



Closing the Gap Through Place-Based Employment

Local Government
Indigenous Employment Program
GREEN PAPER 2010

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The Local Government Practice Unit of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government invites stakeholder input to the *Local Government Indigenous Employment Program Green Paper 2010 – Closing the Gap Through Place-based Employment*.

The closing date for responses to this discussion paper is the **30th of September**. Please refer to the back page for more information.



Introduction

The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) is facilitating the development of a national employment program to encourage Indigenous workforce participation in the sector. The proposed program is a response to an urgent need to increase the pool of available talent for Local Government.

In the process of developing this discussion paper, consultation has taken place with Indigenous leaders, including Indigenous Chief Executive Officers in Local Government, key people involved in Indigenous employment programs, and other stakeholders, where time and their availability have allowed. The purpose of the discussion paper is to commence a conversation on the potential for the development and implementation of a Local Government Indigenous Employment Program (LGIEP).

This program will contribute to one of six Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Closing the Gap targets: to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a decade.¹ To achieve this COAG target "...an additional 100,000 Indigenous Australians will need to find and keep jobs..."² The Local Government Indigenous Employment Program aims to support COAG's 'whole of government' approach to closing the gap through providing place-based employment and will advocate and promote that Indigenous employment in Local Government be at least at a rate that reflects the local Indigenous population ratio.

This program is also in keeping with one of the key recommendations of the *National Skills Shortage Strategy for Local Government 2007*, to grow the regional workforce by developing programs that bring previously under-employed and under-utilised local populations into the Local Government workforce, including women, Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse population groups and those over 50.³

The sector is uniquely positioned to play a greater role in Indigenous employment as it is a place-based employer with national reach, offering secure and diverse occupational opportunities. The purpose of the green paper is to engage with the sector and explore, identify and highlight the opportunities available to fulfil its future workforce needs, with Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders working together for mutual benefit, while at the same time contributing to COAG 'whole of government' goals to close the gap.

Previous work done in workforce development and on skills shortages by Local Government Managers Australia National has pointed to the importance of developing home-grown talent consistent with place-based employment, and 'locational solutions' often referred to in reports on social inclusion.

The non-Indigenous Australian population is an increasingly ageing population. The Indigenous population is not. The key element of this program is to assist the sector to focus on developing the LG workforce of the future. This will be critical if it is to deal with the considerable workforce challenges that lie ahead.

1 COAG *Communique 2* October 2008 http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-10-02/index.cfm#gap

2 Australian Council for Local Government background paper, November 2008 meeting. http://www.aclg.gov.au/media_centre/backgrounders/files/indigenous_engagement.pdf

3 National LG Skills Shortage Steering Committee *National Skills Shortage Strategy for Local Government*. May 2007

Program Objectives

To access an 'untapped' talent pool as the next phase in the war for talent is just around the corner;

To provide additional talent to work in local government to alleviate skills shortages and the ageing workforce crisis that is due to impact the sector severely from 2011;

To create an employment program that will work with 565 councils to increase the number of Indigenous people working in Local Government;

To provide secure and sustainable 'place-based' employment opportunities to Indigenous people;

To advocate and promote the employment of Indigenous people by Local Government at least at a rate that reflects the local Indigenous population ratio;

To supply the sector with a framework, guidelines and best practice examples to encourage local implementation; and

To deliver LG Indigenous Employment Program demonstration projects with real and meaningful outcomes to guide the way for a national rollout.

The business case for Indigenous employment in Local Government

The Australian Public Service Commission has summarised the business case for Indigenous employment in the public sector in *Building an Indigenous Employment Strategy kit*.⁴ The business case for Indigenous employment in Local Government is no different.

"Skills gaps, skills shortages, an ageing workforce and labour shortages are issues of concern for all employers. APS agencies have to compete with the private sector in the labour market, and it is in each agency's best interest to market itself as an employer of choice by adopting innovative recruitment and retention strategies. This can include strategies to explore relatively untapped labour pools, and invest in the recruitment and development of workers from non-traditional areas, including Indigenous people.

"The Indigenous population in Australia is growing at a faster rate than the non-Indigenous population and has a very different age profile compared with the non-Indigenous community. About 56% of Indigenous Australians are under 25 years of age, compared with about 33% of the rest of the population.⁵ The growing number of young working-age Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a valuable source of labour for Australia's workforce today, and an essential one for the future.

"Employing more Indigenous Australians makes good business sense for a range of reasons, including the following:

- Attracting, retaining and developing the capacity of Indigenous staff now will assist an organisation to be seen as an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians in the future, particularly when the demand for skilled and talented staff is forecast to increase.
- Indigenous employees' varying perspectives, experience and knowledge can add substantial value to business outcomes, and make significant contributions to the development of government policies and delivery of government services to the Australian community.
- Increasing the diversity of council employees promotes cross-cultural interaction, enhancing knowledge and awareness of, and competence in, working with people from a range of backgrounds.

"Identifying, attracting and engaging with eligible Indigenous candidates will play an important role in improving outcomes for agencies as well as Indigenous Australians. It will also contribute substantially to the Australian Government's priority of closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, an ambitious aim that requires 'sustained action across all levels of government, all sectors'... and ...'engaging Indigenous people in developing solutions...'⁶ " ⁷

4 <http://www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous/ieskit.htm>

5 ABS, 2006 Census data

6 Budget – *Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians*; Statement by The Honourable Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 13 May 2008

7 <http://www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous/ieskit.htm>

However, Local Government does have additional pressures to deal with which make the need for new talent more urgent:

- LG will be at the front line in the provision of local responses to the new demands of climate change which will inevitably involve additional human resources and tapping into traditional Indigenous approaches;
- Skills and labour shortages are an even bigger issue in remote and rural Australia, particularly in regions of mining activity. As the economy improves this will only get worse as competition intensifies for limited pools of skills and labour.

