



Aboriginal Affairs Policy

While Aboriginal Affairs is approached as a distinct policy area, there are nonetheless many suggestions that appear indistinguishable from how issues are managed within the context of the broader Australian community. That is, Aboriginal community issues are simply an example of social issues dispersed within the wider Australian community.

This paper in particular finds that endemic cases of alcoholism, suicide, crime, etc. are deeply connected to the Australian cultural problem of welfare dependency and 'poverty mindsets'. It is merely more concentrated in Aboriginal communities due in large part to geographic alienation.

The research paper underpinning these recommendations can be found here... Preface to Australian Christians Aboriginal Affairs Policy.docx

All recommendations fall roughly into three categories – primary, secondary and tertiary. They are in no particular order and the distinctions between these classifications can sometimes be unclear or overlap. For example, education may be seen as primary prevention in seeking to prevent sexual violence or drug abuse before it occurs but also a secondary prevention because it engages a higher risk group identified with either perpetration or victimization, or even may function as tertiary prevention in that it targets those who are already perpetrators and victims.

A) Prevention strategies, that is, by engaging communities to challenge the source cultural norms that inform the attitudes and behaviours that 'give licence' to these problems.

B) Secondary prevention focuses on early identification and intervention, targeting those individuals at high risk for either perpetration or victimisation and working to reduce the likelihood of further incidences. It is intended to reverse progress and reduce its impact.

C) Tertiary prevention strategies focus on responding to or treating the problem by minimising the impact of violence, restoring health and safety, and preventing further victimisation and perpetration. It focuses on intervention.

EDUCATION

Reinstate the political consensus and direction that was destroyed through decades of failed government policy and which took a subordinate place to aboriginal cultural rights namely, put the children's welfare first. The findings of Little Children are Sacred report[1] made it clear that violence and abuse in aboriginal northern territories is endemic.

Since every policy should be measured by the impact on its most vulnerable and the greatest common good, children need to be afforded the protection that every other Australian community expects. At-risk children or with known abuses should be placed with appropriate kinship or foster carers. [2] Without this intervention, the aboriginal people now face the real risk of a 'stolen generation' of children lost to the cycle of dysfunction and ill treatment.

To have genuine choices people must have options. Education provides access to the same system that gives the best means for progress and prosperity. In particular, Direct Instruction teaching methods have seen indigenous educational standards substantially improving. [3]

It must be acknowledged that education in remote communities is often nearly impossible. [4] Professor Marcia Langton is a passionate indigenous leader. She has recommended that aboriginal children be placed in boarding schools to receive the best education possible. [5] But other alternatives may include distance education and online learning options where these are most suited to the circumstances and in the best interests of the child.

Encourage regional learning centers and schools that are providing education adapted to their community, linked with real economic outcomes and focused on encouraging lifelong learning at an early age. An example is Gumala Mirnuwarni Program established in 1997 at Karratha and Roebourne. These programs have lifted self-esteem, numeracy and literacy among the chosen students. [6]

Identifying gifted aboriginal children and placing them in selected schools. This may follow the example of a research project that took place in 17 government schools in a very poor area of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Children identified as gifted – gaining a very high score and nominated by at least one other method – had their creativity, motivation and commitment investigated. The results indicated that some of the cleverest, most creative and committed children lived in slum areas.

Where remote communities are considered viable, teachers, particularly talented ones, need to be incentivized to work in rural districts. Historically, missions and churches supported their own teachers who were committed to the cultural integrity but also the prosperity of indigenous communities. Government should once again encourage non-governmental based organisations to flourish. [7] [8]

Encourage the SEAM project and the FRC where welfare payments are withheld from parents who fail to send their children to school. This underlines the need for parental accountability for government welfare that is offered to helping them ensure their children attend school regularly. [9] [10]

Remove high degree of top-down collectivism that brings poverty and dependency by elevating a small privileged group that manages the system. [11]

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Aboriginal leader, Noel Pearson, identifies alcohol and welfare dependency as the two issues critical to aboriginal affairs. To the latter issue we would also include drug abuse and pornography, considered at endemic levels particularly among aboriginal youth, and acknowledged as fundamental reasons for the destruction of indigenous social values. [12]

Alcohol and drug dry communities [13] should be encouraged in consultation with and support of indigenous leaders. [14] It is vitally important to underscore that this approach is not dissimilar to that taken by ordinary Australian's for long-term substance abuse that requires admission to rehabilitation centres, an option that many regional communities do not have. [15]

Bans or controls would operate as part of holistic approach taken together with other policy recommendations and not applied as blanket bans but individually negotiated as with the Alcohol Management Plans.

