

acknowledge past policy and program failures. The 2001 Gordon Inquiry² into Aboriginal child abuse and family violence in Western Australia made 197 findings and recommendations. The Inquiry's report, *Putting the Picture Together*, highlights government failure to deal with the difficult and complex problems that many Indigenous people experienced.

The Government accepted the challenge posed by the Gordon Inquiry. The Government supported most of the Inquiry's recommendations and has developed strategies³ to provide greater protection and security for Aboriginal children and adults through introducing programs for strengthening Aboriginal families and communities, and by resourcing agencies to be more responsive to children and families' needs.

Structures and processes for integrating government effort and for working in partnership with Indigenous people are the cornerstones of the Government's response to the Gordon Inquiry.

This response included a commitment of \$75 million for systematic structural changes and support to ensure that the commitment to implement many of the Gordon Inquiry responses would be sustainable.

The Government developed the State Homelessness Strategy, through which Indigenous people have benefited from over \$32 million in new responses to homelessness in Western Australian, including increased support for public and private tenants, increased investment in social housing, and specialist support services for children and young parents.

The Government has implemented the Town Reserves Regularisation Program linking town reserves to mainstream power, water, and sewage services. The Government has developed and implemented new approaches to education in remote communities, and has improved health services in remote communities.

The Western Australian Government has been working cooperatively with the Australian Government in trialling the whole-of-government approach at the COAG trial in the Tjurabalan region of the East Kimberley. This project demonstrates the potential for governments working in partnership with Aboriginal people to address the problems that they identify as priorities and in ways that will hopefully streamline government service delivery.

Sustaining and Growing the Reconciliation Process

Reconciliation is not the sole responsibility of governments. However,

² Gordon, S., Hallahan, K., & Henry, D. 2002, *Putting the Picture Together, Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Western Australia.

³ Government of Western Australia, 2002, *Putting People First, The Western Australian State Government's Action Plan for Addressing Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities, The Response to the Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*.

governments have a role in leading and promoting Aboriginal reconciliation. The Western Australian Government takes this responsibility very seriously, and funds a number of initiatives to promote reconciliation. Sadly, racism and discrimination are still part of the daily experience of many Indigenous people in Western Australia, and the Government is targeting schools with programs that increase children's knowledge of Aboriginal culture and heritage and that promote understanding and mutual respect. Many Aboriginal people are at the forefront of raising awareness and promoting ways to stop racism and discrimination.

The Government has also developed, under the auspices of a Steering Committee chaired by the Premier, which included community and Indigenous representatives, a comprehensive Anti-Racism Strategy.

One component of this Strategy is the WA Charter of Multiculturalism, the purpose of which is to explicitly recognise that the people of Western Australia are of different linguistic, religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, and to promote their participation in democratic governance within an inclusive society.

The Statement of Commitment is referred to in the Charter, and recognition of the continuing rights and responsibilities of Aboriginal people as the first peoples of Western Australia and as citizens is a fundamental principle underlying the Charter.

The Government provides encouragement to the business sector, community organisations, families, and individuals to become involved in reconciliation activities. The high demand for Aboriginal heritage and reconciliation grants administered by the Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) shows that community interest in reconciliation is still strong. DIA issues grants for activities that increase people's awareness of Aboriginal culture and promote relationship building between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (for example, cultural days, art exhibitions, women's and youth camps, and Indigenous interpretive signage). The Western Australian Government is committed to maintaining these programs in the future.

Enhancing Economic Independence

The Western Australian Government is keen to improve the governance capacity of Indigenous leadership bodies and corporations as a means of improving economic independence. The Western Australian Government supports the principle of Indigenous self-determination. The Government also acknowledges that Indigenous communities require sound governance structures, skills, and resources for effective decision-making.

Many government and non-government agencies in Western Australia are providing services that assist Indigenous communities improve governance at the regional and local level. For example, DIA is working with Noongar community action groups in the south-west of the State to develop their governance capacity. Community action groups are local Indigenous leadership and governance bodies that are formed according to equal or balanced family

representation. Also, the Western Australian Government is co-funding a long-term national project on Indigenous governance that is being conducted by Reconciliation Australia and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University to learn more about Indigenous governance models. Furthermore, building capacity and governance and developing economic opportunity and development for Indigenous people are two of the key themes that the Western Australian Government is negotiating with the Commonwealth regarding the intergovernmental agreement on Indigenous affairs.

The Western Australian Government is working in partnership with Aboriginal leaders and regional and local Indigenous organisations to develop alternative representative structures through which the Government and Aboriginal people can engage and negotiate agreements and strategies for improving Indigenous peoples' quality of life. The Government supports developing Indigenous leadership. It also acknowledges the difficulty many communities have in nurturing their leaders when often the communities' priorities are to deal with the daily challenges of survival. The Government recognises the immense responsibility and pressure that Indigenous leaders have to bear. More Indigenous leaders are needed, and it is incumbent upon governments and other institutions such as corporations, and the Indigenous community itself to encourage and support Indigenous leaders. Indigenous leadership is crucial for driving the reconciliation process.

The Western Australian Government recognises the leadership role that Indigenous women have in governance and the reconciliation process. The Government established the Western Australian Indigenous Women's Congress to promote the participation of Indigenous women at every level of government decision making on issues affecting them, their families and communities.

The Western Australian Government acknowledges the cultural and spiritual importance of land to Indigenous Western Australians. The Government also acknowledges Indigenous people's traditional ownership of land. Redressing Indigenous people's dispossession of their land is an important step to reconciliation. Land ownership is also important for wealth creation and economic independence. The Western Australian Aboriginal Lands Trust manages around 27 million hectares of land which is for the use and benefit of Aboriginal people, and which is mostly leased to Aboriginal community organisations. The Government is committed to transferring the title of this land to Indigenous individuals or communities so that they can share in the benefits of land ownership.

In addition, the Western Australian Department of Planning and Infrastructure has commissioned research to find out about the individual and communal land tenure options available to Indigenous people. The Government also aims to settle Native Title claims through agreements and avoid expensive litigation, thus facilitating Indigenous people's access to traditional land and waters. Dealing with land issues is fundamentally important for reconciliation.

Conclusion

The Western Australian Government remains committed to Aboriginal reconciliation. Symbolic and practical approaches are needed to achieve reconciliation. The Western Australian Parliament has apologised to the Aboriginal people of Western Australia for past injustices committed against them and the Government is taking practical steps to address Indigenous disadvantage. The Government is taking a long-term outlook on reconciliation - dealing with the effects of colonisation, dispossession, and past human rights abuses on Indigenous people will take time. The four pillars of reconciliation will continue to influence the development of government policy as it affects Indigenous Western Australians.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Reconciliation in NSW

The NSW Government is actively committed to bridging the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This paper traces the commitment of the NSW Government to recognising the injustices of the past and to establishing partnerships between the Aboriginal community, government agencies and the private and community sectors to advance the rights of the Aboriginal community, and overcome the inequity that Aboriginal people continue to face.

