drugs	15
Alcohol and Other Drugs Work	42
Mental Health Work (Non-Clinical)	14
Home and Community Care	10
Total	638

Issue 23, p 156 – Establishing links with family and community and culturally appropriate mentoring programs in order to encourage students in their education and support students in their endeavours at all levels of attainment will be investigated further.

Department of Education and Training

DET promotes a wide range of programs to provide culturally appropriate mentoring and to develop leadership skills for Aboriginal students.

Mentoring can occur in many situations, including within an Aboriginal community governance structure. Where local community people are directly involved in the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages they are modelling the critical elements of cultural practices associated with mentoring in an Aboriginal cultural context. This is also inclusive of the western concept of mentoring. Culturally specific curriculum strengthens the inter-connectedness for students and has proven to be a key factor in students' attendance levels at school.

DET provides opportunities for mentoring for Aboriginal staff through its *Teacher Education Scholarships* for Aboriginal people program, whilst the *Mentoring Essentials* training course provides participants with a clear understanding of intercultural issues associated with mentoring. The Department also supports several mentoring programs for students that not only provide support for vulnerable young students by matching them with older students, community members or teachers but also as a secondary benefit, improve literacy skills.

The Department also views Aboriginal student leadership as an important element of future directions in addressing disadvantage in Aboriginal communities and funds state-wide student leadership programs for Aboriginal students. Regions provide student leadership opportunities for Aboriginal students such as forums, conferences, public speaking and career goal setting activities.

Through participation in effective Aboriginal student leadership programs, Aboriginal students develop confidence to become members of school student representative councils or an equivalent student leadership body. They may then be encouraged and mentored to participate in inter-school, regional and state student representative council forums. Regional student welfare personnel are encouraged to identify, mentor and support Aboriginal student leaders.

Each year two Aboriginal student leaders are selected to join the 22 member New South Wales Student Representative Council via a state-wide 'expression of interest' process. The NSW Student Representative Council Conference is held in August each year and 10 Aboriginal student leaders, one from each region, are elected through regional Student Representative Council forums to participate at the conference.

The Department of Education and Training recognises that improving Aboriginal students' outcomes is a whole of school responsibility and that all school staff have a responsibility to develop and implement, in partnership with the local Aboriginal community, localised strategies that aim to increase engagement and improve educational outcomes for students. Currently the Department is reviewing the Aboriginal Education Policy. The new Aboriginal Education and Training Policy will define the Department's commitments and responsibilities in all areas of public education and training. In relation to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people as a whole, the new policy will provide access to Aboriginal cultural education for all staff and education about Aboriginal Australia for all students.

The Department continues to support the participation of Aboriginal parents and communities in the decision-making responsibilities of schools through Regional Aboriginal Education Advisory Committees. The role of the Committees is to assist schools and regions to develop initiatives to improve Aboriginal student outcomes and enhance engagement. This support has also included the provision of training on governance processes and procedures for committee members on the functions relating to committees and additional information on specific topics.

It should also be noted that the Department's *Penpal Program* began in 2004 to support improved literacy levels of students in rural and remote schools with a high Aboriginal population. Goodooga and Lightning Ridge Central Schools were the first two schools involved in the program. In 2008 there are approximately 12 rural or remote schools, and a total of 280 students involved in the program.

The program enables staff in various Sydney law firms to support young children with their literacy. Twice a term, writing sessions are conducted at either lunchtime or after work in law firms with an education officer from the Department of Education and Training running the sessions. The letters from lawyers are then collected, checked and posted to the schools, usually with an accompanying book. When the replies arrive any identifying information is removed. For child protection reasons students are only identified by their first name.

Department of Community Services

The Department of Community Services implements a number of strategies that focus on mentoring and education for Aboriginal children and on strengthening cultural resilience:

- Cultural care support planning: a systematic way of gathering cultural information for Aboriginal children and young people entering and exiting out of home care (OOHC), which the children can draw on in terms of enhancing their cultural identity and connections.
- Aboriginal Life Story Book: a resource that the child/young person and their caseworker use to record personal and cultural information about themselves and their family, and which is designed to foster a sense of pride in their identity and culture.
- Increasing the capacity of Aboriginal community organisations to provide OOHC placements for Aboriginal children through the Aboriginal Capacity Building Project.
- Reviewing placement and support models for children/young people in OOHC so that they are more culturally competent.

- Intensive Family Based Services, which provide intensive, time-limited home-based programs for Aboriginal families whose children are at risk of entering care because of child protection concerns, or who are being restored to their family after a period in care.

Office for Women's Policy – Department of Premier and Cabinet

SistaSpeak, an Office for Women's Policy (OWFP) program that was highlighted in the first NSW Government submission, contains a strong mentoring focus.

Another program with a strong mentoring focus is the Scholarship Program for Aboriginal Girls that has been developed by the Tara Anglican School for Girls and the Harvey Norman Corporation. The Program commenced in January 2008 with three scholarships (including full tuition and board) and a part-time Indigenous Liaison Officer. OWFP facilitated the partnership and will keep a watching brief on the Program, which will be reviewed by Harvey Norman annually. Innovative educational programs such as this will, over time, help to strengthen and build the capacity of Aboriginal communities by providing opportunities for young Aboriginal women to achieve their potential and receive a quality education.

Issue 24, p 165 – The importance of employing Indigenous staff as teachers and role models is apparent, however there is a need to address the attainment levels of current and future students so that this can occur.

