



CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CONGRESS

25 Gap Road, Alice Springs NT 0871
Ph 08 8951 4400
Fax 08 8953 0350

MEDIA RELEASE

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Congress welcomes the report of the NTER Review Board

“Central Australian Aboriginal Congress today welcomed the report from the NTER Review Board and supports nearly all of its recommendations,” said the Director Ms Stephanie Bell.

“We are very pleased that there is strong recognition of an ongoing state of emergency in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities and that governments need to continue to act to address the social and economic disadvantage of our people.”

“We especially welcome the recommendation that the Racial Discrimination Act be re-instated. Congress supports income management only being applied compulsorily on the basis of relevant behavioural triggers but this should have been applied to all Australian citizens not just those in the Northern Territory.”

“The recommendation to ensure that the new primary health care funding is made recurrent and that it is pooled with new Alcohol and Other Drug and Mental Health Funding is also very welcome. There is an opportunity to dramatically improve the primary health care system in the Northern Territory on a permanent, ongoing basis and this is an exciting new phase of the intervention which will help to close the gap in life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.”

“The board are right to recommend the new system for licensing community stores be continued.”

“On the issue of alcohol and other drugs, it is very disappointing that there is a recommendation to continue the non-evidence based forced prohibition on prescribed lands. There is no clear recommendation to reduce the supply of take-away alcohol from regional centres, which is the main source of the problem.”

“The recommendations on police, CDEP, interpreter services, supporting families, housing and land reform, coordination, re-engagement are also welcome.”

“The recommendations on funding arrangements are vitally important to ensure the new investment of additional funds through the NTER is not deducted from the NT through the Commonwealth Grants Commission. In addition, funds pooling needs to be applied to cease unnecessary duplication of effort created between the two levels of government fund competing, and non integrated services.

“Finally, the need to support the development of Aboriginal governance of services and capacity building of Aboriginal communities is welcomed. Government must ensure that appropriate data is being collected so that the effectiveness of all interventions can be assessed into the future.”

“Demographic research undertaken on behalf of the Board along with the outcomes of a Northern Territory Government study of specific indicators did not support the widely held perception that the NTER is driving large numbers of Aboriginal people into urban centres on a permanent basis. However, anecdotal evidence does suggest that there have been increased mobility patterns on a temporary basis between usual places of residence and regional centres.”

“It needs to be noted, however, that it still appears most of the 12 000 Aboriginal people living in Darwin are excluded from nearly all of these developments and this level of discrimination is yet to be addressed” finished Ms Bell.

“Congress believes that if all of the recommendations of the review board are implemented the NTER will be reformed in a manner which will ensure that we have in fact arrived at a promising moment in improving the health and well being of the majority of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.”

Contact: Director - Ms Stephanie Bell - 0417 806062