Local Government is able to take advantage of its unique position as a 'place-based' employer, a point that is particularly attractive to potential Indigenous employees given the importance of place in Indigenous culture. 'Place-based' employment in turn has the additional advantage of improving community cohesion.

Prepare for the 'double whammy'

The sector needs to grow its talent pool now.

Even during the economic downturn the sector has been experiencing skills shortages in key occupational groups. This continues to be more evident in rural and remote areas.

The skills shortage is as much a labour supply issue as it is a skills supply issue, and the situation will rapidly deteriorate with the ageing workforce crisis and the increased demand for services, compounded by the fact that almost one third of the LG workforce is aged over 50.

LG is about to experience the 'double whammy' effect due to a challenging combination of an ageing workforce within the sector, and an ageing population placing more pressure on already stretched aged care and other aged-based services, many of which are provided by the sector.

As the Global Financial Crisis begins to ease LG will, once again, be engaged in a talent war, particularly in regional and remote Australia.

“The ageing workforce crisis is looming and it will be more devastating in its impact than the Global Financial Crisis.”

- Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Supply and Skills Branch, DEEWR, presentation to LG Workforce Development Forum 2009

LG: Living on the demographic faultline

LG will need to be proactive and innovative to meet the demands and challenges of our times. Bernard Salt, Australia's leading commentator on demographic-based trends, observed that:

- LG must deliver services to new surge points over the next decade:
 - o Kids: School, kinder, sport;
 - o Young adults: new households, first home, new estates;
 - o Mature households: crowded house, KIPPERS⁸;
 - o Active retirees: sea change, tree change, wellness, community programs;
- Our great challenge is to improve life expectancy for the Indigenous community;
- Some municipalities will soon come under pressure to deliver aged-based services;
- There is a 'demographic faultline' running through the Australian labour force and the sector will begin to feel it in 2011;
- LG administration is one of the fastest growing industries in Australia. A 34% increase in the period 2001-06 up to 129,100 in 2006 makes it the 7th fastest growing industry in Australia;
- Almost one third of the LG industry is aged over 50.

- Bernard Salt, keynote address to LGMA National Congress, May 2009

Skilling business in tough times

“Skills shortages continue to be a major strategic issue for business despite the downturn and its impact on employment, and industry remains alert to the problem.

Employers continue to report that people working in the trades and as technicians are in short supply, although at less acute levels, while the reduction in apprenticeship intakes will contribute to skill shortages intensifying down the track.”

– Heather Ridout, Chief Executive, Australian Industry Group⁹

The non-Indigenous Australian workforce is getting older ...

- The ageing workforce crisis is looming;
- Approximately 2 of every 5 workers are aged 45 years or older;
- Around half of the workforce in agriculture, forestry and fishing, education, health and community services are aged over 45 years;
- The median age of the workforce in 2006 was 40 years.¹⁰

... while the Indigenous population is getting younger ...

- The Indigenous population is growing and is younger than the non-Indigenous population. In 2006, 38% of Indigenous people were under 15 years, compared to 19% of non-Indigenous people.
- Only 1% of the Indigenous population was over 75 years, compared with 6% of the non-Indigenous population.
- 32% of Indigenous people live in major cities and 43% in regional areas.
- 25% of Indigenous people live in remote and very remote areas, compared with 2% of non-Indigenous people.¹¹
- If present levels of fertility and mortality continue, there will be 1 million Indigenous Australians by 2040.¹²

... and the fastest rate of growth is projected for the urban Indigenous population.

- In the 10 years to 2016 alone, the Indigenous population in Australia's main cities could grow from about 164,000 to 220,000.
- This equates to a growth rate of almost 3 per cent a year, which far outpaces growth rates for the Indigenous population nationally (2 per cent a year) and for the non-Indigenous population in the main cities (1.5 per cent).¹³

With a projected population of one million by 2040, the Indigenous workforce will be the workforce of the future.

9 National CEO Survey – Skilling Business in Tough Times, October 2009, Preface, Australian Industry Group and Deloitte

10 Ivan Neville, Branch Manager, Labour Supply and Skills Branch, DEEWR, National LG Skills Forum, Feb 2009

11 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2009 Fact Sheet – The Indigenous Population

12 Specific plan needed to close the gap for urban Aborigines, Nicholas Biddle, research fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU - SMH 7 August 2009 <http://tinyurl.com/nwdydc>

13 Ibid

LG: A place-based employer with national reach

Local government has the potential to play a greater role in Indigenous employment:

- It is uniquely positioned as it is a major place-based employer with national reach and offers diverse occupational opportunities;
- It is a significant Australian employer with access to substantial resources;
- It's metropolitan.
- It's regional.
- It's remote.
- It's where Indigenous people are.
- It's a natural fit.

