Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory
Report on Consultations

October 2011
# Table of Contents

**Foreword** 5

**Executive Summary** 7
- Consultation approach 7
- Key themes and messages 8
- Individual measures 9
- Structure of report 12

1. **Introduction** 13
- Background 13
- Discussion paper 13
- Consultation process 14

2. **Key Priority Areas for Action — What People Said** 19
   **Context** 19
   **School attendance and educational achievement** 20
   - What are the key factors in getting children and young people in remote communities to go to school regularly? 20
   - How can we improve educational outcomes of young people in remote communities? 21
   - What can the Government do to encourage this, for example, through links to welfare payments? 23
   - How can parents be encouraged and assisted to better support and play a greater role in their children’s development, education and health? 25
   - How can schools and local communities improve access and participation in early childhood services? 25
   - How can we attract good teachers to remote schools and preschools, and retain them? 26
   - How would you like to be involved? 27

   **Economic development and employment** 29
   - How can the Government further improve employment and economic development opportunities in Northern Territory remote communities? 30
   - What changes can be made to remote participation and employment programs in the Northern Territory to increase economic participation? 32
   - What can be done to link jobseekers in Northern Territory communities with employment opportunities? 34

   **Tackling alcohol abuse** 36
   - Will communities benefit from continuing the current Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) alcohol restrictions? 36
   - How could they (the NTER alcohol restrictions) be improved? 38
   - How can alcohol management plans (AMPs) be strengthened to ensure that there is a clear focus on reducing alcohol-related harm? 39
   - What other things should be done to reduce alcohol-related harm? 39
   - What can we do to reduce the supply of alcohol, including very cheap alcohol? 41
### Community safety and protection of children

44

What is the best way to make communities safer? 44

Which services make the most difference? Safe houses, police, community night patrols, child protection workers, better planning and use of existing services? 46

Safe houses 46
Police 47
Community night patrols 47
Child protection workers 48
Better planning and use of existing services 48
Others? 48

Should the current special measures about community safety continue? 48
How could they be improved? 48

### Health

51

Have individuals, families and communities benefited from the expanded health services? 51
Which health programs and services are working well? 52
Which programs and services need to be improved? 53
Are there any health programs and services which are missing? 54
What else could be done to improve health outcomes in your community? 55
How would you like to be involved? 56

### Food security

58

How can the current stores licensing arrangements be improved? 58
What other ways can we ensure that good quality food is available and affordable in communities? 58
What is the best way of supporting store committees to oversee their stores? 58
What is the best way of combining strong business and retail experience with strong community ownership? 61

### Housing

64

How could we improve the way housing is provided and managed in remote locations? 64
Leasing 67
What kind of expanded role could community housing service providers have? 67
How can greater private home ownership be encouraged? 68

### Governance

69

How can people in communities have a better say about what is happening in communities? 69
How can governments work better with community? 70
What are the most important aspects of community governance? 71

### 3. Public Meetings

74

### Appendices

78

1. Consultation guide 78
2. Community consultations — participating communities 80
3. Meetings with stakeholder organisations and individuals 83
4. Assurance letter 86
5. Reference documents 87
In June this year the Australian Government released the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory discussion paper, to help guide our discussions with Aboriginal people about the work we need to do next to improve people’s lives.

Since then, meetings have been held in almost 100 communities and town camps, together with public meetings in major towns. Hundreds of smaller discussions with individuals, families and other groups took place across the Northern Territory.

On behalf of the Australian Government, I acknowledge and thank the Traditional Owners on whose country the Stronger Futures consultations took place.

I want to thank everyone who took part in this consultation process. It has been a privilege for me to have the opportunity to talk with so many strong Aboriginal people who are passionate about building a stronger future for themselves, for their families and for their communities in the Northern Territory.

People engaged actively in the process, put their views frankly and welcomed the opportunity for a direct conversation with government.

In their conversations with me, Aboriginal people were very clear about the huge level of need they face, and about the expectations they have of government and of themselves. Their aspirations include things that any Australian would understand — that their children grow up safely, get a decent education and have a future that includes a job and a roof over their heads. People have also told me that in addition to this, they want their children to grow up as part of their strong culture.

Northern Territory Aboriginal community leaders, the four Northern Territory Land Councils and a range of service provider, community and advocacy organisations and their representatives also participated in stakeholder meetings and the consultations and I thank them for their involvement.

The Government worked closely with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service so that trained and well-prepared interpreters were on hand to assist in the discussions.

The consultations have been another important step in forging a real partnership between the Australian Government and Indigenous Territorians. Since this Government came to office, we have been committed to building a relationship with Aboriginal people that is based on mutual respect, cooperation and responsibility.
I would like to say a special thank you to our Indigenous Engagement Officers, who together with Government Business Managers, have been working on the ground in communities for the past four years. Their relationships have helped create a more effective mechanism for engagement between communities and government.

The staff of the Indigenous Coordination Centres and the Northern Territory State Office of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs have supported the consultations by facilitating meetings and recording the many discussions. Their efforts are much appreciated.

This report provides an opportunity for all Australians to understand what Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have been telling the Australian Government about the best way to build a future together.

The Government knows there is no quick fix to overcoming entrenched disadvantage. It will take time, investment and a commitment to work together to deliver lasting improvements.

The views of the people in this report will be at the heart of what we do next.

The Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

14 October 2011
Executive Summary

Consultations to discuss stronger futures in the Northern Territory were held between June and August 2011. This report provides an opportunity for all Australians to understand what Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory told the Australian Government during those discussions.

Several strong common themes and messages emerged. Participants identified addressing school attendance, jobs, reducing alcohol-related harm and improving housing as the top priorities for action to build stronger futures for people and communities.

Meetings were held in almost 100 Northern Territory communities and town camps to hear what Aboriginal people had to say. Public meetings were also held in major towns.

Indigenous Engagement Officers and Government Business Managers held over 370 meetings with individuals, couples, families and groups to ensure everyone who wanted to have their say had the opportunity to do so.

This report summarises those discussions.

Consultation approach

Since 2007, the Australian Government has taken steps to strengthen its engagement with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

There has been a wide range of consultations since 2007. The Stronger Futures consultations build on the extensive 2009 Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Redesign consultations in which several thousand people participated across 73 communities and town camps.

The purpose of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory consultations was to invite people in remote Northern Territory communities and across the Northern Territory to talk to government about what needs to be done next to tackle the continuing unacceptable levels of disadvantage for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and help build stronger futures for Aboriginal Territorians.

To guide these conversations, the Australian Government launched the discussion paper *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory* on 22 June 2011.

*Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory* looked at the strengths of the Northern Territory Emergency Response and talked about where government effort could be improved. It identified future priorities including:

- school attendance and educational achievement
- economic development and employment
- tackling alcohol abuse
- community safety
- health
- food security
- housing, and
- governance.
The priorities were identified based on discussions with Aboriginal people over the last four years.

The consultation approach was structured around these eight priority areas. People were also encouraged to talk about other issues that were important to them and they raised issues outside the priorities and the discussion paper.

To ensure that everyone was able to have their say, individual and small group meetings were available with Government Business Managers or Indigenous Engagement Officers (Tier 1 meetings).

Experienced senior officers from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs facilitated the whole-of-community meetings (Tier 2 meetings). The facilitators encouraged open participation and created opportunities for participants to express their views.

The Department worked with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service to ensure that, as far as possible, interpreters were present where needed at the whole-of-community meetings.

In addition, public meetings were held in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Darwin. Brief summaries of the range of views expressed in these meetings are included in this report. Meetings were also held with Aboriginal representatives, stakeholders and service provider and advocacy organisations.

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, visited several communities and attended consultation meetings over the consultation period including Tennant Creek, Lajamanu, Maningrida and Engawala.

The Minister for Indigenous Health and Federal Member for Lingiari, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, and Northern Territory Minister for Indigenous Development, the Hon Milarndirri McCarthy MLA, also attended some meetings.

**Key themes and messages**

Strong common themes and messages can be identified from the consultations. Many of the people who were involved in the consultations said:

- the top priorities were getting more children to school, increasing the number of local people in jobs in communities, reducing alcohol-related harm and improving housing
- they wanted to take more responsibility for their lives and communities. They believed, for example, that education is vitally important for children and that parents should be responsible for their children’s regular attendance at school
- they would like to have more effective and reliable services from all levels of government, including greater availability of police and night patrols; good teachers to stay longer in communities; better enforcement of alcohol restrictions; more specialist health services available in communities; and improved repairs and maintenance of houses
- they wanted to work better with government. They wanted governments to talk with them and they wanted to be listened to
• while people continued to feel hurt at the way the Northern Territory Emergency Response was initially implemented, many of the Aboriginal people who participated in these consultations said that they wanted to move on, be more self-reliant and take pride in their culture
• they wanted their communities and young people to develop and be strong for the future.

**Individual measures**

**School attendance and educational achievement**

There was a great deal of discussion recorded on this priority area. Overall, there was a strong sense of the importance of education, with people in a large number of consultation meetings saying that parents should take responsibility for getting their children to school.

There was considerable discussion about how to get children and young people in remote communities to go to school. A relatively frequently expressed comment was that parents often lack the capacity to ensure their children’s regular school attendance because of personal alcohol, drug or gambling problems, a loss of control of their children’s behaviour and, in some communities, a lack of educational experience among parents themselves.

There was a strong sense that schools could better meet the needs of Indigenous children through greater Indigenous involvement. There were two aspects to this: having community members such as parents and elders spend more time in schools, and incorporating Indigenous culture in the school curriculum. Respondents in several communities commented that parents, teachers and principals needed to talk together more often about children’s attendance and achievement in schools. A school liaison officer or truancy officer was also seen as important in making sure children attend school.

Positive comments were made about principals and teachers. Comments were made about the need for school to be an interesting and positive experience for children living in remote communities. Several suggestions were made about how to attract and retain good teachers.

A frequent comment was that where parents were receiving income from welfare payments, payment arrangements should give parents an incentive to make the effort to get their children to school regularly. Suggestions included withholding part of welfare income or fining parents if they do not send their children to school on a regular basis. It was also frequently suggested that some parents would benefit from the support of mentors and parenting education.

Where respondents commented on childcare and crèches delivered under the NTER, comments were generally positive.

Respondents expressed worry about children having to leave communities to continue their schooling, and about children who got into trouble at boarding schools and who have returned to their communities. The need for more local or regional high schools was frequently expressed in the Tier 2 (whole-of-community meetings). The need for vocational education, careers advice in schools, and education that was linked to jobs was frequently discussed in relation to older children and young people.
Economic development and employment
The most frequently recorded comments about economic development and employment were that people wanted jobs in the community and didn’t want to have to leave their community. Respondents said people wanted real jobs with proper pay.

Many comments related specifically to young people: that they need to work and that they need training and careers advice.

A relatively frequently expressed comment was that there are no jobs in their communities and that outsiders often get jobs in preference to community members. A relatively high number of comments were made about wanting to set up and run a business.

There were many comments in relation to training, with the most frequent requesting support or training to establish or run a business. There is a perception that, while some local people are adequately trained for jobs, it is non-Indigenous people who get the jobs.

There were mixed views about the current Community Development Employment Projects program. Where respondents commented on job-placement providers, most said they were dissatisfied with the service.

A relatively frequently expressed comment was that since the creation of the shire councils, local government job opportunities appeared to have declined for Aboriginal people, and that jobs had gone to non-Indigenous employees or contractors.

Tackling alcohol abuse
There was a wide range of views expressed on tackling alcohol abuse. In many meetings, discussions centred on the ways in which alcohol abuse was harming communities, families and children; suggestions for better management of alcohol and heavy drinking; and support for people who abuse alcohol. There were also frequent comments under this priority area about the emerging problems with gambling. There were also comments expressing attitudes to the alcohol and pornography restrictions signs.

Respondents talked about the harm caused by alcohol including road accidents, deaths and health problems. There was a strong call for communities to maintain their ‘dry’ status where alcohol restrictions are in place. Another strong theme in the comments is that people should be able to have a drink in their own home or at a regulated venue such as a pub or club.

Respondents wanted to see alcohol and heavy drinking subject to strong regulation and enforcement through policing and night patrols. In some communities, respondents commented that alcohol restrictions had resulted in communities becoming quieter with fewer incidents of violence. There were also comments that people continued to bring alcohol into areas that had restrictions resulting in noise, fights and people not being able to get to sleep. There were also reports of people travelling to towns, hotels and roadhouses outside the prescribed areas to drink and buy alcohol to bring back to communities.

Where respondents expressed concerns about the welfare of drinkers, most said they did not want people affected by alcohol in their communities at night. A relatively frequently expressed view was that there was a need for safe drinking places outside prescribed areas or community boundaries where people could safely stay overnight and not return to the community until they were sober. There were discussions about the need for better care and support through drug and alcohol rehabilitation.
Community safety
In making comments on this priority area, respondents reiterated concerns raised under the priority area on tackling alcohol. They pointed to the continuing influence of alcohol and its contribution to community unrest and violence. A relatively large number of comments raised the need for improved community infrastructure, such as street lighting, footpaths and mobile phone coverage, as being important for improving safety. Respondents wanted to see effective and reliable services from police and night patrols.

Few respondents commented on the prohibitions on customary law in bail and sentencing decisions, Australian Crime Commission powers, Australian Federal Police powers, or the publicly funded computer measure. Where respondents commented on the pornography restrictions, most wanted them to continue. Respondents in a few communities commented that action to address child abuse issues had been welcomed. Gunja (marijuana) and gambling were frequently identified as emerging issues.

Health
Comments from the discussion on health were generally positive. Where respondents were aware of and commented on the expanded health services delivered under the NTER, many said they had benefited from those services. The NTER child health checks, where they were mentioned, received generally favourable comments with specific mentions of improved health and people needing to get follow-up checks.

The most frequent comment was that health services would be improved if there was a doctor living in the community and if a dentist either lived in the community or visited more regularly. The most frequently expressed need was for Aboriginal Health Workers. More and better dental services were frequently requested. Other areas of need identified by respondents included dialysis units and more health workers generally. Transport for patients to local clinics and to townships for appointments was also identified as a need.

Community stores
The most frequent comment was that respondents were generally happy with their local stores. Communities in the north were more likely to comment that they were happy with their store than those in the south. Most comments were concerned with the cost, quality and variety of food and other goods. Many comments indicated that respondents believed that food sold at community stores was too expensive. Views were also expressed that more healthy food should be available and that junk food should not be sold. There was also concern about communities losing control of their stores.

Housing
Respondents reported living in run-down houses which were not secure from the elements or break-ins. There were many complaints about living in overcrowded houses. Respondents referred to the impact of overcrowding on conflict in families, the health of children and school attendance.

More new houses were being asked for, as respondents felt the impact of a growing population on already overcrowded houses. Particular comments were made about the need for separate housing for single people, teenagers and old people. There was dissatisfaction with the response times and quality of repairs and maintenance. There was a desire for these basic repairs and maintenance to be undertaken locally, employing local people. More housing and construction training opportunities were needed for young people.
Respondents talked about the need for rules to help them manage visitors in their homes. Visitors who drank and became violent and damaged houses were not welcome but because they were family, they could not be asked to leave. Respondents said that taking care of houses and managing tenancy obligations when visitors came to stay was a challenge. They were looking for help on this from government and housing providers.

**Governance**

The consultations also indicated a strong call in many communities to be more involved in decision making, for people in communities to work better together, and for each community to speak with one voice about its concerns and needs. Respondents said frequently that they wanted governments to come and talk to communities about policies and that they wanted government to listen to them. Receiving timely, honest feedback in plain English from both government and community representative bodies was seen as important for building trust and good long-term working relationships.

Face-to-face relationships between governments and communities were valued. Where respondents commented on Indigenous Engagement Officers and Government Business Managers, comments were mostly positive. In a few communities more Indigenous Engagement Officers were requested.

**Structure of report**

The introduction to this report provides the background to the consultations and outlines the consultation process. An analysis is then provided of the feedback from the community consultations. This is structured according to each of the eight key priority areas and the responses to each of the questions on the priority areas in the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory* discussion paper. A summary of feedback from the public meetings is also provided. More details, including the locations and numbers of Tier 1 (one-on-one and small group) and Tier 2 (whole-of-community) meetings and the stakeholders consulted are provided in the Appendices.

There was little difference between the comments made in Tier 1 and 2 meetings. The report therefore only refers to the exceptions where there were salient differences.

The quotations used in the report are taken from the record of the consultation meetings. The staff who made records of the meetings were encouraged to record quotations and, to the extent that they were able to do this, most of the quotations record what people actually said at the meetings. Some of the extracts from the record of meetings are summaries of the discussion of a particular topic. Many extracts from meeting reports including direct quotations from respondents are included in this report to illustrate the diversity and richness of views.

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of the feedback received in community and public meetings on building stronger futures for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Background

Most legislated Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) measures will cease in August 2012 and funding for most measures continues to June 2012. Given the Australian Government’s existing extensive involvement, the high levels of Indigenous disadvantage and significant funding provided to the Northern Territory Government, the Australian Government will continue to play a key role in the Northern Territory.

Between the end of June and mid-August 2011, the Australian Government conducted wide-ranging consultations with Aboriginal and other Territorians on new approaches and new ideas for the future beyond the NTER.

The purpose of the consultations was to seek the views of people living in the Northern Territory on what to do after the NTER ends in 2012 to tackle the unacceptable level of disadvantage still experienced by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

This report presents a synthesis of the feedback from the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory consultations. This report has been prepared by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The NTER measures have continued during the consultation process and will continue until the Parliament considers and passes new legislation or when the existing measures cease.

Discussion paper

On 22 June 2011, the Australian Government published the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory discussion paper (the discussion paper) to provide a focus to the consultations.

The discussion paper was a starting point for discussion. It was not intended to shape or limit comment. The Government said that it was open to hearing any views and ideas.

The discussion paper was written for a wide audience. It was not expected that it would be read by everyone participating in the consultations. Consultation facilitators, Government Business Managers (GBMs) and Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs) were asked to explain the content of the discussion paper when opening discussions in the consultation meetings. Speaking points, interpreters and a variety of communications materials were provided to assist with the presentation of material to audiences with widely varied literacy and language requirements. More information on interpreters and the consultation materials is provided below.

The discussion paper made clear that all future actions taken by the Government will comply with the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

The discussion paper identified some possible directions for reform, particularly to improve education outcomes for children, to expand employment opportunities, to tackle alcohol abuse, and to continue to improve housing.
The discussion paper set out eight proposed areas for future action and these eight areas were used to organise the consultation feedback and to structure this report.

These eight priority areas are:

- school attendance and educational achievement
- economic development and employment
- tackling alcohol abuse
- community safety
- health
- food security
- housing, and
- governance.