A concrete agenda is in place in NSW to achieve progress across the four pillars of reconciliation that are the focus of this workshop: overcoming disadvantage; sustaining and growing the reconciliation process; promoting recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights; and enhancing economic independence

Overcoming Disadvantage

Two Ways Together 2003-2012

Two Ways Together is the NSW Government's ten-year plan to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. Making Services Work establishes what needs to be done, and New Ways of Doing Business sets out how this will be done.

Doing well in school, having a supportive family, a safe home in a safe community, being healthy and having a valued cultural identity are important factors in people's lives. Aboriginal people are disadvantaged in all these areas compared to the general population. Action needs to be taken to reduce the gaps in areas such as health, education and housing. *Two Ways Together* is working to close the gaps and improve Aboriginal people's lives. What's different about this plan is that it works from the ground up-Aboriginal people working as equal partners with government, deciding what needs to be done at

a local and regional level to improve lives-rather than government dictating from the top.

At the State level, Aboriginal representative bodies and government agencies are working as partners to set priorities and implement the different parts of *Two Ways Together*, using a joined-up approach to provide the services Aboriginal people need. Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government have identified seven main action areas: Culture and Heritage; Economic Development; Education; Families and Young People; Health; Housing and Infrastructure; and Justice.

Each priority area is accompanied by an action plan that identifies desired outcomes and the steps necessary to achieve them. Actions range from long-term, big-picture items such as the Aboriginal Education Review, to short-term actions such as conducting educational programs and campaigns. In most instances, more than one agency and/or organisation will be responsible for achieving each outcome.

There is a strong focus on involving and supporting Aboriginal people, and the actions will work to secure positive flow-on effects across the spectrum of disadvantage over the long-term.

The NSW Government's 2004 Budget provides \$40 million over four years for programs that support *Two Ways Together*. Targeted whole-of-government evidence-based programs are being put in place to deliver on-the-ground services to Aboriginal people. The programs seek to respond to the areas of need identified for NSW by the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report. Practical initiatives to reduce incarceration, stop family violence, improve literacy, numeracy and school retention, prevent middle ear infections, increase employment and improve living conditions are being put in place, including the following:

- Target 2000 children with practical assistance for learning in primary school and continue to support them in high school;
- Provide 640 scholarships to assist Aboriginal students in years 9 to 12 to remain in school;
- Test over 65,000 children for middle ear infections;
- Provide 80 new teaching and nursing positions through Aboriginal cadetships; and
- Improve electrical and plumbing safety and functionality in 670 homes.

A biennial report showing what progress has been made will go to the Premier. These reports will decide what the next priorities are and what needs to be done to make the plan work. Chief executive officers of government agencies will be accountable for meeting targets under *Two Ways Together* through performance agreements with their ministers.

Two Ways Together is informed by the findings of the Productivity Commission's Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report and the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) Principles on Indigenous Service Delivery.

Two Ways Together incorporates the national indicator framework developed by COAG to measure government progress on reducing Indigenous disadvantage as well as further NSW indicators specifically developed to reflect particular issues in this State.

Justice System Case Study

Aboriginal people are overrepresented in all justice systems across Australia. Too many Aboriginal people are in custody too often. NSW is working to ensure the Justice system is more responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Justice Plan

In response to recommendations from the National Indigenous Deaths in Custody Summit (1997), NSW has developed an Aboriginal Justice Plan. The Aboriginal Justice Plan addresses the Aboriginal social, economic and cultural issues, justice issues, customary law, law reform and funding. The Aboriginal Justice Plan will be implemented through *Two Ways Together*.

Circle Sentencing

NSW is currently conducting a two-year trial of circle sentencing for Aboriginal offenders. The NSW model involves offenders applying to a court to have their matter dealt with by circle sentencing after pleading guilty or being found guilty by the court. If their application is successful, the circle sentencing court will then be convened in a community setting where Aboriginal community members and the magistrate sit in a circle to discuss the offence and the offender. The circle will also talk about the background and the effects of the particular offence and will endeavour to develop a sentence that is best for that offender.

The trial is currently being applied across four NSW communities.

Second Chance Program

The NSW Department of Corrective Services has developed and implemented a Second Chance Program. The program targets young first-time inmates in the west and north-west of NSW by establishing a diversion from the prison environment. The Mobile Outreach Program is a cultural link program that provides minimum-security inmates with opportunities to work with Aboriginal communities and to acquire or enhance cultural knowledge and skills in cultural heritage management.

Sustaining and Growing the Reconciliation Process

The NSW Premier was the first Premier to apologise to Aboriginal

people for the Stolen Generations. The NSW Parliament has apologised to Aboriginal people for the stolen Generations, on behalf of the people of New South Wales.

On 28 May 2000 the NSW Premier demonstrated his personal commitment to reconciliation when he took part in a People's Walk for Reconciliation. Over 300,000 people participated in the walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This event served as the catalyst for reconciliation walks held in other State capitals and in many smaller regional and rural towns.

NSW Reconciliation Council

NSW was the first government to provide funding for its peak State reconciliation body, which in NSW is the NSW Reconciliation Council. The Council works to ensure the reconciliation process continues at a local and State level. The NSW Government provides annual recurrent allocation of \$109,000, with an enhancement of \$400,000 over 4 years starting 2003, to the NSW Reconciliation Council. The NSW Reconciliation Council works with reconciliation councils in other States, government agencies and other organisations to continue the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (1991-2000).

The NSW Reconciliation Council has developed strategic objectives to advance reconciliation in NSW. These objectives involve:

1. **Developing the People's Movement:** to initiate and support projects that increase public involvement in reconciliation, create partnerships between other organisations and Local Reconciliation Groups, and increase the numbers and members of such Groups.
2. **Leadership:** to promote leadership of reconciliation in local communities, and to provide leadership on reconciliation at the State level.
3. **Communication:** to initiate and support projects which educate and promote the goals of reconciliation and facilitate the dissemination of reconciliation information.
4. **Cultural Renewal and Economic Independence:** to initiate and support projects that enable Aboriginal people to revisit traditional land, custom, practice and belief, and which will contribute to creating a sustainable economic base for Aboriginal people in the local area.

2005 Freedom Ride

The NSW Government was a major sponsor of the 2005 Freedom Ride that retraces the original 'Freedom Ride' trip of 1965 on its 40th anniversary. The 2005 Freedom Ride was instrumental in raising awareness of and support for reconciliation and how reconciliation can advance in the future, particularly among young people.

Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices Policy

The NSW Government recognises the unique position of Aboriginal peoples in the history and culture of NSW. Aboriginal people are the original owners of the land and it is important that this special position is recognised and incorporated into official protocol. To assist NSW public sector agencies to observe the appropriate protocols for the recognition of Aboriginal people at official events or at events where the NSW Government is a major sponsor, the NSW Government has adopted an Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices policy and payment guidelines.

By incorporating Aboriginal cultural practices into official events, agencies are able to:

- Recognise and pay respect to Aboriginal peoples, cultures and heritage;
- Communicate Aboriginal cultural practices to the broader community to promote respect and understanding;
- Demonstrate that Aboriginal cultures are living through maintenance and practice of ceremonies and protocols; and
- Demonstrate recognition of Aboriginal people's unique position that can assist in building relationships and partnerships.

