



Australian Government

**Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

Closing the Gap

in the

Northern Territory

Monitoring Report

July – December 2009

Part One

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory

Two Year Whole of Government Monitoring Report

Report Structure

This Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Monitoring Report provides an analysis of data captured between 1 June and 31 December 2009. However, in many instances information is provided for the entire period 1 July 2007 to 31 December 2009.

The monitoring report has two parts.

Part One

Part I of this report includes the following elements:

- Background on the NTER including the National Partnership Agreement, Closing the Gap in the NT.
- An overview of the NTER redesign process
- An outline of the evaluation and monitoring of the NTER
- An outline of the NTER measures.
- Key points from this report

Part Two

Part Two of the Monitoring Report brings together information against each measure and includes achievements and progress to date against targets and/or milestones. It also includes what has not been achieved and any 'lessons learned' or impacts.

NOTES: There is reporting against a number of measures that have not been covered in earlier Monitoring Reports. This reflects the Closing the Gap in the NT National Partnership Agreement. For example Location Supported Playgroup and Alcohol Management Plans are covered in this report.

1. Background

The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) was announced by the previous Australian Government in June 2007 in response to reports of abuse and neglect of children outlined in the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle* "Little Children are Sacred"¹ report.

The present Government takes the view that Indigenous children are entitled to the same level of protection and support as other children in our society.

The NTER has a wide range of measures that are primarily designed to:

- protect children and make communities safe, and
- create a better future for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory.

The Australian Commonwealth Government has publicly committed to continuing and strengthening the NTER to ensure the protection of women and children, reduce alcohol fuelled violence and promote personal responsibility and community norms in Indigenous communities. The legislated period of the NTER is five years.

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement

The Closing the Gap in the NT National Partnership Agreement provides for the continuation until 30 June 2012 of a number of measures commenced in 2007 under the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) and relevant legislation. The agreement runs until the 30 June 2012 and will strengthen investment made under the NTER to support the specified outcomes.

The agreement transitions the NTER to a three year development phase to build on and enhance existing measures. It maintains and strengthens core NTER measures while placing a greater emphasis on community engagement and partnerships, and building capability and leadership within Indigenous communities.

The objectives of the agreement are to:

- Ensure the protection of women and children;
- Reduce violence and improve family and community safety including through restrictions of alcohol and pornography, enhancing compliance and community education;
- Improve the quality of education, increase school participation and employment outcomes;
- Improve health and wellbeing, particularly that of children;

¹ Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred" Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 2007
http://www.inquiryaac.nt.gov.au/pdf/bipacsa_final_report.pdf

- Promote positive behaviours among Indigenous youth; and
- Promote personal responsibility.

In light of the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership, and the subsequent budget measures, the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Monitoring Report has been reviewed and reorganized under the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) Building Blocks:

- Early Childhood
- Schooling
- Health
- Economic Participation
- Safe Communities
- Governance and Leadership

The Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) is not measure under the NTER or Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership and is not covered in this report. Therefore, the Healthy Homes building block is not included in this report, although land reform is a measure under the NTER.

The Redesign of the NTER

Legislation was introduced into the Australian Parliament on 25 November 2009 to restore the operation of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* in relation to the NTER legislation. The legislation redesigns the NTER measures as either special measures or non-discriminatory measures under the RDA.

Development of the legislation involved extensive consultations with Indigenous people in the Northern Territory regarding the future directions for the NTER measures. The consultations involved people in all 73 NTER communities as well as several other Northern Territory Aboriginal communities and town camps.

Details on the changes proposed in the legislation are set out in the Government's policy statement titled, *Landmark Reform to the Welfare System, Reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act and Strengthening of the Northern Territory Emergency Response*. The *Report on the Northern Territory Emergency Response Redesign Consultations* provides a synthesis of feedback from the consultations.

Many people in the consultation meetings said that they felt hurt, humiliated and confused by the way the NTER had initially been implemented. However people consulted also said that children, the elderly and women were all feeling safer, better fed and clothed, and that there was less humbugging for alcohol, drugs and gambling.

At the time of publication, the legislative amendments were before the Senate.