The discussion paper also included a set of questions under each priority area. The list of questions, or consultation guide, is provided in Appendix 1.

The questions were not presented in every consultation meeting as they exactly appeared in the discussion paper because meeting facilitators needed the flexibility to adjust their facilitation approach to suit each meeting. From the vast amount of feedback recorded from the meetings it has been possible to prepare this report as a broad response to the discussion paper questions.

**Consultation process**

The consultation process was comprehensive involving the following key elements:

- community consultation with Aboriginal people, public meetings and stakeholder meetings.
- The Australian Government has also undertaken consultations with the Northern Territory Government at ministerial and senior official levels. This report does not discuss these intergovernmental consultations.

The views of Aboriginal people living in remote communities, town camps and townships in the Northern Territory provide the centrepiece to this report. Feedback from the community consultations is therefore covered at length in this report.

The elements of the consultation process involved:

- an ongoing process in which individuals, families and small groups were able to provide their views to GBMs and IEOs in their communities on an open door basis. These meetings enabled individuals and groups, for example, men, women, young people, community-based organisations, families and clan or language groups, to provide their views and ideas outside the context of the more structured whole-of-community meetings. These meetings are referred to as Tier 1 meetings in this report — 378 of these meetings were conducted
- whole-of-community meetings facilitated by senior staff from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). These meetings took place in almost all of the 73 NTER communities and in some town camps. These meetings were public meetings, open to all community members. A range of strategies were used to advertise these meetings, including posters and fliers, targeted invitations and word of mouth. These meetings are referred to as Tier 2 meetings in this report — 101 of these meetings were conducted
• five public meetings open to anyone who wished to attend were conducted in Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Katherine. These meetings enabled any Territorian who was interested to contribute their views and ideas, and
• the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, and senior FaHCSIA officers held discussions with stakeholder, service provider and advocacy groups. FaHCSIA convened several meetings of stakeholder and service provider organisations in Darwin, Katherine and Nhulunbuy. A special forum of experts on reducing alcohol-related harm was also held.

Appendix 2 provides information on the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 consultations in each community.

Appendix 3 provides information on the stakeholder, service provider and advocacy organisations which were consulted or provided input by way of written correspondence.

Information on the numbers attending the public meetings in each location is included in the section on the feedback from the public meetings at the end of this report.

The range of attendance across the meetings was from one person (Tier 1 meetings) to more than 100 people at the Alice Springs public meeting. Several meetings were postponed due to funerals in communities. Where attendance for Tier 2 meetings was low, an additional Tier 2 meeting was scheduled or there was a more active approach to holding Tier 1 meetings to ensure community members had an opportunity to give their views.

It is not possible to be certain of the total number of participants who attended Tier 1 and Tier 2 meetings as some people participated in more than one meeting and people moved in and out of meetings.

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (the Minister) attended several Tier 2 meetings. The Minister for Indigenous Health and Federal Member for Lingiari, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, and Northern Territory Minister for Indigenous Development, the Hon Milarndirri McCarthy MLA, also attended some meetings.

There was considerable interest and attendance at Tier 2 and stakeholder meetings from a range of stakeholder and other organisations. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Amnesty International, the Intervention Rollback Action Group, Concerned Australians and the Stop the Intervention Collective expressed interest in the consultations and some sent representatives to attend the Tier 2 consultation meetings.

Media were present at a number of consultations, particularly where the Minister attended.

A number of other Australian Government agencies in addition to FaHCSIA were invited to send observers to attend and assist in meetings.

Northern Territory Government officials and staff, including shire council officials, were present at some Tier 2 meetings.

The planning of the consultation process, in particular the use of senior staff who were skilled facilitators, was aimed at ensuring that participants in the Tier 2 and public meetings were provided with opportunities to present their views.
The Tier 1 meetings provided an opportunity for people who were not comfortable in the larger Tier 2 meetings, who may be shy or hard to reach, to be provided with an opportunity to share their views and ideas in a setting that was comfortable, safe and informal. The numbers of Tier 1 meetings and the feedback they have provided indicates that the Tier 1 meetings have played an important role in providing an opportunity for a large number of Aboriginal people from remote communities to contribute to the consultations. IEOs and GBMs were vital in conducting and reporting the feedback from these meetings.

**Preparation and logistics**
Two full-day training sessions, in Darwin and Alice Springs respectively, were held before the start of the consultations to prepare FaHCSIA staff to conduct the consultations. A training manual was developed to inform staff involved in the consultations. The training materials were updated via an intranet site.

Significant scheduling, organisational and logistical support was required due to the large scale of the consultations. This was managed by FaHCSIA.

**Communications materials**
In addition to the discussion paper, a range of information materials were developed and provided to Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs), GBMs, IEOs, and participants to explain the purpose and topics of the consultations. These included a short consultation paper that summarised the discussion paper in plain language, covering the eight priority areas and related questions. This product was also produced as a Powerpoint presentation. A set of posters and a one-page flyer to inform people of the meetings were also produced and distributed.

The meetings were advertised extensively on the Indigenous and mainstream radio networks, in English and 13 Indigenous languages. Indigenous stations utilised included Radio Larrakia, CAAMA Radio, Yolngu Radio, PAW Media and TEABBA Radio. Newspaper advertising also alerted people to the public meetings in regional centres.

Information on the consultations including the schedule of community and public meetings was also available online at [http://www.indigenous.gov.au/strongerfutures/](http://www.indigenous.gov.au/strongerfutures/).

**Interpreters**
FaHCSIA worked closely with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service (NTAIS) to ensure that, as far as possible, trained interpreters were present to assist with the Tier 2 community meetings and the public meetings.

The NTAIS was provided with copies of the discussion paper and other communication materials, and used these to prepare materials that helped the interpreters to understand and translate concepts and questions. FaHCSIA also worked with NTAIS to produce the radio advertisements about the consultations in 13 Indigenous languages.

Interpreters were booked through the NTAIS for all scheduled Tier 2 meetings and the five public meetings — a total of 91 meetings. Where possible, both male and female interpreters were booked. Of the 91 meetings for which they were booked, interpreters attended at 84 meetings (92 per cent).
Oversight and assurance of the consultation process

The consultation process was overseen by the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA). CIRCA observed a sample of Tier 2 community consultations and two public meetings to assess whether participants attending the meetings were given a fair opportunity to put forward their views and whether the consultations were open and accountable. CIRCA also reviewed the feedback reports from those meetings for assurance that they fairly reflected the discussion and the views expressed.

At the end of the consultation period, CIRCA provided a report to FaHCSIA. Based on the sample of consultations observed, CIRCA concluded that overall the Stronger Futures consultations were conducted in a way that was fair, open and accountable. A copy of CIRCA’s report is available on the FaHCSIA website at www.fahcsia.gov.au.

FaHCSIA also briefed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, and invited their participation in the consultations so that they could be satisfied that the process was fair, open and accountable.

Continuous improvement

The planning and conduct of the consultation process built on the 2009 NTER Redesign consultations and Engaging Today, Building Tomorrow: A Framework for Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The framework provides information to guide Australian Public Service agencies in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In the Stronger Futures consultations effort was put into improving performance in the following areas:

- providing opportunities for a wide range of interested people to participate — this was provided through the public meetings
- better use and availability of interpreters especially for Tier 2 meetings
- use of microphones in large meetings
- preparation and training including the development of a training manual, and
- most significantly, use of experienced and skilled facilitators for the Tier 2 and public meetings.

Recording the views of participants

A template was developed to collect the feedback from the consultation meetings. The same template was used for Tier 1 and 2 meetings. The template included the discussion paper questions. The template was completed by the meeting facilitators and scribes from notes they took at the meetings. The feedback reports for Tier 2 meetings were taken back to communities for verification.

Summaries were made of the main points discussed in the public meetings and most stakeholder meetings.
Limitations on interpretation of the consultation data
The consultations were a process of dialogue aimed at seeking a diverse range of views and ideas. The feedback reports and summaries from the consultations provided qualitative rather than quantitative information on the outcomes of the consultations.

The information presented in this report should be read as a summary of information recorded during the consultations. It should not be considered to be representative of all the opinions of all consulted communities or all individuals in those communities. Nevertheless, the information presented provides a detailed and informative picture of the views and ideas of people in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory about their priorities.

To assist in the synthesis of consultation feedback a quantitative analysis of the qualitative information in the Tier 1 and 2 consultation reports was undertaken by an independent research firm, which also reviewed drafts of this report. Their conclusion is provided in Appendix 4.

Extracts from the consultation feedback reports are used in this report to illustrate the views that have been expressed. The quotations used in the report are taken from the record of the consultation meetings. The staff who made records of the meetings were encouraged to record quotations and, to the extent that they were able to do this, most of the quotations record what people actually said at the meetings. Some of the extracts from the record of meetings are summaries of the discussion of a particular topic.

Other issues raised by participants
The consultation process provided an opportunity for participants to raise any issue they wished with officials — for example, issues about the shires, gambling, substance misuse, houses, community facilities and roads were raised. Processes for follow-up and referral were put in place.

Follow-up on community feedback
The Australian Government is providing feedback to communities on the outcomes of the consultations through GBMs and IEOs, and through flyers. The Government will also come back to communities with information on its decisions.
2. Key Priority Areas for Action — What People Said

**Context**
Understanding the context in which the consultation respondents live is important to appreciating the summary of feedback and the comments presented in this report.

To assist readers the following very brief description of the context in which the consultations occurred is provided.

Across the Closing the Gap indicators, the Northern Territory Indigenous population experiences the widest gaps by a large margin (Council of Australian Governments 2010, 2011). On most indicators the gap widens with remoteness.

Average life expectancy for Indigenous males and females is lower than for all other states and the Australian Capital Territory. Northern Territory Indigenous men had an average life expectancy of only 61.5 years in 2005–07 compared to a national average for all men of 78.7 years. The Northern Territory also has the highest Indigenous infant-mortality rate across all jurisdictions and the largest gap compared with the non-Indigenous population.

The Northern Territory has very low levels of literacy and numeracy among Indigenous students and the lowest school-attendance rates. The Northern Territory also has the largest gap for Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous 20–24 year-olds. This is 59 percentage points, according to the 2006 Census.

The Northern Territory also has the largest gap in the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of working age employed.

Alcohol abuse remains a major cause and symptom of Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory. In the Northern Territory, apparent alcohol consumption is 1.5 times the national level. Alcohol-related harm is four times the national level and alcohol-related deaths are 3.5 times the national level.

Despite an unprecedented investment in remote housing by the Australian Government, there remains a serious shortage of decent houses in remote Northern Territory communities. This is the product of decades of neglect and poor legislative and regulatory requirements.

Since 2007, the Australian Government has taken steps to strengthen its engagement with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Government Business Managers, Indigenous Engagement Officers and Indigenous Coordination Centres work with Aboriginal people and communities on a regular, and often, daily basis.

There has been a wide range of consultations since 2007. The Stronger Futures consultations build on the extensive 2009 NTER Redesign consultations in which several thousand people participated across 73 communities and town camps. The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, has been visiting remote communities regularly. Australian Government officers and consultants have also been working in communities in the Northern Territory over the past 12 months to complete the evaluation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response.
The Northern Territory Government has also been engaged in a range of reforms in services and programs. The *Enough is Enough* alcohol reforms commenced on 1 July 2011. The *Every Child Every Day* strategy and action plan began in 2010, aimed at lifting enrolments and school attendance. The strategy’s infringement-notice system for parents and guardians and truancy fines began just prior to the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory consultations.

**School attendance and educational achievement**

There was a great deal of discussion recorded on this priority area. Respondents commented relatively frequently that education was important and children should go to school.

Respondents also commented relatively frequently that parents should take responsibility for getting their children to school.

- *We believe school is very important for Aboriginal people. It’s the parent’s job to get kids to school.*
- *We understand how important school is. It leads to proper jobs and it may allow you to leave to get a good job. We also want them to get a good job so they can stay and help the community.*

Responses to each of the questions in the discussion paper under this priority area are summarised below. Respondents also raised several additional issues under this priority area. These are outlined at the end of this section.

**What are the key factors in getting children and young people in remote communities to go to school regularly?**

Respondents identified a wide range of factors that contributed to children’s and young people’s school attendance in remote communities. There were calls for support and mentoring of parents as respondents frequently indicated that many parents lack the capacity to ensure regular school attendance because of personal alcohol, drug or gambling problems.

Loss of parental control over children’s behaviour; children drinking and abusing substances; children’s lack of interest in education; and children being bullied were also frequently mentioned as factors contributing to poor attendance. There were also comments in some communities that parents’ lack of educational experience meant that it was difficult for these parents to talk with teachers and principals, to help their children with their school work, and to guide older children through high school and towards employment and careers.

The following factors were also identified as affecting school attendance: parental encouragement and support; housing; no high school in the community or nearby; length of stay of teachers in communities; transport; worries that children will lose their culture if they go to school; truancy rules and enforcement; parents not convinced about or not aware of the value of education; and lack of incentives, that is, rewards and sanctions for children attending school regularly.

- *We are a very old culture and the parents know what to do. We are not stupid, they have been raising babies before Balanda (Europeans) came. They (parents) need to get away from gambling and having Balanda do everything.*
- *Parents playing cards all night still need to get their children to school.*
- *Many kids are wandering around the community late at night. They sleep in and miss school.*
• They are on the street all night because their parents are too busy drinking.
• Drunks make noise all night, hard for kids to go to school.
• Every parent here smokes marijuana and this is why kids don’t go to school.
• Parents need to pull themselves together, toddlers are expected to look after younger ones, grandmothers are looking after grandkids.
• Parents need to do more to help their children. School and government should help parents understand how to help kids. School should be a lot of fun for kids.
• Housing is the key to fixing problems. Without a house that functions kids don’t get enough sleep or food if there is no good kitchen. Need to be able to wash and shower properly to help health.
• To get kids to school, the housing they live in needs to be improved so kids have a shower in the morning. Kids feel shame about being dirty and so won’t go to school.
• Community don’t want to send their children away to boarding school. They want to have children here to complete their whole schooling till year 12 in the community.
• We need good teachers in communities who will stay.
• At the moment teachers are not the same all year. They change after every holidays.
• Kids all go to school. School bus picks kids up at 8 o’clock and drops them after school. Parents get them ready for school.
• Parents don’t have a vehicle and up to 11 kids are missing out on school every day.
• Too much teasing at school.
• We should not have to send our children to school when we have culture.
• Truancy needs to be tougher and with better public relations with house to house and one-on-one interviews with parents promoting education.
• Young people ask why be educated if you can’t get jobs because outside contractors come in to do the roadwork, paint speed bumps etc. Why bother? Parents before them were educated but can’t get jobs.
• People need a little more help like scholarships. The women said that nearly all of the kids in the [community] go to school because parents give them encouragement.

One remote community wanted to highlight how their school had achieved high attendance rates. Following is an extended extract of comments from this community:

• The community believes that there is currently very good attendance at the school. A statement was made that there was currently very good, dedicated staff at the school. There is also very good family support in making the kids go to school.
  In addition, there is good community support indicated by the store not providing service to any children during school hours. The community has a good relationship with the police, shop and school to help with the kids attending school.
  If the kids play up at school they get into trouble from family members.
  The Headmaster works well with the families and children and is very supportive. There is concern for when and if the Headmaster leaves the community, they may not get someone who operates in the same way.

How can we improve educational outcomes of young people in remote communities?
Many suggestions were made on ways to improve educational outcomes in remote communities. Educational outcomes were described most often in terms of improved attendance though in some meetings educational achievement, in terms of improved literacy and learning, was also discussed.
There was a strong sense that many schools could better meet the needs of Indigenous children through greater Indigenous involvement. There were two aspects to this: having community members such as parents and elders spend more time in schools, and incorporating Indigenous culture in the school curriculum. Respondents wanted to see culture valued and regarded it as an important part of education. They also said it would make school more relevant in remote communities.

- **Elders here talk to parents if kids not going to school. Maybe have a more formal program to have community elders help parents to get kids to school.**
- **Children do not like being locked up in the classroom all day. More language and culture needed in schooling. Bush tucker is needed in the schools. It is important we are learning both worlds.**
- **Have a look at the school make sure it is interesting for the kids. They get bored.**
- **They need to learn something more (cultural learnings). Take them out into the bush.**

Respondents in the south were slightly more likely to point to the need for more Indigenous culture in schools than those in the north. Respondents in several communities said that parents, teachers and principals needed to talk together more often about children’s attendance and achievement in schools.

A school liaison officer or truancy officer was also seen as important in ensuring that children attend school.

Other suggestions included more parental involvement with their child’s education; continuing to improve the quality of teaching and educational support staff and services; more local schools; and school nutrition, lunch and breakfast programs.

- **Parents need to talk to the school principal more.**
- **Parents are the only ones who can make kids go to school. A strong school council will get up parents who are lazy and play cards all day.**
- **The Indigenous Education Workers and Home Liaison Officer as well as Principals need to visit community regularly and engage with parents to encourage their kids to go to school.**
- **By means of more homework and more parent support. Parents assisting their children with learning materials and making the time to help with school activities and homework.**
- **We can improve educational outcomes of young people in remote communities by having a homework centre in community. If there was a centre in community then the parents could get involved in their children’s education. When the kids go to school, the kids don’t listen to the teachers. However the children would listen in community, because they relate better to family.**
- **Programs that are interesting for kids that make them want to come to school, like football programs.**
- **Ninety young people recently went through Ceremony — Consider Ceremony as education.**
- **Should be full-time parent liaison officer at the school.**
- **More Indigenous liaison officers are needed at the school.**
- **Can we get truancy officer?**
• I would like to see the availability of staff adequately accredited to undertake assessment of young people needing more help in achieving goals. Where literacy is a real problem schools need these facilities to be able to achieve desirable outcomes.

• More funding to employ teachers, youth workers living in the community who have the necessary skills and qualifications to develop programs/activities relevant to higher school retention rate and achieving better scholastic ability relevant to succeeding in today's world but also relevant for identity and cultural significance.

• Have a college here so we don’t have to send kids to Darwin or interstate.

There was a range of views about the school nutrition program. Some saw it as helping attendance by helping to feed children who might not be fed at home; others commented about the cost, quality or taste of the food; and others said that the programs reduced parental initiative and self-reliance. There were more positive than negative comments about the school nutrition program.

• School nutrition program helps if parent not feeding kids or sending them to school. This really helps because program picks up all individual school age children.

• Kids don’t go to school eating biscuits and water. Nutrition/breakfast program should be food that children like.

• The food is very good and I have seen over the years how this gets our kids to school, but it is the parents’ problem to feed the children. Now the parents don’t have to feed the children it means they have more time for sleeping and gambling... But it is very important for the kids to get food at school.

• School breakfast means the children are well-fed, but we need to find a way to make people responsible and independent so such services are not needed.

