

# GROOTE EYLANDT AND BICKERTON ISLAND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

PROGRESS EVALUATION

MAY 2012



## Contents

Background to the review	2
Conclusions	6
Recommendations	13
1. Introduction	16
1.1 Purpose of the evaluation	16
1.2 Terms of reference for the evaluation	16
1.3 Methodology and approach	16
1.4 Findings	18
2. Background and context	20
2.1 The policy context	20
2.2 Groote Eylandt: its history and people	24
2.3 Towards a Regional Partnership Agreement	32
2.4 Regional Partnership Agreement Stage 1	33
2.5 Regional Partnership Agreement Stage 2	35
3. The regional partnership approach	37
3.1 Rationale for a whole-of-government partnership approach	37
3.2 Readiness for a partnership approach	38
3.3 Governance structures and processes	40
4. Effectiveness of the RPA as a partnership	45
4.1 Vision and leadership	45
4.3 Partnership dynamics: practice and performance	54
4.4 RPA influence	69
4.5 Participation and community engagement	71
5. Achievements/impacts of the partnership	77
5.1 Township leases	78
5.2 Planning and infrastructure	78
5.3 Housing and development	79
5.4 Better education outcomes	81
5.5 Economic development and participation	83
5.6 Improved community health	85
5.7 Safe communities	88
5.8 Youth, sport and recreation	90
5.9 Leadership and governance	92
5.10 Supporting the partnership	93
5.11 Discussion of achievements	94
6. Barriers to the effectiveness of the RPA	97

7. Important governance issues	101
7.1 Duration of the RPA	101
7.2 Integration of Government strategies	104
7.3 Improving place-based implementation arrangements	106
8. Lessons learned	108
8.1 Critical success factors	108
8.2 'Replicability' of the Groote Eylandt Archipelago RPA approach	109
9. Summary and conclusions	112
9.1 Effectiveness of the RPA partnership and operations	112
9.2 General impacts of the RPA on the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities	114
10. The way forward	117
11. Recommendations	123
12. Bibliography	126
Appendix A—Program logic	129
Appendix B—Case studies	130
Case study 1: Umbakumba Road upgrade	130
Case study 2: Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP)	134
Case study 3: Education	139
Case study 4: GEBIE Job Shop	144
Case study 5: GEMCO training and mentoring	148
Case study 6: Machado Joseph Disease (MJD)	151
Case study 7: Fluoridation	154
Case study 8: Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts	158
Case study 9: Australian Football League Angurugu and Umbakumba clubrooms	162
Case study 10: Basketball	165
Case study 11: Governance development plan and training	168
Appendix C—Earlier regional partnership agreements	172
Appendix D—People consulted	173

## Abbreviations and acronyms

ABA	Aboriginal Benefits Account
AETB	Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board (the board)
AFL	Australian Football League
ALC	Anindilyakwa Land Council
BCP	Baseline Community Profile 2009
BMR	Remote Service Delivery Baseline Mapping Reports 2010
CDEP	Community Development and Employment Program
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CTCG	Community Tasking and Coordination Group
DEEWR	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DET	Northern Territory Department of Education and Training
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DHF	Northern Territory Department of Health and Families
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing
FaHCSIA	Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
GCC	GEBIE Civil and Construction
GEBIE	Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Enterprises
GEMCO	Groote Eylandt Mining Company Pty Ltd (a subsidiary of BHP Billiton)
GEMDYU	Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra Youth Development Unit
Land Rights Act	<i>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</i>
MJD	Machado Joseph Disease
MJDF	Machado Joseph Disease Foundation
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy

NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response
PowerWater	Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation
RPA	Regional Partnership Agreement
RPC	Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Committee
RSD	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery
SIHIP	Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program
YSC	Youth Steering Committee

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Margaret MacDonald and Margaret Browne

# Executive summary

## Background to the review

Tempo Strategies was engaged to evaluate the progress of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Agreement (RPA) which is currently in the second stage of its operations.

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide a progress review of the RPA with a view to

- using the findings to take stock of the RPA as a partnership and consider progressive improvement to its processes
- providing feedback on the impacts it is having
- recommending what improvements can be made, and
- providing advice to government on the lessons which have been learned from the partnership approach.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation were to examine the:

- effectiveness of the RPA
- progress in implementing the commitments made under the RPA and resultant projects in the region (noting that the primary focus of this evaluation is the RPA, not community development outcomes), and
- the impacts to-date of RPA work.

The report was also required to address a number of specific questions relating to the partnership functioning and its progress against the principles and objectives of the RPA stages 1 and 2.

## Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology was a mixed method approach incorporating an examination of partnership literature, administrative document review, semi-structured interviews, case study development and a partner/committee member survey. Primary and secondary data sources were used and the information triangulated to ensure the findings were as robust as possible.

To support the research design and data collection tools a limited literature review was undertaken of the governance of partnerships. The Department of Families, Housing, Communities and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) also provided the outcomes of a literature search to underpin this process.

A detailed review of the documentation of RPA governance activity and additional relevant literature and data related to the RPA and associated strategies such as Remote Service Delivery (RSD) was also conducted. This included close examination of meeting minutes and consultancy reports.

Strategic-level program logic (Appendix A) was also developed to identify the main areas of change over time and this was used to formulate evaluation questions and hypotheses and provide some basis of assessing progress and the progress and impact of the partnership to-date.

Semi-structured interviews were supplemented by a survey of partners, committee members and stakeholders to gain more detailed and quantitative information where there was strong variance in interview responses. There were 48 semi structured interviews with RPA partners and RPC committee members and other stakeholders.

The evaluation team also undertook observations of meetings namely the Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board, the Youth Steering Committee (YSC) and the Community Tasking and Coordination Group (CTCG) and consulted minutes of meetings. All of these committees had community representatives.

Eleven case studies were completed to illustrate a range of work that the partnership is undertaking. These studies: Umbakumba Road, Housing, Education, GEBIE Job Shop, GEMCO Training Program, Machado Joseph Disease (MJD), Fluoridation, Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts, Australian Football League (AFL), Basketball and Governance training, are found at Appendix B.

The evaluation team worked closely with the Evaluation Working Group to refine the methodology and to receive guidance and support throughout the evaluation. This process helped to build a shared understanding of the processes and findings and enabled the evaluation team to be given feedback through the duration of the evaluation.

It should be noted input to the evaluation from the East Arnhem Shire Council was sought but the response was late and very limited. In addition, the review team was unable to meet with local reference groups due to deaths and illnesses on Groote Elyandt.

