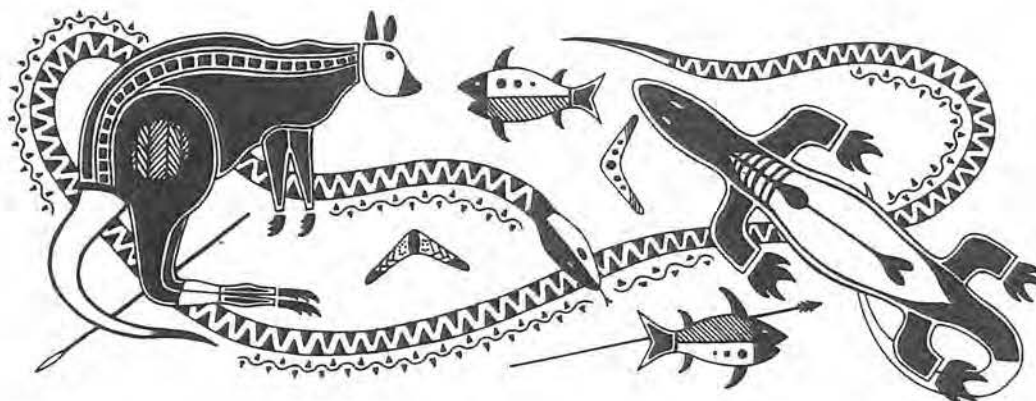




**A REPORT TO THE MINISTER
FOR SOCIAL SECURITY,
THE HON. BRIAN HOWE**

**ON DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES
TO REMOTE AREAS OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA**



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Chairperson
Remote Area Task Force

July 1986

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P. O. Box 2436
DARWIN N.T. 5794

The Hon. Mr. Brian Howe, M.P.
Minister for Social Security
Room L133, Parliament House
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600

Dear Minister

In November 1985 you announced the appointment and Terms of Reference for the Remote Area Task Force (RATF).

We are pleased to present our report.

Yours sincerely

Joe Flick
(Chairperson)

July . 1986

Enc.

• Maria Atkins

• Jim Webb

• Sonny Ah Sam

• (Observer)

P. O. Box 2436
DARWIN N.T. 5794

The Hon. Mr. Clyde Holding, M.P.
Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600

Dear Minister

I am sending you a copy of a document I have just completed on the Department of Social Security Services to Remote Areas of Northern Australia.

Section 3.5 specifically relates to the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), which is administered by your Department.

Yours sincerely

Joe Flick
Chairperson
Remote Area Task Force

August 1, 1986

Enc.

P. O. Box 2436
DARWIN N.T. 5794

The Hon. Mr. Brian Howe, M.P.
Minister for Social Security
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• (Observer)

REMOTE AREA TASK FORCE

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BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

The Remote Area Task Force was established in November 1985 by the Minister for Social Security, the Hon Brian Howe MP to examine existing departmental services to Aboriginal clients in remote areas of northern Australia and to recommend improved methods of service delivery.

The membership of this Task Force was as follows :

- . Joe Flick, Assistant Director (Aboriginal Services), Darwin
- . Sonny Ah Sam, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Mt. Isa
- . Jim Webb, Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Kununurra
- . Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Pt. Lincoln, (Observer)
- . Maria Atkins, Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Alice Springs

Terms of Reference for the Task Force were :

- A. Appraise existing departmental services to clients in remote areas and identify those functions which ought to be done by the Department of Social Security but are not done in remote areas at present.
- B. Examine service delivery and access to services (e.g. CDEP, community payments, individual payments).
- C. Define the tasks necessary to give effect to implementation of the Aboriginal Access Report. In particular, to examine options such as :
 - i. replacement of the two-weekly income statement with a three-monthly review for Aboriginal clients who live in remote/traditional communities and who have been continuously on unemployment benefit for at least 12 months;
 - ii common lodgement dates for the whole community as an option where the two-weekly system continues to be used;
 - iii re-scheduling of benefit payments to off-pension weeks to ensure that a more regular income flows into the community.

- D. Design a pilot program using intermediaries in remote areas to handle the less complex service related matters affecting Aboriginal clients.
- E. Examine ways of formally recognising the existence and role of other third parties (Aboriginal representatives, community leaders, etc.) e.g. by providing them routinely with up-to-date advice and remunerating them for expenses incurred in rendering services.
- F. Examine methods of facilitating payments and the provision of information to remote communities.
- G. Estimate costs for all recommendations.