DET values the skills, experiences and knowledge of Aboriginal people and is committed to improving education and participation for Aboriginal students. Employing more Aboriginal people in schools, TAFE colleges, regional and state offices provides a greater diversity of role models for young Aboriginal students. The visibility of such role models encourages young Aboriginal students to see and hear the value of learning and achievement from Aboriginal people and the life opportunities available to them. Greater Aboriginal representation in the teaching workforce contributes to the development of teaching and learning practices that recognise and meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

For Aboriginal students to aspire to become teachers and/or pursue other educational pathways, whether it be TAFE or university studies, DET recognises the importance of modelling behaviour and providing opportunities that align with lifelong learning philosophies which are connected to Aboriginal cultural practices in relation to learning.

Schools consistently report that having access to Aboriginal support staff is critical to the educational achievement of Aboriginal children and young people and to the successful implementation of the NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy. Schools report that all students and the school community as a whole benefit from the knowledge, expertise and involvement of Aboriginal support staff in education and training.

The *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan* aims to improve recruitment at all levels of the Department's workforce. The plan provides for staff to pursue professional development goals and aims to support all staff to have a stronger understanding of Aboriginal peoples and cultures, which in turn contributes to the improvement of educational outcomes for students.

The Department provides teacher education scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who may wish to become Primary or any Secondary subject teachers. Scholarships are offered to students who may be currently enrolled in a teacher education program or who intend to enrol in university. The scholarships guarantee permanent

employment on successful completion of studies in a NSW public school, training allowance and payment of Higher Education Contribution Scheme fees.

The Department provides a range of professional development opportunities for Aboriginal staff to assist them to maintain the currency of their qualifications, develop new skills and knowledge and improve their employment and promotional prospects.

A support program is also provided for newly appointed Aboriginal teachers including a 2 day orientation workshop, mentoring training, and mentoring support during the first year of teaching. The Department also provides a comprehensive range of training and development opportunities to Aboriginal staff located in the regions to build their capacity to support Aboriginal students, communities and schools.

The Department will continue to convene Yarn Ups (community information sessions) across NSW. The Yarn Ups play a significant role in the recruitment process for School Administrative and Support positions, providing information and opportunities for Aboriginal community members to speak with Aboriginal project officers from the Department and School Principals.

Further details on NSW Government employment programs, including public sector workforce strategies, have been included in responses to Issues 25, 26 and 29.

Aboriginal employment is also a focus of the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform, which has been asked to bring to the October COAG meeting proposals to promote sustainable Aboriginal economic development.

Issue 28, p 192 – Given the volume of evidence supporting mentoring programs and their effectiveness in gaining and retaining Indigenous employees, the Committee will consider how mentoring can be incorporated into a variety of programs aimed at addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

The NSW Government agrees that mentoring programs are highly effective in gaining and retaining Aboriginal employees and supports the incorporation of mentoring into programs for Aboriginal people. Mentoring programs also provide opportunities for greater community engagement in the education and employment of Aboriginal people. Examples of successful NSW Government mentoring programs have been given as responses to Issues 23 and 24.

Issue 27, p187 – The Committee notes that the changes to the CDEP scheme, the strengthening of the STEP program and Job Compacts are all relatively new. The Committee will revisit these schemes, when the Job Compacts are finalised and there is data available on their initial impact and progress towards addressing Indigenous employment issues.

The NSW Government understands that the Commonwealth Government's current review of the future of CDEP and the Indigenous Employment Program will inform the development of Aboriginal specific programs in the new universal employment services model. The Interim Report incorrectly attributes the STEP and STEP ERS programs to the NSW Government.

As noted, twelve Job Compacts, which are two year agreements, have been established, including a variety of employer, council, Aboriginal community, government agencies and service providers as signatories. Stakeholders will continue to be engaged through the Job Compact as strategies are developed.

An evaluation framework is being finalised which will formalise the basis for collecting data and assessing the impact of the program. It is anticipated that interim data will be available in 12 months, however the timeframe will not be set until the evaluation framework is in place.

Issue 31, p 197 – It is evident from the statistics that current policies and/or initiatives have not been enough to make substantial inroads into Indigenous unemployment. The Committee will examine reasons for this, including the limited time frame, education levels and early disengagement of Indigenous students in the educational process.

The NSW Government is committed to implementing policies and programs that will make an impact on the level of Aboriginal unemployment in NSW. Further details on NSW Government employment programs, including public sector workforce strategies have been included in responses to Issues 25, 26 and 29.

Aboriginal employment is also a focus of the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform, which has been asked to bring forward to the October COAG meeting proposals to promote sustainable Aboriginal economic development.

6. SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Issue 5, p 72 – The Committee will investigate further the issue of an independent body for Indigenous representation.

The NSW Government supports the representation and self determination of Aboriginal people. The Government has put in place structures to support joint efforts with the community to plan and deliver solutions. At the regional level, Regional Engagement Groups (REGs) have been established across NSW and Aboriginal people are represented on them. Local-level implementation of *Two Ways Together* is occurring in 40 partnership communities across NSW.

The Commonwealth Government has announced that it is committed to setting up a national Aboriginal representative body to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice in national affairs and policy development. The main principles of this body are that it will have rural, regional and urban representation, and that it will differ significantly from the former Aboriginal body, ATSIC.

Issue 6, p 80 – The Committee will follow with interest the second round of amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW), due to be introduced into Parliament in late 2008. The Committee will examine the need for an appropriate ongoing review mechanism, including the issue of the separation of regulatory and assistance functions of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Rights Council.

A priority focus of DAA is to strengthen community resilience and community engagement in decision making. Amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* which commenced operation on 1 July 2007 focus on strengthening corporate governance within Aboriginal Land Councils to ensure that the Land Council system is better able to deliver benefits to Aboriginal communities. The amendments include the introduction of elected Boards and mandatory Community, Land and Business Plans to strengthen accountability in decision making. They also introduced a new section 252A which requires the Minister to review the operation of the Act every five years. Further amendments are proposed for the second half of 2008 to amend the land dealings provisions of the Act to ensure that the valuable land assets of Aboriginal Land Councils are better able to leverage economic development for Aboriginal communities.

