

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

TO

**ACCESS AND EQUITY
RHETORIC OR REALITY?**

**Report of the Inquiry into the
Implementation of the Access and Equity Strategy**

**House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs**

September 1995

INTRODUCTION

In 1985, the Government adopted the Access and Equity (A&E) Strategy for implementation throughout the Australian Public Service. The Strategy ensures that all Australians, irrespective of their race, culture, religion or language, are able to benefit equitably from resources which the Government manages on behalf of the community. The Access and Equity Strategy initially targeted Australians of non-English speaking background and in 1989 was extended to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In 1991-92, the Access and Equity Strategy was evaluated and it was found that the Strategy had been a constructive step in building a better, fairer Australia. It also found there was considerable room for improvement, in relation to delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recommendation 198 of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody addressed the need for equitable access to government programs and services across all levels of government. There was unqualified support from the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

Until the current inadequacies in meeting the human rights goals of access and equity are comprehensively addressed by all levels of government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will remain the most disadvantaged of all Australians.

There is simply no way that the specifically targeted programs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) can effectively tackle the overwhelming levels of disproportionate unemployment, poor health, low incomes and inadequate housing which characterise the disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in comparison with the wider community.

As we move towards the Centenary of Federation the urgency of addressing the human rights and disadvantaged position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia becomes acute. This is in line with the undertaking given by the Parliament as it unanimously endorsed legislation initiating the reconciliation process.

The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the Hon Robert Tickner MP, in May 1993 initiated an inquiry into the implementation of the Commonwealth's Access and Equity Strategy as it relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The report of this inquiry, *Rhetoric or Reality?* was produced at the end of 1993 by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, chaired by Mr Garrie Gibson MP.

In producing the Report, the Committee conducted consultations Australia-wide to ascertain problems encountered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in gaining access to Government services and as a means of identifying areas which are in most need of improvement. The Report pointed out that there is still a large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are not getting equitable access to, and equitable outcomes from, the range of government services available to all Australians. The Committee identified the provision of adequate and appropriate health services as the area which required most urgent attention.

Following discussions between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the Office of Indigenous Affairs (OIA) and the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), it was agreed that OMA, in consultation with OIA, would coordinate the Government's Response to *Rhetoric or Reality?*. In responding to the 37 recommendations of the Report, OMA has sought comments from all Commonwealth departments and selected agencies. These have formed the basis of the Government's response.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Government has given an undertaking, through the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, to promote respect for individual identity, to ensure social cohesion and to enhance social justice.

The Access and Equity Strategy has been part of the process put in place to achieve these goals. It ensures that all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, have equitable access to, and equitable outcomes from, Commonwealth Government services, irrespective of their language, culture, race and religion.

A principal means of monitoring Access and Equity for indigenous Australians is through the monitoring and reporting of the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADC). Strategies to strengthen this process have been initiated by ATSIC which will result in a stronger emphasis on outcomes, closer scrutiny of agency action, clearer identification of progress and a greater effort to expand the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in monitoring and reporting.

In addition, the Government has established an interdepartmental working group to examine ways in which departments and agencies can improve outcomes reporting for indigenous people. A plan of action will be presented to the Government by November 1995.

The Government will continue to monitor the impact of the Access and Equity Strategy through the mechanism of the Access and Equity Annual Report to the Prime Minister and will consider options which may enhance the outcomes of this Strategy in the future, particularly as it relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is in line with the undertaking given by the Parliament as it unanimously endorsed legislation initiating the reconciliation process.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

(Recommendations in full appear at Appendix)

Interpreting Services

(Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8)

The issue of access to interpreters in Federal and State Court systems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Recommendations 1 and 2) is being addressed by the Courts and Tribunals Branch of the Attorney-General's Department.

The strategy employed is to work with communities to gain acceptance for the development of courses in major language groups and to negotiate with an appropriate educational institution to develop and deliver training modules.

The Government's May 1995 Justice Statement included a commitment of some \$1.4 million over four years for training programs for interpreters in Aboriginal languages. This will enable permanent programs to be established where pilot programs have been undertaken successfully. A registration system for trained court interpreters will also be established.

The Attorney-General's programs are targeted at training of interpreters for courts and tribunals. In October 1995 the Department is holding a national conference in conjunction with the National Association for Accreditation of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) to confirm a national strategy for such services. All agencies which have the need for interpreter/translator services will be required to jointly finance such services.