Other suggestions included school excursions; linking school excursions with attendance; more involvement of elders with the school through more formalised arrangements; revisiting reward programs for individuals such as ‘no school, no pool’; special needs teachers and resources for children with learning difficulties such as those caused by foetal alcohol syndrome; bilingual education; after-school care and school-holiday programs; school buses; and rewards and incentive programs for teachers and schools.

• There should be encouragement and/or rewards for consistent attendance by students, e.g. trips away to football games or Darwin etc.

• If you [Australian Government] give rewards to all schools you will get good results.

**What can the Government do to encourage this, for example, through links to welfare payments?**

Respondents commented relatively frequently that parents should have part of their welfare or Centrelink payments withheld or their payments reduced if they did not send their children to school. Fewer respondents said parents should not have their payments withheld or be fined. A few said parents should be fined for not sending their children to school.

• The track we are going down is wrong and if need be we do what is drastic to get better results.

• Let kids know they have to go to school. Parents need to make kids go to school, take kids to school. Linking Centrelink payment to school attendance sounds good. Parent would also need support too in case there are other problems.

• If government is serious about making parents look after the kids then they need to stop talking about cutting off the welfare and actually DO it.
• Government must not be a toothless tiger any longer. Kids won’t starve because of reduced payments because they get fed at school.
• People should have their Centrelink benefits taken off them if they don’t send their children to school.
• Be more serious about punishing parents for not sending their kids to school.
• It was suggested that Centrelink should withholding welfare payments from parents for non-attendance. Such an initiative should be supported by mentors for the parents of truants. It was suggested this should be implemented Australia-wide.
• Income management should be linked to school attendance. The family allowances should be taken away from parents whose children don’t attend school.
• I like the idea of linking school attendance to welfare payments.
• Should stop family allowance if kids don’t go to school.

A small number of respondents reported using welfare payment arrangements to encourage parents to get their children to school regularly, but said that parents needed to have adequate notice of a change in payments.

• If kids not going to school, government should give warning to parents if not attending, government should further quarantine their income management.
• We think further quarantining of Basics Card is OK so long as the parents are warned for kids that are not at school as often as they should be.

As mentioned above, there were a smaller number of comments expressing concern that welfare payment arrangements might not be effective in lifting school attendance rates. Concerns were expressed that fines or withholding welfare payments might further disadvantage children.

• Taking money off parents for non-school attendance is wrong and doesn’t work, it only infuriates and aggravates the situation, parents become frustrated with the school and the kids develop a perception that government is bad.
• Parents already struggle to support kids, it would hurt kids more if you stop payment for kids who don’t go to school.
• How will kids get fed if Centrelink payments are stopped?

Others suggested that welfare payments should be used as a means of lifting school attendance as a last resort only and that it might be better to reward regular attendance.

• Welfare should be stopped only as a last resort. Better to find ways to reward people who make the effort for their kids rather than punish those who don’t.
• We could have rules that if kids don’t go to school then cannot do the after school program — this could be filled with fun activities so that they want to come.

Some support was expressed for fining parents if their children did not attend school regularly, but others expressed concern about the new truancy fines introduced by the Northern Territory Government.

• People need to be fined if they don’t send kids to school.
• Concern about being fined $2,000 for not sending kids to school and how they can support kids if they get fined.
• Kids have to go to school. If they do not they stay at home and learn to gamble and drink alcohol. Mothers and fathers sit and play cards and gamble. Kids see this and copy their parents. I think it’s the right thing to fine both parents if the kids are not in school.

**How can parents be encouraged and assisted to better support and play a greater role in their children’s development, education and health?**

There were not as many suggestions in relation to this question as some of the other questions. A frequent comment was that parents needed support with parenting and education to understand the importance of school.

• 1. Increase education for parents. 2. More talking between parents and children; more talking at home about the importance of school. 3. Remove obstacles like alcohol and drugs, and overcrowding of houses. Overcrowding creates internal issues like a lack of talking and it also presents distractions such as drinking.

• Children need to have people working with young parents with young children. Helping them to learn how to look after children and themselves properly.

In a few meetings, activities were suggested that would bring parents and children together in happy and active ways. Playgroups, sporting activities, music, learning about bush tucker and culture were some of the suggestions. Respondents in one community mentioned the Culture Days at their school.

• The meeting participants believe that this can happen through more activities being run in community because the parents could support the children and help them. The participants suggested that an activity day or a sports day be run.

**How can schools and local communities improve access and participation in early childhood services?**

There were several communities where respondents reported favorably about crèche, preschool and childcare services or wanted these services in their community.

• We have a mobile preschool that is well-liked and used by many.

• Our childcare really works well here.

Respondents in some communities said that transport was important for parents getting children to preschools and early childhood services.

• The men thought that having a bus would increase the number of kids going to school. This worked with increasing the numbers at the crèche.

• We would like to see a crèche for mums and babies and a play group set up in [community] — this way people could come in to access it. If the bus was to go around to all the neighboring communities, they would bring them here to participate.

• Government can help through transport.

• The two women said that access and participation in early childhood services can be improved through transport. If a child is under five years old, they aren’t allowed on the school bus. The local play groups should look at sending a transport service, that is, a shuttle to take the kids there. Additionally, the participants suggested that more support staff be made available to run a playgroup in community. As previously, the community relied on just one person to run the playgroup, but it was too much for one person and the playgroup stopped running.
Parental responsibility was raised in several communities in relation to early childhood services.

- It’s parent responsibility to get kids to school including preschool.
- Welfare payments should stop if people don’t send their kids to school, same with childcare, education is important.

Respondents in some communities said there were no preschool or child-care services in their location or nearby. In a few communities respondents said that they were working towards getting these services in their communities and to having a local person employed.

**How can we attract good teachers to remote schools and preschools, and retain them?**

There was a range of suggestions to attract and retain good teachers in communities including training and employment of Aboriginal teachers, better pay and conditions for teachers, reducing the isolation of teachers, more targeted selection, and specialised training for teachers. The most frequent comments were about the need to train more Indigenous teachers and that communities were happy with their current teachers. There were also frequent comments about the need for teachers to have cultural awareness training.

- School runs well with some Anangu teachers who live here.
- Local, qualified teachers to have first preference to [local] teaching jobs.
- The men said that the government needed to make sure that teachers were being paid a good wage. Maybe they could get more money the longer they stay in community.
- There should be rewards for good teachers to encourage them to stay in community; there should be penalties for bad teachers.
- The teachers need to be free of personal issues and the right teachers found in the first place.
- Teachers who work in communities need special training to work in Indigenous community context. Requires special skills not just ordinary teacher training. Would like staff to stay longer.
- Teachers should do a specific course about the community to help teachers cross the cultural divide. This will help the teacher be accepted by the community.
- Get them some cultural training and let them go out bush with us and see if we like them and they like us and then we can work together. We will work with anyone that wants to help.
- Teachers should have cultural awareness training about the social and cultural status of young men after Ceremony and how they should interact with them.
- The best way to attract good teachers and retain them is for the community to get to know the teachers and be involved. In doing this the community can show the teacher what the community does in terms of education for their children. This way values can be exchanged and understood between government and the community, that is, community to government and government to community, which helps the working relationship.
- I think it would be good to get some better teachers here but I don’t know how to do that.

There were a few comments about teachers being transferred to other schools too soon after arriving in a community. Where there was discussion about the length of time a community
expected a good teacher to stay in a community, the period mentioned was more than five years.

- People would like the teachers to stay in the community for longer but the NT Department of Education and Training moves them on all the time just when we get to know them.

A young father answered this question in the following way:

- Make them understand that [the community] is a good place to live. They will have a good life here with nice bush and river.

Others were not sure how good teachers could be encouraged to stay.

- We like good teachers to stay and we guess we can ask them to stay but we are not real sure how to get good teachers to stay.

**How would you like to be involved?**

A wide range of suggestions for how parents and communities could take steps themselves were discussed.

- Elders here talk to parents if kids don’t go to school.
- Parents can do things, community can do things.
- Support the kids to go to school for the sake of the kids to learn English and get an education for a better future.
- Take kids to school everyday, don’t sleep in when kids should be getting ready for school. Parents are the teachers, teach kids about pride.
- I can teach culture and dance and bush tucker.
- Parents need to take responsibility for getting their children to school; It’s up to parents; It is up to parents to get their kids to bed early.
- Government can help but community has to help too. Community has set its own rules, for example, no shop for young people during school hours, but they go to the store anyway.
- Fathers need to help with getting children to school also, if one father can do it, other fathers can do it.
- Parent support group and school council; there is no school committee here, we used to have one; set up a small committee to talk about the school.
- Attend assemblies.
- Have created an Indigenous Reference Group and need to involve parents in anger management issues of kids.

Respondents indicated communities wanted a much closer relationship with the school. Several respondents in a number of locations commented that they thought that some past programs helped forge this relationship and that they wanted to see elders and cultural leaders having an opportunity to be part of the school learning environment, integrating current curriculum with local knowledge. This was seen as driving local engagement and improving connections.

Some older people offered to provide teaching in culture, food, art, music and dance.
Some teachers indicated the need for the help of elders and community members on some attendance issues, for example, absences for cultural business.

- The school allows for absences for funerals and similar cultural events but it was agreed the absences must be reasonable as too many absences occur for funerals. Centrelink are talking to parents about these absences.

Respondents in several communities expressed concern about how parents and other adults in communities could best assist older children and teenagers with their education. A few older people said they were grappling with issues around understanding young people and discipline.

- We want to watch carefully how youth are learning then we can assist.
- It’s a good thing for youth to learn for a little while to concentrate on study. The Intervention took away our rights. We are afraid to be strong with youth getting them to school as we might be arrested for child abuse. Some kids are smart and will report parents on child abuse. How can parents discipline kids to get them to go to school?
- Too many young men and women sitting around doing nothing.
- Kids don’t go to school. We need more computers in the school so that 16–17 year olds will go to school. They are interested in computers. People want to keep schooling in the community, don’t want kids to go away.

Communities, community elders and leaders can play an important role in setting clear expectations for young people.

- We do not think that just because a young man has been initiated he does not have to go to school. Our kids have to finish school otherwise they have no future.

Other comments
In addition to responding to the discussion paper questions, respondents talked about other issues related to this topic.

A few respondents were worried about children having to leave communities to continue their schooling, and about children who got into trouble at boarding schools and returned to their communities.

- BIG PROBLEM (concerns) — children go to college start drinking, mixing with wrong social life.
- Some older kids come back from boarding school for holidays but don’t return to school. If the older ones don’t go back then we should have training opportunities for them in our community.
- Need to have smaller schools with boarding in larger bush towns so kids from nearby can board during the week and go home on weekends. Darwin is so far away and when the kids play up parents can’t get there.

A small number of respondents said children needed to be educated outside the community to have the chance of a better future.

- When kids reach secondary level they should go away so they can learn how everything works away from the community, like Melbourne and Sydney. Kids can get better jobs when they finish school.
The need for vocational education, careers advice in schools, and education that was linked to jobs was frequently discussed in relation to older children and young people. Several respondents spoke about the challenge of parenting teenagers including young men who had been initiated. They said this created tensions in families about whether and how these young men should continue their education. There were also comments about how teachers needed to be trained in understanding how to relate to these young initiated men.

The poor educational levels of many adults in communities and the need for adult literacy were frequently mentioned.

- We also think there needs to be adult education in English so those of us that are not so good at English can understand what you are saying to us.
- Many of our people in the community have poor reading and writing skills.
- School to teach parents how to read and write.
- Too many children leave school and can’t read and write. The women agreed this was a major problem and these young people will not be able to obtain jobs at the clinics, school etc as a result of their lack of education.

There were mixed views about bilingual education. Some respondents wanted to see more teaching in Aboriginal languages in the classroom, while others wanted to see a stronger emphasis on English language at school.

- Need bilingual education so identity and language are not denied. To achieve in future, it is important for children to have a strong Aboriginal identity.
- Teach in English not in language as kids have no chance if they don’t speak English.
- They should be teaching them mainstream so they learn like we did.
- Mainstream education needs to be adapted to better meet needs.

**Economic development and employment**

Compared to other jurisdictions fewer Indigenous people in the Northern Territory are employed and the unemployment rate is many times higher for Indigenous Australians. In 2008, 62 per cent of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were in the labour force, compared to almost 90 per cent of non-Indigenous Territorians. This means that close to 40 per cent of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were not in the labour force.

Just over 50 per cent of Indigenous Territorians aged 15–64 were employed in 2008 and the gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment rate was 34 percentage points — the largest of any jurisdiction.

The proportion of Indigenous people participating in the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program is largest in the Northern Territory — 13.8 per cent compared to 4.7 per cent nationally. If CDEP participants are not counted as being employed then the proportion of Indigenous people aged 15–64 employed in 2008 in the Northern Territory decreases from 50.8 per cent to 33.3 per cent — a difference of 18 percentage points.

The most frequent comments by respondents were that people wanted jobs in the community and didn’t want to have to leave their community. There was a strong call for real jobs with proper pay.
• We want jobs.
• Community are interested but no jobs available.
• We want opportunities that if we get training that this leads to real work.
• If work and projects are here people will stay and not go to town and get drunk.
• Need more jobs with agencies, shire.
• More positions in the community, not in town/Alice Springs. Employ and train people, e.g. Shire office.
• Work makes your kids happy because they can see you doing something. Working in the community gives me pride when I see what I have done. This makes us blokes good role models and we are setting good examples.
• Work makes you healthier and happier because you have something to do and you’re not bored and drinking grog.
• We have to find a job, money for family — that is what is important.
• In the past people were working so had little time on their hands. They were able to organise what they had to do like get up, get the kids to school and go to work. But now they don’t do the work so they aren’t organised.

A relatively frequent comment was that there were no jobs in remote communities. Respondents frequently said they wanted to see local people in local jobs but commented that people from outside remote communities often got the local jobs. While some local people were adequately trained for jobs, it was non-Indigenous people who got the jobs.

• Tradies come in from other places, we have people who could be trained to do those jobs.
• People did training and got certificates but contractors did the work. The jobs left town with the contractors. We are good at it, we can do it, we are sick of outsiders, sick of signing forms. We have passed training courses and have tickets but no jobs, still just signing forms.
• Job opportunities are given to contractors (e.g. weed spraying/slash). They aren’t offered to Aboriginal people — our people can do these jobs.

Where respondents talked about the CDEP program, they expressed mixed views.

Some respondents commented on the services of jobs-placement providers. Where respondents commented on these providers, most said they were dissatisfied with the service and that job-service providers needed to spend more time in communities when they visited to build a relationship with local people.

Responses to each of the questions in the discussion paper under this priority area are summarised below.

**How can the Government further improve employment and economic development opportunities in Northern Territory remote communities?**

Two themes emerging from the discussions were that government should encourage and support people in remote communities to participate in education and training and that government needs to design the welfare system to encourage people to take up paid employment and activities that give them skills for greater self-reliance, self-respect and self-esteem.
• Education is the most important thing.
• Education is the key to job opportunities.
• Kids should go to school so when they grow up they can get a job as a nurse or teacher or whatever.
• There needs to be better training for jobs, but people need to have a good education first.
• Everyone should do training. There should be rules for everyone who is on Centrelink so you can’t sit down and do nothing or drink all the time.
• Too much money in welfare, reducing the need to get a job. WFD (work for the dole) must be compulsory and for everyone. There are enough options for enforcing work but not getting used or enforced.
• The Government needs to be stricter with Centrelink dependency as it is becoming a cultural norm and easy way for cash and no motivation.
• Stop hand out from government. Change welfare. Need to get people more involved.
• It’s learning how to get out of bed, work all day and then feel some pride in what you are doing.
• Strong community based incorporated body to make new jobs and be strong employer of local people.
• Enjoy participating in activities like op shop, soap making and arts and crafts. Arts and crafts used to happen regularly in the community but has stopped.
• Need to get the Aboriginal community together with the local business community.
• Need to create own jobs/business.

There was frustration that more people were not in jobs despite past initiatives and efforts. As indicated above, respondents frequently acknowledged that there were few jobs in remote communities and saw this as the biggest barrier to employment.

Across the consultations there were suggestions about how to overcome specific barriers to economic development. These suggestions included more job-related training so Aboriginal people had the confidence and relevant qualifications to win jobs, changing attitudes of both Aboriginal people and employers about the types of work Aboriginal people can do, and continuing land reform and expanding the use of township leases.

• We would like to see more training on the community around numeracy and literacy so people can get real jobs.
• We would like to see more computer skills and training on the community to help people with skills to get good jobs.
• It is important for the community to get training and certificates and licences to get the jobs.
• There is some racism in people’s attitude to employment — a view that Aboriginal people can only get a job in an Aboriginal organisation.
• It’s very hard for our people to get jobs in mainstream.
• Government needs to support Aboriginal land owners to develop their land for business that will create jobs and provide economic independence.
• The test of a lease is if a bank will lend against the land. Communities need leases for private enterprises. If the government can’t secure township leases then the Land Council should be encouraged to embrace township leasing or something that promotes business migration and economic development.
• The community members also spoke about what they want to do for their children regarding their leases and building their own infrastructure to create employment.
opportunities. Due to the lack of services the children are becoming bored which results in the problems around drinking etc.

Respondents identified jobs that should be going to local people and for which local people could be trained. These jobs included plumber, carpenter, mechanic, electrician, nurse, bus driver, teacher’s aide, health worker, fence repairer, housing maintenance worker and community worker. Respondents generally expressed a preference for training in their communities rather than travelling away for training.

Several respondents said that an additional emphasis on career progression of local Aboriginal employees in communities was needed. Some shire workers said that, while training was made available, they remained at the lower rungs of the employment ladder and could not see a way forward.

Many respondents spoke of the importance of young people in communities needing to be employed, trained, given work experience opportunities and careers advice.

- Young people need to be supported through education and into jobs — what is there for them when they finish school? Young people are signing up for the dole because there is nothing else.
- We need to make young ones confident so they can get a job. We need to start from the bottom and be fully supported to get people into employment.
- No real direction for young people — need work experience to get an idea of what they want to do.
- Younger people who left school need to look for work and further education/study but it is hard for them because of lack of resources and access to training centres.
- We would like to see young girls and fellas get apprenticeships as secretaries and builders, in plumbing, painting and mechanics to keep them off the street from drinking grog and smoking dope.

What changes can be made to remote participation and employment programs in the Northern Territory to increase economic participation?

A relatively large number of comments were made about wanting to set up and run a business. The comments suggested that respondents expected that government should facilitate or fund such initiatives. There was a higher proportion of these responses in southern communities than northern communities.