## **Key findings**

### **Effectiveness of the partnerships arrangements**

- The Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA is working very strongly as a government, Indigenous community and industry partnership. It exhibits effective qualities of leadership, an ethos of collaboration and trust and effective management practice. It has an emphasis on evidence-based decisions and good practice.
- The RPA has generated a highly effective approach to place based planning and implementation related to its agenda. Its work also generates impacts on agencies and strategies which are not part of their effort. The work has highlighted the issues which could be addressed such as more effective and less burdensome consultation processes and sharing of information across agencies and sectors, whether government or non-government.
- The aim of the RPA design was to overcome the difficulties in implementation that were experienced by other partnerships and this has been very successful. In doing

so the RPC has effectively undertaken a number of roles which have enabled it to take innovative and proactive effort towards resolving problems.

- The RPA has been a highly effective vehicle for development of effective working relationships with the community and it has developed a strong level of confidence in this arrangement by all parties involved.
- The East Arnhem Shire Council involvement as a partner is less than anticipated, due in part to resource constraints. Its role in the partnership needs some further clarification.

### **Pressing governance issues**

Three key issues have emerged which require attention in the near future. These are:

- the need to give some certainty about the duration of the RPA to support effective long term planning
- improving the alignment of the RSD strategy on Groote Eylandt with the operations of the RPA, and
- more clearly defining and developing the RPA's role in place based planning.

### **The RPA's key achievements as a partnership include:**

- Improved response by government and GEMCO to the needs of the Anindilyakwa people. Having the ALC as a partner has ensured more effective negotiation with government by the Anindilyakwa people and provided supportive mechanisms on the ground for assessing needs, education and communication.
- Ensuring accountability by each partner to the Anindilyakwa people through effective implementation and follow up of priorities in the RPA.
- Effective implementation of national priority programs, such as the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.
- Managing the building of infrastructure such as the Umbakumba Road which will provide all-season access for this community to services located across Groote Eylandt, and more facilities such as sporting facilities, and cyclone shelters.
- Stimulating more collaborative work on complex and entrenched problems where a number of agencies need to be involved in solutions, such as education from birth to work, Machado Joseph Disease (MJD), youth services and community safety.
- Securing enough resources to undertake most of the work in a reasonably timely fashion.
- Gathering the evidence to guide development and good practice implementation of strategies in the future.

- Contributing to knowledge, skills and insights on working effectively in participatory partnerships where whole-of-government effort combined with community and industry effort is important for effective planning and implementation.

While the Stage 2 agenda is not complete the RPA is now at a point where it can consolidate and build on achievements and place more focus on community development and behaviour change. This requires a long term view.

### **Impacts on the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities**

The objective of the RPA is to achieve sustainable and measurable improvements for people living in the Anindilyakwa region across a range of outcomes. Activity is focused on 10 streams of effort:

- township leases
- planning and infrastructure
- housing and development
- education outcomes
- economic development and participation
- community health
- community safety
- youth, sport and recreation
- leadership and governance, and
- support for the partnership

In most of these areas significant progress has been made in putting in place the fundamental building blocks necessary for achievement of ultimate outcomes.

Importantly, the Anindilyakwa people themselves are starting to see tangible progress in a number of areas, particularly basic infrastructure such as roads and housing and the return of some teachers to living in the community. Those most actively engaged in the partnership are also able to see the development of enablers such as communication, trust, leadership and commitment and are seeing service providers begin to work more actively together.

While the impacts of the partnership have been felt across a number of areas, the key question for all partners and stakeholders is whether the RPA has made a difference worth the investment. Participants believe that the RPA mechanism has been worth the investment in time and resources – the work has been undertaken efficiently and effectively and the experience has produced insights for other concurrent work in other communities.

However, the situation on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island reflects that of the remote communities covered under the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) evaluation – signs of progress are emerging, but overcoming the long term disadvantage is complex and change is too fragile yet to be sustainable. The approach taken to consideration of impacts incorporates the concept of ‘additionality’ which recognises the need for long term investments in community development and before behavioural and social norm change is

sustainable. Use of this approach is particularly important where the benefits of investment articulated in terms of outcomes will be seen only in the longer term.

## Conclusions

### Lessons learned

The success of the RPA arrangements cannot be attributed to one factor or indeed several factors in isolation. It is the combination of a number of key inputs and processes that has determined the overall success.

Commonwealth and territory ministerial support for the work of the RPA has been vital for underpinning its successful functioning.

Partnership work has been community-driven and is seen as such. The strategic and future-oriented approach originating from community needs and articulated by the ALC has proven highly successful and the ability and willingness of the community to contribute substantial financial resources has provided strong leverage in negotiations.

The emphasis taken by the RPA on effective implementation has been vital to success. It draws from the experience of COAG trials and earlier RPAs and has proven a sound strategy for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

The principles underpinning the RPA have been important as a touchstone for positive working relationships, and set the tone for professional collaboration and trust that participants will deliver on their promises. They might need refinement as the RPA evolves.

Strong, high level leadership and commitment has been pivotal to RPA success. However more effort is needed through all organisations to educate and support staff to work effectively in a social partnership arrangement. This would build the capacity to develop approaches and systems to underpin partnership work such as sustainable local implementation architecture.

The regional approach has been and continues to be significant as it responds to the 'sense of place' held by the community.

The formation of evidence to support place-based change has been important to ensuring the needs of the community are accurately documented and has provided a sound platform for sustainable change.

The RPA approach to implementation has involved separate agencies funding and being accountable for implementation of specific initiatives. This approach has served the partnership well for large infrastructure projects. It is now appropriate to take a more integrated and comprehensive approach to planning and service development with a focus on more integrated work aimed at improving the social and emotional wellbeing of the Anindilyakwa people.

The allocation of funds to support the initial program of work provided a sound base for delivery and was instrumental in the high level of achievement to date. However essential

work is still dependent on small amounts of unreliable short-term program grants funding and this is an impediment to success.

Implementation has been strongly supported by the ability of GEBIE and GEMCO to respond to resource unanticipated needs as they emerged. It has not been able to meet all needs and flexibility needs to be built into current funding arrangements e.g. through brokerage funds.

The RPA approach to implementation needs to evolve from funding of programs through separate agencies with individual accountability arrangements to a more integrated and comprehensive approach to planning and service development for change. Pooled funding of like government programs which is administered locally, could deliver a responsive and flexible approach which could better support the change agenda for the Groote Archipelago.