Currently some of the language centres funded by ATSIC provide assistance with interpreting and translating (Recommendations 4 & 5). ATSIC will liaise with DSS with a view to developing an interpreter network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Recommendation 6).

Following a staff survey to gather information on language skills, a register has been established detailing the language skills of ATSIC staff (Recommendation 7). Staff who

advised that they were able to communicate effectively in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language were contacted individually and encouraged to apply for payment of the Linguistic Availability/Performance Allowance (LAPA), now renamed the Community Language Allowance (CLA).

Requests to TIS for services in indigenous languages are referred to ATSIC or another appropriate agency (Recommendation 8).

International Human Rights Obligations (Recommendation 3)

Australia has a National Action Plan for human rights that proposes government measures across a full range of civil, political, economic and social rights. The Plan represents Australia's statement to the international community about Australia's human rights objectives. It includes the rights of Australia's indigenous peoples.

The Human Rights Branch of the Attorney-General's Department monitors the operation of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. In addition the Branch provides legal and policy advice in relation to those Acts and in relation to the implementation of Australia's international human rights obligations generally. The Branch is also involved in the further development of international human rights instruments.

The International Civil and Privacy Branch administers Australia's obligations under the compliance machinery of United Nations human rights treaties, in particular:

- individual communications to the United Nations under various human rights treaties; and
- periodic reports required by the following three treaties:
 - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
 - the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and
 - the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The Branch prepares the Australian Government submissions to the United Nations on communications under the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention Against Torture. The Branch is also responsible for liaising with other Commonwealth agencies and State and Territory Governments on communications affecting them, and developing cooperative arrangements with the States and Territories for handling such communications.

Department of Social Security (Recommendation 9)

Departmental correspondence is only one of several strategies used to disseminate information to Social Security customers about their rights and entitlements. DSS recognises that there are significant literacy problems in remote communities and that traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures emphasise oral communication.

A Departmental Review committee has been established which is considering the overall impact of client correspondence. The needs of disadvantaged client groups such as remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are being given special consideration.

Unit for Indigenous Access and Equity (Recommendations 10, 22, 23, 29 and 30)

After consultations with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and ATSIC, the Government has decided that responsibility for Access and Equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will rest with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Recommendation 22).

As the agency responsible for Access and Equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will continue to report on Access and Equity for indigenous people in its Access and Equity Annual Report to the Prime Minister. It will do this in consultation with the Office of Indigenous Affairs (Recommendation 23).

The Government recognises the planning role of ATSIC Regional Councils and will continue to encourage departments and agencies to consult ATSIC and, in particular Regional Councils, in the planning, design and delivery of services (Recommendation 29). To this end, a communication strategy is being developed within ATSIC to ensure relevant office-holders and organisations are made aware of the regional council planning process and the need to work closely with ATSIC Regional Councils for the effective design and delivery of programs and services.

A number of departments and agencies already have formal consultative mechanisms in place and, where these do not already exist, departments are supportive of setting these up in consultation with ATSIC (Recommendation 30).

Currently OMA, through the network of A&E officers in APS departments and agencies at central and regional levels and through the A&E Interdepartmental Advisory Committee, provides the opportunity for coordination and for sharing experiences and initiatives that have been successful in furthering the aims of the A&E Strategy.

Some best practice examples (Recommendation 10) are contained in the A&E Annual Reports to the Prime Minister.

Health

(Recommendations 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 34 and 35)

Health Care

The Government announced a number of initiatives in the 1995-96 Budget to ensure that the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care is strengthened within the wider health system.

On 1 July 1995, responsibility for existing Commonwealth funded Aboriginal health services and substance abuse programs was transferred from ATSIC to the DSHH, with ATSIC retaining a significant advisory role in the development of improved indigenous peoples' health programs. This will involve a transfer from ATSIC of \$379 million over four years of existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health program funds, substance abuse program funds and the National Aboriginal Health Strategy primary health program funds. A further \$103 million over this period was also provided to support the development of new initiatives in the areas of mental health, hearing services and training relief and to provide for the establishment of a new national indigenous workforce agency. This administrative shift is aimed at developing a greater focus on indigenous peoples' needs in mainstream programs, and ensuring that indigenous people are getting a fair share of services, relative to their level of need.