Issue 9, p 93 – The provision of accessible Internet to Aboriginal communities will be considered.

While the NSW Government has a role in encouraging and supporting better broadband services for the State, the regulation and provision of telecommunications (including broadband) is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. The NSW Government's role in the delivery of broadband services needs to be consistent with national level initiatives.

On 11 April 2008, the Commonwealth Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy announced the release of a Request for Proposal to roll out and operate a new, open access, high-speed, fibre-based broadband network. The outcome of this process will greatly affect the provision of broadband services in rural and regional NSW. It will also influence the NSW Government's future role in relation to broadband services.

The NSW Government's role will be consistent with the principle, as contained in NSW Government Statement on Innovation, that Government intervention should aim to complement, not substitute for or compete with activities of private companies.

Consistent with these principles, the key NSW Government initiative is the establishment of the NSW Government Broadband Service. This service is delivering high speed data telecommunications infrastructure to 24 regional centres around NSW. The Government entered into a five year contract with Soul (previously SPT Telecommunications) to implement and operate the Core Network utilising both fibre optic and microwave networks supplied by Soul and other carriers.

The Government Broadband Service has led to the provision of additional cost effective broadband services because the size of Government demand created economies of scale which encouraged providers to expand and provide broadband services to the private sector and households in rural and regional NSW. In this case, Government has used its purchasing power as a catalyst for the provision of broadband to rural and regional communities.

The NSW Government has demonstrated that appropriate government procurement can lead to the provision of broadband and other services to rural and regional areas by establishing a critical mass for providers and encouraging competition.

Many government agencies are now using this enhanced access to broadband to provide better services in rural and remote parts of NSW. For example, DET is providing video conferencing and educational materials for students and teachers in rural and remote areas. NSW Health is providing digital mammography services to rural towns.

At the same time, under the NSW Government ICT Strategic Plan, a single web-site portal has been established for electronic access to information about all NSW government services, back office activities are being made more efficient to allow increased front-office service delivery and customer service hub technology is being implemented to manage interactions between government agencies and the public.

In this context of increased rural and remote access to government and other services through the internet, the Department of Commerce is establishing Community Technology Centres (CTCs) in 83 small rural communities throughout NSW, which are community-owned and operated technology hubs. CTCs offer IT equipment needed for everyday use, and facilities are open to all members of the local community. The CTC@NSW Network also delivers a range of services including tourism training, videoconferencing broadcasts, digital photographic competitions for youth, seniors' activities, small business workshops and programs for Aboriginal groups.

Issue 10, p 99 – The Committee will consider the appropriateness of driver training programs aimed at assisting members of the Aboriginal community to gain drivers licenses.
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The NSW Government recognises the importance of transport in some Aboriginal communities. Examples of programs that address the issue of obtaining drivers licenses follow.

Department of Aboriginal Affairs

Recognising the linkage between holding a driver's license and employment opportunities, DAA, under the Job Compact program, has funded Mt Druitt Learning Ground's "Keeping Aboriginal Youth Safe" initiative that has assisted young Aboriginal people in the Mt Druitt

area to gain the knowledge and develop the skills needed to obtain and keep a drivers licence, and secure employment.

Ministry of Transport

The Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation has been funded by the Ministry of Transport for two trial initiatives, an Aboriginal *Bus Driver Training Project* and the *Murdi Paaki Regional Driver Licensing Program*. This strategy is being implemented in ten Aboriginal communities, and will result in 120 participants gaining their drivers licence.

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

To assist DADHC's Aboriginal Home Care in the recruitment and training of Aboriginal staff, a trainee program has been developed that includes driver training. The program will initially be conducted as a demonstration project in the Hunter region to gauge long-term viability. The program promotes a whole-of-government approach with DADHC, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Centrelink and TAFE NSW working together with the non-government sector and private enterprise.

The program consists of a part-time trainee program made up of blocks of study, on-the-job training and driver training. The driver training component will be provided by an Indigenous Driving School – Drive About, Don't Walk About. Program participants will complete a Certificate III in Community Care through TAFE NSW. Tutorial and mentor support, as well as two cultural camps have been integrated into the program to assist participants to address issues of culture, identity, working within a public sector environment and retention.

Issue 13, p 105 – To help support and strengthen families in Aboriginal communities, the Committee will consider opportunities to bolster existing men's and women's groups, and appropriate programs to assist parents, in particular young parents.

NSW Health and DoCS each have a strong focus on the assistance of young parents, both through universal and Aboriginal-specific programs and services.

Department of Health

NSW Health funds two programs through Child Health Networks to help support and strengthen families in Aboriginal communities. These are:

Aboriginal Young Mothers Sustained Home visiting Pilot

This program aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal teenage mothers and their infants through the implementation of a comprehensive sustained home visiting program. The project targets teenage mothers aged less than 18 years through protective networking with schools, community controlled Aboriginal and mainstream health services and the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health strategy. Young women are recruited through existing Aboriginal mother's and babies programs operating internally within Greater Southern Area Health Service and externally as provided by Rivmed (an ACCHS). Those identified are offered a comprehensive evidence based program of ongoing child and family nurse and Aboriginal health worker visits beginning antenatally and continuing until the child's second birthday.

The Teenage Aboriginal Back-to-School Program

This community program aims to improve the health of young teenage Aboriginal parents and their children, and empower them with educational opportunities and practical health and parenting skills. It targets young Aboriginal parents aged less than 18 years, who did not complete their schooling, especially teenage Aboriginal mothers who left school because of

their pregnancy, but it is also open to fathers. The program enables young parents to complete their School Certificate and/or a TAFE certificate course, to optimise their educational and career opportunities. In addition, if numbers are small, the program may be open to non-parents who left school early and are aged less than 18 years. The process is being facilitated through the provision of practical support, such as transport and childcare, and will include opportunities for health education and parenting skills training.

