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2013



**Indigenous
Implementation
Board**

**Report to the Hon. Dr Kim Hames MLA
Deputy Premier;
Minister for Health; Indigenous Affairs**

March 2010

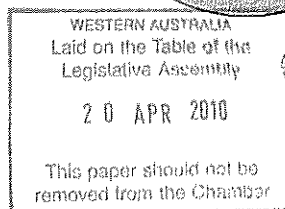


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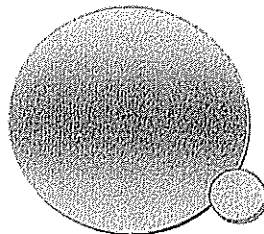
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FROM THE CHAIR

Introduction

This is the second Report of the Indigenous Implementation Board in Western Australia since the Board's inception in February 2009. It covers the first year of the Board's activities which continue to be driven by the Terms of Reference issued to the Board by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs interpreted in the context of the emerging circumstances and activities within Aboriginal communities and the ongoing social programs generated out of the COAG process. This Report follows on from the Board's first six monthly report passed to the Minister in August 2009 and subsequently tabled in the Parliament of Western Australia on 17 September 2009. The recommendations and views expressed in that Report have been analysed and discussed in the public domain. The extent to which they have been followed up with and by Government agencies forms a substantial component of the first part of this report. In general terms, there have been marginal improvements in recognition of the need to engage Aboriginal communities in developing solutions to improve their situations, but the changes in non-Aboriginal government and processes to allow this to occur are, at best, embryonic. Much remains to be done in a very short time to begin this process.

This shortfall continues to confirm the concerns of the Board as expressed in its first report. Despite the strenuous efforts of some agencies to increase Aboriginal engagement and options for the future, the indicators of poor health, alienation and despair continue to rise in Western Australia. This applies particularly to rates of engagement of Aboriginal youth with the criminal justice system which have risen alarmingly in the last six months and are a matter of national and international censure. Multiple agencies continue to engage on these issues with various Aboriginal representative bodies within their narrow areas of responsibility but there are no holistic programs that bring together all the matters that concern Aboriginal people in their search for a respected place in the nation. Much of the work of government agencies in particular, is directed to the task of crisis managing the complex and burgeoning consequences of this failure.

COAG and State trials in selected communities on options for more holistic management of service delivery are progressing very slowly and lack the context of empowerment and equity to commit Aboriginal people to a vision for a shared future. *Royalties for Regions* continues to offer opportunities for this to happen but, so far, has not come up with the processes for effective engagement. The East Kimberley development program continues to be shaped and directed from remote capital cities with ad hoc and, seemingly, temporary structures being put in place to address program requirements as they occur. Massive development programs have also been underway in the Pilbara Region for many years and are now beginning in the Kimberley without the governance structures to ensure the long term sustainability of the regions themselves and those people who live in them.

While Aboriginal people in parts of the State have begun to advance in terms of their capacity to negotiate options for economic empowerment arising from favourable native title decisions, the lack of effective governance, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, across the regions continues to cause divisions and prevent the realisation of genuine community well being, both for the present and the longer term. On a more positive note, there are pleasing indications in all regions of a desire to move these negotiations from an adversarial basis to one of mediation on the basis of mutual interest. Clearly, the success of such a process depends on the capacity of the negotiating bodies to develop and sustain their legitimacy throughout these negotiations and deliver on whatever undertakings they agree. This requires stronger forms of governance than have existed previously.

Regional Governance

Board undertakings to the Minister as a consequence of its first report include a commitment to examine the requirements of regional governance as a means for engaging Aboriginal people in an effective partnership to address their needs and the broader needs of sustainable regional development (in the belief that these two outcomes are inextricably linked), and to report on possible structures and processes to achieve a successful commitment to such governance. The bulk of this report addresses the Board's findings in this area.

It is important to understand that this undertaking to examine the requirements of regional governance is central to the underlying strategy the Board identified from the beginning as the way to engage Aboriginal people in the processes of taking greater control of their own destiny. During the reporting period, the Board has revisited this strategy in detail and confirmed its commitment to "drive the empowerment of Aboriginal people to participate as an equal partner in delivering positive sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal Western Australians." The Board further acknowledges that this requires mutually agreed ways of working and a commitment to:

- enabling the Aboriginal design and delivery of services;
- ensuring the continuation of a vibrant living culture;
- refocusing regional governance to build sustainable communities, economies and environments; and
- engaging all sectors – government, non government and business.

In adopting this strategy, the Board has been cognizant of the fact that many Aboriginal Western Australians do not live in the regions, but has also recognised that the central tenet of culture for Aboriginal people, whether urban or regional, is connection to the various landscapes of the State. Cultural sustainability is therefore dependent on empowerment and continuity in the regions.

This report offers an approach to identifying the nature and benefits of regional government and suggests the characteristics required for successful engagement both with the stakeholders in a region and with the established processes of government in Australia. To aid its deliberations, the Board engaged the services of a consultant to conduct a desk top study of the experiences with and the nature of past and present regional governance structures embracing Aboriginal people. There are obviously many questions that need to be asked and answered in the process of building consensus around these issues, but the Board has identified the establishment of a regional governance authority in an emerging area of state development, with both an economic and a social policy agenda, as an important first step. It believes that a working party should be established as soon as possible to begin the detailed development of this proposal.

How the Board Works

The Board operates in accordance with a strategy formulated at its first meeting after detailed discussions informed by the Terms of Reference issued to it by the Minister. The Terms of Reference is attached as Appendix A.

The Board meets once a month to further an agenda that has been developed in line with its chosen strategy and sustained by its Secretariat in conjunction with the Department of Indigenous Affairs – both in the regions and in the policy offices in Perth.

The Board has attempted to keep itself fully informed of the progress on the initiatives emerging from Council of Australian Governments' Indigenous agenda and to align its strategy for engagement with Aboriginal people with that agenda where it is possible to do so.

Board members also engage directly with the State and Commonwealth Government, non-government and business organisations when it is appropriate to do so to meet the strategic requirements of the Board and the objectives of the Minister.

In addition, Board members have been participating in a series of conversations organised and directed by Aboriginal organisations on a regional basis for the purpose of initiating regional vision and strategies for engagement with Government. The first of these conversations was conducted in the Kimberley Region and detailed in the first report. In this reporting period the Board engaged with regional conversations in the Pilbara region, the Goldfields regions, and with the Noongar people of the South West. Observations from all these conversations are the primary source of information that shapes the views and recommendations of the Board and forms an important part of this report.

Alliances

The Board continues to seek engagement with the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee (AACC - the Directors General group) and the newly appointed Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council (WA AAC). Unfortunately, the building of these alliances continues to be hampered by a lack of clear definition of an agreed strategy for addressing the needs of Aboriginal people and the ongoing problem of explaining exactly how commitment and expenditure of resources are determined in Western Australia and at the federal level. This work needs to be advanced with some urgency and the Board has committed itself to building these alliances as a key part of its agenda for the next period.



Lieutenant General (Rtd) John Sanderson, AC

Chairman

Indigenous Implementation Board

Western Australia

22 March 2010

DEFINITION OF TERMS

AACC

An acronym for the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee. This is a committee established under section 19 of the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972* that comprises key state government department directors general whose mandate broadly expressed is to coordinate services for Aboriginal people.

COAG

An acronym for the Council of Australian Governments.

Indigenous/Aboriginal

For the purpose of this document, the terms “Indigenous” and “Aboriginal” will be used interchangeably to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal Cultures

This term will be used when referring to those broad common connections that relate to Aboriginal peoples and that come from, and are generally passed on from, generation to generation. These are often related to the landscape, place of birth, beliefs, values, stories and the relationships between people and families.

Governance

‘Governance’ is taken to mean the evolving processes, relationships, institutions and structures by which a group of people, community or society organise themselves collectively to negotiate their rights and interests, get things done, and make decisions about:

- *how they are constituted as a group (who are members and who are not);*
- *who has authority within the group, and about what;*
- *their agreed rules to ensure authority is exercised properly and their decision-makers are held accountable;*
- *how they enforce the decisions they make; and*
- *what arrangements will best enable them to achieve their goals.*

For the purpose of this document, three sub-types of governance in the Indigenous affairs context are used:

- **Aboriginal Governance** – Culturally legitimate mechanisms and processes by which decisions are made within the Aboriginal community.
- **Corporate/Organisational Governance** – Mechanisms and processes that are required by law and government administration for organisations that manage and/or provide services to Aboriginal communities.
- **Government Governance** – Those mechanisms by which governments make decisions and manage their business including engagement with Aboriginal people about services to communities.

Regional

The term 'Regional' will generally be used to refer to regional areas of Western Australia that are used by local governments and the Development Commissions. It will also be used to refer to culturally relevant clusters of Aboriginal communities that may or may not cut across these boundaries.

WA AAC

An acronym for the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Committee. This committee is established under section 18 of the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972* to advise the Department of Indigenous Affairs on matters relating to the interests and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

THE BOARD

The Indigenous Implementation Board (Board) commenced operating in February 2009. It is an important part of the State's commitment to the advancement of Aboriginal Western Australians.

Under the terms of reference, the Board reports to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, with the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) providing the Secretariat. The Board will provide three written reports over the first two years of operation.

The membership of the Board includes a new generation of leaders and members with a high level of expertise and influence. It comprises a balance of genders with four men and five women. Five of the members are Aboriginal and four are non-Aboriginal.

Members:

Lt General (Rt) John Sanderson AC (Chairman)	Mr Brendan Hammond
Dr Mark Bin Bakar	Dr Helen Milroy
Mr Kim Bridge	Professor Fiona Stanley AC
Ms Ricky Burges	Ms Dawn Wallam
Dr Sue Gordon AM	

The membership of the Board has between them a high level of knowledge and internationally recognised expertise. The Board is well placed to provide advice on the causes, rather than the well known symptoms, of Aboriginal disadvantage and to develop a proposal for a regionally-based reform agenda.

The Board has built its strategy from a deep analytical process and strategic dialogue at their first two day meeting. It delivered the foundation on which the Board's strategy is built: that Aboriginal people and their culture are critical to the future of our State; their unique knowledge is the defining element in building a sustainable future for Western Australia. This strategy was reviewed in depth in January 2010 and the Board reaffirmed its commitment to this tenet and its original strategy.

