

- **COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION**

- **INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY**

- **SUBMISSION**

**From: Department of Family and Community Services
(Please Note: Attachments for this Submission are held in the
Indigenous Funding Inquiry Library)**

**Submission No.: IFI/SUB/0007
Date Received: 07/04/2000**

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Commonwealth Grants Commission
Cypress Court
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Canberra ACT 2612

Dear Mr Searle,

SUBMISSION TO THE INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY

Thank you for inviting the department to provide a submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission's Indigenous Funding Inquiry.

The department has responsibility for a range of services and programs which all contribute in some way to the wellbeing of Indigenous people: income support; income supplements; child support; housing; Commonwealth rehabilitation services; child care; and family relations. In this submission, the focus is on the programs within the areas designated in your information booklet: housing and infrastructure; employment and training; health; and education.

The attachments to this submission provide information on the department's programs and initiatives which address Indigenous need, either specifically or through mainstream activities:

- Attachment 1 Indigenous Housing
- Attachment 2 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
- Attachment 3 Jobs, Education and Training Program
- Attachment 4 Community Development Employment Projects
- Attachment 5 Youth Allowance
- Attachment 6 Disability and Carer Support
- Attachment 7 Family Allowance Statement of Care Pilot
- Attachment 8 Child Care Program – Indigenous Programs
- Attachment 9 Family and Community Services/Centrelink Indigenous Specific Service Delivery Initiatives

Please direct any enquiries about this submission to Tricia Rushton, Assistant Secretary, Community Branch on 6212 9150 (email, Tricia.Rushton@FaCS.gov.au) or Stephen Smythe, Director, Indigenous Housing Section on 6212 9363 (email, Stephen.Smythe@FaCS.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Jeff Whalan
Deputy Secretary
Community And Business Strategy

6 April 2000

Encl.

INDIGENOUS HOUSING

Introduction

The Commonwealth, state and territory housing ministers met in 1996 and 1997 and made a number of resolutions to improve Indigenous housing, including giving priority to health related aspects of Indigenous housing, such as water supply and waste disposal, and to improving program administration and data collection to ensure future funds are targeted to areas of greatest housing need.

The ministers established the Commonwealth State Working Group on Indigenous Housing (CSWGIH) to develop practical strategies to implement their resolutions. The CSWGIH has representatives from the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and all state and territory housing authorities. Many of FaCS' initiatives and activities in the area of Indigenous housing are undertaken within the CSWGIH context.

Commonwealth review of Indigenous housing

Improved coordination of Indigenous housing programs at the Commonwealth level is considered an important step towards achieving better housing outcomes for Indigenous people. The 1996 review of the Commonwealth's two programs, Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP – administered by FaCS under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA)) and Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP – administered by ATSIC), found that current administrative arrangements overlap and are inefficient, and that this situation limits the government's capacity to determine Indigenous housing policy directions and funding priorities. It was suggested that it might be appropriate to refocus the programs within and between the states and territories, with the emphasis on allocating resources on the basis of need and the lack of alternative housing in rural and remote areas.

The review recommended that the two programs, which have similar objectives, should have a coordinated administrative structure with pooled funds, under the responsibility of a single Commonwealth agency. Commonwealth ministers are considering the options for coordinating Indigenous housing programs within one agency.

The review recognised the importance of maintaining a role in Indigenous housing for states and territories. However, it also recognised that reforms need to be implemented by states and territories if program funds are to be more effectively used in terms of outcomes. The major considerations in this regard were:

- continued funding for Indigenous housing through the CSHA be tied to Commonwealth and state and territory Indigenous housing bilateral agreements;
- continued funding be based on enhanced outcomes and performance monitoring; and
- the majority of new capital spending should occur in rural and remote areas where mainstream public housing is not available, that is, areas of greatest need.