- Without economic development we are not going to have employment.
- Training and knowledge important for people to be developed with the skills to run programs, own businesses, look for funding etc.
- People need information and training on how to start and run a business.
- We need support to start our own business. We used to have trade agreements — we know how this works, but we need help for balanda side of business.
- Community needs a mechanic and tradespeople — electrician, plumber. Give people a certificate and they feel important.

Respondents suggested a range of businesses they could set up or be trained for. These included bakeries, butcher shops, bike repair and mechanics workshops, bush foods production, landscaping, hairdressing and lawn mowing.
A relatively frequent comment was that people should be trained for certain jobs in communities that have been or could be identified for local people. Specific jobs often mentioned included building and housing maintenance, mechanics, and working in crèches and aged care.

- There are women here being trained to prepare food. They could get a job with the school nutrition program.
- To actually get jobs you have to have training, certificates, white cards, ochre cards. That training is not happening here.
- If we had a holiday program, afterschool program, playgroup and crèche, local people should be trained at the community and full time jobs created for them.
- Need more jobs in the community that people can train for. Jobs should be specific to the community, e.g. fishing, arts and crafts.
- We would like to see more opportunities for people in our own town camp so that we are doing the work like painting houses, cleaning and mowing the yards.

Respondents said often that they wanted to see training better matched to available and realistic job opportunities. There was a sense that people were tired of training for jobs that did not exist or were short-term.

- We want opportunities that if we get training that this leads to real work.
- Even if people do training there are no jobs in this small community — training for no purpose.
- Proper training for jobs that are available in community not for jobs that are not available. Community people feel they have failed if they do training and there is no job for them — they feel hopeless.

It was suggested that local jobs and training opportunities should be advertised more widely and in places where local people would see the advertisements such as on television and on notice boards.

- Need to advertise jobs in the community so local people can apply.
- Some people thought that more organisations could advertise on television and radio what service they provide to help people get training for work opportunities.

Where respondents talked about the CDEP program, the most frequent comment was that they were dissatisfied with the current CDEP arrangements. Respondents also expressed mixed views about whether CDEP was effective in preparing people for jobs in the long term and whether there were better approaches.

- Priority is real jobs, not Work for the Dole and CDEP.
- Being on CDEP and then going into a real job doesn’t work. I have been on CDEP for a long time; I am getting old now and still don’t have a real job.
- We think CDEP training is OK so long as it leads to a real job. We are concerned that people work at CDEP and don’t get full wages. We understand you can’t start on the big money first up. But as you progress through CDEP you should get paid more until you leave and get your own proper job.
- We still want CDEP but we want proper training so that it is linked into real opportunities and followed through for real jobs for local people, like mechanics or painting and fixing houses.
What can be done to link jobseekers in Northern Territory communities with employment opportunities?
Most respondents did not talk about job-service providers and the role they played in supporting jobseekers and linking them with employment opportunities. While a few respondents said that they were happy with their job-provider service, most respondents who commented on this issue said they were not satisfied with the service and that the service provider should spend more time in the community. Dissatisfaction was due to people not finding long-term jobs, having to travel into town to see a job provider and Centrelink, and job services not being in the one place or being properly linked with other services.

- Job Network providers need to start coming into work with community people.
- [JSA (Job Services Australia) provider] need to build up good relationship with JSA participants in order to improve employment participation and implement a strategy in mentoring programs where they make sure their participants are satisfied with their work performance and updates their agency or workplace.
- JSA providers need to give more regular service to the community and be there when they are supposed to be there.
- People have to come to town to do business with Centrelink — especially around Basics Card, CDEP, JSA — changes to these services mean people need to come to town — but there is no real help from these services.
- There are lots of mob here — shire/JSA/others — it is confusing.
- We are currently on the right track, because we have a JSA provider based in community. However, obstacles to employment, like issues with alcohol, need to be overcome.

A few respondents talked about the need for people to be supported to move to take up job opportunities elsewhere because there were few job opportunities in remote communities. In some of these comments it was suggested that job-service providers could give more help to people interested in moving to find work.

- It would help if people were prepared to go where the jobs are.
- Maybe people will have to travel South to find seasonal work.
- Maybe employ a group of people to go South and pick fruit. Also, large groups could be formed to take on contracted work. The best group will be the one doing high quality work with no delays.
- If young people are worried about leaving country they can go away and train and then come back. We all went away and then we came back.
- Employment services should be connecting them to ‘jobs anywhere’.
- These kids went to Wollongong to the abattoirs; they like the work and are still there.

There were also a small number of suggestions about job providers and local community organisations working with larger employers such as mining companies and pastoral companies to better plan for the employment of Aboriginal people and to train and employ Aboriginal people. Tourism was also seen as an employment opportunity.

- Without economic development we are not going to have employment.
- ‘Grey nomads’ could park their van for a few days and do bush walks to look for ‘bush tucker’ and perhaps buy some art produced by locals.
• Cattle industry here on the [Land Trust] will only employ about 10 people. We need industry that will employ big numbers.
• Tourism. The government could help by providing funding to establish a tourism program in the community.
• Tourist business — show people our country and our ways, story boards to tell history and culture at relevant places. Show things about bush tucker and water holes.
• Tourism — this is where the dollars are.
• Open community up to tourism (currently solely survives on Government funded programs).
• Reopen community workshop, funded by council to fix broken or dead vehicles. Jobs for local people.
Tackling alcohol abuse
Alcohol is a factor in more than half of all assaults in the Northern Territory and accounts for a range of other serious social and economic harms. Over many years, governments have sought to put in place measures that have targeted the supply, consumption and abuse of alcohol.

A wide range of views on tackling alcohol abuse were expressed in the consultations. In many meetings discussions centred on the ways in which alcohol abuse was harming communities, families and children; suggestions for better management of alcohol and heavy drinking; and support for people who abuse alcohol. Emerging problems with gunja (marijuana) use and gambling; and attitudes to alcohol and pornography restrictions signs were also raised by respondents.

The consultation feedback provided numerous descriptions of the harm caused by alcohol including road accidents, deaths and health problems. There was a strong call for communities to maintain their ‘dry’ status where alcohol restrictions were in place. Another strong theme is that people should be able to have a drink in their own home or at a regulated venue such as a pub or club.

There were comments indicating that alcohol restrictions have resulted in some communities becoming quieter and with fewer incidents of violence. There were also comments that people continue to bring alcohol into areas that have restrictions, resulting in noise and fights. This meant that children did not get a good night’s sleep and were too tired to go to school or to pay attention in class. There were also reports of people travelling to towns, hotels and roadhouses outside of the restricted areas to drink and purchase alcohol to bring back to communities. Many respondents wanted to see alcohol and heavy drinking subject to stronger regulation and enforcement through policing and night patrols.

Respondents were concerned about the welfare of drinkers and said they did not want people affected by alcohol in their communities at night or to be seen by children. For this reason, respondents suggested the need for a designated drinking place outside the prescribed area of the alcohol restrictions or the community boundary where drinkers could safely stay overnight and not return to the community until they were sober or not a danger to the community. There was discussion about the need for better care and support through drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Where respondents commented on the road signs, most said the signs were ineffective and should be changed or removed. There were a few particular comments about the pornography restrictions part of the signs needing to be changed. Kava was also mentioned as an issue in East Arnhem communities.

Will communities benefit from continuing the current Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) alcohol restrictions?
In the discussions, many respondents talked about alcohol as a problem in their local communities.

• Alcohol is a very big problem which causes fights among community members who drink too much, due to the fact that anyone can purchase large amounts of alcohol from premises.
• Alcohol is a serious issue. Children don’t have people taking care of them as mums and dads are drinking. It’s sickness; it’s a problem that you (government) need to address.
• Drinking in the community causes problems with adults and kids — there is too much noise and the kids can’t get to sleep, then they are too tired to go to school the next day.
• Young people are not going to school — they are drinking and smoking gunja.
• We are concerned about how many people die from alcohol. Scared of the wama (drink) — killing people.
• This is a dry community, we don’t want grog here, people will go berserk and damage things. These things happened in the past.
• We have had enough, my partner works, I have small children and because alcohol is so bad we are actually leaving town to escape what is happening. Sad really but we are so glad to be leaving.

Respondents commented frequently about wanting their communities to remain dry.

• Yes. We want the laws to stay, no grog here.
• The No Grog laws should stay. It controls everybody and stops the visitors.
• We like the community with ‘no grog’. Police should be out more. We don’t want grog but people still bring it in.
• There was only a small amount of discussion about alcohol in the meeting, with community members stating that they would like alcohol restrictions to stay in place.
• People thought that there should be no alcohol in any of the town camps so that children can attend school the following day and people could sleep at night.
• We don’t want bloody beer.

Views were evenly split between those who saw benefit in continuing the restrictions and those who did not.

The following are examples of responses indicating that communities would benefit from continuing the current NTER alcohol restrictions.

• Some people here want to see alcohol again, but most of us say no because we know what it does to people. The Government can keep alcohol banned here, we don’t want it and we don’t want our young people to be ruined by it.
• Yes they will [benefit from restrictions], because there seems to be a lack of other options.
• Alcohol is not seen to be a major problem in the community as the community has been historically dry by choice. Legal backup for this position should be continued.

The following are examples of responses indicating that communities would NOT benefit from continuing the current NTER alcohol restrictions.

• No because no one is taking notice of the restrictions and they are not policed.
• No. Communities will not benefit from continuing the current NTER restrictions because every man should be allowed to come home from work and have a beer.
• No, communities will not benefit from continuing the current NTER restrictions because people will continue to bring alcohol into their houses as they are now.

In several meetings people said alcohol was not a major issue because their communities were dry and safe. However, respondents in other meetings said alcohol-related harm and violence were happening despite the restrictions. In one such community, respondents took a strong view that the restrictions must stay:
• The community was very strong on KEEPING COMMUNITY DRY. BIG concern is the impact if community is allowed to lift alcohol ban.

How could they (the NTER alcohol restrictions) be improved?
Suggestions for improvement included the ability to more effectively regulate irresponsible licencees whose operations were impacting on levels of alcohol-related harm in communities. The following note from the consultation record illustrates the type of concerns raised in the consultations.

• The [community name] people would like to have more ownership and input into what they believe is the best way to tackle this issue. They believe the Hotel some 100 odd kilometers away is a major contributing factor towards many issues that stem from unsociable drinking.

In some areas of the Northern Territory a permit is needed to buy and drink takeaway alcohol. Permits can also be obtained so that invited guests may drink at special functions and events. These permits are administered by the Northern Territory Government.

There were discussions about access to permits that allow people to consume alcohol in their homes or at private venues and to transport alcohol into communities. Some respondents wanted permits to be more widely available if the restrictions were kept. There were strong views held that permits were discriminatory, allowing non-Indigenous people access to alcohol and limiting Indigenous people’s access to it. Some said the permit arrangements were responsible for continuing alcohol consumption and harm where restrictions are in place. Others believed that permits should be stopped if they were abused, and that there should be tougher enforcement and penalties for people who bring alcohol into communities that have restrictions.

• Most of us have no permits.
• If we could have permits for drinking in our homes and other people can’t go from house to house this would stop the fighting.
• I reckon we should be able to drink at our own house.
• We would like to be able to drink in our homes without humbug from other visitors and starting to fight with everyone.
• Permit system doesn’t work, need to stop permit holders buying grog for other people.
• If [community] gets a permit it will be a bad influence for the kids.
• If permit is abused, then it should be banned.
• Need a system for when people bring grog in — take the cars off the people.
• Have a presence at the entrance of the community to ensure people do not carry grog into the community.

Several communities wanted to confine drinking to a designated drinking place: having a pub, club or drinking house or being allowed to drink at home. They wanted more discretion at the local level to solve alcohol problems.

• Should be able to drink in controlled situations.
• The restrictions could be improved by introducing a permit (to drink alcohol) for the household. The restrictions could also be improved by allowing the community to solve issues.
• The way the pub is run now is good. This is referring to the hours of service and that you must purchase a meal if you would like an alcoholic beverage. Alcohol outlet is good here with what is being sold (light and mid-strength beer).

How can alcohol management plans (AMPs) be strengthened to ensure that there is a clear focus on reducing alcohol-related harm?

Two broad approaches were identified in the consultations.

One approach involved alcohol management plans being an alternative to restrictions and a mechanism to establish and regulate local drinking venues, allowing people to drink in their own homes, and to promote more responsible drinking habits.

The other approach involved using alcohol management plans to achieve stronger local regulation, in addition to the restrictions. The plans could deal with matters such as the hours of licensed premises, parents and children attending clubs, days when alcohol can be drunk, takeaway sales, the strength of alcohol that can be drunk, regulating and enforcing alcohol permits, and rules for the banning of individuals from community clubs. Alcohol management plans were also suggested as mechanisms for regulating visitors who drank in communities and houses and caused fights and damage.

Examples of suggestions include:

• The community would like to continue their AMP once the NTER ceases, as a small community they can monitor problem drinkers easily. It was stated that Indigenous people have rights as well, they have the right to drink. It is up to the individual to help themselves, but the community is there to closely monitor them.

• The club should have control over the Alcohol Management Plan. The club should be getting that money so they can employ more local people and they would be proactive in punishing those who misuse and abuse alcohol by taking away their permits or banning them from the club. The community must tell their kids and other kids not to hang about the club and get the cops/Night Patrol involved and warn their parents about their kids. If the parents don’t listen they should be advised to leave and tend their kids. If not, they are automatically banned, no questions asked, it should be compulsory.

• The NTER good about intervening with AMP because some children not getting the right care and attention from parents, family and relations.

Respondents from a few communities said they did not want an alcohol management plan because the community preferred to rely on the restrictions.

• We want no grog at all here. We don’t want a plan, we just want no grog.

What other things should be done to reduce alcohol-related harm?

The most frequent response was that more police, stronger policing and stronger penalties were needed to address alcohol-related harm.

• Main thing is to have police here in community. When they come back drunk there are problems at drinking place, women bashed and they go back again. Someone with power to remove grog/drugs from them.

• We need to get police presence here on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. When people party loud and the police get called, by the time the police get here or when the drinkers see them, they turn it down or hide grog.
The need for education programs about alcohol and drug abuse and safe and responsible drinking was the next most frequent suggestion for reducing alcohol related harm.

- We need to have more education about grog — come and talk to us on the ground here, not in your office.
- Education about alcohol and help for drunks to get off the grog. No programs here.

Safe places for drinkers to drink with basic facilities were frequently suggested. Respondents were concerned for the drinkers and also wanted to make sure drunk people were not seen by children or allowed to create disturbances at night. There were differing views about whether these safe places should be close to, or a long way from, where people in the community lived. There was a widely held view, however, that people who were clearly drunk and likely to cause disturbances should not be allowed back into the community until they were sober.

- Drinking camps very dangerous for all communities. Need fencing, need one shed for women and one for men with concrete flooring with fencing compound. Need water tank for water and night patrol to take out water and bring people back from drinking place to community.
- Have a drinking area outside the community and people come back after they have had a sleep.

Respondents in several communities said that they didn’t want drunks brought back to the community or dropped off in town camps by police, taxi drivers or night patrols. It would be better to take them to a sobering up place or return them when they had sobered up.

- When people are drunk, Night Patrol and the Police just bring them back to the community. They need a sobering up shelter. Not just come back here drunk.

Night patrols were also seen as important to managing drunken disturbances in communities. Providing more powers to night patrols to remove drunken people from communities was a frequent suggestion. Other suggestions included better integration with the police and policing arrangements for communities, more resources and better pay for night patrol workers.

- More night patrol.
- We want night patrol coming here everyday asking people who don’t live here to move on. They need to come in and check on people. Keep the violence and noise down.

In a number of consultation meetings, the need for better management of visitors to communities and town camps was also identified in order to reduce noise, damage and disturbances. It was suggested that a law or regulation would make it easier for householders to ask visitors to behave properly or to leave after a certain period.

- Some of the worst drinkers are visitors who just drink in open areas in the camp, on the road. It has quietened down a little as years ago it was like a disco here 24/7 but we still have problems just like everyone else.
- We can’t say no to uncles and family but if we say it is the law then we see it’s not our fault and they don’t get mad at us.
- Visitors are big trouble makers; they would not allow us to do that in their home so why do they think it is acceptable to do it in our back yard.
The need for alcohol and drug rehabilitation services was also mentioned, especially for young people and those with chronic drinking problems.

Other suggestions were made on reducing alcohol-related harm: getting people into work or activity; strengthening the authority of cultural leadership in clan or community level alcohol management; a system for issuing drinking licences to people who have proven they can drink responsibly; re-introduction of dry days in particular communities; greater use of no alcohol signs on fences and gates of individual houses; and providing safe places and respite for the aged from communities with alcohol problems. (Respite for aged people for this reason was also raised in the health priority area.)

- If we have things to do we stop drinking or drink less. Doing something in the community cuts down the drinking and if we get outsiders here they have no one to go drinking with.
- There needs to be strong cultural leaders who have the power to exile people. If the community was strong in this way, then exile drinkers from the community would be gone and not return. Such a system has been observed to work in the Kimberleys. This system would have to involve the police. At the moment, it is then up to an individual to be a leader and step up. If the community doesn’t give the support then the police or government could step in.
- Need to consider reintroduction of Thirsty Thursday.
- A licence to drink — not ID but proof that can handle alcohol and if caught not drinking responsibly, abusive, violence — would lose licence.
- Through the Housing Reference Group we have discussed alcohol and problem drinkers and want to set up rules that everyone who lives in the town camp must follow. We want to make it work so that everyone can live together for the safety of our children. We are going to talk with NT Housing so that we can get some of the no alcohol signs for people to have on their fence.

What can we do to reduce the supply of alcohol, including very cheap alcohol?

Many respondents discussed the way in which alcohol was brought into their communities and where people have bought alcohol since the NTER restrictions started.

In some meetings respondents talked about a few liquor outlets that sold large quantities of alcohol to people for transporting into communities by car or sold alcohol to people who were drunk. Suggestions for reducing supply included: total bans on alcohol sales including takeaway, limiting the amount of alcohol that could be sold to people from particular communities, and closing down irresponsible outlets.

- Needs to be strong monitoring of hotels and taverns where Indigenous people are drinking. Hotel provides continued service to drunken people. Safe serving practices and patron safety is not being followed by licensed premises.
- Should be a limit per person. Stop selling full strength. There should be stronger laws for grog running and there should be stronger laws [penalties] for using other people's permits.

However, more respondents wanted access to takeaway alcohol than wanted it banned.

- We have asked for takeaway to come back so money will stay in the community.
In one meeting, respondents provided an example of a liquor outlet that they considered provided an example of responsible service.

- Pub has a breathalyser and before you buy grog you have to blow and not have had grog. The pub in [community] will stop selling to people when they are drunk.

Specific mention was made of the many places where people could buy alcohol in Alice Springs. Better controls on liquor outlet density were suggested.