LG Sector Profile

- In February 2007, it was estimated that the LG sector employed around 168,000 people nationally.¹⁴
- LG plays a significant role in the Australian economy. The sector "accounted for \$22.10 billion of expenditure in 2006-07, representing 2.16% of gross domestic product (GDP)."¹⁵
- LG has 565 local government councils with statutory responsibilities

Benefits of a LG Indigenous employment program

The many benefits include:

- Recruitment and engagement of Indigenous staff will enable the LG sector to be viewed as an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians in the future, particularly when the competition for talent and skill accelerates, and will raise the sector's profile as a good place to work;
- Unlike the trend in the rest of the Australian population, the Indigenous population is young and growing, with the potential to form a substantial part of the LG workforce;
- Indigenous employment has a profound multiplier effect with potential for community cohesion and stability. It extends to improving the lives of that person's whole family and community, e.g. Ganbina in Shepparton Victoria work with approximately 250 young people, however the benefits of employment ripple through and ultimately enhance the lives of approximately 1,000 family and community members;
- Different cultural perspectives, experience and knowledge contributed by Indigenous employees can add substantial value to the development and provision of services to the Australian community; and
- Creating a more culturally diverse LG workforce encourages improved cross-cultural awareness and interaction.

The benefits of employing a local Indigenous workforce, detailed in an Australian Government publication targeted at the mining industry, could equally be extended to the local government sector. These include:

- Having a pool of local employees who can move between projects and operations as demand changes;
- A stable workforce of local employees who are not intent on leaving the region to pursue careers elsewhere;
- A stable, mature workforce living 'at home' and participating in the activities of strong local community groups and civic institutions;
- Facilitating legal compliance through the protection of Indigenous cultural heritage;
- Ensuring better outcomes in environmental management through access to local and traditional ecological knowledge; and
- Enhancing the industry's sustainable development credentials by contributing to the development of prosperous and sustainable regional communities.¹⁶

14 2006-07 LG National Report Australian Government Dept of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & LG p4

15 Ibid p3

16 Working with Indigenous Communities. Leading Practice Sustainable Development Program for the Mining Industry Australian Government Dept of Industry Tourism and Resources p57 and p4

Mutual benefits

Both Indigenous communities and the sector have much to gain from working together to develop and implement an Indigenous employment program in local government, not the least of which is the creation of a sustainable regional workforce. This program would be one of many ways in which the sector can engage and work with Indigenous communities to progress initiatives to produce mutually beneficial outcomes. E.g. the Minerals Council of Australia and the Australian Government have formally recognised the advantages of such partnerships in the Memorandum of Understanding they have formed in 2005, and updated in 2009.

“The Minerals industry recognises that the effective engagement of Indigenous people in our industry is not only the right thing to do, but there is a compelling business case. The majority of our operations are co-located with Indigenous communities - local workforces and communities with shared aspirations to create societal value from minerals development...

Members of the Minerals Council of Australia are committed to building and maintaining a social licence to operate, recognising the mutual benefits of Indigenous engagement and sustainable local communities.”¹⁷

‘Whole of government’ call to action

There has been a call to action and an appeal for a ‘whole of government’ approach to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Local government has a central role to play in closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – with grassroots, practical solutions delivered locally.

To achieve national goals to turn around Indigenous disadvantage, we need to harness the capacity of all levels of government.

On the ground, we need to tap into the opportunities and services offered by local government.

- Closing the Gap: Indigenous Engagement in Local Communities background paper to November 2008 Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG)

COAG National Partnership Agreement sets ambitious targets

The Council of Australian Governments’ (COAG) *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation* was signed in February 2009. This National Partnership will contribute towards halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The national partnership involves complementary investment and effort by the Commonwealth, states and territory governments to significantly improve opportunities for Indigenous people to engage in private and public sector jobs through:

- creating jobs in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidies through the Community Development Employment Projects program;
- a national target of at least 2.6% of public sector employment for Indigenous employment across all classifications by 2015 to increase employment to reflect the expected national Indigenous working age population share;
- building Indigenous workforce strategies into implementation plans for all COAG reforms contributing to the closing the gap targets; and
- strengthening government procurement policies to maximise Indigenous employment.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) frameworks

Reconciliation Australia launched the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program in July 2006.

The RAP program turns “good intentions into action” by encouraging and supporting organisations, large and small, to engage within their sphere of influence in the national effort to close the 17-year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and other Australians.¹⁸

Developing and implementing organisational RAPs would provide useful frameworks for Indigenous employment in LG programs to operate within as they give a format for exploring how reconciliation can advance business and organisational objectives, and formalise contributions by encouraging the identification of clear actions and realistic targets.

For more information on the benefits of having a RAP, and how to go about developing one, go to the Reconciliation Australia website www.reconciliation.org.au. RAPs are aligned to the core business of the organisation and assist in developing outcomes of mutual benefit.

At the time of writing this paper, only five councils across the nation had RAPs.

Employment Program Funding and Related Resources

The Aboriginal Employment Covenant (AEC) is one Indigenous employment program which has received a lot of publicity and has attracted 20,404 pledges to date. It is aimed at securing 50,000 sustainable jobs for Indigenous Australians. The majority of employers are from the private sector, although it is not limited to the private sector. In the current economic climate a variety of significant initiatives make funding potentially available to support the sector in a standalone project, in addition to the possibility of accessing funds direct from various federal government departments. The federal government initiatives that could be tapped into are:

Indigenous Employment Program

“The reformed Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) can provide employers with tailored assistance to help them provide more job opportunities for Indigenous Australians. Employers can receive assistance either directly through DEEWR or through one of DEEWR’s providers. This assistance can be provided through a panel member to provide a package of financial assistance tailored to an employer’s needs and/or through streamlined access to pre-designed packages. These pre-designed packages include:

- Indigenous Cadetship Support¹⁹
- The Indigenous Wage Subsidy²⁰
- The CDEP Work Experience Subsidy²¹

Through a new simplified contracting arrangement employers will find it easier to access the services offered under the reformed IEP. The new simplified contracting arrangements will also ensure that there is less red tape and a reduced workload for the employer. Job Services Australia will work with employers at the local level to identify the skills the employer needs for their business and match these with appropriately trained and work-ready job seekers.”²²