Indigenous housing programs and funding

ARHP provides \$91 million per annum specifically to help address the high level of Indigenous housing disadvantage. In 1989/90, ARHP funding increased from \$52 million to the current level. Over this period ARHP funding has been quarantined from funding reductions applied to most other areas of social housing. Release of ARHP funds each year to states and the Northern Territory is conditional upon ministerial approval of strategic plans. The plans show how funds are distributed, and focus on ensuring resources are allocated on the basis of greatest housing need.

ARHP funding is directed to construction of new houses and to provision of essential health related housing infrastructure, maintenance and upgrading of housing stock, and funding of strategies to enhance the housing management capacity of Indigenous communities, for example, training in asset and tenancy management. The Commonwealth considers that ARHP funds should be targeted to areas of greatest need, namely rural and remote areas. While the number of newly built or purchased houses has reduced under the ARHP, upgrades and maintenance of existing houses has increased the overall numbers of habitable houses.

Current distribution of ARHP funds across the states and Northern Territory is based on the 1987 survey of housing need. A new multi-measure model for assessing Indigenous housing need is being developed (see pp3-4) which may inform the distribution of ARHP funds in the future.

Indigenous people living in urban areas have access to public and community housing and other support, such as rent and bond payments, and home purchase assistance through mainstream CSHA assistance. Under the 1999 CSHA, all states and territories are required to provide assistance according to level of need. This is being undertaken in various ways, such as through refinement of waiting list systems to prioritise assistance to those with high or special needs, including the special needs of Indigenous people.

Also, under 1999 CSHA bilateral agreements being negotiated between the Commonwealth and each state and territory, strategies are being developed to ensure Indigenous people receive equitable access to mainstream funded assistance. These strategies include:

- providing more culturally appropriate housing support, advice and advocacy services; and
- developing an "urban living skills program" designed to assist Indigenous tenants move to urban areas from rural communities.

Levels of Indigenous housing need

There have been three major surveys of Indigenous housing need over the past 12 years:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing and Accommodation Needs Survey in 1987 (conducted by the Aboriginal Development Commission);
- Housing and Community Infrastructure Needs Survey in 1992 (conducted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)); and
- Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey in 1999 (conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for ATSIC).

The surveys and 1996 Census data show that Indigenous households are about twice as likely as other Australian households to be in need of housing assistance. Analysis of 1996 census data¹ indicates that 11% of Indigenous family and group households nationally suffer from moderate overcrowding² and 7% suffer from high overcrowding³. The percentage of moderate overcrowding is slightly higher in rural areas than in major urban and other urban centres and the highest level of high overcrowding (47%) is in rural areas of the Northern Territory (p28). Seven per cent of Indigenous family households contain two or three families, with the highest rate of 14% in rural areas (p57). The Census data also reveal high rates of Indigenous family households living in improvised dwellings or tents, or sleeping out – 86% of these households are in rural areas (pp5-6).

According to the Census data, affordability of housing for Indigenous Australians also varies between urban and rural areas. The proportion of Indigenous households in poverty before housing⁴ increases from 10.5% in major urban centres to 13.2% in other urban areas to 17.7% in rural areas. Rates of poverty after housing⁵ are generally similar in major urban and other urban centres (17.3% and 17.8% respectively), but lower in rural areas (11.9%) (p73). In urban areas, the average affordability deficit⁶ of community housing tenants is \$50 per week. In rural areas, the average affordability deficit is about \$35 per week (p94).

Indigenous Australians can experience considerable problems accessing the private housing market. In many rural and remote areas there is no rental market. In other areas a limited supply of suitably sized accommodation and discriminatory practices by landlords and agents mean that people who do gain access are often in inadequate accommodation, boarding houses, or caravan parks with reduced tenancy protection.

Home ownership can be an option for dealing with housing affordability and access issues. However, this is difficult for Indigenous people, who generally have low incomes and face complex land tenure issues which limit financing options. 1996 Census results⁷ show that the levels of home ownership and home purchasing for Indigenous households are well below those for other Australian households. While about 71% of non-Indigenous households lived in homes owned or being purchased by their occupants, the corresponding figure for Indigenous households was only 31% (p23).