The NSW Government encourages all agencies to utilise the protocols to ensure appropriate recognition of Aboriginal people and to demonstrate to the broader NSW community that Aboriginal cultures and cultural practices have survived and continue to be practiced.

Promoting the Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights

Representation in a Post-ATSIC Environment

Getting representation right is fundamental as the platform for ensuring meaningful participation of Aboriginal people in decision-making. Hugh McKay summarises this in saying:

All we have to remember is that each one of us wants to be taken seriously. Each one of us wants to be heard. Each one of us wants our needs, our values, our points of view, to be taken into account. That is all reconciliation has ever been about.⁴

Following the abolition of ATSIC, NSW Aboriginal peak bodies convened the Our Future Our Voice summit in October 2004 to discuss the future of Aboriginal leadership and representation. The summit was a landmark event, bringing together grassroots leaders and community people from all over

⁴ Hugh McKay "Reconciliation & Traditional Australian Values" Speech from 1997 Australian Reconciliation Convention.

the State to discuss options for representation to give voice to Aboriginal people across all levels of government. Consultation is continuing to determine the most effective representation structures and mechanisms, with advice expected May 2005.

Access to and Ownership of Traditional Lands:

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (ALRA) is an important milestone in the history of the NSW reconciliation movement. The dispossession of Aboriginal people from their land is acknowledged in the Act's preamble, which states:

- Land in the State of New South Wales was traditionally owned and occupied by Aborigines;
- Land is of spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance to Aborigines;
- It is fitting to acknowledge the importance which land has for Aborigines and the need for Aborigines of land; and
- It is accepted that as a result of past government decisions the amount of land set aside for Aborigines has been progressively reduced without compensation.

The Act recognises the cultural, spiritual, social and economic importance of land to Aboriginal people and that previous government acts have taken that land away. The ALRA creates an Aboriginal Land Council system to address Aboriginal land rights. The ALRA allows land councils to access private land for hunting, fishing and cultural purposes.

As part of the NSW Government's commitment to ensuring that the land rights system is working effectively and that real benefits are being distributed to Aboriginal people, on 26 May 2004 the NSW Government established a task force to investigate and report on the operation of the ALRA. The terms of reference for the task force have been drafted and the task force is to make recommendations for the improved operation of the NSW Aboriginal land rights system, including inquiring and making recommendations on the strengths and weaknesses of current legislative and administrative arrangements. The task force will also make recommendations for more representative, effective and efficient governance within the land council system to strengthen Aboriginal peoples capacity for self-determination and to ensure that land councils have a voice in local, regional and State arenas.

Native Title

Native Title is about Australian law recognising Aboriginal peoples' continuing interests in land and waters in accordance with their traditional law

and custom.

The NSW Government acknowledges the need to recognise and protect native title rights and interests where they continue to exist. In order to protect native title, it is NSW Government policy not to undertake dealings in land or water in which native title may exist, except in compliance with the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993.

The NSW Government will enter into negotiations for an agreement that recognises native title on the production of credible evidence of native title. Where credible evidence of native title is not available, it may be possible to negotiate a non-native title resolution of the claim.

The Government supports the use of Indigenous land use agreements, where appropriate, as they are a means of dealing with native title through co-operation and agreement rather than lengthy and costly litigation. A properly negotiated settlement of a native title claim provides the opportunity for lasting resolution of issues relating to Indigenous access to and use of traditional lands.

There are currently four Indigenous land use agreements registered in NSW, the details of which are publicly available on the Native Title Tribunal website: <www.nntt.gov.au>. The 2001 native title agreement covering land at the Arakwal National Park at Byron Bay means that Aboriginal people now have a role in managing and conserving the land of cultural importance to the Arakwal people. In 1997, the NSW Government and native title claimants negotiated the first consent determination in Australia over land at Crescent Head

The Government will also use the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 and an agreement to settle a native title claim over Wellington Common, in the State's Central West.

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPWA)

In direct response to the Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, joint management capacity was established in NSW in 1996. Joint management provides Aboriginal ownership of land of high cultural significance and conservation value and establishes a partnership between Aboriginal owners and the Government in the management of this land. Joint management of conservation areas including national parks, nature reserves or historic sites of cultural significance to Aboriginal people based on traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history, has been possible in NSW since 1996.

In 2004, the Mount Grenfell Historic Site joined Mutawintji National Park as the second area of land in NSW under joint management. Joint management provisions are expected to be in place by the end of 2005 for the Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks on the south coast of NSW. There are a further seven parks in which traditional Aboriginal elders have a role in the management of the park through a memorandum of understanding with the Government. As of December 2003, there were three non-statutory co-management agreements at Lake Mungo National Park (covering 89,750

hectares), Kinchega National Park (covering 44,539 hectares) and Paroo Darling National Park (covering 220,000 hectares).

The Act protects Aboriginal culture and heritage with special provisions that apply to Aboriginal objects and places of special significance to Aboriginal culture. It is illegal to destroy or damage Aboriginal objects or Aboriginal places.

Aboriginal Languages Policy

The NSW Aboriginal Languages policy is the first of its kind in Australia. The initiative is supported at policy level by international, national and State policy instruments.

The NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy sets up the framework within which Government programs and initiatives around Aboriginal language revival can be developed and implemented. In March 2003, the NSW Aboriginal Languages Resource Centre was opened as one component of the policy. It is supported by the NSW Aboriginal Education Policy and the Aboriginal languages curriculum developed by the NSW Board of Studies.

The NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy will assist Aboriginal people and communities across NSW to revitalise traditional languages. The policy works to advance the rights of Aboriginal people to learn and practice their own language and to revive and permanently preserve some of the 70 languages once spoken across the State.

Enhancing Economic Independence

The NSW Government is committed to improving economic independence and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Two Ways Together-Economic Development Cluster

Under *Two Ways Together*, an Economic Development Cluster Group has been formed. The goal of the cluster group is to increase economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and communities through better education and training options, improving access to employment and business mentoring and government, business and Aboriginal communities working in partnership to better utilise land and water rights.

The cluster group includes as members NSW Government agencies, peak Aboriginal bodies, Commonwealth Government agencies and private sector representatives.

An economic development action plan for 2004-2006 has been developed by the cluster group; and work is currently underway to implement joint agency actions.

National indicators for economic development are:

- Unemployment and labour force participation;

- Land ownership; and
- Aboriginal training.

NSW indicators that align with the national indicators are:

- Employment;
- Aboriginal enterprise;
- Asset utilisation; and
- Training and skills development.

Using land and water assets owned by Aboriginal people is a significant emerging issue for economic development and work being done by the Economic Development Cluster Group recognises this.

One challenge facing the cluster group is breaking down the barriers that prevent Aboriginal organisations accessing sound commercial advice about their assets. The Office of the Registrar, Aboriginal Land Rights Act, has been working with Westpac Bank to identify opportunities for Aboriginal Land Councils. Work has also begun to develop a governance and investment advisory service for Aboriginal organisations. As part of this service, a panel of approved specialists would be available to give pro-bono advice to Aboriginal organisations that want independent support when making decisions about land utilisation.