"Aboriginal people and their culture are critical to the future of our State. Their unique knowledge is the defining element in building a sustainable future for Western Australia."

Indigenous Implementation Board

The general purpose of the Board is to deliver a paradigm shift that will see strong engagement and involvement of all stakeholders to collectively consider and address the structural underpinnings of Aboriginal disadvantage and to identify ways to allow Aboriginal people to make a positive contribution to the development of Western Australia.

"The Board is here to advise the State Government on how to identify and cut through the obstacles and really improve social and economic outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders."

Indigenous Affairs Minister Dr Kim Hames MLA, 10 Feb 2009

The Board recognises that empowerment can only occur by enabling Aboriginal innovation and leadership through partnerships and training.

The Board has committed itself to empowering the Aboriginal voice to bring about improved service delivery.

The Board believes that such reform should not just exist in Western Australia, but should be adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and modelled federally.

INTRODUCTION

The first section of the report will comment on developments since the Indigenous Implementation Board's first report, particularly in relation to the recommendations it made to Government.

The second section of the report will address the main theme of the Board's second report to Government and present a concept and process for shared regional governance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to achieve regional development and sustainability. It will discuss the Board's experience with regional conversations in promoting an Aboriginal regional voice; the findings of research commissioned by the Board into effective models of regional governance; and the Board's synthesis of this information into a process model for regional governance for Western Australia.

The third and final section of the report will outline the Board's work plan for the next period.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indigenous Implementation Board's second report to Government identifies the response to the recommendations of the Board in its first report and develops its thinking about regional governance.

While some progress has been made on most of the Board's recommendations, the gains to date are small and much remains to be done in engaging Aboriginal communities in developing solutions to improve their situations. There are some promising developments where Aboriginal communities have been involved in determining service priorities but these are still small in number. More commonly, Aboriginal communities are approached about implementation of programs that have already been decided and, while this process is useful it falls short of the need to set priorities and outcomes in partnership.

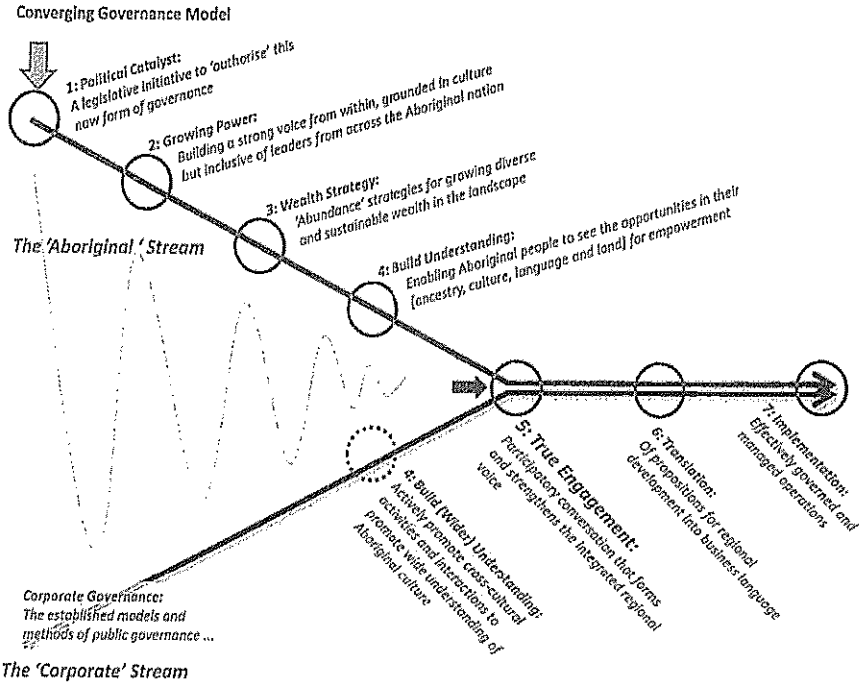
Substantial progress has been made in engaging Aboriginal groups in regional conversations aimed at determining if they want to participate in regional governance and how they need to organise themselves to ensure culturally strong and legitimate representation. It has been the Board's experience that with each new conversation the need for unity has been increasingly stated by participants and that plans to develop a workable regional process are becoming part of conversation outcomes.

These processes have to be sustained to ensure culturally legitimate representation and the Board has reiterated its recommendation that *Royalties for Regions* allocate recurrent funding for the process.

The report presents the Board's thinking on why regional governance is required to develop sustainable communities and how all Western Australians will benefit from a true partnership with Aboriginal people in the regions. It also summarises research on effective models of governance and considers the potential in current activity to improve service delivery to Aboriginal communities.

This work makes it clear that there is considerable work to be done in reorganising government so that its silos are broken down and it can provide a more holistic approach to collaborating with Aboriginal people. The Board recommends that this process commence and that work to establish a regional governance authority with the authority to determine regional development priorities including infrastructure and economic and social development priorities begin.

Diagrammatically the vision of the Board is represented as a converging governance model.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Board recommends that State and Commonwealth Governments resolve issues in funding interpreter services and the training and accreditation of Aboriginal translators and interpreters so that all Aboriginal Australians are provided with health and legal services in a language they understand.
2. The Board recommends that work to develop accurate estimates of Indigenous investment should establish processes for data collection that will enable investment to be measured at regional as well as state and national levels.
3. The Board recommends that consultation continues to identify appropriate regional governance mechanisms comprising Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal representation, industry and three tiers of government.
4. The Board recommends that *Royalties for Regions* allocate recurrent funding for Aboriginal communities to develop culturally relevant processes and structures to enable engagement with regional governance.
5. The Board recommends that government establish a regional governance authority in one region of Western Australia as a first step towards regional governance and based on the principles identified from the Board's conversations, research and analysis. Central to the functioning of the regional governance authority would be the philosophy that governance close to regional people and the land and sea that they care for is the core to any effective strategy of strengthening regions and providing for long term sustainable prosperity and that Aboriginal culture and knowledge are essential and integral to this. The regional governance authority would have the authority to determine regional development priorities including infrastructure and economic and social development priorities.
6. The Board recommends that Government develop a model for creating a single government interface at the regional level that can participate in regional governance.

Section One

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE BOARD'S FIRST REPORT

This section of the report comments on developments since the Indigenous Implementation Board's first report, particularly in relation to the recommendations it made to Government. Further recommendations to Government are presented in blue text.

Minister Hames Request for State Targets in Indigenous Affairs

First Report Recommendation 1

The Board recommends that Indigenous people must be involved in target setting and additionally, that it is critical that greater investment in economic development and the local Indigenous workforce occurs to achieve the targets. It is recommended that Ministers support Directors General to work in the new ways required to provide a more sustainable quality of life and enhance the capacity of Indigenous people to contribute to the common wealth of Western Australia.

Outcome

In the Board's first report it noted that it and the AACC had held a workshop to discuss agency targets for Aboriginal outcomes in Western Australia and commented that success in achieving any state targets will depend on the capacity to involve Aboriginal people in target setting and directing how targets can be met. The latter includes involvement in service design and implementation.

The Board has been advised that the AACC has continued this work and that three year targets to promote cultural, social and economic wellbeing are being prepared for the Minister. It looks forward to commenting on the targets when they are available and notes that although the targets appear to have been developed with limited consultation with Aboriginal groups, any success in achieving the chosen targets will depend on effective engagement with Aboriginal communities as services are implemented.

The Board has also been advised that the WA AAC is finalising its strategic plan and that the plan includes the development of performance measures that will help assess the cultural dimension of social and emotional wellbeing.

The Board believes that the contribution of the WA AAC is a desirable development in designing and evaluating programs and will complement the work of government agencies seeking to achieve the targets being considered by the Minister. It will still be necessary for those agencies to engage with local Aboriginal people to determine how targets will be achieved and how Aboriginal people will be involved in these processes.

The Board makes the following observations in relation to target setting in indigenous affairs:

- Recognition of the value of Aboriginal cultures to the future sustainability of the state is critical.
- Targets, benchmarks, roles and accountability mechanisms are all important, but a 'bottom up' common strategic direction, developed regionally with Aboriginal people would guide the development of targets and coordinate the collective, often fragmented, efforts of governments and other sectors.
- Government needs to engage more effectively with the broader grassroots of the Aboriginal people of Western Australia if it wants outcomes from target setting.
- The State must ensure that people who are charged with undertaking consultation and engagement are well qualified and skilled to do so.
- To gain expected and agreed outcomes from target setting local people must be trained and developed to undertake the subsequent workload required.
- The ultimate target is for Aboriginal and broader community outcomes to be shared but shorter term benchmarks and targets can ensure each agency has immediate goals and responsibilities that they can be held to account for.

The Board would also like to acknowledge the following initiatives as examples that show the emergence of processes that recognise the advantages of involving Aboriginal people from the beginning of the process to establish outcomes. This new dynamic needs to be strengthened and become more widespread:

- The *Training Together-Working Together* strategy within the Department of Training and Workforce Development.
- The Ord Stage 2 Development.

- The Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement.
- The Yawuru native title agreement and associated Indigenous land use agreements that will allow land development in and around Broome.
- The framework agreement between the State Government and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council to negotiate settlement and recognition of the Noongar native title over Perth and the south west of Western Australia.

The Use of Alcohol Restrictions

First Report Recommendation 2

The Board supports the use of liquor restrictions as part of an integrated whole of government strategy designed to build and maintain sustainable communities. It recommends that these restrictions and strategies be supported by and developed in consultation with the whole community immediately that restrictions are imposed.

Outcome

The Board is aware of the significant improvements for the communities of Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek that have resulted from the implementation of alcohol restrictions and recognises that these benefits are due to the work of Aboriginal people in these towns in initiating and planning the form the restrictions would take. It also commends the support provided to the initiators of these schemes by government agencies in the towns.

In its first report the Board commented that alcohol restrictions will only be effective if they form part of a broader strategy incorporating supply, demand and harm reduction initiatives and commended the AACC on the support services being provided in locations where alcohol restrictions have been applied.

Since its report the Board has been pleased to note that Minister Jacobs has announced an alcohol management plan for the Kimberley that will ensure there are adequate government services in the event of further restrictions across the region.

The Board has also been advised that there is agreement at AACC level that healing is a priority and that work is occurring at state level to provide this support and with the commonwealth to give direction to the National Healing Foundation.

The Board commends this work and reaffirms this partnership approach as the way to address alcohol management. If such planning is sustained in partnership with the communities that introduce alcohol restrictions it should enable positive outcomes from the respite from violence and other forms of social disorder afforded by those restrictions.

