

COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION

INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY

FINAL SUBMISSION

From: CITY OF KALGOORLIE – BOULDER - WA

Submission No.: IFI/SUB/0075

Date Received: 03/01/2001

OUT00/709381: DJM/PSQ: 02211

Mr D Martin

21 December 2000

Mr A G Morris
Chairman
Commonwealth Grants Commission
Cypress Court
5 Torrens Street
CANBERRA ACT 2612

Dear Mr Morris

Re: Indigenous Funding Inquiry – IIF 2000/2

I refer to the above and advise as follows:

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder is a progressive regional local government who has first hand knowledge and experience with regard to Indigenous issues, and it is with this in mind that a submission to the Indigenous Inquiry is attached.

Regardless of the outcomes from the Indigenous Funding Inquiry, the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder requests that funds be channeled through Council as a pilot project for a period of a two-years by which an initiative as detailed within the submission can be tested and benchmarked for future applicability to local government. With this in mind a copy of the minutes from the meeting that began Council's involvement with Indigenous issues is also attached.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Discussion paper. Should you have any further queries please contact Mr Damien Martin on (08) 9021 9636.

Yours sincerely

P A ROB
Chief Executive Officer

Encl: Submission
Minutes Special Meeting of Council 30.11.1998

Submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission – Discussion Paper IFI 2000/2

on the

Draft Report on the Indigenous Funding Inquiry

Prepared by the City of Kalgoorlie Boulder
577 Hannan Street Kalgoorlie
Western Australia

Background

Consistently until November 1998 Council was receiving numerous complaints in respect of Aboriginal fringedwellers (in excess of 60 per week; note also persons referred to as fringedwellers are people who have left their remote communities either on a permanent or temporary basis). Many of the complaints related to problems associated with alcohol, health-related conditions, anti-social behavior, camping, littering and vandalism. Attempts at reducing the incidence of antisocial behavior and illegal camping was fruitless because of limited options.

In a bold move in November 1998 the Council supported the establishment of an Aboriginal Community Facility (see the full report –attached). Overnight the problems decreased, litter was being picked up and trust was developed between Council and the fringedweller group. The ACF was initiated not as a housing estate but as a stop gap between encouraging people back to their communities and homeless deprivation.

Council was placed in the position of becoming the lead coordinator in the establishment of a fringedweller camp due to reluctance and/or the inability of existing agencies to take action. The concept worked and was the turning point towards developing workable solutions and was also the catalyst in bringing all parties together to being the process of reconciliation.

Initial funding for the project was drawn from the Red Cross, Safer WA, mining companies and \$50,000 seed funding from Council. Council in conjunction with the Aboriginal Affairs Department funded an Aboriginal Community Facilities Coordinator position for one year to work with the people.

Initially the camp was set-up with basic toilets, sleeping sheds, fire pits and rubbish disposal facilities. Lighting, bow shelters, security fencing, solar panel lighting, drop pit toilets, and a solar operated shower block followed. Firewood is provided also on site, as the regular supply of firewood, one of the critical needs. Currently many agencies use the ACF as a point for the delivery of key services.

Council is now involved in funding works to another two camps on the edge of town. One camp receives basic services, such as carting water out to the camp on a regular basis. A second camp, for use by the Central Desert Communities, has been set up with the same level of basic infrastructure (lighting toilets, shelter, firewood etc) to which the initial camp was set up and has the capacity to cater for up to 300 visitors.

All the issues have not been resolved, but the success of the project has seen the number of complaints fall to about 3 per month. Other Councils have watched our project with interest and are investigating establishing camps using our model.

Similarly, many discussions and visits to remote communities have taken place following the beginning of the ACF project, with current discussions centering upon assistance with road maintenance, airport maintenance, parks and gardens initiatives and dog control.

Core Issues

The City is committed to reconciliation and the Aboriginal Facilities Project is just one way that Council is meeting the real and immediate needs of the remote Aboriginal People and homeless fringedwellers.

The project has come about solely because there are members of the community who are not being serviced by the existing funding arrangement, funding organisations or conduits.

Discussions have been held with the members of remote communities in order to access how Council can attempt to help better the lot for these people. Funding continues to be an issue and in the words of the people from the communities “the existing funds are not hitting the mark”.

Existing infrastructure funding is being channeled through consultants and as a result a significant proportion (antidotal evidence suggests that in some cases that this has been up to 37.5%) of the total expenditure is not reaching the targets. Similarly existing funding mechanisms through agencies are not meeting the expectations and desires of the

residents of remote communities. Presently funding for remote communities is not sufficiently allocated towards local government.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission Draft Report of the Indigenous Funding Inquiry comments that the issue for local government is in the difficulty to raise rate revenue which when combined with legal impediments makes it difficult to effect the delivery of services and infrastructure (page 48-9 clause 24(ii)). The existing grant loading for servicing remote communities does not satisfy minimum maintenance cost requirements

With sufficient resources directed towards local government it is considered that a significantly greater number of outcomes could be achieved in terms of infrastructure provision and servicing. In this way a switch of funding towards local government would more adequately meet the grass roots needs of Aboriginal People.

Such an initiative could be initiated as a case study (or trial) under which a new regime of Local Government - Indigenous relationships could be developed. Any consideration of funding could be targeted towards key infrastructure development, setting in place care and maintenance regimes for new infrastructure and typical local government service provision.

The Report correctly comments on page 110 that jurisdictional partitioning, regional isolation and funding constraints impact upon the provision of infrastructure services in small communities. These three issues alone convey completely the core issues of deprivation in respect to infrastructure provision and services for remote communities.

Conclusion

It is perhaps directly as a result of the success of the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulders' ACF project that it is strongly believed that local government must be both permitted and sufficiently funded with respect to playing a more significant role in servicing Aboriginal Communities.