The Committee visited both Alice Springs and Thursday Island to meet with representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Discussions were held with the State/Territory Directors of Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. The chairperson also visited Coober Pedy and Ceduna.

During the months of April, May and June five communities/towns were selected as pilots for a "Community Agents Scheme" (refer 5.1).

It is important to stress that the "Review of Aboriginal Access to Departmental Programs and Services" and this report are two separate documents although there are similarities.

In this report we have adopted the convention of using "Aboriginal" to include people of the Torres Strait Islands.

CONCLUSION

The Remote Area Task Force is of the opinion that recommendations outlined in this report could form the basis of a much improved service to clients and staff in the remote areas of northern Australia and if applicable, a better service to clients and staff of this Department across Australia.

For the recommendations of the Remote Area Task Force to reach the initial implementation stage, the most important aspect of this report that needs to be addressed, is :

The Remote Area Task Force strongly recommend that the position of Chairperson of the Remote Area Task Force be retained until December 1986 in order to liaise with all concerned in the successful implementation of this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. Income Security

. Extending Reporting Periods (3.1.)

- . Extend the reporting period to suit the labour market. In Aboriginal communities in northern Australia the Department should extend the reporting period to 12 weeks immediately.
- . Use exception reporting to notify any change in circumstances that may alter eligibility or rate.
- . Ensure that appropriate review procedures are in place to monitor the effect that this type of service has on staff and clients.

. Community Payments Scheme (CPS) (3.2)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . CPS be extended as a priority in those communities which request that system. Realistic time frames should be set for implementation.

. Cash Flow in Communities (3.3)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . Payments made under CPS, NTUB, and common lodgement day payments are actioned so that those payments arrive in communities on the off-pension pay week.

. Split Payments (3.4)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . Split payments be given a high priority in regions where either one or both parties agree for this to happen.
- . The results of the CASS Review project in the Northern Territory on split payments be taken into account for future extension of split payments.

**Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP)
(3.5)**

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

Where communities request to be funded as CDEP communities the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Social Security ensure as much as possible that there is a smooth transition to CDEP.

The Department of Social Security, in conjunction with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs design an adequate pro-forma for gaining information on participants' schedules from CDEP communities which can be easily cross referenced.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Social Security visit CDEP communities to inform both the Community Advisors and the community on what they are entitled to by way of Social Security services.

Benefits (3.6)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

Managers of State Aboriginal Units conduct an extensive survey in relation to Aboriginal clients to identify inconsistent and inappropriate types of payments.

A policy package of the abovementioned issues be produced as a priority, taking into account the points raised by the Remote Area Task Force.

Guidelines be issued immediately on necessary points raised as an interim measure in completing the above recommendation.

2.2 STAFFING

Structure of Aboriginal Liaison Units in Regional Offices in Remote Areas (4.1)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

The Department immediately provide 3 AOSL to cover the preferred model of Aboriginal Liaison Units in both Alice Springs and Darwin (refer para 4.1).

Each Manager of State Aboriginal Units, in conjunction with other SHQ areas, Area Managers and Regional Managers review their staffing of Aboriginal Liaison and Aboriginal Counter Officer positions in regional offices in their States.

Joint Staffing Review (4.2.)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

The error made in the allocation of staff for the Northern Territory be immediately rectified as it severely disadvantages Aboriginal clients residing in the Northern Territory.

Aboriginal Publicity Program (4.3.)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

The Action Plan devised at its meeting with Information Secretariat in Alice Springs on 24 - 25 July be formally adopted and implemented.

2.3. Future Developments

Community Agents (5.1.)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

The 'Community Agents' trial be extended until June 1987.

The number of communities in this trial be expanded from 5 to 10 communities.

Regional Offices provide support and training for any 'Community Agents' in their region.

Report on Aboriginal Access to Departmental Programs and Services (5.3.)

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . All State Headquarters continue to implement relevant parts of the Aboriginal Access report.
- . Central Office provide the necessary resources over a realistic timeframe to fully implement the Aboriginal Access Report.

3. INCOME SECURITY PROGRAMS

3.1 Extending Reporting Periods

The two-weekly Form 19b has always been used by the Department as a period specified by the Secretary in reviewing clients eligibility for continuation of unemployment benefits. Whilst it appears that this is a fairly successful system it does disadvantage both clients and staff in regional offices where :

- (a) The labour market varies during the year; or
- (b) There is no labour market at all.
- (c) Clients reside in remote areas.