Translator and Interpreter Services

First Report Recommendation 3

The Board recommends State and Commonwealth Governments commit adequate funding in the next budget, including that which is required to train and accredit Indigenous translators and interpreters, implement the State Language Policy and provide all Aboriginal Australians with health and legal services in a language they can understand.

Outcome

Additional funding has been provided by the Department of Indigenous Affairs for the Kimberley Interpreter Service and the Commonwealth has recently provided funding to support COAG initiatives in the region.

The Board does not consider that adequate progress has been made on this recommendation. The latest report by the Productivity Commission¹ shows that Aboriginal incarceration rates in Western Australia are worsening. This highlights the need for increased attention to translator and interpreter services for people with the health and legal services.

Recommendation 1:

The Board recommends that State and Commonwealth Governments must resolve issues in funding interpreter services and the training and accreditation of Aboriginal translators and interpreters so that all Aboriginal Australians are provided with health and legal services in a language they understand.

¹ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Services (2010) *Report on Government Services 2010*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

Investment in Indigenous Affairs

First Report Recommendation 4

The Board recommends that before the end of the 2009 calendar year, that all tiers of government, business and non-government organisations provide an indicative assessment of the investment occurring in Indigenous affairs, including specific information on expenditure to achieve Indigenous outcomes and its effectiveness.

Outcome

This recommendation was made in order to assess the effectiveness of investment in Indigenous affairs. In December 2009 the Department of Treasury and Finance provided an estimate of expenditure by government departments providing human services. This estimate was not calculated consistently across departments and, for many, it is currently not possible to provide accurate global estimates of expenditure nor to be able to break expenditure down by region or smaller geographical entities.

Despite the significance of Indigenous affairs it is not possible for any level of government in Australia to provide an accurate estimate of expenditure on Indigenous issues at this time. The COAG work includes developing a national methodology for determining and reporting Indigenous expenditure and an initial collection of expenditure data is being trialled. The first report is due in mid 2010 based on the 2008/09 financial year.

The Board is frustrated by this situation as an accurate understanding of investment is essential for planning and evaluation of services thereby ensuring value for money for the community. The Board supports the work occurring to develop accurate estimates that can be compared across jurisdictions but is concerned that this information will not differentiate adequately for planning at regional level.

Recommendation 2:

The Board recommends that work to develop accurate estimates of Indigenous investment should establish processes for data collection that will enable investment to be measured at regional as well as state and national levels.

Support for the Board's Work

First Report Recommendation 5

The Board recommends that reform of the Department of Indigenous Affairs be accelerated and that the reform include adequate resources to more effectively support the work of the Board, as a coordinating Secretariat.

Outcome

When the Board presented its first report the reform of the Department of Indigenous Affairs was still in its initial phase and the Department was not able to provide sufficient support for the scope of the Board's work. Now that the reform has progressed and the Department's executive structure is in place the Board expects greater engagement and coordination with the Department, the AACC and the WA AAC and will shortly meet with these groups to discuss a coordinated agenda and improved information sharing.

The Board also notes and supports the Department's focus on investment in regional offices and strategies as its way of working. A strong regional presence is essential to improving service coordination and supporting Aboriginal communities to develop their capacity to participate in regional governance.

Enhancing State and National Partnerships

First Report Recommendation 6

The Board recommends that all future COAG agreements affecting the lives of Indigenous Western Australians must appropriately involve local governments and broad Indigenous representation at the beginning of and throughout the agreement making process.

Outcome

The Department of Indigenous Affairs is the lead agency for Western Australia in the COAG reforms in Indigenous affairs and is increasingly responsible for work on national partnerships. The Board was critical of the COAG process as it was initiated without consultation with Aboriginal communities affected by the reforms and had not engaged effectively with local governments. It commends the work of the Department in ensuring the involvement of Aboriginal representative groups and local governments as the COAG initiatives are developed and implemented. Major reforms such as the COAG agenda cannot be orchestrated from Canberra or Perth and be effective. They must directly involve the people affected and the local service providers to ensure implementation will occur effectively. To this end the Board notes and supports the Department's ongoing investment in regional offices and strategies as its way of working in general and not only in relation to the COAG reforms.

Aboriginal Governance and Participation

First Report Recommendation 7

The Board recommends that the State Government undertake immediate consultation to identify appropriate regional mechanisms comprising Indigenous and non-Indigenous representation, industry and three tiers of government to:

- Administer investment from Bilateral agreements and report on progress against agreed outcomes.
- Ensure engagement with Indigenous communities, organisations and people to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of services and intended Indigenous outcomes.
- Establish a set of Indigenous service delivery priorities for each of the WA regions based on identified requirements of the region and determined in consultation with Indigenous people.
- Undertake broader regional planning that includes development of a service delivery baseline and identification of performance improvements needed for service delivery to communities in each of the WA regions.

First Report Recommendation 8

The Board recommends that Royalties for Regions allocate a recurrent stream of funding for Indigenous leaders to engage their communities in regional planning.

First Report Recommendation 9

The Board recommends the WA AAC is established and resourced as a matter of urgency, with clear terms of reference to engage with and champion the Indigenous voice and to participate equitably in partnerships with Governments and Industry in decision making that affect the regions.

Outcome

In the first report the Board recommended that government commence consultation about the design of regional mechanisms that could administer and report on COAG reforms, establish Aboriginal service priorities and undertake broader regional planning. This has not occurred and the Board acknowledges that the Department has not had the capacity to coordinate this work due to the volume of COAG work and the ongoing processes of organisational reform. The Board's own work in participating in regional conversations with Aboriginal groups has made significant progress and is discussed in the next section of this report. It has also developed its thinking about suitable models for regional governance and this is also presented in the next section of the report.

However, considerable work is still required, especially in determining how all levels of government might come together with business in regions. The Board is following with interest the work in establishing regional coordination of government services as part of the COAG reforms in remote service delivery so that there is a single interface for Aboriginal communities to deal with all levels of government. This remains a major focus for future work for the Board in collaboration with government.

The WA AAC was not established at the time of the first report but has now had several meetings and prepared its strategic plan. This group will contribute significantly to the work of the Department and the Board looks forward to collaborating with them.

There is no dedicated funding for regional conversations and to date they have been funded by the Department for Indigenous Affairs. In its first report the Board recommended that funding for ongoing conversations come from *Royalties for Regions* and subsequently Minister Hames wrote to the Minister for Regional Development and Lands seeking support. The Director of the Indigenous Implementation Board has also discussed the Board's proposal with the Department of Regional Development and Lands and a formal proposal will be prepared seeking the support for Aboriginal communities across the state to develop the processes and structures to enable them to engage effectively with regional governance.

Recommendation 3:

The Board recommends that consultation continues to identify appropriate regional governance mechanisms comprising Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal representation, industry and three tiers of government.

The Board recommends that *Royalties for Regions* allocate recurrent funding for Aboriginal communities to develop culturally relevant processes and structures to enable engagement with regional governance.

Remote Aboriginal Communities

First Report Recommendation 10

The Board recommends that the Remote Aboriginal Communities Policy be developed with the Commonwealth and Local Government so that it provides consistent advice and guidance to those involved in the development of any Regional Plans.

First Report Recommendation 11

The Board recommends that, to maximise the benefit of any future investment, consideration is given to prioritise investment towards communities where the following outcomes are likely:

- Environments that foster strong families through an increased focus on children and preventative approaches;
- Food security;

- Investment in Indigenous workforce development;
- Capacity to support infrastructure development;
- A clear and broadly united community voice; and
- Support to the development of Indigenous leadership and governance.

Outcome

In its first report the Board recommended that the policy to guide investment in remote Aboriginal communities that was then being developed should be done with Commonwealth and Local Government involvement and suggested several outcomes that should be used to prioritise investment. The Board has been advised that policy development has included all the stakeholders and that the Board's recommendations have been adopted.

Measuring Success

First Report Recommendation 12

The Board recommends that the Auditor General consider measuring the effectiveness of:

- The current investment in Indigenous affairs against the intended outcomes; and
- State agencies' involvement of Indigenous people in the design, delivery, evaluation and outcomes of service delivery, including that being driven through the COAG agreements related to Indigenous Affairs in WA.

First Report Recommendation 13

The Board recommends the AACC and WA AAC commission a WA Indigenous report card to be delivered every two years to compare progress at the regional and local level, allowing them to provide well informed advice to the State to make well-evidenced investment decisions and guide investment towards strategies that work.

Outcome

The Board had set itself the task of producing an annual Western Australian report on achievement of Aboriginal outcomes against investment in Indigenous affairs within the first two years of its operation. The inability of government to provide clear information on Indigenous investment at this time has already been commented on and will prevent the achievement of the Board's goal within its first two years. The indications from the work on investment occurring as part of the COAG process are that the reporting envisaged by the Board may not be available for several years due to the complexity of developing a consistent methodology that can be applied across all jurisdictions and then the need to be able to report regionally as well as at state and national levels.

The Board's discussions with the Auditor General have been promising. He is very keen to develop projects that will contribute positively to government knowledge about how to properly and effectively achieve policy objectives in Indigenous affairs. The Board appreciates his commitment and looks forward to further discussion as projects develop.

Considerable work is occurring on outcome and performance measurement in Indigenous affairs as a result of the COAG partnerships and overarching implementation plan and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs' development of Western Australian targets. This work involves the members of the AACC and will be used to report progress. The Board has already noted the work of the WA AAC to develop culturally relevant measures to assist these processes.

The Board strongly supports the development of a range of approaches to determine the effectiveness of investment in Aboriginal affairs. To support local and regional reporting as envisaged by the Board it reiterates its recommendation that measures must be constructed to allow this level of reporting as well as higher order indicators.

Section Two

PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Following the acceptance of the Board's first report, Minister Hames asked that the Board elaborate on its proposal for regional governance. The Board believes that regional governance is essential to Western Australia's future development and that, central to a sustainable regional process, is a partnership that includes Aboriginal people, all tiers of government and the corporate and non-government sectors. What follows is a discussion of the characteristics of good regional governance and processes that need to occur in order to develop a model of regional governance rather than a prescribed model. This approach is based on findings from the Board's research that, unless processes precede structure, the outcome is unlikely to be sustainable.