Evaluation and Monitoring of the NTER

Monitoring

Much of the data in this Monitoring Report necessarily focuses on output measures such as an increased police presence. The report also goes beyond this to look at the incidence of reported crime. However, these data are limited both because crime may be under-reported and because factors such as increasing the number of police can result in an increase in reported crime, while the actual incidence of crime may have remained unchanged or have fallen.

While policy interventions designed to improve the operation of communities can have a significant effect in this period, this is the exception rather than the rule. It will take a concerted multi-year effort to achieve significant lasting change. While it is generally difficult to report on outcomes at this stage, some outcome data are included in this report such as number of jobs under the Jobs Package in communities.

Evaluation

The Closing the Gap in the NT National Partnership Agreement commits the Australian and NT Governments to jointly evaluate the programs and services under the agreement in 2011-12.

A draft Evaluation Strategy was prepared at the end of 2007 following the announcement of the NTER to guide monitoring, reporting and research for the evaluation. The draft strategy has been reviewed in the light of the expanded focus of the National Partnership. The strategy is expected to be publicly released shortly. The draft strategy includes several elements designed to provide an incremental evidence base relating to the short, medium and long term effects of the NTER.

Under the Evaluation Strategy:

- Surveys of Government Business Managers are undertaken annually. Departments are responsible for evaluation of individual measures, (such as primary health care expansion or income management) and information from these separate studies will be included in the NTER evaluation over the life of the National Partnership.
- Impact studies of places, from a sample of NTER communities, are planned for 2010 and 2011. An approach is being developed involving participatory research methods to engage local people in a two-way research partnership.
- An independent outcome evaluation will be undertaken in 2011-12 to examine the effectiveness of the NTER in improving the protection of vulnerable children and to examine the achievement of the objectives documented in the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership.

2. NTER Measures

Table 1: NTER Measures by Portfolio

Measure	Lead Commonwealth Portfolio
Improving Child and Family Health	Department of Health and Ageing
Enhancing Education	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Supporting Families	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Promoting Law and Order	Attorney-General's Department
Land Reform	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Welfare Reform and Employment	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Coordination	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Ombudsman's Office

The full suite of NTER measures have been implemented progressively in the prescribed areas specified in the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 (NTNER Act). These areas generally have more than 100 residents and are known as the NTER communities.² Some of the critical and sensitive measures, such as the introduction of income management under the Welfare and Employment Reform measure, apply to smaller communities such as outstations and town camps in the prescribed areas. Prescribed areas include all Aboriginal land granted under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.

The Australian Government's response to the independent review of the NTER recognised as a matter of urgent national significance the continuing need to address the unacceptably high level of disadvantage and social dislocation being experienced by Aboriginal Australians living in remote communities throughout the Northern Territory.

² The term 'community' is commonly used to refer to the Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory that are located within the NTER areas in which the NTER measures apply.

3. Key Information³

Early Childhood

Childcare:

Location Supported Playgroups: Between 1 July and 31 December 2009, 54 children and 55 parents/caregivers participated in Locational Supported Playgroups (LSP); Yuendumu delivered 2 playgroup sessions each week; Numbulwar delivered 71 sessions across 2 locations; and Milingimbi delivered 10 sessions.

Intensive Support Playgroups: Between 1 July and 31 December 2009, 106 children and 72 parents/caregivers participated in two Intensive Support Playgroups (ISP).

- 54 parents/carers, and 74 children participated in the ISP in the Katherine communities of Kalano, Binjari, and Rockhole.
- 32 children and 18 parents/caregivers participated in an Intensive Support Playgroup in Tennant Creek.

NT Crèches: The Government committed to construct 9 new crèches and upgrade 13 existing crèches under the NTER. As at 31 December 2009, 8 of the 9 new crèches were complete and 5 were operational in Lajamanu, Peppimenarti, Robinson River, Areyonga and Yarralin. Eleven of the 13 upgrades were also completed.

Parenting Programs:

Parenting: Let's Start Program: In the period 1 January to 30 June 2009, 10 parents/caregivers and 10 children participated in the (Invest To Grow) Let's Start: Exploring Together for Indigenous Preschools Program.

- In the period 1 July to 31 December 2009, 18 parents/caregivers and 16 children participated in the (ITG) Let's Start: Exploring Together for Indigenous Preschools Program.
- For 2009 as a whole, 28 parents/caregivers and 26 children participated in the (ITG) Let's Start: Exploring Together for Indigenous Preschools Program.