In the first year, the focus for health and substance services will be on improved planning and assessment of local needs. The DSHH will undertake a joint planning exercise with each Aboriginal Health Service and Substance Abuse Service.

Following needs assessments, the Department will enter into three year funding contracts with services. A priority will be to simplify administrative arrangements and provide a framework for greater effectiveness and accountability which meets the needs of Aboriginal communities and the Government.

A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Advisory Council will also be set up to advise the Minister for Human Services and Health on broad policy issues relating to indigenous health.

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services, which has been established within the DSHH to administer the new arrangements, will work directly with ATSIC to ensure effective co-ordination between primary health care and environmental health programs, which will remain with ATSIC. ATSIC Regional Councils will retain a role in priority setting and planning processes for primary health services.

Employment of Liaison Officers (Recommendation 11)

The Government notes that under current Commonwealth/State arrangements, State and Territory governments have primary responsibility for managing hospitals and health services. Thus, the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers within hospitals is a matter for State health authorities.

State and Territory Ministers for Health and Aboriginal Affairs gave the following commitment at a Joint Ministerial Forum of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers in Brisbane on 10 June 1990:

"That the States and Territories, as a matter of urgency, expand and where necessary, introduce, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander hospital liaison staff in areas where Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander utilisation of services is high, or where there is a specific need in the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, and that the liaison staff be provided with adequate resources to fulfil their tasks effectively."

The 1991 report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADC) subsequently recommended an expansion in the use of Aboriginal hospital liaison officers (RCIADC Recommendation 261). All States, Territories and the Commonwealth supported that RCIADC recommendation.

Monitoring of such commitments takes place through State/Territory Tripartite Forums under the National Aboriginal Health Strategy and through the RCIADC Monitoring Unit. Strategies to strengthen the RCIADC reporting and monitoring processes generally have been initiated by ATSIC and will result in the production of qualitative information which can indicate measurable progress.

Aged Care programs (Recommendations 15-18)

Within the Department of Human Services and Health (DHS), a sub-section of the Project Development and Funding Section in the Aged and Community Care Division has been responsible for developing and administering aged care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since early 1992 (Recommendation 15). Following Divisional reorganisation in September 1994 this function has been transferred to a new Access Section which focuses on access and equity issues relating to indigenous peoples, people in rural and remote areas and people from non-English speaking background. Both sections have worked to develop a long-term strategy to deliver effective, appropriate and viable aged care services to indigenous peoples.

The 1994-95 Budget committed \$9.5 million over four years to fund transition to more appropriate and flexible aged care services to indigenous communities. The package of measures includes piloting of new service models, community education, case-by-case needs analysis, training of service providers, and project development and start-up grants. It also includes funding for 12 full time staff for 1994-95, of whom 11 have been allocated to State/Territory offices; and for 10 staff from 1995-96, of whom 9 have been allocated to

State/Territory offices. The majority of project officers employed under these allocations are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Agencies such as ATSIC and Aboriginal Hostels Limited participated throughout development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Strategy, and the 1994-95 Budget initiative was developed following extensive consultations with community representatives and relevant organisations. (Recommendation 16).

One of the main aims of the strategy is to ensure that communities are involved in every aspect of service provision from the early needs assessment and planning stages right through to operation of services. The strategy provides for development of new flexible aged care service models, through pooling funding from previously separate aged care programs.

Addressing training needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care service providers on staff has been an important objective of 1993 and 1994 Budget initiatives (Recommendations 17 and 18). As a first step, a management training package for aged care hostels developed by Aboriginal Hostels Limited with departmental funding, is being delivered on an ongoing basis. To ensure its cultural appropriateness, some eight indigenous service providers in Queensland, NSW and Victoria were consulted in its development over 1992-93. Training packages for other services will also be developed.

Arrangements with States and Territories (Recommendations 34 and 35)

The DSHS will also be working closely with State and Territory Governments to improve the co-ordination and delivery of mainstream health and related services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Government notes that Recommendations 34 and 35 are already being pursued through mechanisms other than Medicare Agreements, which are not due for renegotiation until 1998 and are mainly concerned with hospital funding arrangements.

In particular, States are already committed to the principle of consultation with indigenous communities under the *National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 7 December 1992 and is reviewed annually by the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council.

