
**THE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES, HOUSING,
COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS
AFFAIRS**

**REPORT ON THE NTER REDESIGN ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Final Report



**CULTURAL & INDIGENOUS RESEARCH
CENTRE AUSTRALIA**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) contracted CIRCA to review the engagement and communication strategy for the NTER Redesign consultations, and to observe a number of the consultations. The engagement and communication strategy included four tiers of consultations, as follows:

- **Tier 1:** - *comprehensive consultations with key interest groups (stakeholders) in each of the prescribed areas. These will be conducted by Government Business Managers (GBMs) and Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs). It is targeted at individuals and interest groups e.g. men, women, youth, community based organisations, families, clans, and tribes and is expected to reach up to 10 groups per community, resulting in possibly 700 consultations.*
- **Tier 2:** - *a series of public meetings/workshops in each of the prescribed areas (some of the smaller communities may be clustered for this purpose.) These will be delivered by ICC Managers with the aid of interpreters. It is envisaged that there will be at least one workshop per community, resulting in a minimum of 73 consultations.*
- **Tier 3:** - *a series of three-day Regional workshops targeting Indigenous Leaders, conducted by senior staff from Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Group (ILEG). There will be 5 workshops, each capped at 60 participants, resulting in a total of 300 consultations.*
- **Tier 4:** - *Five major stakeholder workshops – four involving the peak Indigenous organisations in the NT; and one specifically for the NT Indigenous Affairs Advisory Council (total 14 participants.) These will be conducted by senior officers from ILEG.'*

CIRCA was contracted to independently monitor the consultation process. Monitoring was conducted in order to answer the following questions:

- Was the engagement strategy appropriate for the task?
- Were the communication products appropriate for the task?
- Were staff appropriately trained for the engagement task?
- Were the consultations undertaken in accordance with the engagement and communications strategies?
- Were interpreters used and used appropriately?
- Was the material covered appropriate given the nature of the engagement?
- Were the consultations conducted in a way that was open, fair and accountable?
- Did the records of meetings reflect the content of the consultations?

The methodology adopted for this project included:

- Review of the engagement strategy and communication products
- Attendance at the two-day training session in Alice Springs for Government Business Managers (GBMs), Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs) and ICC (Indigenous Coordination Centre) staff
- Observations of 15 Tier 2 meetings, covering a range of regions and contexts. In selecting the

locations for this aspect of the project, the population size of the community, and ease of access to a regional centre were considered, to ensure a mix of locations were observed. The community meetings observed by region included:

- Alice Springs: - Ti Tree (23 June); Kintore (8 July); Ampilatwatja (12 August)
- Tennant Creek:- Canteen Creek (22 June); Elliot town camps (25 June)
- Katherine:- Binjari (14 July); Beswick (30 July); Lajamanu (13 July)
- Darwin:- Knuckey's Lagoon and PIV (7 July); Minmarama, Kulaluk and One Mile (9 July); Warruwi (29 July); Maningrida (31 July)
- Nhulunbuy; Yirrkala (16 July); Gunyangara (23 July); Galiwin'ku (22 July).
- Observation of one Tier 3 meeting at Katherine, 11-12 August 2009

The observations of the Tier 1 and Tier 4 meetings were outside our terms of reference for this project, and therefore CIRCA is not able to comment on the implementation of these important components of the strategy. Our involvement in the monitoring of the Tier 2 process underlined the significance of the Tier 1 meetings in informing community members about the consultations, and gathering feedback from key stakeholders or interest groups, such as young people. This is clearly a critical component of the process, given the community protocols that often determine who has the authority to speak at larger, public community meetings on behalf of the community. This is a culturally legitimate practice, however it does emphasise the importance of the Tier 1 meetings in gathering feedback from a broad cross section of the community, to understand the diversity of views.

The first section of this report discusses the engagement and communication strategy, and whether the program objectives and operational objectives were achieved, based on the observations. The remainder of the report discusses the training, use of interpreters, communication products and reporting.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

CIRCA was asked to assess whether the NTER Redesign consultations were undertaken in accordance with the engagement and communication strategy.

This section of the report details each of the key components of the engagement and communication strategy document, and draws on the observations in order to assess whether the implementation reflected the goals and strategies as outlined in the engagement and communication strategy document. Overall though, it can be concluded that the consultations were undertaken in accordance with the engagement and communication strategy.