This can occur virtually anywhere in Australia depending on the economic climate and for the reasons outlined. The "Wollongong" pilot has proved conclusively that in areas where there are minimal changes in circumstances, the need for reviewing entitlement is reduced. In remote areas such as the Northern Territory the Administration has extended the reporting period from two to four weeks. This does alleviate some of the problems faced by clients in remote areas where there is little or no work available and it also takes into account mail services to those places. It can however, create more work for office staff and also hardship for clients if they fail to return fully completed forms to the office within a specified time. This may be due to a number of reasons, such as literacy level and traditional background.

In considering which areas would be suitable for extended reporting periods the following factors need to be considered :

- (a) Field services provided from the regional office;
- (b) Remoteness in terms of communication, both mail and telephone services.
- (c) Client factors.

Recommendation

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that the Department :

- . Extend the reporting period to suit the labour market. In Aboriginal communities in northern Australia the Department should extend the reporting period to 12 weeks immediately.
- . Use exception reporting to notify any change in circumstances that may alter eligibility or rate.
- . Ensure that appropriate review procedures are in place to monitor the effect that this type of service has on staff and clients.

3.2 Community Payments Scheme (CPS)

The Community Payments Scheme has been operating successfully now for some time both in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The Community Payments System is designed to provide regular fortnightly payments of Unemployment Benefit to claimants in remote communities who may be disadvantaged by several factors, i.e. :

- . communication and mail service problems caused by distance and climatic conditions;
- . low literacy level of clients;
- . cultural traits and often the inappropriateness of Department of Social Security forms.

Individual cheques are issued without income statements. A community representative assumes responsibility for the distribution of cheques and advising the Department of any change in circumstances of each client in the community.

The cheques, accompanied by a control schedule for each community, are produced on a common payday. They are posted to the representative in one envelope with a copy of the schedule, which lists the name of each beneficiary.

The completed schedule detailing any changes is returned to the regional office for input of transactions in time for the production of the next schedule and cheques.

Reviews must be conducted at regular intervals to ensure that the correct payments are being made and that the community representative is fulfilling his obligations to the clients and the Department.

It may be argued that CPS takes away the individual rights of clients in relation to unemployment benefits but the Task Force sees CPS as a way of providing regular payments to people in remote areas who have very limited, or no understanding of departmental forms and correspondence. It also reduces the workload of office staff in administering payments to those remote areas.

There are a number of factors which can affect the effectiveness of CPS :

- (i) the stability of the community;
- (ii) stability and suitability of contact persons in the community;
- (iii) staff awareness of Aboriginal culture, tradition, and lifestyle;

(iv) an understanding of CPS by regional office staff and;

(v) number of visits by Aboriginal Liaison Officers.

During the next 3 months the Department should canvass those communities where CPS may be applicable and then draw up a realistic timetable to implement those changes and build in appropriate support structures.

CPS guidelines have been sent to all other States for their information.

Recommendation

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . CPS be extended as a priority to those communities which request that system. Realistic time frames should be set for implementation.

3.3 Cash Flow In Communities

Aboriginal people living in both remote/urban and metropolitan areas have always shared resources as part of their extended family, kinship, cultural and traditional ties. It is of the utmost importance that the following types of payments :

- . Community Payments Scheme
- . Extended Reporting Period payments (NTUB)
- . Common Lodgement date payments

be processed so they actually "hit" the community on the off pension pay week ensuring that there is always a regular flow of income into those communities.

In getting those payments to communities other factors may need to be considered such as, mail services and the timing of input transactions to stimulate payment. This may mean that there will be workload implication for Data Processing Operators in some regional offices.

Recommendation

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . Payments made under CPS, NTUB, and common lodgement day payments are actioned so that those payments arrive in communities on the off-pension pay week.

3.4 Split Payments

A number of representations have been made to various offices of the Department from a number of sources such as Northern Territory Department of Health, Aboriginal communities, and Women's Advisory Committee in relation to split payments of Unemployment Benefit, Sickness Benefit and Special Benefit.

The majority of these representations specifically relate to the concern for the health, hygiene, and financial support of the children and wives within a community.

The Task Force is well aware that this not only affects Aboriginal clients in remote areas but it also is relevant to non-Aboriginal families living in urban and suburban situations.