Evidence suggests that parental education is one of the most powerful predictors of parents' own health status as well as that of their children. It also improves a child's development, education and literacy, and leads to greater chances of school completion in the next generation, potentially reversing the cycle of deprivation.

Universal NSW Health programs available to young Aboriginal people include antenatal care, Universal Health Home Visiting, Safe Start, State-wide Infant Hearing Screening and the State-wide Eyesight Preschooler Screening.

Department of Community Services

The Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Strategy, which was detailed in NSW's initial submission is a significant program that assists parents. The AMIHS has been linked with the Brighter Futures program (also highlighted in the NSW Government submission), and an implementation strategy has recently been jointly finalised by NSW Health and DoCS. An AMIHS Linkage with Brighter Futures 'Working Agreement Paper' has been developed by DoCS and NSW Health to define principles, roles and responsibilities, governance structures and local dispute resolution arrangements. It was published online as an Appendix to the Brighter Futures *Caseworker Manual* and *Service Provision Guidelines* in May 2008.

Issue 20, p 140 – The Committee notes that there has been some improvement in the literacy and numeracy levels of Aboriginal students in New South Wales, however we remain concerned that these levels require significant improvement in order for Indigenous students to meet the national benchmarks. The Committee will examine the efficacy of strategies to address literacy and numeracy rates of Indigenous children and the adequacy of funding.

The Department of Education and training has developed a number of programs and strategies that are designed to address literacy and numeracy levels of Aboriginal students. These include Aboriginal specific programs as well as those that are taught universally. The work of the Department is guided by the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008*, which links to *Two Ways Together* and the NSW State Plan. Through the implementation of the Strategy the Department is actively engaged in achieving the targets of the relevant State Plan's priorities relating to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

One of the key strategies being pursued involves introducing the Accelerated Literacy pedagogy into primary schools, which is proving to be instrumental in increasing the literacy proficiency of Aboriginal students at an accelerated rate, while improving outcomes for all students. Accelerated literacy provides opportunities for the additional benefits of improved attendance, engagement and behaviour as students experience success and engage at the same level as their peers.

Initial data from a small number of teachers who had recently completed accelerated literacy training in 2007 shows strong improvement in the literacy achievements of Aboriginal students. In the sample classrooms, the Aboriginal students' literacy achievement not only caught up, but exceeded the progress of their non-Aboriginal peers.

Student literacy achievement data collection is being collected again from 2008 participants. In addition, the Directorate has targeted thirty effective practitioners from 2007 training to continue to collect long term data. As the Accelerated Literacy program extends its scope, data collection case studies will be launched from schools which have all classes using the pedagogy.

The research findings emanating from the evaluation of the National Accelerated Literacy Program undertaken by Charles Darwin University, reported that the improvement in student literacy outcomes was outstanding, as their reading age improved by a minimum of eighteen months after six months of accelerated literacy instruction.

The NSW Department of Education and Training's *State Literacy and State Numeracy Plans 2006-2008* clearly articulate the shared responsibilities that schools, regions and state offices have in recognising and addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of Aboriginal students. They focus on the effective use of data to align and target support to significantly improve the performance of Aboriginal students.

Comprehensive implementation plans which are aligned with the strategic action areas in the *Plans*, are in place. Twice-yearly reporting of progress on these *Plans* and twice yearly training to ensure consistency of practice is integral to the *Plans*.

From the Department's Curriculum Kindergarten – Year 12 Directorate, literacy and numeracy support for teachers is provided through the development of new materials and focused professional learning programs. Literacy and numeracy professional learning programs include the *Best Start* initiative, *Count Me In Too*, *Counting On*, *Literacy On Track*, *Literacy In The Middle Years* and *Reading Recovery*.

The Government's *Best Start* initiative is designed to identify the literacy and numeracy learning that children bring to school and to use this information to plan and deliver quality literacy and numeracy teaching in the early years of schooling. This initiative has the potential to dramatically improve educational outcomes for young Aboriginal learners through its ability to identify, intervene where necessary, and support their individual learning needs.

The learning frameworks used in *Count Me In Too* bring the latest in research on how children learn mathematics into practice in the classroom. They provide a basis for observing and understanding children's numeracy strategies. The *Count Me In Too Indigenous* program incorporates a specific focus on community involvement in supporting students' numeracy learning. Through this program, Aboriginal community members, Aboriginal workers within the school and members of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, work together with classroom teachers to develop culturally appropriate resources and teaching activities that are appropriate for producing solutions to identified student learning needs.

The *Counting On* numeracy program develops the professional knowledge of teachers in supporting middle years students (Years 5–8) to achieve significant mathematics outcomes. The program specifically focuses on identifying and responding to the needs of students experiencing difficulties in numeracy in the middle years.

The *Literacy On Track* program is offered to school teams of executives and K-4 classroom teachers and is designed to support them to effectively assess, plan and teach literacy.

The *Literacy In The Middle Years* program is offered to geographical school clusters of primary and secondary schools and is aimed at improving literacy outcomes for students in the middle years of schooling.

The *Reading Recovery* program is an intervention for students experiencing reading and writing difficulties after their first year of school (Year 1 students).

These literacy and numeracy programs have been particularly targeted towards low-socio-economic communities. A range of key factors influence the success of these programs with Aboriginal children, including:

- strong involvement of the Aboriginal community and effective relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators
- engagement of the Aboriginal community in planning and implementing literacy and numeracy programs
- explicit linking between literacy and numeracy learning and Aboriginal culture through the development of relevant and culturally appropriate activities that provide a sense of belonging and meaning for Aboriginal students
- effective leadership in the school, continuity of staff and a focus on professional learning that is sustained and builds capacity at the local level.