This section of the Report begins with a description of regional conversations with Aboriginal organisations. They have been a major focus of the Board's work. Through this vehicle the Board has, in partnership with Aboriginal organisations, initiated processes of organisations coming together to decide if they want to participate in regional governance and how they need to organise themselves to ensure culturally strong and legitimate representation.

Following this is a discussion of:

- why regional governance would benefit all Western Australians;
- a summary of research commissioned by the Board into what makes for sound governance; and
- the Board's recommendations for a model for regional governance and a process to develop it further from here.

Aboriginal Regional Voice

In its first report the Board included the outcomes of its first regional conversation with Aboriginal people in the Kimberley. Since then it has held conversations in the Pilbara, Goldfields and South West and further conversations are planned for the Midwest and Gascoyne in May. The main themes of these conversations are summarised below but the full report of the Pilbara conversation is attached. The reports of the Goldfields and Noongar conversations are being written and will be attached to the Board's next report.

The Board's original timeframe to undertake regional conversations across the state within its first 100 days has proved to be overly ambitious. The logistics of bringing people together across the regions are very demanding. Each conversation has taken considerable planning and organisation and to have tried to maintain the original plan would have resulted in a significant loss as each conversation has provided rich information and, most importantly, evidence of a strong desire and commitment by Aboriginal people to engage in regional governance processes.

While the Board has initiated the idea of a conversation to discuss regional governance and other issues the conversations have only been able to happen because Aboriginal organisations within the regions agreed that it was necessary for groups to come together and find ways to work together for common purposes. It has been the Board's experience that with each new conversation the need for unity has been increasingly affirmed participants and that plans to develop a workable regional processes are becoming the main determination of conversation outcomes.

The Pilbara Conversation - 15-16 September 2009

The constant themes emerging from the conversation included:

- The need to develop a common vision about improving cultural, social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Pilbara founded on lore and culture,
- While the Pilbara generates much of Australia's wealth through mining, local Aboriginal communities were by and large not benefiting and that this should be addressed by developing partnerships with business and government to ensure that needs were appropriately met and communities were fairly compensated.

- The desire for self determination and with that, the recognition that groups must develop a governance hub for the Pilbara based on representation of cultural groupings.

The report makes specific recommendations related to the themes of setting a vision for the Pilbara, economic development, lore and culture, building strong families and child protection, women and youth, employment and training, governance and health. *The full report is attached.*

The Goldfields Conversation – 3-4 February 2010

The following summary of themes emerging from the Goldfields conversation is based on notes made by the Board and while every effort has been made to faithfully reflect the views of the participants it is not their record. The report from the Goldfields conversation will form part of the Board's next report to Government.

The main themes emerging from the Goldfields conversation included:

- An acknowledgement of differences among groups along with a clear recognition by most that Aboriginal organisations must find a way to unite to develop a strong voice based on culture that can engage with government and business to change the way planning and service delivery occurs in the region.
- Aboriginal culture must be maintained and valued as it is central to sustainable regional development both economic and social. Local media can play a greater role in this and was an underutilised resource for spreading information and generating discussion across the Goldfields communities.
- Greater accountability was required of service deliverers as outcomes for Aboriginal people are poor. The discussion around these issues indicated that a more holistic approach to service provision and more mobile services were required.
- A commitment by many of those present to continue to talk with each other in order to develop a suitable model to represent Aboriginal interests in the Goldfields.

Like other conversations a range of specific recommendations were made under several themes and the report from the conversation will be presented to government when finalised.

The South West (Noongar) Conversation – 24-25 February 2010

The following summary of themes emerging from the Noongar conversation is based on notes made by the Board and while every effort has been made to faithfully reflect the views of the participants it is not their record. The report from the Noongar conversation will form part of the Board's next report to government.

The main themes emerging from the Noongar conversation included:

- Recognition of the strength of the Noongar community and its achievements in building organisational and intellectual capacity that is capable of self determination.
- Commitment to maintaining and growing culture as a central part of a vision for the future of the Noongar community.
- A desire and intention to work together as whole community for the benefit of all Noongars.
- Commitment to developing a process and structure that can represent all Noongars, including the creation of a working group to begin the process.

The themes emerging from the Pilbara, Goldfields and Noongar conversations are in accord with those of the initial Kimberley conversation. To quote from the report of the Kimberley conversation² that was attached to the Board's first report:

A paradigm shift is required and that shift is about:

- *Better equity for Indigenous people in terms of commercial and community benefits;*
- *Creating community and systemic change, rejecting the welfare model of oppression, building models around freedom and justice and based on human rights and moving to wealth creation;*
- *A framework for moving forward involving further conversations on the six core themes [economic development; environmental sustainability; education and training; cultural sustainability; health; regional development] conducted by a peak regional body's engagement with the IIB ... and dialogue with broader stakeholders in the Kimberley; and*

² The Kimberley Institute Limited (2009) *Report on the Kimberley Conversation 10th and 11th February 2009*

- *A procedure for engagement which includes growing and implementing a vision, evaluating existing service delivery, creating space to discuss economic development issues, developing an outcome based change process model, developing evidence based approaches and evaluation benchmarks, and creating partnerships for economic development and environmental sustainability.*

The Board has observed that the conversations are beginning to build on each other with an outcome that the Goldfields groups committed to continuing to work together to develop a model to represent Aboriginal interests and the Noongar groups actually established a working group to do this. Continued support for the process of regional conversations will result in representative processes and structures that can engage fully in determining regional priorities along with government and other stakeholders.

A Model for Regional Governance

Board undertakings to the Minister as a consequence of its first report include a commitment to examine the requirements of regional governance as a means for engaging Aboriginal people in an effective partnership to address their needs and the broader needs of sustainable regional development.

Why Regional Governance?

Western Australia is experiencing an unprecedented boom fuelled by the export of natural resources to the burgeoning economies of East Asia. This provides a tremendous opportunity for government leadership in using this wealth to lay the foundation, in a real and sustainable way, whereby the true and full potential of the landscape and adjacent ocean of Western Australia can be realised.

This significant and enduring legacy will be based on revitalising the regions of Western Australia which will be the foundation of long term future prosperity and sustainability for all Western Australians.

Embracing Indigenous culture as a national asset and including culturally recognised Indigenous participation in regional governance will enhance regional renewal as well as address the discrepancy that currently exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Western Australians, promote reconciliation and create a new way of working together that will benefit all.

There are clear indications that a range of emerging global challenges will have significant local implications and impacts. The converging issues of global population growth, climate change and environmental degradation are creating unprecedented policy and practical challenges for governments around the world.

A further challenge for Western Australia is that it sits on the edge of a significant shift of geopolitical and economic power into Asia.

These global changes will increase the focus on the region and Australia's actions, which will heighten the need for Commonwealth and State Governments to maintain strategic vigilance and develop measures in order to counteract the unforeseeable consequences of these powerful trends.

In seeking to construct appropriate strategic responses to these challenges, there are four broad security themes that are deeply interdependent, worthy of identification and consideration:

- Food Security: the ability of Australia to produce enough food for itself and maintain a major export capability;
- Water Security: the ability to sustainably manage and effectively use this most precious resource for the long term;
- Climate Security: a focus on building the resilience of the landscape buffer against deleterious impacts of a changing climate; and
- National Security: the capability to preserve Australia's sovereignty and independence.

While these broad themes play out across the region and over longer time frames, there are a range of local challenges that are immediate and significant. Many communities outside the major metropolitan areas of Western Australia are struggling to maintain their integrity with decreasing population, acute social issues and an inability to maintain sufficient levels of basic infrastructure and services.

The regional economic base, outside of extractive industries, is patchy and in many instances unstable or declining. The historical neglect and unwise exploitation of our fragile environment and physical resources has severely degraded and, in some cases, destroyed the viable productive capacity of land and sea.

Perhaps most critically, due to the legacy of colonisation in Australia we are witnessing the rapid loss of Aboriginal access to ancestry, language and culture that provides intimate connection with, and knowledge of, the land and sea. The potential extinction of Aboriginal culture due to the breakdown of Aboriginal social structure and the loss of the older generation of lore holders is a tragedy unfolding across our State. It is a dire situation as there may only be a very few years left before the unacceptable loss of this precious asset and what is a vital key for revitalising a sustainable relationship with our landscape. Fortunately, there is a countervailing resilience within the Aboriginal community that seeks to preserve language, lore and culture but there is an urgent need for change and for the wider community to embrace and support this movement.

The Board considers that principles of responsible government demand that these global challenges are addressed. This will need direct and practical action at a regional level.

A proposal circulating in the public sphere³ that Western Australia needs to invest in the development of two major regional cities is tacit recognition that a situation where the overwhelming majority of people live in a small region in the south west, with the rest of the state sparsely populated by people with little real connection to the land or sea, will significantly limit the future opportunities to develop broad based prosperity. The critical role of *Royalties for Regions* in determining the outcome of the last state election is also evidence of the dissatisfaction of those who do live and work outside the south west of the State with the way regional needs are being overlooked.

While the development of any regional infrastructure will be fuelled by the proceeds of the extraction and export of natural resources, the long term viability of such development can only be maintained by translating the finite and transient wealth of our resource base into enduring assets capable of creating value beyond the inevitable exhaustion of oil, gas and minerals, and where the boom and bust cycles of commodity markets can be counteracted by diverse methods of wealth creation.

The alternative will be a legacy of decaying 'ghost' towns scattered across a wasted landscape.

A broadening and deepening of our understanding of what constitutes an asset is fundamental to the success of any long term picture of prosperity. A move from thinking of value in terms of components of land or sea, towards understanding the immeasurable potential value located in the systemic integrity of the landscape as a whole is required. Aboriginal people and their culture are a critical part of building this understanding and enabling sustainable use of these assets.

³ *State Government launches blueprint for Pilbara Cities* (27 November 2009) Media release by the Premier and the Minister for Regional Development and Lands, Government of Western Australia.

The answer for both the local and regional challenges will not be found in Perth based administration but in a landscape that is occupied, nurtured and managed by those who live and work there with the objective of the sustainable stewardship of communities, economies and environments. Governance that is close to people and the land and sea they care for is the core of any effective strategy of strengthening the regions of Western Australia and providing for the long term prosperity of the state.