Developing more effective responses at the local level is likely to require alignment and integration of effort across governments, services and programs to support the conceptual policy and strategy connections across policies.

Conflicts between state or national upstream policies and systems may have to be addressed in order to have streamlined collaborative approaches at the local level. Such issues are often more apparent at the local service delivery level where guidelines and contractual arrangements do not comprehensively support needed action, for example, the ability to continue effort when funding through a government contract has concluded. Many issues are unanticipated and partnerships need resource and governance flexibility to respond incrementally to issues as they are raised.

A stable long-term approach to resourcing and service implementation is vital to ensure the current investment is built on and contributes to sustainable change.

## **Vision and leadership**

The leadership and commitment by all partners has been fundamentally important to success and to the capacity of the RPA to evolve its approach to meet emerging demands. It has enabled the partners to work through the tensions and problems that have arisen. That the three original partners—the ALC, the Northern Territory Government and FaHCSIA—have been catalysts for joint action has encouraged participation by the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities and nurtured collaboration to ensure commitments are implemented. This has led to a strong sense of engagement and mutual respect and trust that partners will keep their commitments.

## **Strategy and performance management**

The RPA approach has been focused on long-term goals and is highly organised and well supported administratively at least at the strategic level. Its mechanisms and structures support implementation of projects through a collaborative approach where needed.

An emphasis on good practice and the attention to ensuring decisions are based on evidence ensures that positions are developed on a sound basis.

The RPC has managed the overall business of the RPA and the work of most subcommittees very well. Committee approaches have supported professionalism, the bridging of organisational and interpersonal differences and matured skills in working in partnership. People have stayed at the table and shown persistence in dealing with difficulties and delays – some of which have been, and continue to be, fairly challenging. There is a good record of producing tangible products and outputs from all committees. As the development and change program progresses the Education, and Youth subcommittees need more implementation support on the Archipelago.

Implementation and reporting processes provide transparency and minimise risk and in the main have been highly effective in terms of delivering results according to plans. More attention needs to be paid to identifying who is actually accountable for each piece of work and ensuring they take responsibility for it. Respondents noted that when delays or difficulties occur it is sometimes difficult to know who to talk to. This arises from the vertical/horizontal management tensions which can occur with partnership arrangements.

These attributes have resulted in a stable operation that has started to underpin effective, cooperative and efficient social action. It is timely now to develop new approaches for community development, and consider a coherent strategy for reform. Challenges include:

- how to stimulate change in behaviours and social norms to achieve better health, better school attendance and more participation in work and training, and
- how to develop a service system which has the flexibility to be able to focus on meeting needs on the archipelago rather than responding to the requirements of program silos.

Such approaches will need more attention to policy and funding ramifications for each partner.

Stakeholders strongly agreed with the need to develop a strategic plan that details a set of specific strategic objectives, performance targets, and appropriate measures of progress. Current accountability mechanisms would need to evolve to support that change. They are now geared towards measuring inputs and outputs, not change. This is the emerging challenge for the RPA.

The secretariat administrative structures and support established by the RPA have worked well and continue to be vital. Similarly, the individual funding approach has worked for large service capacity, infrastructure and research projects. However, these structures are less able to support implementation of more local projects and have, in the case of some projects, required extensive negotiation and effort. The employment by the ALC of staff to support the RPA has also strengthened effective implementation.

The focus of performance measurement should now evolve from a focus on implementation of projects to include assessment of progress of initiatives towards change and overall impact. Overall reporting and evaluation should include a focus on the evaluation of measures which illustrate progress towards community development and change to behavioural norms, for example, health promoting behaviours.

## **Partnership dynamics**

The partnership exudes a feeling of vitality noted by the RPC meeting attendees (RPC meeting December 2011). The relationships between partners are characterised by high levels of collaborative working, both formally and informally, and a sense of openness and trust that promises will be honoured. Use of memoranda of understanding and contracts underpins that trust.

Although strong disagreement on issues does occur, reassurance is provided by a process for escalation and conflict resolution if needed. Such arrangements are necessary for a healthy partnership. So far the formal processes have not been relied upon. Relationships are constantly maturing as the RPA evolves and this is resulting in more effective informal working relationships and ensures problems are resolved in a fairly timely and effective manner.

The principles underpinning RPA operations have been an important touchstone influencing the manner and outcomes of debate.

## **Influence**

As a strategic place-based partnership the RPA has exerted influence within and beyond its remit. For example, it has influenced the design of the RSD and the development of a fluoridation policy for remote communities, and policy, strategy, research and services more broadly. Many stakeholders have mentioned that it is a beacon for others as it is actively working on problems and ‘things are getting done on Groote Eylandt’ faster than in other places.

## **Key success factors: replicability of the RPA approach**

The evaluation team was asked to consider whether the approach taken for the Groote and Bickerton Island RPA was replicable and views on this were varied among those consulted during the evaluation. Unique success factors which are difficult to replicate include:

- the ability of the community to commit substantial resources to leverage the agreement
- a contained community with one language and culture
- personal commitment of Commonwealth and territory ministers, and
- close involvement of the most senior government personnel.

Nevertheless, the following principles and learnings drawn from the approaches taken at Groote would seem applicable in a variety of situations.

### ***Equality between the partners and appropriate authority to proceed.***

Partnerships must be structured and governed in ways that recognise the partnership equality at all stages of planning and implementation, including the resolution of unforeseen problems. For the ALC, the ability to be at the table at all stages of planning and implementation has been a significant factor in building and maintaining trust, developing clarity of purpose, and accountability of partners to the community. This experience in

inclusion has developed the capacity of all partners to work together and to find ways to work through the complexities. The partnership members need the authority of their host organisations to participate effectively and make decisions on behalf of the partnership.

***The needs and aspirations of indigenous communities as the driving force for the partnerships.***

Another key factor in the RPA is that the community through the ALC identified an overall vision, priority issues to be addressed and objectives for their community and the partnership has been driven by these. Implementation of initiatives has been culturally sensitive with two way learning being a feature of processes.

***The objectives and priorities of partnership members are shared by all parties.***

A fundamental requirement of government community partnerships is that objectives and priorities should be aligned with and support the objectives of government, community and industry members.