Parenting: Core of Life Program: In 2009, 85 parents/caregivers participated in the (Invest To Grow) Core of Life's 'Pregnancy, Birth, Breastfeeding and Early Parenting' Program and 417 youth have been assisted.

³ All information is for the reporting period 1 July to 31 December 2009, unless otherwise stated.

Schooling

School attendance: The average attendance rate for schools in the NTER communities was 62.2% in December 2009 up from 60.1% in December 2008. The average school attendance rate in December 2007 was 62.5%.

School nutrition program: As at December 2009, 65 schools (60 Government, five non-government) across 73 prescribed communities were supported by the School Nutrition Program.

- An estimated 2,627 breakfasts and 4,461 lunches are provided each school day (7,088 meals in total).
- Over 200 people are directly employed by the SNP program in meals delivery, of whom 161 (78%) are local Indigenous people.

Teaching Staff: At 1 February 2010, 140.5 full-time equivalent additional teachers have been funded by the Commonwealth and deployed by NT education providers. This comprises:

- 127.5 teachers deployed by NT Department of Education and Training (DET);
- 12 teachers deployed by NT Catholic Education Office; and
- 1 teacher deployed by NT Christian Schools Association.

Teacher Housing: The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Governments have committed funding to build up to 50 additional houses for teachers in the Northern Territory.

- In addition, the Catholic Education Office will build four houses in Wadeye, Nguiu and Santa Teresa. The Northern Territory Catholic Education Office is in negotiations with relevant parties to progress this.
- This is in addition to the Commonwealth's existing commitment to build up to 10 new houses for teachers in Wadeye.

Quality Teaching Package and Enhancing Literacy: Over 2007-09, the Australian Government has invested \$25.2 million to improve Indigenous literacy and numeracy outcomes and up skill local Indigenous education workers in the Northern Territory. Some key achievements to date include:

- the establishment of regionally based specialist support teams to help embed good literacy and numeracy teaching practices in 51 remote schools;
- leadership opportunities for remote school Principals including 25 places in the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program;
- 22 Indigenous teacher enrolments in a fourth year teaching qualification;
- eight additional More Indigenous Teachers scholarships,

- the first intake of 20 Assistant Teachers in a Diploma of Education Support qualification;
- the recruitment and placement of 12 Coaches in remote schools to support Assistant Teachers studying;
- an increase in the number of Assistant Teachers undertaking study from 100 to 250;
- over 100 completion bonuses to teachers and Assistant Teachers for the successful attainment of higher education qualifications to offset study costs;
- expansion of opportunities on team teaching models around literacy and numeracy skills sets via the new “Learning at and through Work” and the “English Language Self Assessment” resources; and
- 250 laptops to Assistant Teachers undertaking formal study.

Health

Remote Area Health Corps: In the period 1 July to 31 December 2009, the Commonwealth provided funding to the Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) to place 173 health professionals throughout the NT on short to medium-term placements – 23 general practitioners, 95 nurses, 13 allied health professionals and 42 dental personnel.

Child Health Services: From July to December 2009:

- 508 children received audiology follow-up services (525 checks conducted);
 - 1,470 children received dental follow-up services (2,044 checks conducted); and
 - 431 children received Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist follow-up services (510 checks conducted).
- NT Mobile Outreach Service (MOS) *Plus*: From 1 July to 31 December 2009:
- Four teams located in Darwin (includes Katherine team), Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.
 - 19 staff employed in MOS *Plus* (as at 31 December).
 - In this period 110 visits to 66 communities delivering MOS *Plus* services in 184 case related and 413 non-case related⁴ services were delivered.

⁴ Non-case related services include community education and professional development services to Aboriginal children, families and community members.

Drug and Alcohol Services: In 2009-10, \$2.6 million (\$1.2 million under Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative (EHSI) and \$1.4 million under the Closing the Gap – NT – Indigenous Health and Related Services Measure) will be provided to continue the key activities of the NTER. This includes:

- Fourteen Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) positions funded in six Aboriginal Medical Services; and
- Eight ongoing AOD positions and one project manager position funded in four Aboriginal Medical Services and four NT Department of Health and Families centres.