2.1 ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY - OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

2.1.1 Objectives of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 consultations

The engagement and communication strategy discusses the four tiers of consultation. CIRCA's focus was on the Tier 2 consultations, and one Tier 3 meeting was also observed.

The goals of the Tier 2 consultations were described in the engagement and communication strategy as follows:

The purpose of these consultations is to:

- *Explain the Government's current position on the NTER, and in particular its position on the specific measures covered in the Future Directions discussion paper*
- *Provide participants with an opportunity to explore and discuss each of the specific measures in detail*
- *Enable participants to provide feedback on the Government's position, on what's working well and on any changes people are seeking.'*

The Tier 2 meetings that CIRCA observed were all public meetings, and were held in central locations (in front of the community store, in the social club, in the community hall, in front of the community centre, etc). The location was chosen to encourage access for community members.

Overall, the Tier 2 meetings were effective in explaining the Government's current position on the NTER, and in particular its position on the specific measures covered in the Future Directions discussion paper (objective one highlighted above). As well, the Tier 2 meetings that CIRCA observed allowed participants to provide feedback on the Government's position as well as on what is working

well and what changes people are seeking (objective three). We believe objective two was met, although it was not possible to explore and discuss all of the measures in detail, due to time limitations and also a lack of relevance for some communities of the various measures. As well, discussion of several measures (for example, the pornography and publicly funded computers measures) was often highly sensitive, and in some cases participants did not want to discuss this in detail. Discussion of the pornography measure also often tended to focus on the signs, with strong concerns expressed about the shaming nature of these signs for communities.

The goals of the Tier 3 consultations were described in the engagement and communication strategy as follows:

The purpose of these consultations is to:

- *Explain the Government's current position on the NTER and in particular its position on the specific measures covered in the Future Directions discussion paper*
- *Provide participants with an opportunity to workshop the specific measures in greater detail than in Tier 1 or Tier 2 consultations*
- *Enable participants to provide feedback on the Government's position as well as on what's working well and what changes people are seeking.'*

The Tier 3 meeting observed by CIRCA was held in Katherine, and the meetings and accommodation for participants were at the same venue. Accommodation and travel costs were covered. Approximately 45 people attended the meeting, representing a large number of communities (Binjari, Kalano, Roper Valley, Manyallaluk, Beswick, Barunga, Kalkarindji and Kybrook Farm). Several communities from the Katherine region were not represented, including Lajamanu, Pigeon Hole, Yarralin, Amanbidgi, Bulla, and several communities from the East Katherine region (Minyerri, Ngukurr, Bulman, Borrooloola and Robinson River).

Based on the observation of the Tier 3 meeting, all three objectives as outlined above were met. As the workshop went for two days, this provided participants with greater opportunity than in the Tier 2 meetings to discuss each measure in detail. However, given the number of measures to be discussed, and the need to allow for a considerable amount of time for general discussion on the NTER, there was still some time pressure. This meant that, as with the Tier 2 meetings, several measures had less relevance for participants, and less time was spent discussing these measures. As well, it meant that there was not the time needed to fully explain and workshop all measures. For example, the workshop on the special powers of the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) was difficult for many participants, as there was little awareness and understanding, so people found it difficult to discuss whether this measure should continue.

2.1.2 Objectives of the engagement and communication strategy

Aside from the specific objectives of the Tier 2 and 3 meetings detailed above, the engagement and communication strategy identified two overarching objectives, as follows:

There were two objectives of this engagement process.

The first is to reset the relationship between the Government and the Indigenous people in the NT. It will do this by:

- *Reiterating the original purpose of the NTER;*
- *Reiterating the major achievements to date;*
- *Reiterating this Government's commitments including what it has delivered to date;*
- *Explaining the Government's current position on the NTER, in particular, its position on each of the specific measures;*
- *Explaining why the Government is conducting these consultations; and*
- *Explaining the longer term agenda.*

The second objective is to collect and record feedback from stakeholders on the benefits of the various NTER measures, and how they could be made to work better.'

Based on the observations of the Tier 2 meetings and the Tier 3 meeting, overall these objectives were met. The facilitators spoke about the Government's aim to improve the relationship with communities, and specifically discussed the story of the NTER, and the current position of the Government. It should be noted that the level of detail discussed varied, depending on the individual style of the facilitators, and also in response to community feedback. For example, in some Tier 2 community meetings the two proposed options for income management were not discussed, as participants spoke very passionately about not wanting income management to stay, and given this response, it was not relevant to then ask people to discuss the two options proposed in the discussion paper. As you would expect, a greater level of detail was discussed in the Tier 3 meetings.