It has reached a point on communities where the cheque in the husband's name (including payments for his wife and children) is deemed to be his and the family allowance (kids money) is seen as the wife's money.

In situations where Aboriginal Liaison Officers have been made aware of this, split payments have been arranged. It should be noted that payment still depends on the husband lodging his continuation form.

The Administration in the Northern Territory is proceeding to implement automatic split payments into those communities who request that type of payment on a trial basis as part of the CASS Review. This project is in its very early stages and the Task Force would like to see it implemented by August 1986.

Recommendation

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . Split payments be given a high priority in regions where either one or both parties agree for this to happen.
- . The results of the CASS Review project in the Northern Territory on split payments be taken into account for future extension of split payments.

3.5 Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)

The acceptance of CDEP and the success of CDEP communities differ from area to area where they exist. For example, in the Torres Strait Islands the people speak very highly of CDEP and are anxious to extend CDEP to more islands. As one of the community representative's said, "It's breaking away from a welfare system to enable us to be more self-reliant". We believe that one of the most common problems in providing social security services to some CDEP communities is the attitude of the Community Advisors. These people in some cases have stopped Aboriginal people from receiving an entitlement to, for example, Family Income Supplement, because as one advisor claimed, "they get too much anyway". The Task Force believes that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Social Security should regularly visit CDEP communities to outline what is available to Aboriginal people living in those places by way of services.

Another major problem that exists in relation to social security services to CDEP communities is the checking of CDEP schedules against social security payments. There is a delay in gaining that information from DAA in the first place and in most cases the information provided is virtually impossible to cross reference as name spellings and other information is not consistent. In the discussions that took place between the Task Force and DAA in Canberra in February 1986 it was pleasing to note that an instruction has since been sent to DAA offices where there are CDEP communities, advising those offices to liaise with the Department of Social Security in completing schedules of CDEP participants.

Recommendations

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . Where communities request to be funded as CDEP communities the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Social Security ensure as much as possible that there is a smooth transition to CDEP.
- . The Department of Social Security in conjunction with DAA design an adequate pro forma for gaining information on participants' schedules from CDEP communities which can be easily cross referenced.
- . The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Social Security visit CDEP communities to inform both the Community Advisors and the community on what they are entitled to by way of social security services.

3.6. Benefits

The following historical information is provided in relation to Aboriginal access to Department of Social Security benefits and pensions.

Invalid and Old Age Pension

In 1908, when the first legislation was introduced, Aboriginals were specifically excluded from receiving benefit.

In 1942, the legislation was amended and pensions could be granted to Aboriginals who were not under the control of State Laws, or who were not nomadic and/or primitive.

On 2 February 1960, Age, Invalid, Widow's Pension and Maternity Allowance were made available on the same basis to Aboriginals as to the rest of the population.

Child Endowment

Child Endowment was introduced in 1941. The endowment could be paid to an Aboriginal native who was not nomadic or wholly dependent on Commonwealth or State. In 1959, the provision was repealed with exceptions for nomadic and primitive Aboriginals. In 1966, all references to Aboriginals were withdrawn.

Unemployment and Sickness Benefits

Unemployment Benefit and Sickness Benefit was introduced in 1944. Although payable to Aboriginals, the Director-General had to be satisfied on the character, standard of intelligence and development of the Aboriginal before he could receive the benefit, as well as the other conditions of not being nomadic or wholly dependent on the Commonwealth or State. In 1959, the provision was repealed with exceptions for nomadic and primitive Aboriginals. In 1966, all references to Aboriginals were withdrawn.

There are a number of Social Security payments made to Aboriginal clients that may be considered inconsistent or inappropriate.

In briefly looking at some of these types of issues it is strongly recommended that each of the Managers of the State Aboriginal Units conduct an extensive survey of all types of benefits to look for both inconsistent and inappropriate payments to Aboriginal clients. Aboriginal clients are disadvantaged daily as their cultural ties and Aboriginal Law are not taken into account in determining their eligibility for certain benefits.

The following types of issues need to be addressed as a priority and clear policy developed :

- . Polygamy;
- . Payments to Aboriginal clients while attending ceremonies (unemployment benefit);
- . Coding of date of birth where only year of birth is established;
- . Payment of Supporting Parent's Benefit to a person whose child is not their natural child or legally adopted child;
- . Change of custody overpayments to Aboriginal clients.