- Indigenous Employment Program, Information for Employers, DEEWR website

Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP)

The Structured Training and Employment Projects Program provides flexible funding for packages of tailored assistance, including structured and accredited training, to help employers give long term jobs to Indigenous Australians. Assistance is tailored to business needs and can include approaches such as funding for apprenticeships and mentoring that can lead to lasting employment.²³

18 <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-action-plans/what-is-a-rap>

19 <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Employment/Programs/IEP/Pages/IndigenousCadetshipSupport.aspx>

20 <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Employment/Programs/Pages/IndigenousWageSubsidy.aspx>

21 <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Employment/Programs/IEP/Pages/CDEP.aspx>

22 Indigenous Employment Program, Information for Employers, DEEWR website <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Employment/Programs/IEP/Pages/InformationforEmployers.aspx>

23 Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP) <http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Programmes/IndigenousProgs/STEP/>

100,000 Indigenous jobs over 10 years

One of the six ambitious targets the Australian Government has set to close the gap is

“to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade ...

Indigenous unemployment is three times the rate for other Australians. Halving the gap within ten years means that an additional 100,000 Indigenous Australians will need to find and keep jobs...

In the private sector, the Government is supporting the Australian Employment Covenant's target of creating 50,000 jobs for Indigenous Australians with essential training and work-readiness programs.

What we need are new approaches to entrenched problems and innovative answers to questions like:

- What can local government contribute to help achieve the COAG targets, including the target to halve the gap in Indigenous employment outcomes within a decade?
- How can the Australian Government work better with local government to close the gap?
- How can local government support Indigenous initiative to forge new relationships, including with the corporate sector and broader community, and
 - To foster the leadership of Indigenous elders, women, men and youth?
 - To celebrate local achievements and share a positive vision with Indigenous people?
 - To better target gaps in services and infrastructure, particularly in remote Indigenous communities?"

- Australian Council for Local Government background paper November 2008 meeting²⁴

Local Government: “The place where change can happen.”

As a third level of government, the sector is well positioned to help close the gap, and the many Indigenous employment programs initiated around the country by Local Government over the years are testament to that.

“Local Government is the place where change can happen.

It is the place where big issues at the national level have their base.

Local communities are where Aboriginal people meet white people. It is the place where we talk, play sport, shop, and have a laugh and a cry.

What is important is that Aboriginal people get to the starting line...²⁵

The sort of leadership local government can show is a commitment to working co-operatively with Aboriginal people. We see harmony where councils consult effectively with their Indigenous residents, listen to us, respect our opinions, involve us in committees of council, demonstrate support for our endeavours, and respect our culture. This helps us respond with the generosity of our people.”²⁶

- The late Pat Dixon ²⁷

²⁴ Australian Council for Local Government background paper, November 2008 meeting. http://www.aclg.gov.au/media_centre/backgrounders/files/indigenous_engagement.pdf

²⁵ The late Pat Dixon in a speech to International Union of Local Authorities Congress, Toronto, Canada, made in 1994 when she was a councillor

²⁶ The late Pat Dixon in a speech to the Australian Reconciliation Convention, Melbourne, 1997

²⁷ Patricia Dixon was the first aboriginal woman elected to local parliament in New South Wales, and the first Aboriginal woman federal candidate for the ALP.

Ingredients for Success

The disappointing results of the last *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* (OID) report, released on 2nd of July 2009, highlighted the urgent need for more concerted action from all levels of government, all industries and sectors. Following the report's release, Gary Banks, Chairman of both the Productivity Commission and of the steering committee for the review of government services that produced the OID report for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), wrote in *The Australian*:

"Six years and three reports (since the first in 2003), improvement has been clearly achieved for only about 20 per cent of the report's indicators. For 10 per cent of them, things have become worse ...

In the report's analysis of successful Indigenous programs, four factors stand out:

- Co-operation between Indigenous people and government;
- 'Bottom up' community involvement;
- Ongoing government support; and
- Good governance, within Indigenous communities and within government."

- Gary Banks

These four factors are all consistent with the approach of the proposed Indigenous Employment Program in Local Government, and will continue to inform its planning and implementation processes.

Collaboration is key

We have a lot to learn from each other. This program therefore needs structural frameworks that are flexible and collaborative, and that build on the capacity for lateral as well as linear approaches in order to accommodate different cultural approaches and working styles.

- Collaboration with relevant local Aboriginal organisations will be a key ingredient, especially with the relevant Traditional Owner group(s), where they exist, as the 'preferred' or first point of contact.
- Partnerships with Indigenous businesses and social enterprises.
- Collaboration with relevant Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) will also be important, from the point of view of being able to deliver skill training flexibly to meet local needs.
- Forming regional groups of councils and sharing and co-operation between neighbouring groups of councils may also improve prospects of success:
 - Each individual council may not have the capacity, skills and experience to implement this program on their own, nor to access government and other sources of funding; and
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will sometimes only work on their own country and may be reluctant to work on other people's country unless they are authorised to do so;
- Forming partnerships with individuals and organisations who have expertise and have run successful Indigenous employment programs e.g. Aboriginal Employment Strategy, Ganbina
- Forming cross-sectoral alliances with other employers.

A collaborative approach will be fundamental to the Indigenous Employment Program in Local Government.