In the short-term, bans operate as a circuit breaker that seeks to stop the cycle of abuse and the higher levels of fetal alcohol syndrome, domestic violence, casual and forced sex, morbidity and mortality rates. [16] Without sensible bans entire aboriginal communities face both a bleak future and near extinction.[17] [18] [19]

The community elders, not bureaucrats, should be given the voice and every encouragement to once again step up and separate at-risk youths, teaching them the cultural skills and legacy of their ancestors. Indigenous leaders Gumbuli and Murabuda[20] successfully implemented this type of traditional intervention. Youths were taken to isolated locations where they were taught bush, hunting and fishing skills and successfully bought back from the brink of destruction and have the opportunity to step up as then next generation of community leaders. But this would include keeping alive the memory of other well-known giants of aboriginal history such as William Cooper also referred to as 'the aboriginal who stood up to Hitler', [21]and current indigenous voices such as Noel Pearson, Anthony Dillon, Marcia Langton, Warren Mundine and Bess Price.

LAW AND CIVIL SOCIETY

For aboriginal communities to make significant and swift change against substance abuse and violence, law enforcement must be reinstated as a permanent feature that reflects fair and accessible administration.[22] Some communities have had an absence of proper law enforcement for 30 years.[23] This has allowed, especially in remote areas, a return to customary laws that allow for retribution and violence particularly toward women and children.

The balance in achieving a middle ground between under and over policing can be witnessed in the success of the Fitzroy Crossing restrictions and the influence of an exceptional sergeant, who was proactive in building positive relationships. When relieving officers came to community, he introduced them to the women at the Women's Resource Centre. This gesture of respect demonstrates the way the police are now relating to people in Fitzroy Crossing.

Enforcing one rule of law not race-based separatist policies. Cultural practices should fit the social norms of a Western liberal democratic society. This would go a long way to genuine aboriginal self-determination and stem the violence and abuse that has in many cases placed perpetrators outside the law and as a consequence has failed to protect the victims (often women and children).

Customary laws that are antithetical to basic human rights need to be stopped. This is not cultural expression but a violation of universal ethics that upholds the dignity of every human being. These include traditional men's rights to beat women, polygamy, child brides and retribution laws. [24]

Sensible sentencing needs to match the punishment with the crime and not be overly sympathetic with the offender but the victim. Avoiding what psychiatrist, Dr Dalrymple, calls and bares the title of his book *The Toxic Cult of Sentimentality* and recognise that while criminals most often are poor, so are their victims.[25]

Remove section 18c from the Race Discrimination Act 1975. This provision stifles debate, encourages outrageous falsehoods of offence and victimization that cannot be challenged, encourages racial segregation and does nothing to protect true victims. It avoids putting vague statements of principle in the constitution that empower lawyers and increase litigation.

Pursue policy goals that are compatible with enfranchisement, not separatism and exclusion. This mirrors earlier aboriginal rights movements where reformists pushed for the protection of indigenous Australians from violence and exploitation, racial equality and the acceptance of indigenous Australians as fully capable of integration into the wider community.

Not dissimilar to the early American civil rights movement spearheaded by Dr Martin Luther King Jnr and the Canadian government's 'White Paper' in 1969. [26] [27]

WELFARE

Reduce social housing and encourage private ownership, as was the model during missions. This allows skills to be localized, communities to flourish and decreases over-crowding. [28]

This would also mean restoring Anna Bligh's Queensland model of 99-year-leases instead of the One Social Housing. It allows a sensible mix between native title and long-term leasing. It moves housing back from government control to community responsibility. [29][30]

Public services in remote communities should be suited to their needs. Options include monthly services such as the fly-in, fly-out model in Cape York.

Reclassify remote communities so funding does not go to places that are in fact homesteads, at times found to have only three houses. [31]

Change the politics of aboriginal identification. The criterion for aboriginal ancestry needs to be narrowed so that welfare is not exploited.

