

COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION

INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION

From: Dr Tim Denbon

“Health Needs of the Community”

Submission No.: IFI/SUB/0038

Date Received: 03/07/2000

HEALTH NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Submission from: Dr Tim Denbon *et al*

Maningrida 28 June 2000

Integration of environmental and public health with “the clinic”. The reality is that health services are funded only to provide basic medical services, but factors such as:

- Housing and housing maintenance
- Community development, education and vocational training
- Health promotion
- Early intervention programs, especially for mental health and substance abuse.

are vitally important for improved health.

We encourage the Collins report recommendations to be taken up by the Governments, as the links between poor health & inadequate educational standards are very obvious.

From a GP perspective, we encourage initiatives to increase numbers of GP's practising in remote areas. However we feel the numbers need to be increase if you want to give Aboriginal health care access equal to that achieved in mainstream Australia. We strongly believe that doctors in the bush need to move out of the “consultant” role and into the role of a true general practitioner, as it is only by doing this that inroads into the huge burdens of disease can be managed. We would argue that increasing GP's & reducing nurses is a more cost effective and appropriate way of addressing the challenges of Aboriginal health. It is not that we are “anti nurse”. But I think Governments understand that GP services provided by non – GP's will always be substandard.

At the same time, we would argue strongly for increase numbers of indigenous health workers. Community based workers have knowledge of culture, language, family culturally appropriate management, etc. We recognise there have been many problems recruiting and retaining Aboriginal health workers and we feel the roles and responsibilities need to be redefined. We do not have to reinvent the wheel – people like Cathy Abbott have been writing about this for years.