Aboriginal Communities Development Program

The Aboriginal Communities Development Program (ACDP) is investing \$240 million over ten years to raise the health and living standards of selected priority Aboriginal communities where major environmental health needs have been previously identified.

The ACDP aims to achieve this through:

- Focusing funding and effort within selected priority communities rather than through existing State-wide government programs;
- Increasing the capacity of selected Aboriginal communities to maintain these facilities and systems within agreed sustainability frameworks; and
- Adherence to the fundamental principles of community capacity-building through consultation, community development and encouraging participation and self-determination in the Aboriginal communities involved .

The ACDP has three components that account for approximately 70% of programme funding:

1. Priority Communities: twenty-two priority Aboriginal communities

across NSW, determined on the basis of need, are participating in a comprehensive program of capital works. The works include new housing, refurbishment and upgrades of existing housing, and upgrades of essential safety infrastructure such as roads, footpaths and street lighting.

2. **Water and Sewerage:** a State-wide programme aims to deliver clean and safe drinking water and effective sewerage treatment and disposal to Aboriginal communities. Many communities are being connected to town water and sewerage supplies for the first time. Forty-eight Aboriginal communities in NSW have been targeted for fifty-one water and sewerage upgrade schemes.
3. **Housing for Health:** an assessment and maintenance program to improve the conditions and safety of houses is being delivered in partnership between DAA and the Department of Health. Where appropriate, the Housing for Health Co-ordinator must use local Aboriginal registered tradespeople or Aboriginal organisations such as the local Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) to undertake the repair work. This encourages sustainable employment within local communities. Housing for Health has been completed in fourteen communities and is being implemented in a further ten communities.

ACDP Employment and Training Strategy

The ACDP Employment and Training Strategy seeks to provide training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in communities where ACDP is being implemented. Under the strategy, project managers must include local Aboriginal community members wherever possible, consider using local Aboriginal registered trades' people or organisations such as CDEP for maintenance and major capital works, and, where the employment of local Aboriginal trades people is not achievable, canvass other Aboriginal organisations or communities in towns within the area. To date 222 Aboriginal apprentices have been commenced under the ACDP and 13 Aboriginal building companies are operating in 14 priority communities.

To ensure the sustainability of Aboriginal building companies, the following initiatives are underway:

- Reviews are being undertaken to assess business development and performance;
- State agencies are working with the Commonwealth to develop business submissions for Aboriginal companies;
- The NSW Government is reviewing the Aboriginal Participation in Construction Guidelines to create opportunities for Aboriginal companies.

Aboriginal Water Trust

The NSW Government set aside up to \$5 million for the establishment of an Aboriginal Water Trust. The trust will deliver economic benefits to Aboriginal communities throughout NSW and satisfy the objective of the Water Management Act that sustainable and integrated management of the State's water sources benefit Aboriginal people in relation to their spiritual, social, customary and economic use of land and water. Some of these benefits have also been negotiated with Aboriginal communities in NSW through representation on Water Management Committees and the creation of Water Sharing Plans.

Indigenous Fisheries Strategy

In June 2002, NSW Government approved a two year \$1.6 million Indigenous Fisheries Strategy and Implementation Plan. The strategy recognises that fishing has been an integral part of the cultural and economic life of coastal and inland Aboriginal communities. Fishing has been an important source of food, a basis for trade and an important part of cultural and ceremonial life. The strategy seeks to protect and enhance the traditional cultural fishing activities of Aboriginal communities and ensure Aboriginal involvement in the stewardship of fisheries resources. The Strategy has now concluded but many of its proposals have become mainstream policies of the Department of Primary Industries.

Conclusion

This paper has touched upon some of the actions being pursued in NSW across the four pillars of reconciliation to advance this government's commitment to attaining equality for Aboriginal people in NSW. In closing it is appropriate to reflect upon the reasons underpinning the reconciliation movement, as these reasons cut to the very core of our shared humanity.

As seen by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, reconciliation is based on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians coming to an honest understanding of our shared history, a commitment to building cooperative partnerships based on trust and respect, and recognition of the distinctive rights of Aboriginal peoples. The NSW Government supports this vision and will continue to work to harness the spirit of reconciliation to recognise the truth of our shared history and to move forward by ensuring recognition of the rights of Aboriginal people and by delivering social justice to them

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Introduction

While the NTG has not formally responded to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation recommendations contained in its final report, a number of the policies and program activities outlined below are consistent with the directions identified by the Council and its successor Reconciliation Australia.

This paper provides an overview of the Northern Territory Government's key activities addressing, the four pillars of reconciliation contained in the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's (CAR) final report:

1. Promoting recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights;
2. Overcoming Disadvantage;
3. Sustaining and growing the reconciliation process; and
4. Enhancing economic independence

Promoting Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights

Resolution of land issues through negotiation rather than litigation

The Northern Territory Government has adopted a policy of resolving issues related to Indigenous land rights and native title through negotiation rather than litigation where possible. This promotes greater cohesion within the community, ensures the responsible economic management of Government resources by avoiding costly litigation and ensures the legitimate rights and interests of Indigenous people are properly recognised. An example of this approach was the historic Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act 2003.

The High Court's Ward decision of 2002 resulted in uncertainty over the validity of the grant of many of the Territory's national parks and reserves. The Northern Territory Government took the initiative to resolve these land claim issues without litigation and simultaneously take the opportunity to establish a framework for economic development and employment opportunities for Indigenous Territorians. The Act provided a framework for future parks and reserves management and a balance of community interests in land use, conservation, recreation mining, and tourism with Aboriginal interests in protecting and maintaining their culture. It recognised, for the first time, that one of the objectives of the Territory parks system is maintaining and promoting Aboriginal traditional values alongside protection and promotion of the values of the natural environment.

The legislation provided the framework for settling Indigenous land and native title issues associated with these parks and reserves. It acted to reconcile Indigenous interests with the Government's commitment to retain the existing parks and reserves in the Territory for public use and enjoyment whilst also

expanding and enhancing the Territory's parks system.

This reflects a key shift in government policy towards reconciliation and the recognition of the need to balance the legitimate rights and interests of Indigenous people with broader community aspirations in the Territory.

The Act set down a timeframe for Indigenous traditional owners to agree to the framework offer, including land tenure changes and Indigenous Land Use Agreements with leasing and joint management arrangements. Setting out this timeframe in the legislation ensured any such agreements occurred in a transparent and timely manner.

By December 2004, successful agreements had been reached with traditional owners of 27 of the 28 parks and reserves identified under the legislation. This was testament to the overwhelming support for the package. As a consequence the Government enacted new legislation to allow the package to proceed with the 27 parks with which agreement was reached. Implementation of the package is now progressing.

The package provides a way to enrich the management of the Territory's parks and reserves by recognising Indigenous culture, and acknowledging and incorporating Indigenous land management practices that have shaped the landscape for more than sixty thousand years. For the Indigenous people with attachments to the parks, it has provided a sense of relief that their connection to country has been recognised and that they will be given a meaningful voice in future management. For the general public it has provided certainty these park areas will continue to remain open without entry fees or permits, and to know that many tens of millions of dollars of tax payer's money will not be wasted in the courts over countless years ahead.

