

# **NORTHERN TERRITORY EMERGENCY RESPONSE (NTER)**

## **MONITORING REPORT**

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**Measuring progress of NTER activities**

**AUGUST 2007 TO 30 JUNE 2008**

Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC)  
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)  
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## INDEX

<b>Report Structure .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1 Background.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Data Sources .....	4
Outputs and Outcomes .....	4
<b>2 Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3 Overview of monitoring data .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Health.....	9
Education .....	9
Supporting families .....	10
Law and Order .....	11
Sexual assault.....	15
Housing.....	17
Welfare reform and employment.....	18
Jobs Package and business development.....	19
Employment and training .....	19
Coordination .....	21

## Report Structure

This Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Monitoring Report provides an analysis of data captured across three time periods between August 2007 and June 2008:

- August to 31 October 2007
- November 2007 to 31 January 2008
- February to 30 June 2008.

This report contains additional performance information to that provided in the first two monitoring reports, the first outcome data from the Northern Territory Government (NTG) and results from the July 2008 Government Business Managers (GBM) survey.

This monitoring report brings together information against each measure and includes:

- achievements and progress to date against targets and/or milestones
- what has not been achieved
- any 'lessons learned' or impacts.

The report has three parts:

- 1. Background** – information on the NTER and the data provided for this report.
- 2. Executive summary** – summary of key findings of the performance information for the first year of the NTER.
- 3. Overview of monitoring data** – overview of the analysis of indicators by measure.

# 1 Background

The NTER was announced by the former Government in June 2007 in response to reports of abuse and neglect of children outlined in the Little Children are Sacred report. The report made it clear that child abuse in Indigenous communities throughout the Northern Territory (NT) was at crisis levels. The present Government takes the view that Indigenous children are entitled to the same level of protection and support as other children in our society. As such, the Australian Government is committed to continuing the implementation of the NTER, subject to the outcomes of the independent and comprehensive review.

The NTER is a set of reforms designed to address the chronic problem of Indigenous child abuse in the NT. It aims to protect children and make communities safe in the first instance, then to lay the basis for a sustainable and better future for Indigenous people throughout the Territory.

During 2007-08, the NTER comprised seven key measures:

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Lead Commonwealth Portfolio</b>
<b>Improving child and family health</b>	Health and Ageing
<b>Enhancing education</b>	Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
<b>Supporting families</b>	Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
<b>Promoting law and order</b>	Attorney-General's Department
<b>Housing and land reform</b>	Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
<b>Welfare reform and employment</b>	Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Human Services Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
<b>Coordination</b>	Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

The full suite of NTER measures are being implemented progressively in 73 NTER communities, specifically named in the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* (NTNER Act). These communities generally have more than 100 residents and are known as the NTER communities<sup>1</sup>). Some of the critical and sensitive measures, such as the introduction of income management under the Welfare and Employment Reform measure, will also apply to smaller communities such as outstations and town camps in the prescribed areas. Prescribed areas include all Aboriginal land granted under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. Community Living Areas and Town Camps are referred to as 'NTER areas' in this report.

Some of the measures initiated under the NTER will continue in 2008-09 and include a range of activities covering: further welfare and employment reform, ongoing and strengthened health services, community engagement, early childhood, family support packages, income management, additional playgroups, youth alcohol diversion, and promoting law and order.

### **Data Sources**

Relevant monitoring data and analysis on each measure and sub-measure is provided by the responsible Australian and NTG agencies. The NTG has provided a considerable amount of data for this Monitoring Report.

This report also includes data obtained from the second GBM survey. The survey was designed and analysed by a consultant with expertise in survey design. The research comprised an online survey that was completed by 55 GBMs who service 71 of 73 NTER communities and associated outstations, and town camps. GBM responses are based on their own perceptions. As such, findings from the GBM survey provide but one perspective of the NTER and may be affected by a variety of factors. In order to ensure that GBMs were able to voice their opinions without fear or favour, they were made aware that their responses to the survey would be kept confidential, and that no individual GBM would be identified. GBMs live in, or regularly visit, NTER communities and so have first hand experience of what is happening on the ground.

### **Outputs and Outcomes**

The NTER is just over a year old and a number of the measures are yet to be fully implemented. Additionally, in assessing the outcomes of the NTER there is a need to be clear about what can be expected and when. Many of the measures were designed to improve things like community safety. Changing the way a community operates takes considerable time and is both complex and difficult to measure. Much of the data provided in this report, and any assessment at this point, necessarily focuses on output measures such as increases in the number of police in communities. This report goes beyond that to look at incidences of reported crime but these data are limited both because crime may be under-reported and because factors such as increasing the number of police can result in an increase in reported crime while the actual incidence of crime may have remained unchanged or have fallen.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'community' is commonly used to refer to the Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory that are located within the NTER areas in which the NTER measures apply.

While it is generally difficult to report outcomes at this stage, some outcome data are available. Outcomes at this early stage include an increased number of 'real' jobs available in communities. Other intermediate outcome data, such as school attendance and hospital separations, are also reported. The outcome data reported is necessarily limited for two key reasons. First, the NTER has only been in operation for a year and while policy interventions can have a significant effect in a year, this is the exception rather than the rule. Second, much data are not yet available. For example, the results of the school literacy and numeracy tests undertaken in the NT since the NTER are not yet available, nor is there any new Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on employment for Indigenous Australians in the NT since the NTER.