Vouchers to spend on food rather than cash or direct payment was suggested in The Little Children Are Sacred Report. While it is acknowledged that this still encourages a form of paternalism, it is better-targeted welfare that assists in bridging problems of alcoholism, violence and poor health choices.

Welfare should be reduced gradually as more work and economic improvement increase. This approach recognizes that the development of government policy for blanket aboriginal welfare has created a debilitating mindset of entitlement requiring no accountability.

However, gradual weaning off welfare cannot be achieved without some alternative means of income, that is, employment.

EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING

Australia is a vast land with diverse landscapes and therefore requires local knowledge and expertise to understand what resources and skills are best matched to take full advantage of its geography. Mining and energy developments on aboriginal land that is mutually beneficial should be encouraged because they often act as a spearhead, injecting economic capital and stimulating further economic development. But it should not stop there. Once repositories are exhausted temporary communities built around mining activities often recede into ghost towns. This means other economic opportunities also need exploring.

Viable and sustainable options for remote communities require them to take advantage of the large expanse of land [32] and make productive use of it rather than merely letting it remain as a reservation or "museum pieces". For this to occur there needs to be a restoration of agri-business and primary industries. Something Australia once excelled at a global competitor. Farming of cattle, agriculture and sustainable tree plantations for use in carbon offsetting have more connectedness to communities and longevity, providing intergenerational work and skills. As a result this would naturally increase demand for TAFEs as they are linked directly with existing, vibrant marketplaces that are close to the community.

Regional and remote infrastructure needs urgent prioritising. Communities cannot develop if they are shut off from the rest of the nation. [33] A starting point would require government to stop closing off homegrown industries and allowing more autonomy for locals who most understand their niche environments and have a vested interest in maintaining them. This is especially important when determining useful and economically viable water management policies. [34]

Excessive environmental bureaucracy needs to be pulled back as it is hindering vitally important economic opportunities. Environmental activism by groups such as the Wilderness Society have often made aboriginal needs subordinate to 'green tape' that is tied in with political agendas to secure the 'Green' vote. [35] This includes stopping vitally needed development and tourism opportunities. The Green's clash of environmental political correctness with aboriginal interests often hinders practical solutions to human problems. [36][37] For example, a community wished to convert crocodile cull licences to hunting ones that generated greater income and incorporated with selling guided hunting tours to overly cashed up tourists. To date the Northern Territory parliament refused the application. [38] This is not dissimilar to kangaroo culling that while legally permitted doesn't allow for the carcasses to be utilized for industry but requires them to be buried. [39]

Decrease cumbersome regulation and bureaucracy, that often hinders indigenous business growth by giving out free services that could be capitalized by local markets and provide income. [40] For example, government-run businesses such as Outback Stores have crowded out private competition.

It is vital that setting up businesses especially in remote regions is simplified. This would also include consolidating private and government departments responsible for indigenous investment opportunities. An example includes Rwanda, which in 2014 attracted a number of major domestic and foreign investments in a wide range of sectors. It's concept of one-stop-business shopping allowed the process of investing to be simplified including business registration, investment promotion, environmental clearances, privatisation, priority sectors, SMEs, and human-capacity development. [41]

The 2016 Coalition federal budget made a step in the right direction for indigenous funding, promising to redirect \$23.1 million in 2016-17 from Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to support Indigenous entrepreneurs. "A recent Ernst & Young review of IBA highlighted a number of problems with IBA, specifically, that it was not supporting Indigenous businesses effectively, not providing capital in a timely manner, and had a confusing number of programs," Sara Hudson, Research Fellow and Manager of the Indigenous Research Program, said.

Restore Aboriginal traditional knowledge and skills of local land and traditions particularly to the youth (indigenous and non-indigenous) as complimentary to modernization. It encourages relationships between indigenous and urbanized Australia to go beyond either/or options but both. Programs such as Bushmob are one example. [42] Aboriginal people have a unique understanding of the outback. For example, back burning (which the Green's have instilled an opposition to this tried, tested and traditional method of fuel reduction and resulted in more frequency and intensity of fires.) [43], bush survival skills (specialised knowledge of food and hunting). These areas of knowledge could serve as both a platform and bridge to informing all cultures of aboriginal history and life that would also serve as an economic boost to remote regions. It should be noted that contrary to popular media this balanced approach emerged as a practice in early missions. [44]

Businesses in Australia will succeed by cultivating good relationships on the ground with local aboriginal communities, particularly with its elders. [45] Business works better in the long-term with some degree of certainty and will usually pursue mutually profitable industry. Indigenous communities need to understand these benefits and be future orientated.