The Tier 2 meetings all included a session where participants provided feedback on the individual measures. In seven of the meetings this was conducted through separate male and female groups, in two meetings the community preferred to discuss this without the government representatives present, and in six meetings the group did not split into male and female groups. In most cases the facilitators let community members determine the most appropriate feedback option. From our observations, smaller, separate gender groups were most effective. This did not happen in some cases because of the preference by community members to respond in 'one voice', although in a few cases the facilitator did not clearly promote this option to participants, and in one case this option was not offered even after some of the women commented that *"we should split groups, we're always put down, as soon as we get up and say something, we are always pushed down."*

Based on the observations, the Tier 2 meetings provided an opportunity to gather community views on the NTER measures. Because of the nature of public meetings in Aboriginal communities, in most cases this provided an opportunity for senior community members to speak on behalf of the community. The smaller groups also allowed for a wider range of views to be gathered. One of the limitations of open, public meetings is that this is not an appropriate forum to gather feedback from

younger people, or those without the authority to speak on behalf of the community. It is expected that these gaps were addressed by the Tier 1 meetings, although it is not possible for us to assess whether this was achieved, as CIRCA did not have a role in observing the Tier 1 meetings. There was one community where there was no GBM in the community at the time of the consultations, which limited their access to Tier 1 meetings.

Based on our observation of the Tier 3 meeting, the broad objectives of the engagement and communication strategy were met, in that the facilitators clearly articulated the Government's rationale and position with regards to the NTER, and the participants were provided with opportunities throughout the two days to provide feedback. Including several workshop sessions also allowed for those who were less outspoken to have a say. The positive response from the participants at the end of the workshop suggests participants valued the opportunity to voice their opinions to government.

2.1.3 Target audience

The target audience for the Tier 2 and 3 meetings identified in the engagement and communication strategy was the Indigenous population of the NT affected by the NTER and living in NTER communities and town camps. In all meetings observed by CIRCA, the vast majority of those attending were Indigenous people directly affected by the NTER. In some cases non-Indigenous participants were heavily involved in these meetings, but in most meetings it was local Aboriginal community members who provided feedback.

The approximate number of participants for each meeting was:

Tier 2

- Alice Springs: - Ti Tree (80 people); Kintore (70-80 people); Ampilatwatja (60 people)
- Tennant Creek:- Canteen Creek (40 people); Elliot town camps (70 people)
- Katherine:- Binjari (45 people); Beswick (60 people); Lajamanu (95 people)
- Darwin:- Knuckey's Lagoon and PIV (30 people); Minmarama, Kulaluk and One Mile (20-30 people); Warruwi (40 people); Maningrida (90 people)
- Nhulunbuy:- Yirrkala (40 people); Gunyangara (45 people); Galiwin'ku (100 people)

Tier 3

- Katherine (40 people)

2.1.4 Messages

The engagement and communication strategy document identified the key messages for the consultation phase, as follows:

'Background to the NTER

- *The NTER was introduced in response to numerous reports, in particular, the Little Children are Sacred Report, which revealed serious problems impacting on many of the Aboriginal communities in the NT. The Government of the day deemed the problems to be of such seriousness that they warranted an 'Emergency Response'*

NTER Review

- *The report of the independent NTER Review Board (October 2008) concluded that the situation in remote NT communities and town camps remained sufficiently acute to be described as a 'national emergency', and recommended that the NTER continue - with some suggested changes.*

Progress

- *The NTER has brought significant additional funding and government effort to NT communities – with some important improvements including:*
 - *more than 13,000 child health checks*
 - *66 extra police*
 - *4 permanent police stations upgraded and 18 temporary stations set up*
 - *around 2,000 new jobs with award wages and superannuation*
 - *20 Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs)*
 - *4 new stores established and 83 stores now licensed*
 - *school nutrition programs in 69 communities.*
- *Government believes the NTER has brought considerable benefits, including:*
 - *increased household spending on food and other essential items*
 - *better managed community stores, with a wider range of stock including more fresh fruit and vegetables*
 - *families feeling safer because of extra police and reduced alcohol consumption*
 - *increased housing and infrastructure underpinned by five-year leases*
 - *improved school attendance*
 - *GBMs and IEOs helping communities get better access to government*