As part of the longer-term strategy for evaluating the NTER, which will be developed with other agencies, FaHCSIA commissioned the ABS to undertake a consultancy project to identify key outcome variables which can be used to assess the impact of the NTER over a longer time frame. The draft ABS report advises on outcome indicators, potential data sources, and possible data development relevant to the NTER. For consistency, this analysis maps the NTER measures with the indicator framework used in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report and also with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Closing the Gap targets and the supporting 'building blocks'.

A series of intermediate outcomes indicators, which are more closely linked to outputs than intended outcomes, are also identified in the ABS Report. Ideally, these indicators would be available for individual NTER communities. In general, existing data does not support this as the geographic breakdown for most outcome indicators is the NT as a whole. Further consideration on the relative merits of investing in new data collection activity, as opposed to using more aggregated, existing data sources is required. The ABS paper is available upon request.

## 2 Executive Summary

The first year of the NTER sought to protect children and make communities safe. Although all measures sought to build upon this objective, some measures in this first year were directly targeted to this outcome. These include income management, licensing of stores, nutrition programs, community cleanup and housing repairs and additional law and order such as additional police, night patrols, safe houses, and alcohol and pornography restrictions. As expected, most outcome indicators showed little change over the first year, thus highlighting the need for a long term commitment from the Australian and NT governments, communities and stakeholders in achieving change.

Barriers to implementation of some measures were multifaceted but common to many was the interdependency between measures such as income management, store licensing and the School Nutrition Program. Also, lack of local infrastructure to support an increased workforce, constraints on workforce availability and logistical barriers such as access to communities through distance, the wet season and community business all had an effect on the rollout of the measures. Lack of expertise of government and non government organisation staff working in remote communities and time needed for community and service provider consultation also affected the rollout.

Key results to 30 June 2008 include:

- 55% of the estimated population of 17 000<sup>2</sup> children under the age of 16 participated in child health checks (CHC) under the NTER. Over two-thirds of children (69%) were referred for follow-up services, which commenced in 2007-08 and will continue in 2008-09.
- Ten Remote Aboriginal Family & Community Workers have been employed to provide a link between families, local services and the child protection system.
- New service delivery models involving primary health care and substance abuse services enabled access for the treatment of alcohol and substance abuse.
- An additional 28 Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) outreach workers and community support workers were employed to provide comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation services.
- As yet, no new safe houses are operational.
- Fifty-one additional police have been deployed with a new police presence in 18 communities.
- Also meeting initial targets were the 73 funded night patrols (31 active night patrols and 42 communities in the consultation phase)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Estimated population of 17,000 children under 16 derived by adjusting ABS Northern Territory population figures at 30 June 2006 to include only those children living in NTER areas (DoHA)

<sup>3</sup> NT Night Patrol Services were measured against signing PFAs with service providers (NTG shires).

- The Community Clean-Up (CCU) program passed expected targets with 3,046 properties surveyed. Minor repairs were carried out on 2995 properties in 68 NTER communities.
- Income Management (IM) had commenced in 53 communities and associated outstations, plus eight town camp regions
- 93% of IM funds were allocated to priority needs, with 74% of the 93% spent on food.
- Food security has been enhanced in all communities through store licensing where IM was implemented.
- School Nutrition Programs (SNP) in 55 communities and eight town camp areas were providing breakfast and lunch for school age children. Additional programs are scheduled to commence at the start of Term 3 (21 July 2008).
- According to GBMs, income management has been well received by women, in particular mothers and grandmothers, as more money is available for essentials and there has been a reduction in humbugging.
- Remote Area Exemptions (RAEs) removed from job seekers in 86 communities (including all NTER communities) and 654 associated outstations in the NT.
- Out of an expected 1,536 NT Jobs Packages jobs, 1,300 have been created. In addition, employment service providers (i.e. Job Network members) have brokered 982 job placements and there have been 261 Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP) and 924 STEP – Employment and Related Services (STEP ERS) commencements.
- 8,119 job seekers are receiving Job Network services and 1,189 job seekers are engaged in specialist employment programs. In addition, 1,373 job seekers have commenced in Work for the Dole.

The NTG has provided a considerable amount of data for this report, including health and police data. More detailed analysis of this data is contained in Part 2 of this report. Data from the NTG for the NTER communities shows that:

- There were 2471 hospital separations for NT Indigenous children aged 0-4 years as a result of preventable injury or disease across the NT in 2006-07. For the period July 2007 to January 2008, 1381 hospital separations are recorded.
- Across the NTER communities there has been little change in school attendance rates.
- Child protection data, by Indigenous status, are only available at the whole of NT level. These data confirm that Indigenous children are four times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be the subject of a substantiation of a notification of child abuse or neglect.