¹ *Indigenous Housing 1996 Census Analysis*, Dr Roger Jones, for ATSIIC, 1999.

² One additional bedroom is needed to satisfy the occupancy standard, *Indigenous Housing 1996 Census Analysis* (p27).

³ Two or more bedrooms are needed to satisfy the occupancy standard, *Indigenous Housing 1996 Census Analysis* (p27).

⁴ A household whose income **before** paying housing costs is less than its non-housing income need is said to be in **poverty before housing**, *Indigenous Housing 1996 Census Analysis* (p72).

⁵ A household whose income **after** paying housing costs is reduced below its non-housing income need is said to be in **poverty after housing**, *Indigenous Housing 1996 Census Analysis* (p72).

⁶ For households in poverty before housing, affordability deficit = housing costs; for households in poverty after housing, affordability deficit = housing costs - (after tax income - non-housing income need), *Indigenous Housing 1996 Census Analysis* (p93).

⁷ *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, ABS and AIHW, 1999.

Measuring Indigenous housing need

A multi-measure approach to determining Indigenous housing need is being developed to take account of variation in need across different locations⁸. This approach considers measures of housing need under four interrelated dimensions:

- housing adequacy (measures of homelessness, overcrowding, services and stock condition);
- affordability (measures of household deficits and deficits met from rent rebates),
- appropriateness of housing; and
- security of tenure.

The extent to which each of the measures can be assessed, and the consequent value of the measures, depends on the availability and reliability of relevant data. At present, there are gaps in data for a number of the measures, and no data for others.

Emerging Indigenous housing need is another area identified in the multi-measure approach. Although it cannot be measured at present, it is an area which is likely to have significant impact in the future. Emerging need is linked to the rapidly growing Indigenous population and high rate of family formation, and any measurement tool would need to incorporate a predictive element to ensure future need can be assessed as accurately as possible. (A copy of the multi-measure paper is at Attachment A.)

Following development of this multi-measure model for determining Indigenous housing need, experimental estimates⁹ were prepared using the model. These estimates, based on a number of assumptions about acceptable housing and related infrastructure standards and occupancy levels, use available data to demonstrate how the model could be used to quantify Indigenous housing need. (A copy of this paper is at Attachment B.)

It is important to ensure that the model is built on realistic and appropriate standards and that it will provide reliable estimates of the extent of Indigenous housing need in all areas of Australia. As a result, further work to test and validate the assumptions of housing and related infrastructure standards and occupancy levels used in the multi-measure need model is being done. The first step in this process is a report prepared by Street Ryan and Associates Pty Ltd, *Estimates of Indigenous Housing Needs: Towards a Modelling Approach for Funding Allocation* (Attachment C). This report is being considered before any additional work is instigated to fine tune the data requirements for the model.

Indigenous housing bilateral agreements

Indigenous housing bilateral agreements provide a framework for the Commonwealth and state or territory to share responsibility for housing outcomes for Indigenous people by working together to improve and simplify the planning, coordination and delivery of

⁸ *Measures of Indigenous Housing Need and Resource Allocation in the ARHP and CHIP*, Dr Roger Jones, Quantitative Evaluation and Design (QED) Pty Ltd, Professor Max Neutze, Urban Research Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, and Dr Will Sanders, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, August 1998.

⁹ *Experimental Estimates of Indigenous Housing Need*, by Dr Roger Jones, Quantitative Evaluation and Design (QED) Pty Ltd, September 1998.

Indigenous housing programs. The agreements aim to help address Indigenous housing need through:

- better value for money by pooling of funds at the state and territory level;
- leaner and more efficient administration of Indigenous housing programs;
- no duplication between programs and departments;
- coordination of all key players, and clarification of roles and responsibilities;
- effective decision making role for Indigenous people at state and territory and community levels;
- accountable and efficient management of houses by Indigenous community housing organisations (ICHOs); and
- better housing outcomes for Indigenous people.