Food Security and Community Stores: At 31 December 2009, a total of 88 community stores have been licensed.

- A total of 190 monitoring visits to community stores were undertaken from 1 July to December 2009.
- In the period July to December 2009, one community store's license was revoked.

Economic Participation and Welfare Reform

Jobs Package: At December 2009, Commonwealth agencies and the Northern Territory Government confirmed that a total of 2,211 jobs had been funded under the Job Package since the introduction of the NTER. This number is composed of 1,757 jobs in Australian Government service delivery and 454 in local government service delivery.

At 31 December 2009, 2158 positions were confirmed as filled in Australian Government or local government service delivery.

Income management: As at 18 December 2009, there were 16,695 income management customers in the Northern Territory and \$272.3 million being income managed.

BasicsCard: As at 18 December 2009, 96.4% (16,085 out of 16,695) income managed customers had an active BasicsCard.

- From its introduction in September 2008 to 18 December 2009, customers have spent \$133 million through these BasicCards – mostly in stores which trade primarily in food (71.88%) and clothing (17.61%).

Youth Diversion: Four projects previously funded under the NTER Youth Alcohol Diversion measure have been identified for continuation of funding under the Youth In Communities measure in 2009-10.

Locations for new projects were determined in consultation with relevant Australian and Northern Territory Government representatives, Shire Councils and peak service representative bodies. Applications for funding opened on 15 December 2009 and closed on 22 January 2010 and will be included in the next report.

Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP): Between 1 July and 31 December 2009, there were 240 referrals to LLNP in NTER communities. Of these referrals 70 eligible job seekers have commenced training. Government has committed \$3 million over three years from 2009-10 to deliver LLNP training services across nine Indigenous communities.

Working on Country in the Northern Territory: As at 16 April, over 180 rangers across 30 Northern Territory communities were contracted through key Aboriginal organisations, delivering services on Indigenous-held or leased lands. This program builds on Indigenous knowledge of protecting and managing land and sea country, and provides funding for the employment for Indigenous people to deliver environmental outcomes.

Land Reform

Five year leases: The Australian Government currently holds five-year leases over 64 Northern Territory Emergency Response communities. On 30 October 2009, the Valuer-General concluded the consultation process with the Central and Northern Land Councils.

On 25 May 2010 the Australian Government started paying rent to Aboriginal land owners for five-year leases covering 45 communities under the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). The rent payments will be backdated to the commencement of the leases, and include all rent payable for the period up until 1 April 2010. The payments will continue to be made on an annual basis until the leases expire. Some of the leases expire in August 2012 while others expire in February 2013.

Leasing Arrangements: The focus in 2009 was to secure long-term leases over the 16 communities identified for major investment under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP). Long term leases have been finalised or agreed in principle in 14 of the 16 SIHIP communities receiving major capital works. Work will continue in 2010 to negotiate leases at the two remaining communities - Yuendumu and Yirkala.

Safe Communities

Most of the data provided below are from the NT Police. It is well known that reported crime does not always provide a good indication of underlying crime levels particularly when there is a significant change in police numbers. Increased reporting of crime in the NTER communities is likely to be related to an increased ability to report crime given the substantial increase in police numbers. This is particularly the case in the 18 Themis⁵ communities which were provided with new police stations. Increased police numbers may lead to reductions in underlying crime despite increases in reported crime – the only way to establish this is to ask people about their experiences.

⁵ 'Themis' is the operation name selected from a pre-determined list by NT Police for their component of the NT Government response to the National taskforce against child abuse in Indigenous communities.

A study undertaken for the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS) provides direct evidence on this point. The study, which was released earlier this year, was primarily based on 331 surveys of Aboriginal people in 14 of the 18 Themis communities. The study concluded that 'nearly half of people said that alcohol and violence was less of a problem in their community because of the police.' The study also concluded that three quarters of people wanted police living in their community.

Police Presence: At 25 January, there are 62 additional police (compared to the number prior to the NTER) deployed to communities.

- Five permanent police station upgrades have been completed: Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Ali Curung, Hermannsburg and Yuendumu.
- Eighteen Themis Stations are currently operational in communities.
- Over fifty million dollars has been allocated over three years to build five new, permanent police stations in Northern Territory priority areas of Gapuwiyak, Ramingining, Yarralin, Arlparra and Imanpa.