- Child neglect is a more common problem than child sexual abuse. In 2006-07, there were 63 confirmed incidents relating to child welfare reported to police across the NTER communities. This figure rose to 154 in 2007-08 (possibly due to an increased police presence).
- The number of notifications for three Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis across the NTER communities fell from 409 in 2006-07 to 358 in 2007-08 for children aged up to 17.
- The number of STI notifications for children under 12 in the NTER communities (which may be evidence of abuse) was relatively stable with 12 notifications in 2006-07 and 13 in 2007-08.
- There were 34 lodgements in court in 2006-07 for sexual assault and 20 in 2007-08.
- There were nine convictions for child sexual abuse in 2006-07 and eight in 2007-08.
- There was a large increase in incidents reported to the police surrounding alcohol from 2006-07 to 2007-08.
- There was little change in hospital admissions between July 2006 and January 2008 relating to alcohol.
- There was little change in the number of domestic violence incidents reported to police in 2007-08 but there was a large increase in the incidence of domestic violence related to alcohol.
- There was a large increase in confirmed incidents of assault in 2007-08. However, the number of assaults that were lodged in court for hearing fell from 547 in 2006-07 to 455 in 2007-08.
- 532 Indigenous people from the NTER communities were hospitalised as result of assault in 2007-08.
- Forty-four locations, including roadhouses, petrol stations, video stores and restricted premises (ie. adult shops), were assessed for compliance with classification laws.

## 3 Overview of monitoring data

### Health

Between July 2007 and June 2008, at least 55% of the eligible population of approximately 17 000 children under the age of 16 years received a child health check (CHC) under the NTER. Approximately two-thirds (69%) of these children were referred for at least one type of follow-up service. Provision of follow-up services commenced in all regions and will continue in 2008-09. The major impediments to the roll-out of the CHCs and follow-up services were local infrastructure, particularly accommodation for clinical work and staff housing, and workforce availability.

Support services for children were enhanced through the development and delivery of the new Sexual Assault Referral Centre Mobile Outreach Service (MOS) from April 2008. This service delivers counselling services to children, families and communities affected by child abuse.

In 2007-08, Indigenous children aged between 0-5 years from the NTER communities were most likely to be hospitalised as a result of infectious and parasitic diseases (35% of children hospitalised). Influenza and pneumonia were the primary causes (40%) of hospitalisation of Indigenous persons from the NTER communities for diseases associated with poor environmental health. The number of Indigenous children hospitalised in the seven month period July 2007 to January 2008 was just over half the number hospitalised for the full 2006-07 year.

### Education

The NTER does not directly address school attendance. As a result, it is not surprising that there has been little change in school attendance. The NTG publishes data on school attendance for every government school in the NT. Given seasonal fluctuations, it is important to focus on the same period in each year. In June 2008, the school attendance rate for Indigenous students in very remote areas of the NT was 62%, down from 64% in June 2007.

While there has been little variation in the rate of attendance, it should be noted the overall enrolment rate for very remote Government Schools has increased from a baseline of 7,853 enrolled in June 2007, to 8,408 enrolled in June 2008, an overall increase of 7.1%.

The School Nutrition Program (SNP) sub-measure indirectly aims to improve school attendance and engagement by providing breakfast and lunch to school-aged children. At 30 June 2008, there were SNPs established in 55 communities and 8 town camp areas, with programs scheduled to commence in an additional six communities and one town camp from the start of Term 3 (21 July 2008).

The SNP also aims to provide employment opportunities for local Indigenous people. Sixty-nine employment outcomes have been achieved – 59 Indigenous workers and 10 non-Indigenous workers. GBMs report that in communities with a SNP, just under half of all parents are involved in the program.

Funding over four years was provided to the NTG and the NT Catholic Education Office to recruit an extra 200 teachers. The first 19 teachers commenced work in classrooms in remote communities at the start of Semester 2 2008.

In approximately two-thirds of communities (65%), GBMs are aware of children who do not go to school at all. GBMs report that children are significantly more likely to truant in the afternoon as they are in the morning. In about one in ten communities, the GBM is not aware of any truancy.

GBMs perceived no change in school attendance for 51% of communities, an increase in school attendance for 20% of communities and a decrease in attendance for 6% of communities (attendance reportedly fluctuated in a further 21% of communities)<sup>4</sup>. Where increases have occurred a number of GBMs reported that has resulted from increased parental support for attendance, police involvement in schools and sport and the SNP. GBMs perceive that parental support for children's attendance at school has increased in 20% of communities (GBMs perceived no change in support in 56% of communities<sup>5</sup>).

GBMs surveyed believe that a lack of community support and parental enforcement remain key barriers to improving attendance levels.

### **Supporting families**

Children's' services and family support funding was provided for the expansion of existing Early Childhood Programs. The following three projects began in January 2008: the Child Nutrition Program which provides intensive family support and nutrition rehabilitation, the Core of Life program that provides information about pregnancy, breastfeeding and early parenting and the Let's Start Project that aims to develop a preschool program in communities that includes support for parents.

Twenty-two safe houses are to be established in 16 remote communities and expanded in Darwin and Alice Springs. To date, ten Safe houses have been constructed from shipping containers in eight communities but they are not yet occupied.

Eight child protection workers (a target of 10), one coordinator and one administration assistant have been recruited to form a Mobile Child Protection Team. They had commenced employment and begun undertaking investigations by 30 June 2008. Ten Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers (RAFCWs) are providing liaison between families, local and regional services.

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<sup>4</sup> The GBM impressions are supported by NTG data on school attendance rates. These data show that while attendance rates increased in some schools they decreased in others. Overall there has been little change see [http://www.det.nt.gov.au/education/enrolment\\_attendance/index.shtml](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/education/enrolment_attendance/index.shtml)

<sup>5</sup> GBMs reported a decrease in support in 6% of communities, that support for attendance fluctuated in 11% of communities while for 7% of communities GBMs reported that they did not know.