Issue 33, p 213 – The Committee considers that the regulatory requirements for community housing providers should be reviewed, in order to facilitate the provision of community housing to the Aboriginal community.

The NSW Government is introducing a new regulatory scheme for mainstream community housing, which will include the establishment of a Registrar and a new Regulatory Code. Mainstream community housing currently houses approximately 900 Aboriginal households, which is over 6% of all community housing tenants. The *Aboriginal Access Strategy* developed by Housing NSW in cooperation with the Aboriginal Housing Office supports culturally appropriate management practices in the community housing sector and aims to increase Aboriginal people's access to mainstream community housing.

The *Aboriginal Housing Act* includes a regulatory scheme specific to the Aboriginal Community Housing Sector in NSW. (See Issue 35, in relation to the Aboriginal Housing Office's efforts to reform the sector.) A small number of Aboriginal community housing providers receive funding or assistance from Housing NSW (Office of Community Housing). However, if new regulatory requirements to meet mainstream community housing standards were imposed, most Aboriginal community housing providers would require significant further capacity building to meet such standards.

Issue 41, p 252 – The Committee will consider the accessibility of community based sentencing options to Aboriginal offenders.

The NSW Government is giving ongoing consideration to making community based sentencing options more widely available. This is demonstrated by the Attorney General's recent announcement that the Circle Sentencing Program has been evaluated and will be strengthened (details provided at Issue 42).

The Circle Sentencing Program will have a target of 2 referrals per month in each location, totalling 22 matters per annum in each of the 9 locations across the state. This will commence from October 2008, and represents a 100% increase from the previous year's referral rates.

The Department of Corrective Services notes that the recent BOCSAR report 'Does a lack of alternatives to custody increase the risk of a prison sentence' (Crime and Justice Bulletin, January 2008) demonstrates that lack of alternatives to custody does not increase the risk of a prison sentence and that offenders in rural and remote locations are less likely to receive a custodial term than their metropolitan counterparts.

BOCSAR reports that Aboriginal offenders, within any area, are not more likely to be incarcerated than non-Aboriginal offenders when legally relevant factors are controlled for. The area of residence does impact upon incarceration but in the opposite direction. Aboriginal offenders from rural and remote communities are less likely than non-Aboriginal offenders to be incarcerated when legally relevant factors are controlled for.

Issue 43, p 260 – Evidence suggests that juvenile diversions are less likely to be granted to Aboriginal young offenders than to non-Aboriginal young offenders. The Committee will consider the availability and use of diversions for young Aboriginal offenders in the Final Report.

The NSW Government acknowledges that while concerted efforts have been made in recent years to reduce the high numbers of Aboriginal young people in the juvenile justice system, the number of Aboriginal young people in detention remains unacceptably high. The tightening of bail legislation has seen a significant increase in young people who have been bail refused over the past four years.

There are many agencies and support structures that may influence the number of young Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system including not only the Department of Juvenile Justice, but also the Department of Community Services, Department of Education and Training, NSW Police and the court system.

Young people mandated to the Department of Juvenile Justice's care make up a very small proportion of the young people who are involved in the criminal justice system. Amendments to the *Young Offenders Act 1997 (YOA)* that commenced on 1 May 2008 included an additional object of the Act to address overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in the criminal justice system. This is to be done by increasing further the use of youth justice conferences, cautions and warnings, which have been shown to be more effective in reducing re-offending of young people than traditional custodial options.

The Department of Juvenile Justice continues to work closely with NSW Police to encourage and facilitate increased use of the options for diversion under the YOA. Juvenile Justice provides a bail and remand service to support young people in meeting their bail conditions and to minimise the risk of further offending while they are on bail.

In addition, the Attorney General's Department has 20 Aboriginal Community Justice Groups across the state. The Department is working with each group to develop measurable and realistic plans that aim to prevent crime and improve the way that the criminal justice system works for Aboriginal people. The priorities for these plans are identified through comprehensive data analysis. Many of the 20 locations have identified inequitable access to the YOA as a priority area for their respective plans.

In response to this, a number of strategies are being trialled locally to increase accessibility to YOA options for eligible Aboriginal juveniles. These strategies include but are not limited to:

- Improved communication between the Police and Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) to maximise the identification of matters that are suitable to be dealt with under the YOA;

- Training for local Aboriginal people so that they can become eligible to deliver cautions under the YOA, with the aim of making those cautions more effective and relevant to the juvenile;
- Training of local Aboriginal people to become juvenile justice conference facilitators with the aim of making conferences more effective for Aboriginal juveniles;
- Increased community awareness about how the YOA operates and how eligibility is determined, especially regarding the fact that the juvenile must admit the offence to become eligible; and
- Improved utilisation of the 'cooling off period' by Police to ensure that juveniles are provided with an opportunity to seek quality legal advice.

Issue 44, p 264 – Evidence suggests that some Aboriginal offenders with a mental health disorder are being incarcerated due to a lack of adequate mental health services. The Committee is concerned about the wellbeing of these offenders.

The NSW Government provides a range of mental health services to people who are incarcerated. All individuals entering custody receive a full health assessment, including a mental health assessment. During this process, if mental health issues are identified, individuals are referred to further appropriate mental health care within the correctional system. This process includes mandatory suicide risk assessment. There are now in place a number of options to assist offenders with mental health issues, including assessment and advice to courts which is provided through the Community and Court Liaison Service and Mental Health Screening Units (MHSU). The Community and Court Liaison Service provides mentally ill offenders with local court-based diversion options from the criminal justice system towards treatment in mental health facilities in the community. The program reduces the number of people, including Aboriginal people, entering custody.

Ambulatory mental health services are provided at all major NSW correctional centres and all juvenile justice centres. In correctional centres and police cells, where specialist mental health staff are not present, primary health nurses provide mental health triage referral and coordinate care or transfer to an appropriate correctional centre for further assessment and treatment.