Indigenous housing bilateral agreements have been signed between the ATSIC Chairperson and Commonwealth and state or territory housing ministers in the Northern Territory (June 1995), Western Australia (December 1997), New South Wales (November 1998) and South Australia (April 1999). A copy of the South Australia agreement is provided as an example for your information (Attachment D).

A Torres Strait housing and infrastructure bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland housing ministers, the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the Queensland Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, the Chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Chairperson of the Island Coordinating Council was signed in January 2000. Under this agreement, there is improved collaboration between agencies and peak organisations in program planning and delivery of housing and infrastructure services, including water supply, waste management and sub-divisional roads.

Negotiations are continuing on bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and mainland Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Indigenous housing information

The CSWGIH has developed an *Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information*⁶ in recognition of the many gaps and inconsistencies in Indigenous housing data. The agreement is signed by FaCS, ATSIC, ABS, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), TSRA and all state and territory housing agencies. The long term goal of the agreement is to introduce a means of obtaining nationally relevant Indigenous housing administrative data which is consistent and compatible with other housing and related health and community services data collections.

The agreement specifies development and ongoing review of a national Indigenous housing data dictionary which will set out agreed data definitions, classifications and standards, and development of a national Indigenous housing minimum data set. Both the dictionary and minimum data set will be implemented incrementally as data availability and quality are improved.

Information collected under the agreement will be used to develop strategies to improve Indigenous housing data at the national level and to improve access to quality information

for providers of housing assistance. Improved data collection will enable greater Indigenous housing program accountability, and better assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of program outcomes.

Indigenous housing performance measurement

The CSWGIH, with assistance from AIHW, is developing performance indicators to assess the overall effectiveness and efficiency of Indigenous housing assistance. Effectiveness relates to housing outcomes and the extent to which the assistance is meeting its objectives; efficiency relates housing outputs to inputs and considers whether resources are being used to best advantage in producing outputs.

AIHW has undertaken two preliminary performance measurement data collections. These collections identified the gaps in the available program data, and established the need for national data standards, coordination and commitment to the collection of performance data. The gaps show where additional training and resources are needed to assist ICHOs in the collection of more reliable data. The value of performance indicators in assessing housing performance at the State and Territory levels, and at the ICHO level, is expected to increase over time as more data, of better quality, becomes available.

Indigenous community housing organisations

The Indigenous community housing sector has a critically important role in delivering housing to Indigenous people. Yet the sector faces a number of problems which impact on the capacity of many ICHOs to properly manage dwellings. An ICHO is any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation that manages housing or provides support services. ICHOs often take on several roles including asset and tenancy management, community management, community welfare and municipal services.

FaCS funded the Community Housing Federation of Australia to undertake a 'mapping' exercise to develop a comprehensive database of ICHOs and their housing stock. The project identified the diversity of Indigenous community housing, and provided a broad picture of the extent and location of Indigenous community housing in each state and territory. The database was used as the starting point for CHINS 1999, and the ABS will update it periodically. ATSIC is developing protocols for use of the database. From the database, it is estimated that there are 1,000 ICHOs nationally providing approximately 15,000 dwellings, of which 12,000 are in rural and remote areas. States have recognised the need to consolidate the Indigenous community housing sector and are pursuing regionalisation and rationalisation of ICHOs, where appropriate, to provide economies of scale and better management of assets.

ICHOs cannot generate enough income to cover the recurrent costs of housing — maintenance, insurance, rates and charges, and administration costs. Like other forms of social housing, Indigenous community housing requires some form of subsidy to maintain viability.

