Appendix 5:
Overview of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery

· ·

1.   Overview

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership Agreement for Remote Service Delivery came into effect in January 2009 and will run to 30 June 2014. It is a joint commitment by all Australian governments to a 'concentrated and accelerated approach to tackle deep-seated disadvantage' in remote communities.[1] The Partnership is premised on a place-based initiative, targeting 29 remote priority locations across Australia for a whole-of-government approach to service delivery.[2]

The Remote Service Delivery Partnership is geared at developing 'new ways' of working with each priority community, with a focus on 'getting things right'. It is to be underpinned by creating strong partnerships with local Indigenous communities and strict accountabilities for all players.[3] A government office, which acts as the single government interface, has been

1   The Hon J Gillard MP, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Workplace Relations, The Hon J Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, The Hon N Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon R McClelland MP, Attorney General, Senator The Hon M Arbib, Minister for Employment Participation, The Hon P Garrett MP Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts, The Hon W Snowden MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health & Regional Services Delivery, 'Closing the Gap – Strengthening Indigenous Communities' (Joint Media Release, 11 May 2010). At http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/closing_the_gap_11may10.htm (viewed 12 May 2010).

2   The 29 locations were determined using the principles outlined in the Schedules A and B of the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement. This criteria based selection included:
   - significant concentration of population;
   - anticipated demographic trends and pressures;
   - the potential for economic development and employment;
   - the extent of pre-existing shortfalls in government investment in infrastructure and services; and
   - where possible, investment will also build on other significant investment already in progress.

   Applying this criteria the following locations were identified as priority locations for the initial wave of investment:
   - NT: Angurugu, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Hermannsburg, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Umbakumba, Wadeye, Yirrkala and Yuendumu
   - Qld: Mornington Island, Doomadgee, Hope Vale, Aurukun, Mossman Gorge and Coen
   - NSW: Walgett and Wilcannia
   - SA: Amata and Mimili
   - WA: Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Ardyaloon and Beagle Bay

3   Office of the Coordinator General of Remote Service Delivery, *Frequently Asked Questions*, http://cgris.gov.au/site/faq.asp (viewed 10 May 2010).

established in each priority community to achieve these aims. Local Implementation Plans for each priority location will be developed working with the communities. These Plans are supplemented by audits to identify gaps in infrastructure and service delivery.[4]

Intended benefits from the Remote Service Delivery Partnership include:

- improved outcomes through improved access to health, education, employment and other services in remote areas
- revitalised Indigenous organisations with capacity to assist individuals and families to engage with all the opportunities associated with a better serviced region
- greater economic opportunities (business investment and home ownership) as a result of resolution of land tenure and land administration issues
- over time, a reduced reliance on government transfer payments by individuals in remote communities.[5]

In total, $291.2 million is invested in the Remote Service Delivery Partnership. The Australian Government is providing $187.7 million and the remaining $103.4 million is from the states and territories.[6]

2. Single government interface

The Remote Service Delivery Partnership is structured as a place-based approach to service delivery. This means investment is focused on a location rather than specific programs. Current evidence indicates that place-based initiatives can effectively facilitate holistic approaches for addressing community disadvantage.[7] Nevertheless, the COAG trials indicate that the success of place-based initiatives is contingent on other factors including:

- clearly identifiable Indigenous representative leadership
- governments playing an enabling or facilitating role across all levels of government and community.[8]

The single government office in each priority location coordinates local implementation planning processes (discussed below).

---

4   Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *What is Remote Service Delivery*, http://cgris.gov.au/site/rsd.asp (viewed 28 April 2010).

5   Council of Australian Governments, *Communiqué - 29 November 2009* (2009). At http://www.coag.gov. au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/index.cfm (viewed 28 April 2010).

6   Council of Australian Governments, *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery* (2009). At http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/national_partnership/ national_partnership_on_remote_service_delivery_with_amended_schedule.pdf (viewed 28 April 2010).