The first of eight new crèches opened on 11 August 2008 in Lajamanu. Work is continuing to establish an additional seven new crèches with contracts in place for construction due for completion by March 2009. Upgrading work to address urgent health and safety issues has been finalised in three communities. A further six remaining crèche upgrades have contracts in place and are expected to be completed by February 2009.

Infrastructure to support youth diversion activity projects such as basketball courts, recreation halls, and ovals; and sport and recreation materials and equipment are being provided.

## **Law and Order**

Remote Indigenous communities are often, but not always, characterised by a high level of violence. This includes, in particular, violence against women. Across Australia, Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be the victims of assault than non-Indigenous women<sup>6</sup>. Data from the NTG confirms a significant level of violence across the NTER communities. This conclusion is based on reports to the police and convictions. Of course, it is well known that reports to the police significantly understate actual crimes committed against individuals<sup>7</sup>.

The NTER was principally addressed to the safety and well-being of children. It is particularly difficult to collect and report outcomes for this objective, however, some data are available and are reported below. Of course, the short-term impact of the NTER may be to increase reported crime and it is important to 'see through' such a short-term effect. If people in the NTER areas are more able to report crimes, then in the long run this is likely to have a positive effect as perpetrators will be more likely to be apprehended.

While data on assault and violent crime largely reflects crimes committed against adults, a general normalisation of violence is not good for children or adults and creates an environment in which crimes against children are more likely to occur. There is significant evidence that violence is normalised in many remote Indigenous communities<sup>8</sup>. Much violence remains unreported in official data and this needs to be kept in mind in interpreting the data provided below.

In interpreting data on assault and violence across the NTER communities, it is important to note that the number of people in these communities is not particularly large. Based on an NTG analysis of 2006 ABS Census data, there were about 41,130 people living in the NTER communities (including town camps and a significant number of outstations) in 2006. Of these people, 35,929, or 87% were Indigenous Australians.

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<sup>6</sup> ACSSA Briefing No 4 September 2004, Australian Institute for Family Studies

<sup>7</sup> ACSSA Briefing No 4 September 2004, Australian Institute for Family Studies

<sup>8</sup> ABSTRACT Address by the CEO of the Australian Crime Commission, Alastair Milroy, to the 2008 Bennelong Society Conference - 20 June 2008

Fifty-one additional police have been deployed since the NTER was announced in June 2007; 33 Australian Federal Police (AFP) and interstate police and 18 NT police. At 13 June 2008, there was new police presence in the 18 Operation THEMIS communities (some of these communities did not have a police presence prior to the NTER). The additional police presence meant that the recording of all incidents across all categories rose, particularly in the 18 communities where Operation THEMIS is in place.

There was a significant increase in the number of alcohol related incidents reported to the police across the NTER communities, rising from 1458 in 2006-07 to 2287 in 2007-08. This may reflect the imposition of the alcohol bans, as alcohol related incidents are now more likely to be recorded as the possession and consumption of alcohol is now illegal across the NTER areas. It is worth noting that 39% of the increase in the number of alcohol related incidents reported to police over this period was accounted for by the Themis communities.

The level of domestic violence reported to police across the NTER communities appears to have remained broadly unchanged at a high level (1556 incidents in 2006-07 and 1742 in 2007-08). In the 18 Themis communities, the level of reported domestic violence incidents increased significantly, from 161 in 2006-07 to 352 in 2007-08.

There has been a significant increase in the reporting of alcohol related domestic violence across the NTER communities, from 585 incidents in 2006-07 to 756 incidents in 2007-08. This may be a function of increased police numbers and the alcohol bans. In the Themis communities, the number of alcohol related domestic violence incidents rose from 51 to 98 over the same period. In other words, around 27% of the overall increase in reported domestic violence incidents related to alcohol across the NTER communities was accounted for by the Themis communities.

Excluding assaults related to or against children, and assaults that are domestic violence related, the number of assault incidents reported to police across the NTER communities rose, from 112 in 2006-07 to 154 in 2007-08. The number of aggravated assaults fell from 246 to 234 over the same period.

The number of assaults across the NTER communities that were lodged in court for hearing fell, from 547 in 2006-07 to 455 in 2007-08. This is a lagging indicator as it takes some time for matters to go to court.

Indigenous Australians are over-represented in crime data in the NT. For example, Indigenous Australians accounted for 83.5 % cent of assault lodgements filed in court for hearings in 2007-08, despite only accounting for around 32% of the NT population. Most of these matters relate to Indigenous Australians living in major population centres of the NT and not the NTER communities.

It is difficult to reach definitive conclusions on the incidence of violence in communities based on police data as the level of reporting has probably increased, particularly in the Themis communities. For a large proportion of communities (45%), GBMs believe that the level of violence has remained unchanged since their arrival in the community. On the other hand, for 39% of communities, GBMs perceive a decrease in violence. An

increase in violence has been reported by GBMs in 7% of communities. Where GBMs perceive a decrease in violence they attribute this to increased police presence and reduced access to alcohol.

GBMs report 'no change' in alcohol use for 58% of communities<sup>9</sup> and a decrease in consumption for one-quarter (24%) of communities. The relatively large number of communities reporting no change in alcohol consumption is also influenced by community members continuing to drink near the community. GBMs report that in 54% of communities, people are drinking near the community but outside the NTER areas. In communities where GBMs report drinking outside the community, GBMs report that this type of alcohol consumption has increased in 37% of these communities.