***Detailed planning and negotiation of partnership arrangements and work program prior to commencement of the partnership.***

The RPA processes incorporated detailed planning to assess readiness and what was achievable, agreement on principles and secure funding arrangements. Stage 1 of the partnership had a manageable work program. Part 1 also incorporated planning for Stage 2.

***Principles of operation formed a touchstone for the way the partners operated with each other.***

The principles of operation for the RPA agreement have been a touchstone for all partners and have underpinned partnership operations. They have supported the development of collaborative processes and helped maintain trust.

***Adequate resourcing to undertake tasks.***

The funding of partnership work provided an adequate, accessible and stable resource base. The ability to provide for unanticipated needs by contributions from the ALC and GEMCO was also an essential element. Processes are administratively efficient and non-burdensome to agencies.

***The duration of the partnership should reflect the time it takes to undertake the work.***

The RPA was initially funded for Stage 1 for an identifiable program of work. It included preparation for Stage 2. The RPA was established to help address intractable and long-term problems which need a consistent effort and significant amount of time to resolve.

**Responsive and efficient management:**

Highly skilled and policy wise secretariat support has been essential to the success of the RPA to reflect the policy questions and strategic implementation issues with arise across sectors. The RPA has input from senior cross agency administrators who have been

authorised to address the complex and unforeseen questions which arise. This has enabled management of the partnership to be responsive and transparent.

Committee structures supported good communication and joint effort from the strategy design to implementation action. This enabled informed and sensitive approaches at all levels with approaches amended as required.

## **Barriers to RPA achievements**

The following key issues hamper progress:

- Development challenges are high across all domains of effort. These include: the extent of socio economic disadvantage; low levels of literacy; poor health; and a backlog of infrastructure needs. Children have high levels of developmental vulnerability.
- A plethora of engagement processes outside of the RPA overburden community members with little discernible gain.
- Policy and program arrangements present obstacles to incremental, sustainable reform. These include:
  - short-term funding
  - multiple short-term programs, and
  - various applications of place-based planning through individual programs.
- Service system barriers impede connected effort and meeting needs in a comprehensive way. These include:
  - Poor service infrastructure with a shortage of facilities and accommodation hampering the extent of effort.
  - Fly-in and fly-out services results many service providers not having the chance to get to know the community they serve thus affecting the suitability of services.
  - Silo approaches reduce the motivation and ability of services to collaborate and connect their effort as responses are limited to program requirements. This hampers overall service responsiveness.
  - Short-term funding means service disruptions and the inability to plan service development, including collaborative and connected effort to provide effective response to complex needs.
  - Major shortfalls in services.
- Workforce capacity including:
  - a lack of skilled personnel on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island to meet needs, and
  - high turnover with both Groote Eylandt-based employees and fly-in fly-out staff.

While the RPA has worked on a number of these issues changes to the program, funding and accountability arrangements, such as pooled funding and more resourcing on local

implementation governance, eg. Sport and youth activities, would be helpful to support more effective place based planning and improve the effectiveness of service response.

## **The way forward**

Achievement under each stream of effort has been substantial, with the majority of projects being completed or substantially progressed. While not seeing much evidence of progress in the first year or so, community members can now see tangible evidence of the fruits of the partnership in houses, roads and other building, activities around schools and in the community, workshops, training and so forth. At one of its recent meetings the RPC noted that there was 'a positive vibe' around the RPA.

However there is still much to be done. Many of the problems highlighted in the baseline study remain. Insufficient housing is still an issue and will take time and further commitment to resolve. Health and educational issues are ongoing and partly intergenerational in nature and will take years of patient investment. Behavioural change has barely started. There are still low levels of literacy, high levels of cannabis use and low readiness for employment.

Governments need to evolve and develop their capacity to work genuinely collaboratively across boundaries and with communities. In particular the partnership with the shire will need further work. Governments still need to develop and internalise new ways of working which are truly collaborative and place-based. Inherent in place-based planning is that the driver for investment is not the requirements of various government programs and their separate consultative and accountability requirements but rather governments adopting a whole-of-government approach to needs and priorities by local people. Such responses require change to systems, processes, attitudes and beliefs raised in the rationale for partnership working (see Section 3.1). One illustration is the introduction of the RSD strategy which has similar objectives to the RPA. While the RPA accommodated the introduction of the RSD in the archipelago by developing an additional schedule (Schedule D) to the RPA which gives the RPA primacy, implementation has posed complications which still need to be worked through. How the RSD strategy works more effectively as part of the RPA rather than working somewhat in parallel is one of the system issues which needs more consideration as it has been a source of confusion. Similar issues apply to all separate strategies and programs with community development objectives working on the Groote Archipelago. Working through the issues with the RSD might inform the development of protocols for collaborative working more generally.

More deliberate approaches are needed to support the local Indigenous communities in developing new attitudes, behaviours and social norms if they wish to take advantage of the initial investment and work towards a society where they and their children enjoy the same standard of living, wellbeing and opportunities as other Australians.

The challenge going forward is to build on the sound foundations that have been laid and develop strategies that link the various streams of effort to underpin in a concerted way the building of capabilities and behaviours for the future.

Some questions that might guide future directions include the following. How can the Anindilyakwa people use the new houses to develop living patterns that will support healthy children and encourage them to attend school and to do homework? How can parents use

the opportunities to build on their own education and skills to engage in the workforce, earn a good income and further nurture and support their children to grow and develop so that they can grasp further opportunities? How can leadership capability be developed across the community so that increasing numbers of young people develop the willingness and the skill to take over from the current leaders?

The ALC is acutely aware of these issues and, with the support of the RPC is developing a longer term strategic plan to address the key priorities and needs of township residents beyond the life of the mine. Its focus in particular is on working with young people to build a future for them strongly grounded in the Anindilyakwa culture.

The current partnership is in place until 2014 and the ALC strategic plan due for completion by April 2012. The ALC want the partners to consider a Stage 3 to the RPA and have the priorities defined in this plan to be considered as part of going forward. This will require serious consideration soon if the initial investment in this community is to be fully realised.