Inpatient services are currently provided through the 40 mental health beds at the new Long Bay Hospital. The new Forensic Hospital, to commence operations in late 2008, will provide 135 beds to deliver acute and rehabilitative care for women, aged inmates, men, young people and civilians. All of the above groups may include Aboriginal people.

There are two Mental Health Screening Units that:

- Screen offenders with mental health problems that enter the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre (MRRC) and the Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre.
- Assist the State-wide Community and Court Liaison Service with diversion from the criminal justice system of mentally ill offenders.
- Provide offenders with a management plan to assist in determining custodial placement and discharge planning and
- Build definite links with community mental health teams and hospitals to ensure continuity of care post release.

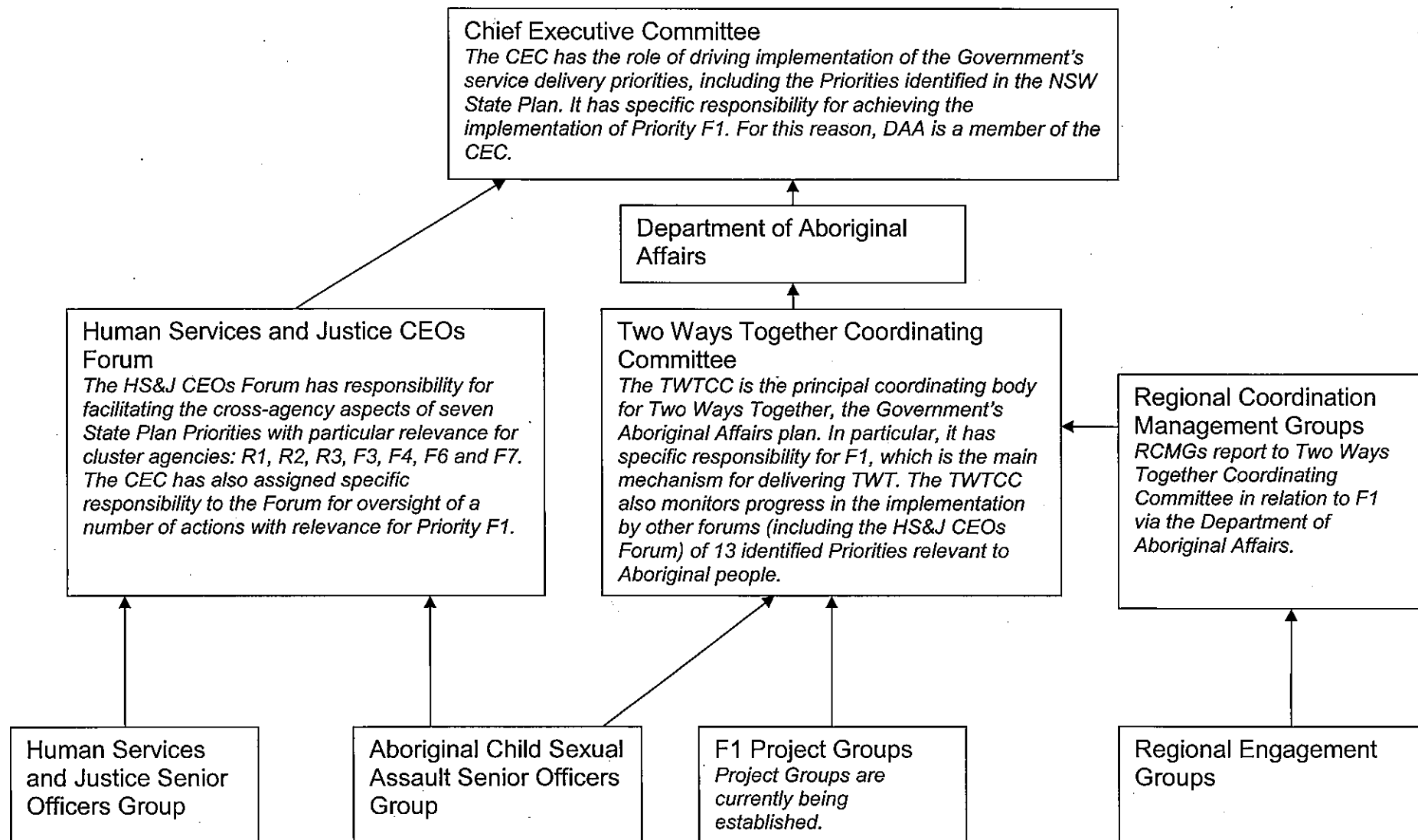
The Community Forensic Mental Health Service provides specialist forensic assessments and advice for individuals who are conditionally released into the community. This includes advice to Area Health Services with regard to high risk civilian mental health clients.

Other initiatives being undertaken by Justice Health to provide services to Aboriginal people with a mental illness include:

- Currently developing a project in Wellington specifically for the diversion of Aboriginal people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems from custody to services in the community. It should be noted that Justice Health employs two Aboriginal Health Workers at Wellington Correctional Centre.
- Justice Health has also recently established the Community Integration Team which aims to co-ordinate integrated, ongoing care for young people with mental health and/or drug and alcohol problems currently held in custody in NSW, upon their release, to aid their successful integration back into the community. Although this is not specifically targeted towards Aboriginal young people, two of the three regions in which this program is currently operating (Orana and Riverina) have a high percentage of Aboriginal young people on the program.
- Justice Health is currently in the process of recruiting to an Aboriginal Mental Health Clinical Leadership position which will be focussing on boosting services for Aboriginal young people with mental health and drug & alcohol co-morbidity issues in contact with the criminal justice system.
- At Grafton Correctional Centre Justice Health has established linkages with community based Aboriginal Mental Health Services to improve the continuum of care for Aboriginal people returning to the community.
- Justice Health works with the Department of Corrective Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice to ensure that Aboriginal people with mental health problems are released into communities where they can receive support from family and community mental health services. Under this arrangement, Justice Health contacts Aboriginal Mental Health Workers on release of patients with mental health problems.
- As part of the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Training Program, Justice Health currently has one Aboriginal mental health worker trainee. An additional Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Trainee position is currently being recruited to.