Monitoring of these commitments takes place through the RCIADC monitoring and reporting process. Strategies to strengthen this process have been initiated by ATSIC and will result in the production of qualitative information which can indicate measurable process.

The Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments also supported Recommendation 254 of the RCIADC which recommended that Aboriginal people should be involved in meaningful ways in decision making roles regarding the assessment of needs and the

delivery of health services to Aboriginal communities. Implementation of the Commission's recommendations is monitored by ATSIC and reported annually.

The DSHS will also be working closely with State and Territory Governments to improve the co-ordination and delivery of mainstream health and related services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Cross-Cultural Training (Recommendations 12, 13 and 14)

The Government requires APS departments and agencies, through their implementation of the Access and Equity Strategy, to use all means at their disposal to increase the incidence of cross-cultural training (Recommendations 12 and 13). In 1993 OMA produced a *National Directory of Cross-Cultural Training* to assist agencies in identifying training providers and in 1994 OMA released *Upfront*, a guide for APS managers on access and equity training.

The Government stresses to departments the need to ensure that cross-cultural awareness programs are relevant to a particular region and reflective of cultural differences. Departments which deal with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote regions are actively incorporating localised training in their training programs (Recommendation 14).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women (Recommendation 19)

The Government recognises the valuable role that women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, can play on all policy making and consultative bodies. APS departments and agencies are to address this recommendation through their implementation of the Access and Equity Strategy, their Equal Employment Opportunity strategies and in action to achieve the Government's announced target of gender equality on its boards and authorities by the year 2000.

Under the National Women's Justice Strategy the Government will provide an additional \$5 million over the next four years to enable the network of women's legal centres to establish specialist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Youth (Recommendation 20 and 21)

The Government supports the improved co-ordination of services to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It believes, however, that the establishment of a special

Youth Task Force could add a layer of administration that may impede, rather than enhance, effective service delivery. Improved co-ordination is taking place through existing mechanisms, including the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy Task Force and the DEET-ATSIC Protocol. These have as part of their function coordination of services to youth, including ATSI youth.

Public Service

(Recommendation 24, 25 and 26)

The Public Service Commission (PSC) will address the specific concerns in Recommendation 24 as they relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when *Equal Employment Opportunity : A Strategic Plan for the Australian Public Service for the 1990's* is reviewed.

The PSC actively promotes the appropriate and non-discriminatory use of the term "Non-English Speaking Background" through relevant publications and activities.

The PSC will consult widely when examining issues relating to the definition of EEO groups in the context of the EEO Strategic Plan.

The Public Service Act was recently reviewed by a high level task group which has reported to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Public Service Matters. Most of the recommendations of the group were accepted by the Government on 3 May 1995, as the basis for the development of a new Public Service Act. Subsection 7 (i) (Recommendation 26) dealing with EEO designated groups is still to be specifically examined in relation to the new Act. The new Act, containing EEO definitions, is currently being drafted.

Council of Australian Governments

(Recommendation 27)

At the 16 June 1995 meeting of the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Ministers resolved to increase their efforts to ensure that access and equity policies and programs are more effectively implemented by the respective Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments. Ministers agreed to seek to have a commitment to access and equity in service delivery made at the highest levels of government through the COAG. To this end Ministers agreed to seek to have this listed for discussion at the next COAG meeting.

In the meantime it is proposed that the COAG working party on the review of Commonwealth / State service provision take into account the implementation by government agencies of access and equity principles.

"Social Justice for Indigenous Australians" report (Recommendation 28)

The last two editions of "Social Justice for Indigenous Australians" have contained material on evaluation of programs and this will be expanded in future publications in accordance with the Committee's recommendation.

Audit of Programs (Recommendation 31)

Part of the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) role in reviewing the effectiveness of programs is to address access and equity issues, particularly those of a social welfare nature. These reviews include an assessment of the access afforded all potential applicants and whether all applications for assistance are treated equitably. Accordingly, in conducting audits of programs related directly or indirectly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the ANAO will continue to address the access and equity issues associated with the delivery of Commonwealth Government services.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (Recommendations 32 and 33)

A major training exercise aimed at Aboriginal Student and Parents Awareness (ASSPA) Committees is currently being undertaken by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). Aboriginal Education Units are arranging training locally in recognition of the diversity of the client group.