## Recommendations

### For the RPA

1. Review the role of the East Arnhem Shire Council in the partnership especially to ascertain:
  - how best the East Arnhem Shire can contribute to the partnership
  - what opportunities and barriers exist in fulfilling that role, and
  - a clear agreement on how the East Arnhem Shire Council can contribute in ongoing RPA work.
2. Review the arrangements for delivering RSD through the RPA to clarify issues and enhance collaboration. The aim of such analysis would be to consolidate policy agendas and better align processes of planning and implementation at community and system level.
3. Nominate a person for each project who will be fully responsible to the RPC for management, responding to enquiries and communicating to senior officers and partners about project status and to community members.
4. Ensure that all subcommittees have leadership and adequate administrative support, especially those located on the islands, for example, the Youth Committee.
5. Review the sub-committee structures and membership as the balance of the effort moves more towards changing the aspirations and behaviours of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island citizens.
6. Develop training for government staff, and partners to support partnership work at all levels including;
  - a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of partnership work,
  - skills in collaborative planning and reporting for shared outcomes,
  - determining the implications of partnership for existing budgetary and accountability systems and organisational thinking

- improving the ability of individuals and organisations to develop and manage improved approaches
- the ability to negotiate and problem solve across government agency and community interests.

## **Planning**

7. Develop a strategic plan over the next year to provide a clear pathway and milestones for development and a framework for subsidiary work e.g. education, employment and youth strategies. This plan should inform the way forward and guide preparation for partnership work beyond the current RPA ending in 2014. It should also provide a framework for assessing resource needs, governance structures and protocols. Key features to consider include:
  - realistic time horizons, identifying changes sought in 5, 10 and 15 years,
  - priorities for development identified through the strategic planning process being undertaken by the ALC
  - a place-based approach which consolidates cross agency planning and implementation so that the underpinning causes of problems and barriers to change can be more comprehensively addressed, and
  - supporting more integrated community level planning and implementation between agencies and services.
  - a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework

## **Reporting, monitoring and evaluation**

8. Future reporting and monitoring and evaluation should be aligned with an overall strategic plan. Where appropriate, reporting processes should incorporate progress towards COAG targets, community development and individual development. Success measures should be developed as part of the strategic planning.

## **Engagement strategy**

9. The RPA should build on recent proposals and information about current community consultation and engagement arrangements to ensure that consultation is less burdensome and more effective for all players. The processes should:
  - encourage agencies, programs and services to look at needs of the community more holistically, for example, pursuing a theme-based rather than program-based approach on such as youth development ,involving government personnel from a number of programs, and
  - continue to build the capacity and expertise of islanders to be more informed and confident to engage with government and services.

## **Governance development strategy**

10. Consider expanding the governance development approach for the ALC, GEBIE and local reference groups to a strategy for service providers and governance personnel involved with managing and contracting services for Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

## **For government policy and strategy**

11. Give early attention to considering how the RPA work can continue beyond the life of the current agreement. This information is important for strategic thinking and planning and for any transition arrangements that emerge.
12. Consolidate and build on the RPA successes in place-based planning and implementation by consolidating funds for multiple short term grants and ongoing programs to support more holistic and integrated effort and to increase administrative efficiency.
13. Consider assured funding for core services for a five-year period, renewable and adjustable on audit and or evaluation to support sustainable change.
14. Consider trialling a community controlled, place based flexible funding pool for youth services with the design incorporating administrative efficiency and responsiveness to need.
15. Consider developing the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA as a pilot site designed to:
  - Develop and test planning, funding and accountability structures which support joint work in remote community settings
  - Develop and test collaborative strategies for community development
  - Develop understanding of good practice for effective partnership development, place-based planning and implementation, governance development and effective community engagement processes at all governance levels, and
  - Provide a source of information, advice and resources to those planning or setting up partnerships
  - Test evaluation approaches such as developmental evaluation (similar to action research) which facilitates improvement in an ongoing way in this setting for particular strategies such as the youth strategy
  - Develop an evaluation methodology which is able to assess comparative progress towards outcomes in pilot and non pilot-sites.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Tempo Strategies was engaged to evaluate the progress of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Agreement (RPA) which is currently in the second stage of its operations (November 2009-June 2014).

## 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide a progress review of the RPA to

- take stock of the RPA as a partnership and consider progressive improvement to its processes
- provide feedback on the impacts it is having
- recommend what improvements can be made, and
- provide advice to government on lessons learned from the partnership approach.

## 1.2 Terms of reference for the evaluation

The evaluation was to examine the:

- effectiveness of the RPA
- progress in implementing the commitments made under the RPA and resultant projects (noting that the primary focus of this evaluation is the RPA , not community development outcomes), and
- the impacts to-date of RPA work.

The report was also required to address a number of specific questions relating to partnership functioning and its progress against the principles and objectives of the RPA stages 1 and 2.

## 1.3 Methodology and approach

The evaluation team worked closely with the Evaluation Working Group to refine the methodology and received guidance and support throughout the evaluation. This process helped to build a shared understanding of the processes and findings and enabled the evaluation team to be given feedback throughout the evaluation.

The evaluation methodology was a mixed method approach incorporating an examination of partnership literature, administrative document review, semi-structured interviews, case study development and a partner/committee member survey. Primary and secondary data sources were used and the information triangulated to ensure the findings were as robust as possible.

To support the research design and data collection tools a limited literature review was undertaken of the governance of partnerships. The Department of Families, Housing,

Communities and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) also provided the outcomes of a literature search to underpin this process. Criteria for evaluation of the RPA were formed based on literature related to government and community partnerships. The key dimensions of partnership used were: readiness for a partnership approach; vision and leadership; strategy and performance management; partnership dynamics: practice and performance; influence; community participation and engagement; and impacts of the partnership.

A detailed review was also conducted of RPA governance documentation and additional relevant literature and data related to the RPA and associated strategies such as Remote Service Delivery (RSD). This included:

- analysis of quantitative data available through the 2008 Baseline Community Profile and the Umbakumba and Angurugu Remote Service Delivery baseline mapping reports, RPA monitoring data and other monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and
- examination of administrative records pertaining to the RPA such as meeting agendas, papers and minutes and reports produced by the RPC.

A strategic-level program logic (Appendix A) was developed to identify the main areas of change over time and used to assess the progress and impact of the partnership to-date. Its purpose was to:

- Make explicit the features of the RPA as a 'partnership' and its future directions.
- Refine the evaluation questions to be used in the interview and data analysis processes. This process included consideration of the indicative evaluation questions provided in the Request for Tender.
- Provide a basis for analysis of progress.

This program logic was not refined with the Evaluation Working Group due to time and resource constraints and was used mostly as a tool to develop working hypotheses, prompt interviewee thinking about processes of change and guide questionnaire development. This work could be built on as part of a future strategic planning process.