Joint management of the parks and reserves in the Territory will provide a range of benefits including opportunities to improve land management by sharing information and resources, and conducting land use activities in a more coordinated and integrated manner, combining both western scientific and Indigenous knowledge. There will be enhanced opportunities for Indigenous training and employment in the management of country, including through the possible expansion of tourism and allied industries through extensions to the reserve system and enhanced visitor experiences.

The Government is also working to establish cross-agency ranger training and exchanges between the NT Parks and Wildlife Service, Parks Australia North and community-based ranger programs.

The negotiations of this parks and reserves framework has provided for a more inclusive approach to park management so that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people benefit from an expanded understanding and appreciation of the management of country as well as improved social and ecological outcomes.

Northern Territory Statehood

The Northern Territory Government recommitted in May 2004 to working towards Statehood and to ensuring that Indigenous communities and

representatives are centrally involved at all stages of the Statehood debate and drafting of the proposed constitution.

The process will be community based and facilitated by the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs of the Legislative Assembly. There will initially be a five-year timetable, including the drafting of a new Constitution, its examination by an elected Constitutional Convention, and an eventual vote by all Territorians. However, this timeline will be designed for maximum flexibility to fit in with community wishes. A central principle will be respect for and proper recognition of the Indigenous people of the Territory.

In April 2005 the Northern Territory Parliamentary Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs established the Northern Territory Statehood Steering Committee that is responsible for engaging in widespread community consultation leading to the development of a proposed state constitution.

Representatives were chosen from more than 90 nominees following a Territory-wide advertising campaign by the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

Four Indigenous Territorians have been appointed to the 15-member Statehood Steering Committee. They are community representatives, former Northern Land Council Chairman and Australian of the Year, Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Kintore schoolteacher Irene Nangala; Reconciliation Council nominee Kim Hill; and Central Land Council nominee Geoff Shaw.

The Statehood Steering Committee will have its first meeting in August 2005.

Developing Governance and Community Capacity

The Northern Territory Government recognises the importance of traditional governance structures and the need to invest in Indigenous leadership initiatives. Many communities want to exercise greater responsibility for decision making and developing their own solutions to local problems.

The Government is working to facilitate the development of the most representative and service delivery structures to empower Indigenous community leaders and also to facilitate governance and leadership capacity training and development.

The Northern Territory Government's Building Stronger Regions - Stronger Futures Strategy is directed towards the creation of larger, more effective local government bodies with legitimate authority to represent and deliver services to their communities. By encouraging the voluntary transformation of existing remote local governing arrangements into Regional Authorities these bodies aim to combine Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance mechanisms and have jurisdiction over larger areas of land.

The Northern Territory Government sees the development of Regional Authorities as an important mechanism for facilitating strong Indigenous representation at the local level in the aftermath of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Regional Councils. The recently agreed Regional

Authorities Schedule under the Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments will provide further support for the development of Regional Authorities.

Under this Schedule, the Governments will identify resources for community capacity building to assist with good governance and coordinate support for communities working towards the establishment of Regional Authorities. Jointly funded development coordinators will also work with existing and proposed Regional Authorities to facilitate community consultation and improve governance and service delivery capacity.

Under the *Building Stronger Regions - Stronger Futures Strategy* the Government is also developing Regional Partnership Agreements with Indigenous communities. Under these Agreements, the Government and communities can work together to identify issues requiring attention and make specific commitments to achieving results. These Agreements set out how all partners will uphold their commitments and can support community leadership initiatives.

The Northern Territory is developing a process outlining how its agencies will most effectively determine their involvement in the Shared Responsibility Agreements being negotiated by the Australian Government. The aim is for this process to emphasise that the Northern Territory Government is keen to partner with the Australian Government in addressing disadvantage with Indigenous communities and that a strong and efficient process needs to be put in place to allow Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies pursue their strategic interests through Agreements, whether they be Regional Partnership Agreements or Shared Responsibility Agreements, with communities.

The Northern Territory Government has a preference to enter into whole of community multi-issue agreements or Regional Partnership Agreements. These need to be genuinely based on community priorities and prioritise community leadership initiatives.

The Government is also working to build the governance capacity of Indigenous community leaders. Resources are provided to fund initiatives in regions where there is a need to develop community capacity for good decision-making and governance. The Government is also developing an emerging Indigenous Leadership Study Tour and Training Program in consultation with Reconciliation Australia and the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre to teach leadership skills to Indigenous students.

In addition to the above examples of investing in community leadership, many of the Governments programs are predicated on Indigenous community leaders taking an active role in the delivery of locally developed initiatives. For example in the justice area, the Government is piloting Police Community Safety Plans in Tennant Creek, Nguiu and Groote Eylandt to build a common government and community purpose and develop initiatives for reducing crime in these localities. Additionally, the Northern Territory Government's Community Harmony Strategy has relied on Larrakia Nation community leaders working with elders from across the Territory on protocols on respect

for country and to address issues of homelessness and the health, wellbeing and social behaviour of 'itinerant' groups.

Indigenous Governance Conference

Jointly sponsored by the Northern Territory Government, the Local Government Association of the NT, ATSIC and Reconciliation Australia, the focus of the Indigenous Governance conference, held from the 4-7 November 2003 was addressing potential workable governing arrangements in Indigenous communities and regions so they may develop the capacity to take responsibility and become strong, powerful, and competent.

This historic conference represented the first time the Northern Territory Government, Land Councils, ATSIC, Community Government Councils and Northern Territory Local Government Association had joined together to address key issues necessary for developing effective local Indigenous governance arrangements within the Northern Territory.

The conference went well beyond an analysis of past failings in policy and service delivery. The presenters addressed and shared local, national and international practical experiences and insights into the issues surrounding effective Indigenous governance.

The conference was very well attended by a large number of Aboriginal Community Council, Aboriginal organisation representatives, Aboriginal leaders, and a wide cross-section of senior government Ministers, departmental officers and policy makers, and private sector stakeholders.

The findings and recommendations of the conference are broadly consistent with, and supportive of, the Northern Territory Government's new directions in the areas of Indigenous governance, regional agreements, legislative reform, leadership and capacity building, partnership agreements and better accountability and coordination.

Overcoming Disadvantage

The Overarching Agreement

On 6 April 2005 the Northern Territory and Australian Governments signed the Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory of Australia.

This is the first new bilateral agreement to be developed out of the June 2004 Council of Australian Governments' commitment to improve services to Indigenous Australians consistent with the National Reconciliation Framework adopted by COAG in 2000. It is a clear signal of the Northern Territory Government's commitment to improve the social and economic opportunities for Indigenous people, particularly those living in remote areas of the Territory.

The Agreement is founded on the principle that the two levels of government need to work in partnership with Indigenous communities and determine appropriate arrangements for consultation and participation in setting

priority areas and developing solutions at the regional and local level. This is a cornerstone of reconciliation and signals a cooperative approach to achieving better outcomes for Indigenous Territorians.

The Agreement reflects the consistent calls from Indigenous leaders and numerous parliamentary reports for better coordination of Australian and Northern Territory Government programs to remove duplication and unnecessary costs and improve services to Indigenous people. There is also a commitment to ensure that funding under mainstream government programs reaches Indigenous communities and is responsive to their needs.