A significant proportion of the Indigenous housing stock, particularly in rural and remote areas, is in poor condition. This stock attracts low rents because of the standard of dwellings and the associated health-related infrastructure. Furthermore, Indigenous people living in rural and remote communities have a reduced capacity to pay rent due to the extraordinarily

high costs of life essentials. Though eligible to apply for Commonwealth Rent Assistance (RA), residents are generally unable to access the payment because rents fall below the threshold to qualify for RA.

Current asset management practices in the Indigenous community housing sector do not measure up to those applied elsewhere such as the mainstream community housing sector or in conventional public housing. Many ICHO housing managers do not have the skills or administrative infrastructure to manage assets and tenancy adequately, and they do not have access to training to acquire the necessary skills. ICHOs also experience difficulties attracting and retaining trained staff.

State and territory building legislation, local council regulations and building codes which set minimum standards for building design and construction have failed to ensure that Indigenous housing, especially in rural and remote areas, is designed and built to safe and sustainable standards. Poor housing construction and design creates a management and financial burden for ICHOs in terms of additional maintenance and replacement costs. Furthermore, residents' health and safety are put at risk when living in substandard and crowded conditions. There is also an additional cost to government as scarce resources for Indigenous housing are wasted through bad design and construction practices.

Commonwealth, state and territory housing agencies have recognised the problems experienced by ICHOs and have been developing and implementing a number of strategies to strengthen the sector:

- capital/recurrent funding model for ICHOs – flexibility to allow ARHP funds to be used for housing maintenance and management functions as well as for construction of new houses;
- *National Skills Development Strategy for Indigenous Community Housing Management* (discussed below);
- best practice principles and model for housing management – linking provision of recurrent funds to charging and collecting reasonable and affordable rents, development of asset management plans and development of asset and tenancy management skills;
- *National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Indigenous Housing* (discussed below);
- Centrepay, Centrelink's voluntary rent deduction scheme for income support customers – tenants of public and community housing organisations can ask Centrelink to direct a portion of their income support payments automatically to their housing organisation to pay for rent and housing related services such as electricity, gas and water.

Housing for health

There is statistical data that suggests Indigenous people are likely to suffer from more health problems than other Australians, and that these problems start early and continue throughout their lives. In most states and territories, babies born to Indigenous mothers are more than twice as likely to die at birth compared with babies born to non-Indigenous mothers¹⁰.

¹⁰ *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, summary booklet, 1999 ABS and AIHW, p12.

In 1991-96, Indigenous males' life expectancy at birth was estimated at 56.9 years compared with 75.2 years for all Australian males. Indigenous females' life expectancy at birth was estimated at 61.7 years compared with 81.1 years for all Australian females¹¹. Available information suggests Indigenous people have higher rates of death from cancer and are more likely to have infectious diseases compared with non-Indigenous people. Respiratory disease, injury and dialysis were among the most common reasons for Indigenous people being admitted to hospital (in 1996-97 almost 40% of all hospital procedures on Indigenous people were for dialysis). Also many Indigenous people live with long-term health conditions such as asthma and diabetes which reduce the quality of their lives but there is little data available.¹²

The poor standard of Indigenous peoples' living environments is a contributor to these health problems. Basic environmental health infrastructure, including adequate sanitation, clean water and power supplies, and appropriate and fully functioning houses are essential if there is to be a significant and sustainable improvement in the health of Indigenous people, particularly those living in remote areas. In recognition of this, there is now a strong focus on quality construction and maintenance of houses and infrastructure.

Housing ministers are committed to an integrated approach to delivering housing and related health services to Indigenous people. Opportunities for greater coordination and collaboration in policy development and administration and delivery of health and housing programs are being explored on an ongoing basis.

National Skills Development Strategy for Indigenous Community Housing Management

The CSWGIH prepared the *National Skills Development Strategy for Indigenous Community Housing Management* in collaboration with the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH). When the strategy is implemented, it will be important to establish links between it and development of the national training strategy for Aboriginal health workers. These links will emphasise the close relationship between adequate housing and good health, ensure integration of housing and health outcomes for Indigenous people and reduce overlap and duplication in development and delivery of education and training for management committees, community members and workers.