Support networks

The environment for mutual support will need to be created at different levels by creating partnerships and alliances with government agencies to ensure that they are an integral part of the solution, and able to provide streamlined services and support:

- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA);
- The federal government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and federal, state and territory departments of Indigenous employment, education and training;
- Job Services Australia (formerly Jobs Network), Jobs Australia and similar state and territory services;
- Government Skills Australia (GSA) and LG related Industry Skills Councils (ISCs); and
- Health and allied agencies.

These support networks will be integrated into the program as it is developed.

Lead by example

Local Government can set an employment benchmark for other local employers to follow. It is a place-based employer with proven capacity to set up and deliver programs for long term sustainable employment.

Local Government is a major employer in regional, rural and remote councils.

The importance of strong and visionary leadership will be central to the Indigenous Employment Program and underscores Local Government's important leadership role in local communities.

Resources for long term funding

Project after project, limited funding has been allocated for Indigenous initiatives. Adequate and effective resources must be committed over the long term to ensure sustainability and success. Providing adequate resources often equates to committing to five to ten year funding horizons for projects – not one to two years.

The experience of those who have been involved in Indigenous employment programs, including those in councils, is often one of frustration when inadequate funding has brought about a premature end to the project. This was also LGMA's experience as National Project Manager in the 2-year cross-sectoral skills shortage Regional Employers' Alliance Project (REAP)²⁸. The three REAP projects required a minimum of 3 years' funding to fully embed them locally, and make them sustainable in the long term. This opinion was shared by local Regional Project Managers and employer stakeholders.

This LG Indigenous Employment Program will request adequate funding resources to be provided over five to ten years.

28 http://www.lgma.org.au/default/regional_skills_projects_regional_projects

Best practice strategies for attraction and retention

Adapting from the previously cited Australia Government publication *Working with Indigenous Communities*, these strategies include:

- Demonstrated organisational commitment to improving Indigenous employment outcomes
- Providing transition to employment, pre-employment or pre-vocational training that prepares Indigenous employees for life in the local government workforce. This includes life skills training and a sustained mentoring program
- Adopting recruitment strategies that focus on personal communication and the opportunity to demonstrate skills and abilities
- Developing company policies that encourage Indigenous employees to remain in the workforce. This may include flexible leave and roster arrangements and ongoing mentoring and support, to assist employees in managing family, cultural and financial responsibilities.²⁹

As well as:

- Establishing and maintaining cross cultural awareness and understanding on both sides
- Establishing a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy in transition to employment and pre-employment training
- Explaining and promoting career pathways and career development opportunities
- Explaining and providing access to Recognised Prior Learning (RPL), and
- Addressing racism in the workforce.

Beginning in the mid 1990s, important groundbreaking work on Native Title and Indigenous involvement in the local government sector was done at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) by the late Pat Dixon, Aerial Bloomfield, Ed Wensing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) facilitators, funded by the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

Ed Wensing specialises in public policy analysis with a focus on ATSI justice and development, and in agreement development between ATSI people and communities and other stakeholders, including on Native Title and cultural heritage matters. He has highlighted that :

Where Native Title claims are being pursued and a council is involved as a respondent, there may be opportunities for offering employment and training opportunities as part of the resolution³⁰.

The above strategies and learnings will be built in to the program as best practice ways of working.

Change the value proposition

We started to focus on the issue, not the solution ...

We changed the value proposition from liability to asset.

Education retention for our Indigenous students is now around 90% (compared with 20%), and our Indigenous employment participation rate is 90% ...

- Adrian Appo, Ganbina - Koori Economic Employment and Training Agency, Goulburn Valley, Victoria³¹

This important learning and approach needs to be taken forward into every aspect of the Indigenous Employment Program in Local Government.

29 *Working with Indigenous Communities. Leading Practice Sustainable Development Program for the Mining Industry* – Australian Government Dept of Industry Tourism and Resources p60
30 Ed Wensing email to LGMA National 6 August 2009, in response to email of approach for input into proposed program
31 Adrian Appo presentation at Social Enterprise World Forum 2010

Demonstration Projects

This green paper proposes rolling out 6-8 Local Government Indigenous Employment demonstration projects which will cross over and intersect with each other at different points, each having the potential to be rolled out in both a regional, rural, remote setting, and a metropolitan and municipal council, depending on relevance and greatest need.

These crossover projects will act as flexible building blocks, with the ability to be bolted on or attached to each other in different configurations depending on relevance and need. 'Crossing over' is about the need to work together now as 'we', not 'them and us', to cross the cultural divide.

The program aims to deliver real, meaningful and achievable outcomes, avoiding the all too common syndrome, aptly described by Indigenous author Alexis Wright, of planning "another process to look at a process of how to be involved in a process for anything to get done."³²

Each demonstration project will incorporate ingredients for success as outlined above, with collaboration and partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders being core elements, as well as flexibility and relevance to the Indigenous situation.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous key stakeholders will be part of the LG Indigenous Employment Program advisory group for the Demonstration Projects, including Traditional Owners.

We'd like to broaden the employment options of kids coming through to cover a range of occupations in local government, however the biggest challenge will be to ensure that the jobs identified are not just 'rake and shovel jobs'.

- Leon Yeatman, CEO, Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

One of the intentions of the program is to pilot ideas and run demonstration projects. The Demonstration Projects in Appendix B are a sample of potential demonstration projects that could be run under the umbrella of this program. See the back page of this document for contact details for providing further suggestions for demonstration projects.

Promote home-grown Indigenous talent

The marketing and communication strategy will need to use a concept that is identifiable, meaningful and accessible to both cultures, using both English and Aboriginal words and/or symbols when naming the project.

Indigenous ambassadors would promote and celebrate home-grown talent and successes, e.g. Indigenous CEOs, planners, environmental health officers, engineers, building surveyors and community services and development officers working in Local Government.