The Agreement sets out five priority areas for joint government action - improving outcomes for young Indigenous Territorians; building safer communities; strengthening governance in Indigenous communities; building Indigenous wealth, employment and entrepreneurial culture; and improving service delivery and infrastructure.

Bilateral schedules will be progressively attached to the Agreement to set out how governments will work together in the priority areas and the first three on sustainable housing, strengthening the Indigenous arts sector and establishing strong local government structures were included in the Agreement signed by the Governments in April 2005.

The housing schedule will bring together existing Australian and Northern Territory Government Indigenous housing programs into one program to be delivered by the Territory Government. Any administrative savings achieved in this amalgamation will be directed into building homes in Indigenous communities.

The Agreement also focuses on partnering with Indigenous communities to strengthen local government structures. This builds on the Northern Territory Government's Building Stronger Regions - Stronger Futures Strategy released in May 2003. The Regional Authorities schedule outlines the Governments' commitment to work with communities interested in pursuing voluntary amalgamations of councils to build stronger, more effective and culturally legitimate Regional Authorities under the Local Government Act.

The Arts schedule commits the Governments to taking a coordinated approach to building a strong Indigenous visual arts sector, characterised by profitable Indigenous art centres.

The principles in the Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs will be expanded upon in the Northern Territory Government's policy statement - Agenda for Action - Whole of Government Policy Statement on Indigenous Affairs to be released in the next few months.

Safety

Many Indigenous people, particularly women and children, do not feel safe in their homes and communities. The two greatest areas of concern are unacceptable levels of family violence and the increasing levels of substance abuse faced by some Indigenous communities.

In October 2004 the Northern Territory Government released the

Building Safer Communities - A Framework for Crime Prevention and Community Safety strategy. This strategy aimed to bring together previous initiatives and, where necessary re-engineer services to ensure they deliver practical measures that support families and children.

Under this Strategy the Government is reviewing domestic violence legislation to make it more effective in protecting Indigenous people. In addition the Government is consulting with Indigenous communities on the development of a Northern Territory Sexual Assault Prevention Plan.

These initiatives complement the joint domestic violence prevention programs under the National Framework on Indigenous Family Violence and Child Protection. The projects involve different levels of government and local communities working together to address family violence and child abuse in Indigenous families (see below).

For example, one of the projects supports planning and establishing community patrols to build community vigilance and support for the members of Indigenous families who may experience violence at home. Twelve community patrols will be established over the life of the project, four each year. The implementation will involve participatory planning to establish the most appropriate community patrol model (for example, policing, early intervention or day or night patrol).

The Northern Territory Government has also committed to reforming the Territory's child protection services and systems to incorporate better ways of delivering services to Indigenous children and their families. One key element of the reform agenda is to consult with the community on the development of a new Care and Protection of Children and Young People Act. This will aim to facilitate the provision of more family support and early intervention child protection services. It will also allow for flexible court orders that meet the specific needs of Indigenous children and, where possible, encourages them to be placed with carers with the appropriate kin relationships or in accordance with Indigenous customary laws.

In relation to drug dependency, the Government has introduced a new Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Bill to combat the growth of petrol sniffing and inhalant use in the Territory. The Government is also funding community-based initiatives to deal with petrol sniffing and supporting healthy activities and education for young people to reduce their vulnerability.

The Government is also expanding the activities of kava monitoring so that Indigenous community representatives are more involved in monitoring the impact of kava in their communities, and have a greater say in the management of kava retail practices.

With Australian Government support, the Department of Education, Employment and Training has consulted extensively with Indigenous school communities and developed and distributed to all remote schools a drug education curriculum resource designed specifically for Indigenous students.

The collaboration between South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory to create a justice system working across borders in the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara communities, is an example

of governments trying to re-engineer the delivery of justice programs to meet the needs of communities. This cross-border approach includes courts, policing and correctional services. For example, to improve the capacity of police operations in the cross border region it is proposed that complementary legislation be enacted to allow police officers to conduct their operations across borders and fulfil their roles without being restricted by the place the offence was committed or the person was apprehended.

Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy

The Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy (AFVS) focuses on coordinated action and community solutions.

The strategy seeks to:

- Establish a comprehensive framework under which effective change can occur in partnership with Indigenous communities; and
- Integrate a capacity-building concept in relation to dealing with family violence that recognises the inter-connection of other factors that adversely affect the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

The AFVS is based on the premise that solutions to family violence must come from within each community, build on customary and contemporary structures and practices, and over time, further strengthen the skills and capacity of individuals/families and the communities involved to respond to these issues.

The keystone of the new AFVS is a Strong Family, Strong Community, Strong Future project.

This is designed to:

- Address family violence and related social problems within communities by assisting (initially) a number of selected communities to mobilise their capacities;
- Create local employment and skills transfers in the areas of community dispute resolution; and
- Produce a set of principles and practices that can be applied across a range of community contexts within the Northern Territory.

The elements that make this a different AFVS approach for the Northern Territory are:

- Community engagement;
- Community development and capacity building;
- Whole-of-government coordination;
- Employment creation for Aboriginal people within participating

communities;

- A train-the-trainer model and professional development opportunities for communities, agencies and organisations; and
- An Australian National University Expert Reference Group, with a credible track record across a number of countries and in Australia, to provide insight and ideas.

Indigenous Health

In relation to Indigenous health and family policies, in April 2005 the Northern Territory Government released the Aboriginal Health and Families - A Five Year Framework for Action. This policy document was developed out of a need to more effectively respond to the health and welfare needs of Indigenous people in the Territory. The plan is focused on the delivery of a set of core services targeted at the most important periods and transition points in Indigenous Territorians' lives.

The strategy includes the recent establishment of a new Territory-wide Child Health Team to support maternal, child and youth health programs in remote communities. Additional staff have been recruited to work in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and other communities. Maternal and Child Health Protocols have also been developed for government and non-government organisations to promote consistent best-practice in maternal and child health services throughout the Territory.

The strategy also identifies working with the Australian Government to ensure that Medicare delivers better services to Indigenous young people, particularly in remote communities as a priority. Improving health promotion and early identification to pick up and treat health problems early is also identified, which includes the further roll-out Growth Assessment and Action Program and Healthy School-Age Kids Program.

Indigenous Education

A number of new initiatives have been implemented to improve Indigenous education outcomes. The Indigenous Language and Culture strand has been included within the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework to enhance the teaching and assessment of Indigenous language and culture programs within the school system. The review of the implementation of Indigenous Language and Culture programs, including the Two Way Learning program, in schools will be completed in 2005. This will establish a framework for schools to implement effective programs across a wide range of contexts within the broader directions outlined in the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework.

The School Breakfast Program in remote communities has been introduced to improve the nutrition of school children. Over 550 children have so far benefited from the program operating in Alekarenge, Gunbalanya, Ngukurr, Papunya, Daly River and Ramingining.

Schools are now committed to delivering two hours of explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy each day. This includes two initiatives aimed at improving numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students: "Count Me In Too" targeting students in Transition to Year 4, and "Keep on Counting" targeting Years 5 to 9 to assist teachers to understand how their students learn mathematics and monitor their skills.