Further initiatives taken by DEET to improve the administration and effectiveness of the ASSPA program include:

- improved training strategies and products for Aboriginal Education Unit staff;
- regular administrative review processes;
- publication of improved information materials for ASSPA Committees;
- the development of local training programs for ASSPA Committees; and
- steps by agencies to include evaluation within their programs.

**Proposed Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Affairs
(Recommendations 36 and 37)**

After these recommendations were finalised, the Parliament passed the Native Title Act 1993, which includes provision for a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Native Title. This Committee has a five year term from 1994. The Government believes, therefore, that the appropriate time to consider the need for a joint standing committee, as outlined in these recommendations, is towards the end of the term of the Joint Committee on Native Title.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Attorney-General ensures that his Department gives top priority to:

addressing the issues of access to interpreters in the Federal court system; (*Paragraph 2.20*)

2.

assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples appearing in other jurisdictions to gain access to interpreters where needed; (*Paragraph 2.20*)

Government Position : Supported

3. The Attorney-General ensures that his Department gives top priority to:

ensuring Australia's international human rights obligations are being met within Australia. (*Paragraph 2.20*)

Government Position : Supported

4. The provision of adequate interpreter services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in courts and in government services be a major focus for the unit responsible for coordinating access and equity provisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all government departments and agencies. (*Paragraph 2.28*)

Government Position : Noted

5. The Commonwealth establish under ATSIC a separate national interpreter service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to ensure that people have reliable access to trained interpreters and translators. The service should be separately funded. Because of the number and geographic distribution of language speakers, a network service utilising existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language resources where possible, would be most appropriate. (*Paragraph 2.37*)

Government Position : Noted

6. **ATSIC give priority to the development of an interpreter network in association with the Department of Social Security. (Paragraph 2.37)**

Government Position : Supported

7. **ATSIC ensures that its own staff are receiving the Linguistic Availability / Performance Allowance where indigenous languages are used as part of their work. (Paragraph 2.37)**

Government Position : Supported

8. **The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language speakers have access to interpreter services through the Translating and Interpreting Service, by utilising the proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpreter network. (Paragraph 2.37)**

Government Position : Not supported

9. **The Department of Social Security take steps to ensure that in mass mail-outs to individuals, correspondence to remote Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities is handled in a more appropriate way, to ensure that recipients with language or literacy needs are not disadvantaged. (Paragraph 2.43)**

Government Position : Supported

10. **The unit responsible for coordinating the Access and Equity Strategy for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders highlights the more successful techniques used by some agencies in addressing Access and Equity, to encourage other departments and agencies to implement such techniques. (Paragraph 2.43)**

Government Position : Supported

11. **The Minister for Health ensures that, in financial arrangements with the States and Territories, the employment of adequate numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers within hospitals to ensure effective delivery of services, is guaranteed. (Paragraph 2.49)**

Government Position : Noted

12. **Cross-cultural training be undertaken by all staff of Commonwealth departments and agencies at all levels including induction programs. (Paragraph 2.64)**

Government Position : Supported

13. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be involved in the design and delivery of cross-cultural awareness training and courses. (Paragraph 2.64)**

Government Position : Supported

14. **Cross-cultural awareness courses should be relevant to the particular region to reflect the cultural differences of the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. (Paragraph 2.64)**

Government Position : Supported

15. **The Minister for Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services:**

establish within his/her Department a unit responsible for designing and administering an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care program; (Paragraph 2.110)

Government Position : Supported

16. **The Minister for Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services:**

ensure that programs are developed in consultation with appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations which allow for the care of aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their own communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff should be involved in program design and in program administration, particularly field work. (Paragraph 2.110)

Government Position : Supported

17. **In co-operation with State and Territory Ministers:**

ensure that culturally appropriate staff training requirements are developed for delivering aged care to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders; (Paragraph 2.110)

Government Position : Supported

18. to ensure that training is provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers in culturally appropriate aged care and that due recognition be given to their important role in the care of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through award and classification structures. *(Paragraph 2.110)*

Government Position : Noted

19. In implementing the Access and Equity Strategy, departments and agencies pay particular attention to the roles and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including their effective representation on policy making and consultative bodies. *(Paragraph 2.130)*