The strategy was designed to produce the following key outcomes:

- capacity amongst Indigenous community housing providers to manage housing;
- efficient and appropriate application of resources to skill development;
- improved access to relevant training programs; and
- a skilled workforce with portable qualifications and improved employment prospects.

¹¹ *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, summary booklet, 1999 ABS and AIHW, p12.

¹² *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, summary booklet, 1999 ABS and AIHW, pp14-16.

National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Indigenous Housing

The *National Framework for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Indigenous Housing* aims to achieve safe, healthy and sustainable housing for Indigenous people. It complements mainstream regulatory building mechanisms, but has no legislative basis, and its success will depend largely on the goodwill of those involved in the delivery of Indigenous housing and their willingness to embrace its principles and products. The framework was introduced by Senator Newman at a workshop in Canberra in September 1999.

The framework includes the *National Indigenous Housing Guide* which is structured around the nine healthy living practices (washing people; washing clothes and bedding; removing waste safely from the living area; improving nutrition – the ability to store, prepare and cook food; reducing crowding and the potential for the spread of infectious disease; reducing the negative contact between people and animals, vermin or insects; reducing the negative impact of dust; controlling the temperature of the living environment; reducing trauma around the house and living environment), and provides practical advice on the design, construction and maintenance of Indigenous housing. Copies of the framework and guide are provided at Attachment E.

Indigenous housing lifecycle modelling project

There is broad understanding of issues contributing to the housing and health problems of Indigenous people, but the factors critical to greater sustained quality and habitability of housing in different locations and climate conditions are not fully understood. FaCS has initiated a project to identify the costs and elements that influence the lifecycle of dwellings in remote Indigenous communities, and develop a data set and system for modelling the lifecycle and condition of Indigenous housing on an ongoing basis.

The data set and modelling system will inform development and implementation of strategies to extend housing lifespans and limit lifecycle costs. The project will describe variables that account for heterogeneity across communities, for example, location specific conditions, describe variables subject to human intervention to improve efficiency and effectiveness and allow housing cost to be analysed. In addition, criteria will be developed for judging whether housing is appropriate to its environment and uses, and some initial estimates will be made of relationships between longer housing lifespans and community wellbeing.

Improving nutrition: towards better designs for storing, preparing and cooking food in indigenous communities

FaCS, in partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, has commissioned Healthabitat to research and manufacture a prototype kitchen based on the *National Indigenous Housing Guide* specifications. The kitchen project, to be trialed in two locations, will use innovative health hardware (appliances, new and emerging materials etc) and will be evaluated over a twelve-month period.

The project's outcome will be a kitchen design that enables Indigenous people to store, prepare and cook food in accordance with healthy living practices. The information will be available to supplement the relevant sections in the *National Indigenous Housing Guide* and, if funding is available, tenders for a limited production run of the project could be considered.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands regional stores policy

In December 1999, the Nganampa Health Council and the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council submitted a proposal to FaCS' Family and Community Networks Initiative seeking funding to develop an Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands (AP Lands) regional stores policy. The project aims to improve the health of the Anangu people by making nutritious food affordable and accessible on the AP Lands. In addition to developing the regional stores policy, a training management strategy and community education and consultation process will be undertaken as part of the project.

FaCS has sought to develop a whole-of-government approach to the proposal with other relevant Commonwealth and state departments. Partners currently include Commonwealth Departments of Transport and Regional Services, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, and the South Australian ATSIC office. There is in-principle support from all these departments, and negotiations are underway on possible funding arrangements.

Attachment 2

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) is a jointly funded Commonwealth/state program that commenced operation in 1985. SAAP is closely associated with the housing and infrastructure service sector covered by the inquiry's terms of reference. The program provides a range of post crisis and transitional accommodation and support to assist homeless persons, or individuals and families at risk of homelessness, towards independent living. The combined funding allocation to the program for 1998-99 was approximately \$230m.