³² Alexis Wright remembers Oodgeroo Noonuccal, *Overland* magazine 2009

‘Bottom up’ grass roots driven

The Local Government Indigenous Employment Program will need to pay attention to metropolitan Indigenous communities as well as remote communities. Approximately 75% of Indigenous people live in urban environments, and the issues there are considerable:

To close the gaps, all levels of government will have to have one eye on remote Australia with the other on Indigenous gaps in the cities ...

Although large in number compared with their remote counterparts, urban Indigenous Australians make up only a fraction of the population of the city or town in which they live. This makes targeting the employment, education, housing and health services required to reduce socio-economic disparities extremely difficult...

In urban Australia especially, the issue is not whether jobs and schools are available, the greater constraint is the ability of the Indigenous population to take advantage of the opportunities that are available...

A specific strategy is needed to bring about sustained improvements in socioeconomic outcomes for urban Indigenous Australians, something the Council of Australian Governments has recognised.³³

- Nicholas Biddle, research fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), ANU, quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald* 7 August 2009

Among other issues, the Indigenous Employment Program in Local Government will need to address the issue of improving the capacity of Indigenous communities by ensuring that adequate and appropriate additional support is incorporated in the literacy and numeracy component, and other areas of the initiative's work readiness pre employment program.

33 *Specific plan needed to close the gap for urban Aborigines*, Nicholas Biddle, research fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU - SMH 7 August 2009 <http://tinyurl.com/nwdyds>

An approach to a LG Indigenous Employment Program

The methodology will be informed by further consultation through the distribution of the green paper to key stakeholders. The demonstration projects will enable the innovative approaches set up in the program's initial framework to be tested and then adapted according to practical levels of engagement and successful outcomes. These learnings and processes will in turn inform the program's implementation strategy, which will be rolled out nationally.

The approach will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Establishment of reference group of content experts for set up and ongoing consultation, particularly Indigenous employment content experts;
 - Consideration of the different requirements and barriers in urban, regional and remote environments;
 - Reference group to develop strategy for raising Indigenous awareness of program and buy in, including Traditional Owners;
 - Raise program awareness in sector and establish buy in, ensuring engagement of Local Government Associations (LGAs), LGMAs, and land councils;
 - Establishment of national project partner group in consultation with content experts;
 - Development of demonstration projects in targeted areas with key Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders both nationally and locally, capturing and adopting best practice guidelines, learning and intelligence in Indigenous employment, including incorporation of components in the Ingredients for Success section of this paper, working with local / regional groupings of councils. Projects will:
 - o Explore key issues and gaps; and
 - o Test innovative approaches;
 - Apply learnings from demonstration projects – what worked, what did not and why – to improve the Local Government Indigenous Employment Program framework for later national implementation, building on successful programs;
 - Adapt structure of demonstration projects accordingly for adaptation and adoption within national framework;
 - Appoint local coordinators within councils or groupings of councils with appropriate skills and status, to drive the implementation of the employment program;
- Application of project development and local engagement approaches successfully used in the Regional Employers' Alliance Project (REAP), in particular:
 - o Contract locally embedded local / regional project managers;
 - o Embedded local / regional project managers to work with local / regional groupings of councils;
 - o Form local stakeholder groups with local 'champions' to begin the consultation process early on;
 - o Establish networks between the projects and groupings of councils so people and projects can share and learn from one another;
 - o Monitor projects to assess replication potential and applicability of projects to other localities;
 - Develop a national framework for the implementation of the Local Government Indigenous Employment Program;
 - Produce national best practice guidelines for Indigenous Employment in Local Government; and
 - Roll out and publicise national Indigenous Employment Program in LG.

Learnings from other Indigenous employment initiatives

The Business Council of Australia's publication *'Many Connections, One Goal – Closing the Gap'* lists some important lessons that have emerged from the response and experiences of their member companies engaged in Indigenous employment initiatives including:

- Get involved
- Establish the business case
- Secure broad buy-in
- Build cultural knowledge and respect
- Foster Indigenous partnerships
- Be realistic
- Stay focused
- Review and revise

Priorities for further attention:

- Increase the pool of work ready Indigenous job candidates
- Improve the responsiveness and flexibility of training providers and programs
- Better facilitate job matching
- Explore the scope to develop employment models that are able to be scaled up.
- Better promote emerging 'best practice' models and initiatives so they can be replicated
- Increase information sharing and collaboration, particularly among companies
- Continue to work with government to enhance the effectiveness and flexibility of government funding and programs and to improve the ease of collaboration with business.³⁴

Conclusion

The Local Government Indigenous Employment Program is consistent with federal government social inclusion and 'closing the gap' agendas. Projects such as these will require significant commitment from councils and extensive support and adequate long term funding from Commonwealth government agencies.

Next steps

The paper will be circulated within the sector, to Indigenous stakeholders, government agencies and other key stakeholders for feedback. Input and comment will be incorporated into the next draft. The resulting white paper will then be more widely distributed, and be used as the basis for funding submissions for the development and implementation of the Local Government Indigenous Employment Program.

