
Chapter 10 Summary of issues for consideration

A number of themes became evidence throughout this inquiry. The Committee has clustered together the issues that have been raised throughout this Report thematically, although they have been discussed in the context of their specific sectors in the body of the report. This approach will assist the Committee to address the broader issues of Indigenous disadvantage comprehensively in the Final Report.

10.1 The themes that have become apparent throughout the course of the inquiry to date are:

- measuring outcomes
- coordinated service delivery
- partnership in service delivery
- funding
- employment, mentoring and training of Aboriginal people
- specific strategies.

Measuring outcomes

10.2 The effective measurement of outcomes, or the success of programs and services was a key issue raised throughout this inquiry. In relation to a number of service delivery areas, the Committee heard that programs and strategies were not effectively monitored to determine if targets are being met and the life expectancy gap being closed.

10.3 These issues are drawn from Chapters 3, 5 and 9: Service delivery; health and wellbeing; and incarceration and the criminal justice system, respectively.

Issues for consideration – Measuring outcomes

- 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 – Issue 2, page 54
- The Committee will examine mechanisms for improving the reporting and accountability processes for community organisations – Issue 12, page 100
- The Committee will review the methodology used to record the incidence of child sexual 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 – Issue 15, page 108
- 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 – Issue 17, page 119

- The Committee believes that the lack of Aboriginal specific criminal justice priorities in the New South Wales State Plan needs to be addressed – Issue 38, page 232
- 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 – Issue 39, page 235
- 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 – Issue 45, page 268

Coordinated service delivery

- 10.4** The Committee heard that services are often delivered in an ad-hoc manner, or in such a fashion that they overlap or create significant gaps in service provision. These concerns included issues relating to the implementation of pilot programs and how they may be replicated more broadly to address the needs of a large number of Indigenous people over a longer period of time. Inquiry participants told the Committee that service delivery at all levels of government and in conjunction with non-government agencies and the private sector required a more coordinated approach.
- 10.5** These issues are drawn from Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8: Environmental health and infrastructure; health and wellbeing; education; employment; and housing.

Issues for further consideration – Coordinated service delivery

- 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. – Issue 8, page 92
- The Committee will consider the need for a co-ordinated approach to identify communities' transport requirements and tailor additional services to meet those needs. – Issue 11, page 99
- The Committee intends to examine the issue of improving the relationship between government and non-government services in more detail – Issue 18, page 120
- 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. – Issue 21, page 144
- The Committee will review appropriate service delivery models to effectively address obstacles to Indigenous employment. – Issue 25, page 177
- 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 – Issue 29, page 194

- 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 – Issue 35, page 220
- 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 – Issue 36, page 224
- 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 – Issue 40, page 248

Partnership in service delivery

- 10.6** The need for provision of services by government, but in conjunction with the Aboriginal community, was highlighted repeatedly in evidence. The Committee was told that communities need to feel real ownership over both the problem and the kind of service developed to address it.
- 10.7** These issues are drawn from Chapters 3, 5, 7 and 8: Service delivery, environmental health and infrastructure; health and wellbeing; employment; and housing.

Issues for further consideration – Partnership in service delivery

- 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. – Issue 4, page 67
- 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. – Issue 16, page 118
- 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. – Issue 30, page 195
- The Committee will examine the issue of community participation in the housing design and delivery process. – Issue 34, page 217

Funding

- 10.8** It is not surprising that the funding of programs and services to address Indigenous disadvantage is a key issue, given the high levels of need within the Aboriginal community.

- 10.9 These issues are drawn from Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9: Service delivery; environmental health and infrastructure; education; employment; housing; and justice and incarceration.

Issues for consideration – Funding

- 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. – Issue 1, page 45
- The Committee will look at the effectiveness and assessment of funding programs that are temporary and intermittent in nature. – Issue 3, page 59
- The Committee will examine the need for ongoing funding for environmental health programs, after funding for the Aboriginal Community Development Program ends in 2009. – Issue 7, page 87
- 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. – Issue 14, page 108
- The need to provide and fund long-term education services with Indigenous specific focus and the necessary funding will be considered – Issue 22, page 148
- The Committee will examine the funding of employment programs to ensure skill development and retention rates – Issue 26, page 185
- 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 – Issue 32, page 207
- 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. – Issue 37, page 225
- The Committee is concerned that there are insufficient resources available for Circle Sentencing courts and highlights this issue for discussion. – Issue 42, page 254

Employment, mentoring and training of Indigenous people

- 10.10 The Committee heard that, across the majority of sectors, there is a strong need for additional Aboriginal employees and in order to increase the numbers and retention of Aboriginal employees, mentoring and training programs.
- 10.11 These issues are drawn from Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 9: Health; education; employment; justice and incarceration

Issues for further consideration – employment, mentoring and training

- The Committee will review the adequacy of training and scholarships for Indigenous health workers in more detail. – Issue 19, page 123
- 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. – Issue 23, page 156
- 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. – Issue 24, page 165
- 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. – Issue 28, page 192
- 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. – Issue 27, page 187
- 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. – Issue 31, page 197

Specific strategies

- 10.12** During the course of the Inquiry, a number of strategies and programs were brought to the attention of the Committee as being in need of review. These strategies range from amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, to the provision of education programs specifically targeting literacy and numeracy rates.
- 10.13** These issues are drawn from Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9: Service delivery; environmental health and infrastructure; education; employment; housing; and justice and incarceration.

Issues for further consideration – Specific strategies

- The Committee will investigate further the issue of an independent body for Indigenous representation – Issue 5, page 72
- 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 – Issue 6, page 80
- The provision of accessible Internet to Aboriginal communities will be considered.– Issue 9, page 93

- The Committee will consider the appropriateness of driver training programs aimed at assisting members of the Aboriginal community to gain drivers licenses – Issue 10, page 99
- 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. – Issue 13, page 105
- 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. – Issue 20, page 140
- 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. – Issue 33, page 213
- The Committee will consider the accessibility of community based sentencing options to Aboriginal offenders – Issue 41, page 252
- 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 – Issue 43, page 260
- 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 – Issue 44, page 264

Committee comment

10.14 The Committee is committed to addressing each of these issues in the Final Report. The second and final stage of the Inquiry will commence with the tabling of this report and will revolve around the issues summarised in this chapter.

10.15 During the second half of the Inquiry, we will also inquire into and report on the following terms of reference;

- 1 (a) policies and programs being implemented both within Australia (States/Territories/Federal) and internationally aimed at closing the gap between the lifetime expectancy between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people (currently estimated at 17 years), with the assessment of policies and programs including but not limited to: New Zealand, Canada, North America, South America, and also considering available reports and information from key NGO and community organisations,
- (c) previous Social Issues committee reports containing reference to Aboriginal people – and assess the progress of government in implementing adopted report recommendations,
- (d) the Federal Government intervention in the Northern Territory and advise on potential programs/initiatives that may or may not have relevance in terms of their application in New South Wales,

(e) opportunities for strengthening cultural resilience within Aboriginal communities in New South Wales with a focus on language, cultural identity, economic development and self determination

(f) the experiences of the outcomes of the COAG Murdi Paaki trial but also take into account the other COAG trials occurring across Australia and their outcomes/lessons learned.

10.16 The Committee will consult on these issues over the next five months and will present its Final Report to the Legislative Council 30 November 2008. The Committee anticipates that this report will focus on the areas outlined above to present informed, specific recommendations to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, through the Parliament.

10.17 The Government's response to the recommendations in the Final Report is expected six months from the date of tabling. It will tell us how the Government intends to implement our recommendations. The Government response is published on the Committee's website www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/socialissues.