Semi-structured interviews with 48 respondents were conducted with RPA partners, committee members and other stakeholders. This approach supported consistency in enquiry and also allowed the evaluation team to capture additional unanticipated information.

The evaluation team also undertook observations of meetings namely the Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board (AETB), the YSC and the CTCG. All of these committees had community representatives.

A survey of RPA partners and committee members was also designed to gain more detailed and quantitative information where there was strong variance in interview responses. There were 22 out of 27 responses.

Eleven case studies were completed to illustrate a range of work that the partnership is undertaking. These studies: Umbakumba Road, Housing, Education, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Enterprises (GEBIE) Job Shop, Groote Eylandt Mining Company Pty Ltd

(GEMCO) Training Program, Machado Joseph Disease (MJD), Fluoridation, Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts, Australian Football League (AFL) Clubrooms project, Basketball , and Governance development planning and training, are found at Appendix B.

## Limitations of the methodology

Input from one of the partners—the East Arnhem Shire Council—was severely limited. Except for one East Arnhem Shire Council employee the evaluation team was not able to secure interviews or survey responses from this partner during the evaluation. However, at the end of the process, one interview was held with the shire’s Chief Executive Officer which confirmed the points made in this report.

Another limitation was that the evaluation team was not able to meet with the local reference groups established under the RSD in Angurugu and Umbakumba due to deaths and illness on Groote Eylandt. However, they had an informal discussion with a member of the Angurugu reference group after another meeting.

## 1.4 FINDINGS

- The Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA is working very effectively as a government, Indigenous community and industry partnership. It exhibits strong qualities of leadership, an ethos of collaboration and trust and effective management practice. Notable qualities demonstrated by the partnership include:
  - sharing of responsibilities for leadership, agenda setting and management
  - the personality and culture of any one of the lead partners does not dominate, and
  - decision making is clear, transparent, accountable, responsive and context and evidence-based.
- The aim of the RPA design was to overcome the difficulties in implementation that were experienced by other partnerships and this has been very successful.
- Implementation capacity on Groote Eylandt needs boosting as projects are nearing completion and need to be transitioned to normal operational practice. Examples include increasing the capacity to maintain new buildings and the road.
- The East Arnhem Shire Council’s involvement as a partner is less than anticipated, due in part to resource constraints. Its potential role in the partnership needs further exploration.

The RPA’s key achievements as a partnership include:

- Strongly improved response by government and GEMCO to the needs of the Anindilyakwa people. Having the ALC as a partner has enabled more effective negotiation with government for the Anindilyakwa people and provided supportive mechanisms on the ground for assessing needs, education and communication.
- Ensuring accountability by each partner to the Anindilyakwa community through effective implementation and follow up of priorities in the RPA.

- Effective implementation of national priority programs, such as the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.
- Managing the building of infrastructure such as the Umbakumba Road which will provide all-season access for this community to services located across Groote Eylandt, and more facilities such as sporting facilities, and cyclone shelters.
- Stimulating more innovative and collaborative work on complex and entrenched problems where a number of agencies need to be involved in solutions, such as education from birth to work, MJD, youth services and community safety.
- Securing enough resources to undertake most of the work in a reasonably timely fashion.
- Gathering the evidence to guide development and good practice implementation of strategies in the future.
- Major improvement in communication between government and the Anindilyakwa community with very positive collaborative relationships developing.
- Advancing the knowledge, skills and insights on working effectively in participatory partnerships where whole-of-government effort combined with community and industry effort is important for effective planning and implementation.

Sections seven, eight and nine of this report expand on these findings.

While Stage 2 of the RPA agenda is not complete, overall the RPA is now at a point where it can build on achievements and place more focus on community development and behaviour change.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### 2.1 The policy context

The Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA was developed in a changing social policy environment which reflects a growing understanding of the complexity of ‘a whole realm of social planning problems that cannot be successfully treated with traditional linear, analytical approaches’ but require multi-agency and multi-level solutions and an integrated approach (Australian Public Service Commission 2007, p. 3).

Increasingly, collaborative, flexible and adaptive approaches are being seen in the literature and by governments as the optimal response to such problems. This requires moving beyond vertical silos and linear approaches. It means working increasingly across organisational and program boundaries, and levels of government, to test approaches and adapt them as necessary to particular circumstances. It also requires engaging effectively with citizens and communities and developing a shared understanding of the problem and of possible solutions (Australian Public Service Commission 2007, p. 27).

Such approaches are challenging for governments, not only because they require working in different and untested ways, but because they require understanding that there are no ‘quick fixes’. These problems require long-term commitments of 10 to 20 years, resources and occasional failure and will certainly not fit neatly within electoral cycles. They require whole-of-government approaches and collaboration between Commonwealth, state, and local governments as well as with non-government providers and communities (Morgan Disney and Associates Pty Ltd November 2006, p. 4).

#### **Council of Australian Government trials**

The Council of Australian Government (COAG) trials launched in 2002 were an early example of governments exploring new ways of working together and with communities to address the needs of Indigenous Australians (COAG Communiqué April 5, 2002). The evaluation of these trials in 2006 described them as representing ‘a pioneering approach to “shared responsibility” and as having resulted in “significant learnings”—with some evidence of improved whole-of-government, cross government, and partnership links’ (Morgan Disney and Associates Pty Ltd November 2006, p. 5).

The trials at eight sites, located in each of the states and territories, and involving rural, regional and metropolitan communities, evolved very differently but were all underpinned by three key ideas:

- whole-of-government approaches
- shared responsibility between governments and communities in finding solutions, and
- place-based frameworks which involved exploring solutions with local communities that were most likely to work for that community.

Five of the trials identified macro level objectives in the areas of:

- economic and employment development
- infrastructure development, including housing
- public safety and justice
- cultural identity
- education
- service delivery improvements, and
- health (three trials).

These areas of focus were all to be reflected in the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA and other whole-of-government initiatives in the next few years.

Many of the learnings from the trials were subsequently reflected in developments beginning to take place on Groote Eylandt. The COAG trial evaluations found that improved relationships and intergovernmental effort as well as improved partnerships with Indigenous communities were evident across all sites, but that higher levels of trust developed in the trial sites where community committee membership and lead agency staff were consistent across the whole period.

The evaluation also found that high level leadership (in this case the Secretaries' Group) was seen as a significant indication of government commitment to new ways of working and that place-based approaches were most effective where there were clearly identifiable Indigenous communities with strong, representative leadership.