However, this cannot follow established models of governance that are suited for metropolitan communities. The unique circumstances, needs and aspirations of regional communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal must be central to the design of effective regional governance models. *The characteristics of such a model include:*

- An overarching vision to provide coherence to all regional governance structures. This is important in order to focus on 'big picture' development and mitigate against 'crisis management'.
- Inclusion of all sectors of regional communities, with a genuine commitment to effective engagement and representation of these groups and focused on long term, sustainable strategic development.
- Adaptation to the particular circumstances of each region, meaning that there would be a diverse range of governance arrangements, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.
- A 'thin governance' approach to coordinate and guide the delivery of services by government, non-government and corporate agencies using local knowledge, rather than adding another level of bureaucracy.
- A philosophical and practical commitment to the empowerment of Aboriginal people, and a willingness to embrace the paramount role of Aboriginal heritage, language, culture and knowledge in leading all Western Australians towards renewing a profound and spiritual connection to the land and sea.

The Evidence Base

To assist the Board develop a model of regional governance for Western Australia it commissioned Desert Knowledge⁴ to research the experience of effective Indigenous governance within Australia and overseas. *A full summary is contained in Appendix 2.*

⁴ Fisher, S. (2009) *Experiences in the development and implementation of regional governance models: Report to the Indigenous Implementation Board.*

Three key messages emerged from the report about governance and these are:

- The processes of governance are more important to success than the structure of the model and so structure should serve appropriate processes rather than the reverse.
- The quality of the interaction between government, regional governance and local people is fundamental to effectiveness.
- Governance needs to be built incrementally.

The report categorised its conclusions into the following:

1. Interface between government and Aboriginal people

It is essential to embed governance within Aboriginal views of effective structures, processes and relationships, while ensuring that it is connected to the wider social, political and business environment.

2. Approaches to strategy

A clear consensus is required on what the remit of governance will be within a particular region. This includes key decisions about fiscal arrangements, boundaries and partnerships, the definition of services and processes for selecting investments in regional development. This includes all key people and agencies within a region developing a clear sense of what the model will look and feel like from its level of authority to its ability to connect with Aboriginal people, government and business.

At a regional level, policy and investment is best focused on supporting long term development rather than on solely fixing problems. The intent of strategy is to overcome capacity constraints and to enable growth.

3. Strengthening leadership and capacity

Any model of governance must incorporate a range of measures to develop the skills and competencies of the people involved in boards or as staff. Aboriginal and government participants will both require development although with different emphases. This training needs to be extensive and sustained. Training would cover clear roles and responsibilities, well defined authority and include access to reliable information and sound advice.

4. Processes of engagement

Regional governance must be outward looking and connected to other sectors. Determining processes of engagement may be easier where objectives are clear such as prioritising regional investment. It will be more difficult where objectives need to be achieved in an already complex and competitive environment such as improved services.

Accountability and decision making processes need to be described clearly within a regional governance model. Clarity of authority and responsibility is central to effective governance.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

Processes that enable performance to be measured against strategic and operational objectives contribute to accountability and are key elements of engagement with people in the region.

6. Suitable structures

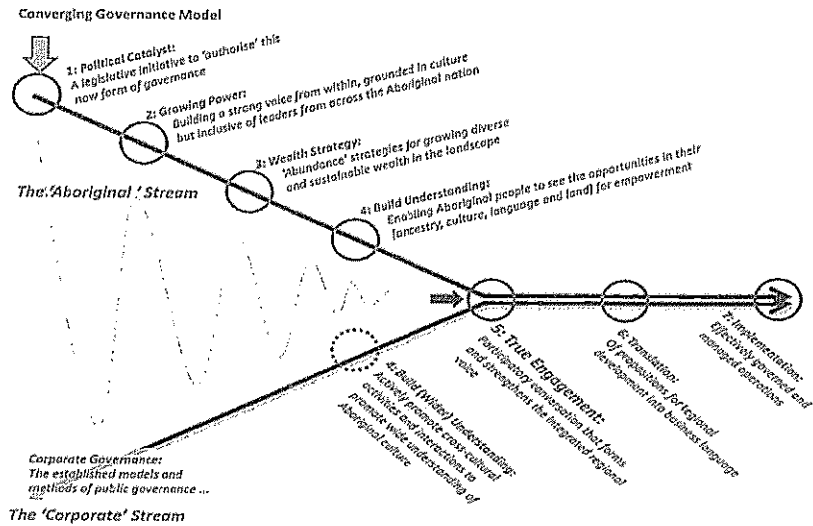
These must evolve from the processes of governance relevant to the region. Legitimacy in governance comes from structures and processes that are validated by the people who will be affected by and involved in them. At the same time they need to operate effectively in the wider environment of contemporary Western governance.

The development of governance models is evolutionary. Time is needed for models to become settled and their effectiveness is best supported by learning systems, including monitoring and evaluation, which support long term improvement. The research showed that the more effective models typically changed over time and that current structure was often quite different from early structures.

The Board's View of a Model for Regional Governance

The research makes it clear that it is not realistic to devise a model and apply it generically across Western Australia. What is required is a process of engagement that brings participants together to determine the processes and structures that will work for their region. This process needs to be truly inclusive of all sectors and focused on long term sustainable strategic development for the region.

The diagram below represents this process whereby mainstream and Aboriginal processes of governance converge to form a new way of working together based on respect and understanding that benefits all. The Board refers to this as a converging governance model.



The Board's involvement with regional conversations shows that many Aboriginal leaders are ready to engage with regional governance and that some regions have begun the process of determining how their communities will be represented. This is a process that must be undertaken by Aboriginal people so that their representation has cultural legitimacy. However, it needs to be encouraged and supported. It is the Board's view that the benefit of investing in this process of building an Aboriginal voice from a strong cultural centre and out to include the many facets of Aboriginal leadership and society will reap long term rewards in the renewal of regions.

Recommendation 4:

The Board recommends that *Royalties for Regions* allocate recurrent funding for Aboriginal communities to develop culturally relevant processes and structures to enable engagement with regional governance.

Complementary work by all levels of government is also required for regional governance to become a reality and the Board notes that there are several initiatives that are being considered or trialled that are relevant to the Board's vision.

Council of Australian Governments

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reforms include a focus on developing governance and leadership that acknowledges the need for government to reform its processes along with developing the capacity for Indigenous governance. Comment here is limited to the processes of bringing different levels of government together, however, the Board acknowledges and supports the COAG initiatives to develop Aboriginal community capacity for leadership and governance and agrees that they are founded on the evidence base. Initiatives to develop community capacity to manage its own affairs are an essential component of developing regional governance and must occur.

The COAG National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Remote Service Delivery is a trial model that incorporates the principles of good governance and is being implemented in the Kimberley communities of Halls Creek and surrounding communities, Fitzroy Crossing and surrounding communities and the Dampier peninsula with a focus on Ardyaloon and Beagle Bay. It is a place based approach that aims to improve service delivery based on bottom-up priority setting and changing the way government works with communities and across its various arms.

The Board supports the processes for creating a single government interface for communities to negotiate with at local and regional levels. While it is too early in the trial to determine the effectiveness of the model, regional governance requires government at all levels to work together to overcome the horizontal and vertical silos that are created by differing levels (Local, State and Commonwealth) and different portfolios.

The COAG model for regional governance is based on Commonwealth and State lead agencies (the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Indigenous Affairs respectively) coordinating government agency effort. Senior staff of government agencies are encouraged to co-locate at the regional operations centre and local government is being included. The regional operations centre is supported by a state operations committee comprising senior commonwealth and state officers who can address barriers that regional officers cannot overcome. In turn there are state and national coordinators to oversee operations.

Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee

The Board also notes the work of the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee (AACC) that has focused on three communities in order to improve service provision – Oombulgurri, Roebourne and Armadale.

A key capacity of the AACC is its employment of a chief operating officer who is an experienced senior officer and is empowered to bring agencies together and devise practical means to overcome barriers between agencies at the community level. While the Board supports the work of the AACC in addressing the problems of interagency collaboration in this practical way it believes that a regional approach where people in the region are required and empowered to come together will be more effective and sustainable in the long term. However, the need for agency heads to collaborate to resolve more intractable problems is likely to be an ongoing need whatever the model of regional governance ultimately adopted by government.

Economic Audit Committee

A feature of the examples discussed is that the focus has been on improving service delivery to Aboriginal communities. The Board's vision of regional governance includes all members of regional communities. In this regard some of the views of the Economic Audit Committee *Putting the Public First: Partnering with the Community and Business to Deliver Outcomes* (2009)⁵ are relevant as follows.

The report recognises that due to the culture and mode of operation of the Western Australian public sector, citizens and communities are not sufficiently empowered to contribute to the decisions made on their behalf by service delivery agencies. They need to have the opportunity to exert more responsibility. The report envisages that citizens in need of services should be able to exercise control over the range of services they access and the means by which they are delivered.

The report also comments that Western Australia's low population density and vast size pose unique challenges that require innovative approaches. It envisages reforms that empower citizens and communities across Western Australia, including community hubs and self-directed service design and delivery, which have the potential to deliver greater benefits in regional and remote areas. Local governments also have an important role to play in the process of empowering citizens as they are the level of government closest to the community.

⁵ Economic Audit Committee (2009) *Putting the Public First: Partnering with the Community and Business to Deliver Outcomes*, Department of Treasury and Finance, Western Australia.

The report acknowledges that services for those vulnerable Western Australians who are most at risk or in greatest need of support are not well integrated, with individuals facing multiple entry points, possessing inadequate information and being repeatedly referred between agencies and waiting lists. Its recommended model of community hubs is seen to offer citizens seamless support, based on the simple but fundamental principle that there should be 'no wrong door' for a person in their search for support or accessing services provided by government. Community hubs would bring together State and Local Government service brokers (public servants and community providers) and provide them with devolved responsibility and authority to make decisions across a range of agency services at the local level.

The Board agrees with the premise of the Economic Audit Committee's report that service users should be able to influence service design and priorities; that government should come together to make service access and delivery as easy and effective as possible, and that service responsibility and authority to make decisions should be devolved.

The limitations of the work on regional governance that is occurring in Western Australia currently and that has been outlined above is that the scope is too local, being confined to places and to service delivery. While service delivery is very important to Aboriginal communities, and the place based approach and supporting governance mechanisms being adopted are helpful, they fall short of the vision of the Board. The model the Board envisages sees Aboriginal communities join with other sectors of the region's economy to determine the future of the region; to determine its economic and social development priorities; to determine how these priorities will occur sustainably with the region's physical and cultural environment; and to work out ways for people to commit their creativity and energy to the achievement of the vision for the region.

Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement

The Board sees a project involving the Martu people in the Shire of Wiluna known as the Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement as having the potential to be a small scale demonstration for regional governance as envisioned by the Board. This agreement creates a forum to bring together the Aboriginal community, the Shire of Wiluna, local industry (particularly the mining industry) and State and Commonwealth Government agencies to address a wide range of social, economic and cultural issues in the Shire of Wiluna. At this stage the Aboriginal community is not sufficiently organised to be a full participant in the process of setting regional priorities, however, this is being remedied through the provision of consultancy services to the Martu people to enable them to develop their governance capabilities and resolve issues around culturally legitimate representation. The Department of Indigenous Affairs provided initial funding for this to occur and the Board understands that the mining industry partners have now endorsed the approach and agreed to continue funding for several years.

The Board commends the work occurring under the Wiluna Regional Partnership Agreement and will continue to observe and support its development. The need for support to be provided to Aboriginal communities to develop governance capabilities over a period of time is a strong lesson that comes from the research. Capacity to provide this support will need to form part of regional governance considerations.

Summary

An observation the Board has drawn from its research is that governance arrangements required for visionary strategic development for a region and those for providing effective services are likely to differ. The Board's focus is predominantly on regional governance for sustainable development as it believes that this is necessary for the long term future of Western Australia. The work of COAG, the AACC and the Economic Audit Committee is focused on more effective service delivery and the more place based models being trialled or proposed are appropriate. The Board's view is that the creation of developmentally focused regional governance will also facilitate the working of place based service delivery strategies by setting service priorities for the region that will guide more local work, determine resource allocation to support priorities and address the regional infrastructure issues that can support a range of community and economic activities. The regional governance processes and structures will also provide support to more local structures.

To develop proposals for how government might reorganise itself regionally to create a means by which strategic decision making can occur in partnership with Aboriginal communities the Board will engage further with the AACC and WA AAC. It will also seek to engage in greater depth with the Ministers and agencies responsible for the economic development of Western Australia and the planning of regional infrastructure.

The Board's research into effective regional governance considered the experience of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and noted that one of the main reasons for its ultimate failure lay in its inability to connect with broader government processes. ATSIC regional councils were generally regarded as legitimate representatives of their Aboriginal communities but had to operate within the void between State and Local Government. The concerns of local councils were municipal and State Government was distant from regional knowledge and priorities leaving ATSIC with no mainstream governance with which to collaborate. This systemic problem was recognised and the State Government sought to engage more effectively with ATSIC through the *Statement of Commitment to a New and Just Relationship between the Government of Western Australia and Aboriginal Western Australians*. However ATSIC was disbanded before this compact came to fruition.

The Board believes that a regional vision and strategy for Western Australia was and still is largely absent and that the creation of regional governance processes and structures are essential. The need for *Royalties for Regions* is the most recent evidence for this. Governance will be most effective when it combines the need for distinctive approaches to meeting Aboriginal priorities with proper strategic planning that connects with wider business and government processes.

Recommendation 5:

The Board recommends that government establish a regional governance authority in one region of Western Australia as a first step towards regional governance and based on the principles identified from the Board's conversations, research and analysis. Central to the functioning of the regional governance authority would be the philosophy that governance close to regional people and the land and sea that they care for is the core to any effective strategy of strengthening regions and providing for long term sustainable prosperity and that Aboriginal culture and knowledge are essential and integral to this. The regional governance authority would have the authority to determine regional development priorities including infrastructure and economic and social development priorities.

The process of establishing full regional governance is evolutionary and a regional governance authority should progressively be delegated program and financial decision making authority as the governance processes mature. Ultimately the regional governance authority would be responsible for generating and delivering regional development priorities through processes of engagement with the regional stakeholders. This proposal transcends the example of existing Regional Development Commissions in that the regional governance authority would assume the responsibility for when and how resources are expended. Indigenous participation in setting regional visions, establishing regional plans and priorities and designing the processes of service delivery will ensure greater empowerment and equity for Aboriginal communities.

As a first step in this process the Board recommends that the Government address the issue of how all tiers of government can come together in a single interface at the regional level. This will mirror the process being asked of Aboriginal communities and will assist to reduce the silos that are created by the usual processes of government decision making.

Recommendation 6:

The Board recommends that Government develop a model for creating a single government interface at the regional level that can participate in regional governance.

Section Three

WORK PLAN

Over the next six months the Board will:

- Continue its work on developing a model of regional governance in accordance with its recommendations. This includes seeking recurrent funding for regional conversations to facilitate Aboriginal groups continuing to develop representational processes to enable engagement in regional governance.
- Engage with the AACC and WA AAC to develop a joint agenda, especially around how government might come together in a regional governance model.
- Consider how Aboriginal leadership can be supported and developed.
- Consider how Aboriginal healing can be promoted to address personal and community trauma that is prevalent among the Aboriginal community and impeding the ability of many people to experience wellbeing. The need for healing is linked to the Board's work on governance as many Aboriginal people's capacity to participate constructively is severely limited.
- Further the work that has begun on Aboriginal economic participation.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The responsibilities of the Board include:

- Developing a framework to use to collaborate and focus resources for future agreements with the Commonwealth, Local Governments and other key stakeholders working with Indigenous Western Australians.
- Establishing accountability mechanisms to monitor achievement against agreed targets and focus resources to maximise positive outcomes for Indigenous Western Australians.
- Delivering a bi-annual report to Cabinet on progress in the Indigenous Affairs portfolio in Western Australia.
- Driving fundamental policy shifts through stronger and more accountable Government governance, building trust through consistency and commitment.
- Building effective participation of Indigenous people, and the broader WA leadership, supporting effective community governance, leadership and structures necessary to engage with Government.
- Providing advice on human and financial resources required for Indigenous people to participate in decision-making that affects community lives and the way services are provided.

Specific activities to be undertaken in the first two years include:

- Establishing a Government governance framework to improve coordination and management of service delivery at the regional level.
- Strategically positioning the State in relation to State, Commonwealth and Local Government responsibilities through relevant bilateral and other arrangements.
- Developing, with State agencies, clear overarching regional action plans to guide current and future activities linked to bilateral arrangements and State investment priorities.
- Producing an annual Western Australian report on achievement of Indigenous outcomes against the investment in Indigenous affairs, including specific and mainstream services to Indigenous people in Western Australia. This will also be provided at a regional level.
- Leading current and future planning to focus the State investment in Indigenous communities that can provide a more sustainable quality of life and enhance the capacity of Indigenous people to contribute to the common wealth of Western Australia.

Appendix 2

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL GOVERNANCE – DESERT KNOWLEDGE REPORT TO THE BOARD

To assist the Board develop a model of regional governance for Western Australia it commissioned Desert Knowledge⁶ to research the experience of effective Indigenous governance within Australia and overseas.

Three key messages emerged from the report about governance and these are:

- The processes of governance are more important to success than the structure of the model and so structure should serve appropriate processes rather than the reverse.
- The quality of the interaction between government, regional governance and local people is fundamental to effectiveness.
- Governance needs to be built incrementally.

Six themes are identified in the report that amplify these messages:

1. Representation

Representation needs to be determined by each region so that it reflects local cultural leadership and decision making processes.

2. Interface between government and Aboriginal people

Governance models must be connected to broader policy processes at the local, state and national levels.

Individuals or agencies that can span the boundaries between the worlds of the local Aboriginal people, government and business are critical. However these entities need to be facilitative parts of the system rather than power bases in their own right in order to avoid potentially destructive gate-keeping whereby the voice of local people is distorted.

⁶ Fisher, S. (2009) *Experiences in the development and implementation of regional governance models: Report to the Indigenous Implementation Board.*

Effective governance involves regular contact by the organisation with community members to both hear about the effectiveness of service delivery and to explain developments in achieving strategic aims and in relationships with government and business.

3. Leadership and capacity

Training of members in the skills and knowledge required for good governance is an essential element for any regional representative model. This training needs to be extensive and sustained. Training would cover clear roles and responsibilities, well defined authority and access to reliable information and sound advice.

4. Policy responsiveness

Policy responsiveness refers to the extent to which government policy is informed and influenced by regional needs and priorities. The research noted that problems occurred when responsiveness was impaired by events such as high turnover of government staff, the demand for upward program accountability without corresponding accountability for program outcomes, less than full costing of programs and inadequate communication with communities and across government.

5. Planning and investment

Effective regional governance models need to look and feel significant to the range of people affected by their work. They must relate closely to the particular concerns and unique economy of regional Western Australia.

At a regional level policy and investment is best focused on supporting long term development rather than on solely fixing problems where the intent of strategy is to overcome capacity constraints and to enable growth.

Such a development approach places human development at the centre of governance. Human development encompasses all aspects of individuals' wellbeing – health, livelihoods, economic and political rights. Associated processes are participation, sustainability, empowerment and ownership of development by those who stand to benefit from it.

6. Scale and structure

There are no set rules about scale and structure but what is required is a match between cultural relevance and an efficient scale. Two key factors identified in research by Hunt and Smith (2006) that increase the likelihood of Aboriginal community support for a particular governance model are:

- 'Representative structures and decision-making processes must reflect and resonate with contemporary Indigenous views of what are the "proper" relationships, forms of authority, and cultural geographies'; and
- these structures 'must be combined with practical management and functional capacity to deliver outcomes'.

There may well be tension between the scale at which governance can be most effective and cultural boundaries within a region.

The ultimate message from the report is to ensure that the content, the strategy and the purpose of regional governance is thoroughly worked out before structures are designed. Structures exist to deliver strategy, not the other way around.

Report Conclusions on Key Ingredients for Regional Governance

The report categorised its conclusions into the following:

- Perspectives on governance, especially the importance of embedding governance within Aboriginal views of effective structures, processes and relationships, while ensuring that it is connected to the wider social, political and business environment.
- Approaches to strategy, especially to build a long term and fundamental grounding for regional governance that makes the key choices to define its responsibility and authority.
- Strengthening capacity in a way that matches the ambition of the regional governance model, including suitable processes for building confidence, gaining access to specific skills and managing risks. This equally applies to supporting better capacity in government to relate to redrawn lines of devolved authority.

- Engagement with local people and across boundaries that lie between business, government and a new regional model and with the aim of ensuring that regional governance is outward looking and connected to other sectors.
- Monitoring and evaluation, with an emphasis on transparency of process and information.
- Structures that serve strategy and are fit for purpose.