Confirmed Incidents: The number of alcohol related incidents recorded by police in NTER communities increased by 12% between 2007 and 2008 and 31% between 2008 and 2009.

- Substance abuse incidents recorded by police increased by over 50% between 2007 and 2008. There was an 8% increase in the number of substance abuse incidents between 2008 and 2009.
- Drug related incidents recorded by police increased 9% between 2007 and 2008 and 23% between 2008 and 2009. Recorded drug related incidents increased by more than 50% in the Themis communities between 2008 and 2009.
- From 2007 to 2009 there has been a 75% increase in the number of domestic violence incidents recorded by police in the NTER communities.
- Excluding assaults related to or against children, and assaults that are domestic violence-related, the number of confirmed assault incidents recorded by police across the NTER communities rose, from 72 in 2007 to 93 in 2008 and 142 in 2009.
- The number of convictions for assault across the NTER communities rose from 347 in 2007 to 445 in 2009 (a 28% increase).

- The number of lodgements in court for sexual assault offences in prescribed communities increased by 42% between 2007 and 2009.

Child Safety: The number of convictions for child sexual assaults committed in the NTER communities in 2008 was 9 and in 2009 it was 10. The total number of convictions for child sexual assaults committed in the NTER communities since 1 July 2007 is 27.

- Since July 2007, 4 non Indigenous people and 23 Indigenous people have been convicted for Child Sexual Assault.
- The total number of confirmed incidents of child abuse in the NTER communities rose, from 106 in 2007 to 275 in 2009. The 18 Themis communities accounted for 77% of the increase in the number of confirmed child abuse reports from 2007 to 2009.
- In 2008-2009, Indigenous children in the Northern Territory were six times as likely as other children to be the subject of a substantiation of a notification of abuse and neglect.
- In addition, the rate of substantiated child abuse for Indigenous children aged 0-16 in the Northern Territory rose from 16.8 per 1,000 children in 2006-07 to 23.7 per 1,000 children in 2007-08 and to 24.1 per 1,000 in 2008-09. Substantiations for Indigenous children in the Northern Territory were most likely to reflect neglect (43.4%), followed by physical (25.9%), emotional abuse (23.6) and sexual abuse (9.7%).

Mobile Child Protection: In the period July to December 2009, Mobile Child Protection Workers visited 45 of 73 prescribed communities

- In the same period, the Mobile Child Protection Team was involved in investigating and providing follow up services in 444 matters and 34 children were made subject to care orders

Remote Aboriginal and Community Workers: In the period July to December 2009 there 122 referrals from individuals and families in the NTER communities.

- In the same period there were 107 referrals from community services regarding child protection issues
- There were 214 referrals from the Northern Territory Families and Children, a branch within the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families.

Night Patrol: As at December 2009, there were 80 active night patrols in 80 communities.

- During the period July to December 2009, approximately 550 people were transported to a recognised safe house by an Australian Government funded night patrol service.

- During the period July to December 2009, approximately 30,267 people were transported, including referral to other services, by an Australian Government funded night patrol service

Safe Places: As at December 2009, 22 Safe Places were fully operational.

- 15 communities had new or refurbished safe house facilities.
- In the reporting period July to December 2009, there were 104 safe house positions filled, and 103 of these were filled by Indigenous people.

Alcohol Management:

- Alcohol Management Plans are in place in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Palmerston and Katherine.
- A liquor supply plan is in place in Groote Eylandt.
- Consultations have commenced with Borroloola, Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Elliot, Tiwi Islands and Groote Eylandt in relation to the development of Alcohol Management Plans.
- All highway and boundary signs have been installed and 129 community signs have been installed.

Legal Services: Between 1 July and 31 December 2009, legal service providers handled approximately 381 NTER related matters, including 160 advices, 43 duty lawyer services, 178 cases, and undertook 160 outreach visits to communities.

Local Priorities Fund (LPF): 181 projects totalling \$10.14 million have been approved for funding. LPF provides streamlined access to flexible funding to address urgent needs in prescribed communities that fall outside the guidelines of established programs. 49 of these projects are in Remote Service Delivery communities, 16 are in Territory Growth Towns and 116 projects are approved in other communities. Funded projects fall under the following categories: refurbishment of community facilities; community safety; environmental improvements; child safety; and community recreation areas.