The Remote Area Task Force notes that the Law Reform Commission (LRC), has recently produced a report in relation to Aboriginal Tribal Law. The Law Reform Commission Report, as well as State Headquarters' areas, regional office staff and other appropriate people need to be consulted before Policy is developed.

Recommendations

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

1. Managers of State Aboriginal Units conduct an extensive survey in relation to Aboriginal clients to identify inconsistent and inappropriate types of payments.
2. A Policy package of the abovementioned issues be produced as a priority, taking into account the points raised by the Remote Area Task Force.
3. Guidelines be issued immediately on necessary points raised as an interim measure in completing the above recommendation.

4. STAFFING

4.1 Structure of Aboriginal Liaison Units (ALU) in Regional Offices in Remote Areas.

The current ALU structures in most regional offices do not meet the needs of efficient, effective service delivery to both individuals/communities and the regional office.

There is really no formula for justifying an Aboriginal Liaison Officer position in any regional office apart from things like 1981 ABS figures, representations from Aboriginal individuals/organisations and communities, remoteness etc. In some regional offices this type of formula works very well but in other cases it simply is just not appropriate. For example, other service providers namely, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Employment and Training Branch, have in some cases double or even triple the number of field staff servicing the same region to that of Social Security.

This is particularly relevant to the Darwin and Alice Springs regional office areas. Given that payments from the Department of Social Security are in the majority of cases the only income that goes into communities/towns it is essential that the Department adequately staffs Aboriginal Liaison Units in those regional offices. In Alice Springs, Aboriginal Employment and Training Branch of DEIR has a field staff of twelve. Social Security services the same area with three Aboriginal Liaison Officers.

The recommended structure in both Alice Springs and Darwin should at minimum be:

	CLAD 6		OIC Aboriginal Liaison Unit
	CLAD 5		Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer
CLAD 4	CLAD 4	CLAD 4	Aboriginal Liaison Officer

The current structure in Alice Springs is:

	CLAD 6		OIC Aboriginal Liaison Unit (position created not filled at present)
	CLAD 5		Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer (position filled)
CLAD 4 (filled)	CLAD 4 (filled outposted position from SHQ ALU)	CLAD 4 (vacant - officer on 2 years study leave - 12 months to go)	Aboriginal Liaison Officer

The current structure in Darwin is:

CLAD 6		OIC Aboriginal Liaison Unit (position created not filled at present)
CLAD 5		Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer (filled)
CLAD 4 (filled)	CLAD 4 (filled)	Aboriginal Liaison Officer

This requires an additional 3 AOSL for those offices to staff them to the preferred model.

The preferred model would then have three main thrusts to overcome some of the difficulties that exist at present, briefly they are as follows:

- . Additional Clerical Administrative, Class 4, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, - will mean more communities can be visited as well as more follow-up and more face-to-face counselling.
- . Clerical Administrative, Class 5, Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer, - this position should be retained to monitor the progress of Aboriginal Liaison Officers, as well as visit the more "troubled spots". It would also be looking at training programmes, etc., to help develop the skills of the Aboriginal Liaison Officers.
- . Clerical Administrative, Class 6, Officer In Charge, Aboriginal Liaison Unit. This new position not only gives the OIC the same status as other OIC Benefits and Pensions it is also there to initiate, develop and implement ideas to overcome some of the hardships that Aboriginal people with limited or no education experience now in trying to fit into a system not designed for them.

RECOMMENDATION

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . The Department immediately provide 3 AOSL to cover the preferred model as outlined for Aboriginal Liaison Units in both Alice Springs and Darwin.
- . Each Manager of State Aboriginal Units in conjunction with other SHQ areas, Area Management and Regional Managers, review their staffing of Aboriginal Liaison and Aboriginal Counter Officer positions in regional offices in their States.

4.2. Joint Staffing Review (JSR)

The Remote Area Task Force would like to take up an issue that has been raised by the Northern Territory Administration with Central Office a number of times.

In November 1984, when the JSR was conducted, there were 9 Aboriginal Liaison Officer positions. These positions were not included in the Welfare staff count in the Northern Territory, but in other States, Aboriginal Liaison Officers were included in the Welfare counts.

Welfare staff are a fixed cost, i.e. not calculated by one of the JSR formulae and any recalibration of the JSR model would spread the additional cost nationally and the Northern Territory cost would be a fraction of an AOSL.