7   Northern Territory Emergency Response Review Board, *Report of the Northern Territory Review Board*, Attorney-General's Department (2008), p 11. At http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review. PDF (viewed 28 April 2010); Morgan, Disney and Associates Pty Ltd with Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations*, Report to OPIC, Canberra (2006). At http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/coag_trial_site_reports/overiew/ Documents/COAG_Trials_Overview.pdf (viewed at 4 June 2010).

8   Morgan, Disney and Associates Pty Ltd with Tracey Whetnall Consulting and Wis-Wei Consulting Pty Ltd, *Synopsis Review of the COAG Trial Evaluations* (2006) p 5. At http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/ pubs/evaluation/coag_trial_site_reports/overiew/Documents/COAG_Trials_Overview.pdf (viewed at 4 June 2010).

Six strategically located Regional Operation Centres provide support for the priority locations.[9] The Regional Operations Centres works with government agencies across all levels of government and form part of the whole-of-government interface.[10] Fitzroy Crossing, Adyaloon, Beagle Bay and Halls Creek are supported by the Broome Regional Operations Centre.

This single government office is the conduit for creating strong partnerships between government and priority communities. Two types of government employee will work out of these offices':

- Local Area Coordinator (also known as Government Business Manger)
- Indigenous Engagement Officer.

These staff will live and work in the community.

The Local Area Coordinators are appointed to function as the direct link between community and government. They:

- are the key liaison and consultation point in communities
- work collaboratively with other government representatives
- assist with community planning and agreement making
- ensure that services are coordinated on the ground
- report on progress and on local issues and concerns to the local Regional Operations Centre and State/Territory Board of Management.[11]

The Indigenous Engagement Officers are Indigenous people recruited from within the local area, who speak the local language/s. They work with the Local Area Coordinators in their liaison and engagement work and help to support their communities as the strategy is rolled out.[12]

3.   Community audits

Comprehensive community audits have been undertaken to effectively implement the Remote Service Delivery Partnership, and to subsequently measure its impact. This includes:

- an audit of municipal and essential services and infrastructure (part of the wider National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing)
- 'baseline mapping' of social and economic conditions, existing government investments, services and gaps in services.[13]

---

9   These six Regional Operations Centres are: Darwin, NT, Cairns, Mount Isa, Qld, Broome, WA, Adelaide, SA, Dubbo, NSW.

10   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *The Remote Service Delivery single government interface*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/families/RSD_NPA/Pages/single_gov.aspx (viewed 10 May 2010).

11   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *The Remote Service Delivery single government interface*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/families/RSD_NPA/Pages/single_gov.aspx (viewed 10 May 2010).

12   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *The Remote Service Delivery single government interface*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/families/RSD_NPA/Pages/single_gov.aspx (viewed 10 May 2010).

13   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Progress on Remote Service Delivery*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/families/RSD_NPA/Pages/progres_rsd.aspx (viewed 10 May 2010).

The 'baseline mapping' information will be drawn from available statistical data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and from state and territory government agencies. This will provide information on the following indicia:

- who lives in the area – the number of people and their ages
- how many people might live in the area in five years time
- existing facilities, such as schools, clinics, playgrounds, meetings halls etc
- available services in areas such as health, early childhood, schooling and aged care
- community health
- the number and condition of houses
- the local economy including jobs.[14]

These audits are a welcome component of the Strategy. They are to provide a sound basis for strategising about service delivery, developing local priorities and assist in monitoring the impacts of the Partnership. Mapping and benchmarking policy outcomes is consistent with human rights standards.[15] Informed decisions rely on the collection of reliable data on the real effectiveness of development programs.[16]

4.   Local Implementation Plans

Local Implementation Plans are a central component of the Remote Service Delivery Partnership. These Plans perform two key roles that will underpin the success of the Partnership:

- They are the prime mechanism for engagement with local communities.
- They will outline the key performance indicators and benchmarks to measure the performance of the National Partnership Agreement and to hold various parties accountable.