Governance and Leadership

Government Business Managers: As at 30 December 2009, there were 56 GBMs servicing 73 NTER communities, 35 town camps, and one community that is not prescribed under the NTER Act.

Northern Territory Indigenous Interpreters: Between July and December 2009 there were approximately 280 people available to provide interpreting services in the NTER communities and 2,899 interpreting sessions were delivered by trained interpreters: an 11.5% increase from the first 6 months of 2009.

Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service: For the period 1 July to December 2009, 3,114 people sought access to an interpreter which is a 22% increase for the same period in 2008.

Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service: The number of interpreting hours provided for the NTER for the period totalled 2,066 hours.

Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs): During the period 1 July 2009 – 31 December 2009 there were 26 Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs) in 26 communities across the Northern Territory and 26 out of potential 30 communities covered by an Indigenous Engagement Officer.

Commonwealth Ombudsman: Between July and December 2009, complaints about the NTER and other programs in the NT totalled 147. These were gathered almost exclusively as a result of 14 visits to 12 communities and one homeland area, and five visits to four town camps. The most common complaints were regarding housing issues, followed by income management.

Recent evaluations and reports

Report on the Northern Territory Emergency Response Redesign Consultations

From June to the end of August, 2009, the Commonwealth Government conducted extensive consultations with the people of the Northern Territory about the future direction of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. The consultations were conducted using a four tier process that targeted participation from a wide range of community members, in a number of different forums.

Tier 1: Government Business Managers (GBMs) and Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEO) collecting responses from individuals, families and small groups

Tier 2: Whole-of-community meetings in almost all of the communities and town camps affected by the NTER

Tier 3: Workshops attended by people from the NTER communities as well as Indigenous leaders. The workshops were held in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek

Tier 4: Workshops with major Indigenous stakeholder organisations in the Northern Territory, and a separate workshop with the Northern Territory Indigenous Affairs Advisory Council. These workshops were held in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine and Nhulunbuy.

The consultation process involved people in all 73 NTER communities as well as people from other Northern Territory communities and town camps. There were over 500 Tier 1 and Tier 2 meetings, and eleven Tier 3 and 4 workshops.

Key Themes:

There were a number of common themes to emerge across all eight NTER measures.

There was an identified desire and need for Aboriginal people to take greater ownership of solutions to the problems the NTER measures are seeking to address.

Those consulted valued the opportunity for genuine engagement in the consultation process and involvement in the development of policy and programs to address the problems, and considered this engagement to be central to achieving successful outcomes.

Children, women and the elderly reported feeling safer, better fed and clothed, getting more sleep and being subjected to less humbugging for money for alcohol, gambling and drugs. These outcomes were attributed to income management, alcohol restrictions, community store licensing and an increased police presence.

Income management and alcohol restrictions were most commonly approved of by women, however men also commented frequently on the benefits of the measures. It was noted that the NTER had brought shame to many caring and responsible men in communities.

Attention to implementation and service delivery is a critical factor in achieving outcomes. Poor implementation and delivery can act to develop perceptions of unfairness and marginalisation and distrust in government, and can threaten beneficial outcomes.

It is vital to acknowledge the need to understand the particular challenges of language, literacy and the dynamics and capacity of remote communities in the communication of policy and program change.

There was a reported feeling amongst Aboriginal people that different standards and measures were being applied to them compared to the rest of Australia and that this has accentuated racial divisions in some areas.

The full report is available at www.fahcsia.gov.au.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Independent Review of Policing in Remote Communities in the Northern Territory – November 2009

In November 2009, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments commissioned the Allen Consulting Group to undertake an Independent Review of Policing in Remote Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory. The review was published in April 2010 and outlined a number of recommendations for future strategies for policing in the NT.

The review methodology involved a four pronged approach – community consultations, stakeholder consultations, a literature and desktop review of existing Australian and international ‘best practice’, and the development and application of modelling and analysis. This yielded both quantitative and qualitative data which was used to review the current level of policing, the anticipated future requirements for remote policing, and develop a framework to determine the resourcing levels required in future.