The Northern Territory has been allocated 16 AOSL for Special Factors. Special Factors are allowed so as not to handicap offices which are affected by :

- . the time spent travelling to provide visiting services;
- . high Aboriginal clientele;
- . high number of clients from different ethnic groups;
- . high number of itinerant clients.

This figure should, in no way, be considered compensation for the miscounting of the Aboriginal Liaison Officers when the JSR was completed in November 1984.

Recommendation

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

- . The error made in the allocation of staff for the Northern Territory be immediately rectified as it severely disadvantages Aboriginal clients residing in the Northern Territory.

4.3. Aboriginal Publicity Program

Aboriginal clients need improved access to the departmental services provided by Social Security, but they first need to be more aware of what Social Security is all about and what eligibility requirements exist to qualify for particular benefits.

Information has been targeted to Aboriginal clients, both as general information dissemination provided to everyone in Australia and as a specific group, taking into account their cultural lifestyle and tradition. This type of information has, in some cases, been costly and inappropriate in trying to meet the needs of Aboriginal people. There has also been a tendency in the past not to produce information aids, either nationally or as a combined effort between States and this has fragmented the provision of similar types of information aids. Some States have developed very successful seminars, posters, videos and other material to meet the needs to some degree of Aboriginal people living in those particular States.

The Remote Area Task Force recently met with Information Secretariat, Community Liaison & Services Co-ordinators from Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland as well as Managers of the Aboriginal Units from each of those States and Central Office to look at devising an Aboriginal Information Strategy in linking both current and future information to a more co-ordinated and cost effective approach.

Recommendation

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

The Action Plan devised at its meeting with Information Secretariat in Alice Springs on 24 - 25 July be formally adopted and implemented (see Attachment 1).

5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

5.1. Community Agents

The Remote Area Task Force recognises that this is the most contentious issue in servicing Aboriginal clients in remote areas.

The Department has received a number of representations and Ministerials over the years in relation to employing persons on Communities to act as 'paid agents' of Social Security.

There has been a trial conducted in Queensland with 'paid agents' and as a result there are now a number of 'paid agents' employed by the Department in Queensland.

Western Australia has had Information Officers employed in small towns for some time and this has increased the awareness of and has given access to the Department for residents of those towns.

Both these schemes have been fairly successful in their respective States. The major difference between both these schemes and the trial 'Community Agents' proposed by the Remote Area Task Force is that these 'Community Agents' are servicing areas where the majority of clients are Aboriginal.

Within the three months that 'Community Agents' were employed, the Remote Area Task Force was encouraged by the overall service that these 'community agents' provided.

Some of the positive points raised in assessing the service of the 'community agents' at this time are as follows :

- . Someone on the spot to handle Department of Social Security work;
- . Aboriginal person who knows everyone on the Community and can identify situations that relate to the Department of Social Security;
- . Disseminate information by communicating in a way that the community members understand (i.e. using their own language);
- . Contact person for Department of Social Security regional office;
- . By being paid the 'community agent' had some incentive to operate consistently and correctly, according to Department of Social Security operation;
- . Enhances awareness of Social Security programs.

The Remote Area Task Force believes that three months is not enough time to realistically assess the information on 'community agents' and come up with any long term recommendations.

The Remote Area Task Force strongly recommends that the 'Community Agents' trial continue until June 1987, and that this trial be expanded from 5 to 10 communities to gain an overall picture of such a scheme and its impact on Aboriginal access to the Department.

Recommendations

The Remote Area Task Force recommends that :

1. The 'Community Agents' trial be extended until June 1987.
2. The number of communities in this trial be expanded from 5 to 10 communities.
3. Regional Offices provide support and training for any 'Community Agents' in their region.

5.2. Social Security Review

The Social Security Review was announced by the Minister for Social Security, Mr. Brian Howe, in December 1985. Dr. Bettina Cass has been appointed as Consultant Director. The review will focus on three major parts of the Social Security System :

- . Income support for families with children;
- . Social Security programs and work-force participation in relation to the unemployed, sole parents and disabled people;
- . Income support for the aged, especially the connections between social security and superannuation.

The Remote Area Task Force believes that there are a number of Aboriginal clients or potential clients in urban, rural and remote areas of Australia, who fit into the scope of the review.

In compiling information in relation to Aboriginal clients for the Social Security Review, the Remote Area Task Force has pleasure in making its report available to Dr. Bettina Cass and is confident that it addresses major problems in service delivery to Aboriginal clients in remote areas and realistic ways of solving some of those problems.