Perspectives on Governance

The starkest divide is likely to lie between Aboriginal people and government. The report recommends consulting with knowledgeable individuals, working through the issues arising and defining a contemporary Aboriginal view from the area in which the model is to be developed.

Definition of Strategy

A clear consensus is required on what the remit and the ambition of governance will be within a particular region. This includes key decisions about fiscal arrangements, boundaries and partnerships, the definition of services and processes for selecting investments in regional development. This includes all key people and agencies within a region developing a clear sense of what the model will look and feel like from its level of authority to its ability to connect with Aboriginal people, government and business.

Strengthening Capacity

Any model developed must incorporate a range of measures to develop the skills and competencies of the people involved in boards or as staff. Aboriginal and government participants will both require development although with different emphases.

Process for Engagement

A stumbling block for regional governance can be its disconnection from wider governance such as local, state and federal government. Any regional model of governance must be clear on how it relates to the range of people who depend on it for direction and decisions as well as those less closely engaged but who are critical to the success of the model.

Determining processes of engagement may be easier where objectives are clear such as prioritising regional investment. It will be more difficult where objectives need to be achieved in an already complex and competitive environment such as improved services.

Accountability and decision making processes need to be described clearly within a regional governance model. Clarity of authority and responsibility is central to effective governance.

Effective Monitoring and Evaluation Processes

These are critical as they enable performance against strategic and operational objectives to be measured, contribute to accountability and are key elements of engagement with people in the region.

Effective models cited in the research developed clear, easily understood methods of obtaining from and providing information to community members that facilitated involvement and helped build support for the governance model.

Suitable Structures

These must evolve from the processes of governance relevant to the region. Legitimacy in governance comes from structures and processes that are validated by the people who will be affected by and involved in them. At the same time they need to operate effectively in the wider environment of contemporary Western governance.

The development of governance models is evolutionary. Time is needed for models to become settled and their effectiveness is best supported by learning systems, including monitoring and evaluation, which support long term improvement. The research showed that the more effective models typically changed over time and that current structure was often quite different from early structures.

Indigenous Implementation Board
Second Report to the
Hon. Dr Kim Hames MLA
Deputy Premier;
Minister for Health; Indigenous Affairs

MARCH 2010



Ngarda Ngarli Yarndu
FOUNDATION

OUTCOMES FROM THE INDIGENOUS PILBARA DIALOGUE

The Peninsula Palms, Dampier

15 – 16 September 2009

ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED AND NAMES OF ATTENDEES

Bloodwood Tree Association (Inc)

Graham Kennedy, Bernadette Spurling.

Department of Indigenous Affairs

Ms Noela Taylor (Head Office with observer status).

ESS/Compass

Mara West.

Gumala Aboriginal Corporation

May Byrne, Darren Injie, Natalie Parker, Karen Tommy, Greg Tucker.

Indigenous Implementation Board (IIB)

John Sanderson, Sue Gordon, Brendan Hammond (all with observer status).

Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation

Jan Kapetas.

Mawarnkarra Health Service

Chamaine Adams, Danny Brown, Keith Churnside, Marilyn Lockyer, Joan Hicks.

Ngarda Ngarli Yarndu Foundation

Barry Taylor, Athol Prior (providing secretariat support).

Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation

Susan Shirtliff (observer status).

Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation

Paul Hales (observer status).

Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation Ltd

Vince Adams, Michelle Broun, Arnold Lockyer.

Oasis Contracting

Susan Murphy.

Pilbara Indigenous Women's Aboriginal Corporation

Donna Lockyer.

Pundulmurra Indigenous Management and Training Council

Maureen Kelly

Wakathuni

Joyce Drummond.

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Doris Eaton, Nyaparu Rose, Amy Cargill (observer status).

OUTCOMES

DAY ONE – 15 September 2009

Acknowledging the Traditional Owners (Mr Barry Taylor)

Welcome to Ngarluma Country (Mr Keith Chumside)

Introductory Comments (Mr Barry Taylor)

- Mr Taylor welcomed participants to the inaugural Indigenous Pilbara Dialogue and introduced the guests from the Indigenous Implementation Board (IIB).
- Mr Taylor made the point that Indigenous leaders in the West Pilbara could choose to engage with government and seek to change the current unsatisfactory state of affairs, or believe that government was not serious about change, and focus their energies elsewhere. He stated that by coming to this Dialogue, all present had recognised the need to do Indigenous business differently. He recommended that participation be constructively critical, and focussed on forward looking solutions.

Expectations of the next two days (Lt Gen. John Sanderson)

Lt Gen Sanderson:

- Acknowledged the traditional custodians of this place and expressed his respect to everyone present, particularly to the elders who lead in fulfilling the obligations to ancestors and the landscape which is the source of our nation's wellbeing.
- Stated that realisation of the true wealth of this mystical region called the Pilbara lies in accepting responsibility for and sustaining the deep and ancient heritage of that landscape into the future.
- Thanked the Ngarda Ngarli Foundation for taking a leadership role in organising this Dialogue. He noted that it was an important leap of faith on the Foundation's part and has to be based on an expectation that there is something different about what is going on to justify another attempt at engaging the people of this region in talking about their future.
- Expected participants to make their own decisions about how they would organise themselves and what they would demand from Government in the way of plans, structure and a fair share of resources to bring about change in the future.
- Observed that the critical thing from his perspective, is for the Aboriginal people to speak from a position of strength. Such a position can only be developed if they can overcome or put into proper perspective the things that might have divided them in the past, and unite on the things that are truly important.
- Stated that the IIB is in the business of giving Aboriginal people – particularly young people – hope. Somehow, they have to seize the moment and transfer sufficient power to the people so that they can sustain their own options, even in the face of political opportunism.
- Explained that there are new opportunities to become full partners in the future of Australia, but they are only there if Aboriginal people are prepared to seize them. Australia's position as a global nation demands this, but they will not be given willingly, because there is an underlying, historical, racist and self serving view in the non Indigenous community that Aboriginal people are not capable of accepting that responsibility.

- Referred to this contradictory and almost schizophrenic view as being fundamentally wrong and containing the seeds of destruction for this nation. In order to build a new future together in this landscape, he believed that Aboriginal people are probably going to have to lead the way.
- Made the point that despite the COAG processes and the Northern Territory Intervention, power has been taken away by the centralisation of decision making into the hands of people who know they are failing.
- Noted that Aboriginal people still don't have a participatory process with government, even though a proposal from the Australian Human Rights Commissioner (Tom Calma), for a national Aboriginal Advisory body is on the table.
- Explained that the Indigenous Implementation Board that he chairs, and that is also represented by Sue Gordon and Brendan Hammond at this dialogue, has been empowered by the Western Australian Government to: *"advise the State Government on how to identify and cut through the obstacles and really improve social and economic outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders."*
- Advised that the IIB is developing a proposal for a regionally driven reform agenda that has Aboriginal people at the centre.
- Recognised that the IIB is not an Aboriginal voice. That voice is the voice of experience and must come out of the landscape. For the Pilbara Aboriginal voice to have legitimacy, it must be inclusive and embrace both genders, all cultural groups and young people as well as the Elders.
- Challenged participants to create a sense of hope and aspiration where everyone wants to climb on board and be a part of a new future.
- Advised that this Pilbara Dialogue is even more important than the highly successful Kimberley Conversation, because of the opportunity to build on and progress beyond the point reached by the Kimberley mob, and because it adds serious momentum to the whole process of taking control.
- Emphasised that his Board gets its power from Aboriginal people – not from Government.
- Pointed out that no single thing will give Aboriginal kids a decent go at a future worth having. It has to be the total package that makes life worth living, and that includes knowing who you are, where you fit into the landscape and the larger world and taking confidence and pride from your culture.
- Confirmed that they were looking forward to taking away from here the wisdom of all the participants, and building it into their advice to Government.
- Stated that they are confident in the Pilbara Dialogue and the capacity of Aboriginal people to come up with strategies for the future.

Workshop Outcomes:

Setting a Vision for the Pilbara

- We need to share a common vision about improving cultural, social and economic outcomes for Indigenous peoples in the Pilbara.
- Our focus should be the Pilbara first (i.e. our own back yard), and then be prepared to look nationally.
- We need a Makarata or a Truth and Reconciliation process, to overcome racism and the theft of our land.
- We need a Memorandum of Understanding between Indigenous Peoples and the Government, which includes a commitment by government to policy continuity.
- We need to go back to our own communities and consult about all these things; we need to build from the bottom, like a tree.
- We need to speak with one voice and act as one people.
- The answer to our problems lies with Aboriginal voices.
- We need to respect ourselves first, and then we will get recognition by others.
- Now is the time for action and leadership, with:
 - older people modelling the right way to young people;
 - parents building strong families;
 - elders building strong culture; and
 - us all building cohesiveness, integration and unity.

Economic Development

- The Pilbara generates most of the country's wealth through mining companies. However, Pilbara Aboriginal communities are still experiencing poverty and third world living conditions.
- The Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (native title representative body) is forming a Charitable Trust, which will be responsible for running a food bank with the assistance of non government bodies.
- Given the limited funding available from government, we need to develop more community partnerships of this kind, in order to better meet the needs of Pilbara Aboriginal communities.
- We need sustainable economic development programs and we require government to be more accountable. There is a history of government programs which work well, suddenly being defunded without explanation.
- How can we keep government accountable? By taking back our power and control, by togetherness, unity and driving change ourselves.
- We need to set up a Pilbara Aboriginal Economic Group to deal with Aboriginal affairs, mining companies, native title agreements and partnerships.
- There is power in working together in order to create:
 - partnerships;
 - agreements; and
 - shared responsibilities.

Lore and Culture

- The Pilbara Region is rich in lore and culture.
- Everyone here rides on Aboriginal lore and culture but doesn't respect it.
- Proper consultation rarely happens - Indigenous Intellectual Property needs to be recognised in statute law.
- Young people don't hold the knowledge about lore and culture, old people do.
- Should we be setting up a governance hub, to handle lore and culture consultations?
- We need to strengthen the people who have lore and culture authority. Lore and culture doesn't change.
- Learning culture from our elders will build strong men and strong women.
- We need to bring back bush meetings.
- We need to bring back the commission of elders.
- What is an elder? Who is an elder? They are nominated by their community. This is not government business.
- We still have strong lore and culture and we need to make it stronger.
- Schools need a budget to teach lore and culture, and bilingual programs need to be included in the curriculum.
- It is time for change! We need to ensure that there is respect for culture. In order to do this, we need to take back the power by all language groups working together.
- Can we do this through Native Title Agreements?