According to GBMs, petrol sniffing is present in 38% of communities. Amongst those communities with an acknowledged problem, GBMs consider the problem has decreased in 11% of communities, increased in 9% of communities and remained unchanged in 16% of communities. Where a decrease in petrol sniffing has occurred, GBMs report that it is due in part to the introduction of Opal fuel. However, GBMs also believe that community intervention/pressure and the introduction of youth programs will be more effective in discouraging petrol sniffing in the future.

With regard to illicit drug use, GBMs report that it is not present in almost one-third (30%) of communities and perceive that rates of use remain unchanged in a further 31% of communities. GBMs perceive an increase in illicit drug use in 4% of communities and a decrease in 4% of communities. GBMs who observed a decrease consider it is due to an increased police presence in the area and surveillance limiting the supply of drugs entering the community.

Increased usage of marijuana is perceived in 16% of communities by GBMs<sup>10</sup>. Some GBMs attribute increases in marijuana use to the alcohol restrictions which have reduced the supply of alcohol.

The number of drug related offences reported to the NT police across the NTER communities rose from 57 in 2006-07 to 131 in 2007-08.

The drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation sub-measure commenced with the rapid deployment of specialist teams into Katherine and Tennant Creek for six weeks from September 2007.

Two additional hospital beds for detoxification were provided at both Katherine District and Tennant Creek Hospitals. 737 occupied bed days were used for alcohol treatment between 28 October 2007 and 30 June 2008 (total for both hospitals). 248 individuals received alcohol treatment at both hospitals between 1 January and 30 June 2008.

Based on NTG hospitalisation data it appears that the number of hospitalisations due to 'Alcohol related hospital admissions for NT Indigenous people' has remained stable between July 2006 and January 2008.

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<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that some communities had alcohol management plans in place prior to the NTER.

<sup>10</sup> For 41% of communities GBMs reported no change in marijuana use. GBMs reported that marijuana was not present in 7% of communities. For 6% of communities GBMs perceived a decrease in use while for 31% of communities GBMs did not know.

The second phase of this sub-measure included the employment of 28 outreach workers in primary care and substance use services. The AOD outreach workers and community support workers were employed to provide comprehensive treatment, rehabilitation and support services within host agencies and local Indigenous communities. Twenty six additional beds and 13 additional AOD support workers have been provided in residential rehabilitation services across the NT.

To increase the awareness of the pornography measure, 44 locations including roadhouses, petrol stations, video stores and restricted premises (i.e. adult shops) in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and Nhulunbuy were assessed for compliance with classification laws. Radio and print advertising, Call Centre scripts, cards and posters, a Question and Answer document and Fact Sheet and signage has also been developed.

To reduce the availability of pornography, the first audit of publicly funded computers in the NT took place on 2 June 2008. 264 organisations were contacted in relation to the 2 June 2008 audit.

New night patrol services are to be established in 50 communities (night patrols operated in 23 communities prior to the NTER), with the transition of night patrols operating prior to the announcement of the NTER, to the new regional service delivery model. By mid-March 2008, the Attorney General's Department had funded night patrols in all 73 communities identified by the NTER. As at 30 June 2008, there were 31 active night patrols in these communities and 42 communities were in the consultation phase.

GBMs report that night patrols are now present in 58% of the communities they service. In 54% of these communities (where a night patrol operates), GBMs note that patrols operate 7 nights per week, in 34% of communities night patrols operate for part of the week and in 10% of these communities the patrol was yet to commence operation. GBMs feel that the service is adequate in 61% of the communities with a night patrol, i.e. it is sufficiently resourced relative to the size of the community and works well with the community, police and state imposed restrictions. Where the service is considered inadequate, GBMs cite limitations in staff numbers, training, management, authority and accountability.

Having senior and well respected members of the community on the night patrol is also seen as an effective measure.

Overall, GBMs attribute police presence as having the greatest impact on reducing criminal activity (55% of communities), followed by youth diversion programs and elders law (both 42% of communities). GBMs believe that alcohol restrictions and night patrols are reducing criminal activity in more than one-third of communities.

It is worth noting that according to NT police data there have been significant increases in the number of infringements issued across the NTER communities from 2006-07 to 2007-08. The number of traffic infringements rose from 738 in 2006-07 to 989 in 2007-08, the number of drug infringements rose from 56 to 66 over the same period while the number of summary infringements rose from 372 to 463. A significant proportion of these increases can be attributed to the 18 Themis police stations. For example, 49% of the increase in the number of traffic infringements over this period occurred in Themis communities.

### **Sexual assault**

The Little Children are Sacred Report concluded that child sexual abuse is a significant issue for Indigenous Australians living in the NT. While data on this issue are provided below it is important to note that child sexual abuse is under-reported<sup>11</sup>.

Child protection data are not available for the NTER communities. However, data are available for Indigenous children across the whole NT. In 2006-07, Indigenous children in the NT were four times as likely as other children to be the subject of a substantiation of a notification of child abuse or neglect. In addition, the rate of substantiation of a notification for Indigenous children aged 0-16 in the NT rose from 13.7 per 1000 children in 2004-5, to 16.8 per 1000 children in 2006-07. Substantiations for Indigenous children in the NT were most likely to reflect physical and emotional abuse (both 30.1% in 2006-07), followed by neglect (29.9%). Sexual abuse accounted for 9.9% of substantiations for Indigenous children in the NT in 2006-07.

The incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in children under-12 has sometimes been used as an indicator of the extent of child abuse in the population. Where STIs are present in children under-12 this may be symptomatic of sexual abuse. Across the NTER communities, there were 12 notifications of STIs in children under-12 in 2006-07 and 13 in 2007-08. It is not possible from these data alone to draw any conclusions about changes in the incidence of child sexual abuse as most child sexual abuse does not involve the transmission of STIs. In addition, the numbers are affected by the prevalence of STIs in the population which in turn is associated with things like access to primary health care services. The Little Children are Sacred Report looked at changes in the number of STIs diagnosed in Aboriginals aged under-12 from 2000 to 2005 across the NT as a whole. The report noted that that no real trend in increased notifications was evident over that period.

There are many more incidents of STIs for older children but care is required in interpreting these data, as the transmission of STIs for older children may be reflective of consensual sexual activity between children.

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<sup>11</sup> ACSSA Briefing No 4 September 2004, Australian Institute for Family Studies. It is widely accepted that sexual assault and child abuse are under-reported crimes. Research by the Australian Institute of Criminology provides varied reasons why victims do not report to police (Australian Institute of Criminology, Women's experience of male violence: findings from Australian component of Violence against women survey, IVAWS, Canberra, <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/56/index.html>). These difficulties are compounded for Aboriginal people because of factors such as complex extended family and community networks; geographic isolation and community wide mistrust of the service system (NSW Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, 2006). It is therefore considered that the incidence of under-reporting in Aboriginal communities is likely to be higher than in non-Aboriginal communities.

The number of notifications, investigations and substantiations of child abuse and neglect in the NT for 2007-08 are not currently available by Indigenous status.

NT police data shows the number of sexual offences detected in 2006-07 and 2007-08 across the NTER communities. There were 155 offences recorded in 2006-07 but only 91 in 2007-08. Without further analysis it is not possible to explain this change.

In 2006-07, there were 34 lodgements in court for hearing for sexual assault for sexual assault occurring in NTER communities. This number fell to 20 in 2007-08.

Indigenous Australians are over-represented in the NT data on sexual assault. They account for 61% of all lodgements in court for hearing in 2007-08 (69% in 2006-07) regarding sexual assaults despite only accounting for around 32% of the NT population. Most of these alleged offences are committed by Indigenous Australians living in the major population centres of the NT and not in the NTER communities

The number of sexual offences committed against children in the NTER communities fell, from 60 in 2006-07 to 34 in 2007-08. The number of people arrested or summonsed for sexual abuse offences committed against Indigenous children across the NTER communities fell from 39 in 2006-07 to 26 in 2007-08.

According to NT police data, the largest single category of sexual abuse is sexual intercourse without consent. There were 86 offences in this category across the NTER communities in 2006-07 and 54 in 2007-08. Focussing on children, there were 11 offences in the NTER communities relating to indecent dealings with a child under-16 years in 2006-07 and there were ten offences relating to exposing a child to an indecent act. Across the NTER communities, there were nine convictions for child sexual abuse in 2006-07 and eight in 2007-08. These data are likely to understate the actual level of abuse and as a result, it would be misleading to view these data in isolation<sup>12</sup>.

Issues of child welfare go well beyond sexual abuse, indeed, sexual abuse is a subset of behaviours that can have a lasting negative effect on children's future. It has been argued that neglect is a particularly damaging type of child maltreatment. There is evidence that child neglect is a more common issue<sup>13</sup> than sexual assault in the NTER communities. This is confirmed by NT police data.

The total number of confirmed incidences of child abuse<sup>14</sup> in the NTER communities rose, from 66 in 2006-07 to 192 in 2007-08. The 18 Themis communities accounted for around 35% of the increase in the number of child abuse reports made to police from 2006-07 to 2007-08.

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<sup>12</sup> pg6 ACSSA Briefing No 4 September 2004, Australian Institute for Family Studies

<sup>13</sup> Nettie Flaherty and Chris Goddard, Child neglect and the Little Children are Sacred Report, Children Australia, Volume 33, Number 1, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> This includes, child abuse material, child welfare, child welfare – pregnancy, child welfare STI prohibited material, and unclassified adult material

The vast bulk of these confirmed reports across the NTER communities were accounted for by the category 'child welfare' (80% in 2007-08). The category 'child welfare' relates to issues that would generally be considered to be child neglect. There has been a significant increase in reported incidence of abuse relating to child welfare across the NTER communities, from 63 confirmed incidents in 2006-07 to 154 in 2007-08.

These data should be treated with some caution as they are based on the assessment of police. Child protection authorities may reach a different conclusion.

## **Housing**

The NTER did not include measures for new housing, although there has been a substantial investment in capital works in the NT through the development of the Strategic Investment Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) in partnership with the NTG. This work is expected to commence in October 2008. The Government has made it clear that secure tenure is required to underpin this investment in remote communities. The Australian and Northern Territory governments are working closely with Land Councils to negotiate long term leases to underpin the 16 major housing and infrastructure developments as part of SIHIP. Where the SIHIP investment comprises upgrades, the five-year leases (introduced as part of the NTER) will be relied upon as sufficient security to allow this work to proceed. The Australian Government has also negotiated with Territory Housing on the implementation of new property and tenancy management arrangements for publicly funded housing.