The SAAP Coordination and Development Committee (CAD), comprising senior officers from each state and territory and chaired by the Commonwealth, is responsible for oversight of SAAP. State and territory departments of community services are responsible for ongoing program management and for establishing new services.

SAAP services assist the following target groups:

- young people (15-25);
- single men only;
- single women only;
- families;
- women escaping domestic violence; and
- cross target/multiple/general.

The main SAAP service delivery models are crisis/short term accommodation, medium/long term accommodation, day support, outreach support, and telephone information/referral.

SAAP funds around 1200 services, including 86 Indigenous managed services and another 41 services that particularly target Indigenous homeless persons. Indigenous clients comprise 13% of the SAAP client base. Due to the high ratio of Indigenous SAAP clients, Keys Young was contracted to conduct research on Indigenous homelessness and their report, *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and its possible implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*, was released in 1999. (A copy of the report has already been provided to the inquiry team.)

The report found that Indigenous homelessness is different in kind and is experienced differently from mainstream homelessness. The Memorandum of Understanding 2000-2005 (SAAP IV) between the Commonwealth and states and territories recognises that the risk of homelessness among Indigenous people is greater than that faced by non-Indigenous people.

Appendix 1 of the Indigenous homelessness report consists of a profile of Indigenous SAAP clients derived from the SAAP 1996-97 data collection. The profile reveals that the proportion of SAAP clients who are Indigenous varies considerably across the country from a high of 37% in the Northern Territory to a low of 4% in Victoria. Two-thirds of Indigenous

people using SAAP services are female. In comparison to non-Indigenous clients of SAAP, Indigenous clients are more than twice as likely to be women escaping domestic violence.

SAAP is currently establishing a range of innovative services for Indigenous clients experiencing domestic violence in rural and remote areas of Australia under the banner of the Commonwealth's *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative. Recent research indicates that family violence within Indigenous communities is associated with distressingly high homicide rates, in some states 25-33% higher than that of the rest of the community.

SAAP data collection and estimation of need for Indigenous communities

The third annual report of the SAAP national data collection was released on 3 April 2000. Reports for each state and territory will be released later in the year. The annual reports provide information, collected by SAAP services, on people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The report presents the findings from the analysis of four components of the 1998-99 SAAP national data collection:

- the client collection – information about all clients receiving support through SAAP;
- the administrative data collection – general information about SAAP agencies;
- the unmet demand collection – measures unmet demand for SAAP services over two weeks in November; and
- the casual client collection – information about one-off assistance provided to homeless people over two weeks in May.

Management of the SAAP national data collection is the responsibility of the SAAP National Data Collection Agency (NDCA), in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Data has been provided by 95% of SAAP agencies in 1998-99. The proportion of SAAP clients who have consented to the provision of their personal data to the NDCA remains at 75% in 1998-99. The NDCA considers the SAAP data collection to have a high level of support and a high level of accuracy.

The SAAP national data collection holds a wealth of information on SAAP Indigenous clients. A monograph analysing this data is planned for later this year. Clearly, the data on Indigenous clients provides some indication of levels of need for support and housing infrastructure around Australia. The data on where support is provided is readily available for each state and territory and can be aligned to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission regions if the postcodes for each region are provided.

There are two main challenges to accurate use of SAAP Indigenous data for determining regional needs. First, the limited range of locations of SAAP agencies (almost one-third (32%) of agencies are located in New South Wales and 27% are in Victoria) and second, the often transient nature of the Indigenous client base.

JOBS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM

The Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program is not targeted specifically to Indigenous customers. However Indigenous customers do join the program, particularly those in remote or rural areas.

The March 2000 changes to the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, where the CDEP Participant Supplement payment is paid under the primary social security payment, allows a greater number of Indigenous customers to qualify for JET participation.