Allowing time for ongoing negotiation and planning was also considered important given the need for partners to develop new ways of working together and to develop personal relationships and trust (Morgan Disney and Associates Pty Ltd November 2006, pp. 5-6; Stewart, Multi-level governance in Aboriginal community development: structures, processes and skills for working across boundaries 2011, pp. 7 and 14)

Another finding was the importance of flexible funding and 'creative approaches to financing by participating agencies'. Because projects were identified by communities, they did not fit neatly into 'top-down' government program guidelines and flexible funding arrangements were necessary to support them.

At Commonwealth level, the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination<sup>1</sup> established a flexible funding pool for the COAG sites which could be accessed by lead agencies. For the Murdi Paaki trial in New South Wales, judged by the Australian National Audit Office to be the most successful of the COAG trials, the lead agency, the then-Department of Education, Science and Training established a fund that drew from sources across the agency as a whole (Stewart, Multi-level governance in Aboriginal community development: structures, processes and skills for working across boundaries 2011, p. 3; Stewart, Working with complexity: community engagement and the Murdi Paaki COAG Trial 2002-2007 September 2011, pp. 3 and 14). However flexible funding proved more elusive in some sites, for example Wadeye in the Northern Territory, where the Thamarrurr Regional Council at the

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination was renamed in late 2010. It is now called Indigenous Policy and Engagement Group, FaHCSIA

end of the trial was administering more than 90 funding agreements compared with about 60 at the beginning. The reporting and acquittal requirements for these funding agreements are many and varied (Gray May 2006, p. 9).

Also important were findings that

- governments and Indigenous communities must be willing to understand and learn how to work with each other
- expectations of the partners need to be clear, mutually understood and periodically reviewed
- partners need to stay focussed on shared responsibility for improved outcomes rather than blaming each other and working outside agreements
- there cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach and community priorities must be the focus rather than government programs or mainstream services
- priorities must be specific and achievable
- there needs to be an authorised person or group to manage the process on behalf of the partnership
- staff engaged in whole-of-government initiatives and working with Indigenous communities often need training to acquire the requisite skills and knowledge
- training for Indigenous staff on governance and how to work with governments is equally important
- efficient funding arrangements, including single agreements in locations, are desirable; and
- systemic change is required at all levels, in both government and community (Morgan Disney and Associates Pty Ltd November 2006; Gray May 2006).

## **The Northern Territory Emergency Response**

In 2007—the last year of the COAG trials—the Australian Government announced the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) which was 'a major practical and philosophic shift away from partnership with Aboriginal communities to direct control and action' (Stewart, Multi-level governance in Aboriginal community development: structures, processes and skills for working across boundaries 2011).

The immediate aims of the NTER measures were to protect children and to make communities safe. In the longer term the measures were designed to create a better future for Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

An independent review of the NTER undertaken in 2008 found that some measures received 'widespread support, such as increases in police numbers and police stations, measures that attempt to reduce alcohol-related violence and measures for improving health and early childhood outcomes (for example, new crèches, safe houses and follow-up treatment for children)' (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2011, p 69). However there was concern at the manner in which the initiative had been implemented.

The government's immediate and interim response accepted the review's three overarching recommendations:

- acknowledgment of the urgent need to address unacceptably high levels of Indigenous disadvantage and social dislocation being experienced by Indigenous Australians living in remote communities in the Northern Territory
- that governments reset their relationships with Indigenous communities based on genuine consultation, engagement and partnership and
- that government actions respect human rights obligations and conform to *the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA)* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2011).

Redesigned measures are now covered by the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement between the Australian and Northern Territory governments. The agreement operates until 2012 and aims to maintain and strengthen core NTER measures with greater emphasis on community engagement and partnerships, building leadership and capability and a reformed approach to engagement with Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2011).

## **National partnership agreements**

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory is one of a number of national partnership agreements signed under the aegis of COAG in 2009. These agreements, covering smarter schools, Indigenous early childhood development, remote service delivery, Indigenous economic participation, remote Indigenous housing, Indigenous health outcomes and Indigenous public internet access, form part of the complex and dynamic policy, governance and administrative environment in which the Groote RPA operates.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (RSD) has particular implications for Groote Eylandt as the townships of Angurugu and Umbakumba are amongst the 29 remote locations across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia (15 in the Northern Territory) chosen to be part of reforms to service delivery in early childhood, schooling, housing and health with a focus on engagement with local communities and on governance and leadership within Indigenous organisations. These are all areas of focus in the RPA.

Additionally, the Northern Territory Government has identified Territory Growth Towns. These growth towns include the 15 RSD communities including Angurugu and Umbakumba, plus an additional six and are part of the Northern Territory's Working Futures which provides an overarching policy framework that aims to achieve a logical hub and spoke structure across the Territory. In doing so the Northern Territory Government planning is designed to support regions rather than single communities as in the RSD strategy.

## 2.2 Groote Eylandt: its history and people

Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island form part of an archipelago of islands situated 50 km off the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria in the east of the Northern Territory, about 650 km south-east of Darwin. Groote Eylandt is 2300 square kilometres in area, 60 km long and 50 km wide and has three townships; Alyangula, the mining town, and Angurugu and Umbakumba, which are Indigenous towns. There are also two smaller communities at Malkala and Bartalumba Bay and a number of outstations. Bickerton Island is about 13 km west of Groote Eylandt, with an area of 215 square kilometres and contains the township of Milyakburra, which was originally settled from Groote Eylandt as a family outstation in 1975 and a haven from violence and disruption.

The Anindilyakwa people, originally hunter gatherers, came to Groote Eylandt on song lines which created the land, rivers, animals and people and named key features of the region. While they are an island population, with an autochthonous language, the Anindilyakwa show evidence of long-term connections to the mainland (Local Implementation Plan Umbakumba 2010, Local Implementation Plan Angurugu 2010).

European settlement came late to Groote Eylandt, with the arrival of the Anglican Church Missionary Society in 1921, establishing the Emerald River Mission 13 km south of Angurugu. During the Second World War the Royal Australian Air Force used the mission's airstrip which subsequently became a flying boat base for Qantas. By the 1950s, almost all the clans living on the west side of the island had settled at Angurugu.

The Umbakumba community started in 1938 on the east coast of Groote Eylandt as a base for trepanning and became a service point for Qantas and subsequently the Royal Australian Air Force base. After the war, the Church Missionary Society ran Umbakumba as a mission until 1966, when it was taken over by the Australian Government.