Government Position : Supported

20. In co-operation with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and Commonwealth and State Departments, ATSIC establish, as a matter of priority, a Youth Task Force, within its Central office to:
- examine in detail and develop particular strategies required to tackle unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse and other issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under the age of 25; *(Paragraph 2.147)*
21. coordinate the funding and implementation of these strategies across all levels, with the ATSIC Regional Councils, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and government departments and agencies. *(Paragraph 2.147)*

Government Position : Noted

22. The co-ordination of the Access and Equity Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be separated from the Office of Multicultural Affairs and be established as a separate unit, with appropriate resources, under the responsibility of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. *(Paragraph 3.25)*

Government Position : Not supported

23. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner includes in his/her annual report to Parliament an evaluation of the access and equity performance of departments and agencies in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. *(Paragraph 3.25)*

Government Position : Not Supported

24. **The Public Service Commission remove the provisions in its Equal Employment Opportunity Strategy which discriminate against Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders from a non-English speaking background. (Paragraph 3.39)**

Government Position : Noted

25. **The Public Service Commission take steps to ensure that the term Non-English Speaking Background is used appropriately and in a non-discriminatory way throughout the Australian Public Service. (Paragraph 3.39)**

Government Position : Noted

26. **That subsection 7(i) of the *Public Service Act 1922* be amended to cover all people of a non-English speaking background and their children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (Paragraph 3.39)**

Government Position : Noted

27. **The Prime Minister seeks adoption by the Council of Australian Governments of the Access and Equity Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within each State and Territory and also seeks the implementation of co-operation and co-ordination in the delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as already agreed to at the Council's meeting in December 1992. (Paragraph 4.26)**

Government Position : Noted

28. **That the publication *Social Justice for Indigenous Australians*, which is published at the time of the Federal Budget each year, be expanded to include not only details of total government outlays on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services but also an evaluation of the effectiveness and utilisation of these programs, including their inter-relationships with mainstream government services. (Paragraph 4.26)**

Government Position : Supported

29. **The unit responsible for co-ordinating the Access and Equity Strategy as it relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ensures that Regional Councils are fully consulted by all Government departments and agencies on the planning, design and delivery of their programs and services, to achieve much greater co-ordination and to maximise competent community input and effective, properly targeted delivery. (Paragraph 4.26)**

Government Position : Supported

30. **Departments and agencies should develop internal consultative mechanisms to address Access and Equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, where advice is necessary on the development of these structures, they should approach the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. (Paragraph 4.26)**

Government Position : Supported

31. **The Auditor-General in conducting program audits include an examination of compliance with the Access and Equity Strategy, particularly to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues are being addressed. (Paragraph 4.101)**

Government Position : Supported

32. **The Minister for Employment, Education and Training should ensure that:**
- . funding is provided to enable provision of State and Territory Offices of DEET additional advisory field staff to work with ASSPA Committees, assisting parents to achieve the aims of the program, and to counsel school administrative personnel on their appropriate relationship with ASSPA committees. (Paragraph 5.57)**

Government Position : Supported

33. **The Minister for Employment, Education and Training should ensure that:**
- . DEET State offices tighten approval procedures to ensure that all expenditure by ASSPA Committees is consistent with the Program guidelines. (Paragraph 5.57)**

Government Position : Supported

34. **The Commonwealth should ensure that the Medicare Agreements with State/Territory Governments contain specific reference to the process of co-operation and co-ordination with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and ATSIC at a regional and state level, to achieve more effective and efficient delivery of health services, responsive to the needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. (Paragraph 5.92)**

35. It should be a requirement that each regional health authority, where appropriate, establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee to co-ordinate greater input by local communities into the management, operation and delivery of public health services in each region. *(Paragraph 5.92)*

Government Position : Supported

36. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs becomes a joint standing committee of the both Houses of the Federal Parliament:

among other matters, the Joint Standing Committee should automatically have referred to it for review, the annual report of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, the annual report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and the annual report on the Access and Equity Strategy as it relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, if not already covered in the above reports; *(Paragraph 6.20)*

37.

the House of Representatives members of this Joint Standing Committee should be appointed using the same formula as the existing standing committee. In addition, there should be two Senators each from the Government and the Opposition, together with a third Senator from the minor parties or independents. *(Paragraph 6.20)*

Government Position : Noted