- Government should look at getting rid of some liquor outlets, there are too many.
- There are too many alcohol outlets in Alice and they should be reduced. Alcohol is a big problem yet town has so many outlets, it's ridiculous.

Respondents talked frequently about grog-running which means bringing alcohol into communities where there are alcohol restrictions. Tougher penalties and stronger enforcement were seen as ways of dealing with grog-running. In a few communities there were calls for more sniffer dogs (though this was mostly in relation to drugs) and checks on people entering communities.

- Police should be stronger.
- We want a police station at the front and that is final. [Community] is a drinkers’ paradise because we are too far from town and nobody is keeping an eye on what happens out here after hours.
- Want full-time police in [community] to control alcohol coming into community. Need police to watch out for drunken people coming from the drinking place just outside [other community] and causing trouble.
- Sniffer dog to check bush bus. Many back ways into community so permanent police presence needed to control properly.

Few respondents mentioned raising the price of alcohol. There was only limited support for encouraging sales of low and medium strength alcohol or limiting the sale of particular types of alcohol to reduce supply. In response to suggestions that higher prices might be an option, a few people suggested that the levels of addiction of some heavy drinkers might be so serious that they would be prepared to pay very high prices to get alcohol. Others suggestions included the need to control supply into communities by enforcement.

- Put the price up, no cheap grog.
- The Government should not allow the sale of any boxed wine to anyone (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).
- At [hotel] you can buy rum for $100 a bottle. They don’t care how much it costs.
- They’ll always get it if they want it.
- We can reduce the supply of alcohol, including very cheap alcohol by getting the police to stop it from coming into community.

In some communities respondents said the rules and policing were already strict and that drinkers should accept responsibility for their drinking and drink in ways that caused no harm to themselves and others.

- People need to be responsible for their own actions and Government should support the local outcomes that suit this community.
• Alcohol is not a community problem but an individual problem.
• Some people have to be responsible for their own drinking. The rules are strict enough already.

Other comments
Three other issues were raised frequently in discussions about alcohol. These issues were gunja, gambling and the alcohol and pornography restriction signs.

The problem of gunja was also raised in relation to community safety and is discussed under 'Other comments’ in that section.

In regard to gambling, quite a few respondents mentioned that they would like the community store not to sell packs of cards. One suggestion for dealing with gambling was a community ‘lights out’ time so that people could get to sleep and so children would be ready for school the next morning.

A small minority of respondents commented on the blue alcohol and pornography restriction signs. Where respondents commented, most said they were ineffective at stopping drinking and grog-running. Many wanted their communities to make the decision about the signs.

• People raise their cans to the blue sign and as they drive past and say ‘cheers’.
• Sign on the road is ‘shame’ for our people. Leave the ‘no alcohol’ part of the sign but remove the rest of the writing on the sign.
• The NTER signs are not working as drinking continues in the town camps by visitors and residents.
• People wanted stronger signs about alcohol that were more relevant to [community] people in simpler language but strong message. Relevant to our culture and people.
• Community should have decision to make their own alcohol sign, own words and use proper cultural words.
• Don’t like the alcohol signs and would like to change them. Need some kind of sign to say no grog.
• Signs we have should stay.

There were frequent comments about kava from respondents in East Arnhem communities. In a few meetings kava and its effects were discussed at length.
Community safety and protection of children

Many Indigenous people in the Northern Territory live in circumstances of compromised safety because of alcohol-related violence, run-down housing, and various other factors. As well as measures to reduce alcohol-related violence, a range of measures are in place through the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) to improve community safety and the protection of children. These measures include additional police and police stations, night patrols, safe places, a Mobile Child Protection Team and Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers.

Further there are legislated measures in place aimed at protecting women and children in particular from violence and abuse. These include restrictions on sexually explicit or very violent material, controls on the use of publicly funded computers, special law enforcement powers for the Australian Crime Commission to investigate violence and child abuse, and prohibitions on customary law considerations in bail and sentencing decisions. Most of these measures have been designed as special measures so that they conform with the requirements of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

The questions in the discussion paper sought to establish what works well, what does not, and sought ideas and suggestions for the best way to make communities safer. There were fewer comments on this priority area than other areas. Most respondents did not address the questions directly; instead the responses reflected a general level of concern over the issue of community safety. In a number of communities there were comments indicating that respondents considered their communities to be reasonably safe or becoming safer, and that violence is not a significant concern.

- All believed kids on the community are safe and they are the number one priority.
- We think it’s pretty safe here for women and kids. When drunks come in we call the Police. We are pretty happy with the Police. Community is a safe place — no violence here.
- There are four police and a community constable and a CPEO and night patrol which has been a big improvement to safety.
- It is a safe place here, I walk around at night and it’s pretty quiet.

In making comments on this priority area, respondents reiterated concerns raised under the priority area on tackling alcohol. They were concerned about alcohol and its contribution to community unrest and violence. The need for improved community infrastructure such as street lighting, footpaths and mobile phone coverage was raised in a large number of comments. Respondents wanted to see effective and reliable services from police and night patrols. There were also a considerable number of comments expressing concern at the emergence of marijuana (gunja) use as a contributor to violence in communities. The prevalence of gunja in some communities was also raised in comments relating to several other priority areas. A smaller number of comments referred to gambling as a continuing problem issue. Violence and fighting among family groups and youth gangs were also identified as concerns. In a few meetings, the use of mobile phones by young people to harass and intimidate others was identified as another emerging factor contributing to community unrest.

What is the best way to make communities safer?

The need for improved infrastructure was raised in a relatively large number of comments. There was a general concern that those who needed to walk in areas without footpaths and at night without street lights were vulnerable to drunks and, in particular, drunk drivers in the community. Public phones and/or mobile phone coverage were needed.
to call police in an emergency. A higher proportion of comments about infrastructure came from northern communities.

- The community has a lot of dark corners and areas, at night it is hard for older and younger people who are walking home at night it is very dark. We could benefit from more street lights and for children to face up to the consequences for vandalising the street lights as it costs a lot to repair and purchase.
- Street lights: some need fixing and there needs to be more lights.
- The camp is too dark at night. We would like street lights that work just like anyone else who lives in Alice Springs.
- Safety issue is street lights. Send 'em back the ones we have (solar). We call those lights candle lights.
- The best way to keep the community safe is to talk with residents about where to put speed bumps and signs to stop vehicles from speeding.
- Would like signs within the town camp like slow down, speed bump ahead, 'drive with care children playing'.
- Should be higher speed bumps and rocks in front of the fenced areas near houses to deter cars from smashing into people’s yards when they are intoxicated.
- Having mobile phone reception would make the community safer, especially when people are broken down on the road.

There were a small number of suggestions to address concerns about the behaviour of children and youth. They included providing diversionary sport and recreation facilities and services and greater engagement between police and youth in communities.

- We are a bit worried about youth and teenagers. Particularly the boys. We need something to keep them busy and to keep them out of trouble. We don’t know if they are supposed to be in school. We need a proper qualified youth worker. Particularly for young men.
- More sports and recreation. We have too many young people in our community who are bored.
- More visits and positive interactions with police would be good, but understood they are over 2 hours away. Some blue light discos or other interactions would be good.
- The Rec Hall and Red Cross should implement a Respect and good social wellbeing program through play and sports events so children learn to care, respect and use words not swearing as it is getting worse, hearing young kids swearing.
- During and after Rec Hall the Night Patrol should start their patrolling and using a better strategy in keeping the children safe and not fighting and not walking around late at night.
- Sport and rec program can keep kids off the street at night.
- No youth workers in the community. There is trouble keeping them and a long recruitment process to replace them.

Concerns about young people were also raised under several other sections indicating the cross-cutting nature of this issue.

There were also several suggestions on enabling communities to deal with safety issues through their own cultural approaches.

- The way to make community safe is to strengthen culture.
- Resource those activities that community want, to strengthen culture and to stay strong. Community stay safe and they deal with things community way.
• The best way to make communities safer is to create communities that have a healthy self-consciousness and things to be proud of. A healthy society has people who feel good about themselves and their lives.

Suggestions were also made for enhanced training and information to improve communities’ capacity to deal with violence and bad behaviour.

• Domestic violence is a problem for all remote communities. We would like to have a workshop for women to make them more aware. They could come and explain the different types of DVOs (Domestic Violence Orders), NAAJA (North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency) could come out and explain all of this to us. A lot of times, our women are confused with all of these barriers, our laws stay the same always, but your laws change all the time.
• We need mediation training for the violence and bad behaviour because of gunja.

The issue of visitors causing trouble was also raised. (This concern was also raised in relation to the alcohol and housing priority areas.)

**Which services make the most difference? Safe houses, police, community night patrols, child protection workers, better planning and use of existing services?**
Overall, very few responses directly addressed this question.

**Safe houses**
Safe houses and shelters were raised in the context both of protecting people from dangerous situations and of protecting drunks from themselves — as a sobering up place. Respondents said that safe houses were needed.

• Safe house makes a difference in the community. Means women and children can feel safe and get rest when there is trouble at home.
• Safe house is good. People are learning what it is for and over time are becoming more confident to use the safe house. Safe house workers have been talking and running programs to educate people so they understand and feel comfortable coming here. At first people were thinking it was like a jail but these attitudes are breaking down now as people begin to understand what the safe house is for.
• We really think a Safe House is very important to protect wives from husbands who thrash them.
• Want a Safe house for women because men are returning drunk from other communities, having gone to get drunk.

An issue raised in the comments on the tackling alcohol priority area was that safe houses do not afford people privacy when dealing with family issues in small communities. It was recognised, however, that they do provide a circuit breaker and a place for men, women and children to go to stay out of harm’s way. There were also requests for sobering up places, men’s cooling off places or men’s sheds.

• We don’t have a sobering up shelter, need a place for men to sober up.
• Sobering up shelter for men so men look after men.
Police
Many respondents expressed concern that they had had difficulties contacting police in an emergency or when drunks were causing problems in the community. Respondents reported that their phone calls go to a central point causing delays in receiving a response to their calls. Comments indicate that police were most needed in the evenings and weekends when trouble was most likely to occur, but police were most difficult to reach at these times.

- 000 gets diverted to Darwin. If you call the police after hours, we can’t get anyone close. What if someone dies, what if someone gets murdered?
- After 4:30pm the police phone is transferred to Berrimah. After the sun goes down is the time we need the police accessible. This is a big issue for the community; they want the police to be on duty at night time too. The night patrol need this support at night.
- Emergency button at Police station should not go to Darwin — it takes too long to get help.
- When you call for the Police it goes to Darwin and they don’t come. They ask for the street but there are no street names here. I give up and hang up.

There were slightly more comments that respondents were dissatisfied with service from the police than that they needed more police. This was followed by comments that the police needed to work with, talk to and get to know people in communities more. Some respondents did say that the police who look after their community were good and that the police had a good relationship with their community.

- Police need to build a better relationship with the community.
- We would like police to come and talk to us more.
- Elders are very important in the community; we want the Police to work with the elders here in the community.
- When Police are out of the community, that is when the trouble starts.
- People thought that the police response was good and came when they called for assistance.
- We would like to see a permanent police station here so that whenever we need them we can just give them a call. Right now they are an hour away.
- There needs to be a proper Police station here. Good proper permanent one.
- Would like to have more police and create a greater police presence in the community. There are certain days of the week where there is NO police presence at all.

A few comments were made in support of Aboriginal Community Police Officers (ACPOs).

- Police and Night patrol is OK but should have local people working as Police Aides (ACPOs). Every Community has one so why not here? Plenty could do the job, not sure what’s stopping this, maybe because they have to lock up family and that’s hard.
- We need an ACPO, was good when we had one, community was safe.

Community night patrols
Many respondents who commented on night patrols said that the night patrol needed to do more in the community, to work longer hours, including during the night and on weekends, and take a greater part in the overall community safety issues.

The most frequent comments were that people wanted more night patrols, night patrols should have more powers, and they needed to do more. The next most frequent comment was
that people were satisfied with their night patrol’s service. This was followed by comments that the night patrol needed to work longer hours, late nights, daytime hours and weekends. There was also a call for including more women in night patrols.

- I’d like to see more Night Patrol. I think if night patrol were stronger there would be less crime.
- Night Patrol is so good; it only goes for a little while though, by the time the drunken people come in they might have stopped work. Really need a 24 hour service and shift work!
- Police, Safe House, and Night Patrol are all important. We want no trouble. We want less Police but more Night Patrol because that is a paid job and we want Aboriginal people dealing with Aboriginal problems.
- Night Patrol is good and is running well but only men work on the night patrol — no women — we want to be involved.
- Night patrol is good here and works during the day as well. Also assist in getting kids to school. Should involve women in night patrol — maybe husband and wife teams.
- People thought that the night patrol was good but also felt that they often just went past and did not assist people when they needed help.
- Night Patrol goes home too early before the drunks come out.
- Night patrol should stop dropping off drunks (causes problems); take them to sobering up shelter.

There were also comments in the school attendance discussions about using night patrols in the day time to help in getting children safely to school and home again at the end of the day.

**Child protection workers**

There was limited discussion about child protection workers. Where this matter was discussed, the most common comments reaffirmed people’s overall acceptance of their own responsibility for seeing that children are looked after, and indicated a concern that some of the services responsible for child protection needed to spend more time in the community, and perhaps visit communities more often.

- We don’t know about child protection workers but it is important to look after our kids.
- We should be the same as everyone else, in relation to child protection. We look after all children that we see.
- Don’t want child protection workers, should be a measure of last resort. Police, night patrol and the community should try to work together on this first.
- We don’t have any child protection workers but we would like them to visit. We need child protection workers here — too many parents are drunk and don’t look after their kids.

**Better planning and use of existing services**

Very few respondents commented on this and where they did it was to make the point that services needed to work better together.

**Should the current special measures about community safety continue? How could they be improved?**

Where there was discussion about the continuation of the current special measures, a majority of comments expressed the view that pornography was not wanted in their community and that the current restrictions should continue. Many respondents who commented indicated
that pornography was not an issue in their communities. This view was tempered by the acknowledgment that pornographic material is readily accessible via mobile phones and this was seen as difficult to control.

• I don’t want the ban lifted because it protects young people. Adults should be able to access it if they want but it is bad for kids to grow up with it. It is my worst nightmare for my daughter to think that that is okay.
• The women were unanimous in their concern that pornography not be allowed in their community and wanted the restrictions to continue.
• That porno isn’t here, that’s a whitefella thing and we’re not interested in that stuff.
• Mobile phone porn is a problem. Young people getting it on their phones.
• This stuff is foreign to us, this stuff coming into the community. We learned the right way, through our parents, in the past. There is still a problem with the internet and mobile phones, we need a block for the pornography. What can the government do about this? Can they stop it?
• What about the love shop in Darwin? What if someone wants to start that business here? We don’t want a love shop here!
• Porn on mobile phones is a problem for young people because they have a lot of mobile phones.

Among those who commented, there was a strong view that the road signs advising of the alcohol and pornography restrictions caused hurt and distress to local people — in particular the references to the pornography restrictions — and that the signs should be removed or changed so that they are less offensive. A number expressed the view that, while they supported the restrictions, they wanted the signs to be changed.

• We think the pornography bans should stay in place; we just don’t want it written up all over the place on signs for everyone to see. Because we think that labels us and that’s not true.
• Get rid of the signs all over the area. We don’t think they send out the right messages to visitors.
• We want the NTER sign removed. It does not stop people downloading or watching pornography on their mobile phones.
• We want signs up about grog and gunja and No Fighting.

There were very few comments relating to the Australian Crime Commission powers to investigate serious violence and child abuse. Of those comments, the preference was to continue the operation of these powers.

• We want government to keep the special powers that protect kids, they are good.
• These laws are making communities safer and need to continue.

Other comments
The availability and use of gunja and the problems associated with it were raised as a concern in many communities. This issue was also mentioned in relation to school attendance, alcohol and health.
• 3 main problems here — drinking, gunja and violence.
• Gunja is a big problem. $100 a bag (1g) has a big impact on the community and people get desperate when they run out of it. Costs a lot of money and takes money from food. More programs are needed for young people.
• School children smoking gunja. Younger generation is spoiling this place. Even small children are smoking gunja.
Health

The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) supported expanded health care services in the Northern Territory. More than 1,000 health professionals have undertaken short-term placements in the Territory, and more than 273 new positions for doctors, nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers have been established to date.

Comments from the discussion on health were generally positive. At almost all meetings, the discussion centred on the local health clinic or health service.

The most frequent comment in the health discussions was that people were happy with their local clinic or health service. This was especially the case in northern communities.

Where respondents were aware of and commented on the expanded health services delivered under the NTER, many said they had benefited from those services. The NTER child health checks, where they were mentioned, received generally favourable comments with specific mentions of improved health and people needing to get follow-up checks.

In the majority of meetings respondents said that health services would be improved if there was a doctor living in the community and if a dentist either lived in or visited more regularly. More and better dental services were frequently requested. The most frequently expressed need was for more men’s and women’s Aboriginal Health Workers. Other areas of need identified by respondents included more health workers generally, and community-based dialysis units and dialysis support.

Have individuals, families and communities benefited from the expanded health services?

Where respondents commented on the expanded health services, they indicated that there were more health checks being undertaken and that health had improved since the NTER began. The need for more follow-up checks and follow-up care was mentioned.

- The community members at the meeting talked about the positive benefits of the NTER being the improved access to medical services.
- There were health checks and follow-ups with specialists.
- Drive around and pick kids up and take them to doctors (ears, eyes, throats) and dentists.
- We are happy with health service.
- Many people who spoke said they were happy with the health services in general and the health services that were implemented under the NTER.
- Yes. We get regular fly in visits and when the road is open they come often.
- Yes, definitely health checks have made a big difference for our kids but we need a follow up to see what is happening now and how we can put in a program to look after our kids.
- Health checks worked but we need support and follow-up.
- The health checks were the best thing that came out of the intervention. But it shouldn’t have taken an intervention to achieve it. This should be on-going.
- All our children had Aboriginal health checks and follow-up.

Not everyone thought that the expanded health services and child health checks had delivered benefits.
• Informants were appreciative of the expanded effort but felt there was much duplication. No real benefit.
• We have not really seen it here. There is still a long wait at the health clinic. They should go round the community more.

Which health programs and services are working well?
Positive comments were made across communities about local health clinics and services. Communities in the north were more likely than those in the south to report that they were happy with their health services.

Few respondents mentioned specific health programs by name. There were numerous comments about health staff being appreciated in the communities. However, there were also comments about the importance of building relationships and trust between locals and health workers in remote Aboriginal communities and local people’s preference to have health workers resident in communities or regions rather than fly-in fly-out workers.