The review evaluated the current level of policing in remote communities including service delivery standards (measured by response times and levels of accessibility), the current strategies of delivery options (rapid response options, hub and spoke models and community based policing models), the current amount of cultural training and development available to police, the access to and capacity of specialist officers and cross-services support, and the resourcing levels required.

Included in the review is an evaluation of the current effectiveness of the Northern Territory Police Remote Service Delivery strategy in providing adequate coverage to remote communities (including the Themis stations), the current and future funding bases for remote policing in the NT, the role of community engagement in preventative policing activity, the cross service capabilities available in remote communities (including Mobile Child Protection Teams and psychologists), the effect of resident mobility in Indigenous communities and the future capacity of NT police to meet demands for policing over the next five years.

There were 19 recommendations as a result of the review.

The key recommendations focus on developing remote community policing service standards that can be applied consistently across all communities, and include the development of standards for night patrols to coordinate and complement NT policing. A system of monitoring and adherence to these standards is also proposed, as well as the development of a command structure career stream primarily based on small station operations in remote communities. The transition of the current Themis stations into permanent police stations, or as an alternative, the provision of overnight facilities to accommodate relief staff is also recommended. The introduction of mobile police vehicles that can provide accommodation and operational facilities for relief police staffing is also proposed.

There were recommendations for an increase in recruitment and retention targets for female and Indigenous officers, and a locum pool of officers experienced in remote community policing be established to cover any staffing shortfalls. An increased focus on recruiting police that are suited to living and working in remote communities in the long term would help improve community engagement and community policing outcomes.

As an immediate response, both Governments have agreed to establish a joint working party to address the Review's recommendations including development of an implementation plan to progress agreed recommendations over the next five years.

The full report can be accessed at –

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/nter_reports/policing_in_nt/Pages/default.aspx

Aboriginal Communities and the Police's Taskforce Themis: Case studies in remote Aboriginal community policing in the Northern Territory

A study undertaken for the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS) provides direct evidence on this point. The study which was released earlier this year was primarily based on 331 surveys of Aboriginal people in 14 of the 18 Themis communities. The study concluded that 'nearly half of people said that alcohol and violence was less of a problem in their community because of the police.' The study also concluded that three quarters of people wanted police living in their community.

The research project found a number of consistent issues across the communities:

- There were generally two types of policing in remote communities: appropriate policing and underpolicing. Police that engaged with the community and adapted their practices to suit the local population's service demands were more accepted, respected and achieved better community policing outcomes. Police that 'underpoliced' failed to adapt their urban policing to remote community needs and did not engage with and show flexibility in their policing duties.
- The use of search powers by police to enter properties and vehicles to search without a warrant was an issue of concern. This is an area of uncertainty under the NT Liquor Act with respect to the s59A (1) NT Interpretation Act that defines the limitations of police search powers.
- There were also complaints about police issuing notices/fines for unregistered vehicles and unlicensed vehicles, with this causing excessive hardship on residents in communities without adequate

public transport, where vehicles are needed to access shopping, medical services and to get to and from school and work.

- The use of unregistered vehicles and their unlicensed operation on land that is held under trust is a common occurrence as community members need transportation for hunting and traditional practices. The classification of this land as public/private determines whether police issue fines/notices for traffic offences committed on this land. This is another grey area that needs clarification.

The perceptions of community members of the effectiveness of police showed a strong support for a permanent police presence in the communities. In every community a majority of respondents wanted a continued police presence. Of the total group of respondents, three-quarters (75%) wanted a permanent police presence and 53% believed the police were doing a good job.

There are differences in the perceptions between communities that are not apparent in the overall figures. In some communities less than one fifth of people reported improvements in alcohol issues. The proportion of people who believed police were doing a good job ranged from 11% to 85% across each community.

The research found a need for strengthened cultural awareness training and a specific career path for remote policing. A strong correlation was found between culturally appropriate policing and community regard and trust. It was also reflected that culturally appropriate policing was developed through experience rather than training.

The research also identified a number of areas where further research and consultation was required to address key problems with policing in remote communities.

The full report can be accessed at –

<http://www.naaja.org.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewMediaRelease&pid=201&y=2010&mo=4>
