



# Grannies act to “save our children”

They call themselves the Grannies Group. They come from Adelaide and want Federal Parliament to listen to their ideas on what can be done to better help disadvantaged Indigenous people living in their city.

The Grannies Group started out as a few friends getting together to help Aboriginal women re-entering the community after prison terms. They soon expanded into a general support network for Aboriginal families in Adelaide.

“With our extensive knowledge of what is going on in our community we decided some time ago that we were not going to sit by and watch the desperate plight of our children and our grandchildren getting worse,” the Grannies Group said.

Based on their knowledge and experience, the Grannies Group has now made a submission to a parliamentary inquiry being conducted by the House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee, chaired by Lou Lieberman (Member for Indi, Vic). The inquiry is considering the needs of Indigenous people living in urban areas.

As these grandmothers recently explained to the Committee in Adelaide, they now devote most of their spare time to helping young Indigenous people. They help young Aboriginals with drug and alcohol problems and provide assistance to women and children facing domestic violence. They also promote the local Aboriginal community’s

cultural heritage through school visits, story telling, dance sessions, language groups and advice on traditional parenting skills.

## They want greater community involvement in setting service delivery priorities.

As part of their volunteer work, for which they receive no public funding, the Grannies Group lobbies State and Commonwealth Departments to get assistance with family and community problems. They also put their own time into counselling and provide support for professional counsellors who work with young Aboriginals facing difficulties. The Group holds regular meetings to inform themselves about issues relevant to their work and seeks to develop effective ways to deal with problems faced by young people in their community.

The Grannies Group has made a range of proposals for improving the delivery of

services to Indigenous people and for enhancing the involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making that affects their local communities. In particular, they want boards of agencies that deliver services to Indigenous people to be drawn from the relevant communities and they also want greater Indigenous community involvement in setting of service delivery priorities.

In relation to jobs, the Grannies Group suggests that the Federal Government should investigate the feasibility of setting up community-based support systems for Indigenous apprentices. They also propose wider dissemination of information on education and training programs available to young Indigenous people, such as the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme.

The Group highlighted their particular concerns about drug abuse among young people. “The death rate of our children from drug abuse is appalling and unacceptable,” the Group told the Committee. “If the death rate continues we shall lose a whole generation. Recently, three young people from the same family died of drug overdoses.”

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The Grannies Group has called for the establishment of an Indigenous Detoxification Centre fully staffed by Indigenous people. They also have proposed a significantly expanded outreach program on alcohol abuse to include country areas such as the Riverland, Port Augusta, Whyalla and the Murray Mallee.

**“Committed and willing people can make a difference.”**

Maintenance of Aboriginal culture is seen by the Group as crucial in helping to deal with problems and to foster cohesiveness and a sense of belonging within the community.

“Actions that will help our people include promotion of pride in aboriginality among our young and re-association with our culture and land.”

The Grannies Group is keen for people who are responsible for delivering services to the community to spend more time in the community. “I think in every government job a person should have a day out of their job when they revisit and find out what is going on on the ground, because they just lose touch and lose the reality of what is happening in the community,” one Group member told the Committee.

After meeting the Grannies Group, Committee Chair, Lou Lieberman said that he has been heartened by the constructive

approach that people are taking to the inquiry and to the problems of their local communities.

“The Grannies Group is an inspiration to all Australians,” Mr Lieberman said. “They clearly show that committed and willing people in the local community can make a difference. They also are an example of the strength of the Aboriginal community in urban areas.”

**For a copy of the Grannies Group submission and the transcript of their hearing with the Committee:**

Visit: [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia)

Call: (02) 6277 4559

Email: [atsia.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:atsia.reps@aph.gov.au)

## Strengthening ties with **East Timor**



*José Ramos Horta (right) meets the Deputy Chair of Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Colin Hollis (left) and the Deputy Chair of the Defence Sub-Committee, Roger Price (centre). Photo: AUSPIC*

East Timor's Foreign Affairs spokesman, José Ramos Horta, held discussions with Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee during his recent visit to Australia. Among the matters discussed were East Timor's progress towards independence, the upcoming elections in August, the development of infrastructure in the fledgling nation and the plight of refugees. Through regular meetings with representatives of other countries, Members and Senators on the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee keep up-to-date with regional and world affairs.