Action taken by the present Australian Government

The Government has already taken action to improve the NTER

- *legislation is currently before Parliament to enable people on income management to appeal against decisions about their income management arrangements.*
- *moving to reinstate the permit system that was removed by the NTER laws. Although this was defeated in the Senate, the permit system continues to operate over most Aboriginal land in the NT.*

The Government also reversed the previous Government's decision to abolish CDEP in 25 NTER communities and 5 town camps

The Government is committed to a more respectful and supportive relationship with Indigenous Australians, as part of its wider strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. Significant actions include:

- *the National Apology in February 2008*
- *supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and*
- *working towards establishing a national representative body.*

Making the NTER sustainable

The Government provided over \$800 million over three years in the last Budget to enhance community safety, tackle child abuse and rebuild communities in the NT. The Government wants to move the NTER to a sustainable development phase, building on the improvements already achieved through the NTER and aiming to make the benefits last.

The next stage

Governments have an obligation to protect children from violence, abuse and neglect, and to expand their chances for a better life.

Because of the improvements made so far, the Government believes that the key NTER measures should continue. As a starting point for discussion the Government proposes that a number of the individual measures should be continued along similar lines to how they are currently operating. For some measures, proposals for possible change are presented to assist the consultation process.

The Government will work closely with Aboriginal people to re-design the various measures because it believes the ongoing success of the NTER depends on individuals and communities having a strong say in how the measures should work.

The Government plans to introduce legislation in October 2009 to remove the current provisions that exclude the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) in relation to the NTER. At the same time the Government would introduce legislation for any changes it decides to make to the individual NTER measures, following the consultation process.¹

Based on the observations of the Tier 2 meetings and the Tier 3 meeting, the majority of these key messages were delivered, although the emphasis on each varied. In summary:

- Every Tier 2 and Tier 3 presentation discussed the history of the NTER in terms of the Howard Government's response to the Little Children are Sacred report, and the three main recommendations from the Independent Review (continue the NTER, bring back the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA), resetting the relationship)
- Discussion on the progress to date varied. In some Tier 2 community meetings, the facilitators spoke of specific changes directly affecting the relevant community. In other cases the facilitators spoke of what they have heard to date about what is working, and what needs to be improved. In only a few instances (one of which was the Tier 3 meeting), the facilitators listed a number of achievements, as identified in the engagement and communication strategy. Overall, based on the observations, we believe that in almost all cases the facilitators provided an unbiased overview of what has worked well and what could be improved. In only a few instances the presenters focused more on the positives, with little mention of the negatives of the NTER
- The facilitators in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 meetings rarely discussed the actions taken by the

current government to date, as listed in the engagement and communication strategy

- As well, there was no discussion on the amount of money the government has dedicated to making the NTER sustainable, although there was a general discussion on building on what has already been achieved
- Discussions on the next stage focused on the Government's goals of resetting the relationship and bringing back the RDA, and on each of the measures included in the discussion paper. This component accounted for most of the presentation time.

2.2 OPEN AND FAIR CONSULTATIONS

CIRCA was asked to assess whether the consultations were open, fair and accountable. This assessment is based on observations of 15 Tier 2 meetings and one Tier 3 meeting.

Overall, the meetings were conducted in a way that was open and fair:

- Facilitators provided consistent information to all community members
- In almost all cases facilitators highlighted both the positives and negatives of the NTER
- Facilitators encouraged open discussion, and emphasised that it was important for people to have their say
- Facilitators explained that people can contact the GBM or IEO after the meeting to discuss any of the issues further
- In almost all cases staff were very respectful and professional, and provided time and space for people to air their grievances, as well as raise issues that were not directly related to the NTER
- In most cases staff allowed the discussion to flow organically or out of sequence from the original script, in response to community feedback
- In several meetings that CIRCA observed, the Government committed to discussing the report with community members before sending this to Canberra. This is an important protocol when conducting community consultations and should have been standard practice for all meetings
- In most cases, staff from the Tier 2 meetings were open to suggestions from the community on how the meeting should be conducted. In two communities, the participants requested that the Government staff leave the meeting while the community discussed the NTER measures together, without Government involvement, and then reported back to Government staff
- In several meetings that CIRCA observed, community members appreciated that the Government was committed to and interested in hearing from the community, and in giving community members a chance to be heard
- The Government staff were responsive and flexible with regards to timing of the Tier 2 meetings, and rescheduled many meetings in order to meet the needs of the community with regards to sorry business and other community commitments.