It should also be noted that the Department of Corrective Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice respectively employ psychologists and Aboriginal welfare workers that provide individual counselling, group programs and other services to Aboriginal people with mental health problems. Additionally, DCS has reallocated resources to place Psychologists into the community. This will ensure that offenders who are placed on community based orders are provided with appropriate service provision whilst in the community.

4. Schematic representation of decision-making structures for Aboriginal Affairs in NSW



OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE IN NSW – NSW Government suggested amendments and corrections.

Key: Words to be deleted or altered in Interim Report

Words to be added or used as a replacement for words deleted.

PAGE NO	ITEM NO	What the document states	Suggested Amendment/Correction
87	4.29	NSW Health has committed \$2 million over four years to manage the delivery of the Housing for Health program.	This is correct, however the program has been running for 10 years, with an approximate \$4.5 million contribution over that period.
90	4.43	Housing for Health has been delivered to over 12,100 houses.	As at June 2008, Housing for Health had been delivered to 2,081 houses since 1998.
203	8.19	In 2006 the Federal Government, NSW AHO, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Institute of Health and Welfare along with other state and federal departments committed to an Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information.....	To be added: However, under the new Australian Government, priorities have changed and this project is not proceeding.
205	8.27	Mr Taylor expressed concern about the Federal Government's commitment to targeting Aboriginal communities in rural and remote Australia, stating that much of the Indigenous population in New South Wales.....	Mr Taylor expressed concern about the Federal Government's commitment to targeting Aboriginal communities in remote Australia, stating that much of the Indigenous population in New South Wales..... (Deleted: rural and)
207	8.35	Community housing in New South Wales is provided to Aboriginal people by a number of service providers. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing NSW the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, and community housing providers 	Community housing in New South Wales is provided to Aboriginal people by a number of service providers. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal community housing providers (funded by the Aboriginal Housing Office) Mainstream community housing providers (funded by Housing NSW)

PAGE NO	ITEM NO	What the document states	Suggested Amendment/Correction																		
207	8.36	<p>Table 8.1 – Aboriginal community housing providers at June 2005775</p> <table><tr><th>Housing provider</th><th>Number of properties</th></tr><tr><td>Local Aboriginal land council properties</td><td>2,664</td></tr><tr><td>Other Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (non-LALC)</td><td>1,964</td></tr><tr><td>AHO Properties (managed by Housing NSW) Deleted</td><td>4156</td></tr><tr><td>Total properties</td><td>8,774</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Housing provider	Number of properties	Local Aboriginal land council properties	2,664	Other Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (non-LALC)	1,964	AHO Properties (managed by Housing NSW) Deleted	4156	Total properties	8,774			<p>Table 8.1 – Aboriginal community housing providers at June 2005775</p> <table><tr><td>Local Aboriginal land council dwellings</td><td>2,636</td></tr><tr><td>Other Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (non-LALC) dwellings</td><td>1,738</td></tr><tr><td>Total dwellings</td><td>4,374</td></tr></table>	Local Aboriginal land council dwellings	2,636	Other Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (non-LALC) dwellings	1,738	Total dwellings	4,374
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208	8.37	<p>The three components of community housing are public housing, Aboriginal housing and community housing:</p> <p>3. Community housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Community housing is an integral part of the social housing system and.....operations, in the main, have been at least partly subsidised by government (usually through funds provided under the Federal State Housing Agreement).	<p>The three components of social housing are public housing, Aboriginal housing and community housing:</p> <p>3. Community housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Community housing is an integral part of the social housing system andoperations, in the main, have been at least partly subsidised by government (usually through funds provided under the Federal State Housing Agreement). <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Community housing is made up of Aboriginal Community Housing and mainstream community housing. The Aboriginal community housing sector is primarily made up of small organisations and is</p>																		

PAGE NO	ITEM NO	What the document states	Suggested Amendment/Correction
			currently managing around 4,300 properties. The mainstream community housing sector is much larger, managing more than 13,000 properties.
208	8.38	<p>Housing NSW does not specifically provide housing for Aboriginal people, as it refers Aboriginal clients to the AHO.</p> <p>In answers to questions on notice the Aboriginal Housing Office outlined the significant increase in Aboriginal people waiting to be housed in 'mainstream' housing services in Housing NSW accommodation and consequent decrease in the number of people electing to be housed by the AHO, which has decreased the number of people waiting for AHO housing. Despite this, the AHO believes that the overall level of demand for Aboriginal social housing is continuing to increase, and it is being masked by the trend toward mainstream services.</p>	<p>Housing NSW provides housing for the general population, including Aboriginal people as well as refers Aboriginal clients to the AHO.</p> <p>In answers to questions on notice the Aboriginal Housing Office outlined that most Aboriginal people on the Housing NSW waiting list (which also incorporates the AHO waiting list) nominate to be housed by either the AHO or Housing NSW.</p> <p>Research into the social housing needs gap commissioned by the AHO and Housing NSW has found that the combined urban and remote social housing dwelling needs gap for Aboriginal household in NSW was 3,931 in 2006, increasing to 4,200 in June 2008 and is projected to increase to 4,657 dwellings in 2011.</p> <p>The number of Aboriginal people housed in 'mainstream' accommodation has increased significantly, assisting to address the AHO waiting list and masking the increasing level of demand for Aboriginal social housing.</p>
211	8.51	As noted earlier, community housing providers own and maintain approximately 4,000 properties, the majority of which are owned by Local Aboriginal Land Councils.	As noted earlier, Aboriginal community housing providers own and maintain approximately 4,300 properties, of which around 60% are owned by Local Aboriginal Land Councils and around 40% by other Aboriginal non-government