The Accelerated Literacy Program was piloted in six Territory schools with the aim of improving literacy levels for students not currently achieving national benchmarks. The pilot achieved widespread recognition through demonstration of significant improvements in Indigenous student literacy outcomes. The Government is now collaborating with the Charles Darwin University, to evaluate the National Accelerated Literacy Program in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory and Australian Governments have committed funding for the rapid expansion of the program over the next four years across the Territory. The planned expansion will include the implementation of Accelerated Literacy in up to 100 schools by 2008.

Secondary programs have been implemented in five remote schools over the past three years, as part of the Secondary Provision in Remote Schools Project, resulting in seven Northern Territory Certificate of Education completions by the end of 2004. The Government is now implementing "Building Better Schools", the Northern Territory Government's response to the Secondary Education Review. This plan includes a number of initiatives such as: delivery of secondary education programs to remote communities; better school infrastructure and facilities; provision of regional pools of specialist subject teachers; and further initiatives to improve school attendance.

The Government is also developing an action plan for Indigenous students which will build partnerships with Indigenous communities to connect education outcomes to skills training, employment and enterprise opportunities in the Territory.

Indigenous Knowledge Centres

Access to relevant information in an appropriate form is critical in the development of community capacity building. In an institutional sense, information services have traditionally been site based, library focused, with librarians as experts. The Northern Territory has in the past offered generic content, in highly organised structures and offered libraries as classrooms.

This traditional freestanding public library model has been implemented for Indigenous communities over the past 15 years, and has been important in raising levels of awareness, and providing basic library services to about twenty remote communities.

A recent initiative of the Northern Territory Government is the development of Indigenous Knowledge Centres in regional areas of the Territory. In general the Indigenous Knowledge Centres will be an innovative combination of library, keeping place, training facility, community centre and Internet point to digitally create, capture and manage knowledge in new ways.

Although physically located within individual communities, it is intended that the Centres be developed as a regional hub.

One aim of these centres is to create regional partnerships between a number of research and other stakeholders to develop and expand Indigenous knowledge and to reunite and strengthen Aboriginal knowledge systems.

Traditionally, Indigenous knowledge has never been held in atomised, discrete communities or clans. Indigenous knowledge has always been dispersed across regional groupings, mediated through ceremony, trade and intermarriage. The 'settlements', 'missions' or 'communities' which are artefacts of the colonial past have encouraged parochial approaches as a means of dividing Aboriginal groups from themselves and each other. It is envisaged that the Indigenous Knowledge Centres will be one way of re-uniting and strengthening Aboriginal Knowledge Systems.

Community Harmony Strategy

This \$5.25 million Northern Territory Government program seeks to address longstanding concerns regarding the health and wellbeing of itinerants, and has a strong focus on outreach and withdrawal rehabilitation service for those affected by substance abuse and mental illness.

Some of the initiatives include:

- Regional co-ordinators in all major centres across the Northern Territory;
- Information and Referrals Office - provides proof-of-identification facility and a one-stop referral centre;
- Return to Country programs;
- Patrolling activities - focusing on interventions and referrals to assist people move from or assist with itinerant lifestyle choices;
- Crisis accommodation - provides immediate accommodation options;
- Expanding sobering up shelter hours; and
- Improved linkages to health assessment and rehabilitation services.

The strategy involves local service providers and itinerant clients in the identification of service needs. Community harmony groups in all regions are the primary methods used to facilitate gap identification. Service delivery needs are then developed from this information.

Major Northern Territory Government outlays include \$2.62 million for infrastructure including shelter and accommodation facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs, and \$1.98 million for health and outreach services such as Day Patrol, outreach and withdrawal services, expanded sobering up facilities linked to health assessment and rehabilitation services.

Ultimately, the Itinerants Strategy seeks to find ways out of the itinerant lifestyle to either return home or living more productive lifestyles in town, and forms an important part of stolen generation rehabilitation programs in urban

areas.

As a direct result of the intervention, many itinerants have already returned home; several have taken up a productive and meaningful place in their communities. The role of Aboriginal law has been most important.

As an example, a meeting of Marla elders from East Arnhem, Maningrida, Wadeye, Tiwi, Groote Eylandt, Katherine and the Larrakia, in May 2003 developed a comprehensive plan for countrymen and women in town to return to their home communities. As a direct result of the intervention, 30 people returned home.

Rehabilitation programs in corrections

Services available to Indigenous inmates while in custody include access to an Aboriginal Liaison Officer who offers cultural support, linking inmates to their family/community, an aiding in accessing other services available. There is also Good Beginnings - Prisoners and Their Families program, which supports prisoners who have children and offers information on parenting skills and improving relationships with their children.

Indigenous inmates also have access to an array of rehabilitation programs focussing on family violence, drug use and abuse, alcohol misuse, and anger management.

A great deal of success has resulted from prisoner art initiatives in the Northern Territory, including:

- An Indigenous prisoner from Alice Springs was a finalist in the Northern Territory Literacy Awards in 2003;
- Indigenous offenders artworks displayed in a number of prominent exhibitions in the Northern Territory;
- A number of Indigenous prisoners have taken up art while in prison and gone on to work in art centres as full-time artists after release; and
- Indigenous art has been entered into both the Telstra Art Awards and the NAIDOC Art Awards.

Sustaining and Growing the Reconciliation Process

Protocol and ceremony

There is increasing recognition of the importance of reconciliation within the Northern Territory Parliament.

Some initiatives include:

- The opening of 9th Legislative Assembly involved a traditional Aboriginal welcome;
- A formal apology was made to the Stolen Generations 24 October 2001;

- Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners is now consistently made by parliamentarians in their speeches;
- The first Community Cabinet in an Aboriginal community was conducted at Port Keats/Wadeye; and
- The Outcomes Statement from the summit to examine issues relating to the implementation and a re-commitment to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was signed by the NT Justice Minister and Attorney General for the Government on 16 October 2002.

Within schools, the inclusion of appropriate Indigenous ceremony and protocol into official school events is at the discretion of School Principals and Councils. At the individual school level, particularly in remote Indigenous communities, school Councils and Indigenous leaders organise suitable ceremonies for traditional or for official occasions.

Common Ground

Common Ground is an Indigenous newsmagazine, produced in tabloid newspaper format, to promote Northern Territory Government programs and policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians and to highlight the new approach to "doing business" that is, based on mutual respect, shared responsibility and with a focus on partnerships.

The publication provides stories and information on a wide range of issues from across the whole of government and while targeting an Indigenous audience, it is intended it will also be a valuable resource for the wider community.

Copies are distributed at the Northern Territory Show Circuit, community festivals and via an extensive mailing list including major Aboriginal organisations and businesses. There have been two issues to date, with the third edition scheduled for release in late June 2004.

The benefits of this approach are improved level of knowledge and understanding of the issues across government, Indigenous and wider community and improved engagement with Indigenous Territorians.

Support for cultural activities and festivals

Specific funding has been identified for the support of Indigenous art and cultural activities as part of Building Strong Arts Business (see below). In addition, the Government supports a number of regional arts and cultural festivals throughout the NT.