However, there were several factors that limited the openness of the meetings. In reference to the Tier 2 meetings, a range of factors need to be considered when assessing the openness of these

meetings:

- Large public meetings tended to be dominated by a few senior community members who have the authority to talk on behalf of the community. This is a culturally legitimate practice, however it does emphasise the importance of the Tier 1 meetings in gathering feedback from a broad cross section of the community, to understand the diversity of views. This is why it is important, where possible, to separate into smaller male and female groups, to limit the dominance of men in the discussion
- There were only a small number of young people who attended the meetings, and where young people were in attendance, very few made comments in the meetings
- There are several practicalities of larger meetings that naturally inhibit feedback, such as having to use microphones, and having to speak loudly in a group setting
- In many cases interpreters were not available, and the bulk of the discussion was conducted in English, which limits participation of those less confident speaking English. In some meetings the discussion was dominated by those who were better educated and more familiar with Government processes
- In one case the facilitator discouraged people from airing their grievances and making comments throughout the meeting, and instead suggested that people wait until the discussion specifically covered each measure. This limited participation in this community meeting. At the start of this meeting, several community members spoke about the intervention and income management, and they were encouraged to wait until the income management discussion. While there was time devoted to income management later in the meeting, and these community members participated in this discussion, there was considerable frustration at the beginning of the meeting. Based on the observations, we would recommend that in future consultations, participants be allowed to air their grievances on hot topics, such as income management, throughout the meeting. It is worth noting that the GBM and IEO were responsive, and encouraged the facilitator to separate participants into break-out groups, and this improved the management of the meeting
- There were also two cases where the facilitators were defensive of the Government's actions to date, challenged participants and provided more emphasis on the positive outcomes of the intervention rather than the negatives.

For the Tier 3 meeting, the main factor that limited openness was that the meeting was open to a limited number of participants from each community. Communities put forward names of people to attend and represent the community, and the Government staff also encouraged community members to attend. There is a potential for bias in that this meeting was more likely to attract community members who were confident, with good English language skills. As well, the Tier 3 meeting tended to attract the same community members who were most vocal in the Tier 2 meetings. While this is legitimate, in that these senior community members are in a position to speak on behalf of the community, it does highlight that for the Tier 2 and Tier 3 meetings a similar audience had a voice. However, there was a difference in that the Tier 3 meeting offered community members more detailed information, and a greater opportunity to have their say. As mentioned earlier, this potential

for bias emphasises the importance of the Tier 1 meetings in gathering feedback from a broad cross section of the community, to understand the diversity of views.

There were several people who dominated the Tier 3 meeting, as was the case for the Tier 2 meetings. However, the smaller workshop groups helped to overcome this limitation, and encourage input from the broader group.

Interpreters were not used in the Tier 3 meeting, but based on observations an interpreter was not needed.

2.3 CONTENT

CIRCA was asked to assess whether the material covered was appropriate given the nature of the engagement. This assessment is based on observations of 15 Tier 2 meetings and one Tier 3 meeting.

Overall, the material covered was appropriate:

- Almost every meeting was opened with an acknowledgement of traditional owners. In a few town camp situations the welcome to country was not included as staff felt it was highly sensitive
- Several key messages were delivered consistently across all of the consultations. These related to the history of the NTER, the commitment of Government to hear from communities, the commitment to bring back the RDA, and the individual NTER measures
- Generally, community members were interested in discussing the RDA and the NTER.

However, the observations highlighted a range of factors that impacted the appropriateness of the content:

- In a few cases, the facilitators tended to emphasise the positive outcomes of the NTER, rather than providing a balanced view, and were, in CIRCA's opinion, defensive of the Government
- In many cases interpreters were not available, which limited the appropriateness of the material covered in a few communities
- There was very little awareness of several of the measures, and it was therefore not possible to adequately explain the measure and gather feedback in the timeframe allowed for the Tier 2 meetings. However, we do not believe this is a significant issue as the relevance and significance of these measures was minimal. This was true for publicly funded computers, business management powers, and law enforcement measures. These measures received greater discussion in the Tier 3 meeting
- For several other measures, it was difficult in the Tier 2 meetings to have an open discussion as the level of understanding and knowledge of the measure varied, and there was not time to fully explain the measure. This was true for five-year leases and alcohol restrictions.