As part of the new arrangement, Territory Housing will adapt its mainstream public housing model to ensure that houses in remote communities are managed in a similar way to other public housing properties.

The Community Clean Up (CCU) Program has been implemented in 68 remote communities. In the period to 30 June 2008, 3046 properties were surveyed and minor repairs were carried out on 2995 properties. CCU initially relied on Work for the Dole (WfD) as a major delivery mechanism. The CCU is also collecting data on the number of bedrooms and inhabitants per house.

GBMs report that 31% of the communities they cover have had a positive reaction to changes in the management of community housing, 32% have had a negative reaction and 30% have had no reaction.

GBMs report that community members are involved in housing repair (primarily through the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program) in just over half of all communities. According to GBMs, more than three-quarters of communities are involved in clean up activities including through CDEP and WfD. This is confirmed by DEEWR data which shows that 920 participants from Work for the Dole and STEP ERS were involved with the painting of properties as part of the CCU program.

## Welfare reform and employment

At 27 June 2008, Income Management (IM) was in place in 53 communities and associated outstations, and eight town camp regions with a total of 13,305 people on income management.

In most cases, community members in receipt of a relevant welfare payment receive 50% of their payment in the usual way, while the other 50% is reserved to pay for priority needs, such as food, clothing, housing, transport and utilities. Some welfare payments however are income managed at 100%. At 13 June 2008, 93% of income managed funds were allocated to priority needs, with 74% spent on food. Housing expenses and clothing purchases accounted for the majority of the remainder.

While the perceptions of GBMs may not match those of the communities themselves, GBMs report that 53% of communities have a positive attitude to IM, while 38% of communities are believed to hold mixed views. In contrast, GBMs report that 9% of communities have a negative attitude to IM.

The GBM Survey provides some evidence that women, mothers and grandmothers are most likely to have a positive attitude to IM. According to GBMs, this positive attitude is related to there being more money available for food and other essentials and a reduction in the incidence of humbugging. Since their arrival in communities, those GBMs who responded to the GBM survey have perceived a decrease in humbugging for 39% of communities, no change in 35% of communities and an increase in humbugging for 6% of communities.

Food security has been enhanced through the licensing of stores. Specifically, there were 62 licensed stores at 30 June 2008. At 30 June 2008, an additional three communities also had access to Bush Food Order packages.

According to GBMs, most food groups/ staples appear to be commonly available in community stores (fresh produce and over-the-counter medications available less often). In 68% of communities, GBMs report that frozen vegetables, frozen meat and poultry, and baby food are always available in community stores. GBMs stated that fresh fruit and vegetables are available at least several days per week in 83% of communities, with fresh vegetables being always available in 45% of communities.

- Price, quality and availability of the various food groups vary, with the greatest fluctuation occurring for perishable fruit and vegetables.
- Price increases since GBMs arrived in a community are attributed predominantly to rising fuel prices, whereas quality and availability issues, although linked to cost, are coupled with varying levels of store management and efficiency.
- GBMs perceived an increase in the availability of fresh fruit and vegetables in 31% of communities<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> GBMs perceived no change in 55% of communities, perceived that availability had fluctuated in 10% of communities and were unable to express a view for 3% of communities.

For a large majority of communities, GBMs agree that children have sufficient food to eat, however, in 14% of communities GBMs perceive that this is not the case. GBMs report that this is due to a range of contributory factors including the cost of food. A number of GBMs cited the SNP and income management as having a positive impact on children.

### **Jobs Package and business development**

The Northern Territory Jobs Package provides funding for jobs supporting government service delivery through the CDEP program.

There were 1536<sup>16</sup> jobs in Australian Government-funded service delivery and 400 jobs in local government service delivery across the NT to be funded. A total of 1300 jobs were funded by 30 June 2008. This figure is made up of 1147 jobs supporting Australian Government service delivery and 153 jobs supporting NT and local government service delivery. 176 Indigenous people have jobs in childcare through the conversion of existing CDEP jobs in childcare into fully waged positions.

On 30 April 2008, the Government announced it would restore CDEP from 1 July 2008 in the 25 NTER communities and five town camp regions where CDEP had been abolished. While CDEP is being restored, the process of converting CDEP positions supporting government service delivery has been continuing.

Indigenous Business Australia visited 49 CDEP Providers across 73 communities to identify activities with potential to become stand alone viable businesses. Some 330 activities were rigorously assessed. 68 separate activities were supported with one commercial business enterprise commencing. The most promising businesses included market gardens, vehicle repair workshops, road construction and repair, house repair and maintenance, and tourism related businesses. Constraints in moving from CDEP activities to viable businesses include poor literacy and numeracy, lack of understanding of business operations and concern about private ownership of community services or resources.

GBMs report some negative impacts from the removal of CDEP:

- Municipal services are suffering
- The move from CDEP to 'work for the dole' is seen by some community members as punitive.

### **Employment and training**

Commencing in 19 July 2007 and finishing 23 November 2007, 5830 Job Capacity Assessments (JCAs) were undertaken in remote Indigenous communities to support the removal of Remote Area Exemptions (RAEs).

