

**Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Inc.**  
**Social Justice Principles**

*November 2002.*

**Congress Cabinet endorses the following key principles as being fundamental to achieving social justice:**

1. **Self-determination.** All Aboriginal peoples have the right to self-determination as Indigenous peoples. This right, recognised internationally, includes the right to determine the nature of our own organisation, formulate policy that affects us, and the implementation of programmes under Aboriginal control.
2. **Social justice and equity.** Current extreme world inequality and inequity is wrong and must be changed. Cabinet supports measures to reduce these inequalities based upon principles of fairness and non-exploitative relationships. Cabinet opposes discrimination that unfairly disadvantages people on the basis of race, gender, sexual preference or beliefs.
3. **Governments** have a responsibility to ensure that all citizens enjoy the same standards of access to services and must fund these services on a per capita basis, with loadings to address existing socio-economic inequalities, disadvantage, geographic isolation and costs peculiar to maximising community control of these services. Further we believe the state is required to intervene actively in society, including the economy, to promote and ensure justice and to redress inequalities.
4. Congress believes that governments and other organisations should be **accountable** to the community for the delivery of services they are funded or responsible for delivering. We believe that governments and other organisations must be **transparent** in their decision making to their community constituents.
5. Aboriginal peoples have the right to protect their collective **cultural and intellectual property rights**.
6. Congress Cabinet believes that **Aboriginal cultural business** belongs in the Aboriginal domain. Governments do not have a role in Aboriginal cultural matters; rather the two systems operate in parallel. Governments must ensure that service delivery allows Aboriginal people to control those services, so that they do not negatively impact upon Aboriginal culture. Governments must ensure that Aboriginal people have access to all mainstream services to be utilised as they collectively and individually deem appropriate.

7. Cabinet endorses a **community development approach** to policy development and programme planning. Such an approach must primarily be driven at a grass roots level, not from the top down. This approach requires that Aboriginal people control the process at all levels, in so doing strengthen the control people have over their lives. This empowerment process must become a guiding principle in programme development and implementation.
8. **Individual responsibility** Cabinet expects Aboriginal people to aspire to take active responsibility and control (a degree of individual responsibility) over their lives in ways and over matters that they can. Cabinet believes that the intervention of Governments and other organisations should not be at the expense of individuals actively taking responsibility for their own destiny.
9. **Poverty.** Cabinet believes that poverty is an evil, which must be overcome. Poverty is more than simply the lack of money; it is also a condition, which involves the experiences of shame, powerlessness, and social and political exclusion. Whilst being a necessary pre-requisite, genuine human development, requires more than the improvement in the material and economic aspects of life. Cabinet believes that there are more than enough resources within the world to create sufficient wealth to provide genuine well being. Cabinet calls for a redistribution of this wealth in ways that do not cause further social and economic disadvantage or ecological degradation.
10. **Solidarity.** Cabinet will act in solidarity with those peoples and groups that subscribe with the above-mentioned principles to address social justice issues.

**In order to advance these Social Justice Principles, Congress Cabinet endorses this program for action, as a critical first step:**

1. The Primary Health Care Access Program must be fully funded and implemented.
2. Governments must ensure that there is adequate government expenditure in Aboriginal affairs. The Taxation base for Government Program expenditure needs to be reformed in order to ensure adequate funds for Aboriginal health programs. This reform agenda should not place any additional financial burden upon Aboriginal or other people already economically disadvantaged. Taxation based upon the 'Tobin tax' principles of taxing economic speculative activity should be adopted or forms of wealth tax, such as inheritance tax. Another approach (that may occur in parallel) is to re-allocate existing government outlays that are inefficient and ineffective, such as the private insurance rebate.
3. Governments must adopt the aim of full employment. Schemes such as the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) should be reviewed to ensure they create structural pathways to provide real jobs, at real wages.
4. Substance misuse, in particular alcohol is a major problem for our community, governments must: reduce the number of non-hotel licences in Alice Springs, review the current alcohol availability trial to include other beverages that have substituted those under control, in particular adopt an 'alcohol volumetric tax' system that ensures that there is a lower limit on the price of alcohol per volume (set equivalent to the current full strength beer ratio).

5. Aboriginal peoples access to education services must be addressed. To this end the recommendations of the Learning Lessons Inquiry, and the Inquiry into the Secondary Education need of the Alice Springs Community- the ‘Taking Control’ report must be fully implemented. The Congress developed Inquiry into Education Resource Allocation in the NT, must be funded as a matter of priority.
6. Ensure that Aboriginal people have access to best practice of Chronic Diseases management, delivered by multi-disciplinary teams (the full range of specialists and allied health workers).
7. Violence in our community must be addressed. Funding for men’s and women’s centres needs to be provided urgently. The community must be provided adequate police resources to allow the community to have action taken when responsibility for violence has been taken.
8. All sectors, but particularly governments, must respect and support the Native Title Holders of Alice Springs to exercise their responsibility for this area. All government programs must take guidance from the Native Title Holders on the implementation of government programs. The Four Corners Council must also abide by the authority of the Native Title Holders in matters dealing with Alice Springs.
9. The high costs of living for people living in remote communities and the consequent impact upon their nutrition, the provision of housing infrastructure and other health matters must be addressed through programs designed to limit the costs of delivery and improve the quality of products available in these communities.
10. Transport, both public transport services within the Alice Springs area and services between remote communities and Alice Springs, needs to be upgraded and co-ordination between existing services be established; to ensure ease of movement at acceptable costs to improve people’s access to services.

Endorsed Congress Cabinet,  
29<sup>th</sup> November 2002.