Based on this, the consultation approach could have been improved if fewer measures were covered.

However, a natural prioritisation took place in every meeting based on community interest, as community members were most passionate about the RDA and income management, and this tended to account for the bulk of the discussion. If the Government conducts similar consultations in the future, where it is a requirement to discuss a large number of topics, we recommend grouping several of the measures in an attempt to reduce the number of areas to be covered (for example, the pornography measure and the publicly funded computer measure could have been discussed together).

3. TRAINING

CIRCA was asked to comment on the training provided to staff involved in the implementation of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 components of the engagement and communication strategy. CIRCA attended the GBM/IEO/ICC Workshop conducted in Alice Springs on the 28th and 29th May, 2009.

This section is based on the observation of this training session, as well as observations of 15 Tier 2 meetings.

Overall, the training session covered all relevant topics. On day one, information was provided on the NTER Redesign, the RDA, the NTER measures, and the engagement and communication strategy. Day two was more interactive, and focused on the implementation of the engagement and communication strategy, including a session run by the Aboriginal Interpreter Service on working with interpreters.

Aspects of the training session that worked well were:

- Utilising presenters with expertise in the relevant subject areas
- Having workshop sessions to encourage engagement
- Providing clear guidelines on the key messages and steps for implementation.

Aspects of the training that could have been improved are highlighted below:

- There could have been more opportunities to engage the IEOs in the training. While a separate session was conducted with the IEOs on the Saturday morning to allow for an open discussion of the NTER Redesign, it would have been beneficial to integrate sessions throughout the workshop to encourage greater participation. Asking IEOs to work together during the implementation workshop sessions, to discuss their roles and responsibilities, and having an Aboriginal facilitator work with this group, could have been another option for enhancing their participation in the two-day training session
- While there were workshop groups organised by region in the training session, it would have been beneficial if this occurred earlier in the training session, as this would have encouraged greater discussion on the implications, barriers and enablers for the region
- Given the significance of the Tier 1 meetings, the training should have provided greater emphasis on the ongoing nature of the Tier 1 phase of the engagement and communication strategy
- The interpreter session was very useful; although less time could have been dedicated to this aspect of the training. As well, a doctor/patient role play was used in this session, but it would have been more valuable to use a role play of an NTER Redesign discussion
- A 'Risks and Issues' session was scheduled, but this was not covered due to time limitations. While risks and issues were discussed throughout the two days (including dealing with media), it is important to ensure a separate session is dedicated to this in the future.

3.1 OBSERVATIONS OF THE CONSULTATIONS

Observations of the consultations have been used to assess the appropriateness of the training provided.

All facilitators demonstrated knowledge of the content delivered in the training session, and were able to articulate the history of the NTER, the RDA, and the individual measures. Facilitators also demonstrated an understanding of how the measures are affecting communities in order to prompt discussion.

In almost all of the consultations observed, the facilitators ran the meetings in a professional and respectful manner. Concise and simple language was used in the presentations, and many also utilised active listening.

There was one instance where the facilitator was not adequately skilled in community consultation and did not work as well with the interpreters as you would expect. In this case the information was not delivered as clearly as it was in the other locations, and community feedback was limited. It should be noted though that the GBM at the meeting responded accordingly and altered the approach to encourage community discussion and diffuse the rising frustration of community members. In this instance several smaller groups were used to gather feedback.

In another instance, when breaking into the separate male and female groups, one of the facilitators was less experienced in community consultation. In this case it was difficult to address all of the measures, as the discussion often went off track, however, we do not believe this had a significant impact on the quality of the feedback. The ideal scenario would be to have experienced male and female team members for each meeting.

4. COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS

A range of communication products were developed for the consultations, as follows:

Awareness raising:

- Posters (with meeting times). One for the consultation process, and posters for each NTER measure
- Radio advertisements

Delivery Information:

- Discussion Paper
- Flipchart
- PowerPoint presentation (Tier 3 and 4)
- Scripts (for facilitators)
- FAQ (for staff)

Fulfillment material:

- DVD
- Fact sheets
- Website

CIRCA did not observe the use of all of the communication products, so we are not able to assess the appropriateness of all of the communication products provided by FAHCSIA.

The communication products observed during the Tier 2 and 3 meetings included:

- Posters
- Discussion Paper
- Butcher's Paper
- Flipcharts
- PowerPoint presentation (Tier 3 only)
- Scripts (for facilitators)

As you would expect, it was mainly the delivery information that was observed during the Tier 2 and Tier 3 meetings.