The role of Aboriginal Health Workers is clearly appreciated by communities, with strong calls for Aboriginal Health Workers of both genders in communities as well as some very positive comments about existing workers. The need for more general health workers of both genders was also a relatively strong call.

• Clinic works alright — real good out here.
• It is our own service with good staff.
• We got Aboriginal Health centre and we control it. We are happy with the way things are going, we look after it.
• We need more Aboriginal health workers for men and women. The clinic is good and men and women can go there.
• Need an Aboriginal health worker so people can learn about healthy houses, healthy lifestyle. Everyone needs to learn about hygiene and health.
• Clinic is ok but only 1 male Indigenous health worker and 1 old lady. We need child Indigenous health worker. Women said clinic here is ok. The health has improved since the NTER.
• It’s good to have the clinic here so that when you get a hiding from drunks you can go there and be patched up again.
• The Clinic is good but very busy. They say go away and come back later. All the nurses are fly-in fly-out and you don’t get to know’em. We need to trust ’em. Sometimes they give the wrong medication and have to get the doctor. Then another nurse comes in the next time and does it again. When they change nurses all the time they don’t remember you and your medicine.

There were frequent comments that the clinic or health service would operate better if there was a doctor or nurse living in the community. In a few communities where clinics had closed, respondents said services were better in the past than now.

• Yes — the clinic here is good but we need a doctor all the time.
• A GP needs to be here instead of flying in and out once a month.
• When the health centre was operating in [community], the child health checks and the adult health checks were good.
Visiting services and services that helped with transporting patients to medical appointments received favorable comments.

- Good that we have specialists coming in — need more of this, more often.
- The chronic disease nurse is very good and will visit older people out in the community, i.e. at the Art centre.
- People thought the service [health service] provides is good. '[health service] comes and checks on little ones and older people.' '[If you ring [health service] they will come and pick you up.]

Being able to make an appointment was spoken about on several occasions as an improvement. In a few meetings it was reported that people could not make appointments at some services and this caused uncertainty and inconvenience.

**Which programs and services need to be improved?**

There was a wide range of suggestions about how programs and services could be improved. These suggestions varied from community to community.

These included:

- more local Aboriginal Health Workers with training of local people for these roles
- the need for permanent doctors, and more nurses, dentists and specialist services
- more local dialysis services with more training of local people to support dialysis care locally
- services to the aged — particular concerns were expressed about the safety of older people living in overcrowded houses and communities with alcohol problems and older peoples’ need for respite from these situations
- more men’s and women’s services (for example, men’s and women’s Aboriginal Health Workers, separate examining rooms where services currently had only one examining room)
- reduced waiting times at clinics by better use of appointment and booking systems
- better transport — this was seen as improving access to medical appointments, reducing travelling time and improving safety for patients. Returning home from appointments in towns is reported as a problem. Quite a few respondents commented on the difficulty in accessing health services because they had to travel and stay overnight in towns
- better communication between bus drivers and health service reception so patients can keep appointments, to manage appointment lists and handle delays
- improving ambulance and emergency services
- better access to and more mental health services, particularly for young people and gunja users. Mental health issues raised in the consultations also included social and emotional wellbeing generally, and the need for special services for men struggling with emotional and identity issues
- better access to and more alcohol and drug rehabilitation services.

The following comments provide further insight into how people from communities see programs and services needing to be improved.

- Dialysis is a big issue — a machine is needed so we don’t have to go away for dialysis.
• We would like to see local people trained in that dialysis business so people don’t have to go away. We would like to see trainers to come here to train us and our people not have to go away. When people go away they get on the grog and don’t do the training they are supposed to.

• People go to town in the bush bus for medical appointments. For half hour appointment they have to stay in town for a few days and sometimes they get in trouble and can't get home. People don’t like getting stuck in town.

• No appointments for dentist/doctor, just have to turn up and wait.

• Sometimes there is a communication breakdown between the bus driver and the reception workers at [health service] are not good. They should fix this problem as it affects residents not being collected or waiting all day.

• Gunja is a problem. We need men’s education on drugs and alcohol to tell us what this is doing to us. People don’t understand the effects on their health.

• Mental illness from gunja, we need youth rehab for them as rehab is available to adults but not for children. We do culture camp for our young people. We want more help for our young people.

• People felt they would like more door to door service so that women could talk discreetly with medical staff from [health service] and [clinic] on women’s business, STDs, contraception.

The need for aged care was spoken about frequently and in detail.

• Pensioners need to be protected and safe. Pensioners need a place with staff/someone to look after them. Pensioners need rest, too noisy at night when drinkers come. We need aged pensioners picked up. They can’t walk into town. Aged Care people (service) should bring their car here and pick pensioners up, take them shopping when they get their pay.

• Some of us old people would like to see a mobile health worker visit more regularly as some of us are scared to go to the doctors.

• Aged care is important work. We would like a day care centre for our old people so they can be together in a safe place.

Are there any health programs and services which are missing?
There was a wide range of responses to this question. Some respondents said they could not identify missing programs and services, but at most meetings several services were identified.

These included health centres for some communities; dental services including dental health workers; resident community nurses; ear, nose and throat services; optometry; community-based alcohol and drugs workers; pharmaceutical and chemist services; on-call or at night doctor services; nutritionist and dietician services to deal with obesity issues; and sexual health education. After the need for more Aboriginal men’s and women’s health workers, a dentist in the community or a visiting dentist were the most frequently identified needs. The need for dentists was identified more frequently in southern communities than in the north.

• No dental visiting — they should come out fortnightly. There are only dental services available to primary school children twice a year.

• The community are aware of public dental services but the waiting list is astronomical and Indigenous people cannot afford private dental services.
• Also, people need to be encouraged to get help for alcohol issues. The community needs to have more alcohol counselling services. For example, there could be a day where the effects of alcohol are discussed and demonstrated through visual media such as education DVDs.
• We have not seen a professional nutrition person here for a year. We think they need to be here on a fortnightly basis for families and children.
• Sex, VD and parenting information for young people.

There were also several communities where the need for morgue facilities in the communities was discussed.

• We don’t have a fridge or a special place for a morgue here and we should have one at the clinic.
• We want our own community morgue.

**What else could be done to improve health outcomes in your community?**

Across the meetings, there were frequent statements that more local Aboriginal people needed to be employed in local health services.

Preventative health information and support programs were discussed in relation to healthy lifestyles, the health of young women and mothers, maintaining houses, practising culture such as eating bush foods, and combining western and bush medicine.

Comments on the need for healthy lifestyle information included respondents saying they wanted more information on preventative health care, parenting, sex education, nutrition, cooking, doing more exercise, and stopping smoking, drinking and substance abuse. The better and healthier food being sold by community stores was also mentioned in some of these discussions.

• We would like to see more chronic health education on diabetes, heart, healthy food choices, exercise and how to keep your house clean, dental care, scabies, education on taking regular showers.
• We need to do more with preventative health. More help is needed around cooking and exercise support to help people get more active.
• A while back the clinic held a weight loss competition. They really liked this as it promoted a healthy lifestyle.
• Shop has improved the quality of the food they sell. Healthier food is available to community families. Healthier food is available at school. It is good. Keep it like that.
• Healthy House for training in life skills and how to prepare healthy food.
• There should be more programs on family. I am on a program for young mothers or first time mothers. Sometimes young ones think these programs are telling them how to be parents but I found it good. It helped me find out about baby seats, toys and food.

Issues discussed in relation to houses included the need for older people to have a break from living in crowded houses, tenants learning how to clean and maintain houses, the need for laundries, public toilets and showers for visitors, and the difficulties of maintaining septic and sewerage systems in overcrowded houses. Respondents said that maintaining houses and yards was important for health and safety and that better management and maintenance for public housing was needed.
• Healthy living, show people how to keep houses clean.
• We would like somebody to show us how to live in our houses a bit better, not everybody needs it but we should still be able to get it.
• Need more houses and need to fix houses.
• Community needs a homemakers program, homemakers was talked about before but nothing happened.
• We need bigger houses, power, windows etc. Why are single men still living with their mothers? Health problems all lead back to housing.
• Get rid of car wrecks, not good because the kids play in them and get hurt and snakes live in them.

There were a few comments about the impact on health of poor housing and maintenance under this priority area. There were also comments on this issue under the housing priority area. This included comments about stoves not working so people could not cook; hot water, showers and taps not working so that people had to wash in the winter in cold water; and not being able to properly launder blankets and clothes because of lack of laundries and washing machines.

The need for public toilets and showers in towns and in remote communities was also discussed. Separate toilets for women and men were requested. When visitors came to communities they put a load on facilities in houses and communal facilities were therefore being sought.

• Public showers for visiting families; because it makes it hard for us locals.

People in several communities talked about the possibility of buying water tanks for the collection of rain water because they were concerned that their existing water supply contained too much calcium causing kidney problems and the need for dialysis.

Several communities talked about dogs, their impact on health and the need for veterinary services.

• Need animal vet doctor to visit on a regular basis. How often vet come now?
• What about the mangy dogs around the community — supposed to be two dogs per house — too many dogs. Some people don’t look after their dogs properly. We need the Vet lady to come more often.

**How would you like to be involved?**

Several people said they were already involved as members of the local health group or men’s or women’s groups.

• We are part of the local clinic’s board so we have our say.

A variety of ways were identified for how people could be involved in improving community health services, their families’ and their own health. Stopping smoking, eating more healthy food and getting regular health checks were suggested in a few communities.

Respondents wanted more information on health. Respondents also wanted to be active and to see others being more active.
• People need to get up and running. They can’t sit around all day.
• A women’s group to help lose weight. Men too. Too many people overweight.

One group of men who came to the consultations while they were attending a training course decided to go as a group to get their health checks done. A group of women said that they would like to be involved as part of a women’s reference group. They suggested taking field trips to meet other women to learn from each other.

A stronger women’s group was suggested to help young girls in the community.

• The women want to be able to help the young girls in the community. Help the young girls before, during and after becoming mothers. Teach them how to cook. Give them support.

Working with the health service to organise a bush bus, starting a play group, playing sport and working to improve local sporting facilities were other suggestions.

Comments were made frequently about bush foods and enjoying and being proud of culture.

• We need to have a good balance of white food and bush tucker. Need to take the kids out hunting.
• The community believes that health could be improved by going to get bush tucker as it is better to eat than takeaway.
• We want to combine western and bush medicine.
• Women’s centre to have a good kitchen to teach cooking and nutrition. Bush food can be collected. Bush food sold at the shop. Sell the recipes with all the ingredients in one bag at the shop.
• Also need somewhere for men — A men’s place, somewhere to keep their sacred objects.
Food security

The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) introduced community stores licensing to improve the quality and range of food and grocery items available to people in remote communities, as well as to improve the business practices and governance of community stores to help maintain their viability.

The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory discussion paper noted the Government’s aim that remote community stores should provide an environment, choice and pricing that is as close as possible, given the problems of distance, to that available to people in non-remote areas of the Northern Territory.

Most respondents indicated that they were generally happy with their local stores, with communities in the north more likely to comment that they were happy with their store than those in the south. Most comments focused on the cost, quality and variety of food and other goods. Many indicated that the food was too expensive, and there was an emphasis on the need for healthy food to be available and a preference for junk food not to be sold.

How can the current stores licensing arrangements be improved?

Many comments indicated satisfaction that the store was performing well and that there was a clear improvement since store licensing was implemented.

- The food at the community store is good, better than it was.
- More people now shop at the store since the intervention.
- The group acknowledged Store food has improved since the Intervention. Licence arrangements have improved the quality and healthy aspects of the food.
- New store is good — lots of stuff — they employ local men to work there.
- I’m happy with our store. I don’t think much could be done to improve it. I think what happened here with the Government taking over was a good thing.
- We are glad FaHCSIA has taken over. We knew something was wrong but we did not know what.
- We are glad FaHCSIA has done what it has but it took too long for action.
- We like the government store team coming and checking our store.
- Stores licensing is good — government needs to keep an eye on the store.

There were, however, a number of respondents who indicated that stores licensing had not helped:

- The store licence has not made much difference.
- Stores licensing not working. Healthy food is still very expensive.
- Chocolate is cheaper than fruit. Store licensing needs to make sure healthy food is cheaper than unhealthy food.
- Food is the same as it was before the NTER.

What other ways can we ensure that good quality food is available and affordable in communities?

Many comments focused on the high cost of food, and there was a strong feeling that prices were too high.
• The community are happy with the range of fresh fruit and vegetables/healthy food available at their store but feel prices are too high.
• Store is good and selection of goods is good but expensive.
• Food quality is good but prices too high.
• The local store is good and we have some good board members on the committee. The prices are still too expensive but are better than what they were. Before a 2 litre bottle of milk would cost you $8 now it costs $6 — it is still too high.
• We have good fresh food but it is really expensive. Prices are always high.
• Outback Store is good and food is better than before. The problem is that the price is too high.
• We think our store is OK. We just like the managers to check up on out of date stuff. We think we need to have a better deal re transport costs out here.
• The local store is good. Food is too expensive.

There were also a number of comments that were critical of the quality of goods and the performance of the store.

• The store should have more and fresher fruit and vegetables available.
• We are very unhappy with the store. The prices are too high. They don’t want to employ Aboriginal people and pay proper wages. They sell food that is out of date. They sell meat that is rotten when it is defrosted. They close the shop without any notice and don’t tell us why.
• Not happy about the quality of goods at the store — mainly hardware, tools, clothing, etc.— the goods are too expensive and not good quality. Food prices are too dear.
• Vegetables are not fresh and only last a week.
• Store too expensive. Why is the store raising prices? Is it balanda or Yolngu shop? Selling expired food. Store needs to be more cheaper and have fresh food.

Some comments indicated a preference for shopping at larger stores in town because of the greater range of items at more affordable prices.

• Food is too expensive especially meat and vegetables. Community members are doing shopping in other places but many people have no vehicle to shop elsewhere.
• Not an issue as we get most stores from Katherine or in Pine Creek that have an OK range but maybe too expensive. We need to plan our shopping.
• I never buy food here I go to town to do the shopping at Coles.
• Very dissatisfied with community store — too expensive. Not worth it, that’s why everyone goes to Darwin ...

Many comments expressed a need for greater attention to the provision of healthy food through the local store. More education about good nutrition and awareness raising about healthy food choices were suggested as ways of ensuring more attention is paid to healthy eating. The ready availability of junk food in some communities was also of concern.

• We would like to have a nutrition program to teach people about eating the right food and supporting good nutrition in the store; we need to learn about these things.
• Too many microwaves and takeaway food, not enough fresh food options for takeaway.
• More healthy food is needed.
• The local store competes with the roadhouse. The roadhouse provides unhealthy food, out of date produce or food that you have to eat a day before it expires. We would like Government to check the roadhouse and all stores if they are doing the wrong thing.

• We could ask the store committee to make Coke and lollies cost more and make healthy fruit and vegies cheaper.

• I would like to see our store made stronger and bigger like Coles or Woolworths in Alice Springs. They should stop selling junk food and takeaway food.

• Ban all the rubbish food. Sell good food at cheaper price. We could get second shop to compete with our one shop. Healthy, cheaper food for older and younger people. We need another shop here that is not worried about just making money but selling good food.

• Not enough food that’s suitable for diabetics. We would like to see more healthy takeaway food options.

• More fresh food. Food is sometimes bad when it comes in on the barge.

• No diet drinks were sold, with many people being diabetics. Very limited healthy food items.

• Healthy foods should be cheap and bad foods more expensive.

• Truck should come weekly not fortnightly as food does not stay fresh for a fortnight.

• Needs to be more training and education about healthy alternatives when shopping.

A small number of comments expressed a desire for the local community store to sell a wider range of household goods.

• Wanting to be able to buy all essential items — whitegoods, linen etc — on the community at affordable prices.

• We want to see a greater range of products and good quality stuff. You can see we are sleeping in the open. We go to the store and buy a heater and it only lasts one night and it doesn’t work any more.

• There are three shops here but no furniture in any of them. Have to go to Alice nothing in shop for this. Need to have something in the community for furniture — need a bigger choice.

A concern raised several times related to the practical difficulties involved in freighting supplies to remote communities. Problems with access were also raised, along with the cost implications. There were a number of calls for government to subsidise freight costs for delivering fresh food and groceries to remote communities.

• Heavy rain stops food coming in due to flooded creek, and this needs to be fixed.

• Food comes in every 2 weeks and can be bad before it gets here.

• There is a good range of fruit, vegetables and other products but need more than one delivery a week. During the tourist season they run out and you have to wait days for more fresh food.

• We need fresh fruit and vegetables that is affordable. Government should subsidise the cost.

• Govt should subsidise food freight to assist especially now with incomes being halved.

• Why can’t government subsidise freight for fresh fruit and vegetables.

• Government needs to think about food subsidy, because it costs too much.

• Governments could provide or arrange purchasing and delivery of goods to a number of communities to standardise goods, pricing and help to store owners. Phone bulk
purchase ordering by all neighbouring communities would be the best way. This would reduce costs and travel for store owners.

There were some suggestions that a freight subsidy arrangement could be established through the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) utilising mining royalty payments.

- **Price is still a problem — how to solve this? Maybe Government to subsidise — could be ABA project.**
- **Barge freight is too expensive — Traditional Land Owners and Land Council could negotiate more with [barge company] re royalty monies that are paid so some could go to a special fund to subsidise freight costs for food.**

**What is the best way of supporting store committees to oversee their stores? What is the best way of combining strong business and retail experience with strong community ownership?**

Most comments concerned the need to include local people on the store committee and ensuring these people received adequate training to perform their duties. Responses also indicated a preference for profits to be returned to the community, as occurred in some communities previously, as well as wanting to better understand the financial operations and status of the community store, that is, the ‘money story’.

- **We are worried about the governance of the store. We don’t know the money story and we can’t get hold of it. Only the Store Committee knows the money story. We no longer get an annual Store dividend and we don’t know where that money has gone.**
- **Community needs to have a say what the prices should be, need to have a store committee meeting.**
- **We don’t have any say on what happens at the store since the Shire took over.**
- **Community want their store back.**
- **The elders were the ones who signed up and built that store and now they don’t know what’s going on.**
- **Community store provides fresh and healthy foodstuffs at a reasonable price. However we would like to see more community ownership of decisions on food and pricing.**
- **Would like an education program for store committees so they better understand the financials and business aspects of running community stores.**
- **Store manager needs to show the books to the Store Committee and members need to have more input. Store manager needs to explain and justify operations and money to members.**
- **Store Committee not working real well — need more training. No power by the Store Committee, control by the Manager.**
- **If you want to be on Store Committee you should have to go to Store School. Like we have to go to Clinic School to run our Clinic.**
- **Find better ways to manage profits so that they can be ploughed back into cheaper foods.**

Some comments were offered about the commitment of the store and store managers to train and employ local community people in the store. In the main, these comments suggested that much more could be done to improve the level of local Aboriginal employment in the store.