How JET works

JET is a voluntary program which aims to improve the financial circumstances of eligible customers by assisting with skills development and/or aiding entry or re-entry into the workforce. It assists recipients of certain government income support payments to improve their financial situation by achieving higher levels of earnings from employment.

JET recognises that there are a number of major barriers that may affect the ability of some customers to join the paid workforce. JET assesses and helps people overcome these barriers by providing structured assistance which includes development of a plan to achieve labour market readiness; and as appropriate, access to education, training and employment assistance; referrals to government and community services, and where required, child care assistance.

The access that JET provides to child care assistance greatly assists remote and rural customers by providing temporary child care facilities where permanent child care may not be available.

How needs are measured

The JET program measures the needs of customers on an ongoing basis. Throughout JET history, pilot projects, research and evaluations have been and are still being conducted. Feedback from customers and the Centrelink JET network provides valuable insights into the needs of various communities.

How funds are allocated

Centrelink delivers the JET program on behalf of the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). Centrelink has advised that services and financial assistance are allocated on a pro-rata population basis.

JET child care

FaCS has responsibility for assisting JET clients to obtain child care places. If a place in a Commonwealth-funded child care service is not available immediately, the department will, if possible, arrange JET-funded temporary child care for clients while they participate in the JET program, in accordance with state and territory licensing regulations.

There is no specific funding allocated for particular client groups; JET has a single appropriation for child care. Indigenous JET customers and (following ministerial approval on 1 September 1999) ABSTUDY recipients are able to access JET child care assistance in all forms. In remote regions, particularly on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities, provision of child care usually involves the setting up of temporary care facilities known as JET crèches, sponsored by local organisations.

These facilities are arranged (in conjunction with the community) by JET Child Care Resource Workers (JETCCRW) – community workers who assist JET clients to obtain child care so that they are able to access education, training and employment opportunities.

When JET has been able to fund an on-site crèche, there has been very active usage by Indigenous parents due to the close proximity of their children and the placement of Indigenous crèche workers.

The temporary nature of JET funding is a potential difficulty. However, this has effectively created an incentive for some Indigenous organisations to begin investigations about establishing and funding a permanent child care site in their communities. This is an initiative which could usually be expected to include some Commonwealth funding.

Other initiatives have been:

- marketing JET specifically to Indigenous communities, including more traditional communities in remote areas as well as metropolitan Indigenous communities;
- funding Indigenous Resource Workers in several states and territories to implement a program of introduction to child care for Indigenous parents by:
 - setting up playgroups;
 - raising awareness of the different child care service types;
 - providing an education program on Indigenous cultural needs for the child care services in the region; and
 - encouraging indigenous people to train as carers;
- working with state and Commonwealth officers in the child care area to look at more innovative options.

Attachment 4

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS

The community development employment projects (CDEP) scheme is administered by the aboriginal and torres strait islander commission. However, this department has introduced a number of measures to assist CDEP participants. These measures address long standing inequities between income support recipients and CDEP participants by:

1. Paying a CDEP participant supplement of \$20 per fortnight, similar to the work for the dole supplement;
2. Providing access to social security "add-ons" to allowee participants;
3. Introducing a more uniform treatment of CDEP wages for new lone parent participants.

The supplement is being paid retrospectively with effect from 20 march 1999, to reduce any disadvantageous impact from the delayed passage of legislation. From 20 march 2000, allowee participants are eligible for the range of additional entitlements and benefits available to income support recipients. This includes rent assistance, bereavement payments, automatic access to family allowance, health care cards and pensioner concession cards, telephone allowance and pharmaceutical allowance.

A more uniform treatment of CDEP wages has been introduced for new pensioner participants from 20 march 2000. Existing lone parents on CDEP will retain their current income treatment for as long as they remain on CDEP continuously. Even with the new income treatment, new lone parent participants will remain better off financially by participating in CDEP than by remaining solely on income support.

Entry to CDEP is open, for the first time, to other pensioners such as disability support pensioners and age pensioners.