



20 August 2007

CLOSING THE GAP

(Northern Territory Government's Response to Anderson/Wild Report and Indigenous Generational Plan)

The Northern Territory Government has announced the most comprehensive package to tackle Indigenous disadvantage in the history of the Territory.

Chief Minister Clare Martin said \$286 million has been committed and 223 additional positions created over the next 5 years to implement the first stage of its 20 year Indigenous Generational Plan *Closing the Gap*.

The plan addresses all 97 recommendations of the Anderson/Wild Report into Child Sexual Abuse in Indigenous Communities – and goes further again.

It does this by also tackling legislative reform, governance, employment and economic development, remote area policing, health, housing, communication and engagement.

“This is a long term, generational plan of action to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians,” Ms Martin said.

“The plan builds on the extensive work already undertaken by this Government in the areas of law and order, community safety, housing and health.

“We have set ambitious 5, 10 and 20 year targets – which are achievable and will be accountable to independent monitors and measures.

“Within a generation – by 2030 – we want Indigenous children born in the Northern Territory to be as healthy and live as long as other Territorians.

“This is a realistic goal backed by the necessary resources to make it happen- there is no quick fix, this problem needs a serious, sustained solution.”

“Critically - this is also about Aboriginal people taking responsibility – and being prepared to change.

“They need to get their kids to school, work with police to stamp out violence and substance abuse and live healthier lives.

“All Territorians pay the price of Indigenous disadvantage – it places an enormous strain on our hospitals, police, and economy.

“We are in a position to implement this comprehensive package due to our sound financial management - these measures are fully funded and affordable.”

The \$286 million program over the next 5 years has identified seven priorities - **Safety, Health, Housing, Education, Jobs, Culture and a Better Way of Doing Business.**

Safety covers community justice, family violence, offender rehabilitation, alcohol and drugs, gambling and pornography, and Police.

Importantly it also includes child protection where we’ll attack the symptoms of child sexual abuse – and its causes.

More than \$79 million has been committed to deal directly with child protection – among the measures:

- Strengthen the child protection system by introducing the Child Care Protection Act and Evidence of Children Amendment Bill.
- New Domestic Violence legislation
- Establish a Children’s Commissioner
- Expand Child Abuse Taskforce
- Recruit 23 specialist FACS staff for the Child Abuse Taskforce
- Recruit 37 additional specialist Family and Children’s Services staff
- Recruit 10 additional child protection workers
- Recruit 10 school counsellors

More than \$10 million has been allocated to tackle alcohol and drug abuse:

- Recruit 8 compliance inspectors
- Recruit 4 specialist alcohol rehabilitation workers
- Recruit 2 Court clinicians
- Expand the Return to Home Program
- Introduce amendments to the Liquor Act and declare dry areas
- Continue to implement Alcohol Management Plans
- Implement a licensing identification system

Policing, justice and family violence has been given a \$38.6 million commitment:

- Recruit 40 Police – Remote Policing Strategy and Child Abuse Taskforce
- Implement the Remote Area Policing Strategy – 12 new police stations

- Establish 10 Community Courts,
- Employ 10 Community Corrections officers
- Establish a Witness Assistance Service in Katherine
- Introduce integrated community based family violence programs and safe places in communities
- Recruit 26 family violence support workers
- Continue the Juvenile Diversion Program
- Implement sexual offender rehabilitation and therapy programs and expand the Elders Visiting Program
- Recruit witness assistance officer
- Implement a pornography and gambling education program

Health problems will be targeted with \$23.4 million of initiatives:

- Establish integrated family/children centres in remote communities to deliver early childhood education and health programs
- Expand alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services
- Provide sport and recreation programs and infrastructure in each shire
- Expand and implement programs targeting hearing loss and preventable chronic disease

Housing measures include \$42 million for new initiatives – which come on top of the extra \$100 million the NT Government announced for remote housing last year:

- Provide houses for the growth in government employees to be stationed in remote communities
- In partnership with the Australian Government, work to address the backlog in remote Indigenous housing
- Negotiate with the Australian Government for a significant share of the \$1.6 billion ARIA program
- Roll out the \$100 million NT Government commitment to remote housing over 5 years

Education will see an increase in \$70.6 million increase in spending and recruitment:

- Recruit 47 teachers and assistant teachers for remote schools and preschools
- Provide 6 new mobile pre-schools
- Build 15 classrooms, establish a school attendance team, upgrade 2 homeland learning centres and 15 community education centres
- Recruit 3 specialist DEET staff
- Recruit Aboriginal education co-ordinator

- Develop partnership programs to improve student engagement and community involvement

Jobs are vital if we are to make a lasting difference and we've committed \$13 million:

- Transition CDEP jobs supporting NT Government and Local Government services to mainstream NT Public Sector positions
- Provide Indigenous economic development initiatives
- Develop a component under the 10 Year Infrastructure Plan for road access to remote areas
- Use current and future Indigenous housing construction programs and capital works programs to facilitate opportunities for training and employment of Indigenous people

Culture provides many benefits to the Northern Territory and we will nurture and encourage it with the help of an extra \$500,000:

- Expand Indigenous culture programs in Northern Territory Government schools
- Implement cross cultural programs in NT Public Sector
- Implement a Whole-of-Government Indigenous communications strategy

A Better Way of Doing Business is about Indigenous people and the Northern Territory Government working together to achieve results and we've dedicated nearly \$9 million to achieve that:

- Establish an Indigenous Affairs Advisor Council to the Chief Minister
- Establish local community boards
- Provide infrastructure to support local community governance

Our initiatives in these priority areas - **Safety, Health, Housing, Education, Jobs, Culture and a Better Way of Doing Business** – will need to be complemented by a long term plan of action by the Australian Government – and we'll negotiate for improvements in these key areas:

- Jobs post-CDEP – Local Government
- Economic Development (eg taxation incentives)
- Police – law and order – 50 police and infrastructure for 5 years and beyond to support remote policing strategy
- Education – ESL for 7&8 year olds
- Boarding schools
- Health – extension of primary health care to make up for lost Medicare funding

- Housing a) backlog – 200 per year for 20 years
b) 50% of ARIA \$1.6 billion

Closing the Gap includes a comprehensive package of legislative reform, including:

- Introduction of the Care and Protection of Children Bill
- Introduction of the Local Government Amendment Bill
- Introduction of the Local Government Amendment Bill (2)
- Amendments to the Local Government Act
- Declaration of Dry Areas
- Amendments to the Liquor Act
- Introduction of the Evidence of Children Amendment Bill
- Amendments to the Bail Act
- New Domestic Violence legislation
- Introduction of legislation to reform the committal system
- Further reform of laws of evidence

These build on the comprehensive legislative reforms undertaken by this Government over the past 6 years.

Our targets to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians will be measured against the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators.

For more details you can log on to www.action.nt.gov.au

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