34 *'Many Connections, One Goal – Closing the Gap'* Business Council of Australia pp 18-21

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Working with Indigenous Communities. Leading Practice Sustainable Development Program for the Mining Industry – Australian Government Dept of Industry Tourism and Resources p57 and p4

Appendix A – Consultations

Positive and encouraging responses have been received from those whom we have been able to contact and consult with to date in the preparation of this green paper:

Wayne Bergmann

CEO, Kimberley Land Council, WA

Michael Berto (by phone)

CEO, Roper Gulf Shire, Northern Territory and a member of the new Regional Development Australia NT committee

Fred Chaney AO

Board Director, Reconciliation Australia
Chair of Desert Knowledge Australia
Formerly Deputy President of Native Title Tribunal 2000-2007

Warren Collins (by phone)

CEO, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

Rowan Foley (by phone)

Former CEO, Central Desert Shire, Northern Territory

Prof Marcia Langton

Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies, University of Melbourne
Member of Australian Employment Covenant Board

Danny Lester

CEO, Australian Employment Strategy
Formerly Head of Placement, Aboriginal Employment Covenant

Andrea Martin

Executive Director, Central Australia, Dept of LG and Housing, NT

Emeritus Professor Martin Mowbray

School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University, Melbourne

Warren Mundine

CEO, NTSCORP Ltd
Member of Australian Employment Covenant Board

Darryl Pearce

General Manager, Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, Alice Springs, NT

John Tobin

Manager Regional Frameworks, Employment and Workforce Development Branch, Projects and Key Initiatives, NT Dept of LG & Housing

Leon Yeatman (by phone)

CEO, Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

Edward Wensing

Consultant, SGS Consultants, and formerly Native Title Project Manager and Policy Manager, Australian Local Government Association (1994-1999)

Appendix B – Demonstration Projects

As previously stated, one of the intentions of the program is to pilot ideas and run demonstration projects. The demonstration projects below are a sample of potential demonstration projects that could be run under the umbrella of this program. When the green paper is distributed more widely for input, the accompanying questionnaire will ask for recommendations for pilot projects, as well as requesting information on Indigenous employment programs that have worked, are working, or did not work, and the reasons why.

» Indigenous LG Leadership and Management Demonstration Project

This is a training and career development program for Indigenous CEOs and senior managers, incorporating:

- Ongoing mentoring and exchange program;
- Cross-cultural exchange to facilitate exchange of leadership styles and approaches, where emerging Indigenous CEOs and senior managers can learn from non-Indigenous CEOs and senior managers, and in turn non-Indigenous CEOs and senior managers can learn from Indigenous leaders;
- Form groupings of councils to share training and mentoring resources in areas of greatest need; and
- Adopt methodologies of best practice examples of program models that have had positive Indigenous leadership outcomes e.g. the mentorship program for councillors in NSW that Warren Mundine was involved in.

We'd like to make it clear what the pathway is to be a CEO or any senior manager in council and cover the areas of accountability and personality issues as it may not suit everyone. We would like to be clear about what is required in these occupations.

Going forward there needs to be a program where we can say: here are individuals with the capacity to take up leadership studies and scholarships.

- Leon Yeatman, CEO, Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

» Indigenous LG Entry Level Training Demonstration Project

An Indigenous LG Entry Level Training Demonstration Project incorporating training in Indigenous and non-Indigenous language, literacy and numeracy, general cultural awareness training, training in Marvin, a 3D computer animation program, and utilising existing Indigenous LG entry level qualifications, e.g. Local Government and Shires Association of NSW.

Marvin has the accessibility and flexibility to be utilised as part of a demonstration project, and/or a support and promotional tool for several projects.

Marvin is a 3D computer animation program which creates animated characters to share important messages about services, business or culture. It promotes interactive learning and community ownership. It was developed by the Northern Territory Institute for Community Education and Development Pty Ltd (NTICED).

The animation can be based on real people, using local images and with messages recorded in the local language. It is a potent tool to overcome cultural barriers...³⁵

A variety of employment and business opportunities are available to Indigenous people trained in Marvin, for example:

- working with local councils and organisations to produce Marvin messages customised to the local language, culture and regions
- working with local training and employment service providers to adapt their materials and make these more relevant and accessible to Indigenous people.³⁶

³⁵ <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Employment/Programs/Pages/MARVIN.aspx>

³⁶ <http://www.marvin.com.au/partners.aspx>

There is potential for Marvin to be utilised in a variety of ways in the development and implementation of the Indigenous employment program and for Indigenous youth to be trained and employed to use the 3D technology, liaising and collaborating with Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders to develop components of the program. This could be done on both the informational and promotional side of working in local government as Employer of Choice for Indigenous people.³⁷

We need more awareness of what the (Local Government) work's all about ... and work experience opportunities. Lots of kids want to do work experience.

A lot of Indigenous people feel they're protected when working in an Indigenous community with friends and family but when they're out of that environment it's unknown. So how do you prepare people?

- Warren Collins, CEO, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

Mentors, employed by Roper Gulf Shire, have been likened to 'myth busters' as they try to untangle the maze of changes happening in remote communities through their supportive role for newly recruited employees.

The role is vital in providing support, especially to the young people gaining regular employment for the first time, through helping them understand the complexities of the working environment.... The team is working towards implementing a 'best practice' model of 'Mentoring for Retention' throughout the shire.

- Roper Gulf Shire Newsletter 12 July 2009

» Language, Knowledge and Media Hub Demonstration Project

Establish language based knowledge and media hubs:

- To provide a foundation for other demonstration projects and intersect with them, particularly the LG Entry Level DP;
- To embed literacy and numeracy support locally;
- To emphasise the importance of language;
- Utilise and extend local government infrastructure and networks to facilitate accessible user-friendly language, literacy and numeracy training and development initiatives and establish them in the community in the long term. The sector has the infrastructure and networks to embed literacy and numeracy in communities providing a critical resource for the foundation of successful work readiness employment programs, as well as an important community resource. In terms of physical infrastructure for example, councils could provide council buildings, e.g. setting up permanent educational 'shopfronts' in underutilised council owned buildings; and
- Collaborate with the Australian Library Institute of Australia to extend function of libraries to provide, particularly in remote areas, a media centre for video conferencing as a training and education facility for language, literacy and numeracy, and information and media programs.