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<sup>16</sup> The Jobs package provided funding initially for 1,670 jobs in Australian Government-funded service delivery and 400 jobs in local government service delivery. These figures were based on initial agency estimates about the number of sustainable jobs that could be created out of CDEP. When job audits were completed, the job targets were revised (May 2008) - 1,536 jobs in Australian Government-funded service delivery are now expected to be realised.

As a result of these JCAs, 48% of job seekers were referred to Job Network, 7.5% to the Disability Employment Network (DEN), 10.2% to Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), 30.6% to the Personal Support Program (PSP), and 3.5% to Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) services.

The number of income support recipients (this includes Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Mature Age Allowance and Sickness Allowance) in NTER communities (including town camps and outstations) rose from 18,692 on 21 June 2007 to 20,370 on 27 June 2008. The number of Newstart recipients rose from 6,735 to 7,654 over this period. In other words the rise in the number of Newstart recipients accounted for around 55% of the overall increase. Much of the increase in the number of income support recipients over this period reflects the transition of former CDEP participants onto income support.

The announced closure of the CDEP program in July 2007 resulted in just over 2,000 individuals moving away from the program<sup>17</sup>. Around 62% of these individuals were on income support on 27 June 2008. Most of this group had moved onto Newstart (64%). It is important to note, however, that while most CDEP participants in the transition group live in the NTER communities, some of them may not.

DEEWR continues to employ Community Employment Brokers to coordinate childcare, education and employment programs and services in communities.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the Northern Territory Jobs Package jobs, mainstream employment service providers (i.e. Job Network members) have brokered 982 job placements since the start of the NTER.

Out of 1185 STEP and STEP ERS commencements, there were 162 employment and 317 training commencements occurring in CDEP transitioned communities, compared to 98 employment and 608 training commencements in non-transitioned communities.

Since the NTER commenced, there have been a total of 80 Work for the Dole activities delivered across the NTER. Of these, 55 have been delivered to 42 of the NTER communities, 23 to town camps, and two to outstations. There have been a total of 1,373 commencements against these activities.

Twenty-one clients in the NTER communities have participated in the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program out of 809 referrals. The factors contributing to this low commencement to referral ratio are multifaceted but include coordination and logistical barriers such as distance and the availability of teachers and high 'no show' rates. DEEWR is working with providers and residents to boost this ratio.

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<sup>17</sup> The last scheduled transition day before the moratorium surrounding further CDEP transitions of 10 December 2007, was 16 November 2007. Since that date there have been no more providers transitioned

<sup>18</sup> It is also important to note the role of Community Employment Brokers. Whilst not a separate NTER measure (they are a sub-measure of the Welfare Reform and Employment measure), Brokers co-ordinate DEEWR childcare, education and employment services and programs within communities. They work closely with communities and GBMs in all facets of their work.

A further 138 Indigenous people in NTER communities have commenced workplace literacy and numeracy training with three Registered Training Organisations delivering training for five employers across business, mechanics, building and construction, forestry, land and sea management, hospitality and tourism, mining and the entertainment industry.

Most GBMs report an increase in employment and training opportunities since they arrived in their communities. However, some GBMs note issues with the removal of RAEs, arguing that in some communities there are no jobs to apply for.

Negative effects include:

- Looking for work in order to get payments is considered unsustainable by some due to limited work opportunities in more remote areas. It is also important to note that many job seekers are not 'job ready' and face multiple barriers to finding and keeping employment.
- Some feel the introduction of fortnightly forms is stretching the literacy and numeracy skills of claimants.

### **Coordination**

Community engagement workshops were held with representatives of the originally identified 73 NTER communities before the end of 2007. The workshops assisted understanding of the various NTER measures and their implementation among Indigenous communities.

As at 30 June 2008, the Commonwealth Ombudsman had received 489 complaints from Indigenous communities. 340 have been, or are being, investigated. Main concerns were around lack of information in language, income managed and discretionary funds, CDEP transition payments, store licensing and more recently, the role of GBMs.

GBMs report the aspects of the NTER that are perceived to be working well relate to improvements in communication and coordination services, whereas aspects that are perceived to be less successful relate to barriers to information sharing between agencies and concomitant problems in service provision.

In the vast majority (90%) of communities, some form of burden is placed on community members through visits by government officials or agencies to the community.

Although some believe this burden is inevitable, others feel that the load can (broadly) be reduced through better coordination and organisation across agencies. On a positive front, it is believed that the level of understanding of the GBM role is relatively good. There is a notable increase in the availability of visitor accommodation (in one-quarter of communities).

Levels of communication and engagement with the community vary, although those communities displaying high levels of involvement in their own management, display positive characteristics of leadership, as well as involvement/ integration, education, literacy and closeness of the community.

On rating the impact of key NTER measures, the measures most extensively endorsed by GBMs (apart from the introduction of GBMs) are:

- fixing problems with existing housing
- the introduction of income management
- community clean-up programs
- child health checks and follow-up services.

Those measures seen as having the least impact, primarily due to lack of existing facilities or services at the time of reporting, are:

- expanded safe houses
- extra drug/ alcohol rehabilitation services
- additional child protection workers

Overall, GBMs trust that the communities have a good (if not excellent) understanding of the aims of the NTER and why it was launched, as well as an acceptance thereof.