In terms of the communication products developed for information delivery, use of some of the materials was limited. In 10 communities, the discussion paper was provided (in some cases it was distributed, but in other cases it was available but not handed out to participants). In 7 communities the flipchart was available. In 10 communities the facilitator used hand written notes on butcher's paper to list the key points, and the eight NTER measures. All facilitators used a copy of the prepared script, although in almost all cases the facilitators did not follow this script closely. The script was beneficial as it provided a consistent message for delivery, and the observations indicate that most

facilitators used the script, but adjusted it accordingly in order to encourage an open, free flowing discussion.

In the Tier 3 meeting a PowerPoint presentation was used throughout the workshop, and participants were provided with a discussion paper, agenda, and summary of the recommendations from the NTER Review Board, and the Government's response.

There were several locations where the flipcharts were handed out to participants in the Tier 2 meetings. These did not form the basis of discussion, and the facilitator did not refer to the flipchart, but they were provided to participants to flick through during the meeting. In most cases the number of flipcharts distributed was less than the number of people attending (for example, in one community six flipcharts were distributed among approximately 40 participants). There were some criticisms of the flipchart by staff, because it did not follow the format of the discussion paper, and because it included housing images, which was not part of the consultation agenda.

As discussed above, the discussion paper was available in 10 of the Tier 2 meetings that CIRCA observed, and in the Tier 3 meeting. In many cases the facilitator also referred to this document throughout the consultation, pointing people to specific sections of relevance.

Based on the observations, most people flicked through the discussion paper, but did not appear to read it in detail. There were a few people in each meeting who read the discussion paper more closely, and highlighted points from this in the discussion.

The discussion paper is a very important document, and formed the basis of the consultation. The benefits of this communication tool were:

- It provided details on the history of the intervention and each measure, reflecting the verbal presentation
- It demonstrated the commitment of the government in taking these consultations, and the feedback from community members, seriously
- It provided detailed information that could be accessed by those with relevant English literacy skills
- Several people at the meeting had already been given the discussion paper, and this was a useful tool for informing them of the Government's position with regards to the NTER.

The limitations of this tool were:

- It was not accessible for those with limited English language skills
- It did not have any visual imagery to assist understanding or engage the audience
- The meeting did not provide time for people to read the discussion paper
- The document uses formal 'government' language.

5. USE OF INTERPRETERS

CIRCA was asked to assess whether interpreters were used, and whether the interpreters were used effectively.

The use of interpreters for the 15 Tier 2 community meetings observed was as follows:

- In nine communities there were interpreters present
- In six communities interpreters were not used

The Government was committed to using interpreters where needed for the Tier 2 meetings, but in one community it was not possible to book an interpreter, and in two communities an interpreter had been booked, but did not attend the meeting (based on the 15 Tier 2 meetings observed). In several other meetings interpreters attended, but did not interpret. In the three town camp meetings (Elliott town camps; Knuckey's Lagoon and PIV; and Minmarama, Kulaluk and One Mile) interpreters were not booked.

It is clear that the biggest challenge in working with interpreters at this stage is the availability of interpreters with the skills and training to facilitate large public meetings.

In several communities the interpreter was a senior community member. In other communities where interpreters were not present, community leaders or the IEO informally played the role of interpreter. In both scenarios not all information was interpreted, as often the participants would have a discussion in-language, and the interpreter would then provide a summary of the discussion to the Government staff in English. These community members also often re-worded the information in English so it could be better understood by participants. They often played the role of facilitator as well, encouraging people to respond to the questions, and asking people to speak one at a time and stay on track. It was sometimes difficult to assess when this person was interpreting and when they were voicing their own opinion, and in a few cases several community members were informally interpreting, which created some confusion in the meeting.

Where interpreters were used in the Tier 2 meetings, in most cases this worked well, and the following characteristics demonstrated the effective use of interpreters:

- The facilitator explained the role and function of the interpreter to the group
- The facilitator addressed the audience, and not the interpreter
- The facilitator used simple English and paused at appropriate intervals
- The interpreters were confident and asked the facilitator to pause or re-phrase information when needed.

The Tier 2 meetings did provide an example of good practice in working with interpreters. In this meeting team interpreting was used, and the interpreters were very confident. They determined when it was appropriate to intervene and interpret, and played the role of cultural as well as language

interpreters. The facilitator worked well with these interpreters.