- **Most believed store had improved quality and quantity however still far too expensive. Good management employing all locals.**
• We want training for Indigenous people to work in the store in finance and stock take. We don’t see our workers doing stock take, only the white workers.
• More training for community people to show us how to manage a store.
• There are jobs in the store but no local people work there.
• Outback Stores should have the two trainees being managers by now, but they are still working as trainees. We need to get Aboriginals to manage the store and help food prices to be lower. There is an Indigenous store worker who manages the store when the Store Managers are on leave. He should be paid at a higher level. We need to break the cycle where all Indigenous people at the store are just trainees.
• We would like to see locals employed at the store and employed and trained in management.
• No local people work in the store, we want more jobs in the store.

Other comments: income management
In talking about food security and community stores, comments were made about income management. These comments generally referred to income management as the BasicsCard, indicating that respondents’ understanding of income management as a policy is often reflected in their practical experience with the operation of the BasicsCard.

Most of those who commented on this issue expressed support for income management; some expressed opposition. A number raised practical concerns about limitations on access to the BasicsCard, and made suggestions for improving its operation. Income management was made a non-discriminatory measure in 2010 and also applies outside the Northern Territory.

• BasicsCard is very good and we like it, we can save up, BasicsCard is right.
• Income Management: Up to individuals to manage money. Not good for the ones who are home looking after the kids OK.
• That part of the Intervention (income management) has been good. We are better off leaving it as is and not go off income management, and I don’t drink or smoke.
• That is one of the good things about the intervention. Women used to play cards, now there is food for the kids.
• Income management is good because people still have money even if they have spent their cash money.
• BasicsCard good — kids see food on the table — working really good here.
• Some old people get their money (cash) taken from them by the young ones and say BasicsCard helps them.
• It’s good — women can’t be humbugged.
• Grandmothers want to stay on BasicsCard because a lot of them are raising their grandchildren and it helps when they need to buy food; they have money.
• BasicsCard is okay but cash is preferred.
• BasicsCard is good, we need that. The only problem is that at some shops it can’t be used. We often have parents going down to Adelaide and Melbourne because that is where their children go to boarding school, and they are unable to use their BasicsCard.
• BasicsCard is better but it is too hard to ring up and get the card balance because there is no checkpoint at the store.
• People want a machine in the shop where they can check BasicsCard balances as they get the balance at Centrelink and then go shopping but find the balance is less or wrong. This may be because they don’t understand how much the basket of shopping is going to cost and then find they don’t have enough but they don’t know the balance for certain after each purchase, so are constantly checking on the phone or in Centrelink.
• People want to be able to check the balance on the receipt of basics expenditure like the ALPA food card used to do.

• People felt that many smaller convenience stores near the town camps don’t accept the BasicsCards which limits peoples’ choice in which store they want to buy from. BasicsCards are traded around. They need photos on them.

• Comments about the wrong types of food being bought on the BasicsCard like fast food and full strength Coke etc. Needs to be a full review on what and who can sell on BasicsCard.

• BasicsCard — Need some cash for fuel. Don’t have enough cash in the pocket.
Housing

Improved housing contributes to families being healthier, stronger communities and enables economic growth through job and training opportunities. The Australian and Northern Territory Governments are jointly implementing the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH), a ten-year program over 2008–09 to 2017–18. NPARIH is providing better housing for Indigenous families living in the Northern Territory. It incorporates the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP).

Under NPARIH, new houses, rebuilds of existing houses and refurbishments are being delivered across 73 remote Indigenous communities and a number of community living areas and town camps in the Northern Territory. While there remains a significant backlog of unaddressed housing need in the Northern Territory, considerable progress has been made.

As at 30 September 2011, 324 new houses and 1,782 rebuilds and refurbishments have been delivered across the Northern Territory since the commencement of the program, with a further 252 new houses and 34 rebuilds and refurbishments under way. Rebuilds restore the original level of functionality in a house as far as possible, with an average cost of $200,000 across the program. Refurbishments have an average cost of $75,000 and are intended to make a house safe and functional through repairs to electrical and plumbing components.

In the consultations, the most frequently expressed areas of concern about housing were living in overcrowded and run-down houses and the need for more new houses. In a few communities respondents said that the need for houses was the result of a growing population putting a burden on already overcrowded houses. Frequent comments were made about the need for separate housing for single people, young people and old people. Respondents referred to the impact of overcrowding on conflict in families, the health of children and school attendance.

• *Kids need a good night’s sleep if you want them to come to school and housing in [name of community] doesn’t allow that. Too many homes are overcrowded.*
• *We need good houses so kids can grow up healthy.*

There was dissatisfaction with the response times and quality of repairs and maintenance. A desire was expressed for these basic repairs and maintenance to be undertaken by local providers, employing local people. More housing and construction training opportunities were needed for young people.

Respondents from several communities talked about the need for rules to help them manage visitors in their homes. Visitors who drank and became violent and damaged houses were not welcome but because they were family, they could not be asked to leave.

How could we improve the way housing is provided and managed in remote locations?

Responses to the discussion paper clearly indicate that housing is an area of considerable concern for many communities. Discussion centered around the need for more houses and more variety in housing types so that singles, young couples and older people, as well as families with children, could all be adequately housed and thus relieve current overcrowding situations in some communities. In several meetings, backlogs in repairs and maintenance, population growth, and changes to the size and structure of families were discussed as the back drop to the current housing situation.
After the need for more housing and the problem of overcrowding, the next most frequent comments on housing were in relation to repairs and maintenance.

The most frequent suggestions for improvement were reducing delays in completing maintenance, ensuring that maintenance services were completed competently with quality fixtures, and better client service through mechanisms such as customer visits and customer hotlines.

- Prior to the intervention, there was no backlog on getting repairs and maintenance (R and M) work done to the homes. With the current set up, it sometimes takes weeks to get the simplest jobs done. There is too much bureaucracy with the current system to get repairs and maintenance done quickly.
- Management of houses is not working. There should be help particularly for young families on how to look after their houses. The house has to be suitable for the environment they live in, these houses are not. You need to accommodate these needs and support them; this can also help in their health.
- It’s hard to cook proper meals in the house when the stove is broken and I can’t get it fixed. I went to the [service provider] about the stove and it’s still not fixed. So my message is not getting through to who it needs to get to. I’ve been waiting 6 months to get my stove fixed. Housing maintenance either does not happen or is very slow.
- People want [service provider] to visit the town camps regularly to check with tenants if the are having any problems with their homes.

A few respondents said they were happy with the level of property services they were receiving compared with previous arrangements.

- Housing is better now that Territory Housing looking after our housing. Shire was alright but now NT Housing has a form that can be filled out and faxed but any damage has to be paid for out of your own money.
- [Organisation] would only give out money to some town camps and play favourites. It is good that we are now seeing new homes and things changing for the better.

Respondents from several communities talked about the need for help from a tenancy manager, housing provider or housing association to set and enforce rules to help them manage visitors in their homes. Visitors who drank and became violent and damaged houses were not welcome but because they were family, they could not be asked to leave. Managing visitors and tenancy obligations was seen as a challenge.

- Residents felt that when visitors or other people damage the houses, housing should get the names from the tenants and the people who damaged the property pay for the damage. These people should then be banned from coming back to visit.

Where tenancy issues were discussed, many respondents said that they needed better tenancy support, to help them understand tenancy agreements and have more training in maintaining houses and in healthy living including cooking and nutrition.

- People felt every household should have training on tenancy management and what it means to be a good tenant. Be able to say ‘no’ so that there is no humbug from family.
- There could be a role as educators that show people ‘house hygiene’, e.g. no dogs.
There was a need for different types of housing that better suit the needs of single people, the aged, small families or people with large extended families. Providing a variety of housing stock was seen as an improvement. Flats and units were suggested as providing a safer and better housing option particularly for single people and the aged. In several communities respondents said that the community should be involved in the design of houses.

- We would like more duplexes in the town camp for older ones and young single people. Some of the houses are too big for older ones and this attracts visitors from remote communities.
- We would like to see some singles quarters for us old women.
- Units for young couples would be good as this would reduce household tensions.
- We need houses with more rooms so that the whole family can stay together. Houses should be bigger.

Respondents were concerned about fairness in the way houses are allocated and upgraded, and wanted to understand more about these processes.

Some respondents said they needed more explanation of tenancy agreements and to understand better how the amount of rent is calculated. There were some comments on the need for better matching between the type of house and family size.

- The waitlist is too long and the wrong people have been getting the houses when they become available.
- There are larger families living in little houses and smaller families living in larger houses.

In several meetings respondents referred to their local housing reference group as a channel for getting their views and complaints heard in the community and by housing providers and achieving improvements in local housing. Local housing reference groups are made up of local residents and provide a forum for community input to Northern Territory Housing. Comments about housing reference groups were mixed with a few people saying that Aboriginal peoples’ input to these groups could be strengthened.

Some respondents expressed concerns about high levels of rent, particularly in light of their perception that repairs and maintenance services were inadequate. There was also comment about some people not paying rent but still able to live in houses. One person commented on the link between non-payment of rent and the poor quality of houses.

There were a few respondents who said they were happy with their new houses or refurbishments to their house.

- We are really happy with the houses. They are good.
- The houses are good. Good quality. It is the number of rooms that is the problem [wanted more rooms].

Some respondents were pleased with the renovations undertaken through SIHIP, but would have liked more work done. Many people were not happy with the extent of the refurbishment work. One respondent said that tenants should have been told what to expect from SIHIP, that ‘not everything is going to be fixed or done up at your house’, then people may have had more realistic expectations.
• Renovations were good but we need more rooms and fences to keep cheeky dogs out.
• SIHIP is only doing the wet areas; it is not only the wet areas that need fixing — we need the whole house renovated.
• Couple were happy that homes were being refurbished. It is good to see that they are doing all the holes up.

Respondents wanted more local people to be able to get jobs as part of the construction and repairs and maintenance work.

• Locals could be trained to have a community maintenance service business.
• Take more time with housing — train Yappa to build the houses — then we will have a job.

Leasing
A few respondents talked about voluntary leases and township leasing models as opportunities for getting more and better housing in their communities. Some respondents wanted more information about leasing issues, including who would control the leases. Some did not understand why security of tenure through a lease was important for future investment in housing since previously no lease had been required when houses were built. At a few meetings people talked about leases being confusing and that people were worried that making a lease might mean they could lose their land.

• We could improve the way housing is provided and managed in remote locations by having a similar system (lease agreements) to what is in town. The meeting participants would like a leasing arrangement for community housing. The community wants to ensure money is kept in community instead of paying [provider].

What kind of expanded role could community housing service providers have?
Respondents wanted increased community involvement through greater local input into the design and siting of houses, and by having more locals employed in the building, maintenance and repair of houses.

Training and building a local Aboriginal construction and trades workforce was frequently suggested as a way of improving remote housing delivery and as an expanded role for community housing service providers.

• People wanted houses maintained through CDEP or work experience for young ones during the school holidays. They wanted young people trained before they leave school to help fix houses like painting them, tiling where they live. This might encourage them to do a trade.
• Our men should be trained for jobs and they could do the repairs.
• Provide business mentors and on the job training so community businesses can be established and contract work on basic maintenance and repairs.

An expanded community housing service provider role might also entail a more understanding approach to the cultural issues that were mentioned by a few respondents. An example is the issue of cultural practices after a person’s passing in a house.
• **What happens when there is a death in a house?** Aboriginal culture means we have to leave the house so what happens to those people who have to move and what happens to the house?

There were a few discussions about community housing providers exploring alternative funding sources for housing such as the Aboriginals Benefit Account and using royalty payments to fund new housing, and exploring more affordable housing options such as transportable and kit housing.

**How can greater private home ownership be encouraged?**
Few respondents addressed the issue of potential home ownership. Where there were positive responses to the idea of home ownership, many respondents said they needed more information about the process of purchasing a home and the implications of home ownership.

Most respondents who commented on how home ownership might be encouraged said that more information was needed about how to buy a house, home loans and managing money. Several respondents said that they would be unlikely to afford to buy a home and might be better off renting because then the housing provider was responsible for paying for repairs and maintenance. Other suggestions included rent-to-buy schemes and establishment of community housing trusts. Examples of the range of comments about encouraging home ownership are provided below.

- *We would like to buy our house but we need someone to help us and explain how to lend money.*
- *I need job first to pay off house.*
- *How could anyone be able to afford a house of the quality that government can supply?*
- *Why would anyone take on homeownership and the cost of their own repairs and maintenance in such a remote and expensive place?*
- *Rent/buy plans could assist with potential ownership.*
- *Provide financial education and both loans and mining royalty funds to pay for house.*

**Other comments**
There was also discussion in several meetings about the provision of housing and services such as electricity to outstations. At one meeting respondents expressed concern that housing was being built in growth towns and larger communities and they believed this might result in people moving from small communities and outstations to larger centres in search of better housing. The high cost of providing services to outstations was commented on in another meeting.

Staff housing for teachers and health workers was also discussed in a few communities. Various needs such as for heating, cooling, cupboards, plumbing, fences, plants and gardens were raised in particular communities.
**Governance**

The governance priority area was concerned with identifying ways that people in communities could have a better say about what was happening in communities and how governments could work better with communities. Over the past four years the Australian Government has been working to reform engagement with Indigenous Australians through mutual respect, cooperation and working with Indigenous people.

Throughout the discussions on this issue, it was apparent that the term ‘government’ has been taken by respondents to refer to all tiers of government — federal, territory and local government. A high volume of comments on governance concerned the shire councils and the relationship between the shires and local Aboriginal communities. While it was not possible to disentangle the comments about different levels of government, this report seeks to focus on the comments that will help the Australian Government work better with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. More information relating to the shires is provided at the end of this section under ‘Other comments’.

The consultations also indicate a strong call in many communities to be more involved in decision making, for people in communities to work better together, and for each community to speak with one voice about their concerns and needs.

Respondents said frequently that they wanted governments to come and talk to communities about policies and that they wanted government to listen to them. Receiving timely, honest feedback in plain English from both government and community representative bodies was seen as important for building trust and good long-term working relationships.

Face-to-face relationships between governments and communities were valued. Where respondents commented on Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs) and Government Business Managers (GBMs), comments were mostly positive. In a few communities more IEOs were requested.

**How can people in communities have a better say about what is happening in communities?**

Suggestions included that people in communities needed to work better together; each community needed to speak with one voice about their concerns and needs; there needed to be timely feedback and publication of meeting minutes on community notice boards; more people should be encouraged to be interested and participate in community meetings; and more leadership training and support should be provided so young people could put themselves forward for development as future leaders.

- *We want development but we need to work together (Yolngu and Government) — with respect for cultural protocols.*
- *We need to work together as a team — if this doesn’t happen we are not going to get anywhere. Need to work women with women. Need men to work with men.*
- *One strong person in the community to stand up for the community. This person to be the ‘voice’ of the community and advocate for the community with government, agencies and service providers in the community.*
- *We have a local board here but they need to make sure we know what is going on.*
- *We want a village council with the Elders. When we have a board meeting, what we write and say does not get to the ICC.*
• Board meetings are not community meetings, complaints from community to go through the board and to community meeting, notice of what’s been said at the meeting (posting minutes of meetings on notice boards).
• There should be an Elders’ group that the Government should talk and listen to, an Elders’ Council like they have at [other community]. They should have that in every community. Some of the people don’t know who the council is, who is for the community. We should have an Elders’ Council to make decisions for this community. Get a group together from the community to talk and make decisions then give the decisions to the GBM so they don’t have to go running all over the place.
• Hold whole-of-community regular meetings with government. Now, it is mostly the strongest and most vocal in communities that make the decisions. Those decisions are not always the wishes of the majority.
• What are we going to do for ourselves? We need strong male and female leaders. We need to focus on the future and discipline our kids. We need to help the Government make changes.
• We can all talk at community meetings. Should have our own council like it was before.
• We need more governance and leadership for the community members who want to make our community a good place to live and to encourage younger ones to run our community affairs before other people take over.

How can governments work better with community?
Respondents said frequently that they wanted governments to come and talk to them about policies and that they wanted government to listen to them. Receiving timely, honest feedback in plain English from government was seen also as important for building trust and good long-term working relationships with people in communities.

The most frequent comments were that governments at all levels needed to listen to communities; Ministers and parliamentarians should visit communities more often and spend longer in communities; and there needed to be better coordination of government services. Respondents frequently said that they wanted government to explain proposed new changes to them in person. Face-to-face relationships between governments and communities were valued particularly where people did not read or their reading skills were poor.

• We need Government to come and talk with us so that it is a two way process not just tell us what they think we want to hear.
• By talking with us more and listening properly to what we are saying.
• Sit down and talk to us and listen to us.
• People asked that more meetings be held with residents when there are changes in policies and should include interpreters where appropriate.
• Government representatives need to get out and talk with/socialise with the community.
• Government people used to stay and look at what we do. Instead of coming for one day, they need to stay for a month, that way they will be able to better understand.
• We want to be treated with respect and consulted all the time not just when Government want something from us.
• Government can also be more understanding, patient and flexible around working with communities.
• Taking time and being sincere to build relationships by governments and services through genuine communication would help.
• Don’t beat around the bush, tell it as it is and if it is bad news explain it so we understand. More honest discussion and consultations.
There were requests from communities for government officials to let the community know when they were visiting and to follow protocols when they visited as this would help build relationships and would show respect. The need for officials to understand traditional governance arrangements in communities, for the use of interpreters in consultations, and for cross-cultural training for officials were also mentioned as ways that government can work better with communities.

- We need more notice for meetings. People come in and want to talk to us at short notice and we want info about the subject matter in a form we can read and be distributed.
- Government don’t follow protocols, they walk in and boss us around, they don’t come and ask leaders or right people.

In the majority of meetings there was no reference to the roles of IEOs or GBMs. However, in those meetings where their roles were discussed, comments were generally positive with both IEOs and GBMs being seen as helping government work well with communities. There were requests for more IEOs. There were also requests that GBMs should be more active in communicating community decisions and views to government.

- We know about GBMs, there are some good ones and some bad ones.
- We like the GBM role. We would like an IEO here. More cultural training for Government people targeted at the actual communities they are going to.
- Like the IEO role — it should stay.
- GBM needs to send message to government on issues.

There were also comments in a few meetings that the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), ‘the intervention’ as people referred to it, should be stopped.

- The intervention has reduced the leadership in the community.
- Intervention — to finish as it’s not community’s problem.

While respondents were keen to see more consultation with government, there were also comments in a few meetings that action as well as talk, was important.