A good example of indigenous groups negotiating directly and successfully with large business interests is seen with The Kimberley Land Council, formed during the Noonkanbah dispute that has been negotiating these sorts of agreements for a long time. [46]

Encourage individual property rights and open markets. [47] Both are known historically to bring prosperity and social independence for the largest possible number of people. Studies repeatedly link clear title of land ownership with the positive impact to the society and economy. People are then free to capitalize on their resources and create wealth in a community. They begin to view themselves as agents to their success. However, collective property rights and high levels of government control keep indigenous people bound to autocratic structures and poverty stricken.

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[1] http://www.inquirysaac.nt.gov.au/pdf/bipacsa_final_report.pdf

[2] The rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care in Australia is 11 times the rate of non-Indigenous children. Kinship carers are usually grandparents. While this is often seen as ideal, this must also be weighed with issues of accessibility to education, proper standards of care and financial burden. <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/review-kinship-carer-surveys/characteristics-kinship-carers>

[3] <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/controversial-teaching-method-brings-hope-and-social-change-to-cape-york/story-fn9hm1pm-1226639388060>

[4] Of the 1,200 discrete Aboriginal communities, nearly 500 do not have a primary school and only 40 have a secondary school up to year 12.

[5] <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2013/s3699062.htm>

[6] <http://www.menziesrc.org/publications/item/aboriginal-education-remote-schools-and-the-real-economy>

[7] <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2012/07-08/the-missionary-with-150-wives/>

[8] <http://sydneyanglicans.net/blogs/books/a-great-man-and-an-inspiring-aboriginal-christian-story>

[9] <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/about/school-enrolment-and-attendance-measure-seam>

[10] <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/noel-pearsons-cape-york-trial-changing-lives/story-fn9hm1pm-1226608059546>

[11] <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2012/07-08/the-missionary-with-150-wives/> ;

[12] http://www.inquirysaac.nt.gov.au/pdf/bipacsa_final_report.pdf

[13] This could also mean alcohol or drug controls rather than a ban.

[14] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-06/aboriginal-group-leading-push-make-davenport-community-dry-zone/7224526> ; <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/drinking-to-die-in-aboriginal-communities-says-sharman-stone/news-story/d4fa18fbf02e4b890351d72d4507c5b4>

[15] <http://www.cis.org.au/app/uploads/2015/07/pm116.pdf> (pg.5)

[16] While alcohol or drug abuse is not exclusively an aboriginal problem, the cultural and geographic nuances make it distinct. In indigenous communities, unemployment is higher and many die before their 40s. Heavy drinking becomes a way of life that people of all generations engage in until their premature deaths.

[17] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-16/fitzroy-valley-fetal-alcohol-research/6022430>

[18] <http://www.aihw.gov.au/australias-welfare/2015/in-brief/children-and-youth/#t8>

[19] <https://theconversation.com/factcheck-qanda-does-australia-have-some-of-the-highest-rates-per-capita-of-fetal-alcohol-syndrome-in-the-world-57736>

[20] <http://www.biblesociety.org.au/news/an-era-ends-with-passing-of-aboriginal-leader-murabuda>

[21] <http://www.theaboriginalwhostooduptohitler.com>

[22] Law enforcement was viewed as vital in the report, Growing them strong, together:

Promoting the Safety and Wellbeing of the Northern Territory's Children.

[23] http://ipa.org.au/library/59_3_Johns.pdf

[24] In her book, "Bad Dreaming: Aboriginal men's violence against women and children" (Pluto Press), author Louis Nowra, argues persuasively that traditional aboriginal culture too often supports abusers but not their victims.