Media, Radio and Communications

- We need to use and build on existing media, like the Koorie News, to not only reach our people with good news stories, but reach non Aboriginal people too. The Aboriginal community of the Pilbara needs to open a dialogue with the wider community of the Pilbara.
- We need to be able to attract donations from the wider community (i.e. not just depend on government), by using the tax deductibility of charitable foundations.
- Note that the loss of funding initiated by the Howard Government has not been overturned by the Rudd Government. All media organisations are struggling.
- We need the ability to establish a positive identity for Aboriginal people in the Pilbara, and one way we can do this is through successful local Indigenous drama and music.

Gaining Control

- In any contest or competition, winning is about out-thinking your opponent. In this case, successfully taking back control will involve a contest with the mainstream Australian system. Fortunately, this system doesn't do much thinking and is pretty dumb.

- In order to gain control of their own affairs, Aboriginal people in the Pilbara will need a plan of attack. This can be developed by answering the following simple questions:
 - **Why** do we need to take back control of our own affairs? (Answering this question will allow us to be clear about our purpose or mission.)
 - **What** will it be like when we take back control of our own affairs? (Answering this question will allow us to be clear about our vision.)
 - **How** do we need to act in order to take back control of our own affairs? (Answering this question will allow us to set strategies aimed at achieving our vision.)
 - **Do** what to implement our strategies? (Answering this question will allow us to operationalise our implementation.)

Participants' Summary Thoughts at the end of Day One

- We need to tell the story of our successes and our good times.
- We need to create pride in the past and hope for the future.
- We need to form partnerships with white people, while remaining united and staying in control of our own affairs.
- There is a passionate belief in the importance of employment for Aboriginal people (especially young people), and of creating a strong Aboriginal community.
- We need to work smart to achieve change, develop partnerships with others and do things the Aboriginal way.
- We need to focus on the positives and look to the future.
- We need to build self esteem through a focus on lore and culture.
- We need to voice our opinions clearly, government needs to listen carefully.
- We need to stand united, speak with one voice and protect that voice.
- We should not get angry, we should not get even, we should get what we want.
- Magistrates should be directing offenders into training programs, which will prepare them for productive lives. Local elders should meet with magistrates and offer alternatives to locking people up.
- There is a brain drain from service delivery jobs into mining jobs.
- We have learned a culture of drinking as a means of celebrating success – this is counter productive. American Indians shun drinkers from their communities.

DAY TWO – 16 September 2009

Recapitulation of the previous day and review of directions

After much discussion of the previous day's outcomes, the following vision was agreed:

Our vision for the Pilbara is strong, secure and sustainable Aboriginal families and communities, built on lore and culture.

Workshop Outcomes:

Building Strong Families and Child Protection

- Strong families and strong communities need good facilities and better infrastructure. However, we shouldn't use this as an excuse to do nothing while we wait for the facilities. We need to take control back and make things happen.
- Some parts of current Aboriginal lifestyles come from our traditional culture and some parts are learned behaviours which do not serve us well.
- In 1967, Aboriginal people obtained drinking rights and a new culture of drinking to excess arose. Among other things, this resulted in weakening the legacy of our elders, including the application of tribal justice. Now our children are learning wrong behaviours from their parents.
- The greatest danger Aboriginal children face today is from other Aboriginal people. This problem must be addressed by Aboriginal people themselves, through acting on many of the things already identified in our earlier discussions.
- Aboriginal child protection workers become scarred through their experiences and Aboriginal families become wary to avoid being blamed for child abuse.
- This is not just an Aboriginal problem, but Aboriginal people are an easy target. Aboriginal people are more visible than white people, due to their practice of largely living outdoors.
- It should be realised that not all jobs are family friendly. Some jobs can harm families and sometimes parents can be exploited by employers. Fly in fly out jobs can fall into this category.
- Some families do the right thing, but their children get dragged down by other kids running wild. Spending time on outstations can help in this area, by reducing the bad influences of towns. We need to take our children out bush again.
- Existing organisations (like PIWAC) need to be properly resourced and become truly regional in their focus and service delivery.
- Community organisations need direct funding – government keeps control by funding through intermediary organisations.
- Existing service providers need to be held accountable for results. It would help if a report evaluating the effectiveness of Pilbara service delivery agencies was prepared. Long term statistical evaluations of the success of all government programs should be undertaken.
- For example, what was the impact of the long term hostel program (residential education) run by government?

- More resources need to be directed back to making families whole again, using Aboriginal knowledge and practices.
- In order to achieve this, we can draw on our past history of successful grass roots lobbying and exerting political influence.

Women and Youth

- The changes to CDEP are causing problems. Government is now expecting people to find mainstream employment. However, our people need a lot of help to find, win and keep mainstream jobs.
- In some cases, our women are unable to take mainstream jobs due to the attitudes of Aboriginal men.
- Support groups have proved effective in assisting both Aboriginal men and women in dealing with issues associated with entering the mainstream labour market.
- We need to support the home maker if we want to build strong families again.
- Appropriate community development strategies need to be developed and implemented.
- Our young people need to know their skin groups and be strong in their culture.
- There are real benefits for employers in accessing a skilled and stable local workforce, drawn from nearby Aboriginal communities.
- It has been demonstrated that Aboriginal women are very stable employees, who are able to quickly learn the skills needed to become proficient machinery operators. A business case can be easily made for employing Aboriginal women.
- The priority is to build strong families, strong culture and strong communities.

Employment and Training

- Employers sometimes work on the assumption that Aboriginal job seekers have their own accommodation and transport. This is often wrong. Either accommodation on site is needed, or transport to and from work sites.
- Working FIFO involves long hours, often at the cost of families and culture.
- Employers need to open discussions with Pilbara Aboriginal communities about the needs of Aboriginal job seekers and employees. Employers need to create flexibility within the employment they offer.
- A priority in building strong families and strong communities is ensuring that all options are utilised to help Aboriginal young people make a successful transition from education and training to employment.
- Traditional land owners need to take an interest in what is being done to country by mining companies.
- Native title agreements should include time frames for all promised training, employment and enterprise support commitments, as well as accountability clauses.
- Note that not all Aboriginal people want mining jobs (either directly in mining or even related to mining), when they see what is happening to country.
- There are other service delivery employment options which can be pursued. Eg, mothers should be brought back into schools as teacher assistants.

- We need to return to the community based service delivery approaches of the past.
- Aboriginal people should be encouraged and supported to develop their own enterprises and small businesses. Eg, we have a heritage of successfully growing vegetables (back when living on stations).
- It is recognised that there are sustainability and long term viability issues associated with the establishment of any small business. Eg there are high failure and burn out rates, even in mainstream. However, we should not use this as an excuse, targeted support arrangements can overcome these problems.
- Another option is the creation of not for profit businesses, run by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people and employing Aboriginal people.
- It has been observed that whole towns and associated infrastructure can be built quickly by mining companies, when their bottom line is at stake. We require the same commitment to addressing critical Aboriginal community needs.

Governance

- We know how to do it (good governance) in our culture. We are still learning how to do Wadjela governance.
- There are many Aboriginal organisations and many of the same people sit on their boards of management.
- This is also true for advisory bodies to government, most of which operate within information silos.
- There are no benchmarks to establish what constitutes good governance.
- Aboriginal organisations need to be open and transparent, and share information.
- A major problem identified was that although Commonwealth funding is available for three years, it is only provided on an annual basis.
- The common experience of Aboriginal organisations in receipt of annual funding is one of FAILURE.
- We need to learn from other regions to find out what is working well and how it is being done, eg the Gove Housing Program.
- We need leadership from our elders, who need to strengthen our men.
- We need to act now before we lose our elders.
- One change we can make immediately is to bring back bush meetings.
- We need to be aware that wadjela governance rules are changing and that there is training available from ORIC to learn about this.
- A simple way of understanding Wadjela governance is *“doing the right thing, and doing the thing right”*.
- We need a governance hub for the Pilbara, based on our four Aboriginal cultural blocs, a regional governance body. We need this so we can have a process whereby we can resolve internal conflicts.
- Our governance hub needs to start with Aboriginal people, and then as strong and united Aboriginal peoples of the Pilbara, we can invite others (like local government) to join us. (Note: local government is strong because it has a strong lobby group to government. It also has its own local Pilbara Council.)

Health Workshop

- Education: We need to see a return to parents teaching children, and grandmas looking after kids. Parents need to be educated in this role, and be given the skills and training to do it properly. We all need to learn from our elders.
- Long term programs: Pilot programs get closed down after 6 – 12 months, and other successful programs have been discontinued. Government needs to bring back the homemaker program.
- We need to look at what has worked and is working and do more of that.
- We need funding for health workers in communities, not just clinics.
- Environmental factors: poor living conditions cause the biggest impact on health. Eg, overcrowding needs to be addressed and culturally appropriate housing needs to be built. We need to address eating and lifestyle factors, as well as stress, mental health and self esteem factors.
- We need to respect and look after our elders, so they can look after the health of our communities.

Motion, put from the Floor

That a Pilbara Indigenous one stop shop (the governance hub referred to earlier in the workshop) be created to speak to all levels of government:

- *Federal;*
- *State; and*
- *Local government.*

This organisation would do business with:

- *Miners;*
- *Explorers;*
- *Tourist operators; and*
- *Other relevant agencies.*

This organisation would include Indigenous:

- *Elders;*
- *Community leaders (who may or may not be elders); and*
- *CEOs of Indigenous organisations.*

Only Indigenous people would have voting rights.

This motion was passed unanimously.

Agreed follow up action

The Ngarda Ngarli Yarndu Foundation:

- Will prepare a draft report and a DVD of the Dialogue, and distribute them to everyone;
- Will organise further meetings to discuss these issues, with the next meeting to be held as soon as possible in 2010; and
- Will ensure that the planning for further meetings includes bush meetings.

The Indigenous Implementation Board

- Will impress on the State Government the needs of Pilbara Aboriginal people (as advised at this Dialogue);
- Will advise State Government what Pilbara Aboriginal People want to do next;
- Will seek resourcing for these next steps, including for bush meetings.

Meeting Closed