- People get frustrated because of all the talk at meetings and nothing eventuates or happens — people lose confidence and give up and can’t be bothered.
- Community were very strong in agreeing that the same things are said at EVERY meeting on community and the same things happen — NOTHING.
- Ask us more questions and then DELIVER us the things we ask for …otherwise stop asking us because we are tired of government lies.

**What are the most important aspects of community governance?**

The themes emerging from the discussions were more about internal governance of communities, civic participation and problem solving. This went as well to setting social standards often linked to cultural foundations. Specific aspects of community governance discussed included giving everyone a say; leaders; governance and leadership training; preparing young people to take on leadership roles; respecting cultural protocols and law about decision-making; and better understanding of how government works. Having men, women and young people participating as leaders in community governance was also seen as important.
• Government needs to address community issues seriously. Encourage everyone who lives here to talk about issues in their community.
• Go to meetings and ask questions.
• Look after money properly. Be fair to all our countrymen.
• If people don’t see the governance as honest and equitable, they will not support it, they won’t cooperate.
• Need strong leader to communicate with departments, to talk to FaHCSIA, like today, rather than people coming in to solve problems.
• Strong men’s meetings needed. Strong women’s meetings needed.
• We need young ones to learn how to speak up and be strong.
• Old people and young people to work together. Young people have got the ideas. We need young people to get involved in decision making in the community. Old people should be mentoring young people. Young people to get advice from old people. Mentors for cultural knowledge should be in each community.
• Youth leadership and training is very important, Youth Council and meetings are needed.
• Tjukurrpa (Culture) forms the ground for our governance. We want to see more cultural identity and less arguing.
• 14 clans were represented in the women’s group (who set up curfew and night patrol). Led to good results under Yirrkala Dhanbul.
• Have to work collaboratively, cultural consultation doesn’t take place. Can’t throw one out and leave the other (Yolngu and non-Indigenous systems). How to set up together, mala (group) things better for Yolngu and non-Indigenous.
• Sometimes women are too quiet, they need to speak out and be strong.

In some communities, respondents wanted to see more direct funding arrangements to communities, more sustainable funding in preference to funding for one or two years, and longer planning horizons. One large community suggested a five- to ten-year community plan.

Several respondents referred to the need for people to regain their ability to manage the many external influences on communities and that people wanted to be self-reliant.

• The most important aspects of community governance are that the decisions are owned by community and there needs to be open consultation.
• Our future depends on us, give us a chance.
• People need to work out for themselves first what are the problems and how to fix them, before they ask government for money. Otherwise the money will be wasted in the wrong areas.
• All these topics are about capacity-building — community development. Social strategy to address this is through equal partnerships.

Several respondents said they did not understand what governance meant. When it was explained to them they asked to be more actively engaged in local decision making.

• I’m not sure about governance because this is the first time anyone has ever explained to me what governance is. But when people are making decisions about my life I would like them to talk to me about it.
• We think governance is important. We don’t fully understand it but we want to be involved in the decisions that are made about our lives.
Other comments
In the Northern Territory, regional local government is provided through eight shire councils which predominantly service remote Aboriginal communities. Prior to the 2008 local government reforms in the Northern Territory which established the regional shire councils, there were 61 local government bodies, of which 54 were Aboriginal Community Councils.

As indicated in the introduction to this section, there was a high volume of comments on the shire councils and their relationship with Aboriginal people living in remote communities. The most frequent comments were that the shires do not communicate, listen or consult. The next most frequent comments were that respondents were generally dissatisfied with shire councils; they had little influence in shire decision-making; and the shire was not providing services or not getting things done. There were a few respondents, however, who said they were happy with their shire council.

There was a range of comments about shire councils in relation to some other priority areas, in particular economic development and employment and housing where respondents indicated concerns about the delivery of CDEP, about an apparent decline in local Aboriginal employment since the shires were established in 2008, and about repairs and maintenance of housing.

• The only thing we get from the shire is Night Patrol. They don’t invite us to their meeting, we should be invited. We are not part of the shire process. We need to go and have our say.
• The shire does not listen to us and people are not included.
• This is our community and we get so much interference like what is the shire’s role here. They come in and do what they want but not what we want or is important to us.
• Shire making all the decisions here, the community have NO Say. Cut the shire out. No locals in the Shire office. Nothing is working, no services is happening. Shire taking over, bossing everyone.
• When something is wrong with a house the council used to fix it but now the shire has come in it is much harder to get any support for renovation and maintenance.
• Sometimes there is a quick response from the shire so we feel listened to.

The funding of outstations and outstation resource centres was also discussed in several communities. There were several meetings where people had travelled from outstations to the meeting location to make their views known.

One of the senior meeting facilitators reported that a common statement to him at the end of the meetings was that it was the first ‘real time’ people had had the opportunity facilitated by government to discuss hard issues, including issues around the resolution of conflict within communities and the recasting of authority within communities.
3. Public Meetings

The public meetings were provided to give anyone who was interested and wanted to contribute to the consultations the opportunity to do so. In the 2009 Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Redesign consultations there had been comments made that people in regional towns who had been affected by the NTER did not have an opportunity to comment. Convening the public meetings in the major Northern Territory regional towns gave town folk an opportunity to have their views heard.

These meetings were widely publicised and were held in Darwin and the major regional centres. Participants included Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The locations, dates, and numbers attending these meetings are provided in the table below:

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Nhulunbuy</td>
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</table>

The public meetings followed a similar format to the whole-of-community meetings, with the eight priority areas being discussed. Some groups in the meetings had strong views about education and jobs and willingly had their say.

School attendance and educational achievement

The importance of education and the need and responsibility of parents to get their children to school and attending regularly were emphasised across the public meetings. The need for teaching approaches that catered to the needs of children who lived in the bush, and that engaged children through activities that were interesting and meaningful were considered important in encouraging better school attendance and achievement. More resources for remote schools, including special needs teachers, professionals and facilities, were mentioned in most of the meetings.

Sanctioning parents who did not send their children to school was not supported by speakers at the meetings. Incentives to get children to school were suggested to increase school attendance.

Bilingual education programs, more Aboriginal teachers, truancy officers, better preparation and training of remote schools teachers, more homework, homework centres, locally-based approaches and greater involvement of elders, parents and communities with schools were some of the suggestions in these meetings for improving attendance and educational outcomes. Other suggestions included pathways to jobs, family support, children’s and child care centres, support for young mothers, and addressing health and housing issues, for example, hearing problems.

It was acknowledged that some remote schools have good attendance levels and that there are families who are strongly committed to education and whose children attend school regularly. The needs of children who move between communities and children from outstations were also discussed.
School attendance is non-negotiable. Families know how important school is, they want education.

There is a shortage of special needs teachers and professionals like psychologists in schools — mainstream staff don’t cope well with kids with special needs in remote areas.

Encourage kids to go to school — don’t take parents money away.

If parents won’t take responsibility — for the sake of the children use welfare payments for a child centre.

Maybe there should be a homework centre for Indigenous kids who can’t do it at home.

Support for families is very important, support for mothers is very important.

Children need to be taught in their first language.

Support teachers to teach Indigenous language, while building the students’ English.

There are some great teachers that are not being supported.

**Economic development and employment**

The lack of jobs in remote communities, the limited opportunities to start a business and the limitations of poor education and literacy were topics discussed across these meetings.

Different, innovative and flexible models for training, linking people to jobs and stimulating business and job opportunities were considered necessary.

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program was discussed in four of the five meetings. Respondents said that CDEP and CDEP wages had supported employment and provided incentives to work in remote communities. There were also comments that there needed to be support for people to move beyond CDEP into other employment.

Better planning and leveraging of Indigenous employment from developments such as roads and mining; mentoring; job shadowing (where an Indigenous person is partnered with another worker to learn on the job); money management training; more work experience for young people at school; training to set up and run small businesses; and ensuring the incentives in housing, welfare and CDEP are directed at encouraging people to get a job and stay in work were suggestions put forward to improve economic and employment outcomes. Supporting young people to get a job was considered particularly important.

- People who were on CDEP are now on the BasicsCard, the old CDEP was working and people liked to get top up for the work they did.
- There needs to be some rethinking of CDEP and use it as a transitional form of employment.
- We can’t fill positions as night patrollers because we can’t compete with Centrelink. There needs to be more incentives for people to get off Centrelink.
- There needs to be more mentoring programs, when people get out of gaol there should be a program to work with families. There are far too many pressures for people to deal with. Once they get out of gaol they work for two or three weeks before the pressures of family and alcohol start and they don’t get back to work. They need mentoring.
- Tap into IBA (Indigenous Business Australia) holding business training in communities and identify Aboriginal people with qualifications who don’t have jobs. It is nearly impossible to set up a business in a community. There are no incentives for business.
- Indigenous people don’t know the systems or process to obtain jobs, they don’t understand the questions on the forms.
- Young people are not supported, they aren’t encouraged by people around them.
• Our parents have seen the connection between education and getting a job and made us go to school. If my parents had not made me go to school, I would have been out fishing.
• There should be work experience situations to help people develop skills, then they could get jobs like Aboriginal Health Workers.
• Mining companies are doing some good work around recruiting Indigenous people in the NT.
• Bumbalungis (non-Aboriginal people) need to set employment targets for Indigenous people to be employed in their business or organisation.
• There are incorrect assumptions that it is difficult to employ Indigenous people.
• Communities need to target small business. Why aren’t plumbers, electrician types of businesses being developed? Therefore you go to school because they know there is something to look forward to.

Tackling alcohol abuse
Alcohol-related harm in communities and the need for more alcohol and rehabilitation services were common topics across the public meetings. Alcohol Management Plans were discussed as options that allowed for local control. Time was needed to see the impact of the recent Northern Territory Government alcohol measures such as the banned drinkers’ register. The need for greater accountability of liquor licencees and continued enforcement from police and the licensing authority were also mentioned.

• We need drug and alcohol programs in schools so that our kids are familiar with the impact and are supported as they grow up.
• Need to limit access for everyone.
• The banned drinkers register has the potential to have a very large impact on the alcohol issues in the Northern Territory. Time needs to be allocated to allow this system to work and results evaluated.
• We need to get the whole community together and get the town to come up with an alcohol management plan.

Community safety and the protection of children
There were different responses in each place on this priority area. It was acknowledged that people could live without violence in communities and that this required tackling alcohol and substance abuse, people feeling more in control of their lives and feeling better about themselves, improving the performance of night patrol and police services, family and community dispute resolution, organised activities for young people, and non-government and government organisations working better together to support communities. Improvements in community safety over recent years were identified in some communities along with the continued need for further support and services.

• NPY report people feel safer, there are more police and safe houses are now in a number of communities.
• We would like to see houses where men can go and access programs.
• We need to teach people about alternatives, stop talking negatively, use more positive language, teach what social harmony can be like.
• Need to have family support workers rather than child protection workers.
• Need to fix roads.
• After 9pm you call the NT Police and it goes to a Darwin call centre — 000 and they say what suburb are you in.
• Night patrol — better response times — hours need to change. Not enough night patrols after hours.
• Crime is up in school holidays — no youth drop in centre.

Pornography issues were discussed in at least one community.

• Pornography is a big problem in communities. Maybe the fines should be raised to $10,000 a go.

Health
Each community approached this topic differently. Common messages were that housing was important for health and that local health services provided an effective approach to health-service delivery for remote communities. A broad range of suggestions were discussed including the need for sex education for young people, more dialysis places, healing and wellbeing services, translation and interpreter services so people understand their prescriptions, medicines, and treatments, and the need for consultation with services and people affected when changes are proposed.

Improvements in health services, for example, eye health services were identified.

Food security
This topic was discussed in three meetings. Suggestions were made that more communities should have market gardens to grow their own food, that there should be higher prices on unhealthy food, and that more needed to be done to keep prices down in community stores. Positive comments were made about some community stores, including that more Indigenous employment and training is now occurring in one store.

• It is fantastic to see an increase in the number of Indigenous people behind the cash register at Food Barn.

Housing
The need for more housing, for Aboriginal people to be involved in the planning and design of houses, for a wider range of accommodation to be available to suit the needs of people at different stages of their lives, and more tenancy and maintenance support were common themes across the meetings. Leasing was raised in at least one meeting.

Governance
Outstation services, the shires, the need for more local input into decision-making, the need for more recognition of culture and cultural protocols, better government coordination, needing to be listened to, and realistic expectations were common themes discussed under this topic. Feedback to communities before introducing new policy was also requested in several meetings.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultation guide

Following are the questions on each of the key priority areas in the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory discussion paper which were used as a guide to focus and structure the community consultations and public meetings.

School attendance and educational achievement
What are the key factors in getting children and young people in remote communities to go to school regularly?
How can we improve educational outcomes of young people in remote communities?
What can the Government do to encourage this, for example, through links to welfare payments?
How can parents be encouraged and assisted to better support and play a greater role in their children’s development, education and health?
How can schools and local communities improve access and participation in early childhood services?
How can we attract good teachers to remote schools and preschools, and retain them?
How would you like to be involved?

Economic development and employment
How can the Government further improve employment and economic development opportunities in Northern Territory remote communities?
What changes can be made to remote participation and employment programs in the Northern Territory to increase economic participation?
What can be done to link jobseekers in Northern Territory communities with employment opportunities?

Tackling alcohol abuse
Will communities benefit from continuing the current NTER alcohol restrictions? How could they be improved?
How can alcohol management plans be strengthened to ensure that there is a clear focus on reducing alcohol-related harm?
What other things should be done to reduce alcohol-related harm?
What can we do to reduce the supply of alcohol, including very cheap alcohol?

Community safety and protection of children
What is the best way to make communities safer?
Which services make the most difference?
- Safe houses?
- Police?
- Community night patrols?
- Child protection workers?
- Better planning and use of existing services?
- Others?
Should the current special measures about community safety continue? How could they be improved?
Health
Have individuals, families and communities benefited from the expanded health services?
Which health programs and services are working well?
Which programs and services need to be improved?
Are there any health programs and services which are missing?
What else could be done to improve health outcomes in your community?
How would you like to be involved?

Food security
How can the current stores licensing arrangements be improved?
What other ways can we ensure that good quality food is available and affordable in communities?
What is the best way of supporting store committees to oversee their stores?
What is the best way of combining strong business and retail expertise with strong community ownership?

Housing
How could we improve the way housing is provided and managed in remote locations?
What kind of expanded role could community housing service providers have?
How can greater private home ownership be encouraged?

Governance
How can people in communities have a better say about what is happening in communities?
How can governments work better with communities?
What are the most important aspects of community governance?
Appendix 2: Community consultations — participating communities

The *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory* consultation meetings were held in around 100 communities and town camps across the Northern Territory.

The participating communities are listed below, along with the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 meetings held in each location.

Where communities agreed for the Tier 2 meeting to break into separate discussions among men’s and women’s groups, these are recorded as two meetings. Other instances where more than one Tier 2 meeting is recorded are explained in footnotes.

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Notes:
(a) Borroloola: Separate Tier 2 meetings were conducted in the four town camps, namely Garawa 1, Garawa 2, Yanyula, and Mara.

(b) Lajamanu: A follow-up Tier 2 meeting was arranged because there was insufficient time to discuss all matters of interest at the first scheduled Tier 2 meeting. On both occasions the meeting divided into separate men’s and women’s discussions.

(c), (d) The Pmara Jutunta Tier 2 meeting also covered Nturiya, Wilora and Ti Tree.
Appendix 3: Meetings with stakeholder organisations and individuals

During the consultation period, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs had discussions with a range of individuals and key stakeholder groups, as follows:

- Mr Eddie Cubillo, Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
- Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM
- Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM and leaders from north-eastern Arnhem Land
- Mr Wanyubi Marika, Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation
- Northern Territory Indigenous Affairs Advisory Council
- Aboriginal Peak Organisations (Northern Territory), comprising:
  - Central Land Council
  - Northern Land Council
  - Northern Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency
  - Central Australia Aboriginal Legal Aid Service
  - Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory
- NPY Women’s Group
- Tiwi Land Council
- Northern Land Council
- Anindilyakwa Land Council
- Barkly Shire Council representatives
- People’s Alcohol Action Coalition
- Alice Springs Desert Leadership Group
- The Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser AC CH GCL, the Hon Alastair Nicholson AO RFD QC, and the Hon Ian Viner AO QC – on behalf of the group ‘concerned Australians’.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs also held stakeholder discussions and briefings with the following individuals, groups and organisations:

- National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples
- Mr Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner
- Mr Eddie Cubillo, Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
- Northern Territory Indigenous Affairs Advisory Council
- Aboriginal Peak Organisations (Northern Territory)
• Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman
• Mr John Paterson, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory
• Ms Josie Crawshaw, Aboriginal Child, Youth and Families Peak Body
• Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
• Macdonnell Shire
• Central Desert Shire
• Roper Gulf Shire
• Alice Springs Town Council
• Katherine Town Council
• Victoria Daly Shire
• West Arnhem Shire
• Palmerston City Council
• Tangentyere Council
• Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
• Northern Territory Minister’s Youth Roundtable
• Northern Territory legal services, comprising:
  - Northern Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency
  - Central Australia Aboriginal Legal Aid Service
  - Darwin Community Legal Service
  - Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
  - Top End Women’s Legal Service
  - Law Society of the Northern Territory
• A Darwin forum of service providers, comprising
  - National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
  - Good Beginnings
  - Ironbark Employment
  - YWCA
  - Mission Australia
  - Dawn House Inc
  - NT Department of Education and Training
  - Barkly Shire Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Group Inc
  - Australian Football League Northern Territory
  - Yilli Rreung Housing Aboriginal Corporation
- Youth Justice Support Unit
- Ambrose Business Solutions
- CatholicCare
- Lutheran Community Care
- Northern Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency
- Northern Territory Police Youth Services
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory
- Lifestyle Solutions
- Royal Darwin Hospital Department of Paediatrics
- The Salvation Army
- YMCA
- Northern Territory Shelter
- Northern Territory Council of Social Service
- Red Cross Society
- Royal Life Saving Society
- Early Childhood Australia
- Save the Children
- Aboriginal Child, Youth and Families Peak Body

• A Nhulunbuy forum of stakeholder organisations, comprising
  - East Arnhem Shire Council
  - Miwatj Health
  - Rio Tinto / Alcan
  - Chaplaincy Australia
  - Gumatj Association
  - Yirrkala Homeland School

• A Katherine forum of Aboriginal community organisation leaders and members

• A Katherine forum of non-government service provider organisations.
Dear Secretary

Our two Principal Researchers, Ms Karen Rich and Ms Clare O’Brien, having carefully checked the draft of the above report (dated 14 October 2011) consider it to be consistent with the quantitative analysis of the consultations undertaken by our company.

Yours sincerely

Ms Karen Rich
Director
O’Brien Rich Research Group

14 October 2011
Appendix 5: Reference documents