PAGE NO	ITEM NO	What the document states	Suggested Amendment/Correction
			organisations.
211	8.52	The New South Wales Government Housing Assistance Program provides funding to non-government organisations to deliver the Housing Communities Assistance Program. The scheme aims to provide quality of life for tenants by providing resources to develop community development activities. There are nine Housing Communities Assistance Programs currently being undertaken, these include Redfern/Waterloo, Riverwood, Minto, Rosemeadow, Cranebrook, Mount Druitt, Bidwill, Windale/Hamilton south and Bellambi.	<p>The Housing Communities Program (HCP) administered by Housing NSW is different from the Housing Aboriginal Communities Program (HACP) administered by the AHO and does not operate in relation to Aboriginal community housing providers– instead it is linked to Housing NSW Corporate Outcomes. Note: HACP is a funding program for the provision of housing for Aboriginal community housing organisations. It is administered by the AHO.</p> <p>The program name has been changed from <i>Housing Communities Assistance Program</i> to <i>Housing Communities Program</i> for the new 2009-2100 funding cycle.</p> <p>During 2009-2011 Housing NSW will provide grant funding under the Housing Communities Program to eligible non-government organisations or local councils to undertake a set of core activities to enhance social cohesion and community wellbeing within 10 key NSW locations affected by significant social, economic, environmental and/or housing change. The ten locations include Cranebrook/Kingswood Park, Minto, Mount Druitt, Rosemeadow/Ambarvale, Casino, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Southern suburbs of Wollongong, Redfern/Waterloo, and Riverwood.</p>
211	8.53	Mr Maxwell explained that the Housing Communities Assistance Program aimed to empower Aboriginal	Deleted as it refers directly to HCP and not HACP – see

PAGE NO	ITEM NO	What the document states	Suggested Amendment/Correction
		communities to 'actively and meaningfully participate in the decision making process' by facilitating partnerships with government and non-government sectors to develop financial sustainability. He highlighted the importance of this kind of commitment for a disadvantaged community such as Mt Druitt...	above.
211	8.54	The AHO has developed a number of policies to guide the provision of housing in New South Wales by Aboriginal community housing providers, through the Housing Communities Assistance Program. The Housing Communities Assistance Program policy 'sets out the minimum requirements for the management of rental housing under the Housing Communities Assistance Program and providers a starting point for Aboriginal Community Housing Providers to develop their own policies and procedures'.	The AHO has developed a number of policies to guide the provision of housing in New South Wales by Aboriginal community housing providers, through the Housing Aboriginal Communities Program. The Housing Aboriginal Communities Program policy 'sets out the minimum requirements for the management of rental housing under the Housing Aboriginal Communities Program and providers a starting point for Aboriginal Community Housing Providers to develop their own policies and procedures'.
212	8.58	Mr Maxwell reinforced this point. He told the Committee that housing programs in disadvantaged areas such as Mt Druitt have difficulty in becoming self-sufficient, as entrenched disadvantage is a major obstacle to running a profitable housing provider: [T]he expectation of various funding bodies that programs initiated and supported by HCAP will be financially self-sufficient fails to recognise the complex and entrenched disadvantage in the communities in which HCAP is funded—not simply in Mount Druitt but also across the 10 areas listed earlier. While every effort is made to develop broad partnerships and support for any project undertaken, the reality is that some.....	Deleted as this again refers to the HCP and not the HACP

PAGE NO	ITEM NO	What the document states	Suggested Amendment/Correction
213	8.59	Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) are responsible for nearly 60 percent of the housing that is provided by Aboriginal community housing organisations and own approximately 30 percent of the total housing stock used for social housing in New South Wales.....	Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) are responsible for nearly 60 percent of the housing that is provided by Aboriginal community housing organisations and own approximately 30 percent of the total Aboriginal housing stock used for social housing in New South Wales.....
215	8.71	Mr Taylor highlighted to the Committee the difficulty Aboriginal people have in accessing private rental properties, and also in purchasing their own home, which impacts on the high demand for public housing within the Aboriginal community.....	Mr Taylor highlighted to the Committee the difficulty Aboriginal people have in accessing private rental properties, and also in purchasing their own home, which impacts on the high demand for social housing within the Aboriginal community.....
216	8.76	Mr Shane Carriage of the Ulladulla Local Aboriginal Land Council, told the Committee that the LALC was the major community housing provider in the area, with 17 houses, compared to the AHO's four. Mr Carriage told the Committee that through the AHO, Housing NSW is contracted to monitor housing acquisitions and constructions, through an arm called Resitech. He argued that the process of acquiring new properties was now controlled by Resitech, who decide which properties it will buy, rather than allowing the ACHP to provide a list of potential properties it would like to acquire.....	Comment: Resitech is contracted by the AHO to provide project management services. Resitech may suggest to the AHO a shortlist of potential properties but does not make any decisions. The AHO makes the final decision in consultation with the housing providers on which properties to acquire.
219	8.87	Mr Taylor highlighted to the Committee that it is difficult to quantify the level of overcrowding in the private rental market; despite the AHO's role in monitoring and oversight of some private market, in this case Aboriginal community	Mr Taylor highlighted to the Committee that it is difficult to quantify the level of overcrowding in the private rental market;

PAGE NO	ITEM NO	What the document states	Suggested Amendment/Correction
		controlled, providers.....	Deleted – “despite the AHO’s role in monitoring and oversight of some private market, in this case Aboriginal community controlled, providers” – Aboriginal community housing providers are NOT in the private rental market.