CIRCA observed a few briefings of the interpreters, which worked very well. In these cases the interpreters were senior men, and they provided recommendations on how the meeting should run.

There was one case where the use of the interpreters was very poor. In this instance the facilitator addressed the interpreters, not the group, used unclear language that made the interpreting task difficult, and provided the interpreter with instructions while interpreting, interrupting the interpreter. In several situations it was also challenging working with interpreters because participants were spread over large distances.

Interpreters were not used in the Tier 3 meeting, but based on observations an interpreter was not needed.

6. REPORTING

CIRCA reviewed the Government reports from all of the Tier 2 meetings and the Tier 3 meeting, and compared these with the notes taken by CIRCA observers. This was done to assess the accuracy of the meeting records.

Overall, the Government reports of the Tier 2 meetings reflected the content of the consultations. A standard template was used for the Tier 2 meetings, and this template allowed for introductory/overview comments and for additional issues to be documented.

The Tier 2 template followed the questions of the discussion paper. In several meetings we observed, these specific questions were not asked, as there was a general discussion on each measure. In these cases the reports listed the range of comments for each measure.

In most cases the Government reports accurately reflected the content of the Tier 2 consultations. For each section of the report, the range of comments made by community members were listed. In some cases the language used by community members was recorded in the reports, and in other cases a summary of the comment was used.

Reviewing the reports did highlight a few opportunities for improvement:

- It would have been helpful for a description of the meeting to be provided, and for descriptors in terms of level of anger and frustration to be provided. While the language recorded in many cases demonstrated this anger, it would have been helpful if the report clearly indicated this. Similarly, there was no indication in the reports of whether the comments came from a number of community members, or whether they were from a couple of community members (from our observations, a lot of the feedback was gathered from a few key community members). It would also be important to discuss whether the meeting was dominated by men or women, or Indigenous or non-Indigenous people (in a few cases non-Indigenous people dominated the discussion). As well, it would have been beneficial to provide other indicators with regards to whether participants were more/less engaged, and where the conversation was more forced
- A few reports did not clearly indicate the extent of negativity towards income management that CIRCA consultants observed in the meeting. Linked to this, in a few reports, the preference for the opt-out option was implied, whereas our interpretation of the feedback from the meetings is that the decision to be on income management should be left up to individuals
- The signs were an important issue in many communities, especially when the pornography measures was raised, and this was not always clearly recorded in the reports
- The consultations gathered feedback on a number of issues that are not related to the NTER discussion paper. Below are some of the issues that were raised consistently in the meetings, but that were not given enough weight in the reports:

- Housing – many people were frustrated that no (or very little) improvements had been made with housing. Most had been promised (but were yet to realise) house refurbishments, but in almost every consultation we observed community members emphasised their need for more housing
- Pornography – mobile phones and late night TV were identified consistently as a concern
- Having funds available for the show – this was recorded in a few reports, but there were several meetings where this was identified but not reported.

When conducting consultations in the future, it will be important that there is an opportunity to record additional issues that are important, but may be beyond the scope of the consultation. The importance of this was emphasised during the observations, as the facilitators all made it very clear that the Government is interested in hearing from community members, and that the Government will take their comments seriously. This verbal commitment needs to be supported with a clear process for matters to be actioned. One option is for these reports or action items to be directed to the GBM for action.

The Tier 3 report included each question from the discussion paper, as well a section for general comments. This report was very detailed, and in many cases included quotes from the participants. Overall, the report we reviewed reflected the content of the discussions observed.

There are a few areas that could be improved in the future:

- As mentioned earlier, it would be valuable to include a descriptor of the meeting. While the communities represented were listed, in the future it would be helpful to also include information on the gender mix, age profile, level of engagement, and level of emotion expressed in the meeting.
- While there was a section in the report for other comments, it would be valuable to summarise the main issues of concern. For example, in the Katherine workshop there were lots of concerns raised about police, night patrol, the BasicsCard, housing, young people and employment, and these could have been identified and summarised more clearly in the report.
- The summary of the income management section identifies the level of opposition to the two income management options included in the discussion paper. However, the summary identifies the voluntary model with triggers for those not managing their money as the preferred model. We believe this over-simplifies the level of discussion and responses to some extent, as many said income management should be stopped, and the trigger model was acceptable as an alternative solution, rather than the preferred solution.