

INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

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15 August 2008

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

By Facsimile: (02) 9230 2981

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families service group we congratulate you on the recently published Interim Report on the Inquiry into overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. The report is indicative of your Committee's thorough and timely investigation of the issues that are currently being faced by our state's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island (ATSI) communities.

The six themes that are identified in the interim report are integral to any discussion of overcoming disadvantage in ATSI communities. UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families suggest that the Standing Committee on Social Issues conduct the next phase of its Inquiry using the additional theme of 'prevention and early intervention'. The importance of prevention and early intervention strategies in service provision was acknowledged in the Committee's Interim Report. We believe that it requires an increased focus in the next phase of the Inquiry because prevention and early intervention are an essential foundation for any successful service provision model.

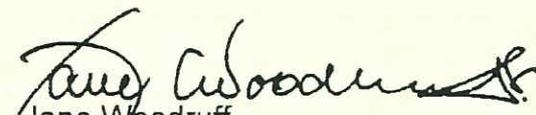
One of the themes listed for further review is 'employment, mentoring and training'. The provision of adequate training for ATSI community members who are seeking appropriate employment is discussed as an issue for consideration under this theme. This focus should be broadened to consider the need for cross-cultural training to be undertaken by employer groups so that they may more effectively meet the needs of potential ATSI employees. (Pages 13-14 in our initial submission provide further details on this point.)

We welcome the Committee's decision to review the NSW Government's implementation of its *Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities* and the outcomes of this part of the Inquiry will be closely followed by the Service Group.

The Committee's identified strategy "to bolster existing men's and women's groups, and appropriate programs to assist parents, in particular young parents" is also welcomed. In explanation of this strategy, the Committee's awareness of culturally appropriate fathers' support services should be applauded. However this is only one aspect of family support service provision. Culturally appropriate services are required at every level, from universal prevention services to intensive or casework support. In particular appropriate prevention and early intervention services must be acknowledged in any discussion of strengthening family well-being in ATSI communities.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Interim Report. We look forward to the release of the Final Report. If you require any further information or would like to discuss any aspect of our response, please do not hesitate to contact Rita Perkons, Director of Social Justice Partnerships & Communication on email rperkons@burnside.org.au or phone (02) 9407 3201.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Woodruff
Director

UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families