[25] Theodore Dalrymple, "Life at the Bottom: The Worldview that makes the Underclass", March 8th 2003 by Ivan R. Dee Publisher (first published 2001); <http://www.aim.org/special-report/black-criminals-white-victims-and-white-guilt/> ; <http://www.alicespringsnews.com.au/2013/05/17/mla-bess-price-on-the-killing-of-our-women-and-abuse-of-our-kids/>

[26] <https://quadrant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Johns-Waking-up-to-Dreamtime.pdf> ; page 13.

[27] The perpetual narrative of loss and injustice has had negative impact on how social workers deal with indigenous cases of child neglect; often causing them to minimise the real circumstances. <https://www.cis.org.au/commentary/articles/stolen-generations-taboo-harms-indigenous-children>

[28] <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/social-housing-model-rips-the-heart-out-of-indigenous-communities/story-e6frg6zo-1225827273146>

[29] The plan was abandoned in Queensland due to no or little loan applications being taken up. Mayor Percy Neal of Yarrabah near Cairns blamed delays by the local land council (traditional land right owners) for the failure to progress 99-year lease applications.

[30] Overall, an estimated 43% to 46% of all Indigenous households received help from at least one major housing assistance program, compared with around 18% of other households.

[31]

http://www.menzieshouse.com.au/?p=6348&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A%20MenziesHouse2%20%28Menzies%20House%20Relaunched%29

[32] For example, The Kimberley alone is more than 421,000 square kilometres approximately twice the size of Victoria and three times the size of England.

[33] This would include support for the Mount Isa to Tennant Creek railway, the Townsville port expansion and the expansion of the Outback Way linking Western Australia with Queensland. Investment in key transport infrastructure beef roads initiative would also connect products with markets. In NT there are 11.7 million cattle, nearly 45 per cent of the national herd, and cattle exports worth \$3 million a year.

[34] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRBgIzEq9aM> ;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05mSpdCY3fE> ;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ype4SzkGwx8> ;

[35] <http://www.afr.com/news/policy/climate/green-groups-keep-aboriginal-people-in-poverty-20140701-jgqng>

[36] <http://www.afr.com/news/policy/climate/green-groups-keep-aboriginal-people-in-poverty-20140701-jgqng>; Another example is the Adani Mine. It is more environmentally friendly than other sources of coal and will be the first mine in the region. This project will open up the Galilee Basin. It will have to pay for the rail line and upgrades to the ports. However, investors have been hampered by the regulatory system including environmental laws. Dumping of dredging was at the port offshore originally, then it was going to come onshore and then the Queensland Labor government promised at the last election that they wanted to move it and not put it onshore near the Caley Valley wetlands; they wanted to put it somewhere else. However, the Caley Valley wetlands are artificial—man-made—wetland made in the 1950s by locals who wanted to shoot ducks. But apparently, according to the Greens and Queensland Labor government, these wetlands are so important to protect. They want to protect a man-made wetland created for duck shooting over and above a \$16 billion project that can create 10,000 jobs.

[37] <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/voting-for-greens-hits-aboriginal-rights-says-marcia-langton/story-fn59niix-1225905619168>

[38] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-23/crocodile-trophy-hunting-northern-territory-coalition-spat/6340398>

[39] <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bushtelegraph/roo-meat/5340868>

[40] <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-13/hudson-work-with-indigenous-businesses/6929738>

[41] http://emagazine.european-times.com/EPT_e-magazine_Rwanda/business-and-investment-opportunities-rwanda-development-board-offers-one-stop-shop-services-for-investors

[42] http://blogs.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/mirandadevine/index.php/dailytelegraph/comments/green_arrogance_burns_fiercely/

[43] http://blogs.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/mirandadevine/index.php/dailytelegraph/comments/green_arrogance_burns_fiercely/

[44] <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2012/07-08/the-missionary-with-150-wives/>;
<http://www.biblesociety.org.au/news/an-era-ends-with-passing-of-aboriginal-leader-murabuda>;
<http://sydneyanglicans.net/blogs/books/a-great-man-and-an-inspiring-aboriginal-christian-story>

[45] <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/bennelong-papers/2012/02/who-is-an-aborigine/>

[46] <https://theconversation.com/marcia-langtons-quiet-revolution-and-what-you-dont-hear-about-james-price-point-11256>

[47] <http://www.povertycure.org/the-importance-of-private-property-by-jonathan-moody/>