The Local Area Coordinator is to work *with* the local community, informed by the auditing and baseline mapping, to detail priorities, actions, responsibilities and commitments from the various partners to the agreement.[17] The Regional Operations Centre provides extra assistance to the Local Area Coordinator and the members of the community. These Plans are to establish:

- community driven priorities and needs
- the commitments and responsibilities of various governments and their agencies to the when, why and how of implementing meeting these needs through the provision of services.

Upon completion these Local Implementation Plans will become public documents.

---

14   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Progress on Remote Service Delivery*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/families/RSD_NPA/Pages/progres_rsd.aspx (viewed 10 May 2010).

15   See W Jonas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Social Justice Report 2002*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2003), ch 4. At http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport02/index.html (viewed 22 June 2010).

16   See Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, *Report of the Workshop on Data Collection and Disaggregation for Indigenous Peoples*, UN Doc E/C.19/2004/2 (2004), para 11.

17   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Progress on Remote Service Delivery*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/families/RSD_NPA/Pages/progres_rsd.aspx (viewed 10 May 2010).

The Coordinator General suggests that a Local Implementation Plan will be effective because it 'forces governments to make their commitments and timelines public and imposes a discipline on implementation that may not have been there previously'.[18]

5.   The Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services

The Office of the Coordinator General has been established to monitor the effectiveness of the Remote Service Delivery Partnership and the performance of Australian Government agencies in meeting their commitments under it. The office was created by the Australian Government pursuant to the *Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services Act 2009* (Cth).

Each state and territory also has a senior officer to perform functions similar to the Coordinator General at the state/territory level and these office holders work with the Coordinator General to further the aims of the Strategy.[19]

The Coordinator General's tasks include:

- oversee the implementation of the Remote Service Delivery Partnership in Indigenous communities
- formally report to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs twice a year on progress, and ensure that all government service agencies are held accountable for their implementation responsibilities under the Remote Service Delivery Partnership
- have the authority to work across agencies to cut through bureaucratic blockages and red tape, and to make sure services are delivered effectively
- have a direct line of sight to the whole of government Regional Operations Centres established to coordinate services in communities and the single government contact points located within the identified priority communities.[20]

The Coordinator General's primary function is to monitor and oversee the roll-out of the Remote Service Delivery Partnership.

6.   State/territory implementation plans

The roles and responsibility for each state and territory government is guided by a Bilateral Implementation Plan between that jurisdiction and the Australian Government. Although these Plans vary across each jurisdiction they provide a similar framework outlining the ways governments will work together and with priority communities.[21]

---

18   Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Service Delivery, *Project Management and Local Implementation Planning The Coordinator General's view*, http://www.cgris.gov.au/site/newsarticle_1. asp (viewed 10 May 2010).

19   Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Service Delivery, *Frequently Asked Questions*, http://cgris.gov.au/site/faq.asp (viewed 7 September 2010).

20   Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Role of the Coordinator General*, http://cgris.gov.au/site/role.asp (viewed 29 April 2010).

21   Office of the Coordinator General of Remote Service Delivery, *What is Remote Service Delivery*, http://cgris.gov.au/site/rsd.asp (viewed 10 May 2010).

These implementation plans are designed to delineate the responsibilities and timelines of the Commonwealth and the relevant state/territory jurisdiction and facilitate a clear whole-of-government coordinated approach to service delivery.

7.   Boards of Management

A Remote Service Delivery Board of Management, comprising of senior officers from both the Australian Government and the relevant state/territory, has been created in each state/territory to oversee the roll-out of the Remote Service Delivery Partnership.[22]

The Board of Management meets every four weeks to support the single government interface (both the Regional Operations Centres and locally-based staff). These meetings include monitoring implementation progress and, where necessary, expediting service delivery issues.[23]

22   Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Frequently Asked Questions*, http://cgris.gov.au/site/faq.asp (viewed 7 September 2010).

23   Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, *Frequently Asked Questions*, http://cgris.gov.au/site/faq.asp (viewed 7 September 2010).