"We've had a number of workplace literacy and numeracy programs. Quite a few employees have accessed them and enjoyed their experience. Many need basic reading and writing skills.

Lots of kids have missed out, and lots have hearing problems."

- Warren Collins, CEO, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

37 <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Employment/Programs/Pages/MARVIN.aspx>

Te Kōhanga Reo is a Maori development initiative in New Zealand, aimed at maintaining and strengthening Maori language and philosophies within a cultural framework inspired by Maori elders in 1982. Over the years a range of programs have been developed, and there is now a centre in every district.

“Te Kōhanga Reo centres provide a location and a purpose for people of all ages to meet and work together. The Kōhanga Reo kaupapa (philosophy) is powerful in drawing people together to support each other and work towards the ultimate goal of a bilingual and bicultural nation.

The programme reaches young families who would not otherwise have taken part in early childhood services. Through Trust training branches it has provided opportunities for young Māori to gain knowledge and skills and the confidence to enter and speak out in new spheres. The autonomy of the Kōhanga reo ... has meant that the Kōhanga Reo whānau (community, family) have had to acquire new administration and management skills in carrying out their responsibilities for the programme.”

- Te Kōhanga Reo website www.kohanga.ac.nz

» LG Skills in Demand Demonstration Project in Engineering, Planning, Building Surveying and Environmental Health

Establish a Demonstration Project in LG skills in demand occupational areas – including planning, engineering, building surveying and environmental health – all mission critical roles. Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) and mentorships would be utilised, and the project would aim to result in both para-professional and full qualifications for participants.

- Collaborate with relevant peak bodies and employment organisations – e.g. Planning Institute of Australia, Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, and the Aboriginal Employment Strategy – building on, not duplicating, the work already done.
- Build on best practice examples of existing training models for Local Government skills in demand, e.g. Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation in Broome offers Certificates in Indigenous Environmental Health³⁸;
- Groups such as the Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) are facilitating the takeup of Indigenous school-based traineeships, particularly in the area of Local Government skills in demand such as town planners, highlighting the importance of developing *careers* for Indigenous youth, not just jobs. Since 2002, the ANZ bank has recruited over 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees in branches around Australia. The ANZ offers school-based traineeships for Indigenous students while they are completing year 11 and year 12 studies, enabling them to earn an income while learning new skills and gaining a nationally accredited qualification.³⁹

Town planning is a new skills area for Indigenous councils. We want to look at how we can create pathways so kids can jump across.

- Leon Yeatman, CEO, Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

We will need planning skills. We need to do a land use plan and update the town plan under the new LG Act in December (2009). (We need skills) in the following areas: community planning, asset management plans, long term sustainability and financial sustainability plans ... It's getting people. It'll probably be a consultant as we don't have the time.

- Warren Collins, CEO, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Queensland

38 http://www.nirrumbuk.org.au/enviro_h.htm

39 <http://www.anz.com/about-us/careers/indigenous-employment/Indigenous-traineeships/>

» Regional Cross-sectoral Apprenticeship 'Passport' Demonstration Project

A demonstration project to train and skill apprentices in common skill sets transferable across sectors to provide mobility, enhance regional sustainability and provide long term employment. It could potentially be run in the Northern Territory or the APY lands in northern area of South Australia.

- Project to provide part of a formula for short term skill acquisition but long term employment;
- Identify regional cross-sectoral common skill sets; and
- Create a skills 'passport' utilising these common skill sets to allow cross-sectoral mobility from job site to job site.

» Indigenous Owned and Operated Community Services Demonstration Project

Demonstration project to form a group of key Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders to look at the successful Aboriginal controlled community services models cited in Professor Fiona Stanley's 2008 Annual Hawke Lecture *The greatest injustice: why we have failed to improve the health of Aboriginal people* and ascertain how they can be extended to other regions in Australia.

There are benefits to be gained from Indigenous owned and controlled services delivered to their own communities.

There is now clear evidence that Aboriginal controlled services with proper support – and particularly in partnership with competent and committed government and non-government services – are much more likely to succeed because Aboriginal people trust them and use them more effectively...

Services which employ Aboriginal people are more effective, provide employment and training, do not have the problems of short terms, increase both individual and community self esteem, and engage Aboriginal people in the solutions.⁴⁰

- Professor Fiona Stanley AC

Professor Stanley is the founding Director of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, the inaugural Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and a member of the Australian Social Inclusion Board.

40 http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkecentre/ahl/2008ahl_Stanley.asp



Responding to the Local Government Indigenous Employment Program Green Paper 2010

The Local Government Practice Unit (LGPU) of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) is seeking the input of as many people and organisations as possible. All stakeholders are encouraged to provide their input, experiences and opinions regarding this document and the proposed national Local Government Indigenous Employment Program. Responses to the Green Paper may contain facts, opinions, arguments and recommendations. Statistics and data may be included to support your comments.

This Green Paper provides a range of options that are discussion points only. They are not the only options for change. Therefore other suggestions are encouraged, particularly for Demonstration Projects. Best practice examples of programs that have achieved successful Indigenous employment outcomes in Local Government are welcome, as are details of federal, state, territory and/or local government Indigenous initiatives that may be relevant to the program outlined in this document. The latter will assist in avoiding duplication and repetition.

Responses can be made by:



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Letter OR Audio cassette

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