For example, the Northern Territory Government is a sponsor of the Garma Festival that attracts around 20 clan groups from north east Arnhem Land, as well as representatives from clan groups and neighbouring Indigenous peoples throughout Arnhem Land, the Northern Territory and Australia.

Garma has also become a key event for bringing together non-

Indigenous and Indigenous Australia - with some international guests as well - to share knowledge and culture, with a strong reconciliation element, and to nurture learning and leadership skills among Indigenous Australians.

Enhancing Economic Independence

Indigenous Economic Forums

The Indigenous Economic Forum "Seizing Our Economic Future" was held in Alice Springs on 6 and 7 March 2003. Approximately 150 people participated from Indigenous organisations, the private sector and relevant Government agencies.

There were 22 presentations given in four sessions:

- Employment, Education and Training;
- Financial Capacity and Governance;
- Sustainable Economic Use of Country; and
- Indigenous Arts and Tourism Strategies.

Dr John Taylor from the Australian National University provided the Forum with a sobering analysis of the latest Indigenous census and administrative data for the Northern Territory. Dr Taylor's analysis confirms that a dominant perception that Indigenous employment and training outcomes will only be effectively secured via the mainstream labour market and major projects is short sighted. It fails to reflect the reality that 73 per cent of Indigenous Territorians reside on Aboriginal-owned land where mainstream labour market opportunities are, and will remain, very limited.

Where labour market opportunities already exist they could be better exploited. Positive examples in maximising Indigenous sustainable employment in mainstream labour markets emerged from the Forum.

But regional communities are clearly where major future effort needs to be made.

A key issue that emerged from the Forum was that mainstream activities are not currently balanced by policies that maximise employment and training outcomes on Indigenous-owned lands.

Other case studies confirmed that there are a number of alternative approaches that in reality constitute the only short to mid-term options for economic development on much Aboriginal land. These case studies demonstrated that important employment opportunities could be realised by:

- Removing a number of regulatory barriers to the commercial utilisation of wildlife and community-based fisheries. Case studies clearly demonstrated that sustainable harvesting of wild plants and animals hold significant potential for generating meaningful employment opportunities;
- Working with Aboriginal people on resource management issues not

only facilitates quarantine surveillance and monitoring animal disease in feral stock, but also provides the basis for attractive options for high-value cultural tourism;

- Engaging with important longer-term opportunities in biodiversity maintenance, carbon credits trading and salinity minimisation by tackling these in a systematic manner; and
- Maximising emerging opportunities for Indigenous employment in delivering contracted government services and infrastructure.

The Forum clearly demonstrated that there are a number of structural and policy barriers to Indigenous Economic Development, requiring existing policies to be reviewed and adjusted and more coherent strategies adopted.

The Forum also identified the requirement for a clearer definition, across government, of the respective roles and responsibilities in relation to Indigenous Economic Development to address the evident confusion and lack of accountability by agencies. The development and adoption of a clear strategic focus that recognises the realities associated with Indigenous Economic Development will enable better targeting of resources and ensure accountability for outcomes.

The second Indigenous Economic Development Forum will be held on 25-26 May 2005 when the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (see below) will be released.

Indigenous Arts Strategy

The Northern Territory Government released *Building Strong Arts Business* in August 2003, a strategic policy document dealing with the Indigenous arts industry. The Northern Territory is the first place in Australia to produce an Indigenous Arts Strategy.

The strategy aims to build the strength of Indigenous visual arts and crafts, performing arts, music, film, new media and literature. It also will promote Indigenous control through the establishment of an Indigenous Arts Reference Group and the setting up of a Government specialist Indigenous Arts Development Unit.

The key points in *Building Strong Arts Business* are:

- Laws to protect intellectual property rights;
- New government committee to coordinate the strategy;
- New Indigenous artists advisory group;
- Better coordination with federal, state and territory governments;
- New Indigenous Arts Development Unit;
- Increased funding for visual and performing arts projects;
- New Arts Centre Infrastructure and Employment Action Plan;
- More promotion to local, national and international markets;
- Increased employment and training opportunities; and

- Funding of \$3.2 million over the next three years.

Indigenous Tourism Strategy

The Northern Territory Government has developed the first Indigenous Tourism Strategy highlighting the economic and cultural importance of the industry to the Territory's future. The Government has further recognised the importance of cultural tourism through the appointment of three new Indigenous members to the NT Tourism Commission (NTTC).

The purpose of the Indigenous Tourism strategy is to continue the government's efforts to develop a sustainable Indigenous tourism industry. The four guiding principles are: cultural sustainability, ecological sustainability, financial viability and community benefit, and quality and integrity.

Key stakeholders including the four Aboriginal land councils, Aboriginal tourism organisations and communities and relevant representatives of the Territory's tourism industry assisted with the development of the strategy.

The strategy incorporates an action plan that will be reviewed twice during the year by a Tourism Reference Group made up of representatives from Indigenous organisations, government departments and tourism industry associations.

Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy

The Northern Territory Public Service Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy was developed to increase Indigenous representation in the Northern Territory public service through recruitment and retention initiatives.

In partnership with the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA), the Government coordinated Indigenous Employment Forums throughout the Territory to examine key issues impacting on the recruitment, retention and career development of Indigenous people to the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS).

In addition, the NTPS Indigenous Employment Tool Kit for employers and managers to provide a reference guide for recruiting and retaining Indigenous employees.

Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce

The Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce grew from the Indigenous Economic Forum held in March 2002. The Forum participants identified the lack of coordination of programs aimed at improving the economic status of Indigenous people and called on the government to set up a high-level Taskforce to address the issue. This has now been done with members drawn from the Australian and Northern Territory Government agencies, Indigenous organisations and the private sector.

The Taskforce has been working to develop an Indigenous Economic Development Strategy to be released in late May 2005. This strategy sets out a vision of improved quality of life through dramatic advances in the economic status of Indigenous Territorians. The target outcome is parity between the economic indicators for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians by 2020. This is to be achieved by fostering long-term economic growth and prosperity through a significant increase in Indigenous wealth, employment and business ownership.

The Strategy sets targets for improved Indigenous employment and business development outcomes by industry sector, including support strategies required to achieve those outcomes within a prescribed timeline. The key industry sectors are identified as:

- Aquaculture and fisheries, including mud crabs, sponges and trepang;
- Arts, including visual and performance arts, film and literature;
- Community services, including childcare, youth services, disability services and aged care;
- Construction;
- Forestry and agri-business;
- Horticulture;
- Knowledge and culture, including tourism;
- Mining and production;
- Natural resource management, including pastoral; and
- Retail and services.

To illustrate the format, in relation to aquaculture and fisheries, the Strategy provides a long-term outlook based on the domestic consumption of seafood and the range of untapped specialist export markets for a variety of potential harvests. It then sets out a number of government projects aimed at assisting Indigenous communities and businesses harness this opportunity. For example, the strategy reports on the work the Government is doing with communities to trial the spawning of mud crabs.

Trials for pond production in a community environment have been negotiated with Gwala Daraniki (Darwin), and wild stock trials within an enclosed coastal habitat are currently being negotiated with Bawinanga (Maningrida), and interested Traditional Owners at Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island).