Dramatic changes came to Groote Eylandt with the discovery of manganese. A major mine was established near Angurugu following an agreement between the Church Missionary Society and the then BHP on royalty payments, without the consent of the Anindilyakwa people. In 1964 BHP's subsidiary, GEMCO was granted leases on Groote Eylandt and the first shipments of manganese ore were made in 1966. Groote Eylandt now produces over three million tonnes of manganese ore each year.

Groote Eylandt became Aboriginal freehold land in 1976 with the passing of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* which gave Aboriginal people greater control. Angurugu became self-governing in 1979 and Umbakumba in 1982. Both these local Aboriginal councils were absorbed into the East Arnhem Shire Council in 2008, under the Northern Territory's local government reforms which saw 54 mostly indigenous councils replaced by eight shires. This met with significant opposition from local communities.

The East Arnhem Shire Council's headquarters are in Nhulunbuy and Darwin, both a plane ride away from the Groote Eylandt. The new arrangements and limited resources available to the Shire Council have resulted in some tension with the ALC about the level of services on the archipelago and about the shire's role under Stage 2 of the RPA.

The ALC represents the Indigenous people in the archipelago and is responsible for matters under the Land Rights Act, including representing the wishes of local Indigenous people, assisting traditional owners in their protection and management of the land and being the first point of contact between the traditional owners and GEMCO on issues related to land and payment of royalties.

GEMCO is the main employer on Groote Eylandt and employs many Indigenous people. It is working with the ALC, its offspring GEBIE, and schools to increase the number of Indigenous employees. The ALC and GEBIE also own the Dugong Beach Resort and other culture-based tourism businesses.

## **Community profile 2008—09**

Stage 1 of the RPA provided for a baseline data study to inform negotiations for Stage 2 and improve the capacity to measure outcomes and development in the communities. The Baseline Community Profile (BCP) of the three Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities undertaken in 2008 provided a snapshot of the communities at that time and a useful point of reference for later developments. The BCP was a combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators and examined a range of physical, governance, service delivery and human health and capacity measures based on the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators* developed by the Productivity Commission with additional data around demographic trends and infrastructure services. Indicators used were:

- Early Childhood Development and Growth
- Early School Engagement and Performance
- Positive Childhood and Transition to Adulthood
- Substance Use and Misuse and Gambling
- Functional and Resilient Families and Communities
- Effective Environmental Health Systems and
- Economic Participation and Development (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

Under the aegis of the RSD detailed standardised baseline mapping was undertaken for each of the RSD communities, including Angurugu and Umbakumba, around social and economic indicators, government investments, services and service gaps. The RSD Baseline Mapping Reports (BMR) were undertaken in 2009 and 2010 and complement the BCP by providing further information on social and economic indicators and service provision in Angurugu and Umbakumba.

## **Groote Eylandt and Bickerton island Population Survey 2010**

Establishing population numbers in the Anindilyakwa Archipelago, including through the 2006 Census, has proved challenging due to the high level of mobility between the various communities and outstations on both islands and to and from the mainland. However an

Australian National University study in 2010 (Frances Morphy June 2011) put the core Indigenous population of the region at 1455. The core population of Angurugu was 857, Umbakumba 381, and Milyakburra 153, with 21 Indigenous people residing in the mining town of Alyangula. In Angurugu 43 per cent of the population is under 20, and in Umbakumba 39 per cent per cent, although fertility is declining in the region.

The 20 - 64 cohort represents 56 per cent of the population in Angurugu and 60 per cent in Umbakumba. Future projections anticipate little growth in infant and school-age numbers and substantial additional numbers in the prime working ages and older ages, especially over 65 (SGS Economics and Planning 2009). As with the broader Australian population, this 'ageing' of the population reflects both declining fertility and higher survival into older age. This means that investment in the future of the Anindilyakwa people will need to strike a balance between critical needs in early childhood, schooling and training and emerging care needs in the older population, the majority of whom do not enjoy the health status of other Australians. Developing and retaining a capable and resilient workforce will be critical to underpinning the future welfare of the Anindilyakwa people.

The indigenous communities of Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra have a strong connection to land, culture and language. In these communities the primary language spoken at home is Anindilyakwa, with English and Miriam Mir also spoken.

### **Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Communities**

The Indigenous communities of Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra have a strong connection to land, culture and language. The islands in the Groote Eylandt Archipelago are managed by the Anindilyakwa Indigenous Protected Area plan, through Indigenous rangers who are based at Alyangula, Umbakumba and Angurugu, along with other partners to the plan. The archipelago's land and sea country is owned and managed by the Anindilyakwa clans and has been recognised as an international site for threatened species, wildlife aggregation and national significance for flora.

Umbakumba in particular has a very successful community led animal management plan, which is supported by a Northern Territory Parks feral cat trapping and eradication program. Umbakumba is one of the few RSD communities with an effective animal management plan.

In these communities the primary language spoken at home is Anindilyakwa, with English and Miriam Mir also spoken. The Anindilyakwa-speaking clans maintain traditions and have close ties with people on the mainland, particularly in the communities of Bickerton Island and Numbulwar.

Despite these strengths, there are a number of challenges faced by these communities in the areas of infrastructure and facilities, education, employment, housing and health. These are further detailed below.

### **Infrastructure and facilities**

The island's largest township, Alyangula, was established in the late 1960s to cater for employees and contractors of the mine. At the time of the Baseline Community Profile done in 2008 its population of about 1000 was almost exclusively non-Indigenous. Its amenities

comprise a first-class resort and two clubs, which sell food and liquor; an arts centre; a coffee shop; a golf course and other sporting facilities; a swimming pool; a church; half a dozen shops; a bank; a post office and a travel agency; as well as a school; a child care centre; a training centre; an area health centre; and a court house and police station. The basic infrastructure in the town was described in the Baseline Community Profile as good, apart from the health centre which was described as in fair condition (SGS Economics and Planning 2009). The majority of housing is owned by GEMCO which also provides most local government type services.

Angurugu in 2008 had a school; a local health centre and dialysis unit; men's and women's shelters; an aged care and respite centre; a substance misuse facility; a church; a store and two takeaways; a library; a linguistics centre and a museum; council offices; Centrelink; a sport and recreation building; and an oval and basketball court. There was only one public telephone located in the store, which constrained communication, and there was limited mobile phone service. Public internet access was available, although its low speed and lack of reliability made it also of limited use. These facilities were rated as mainly fair, with some good and one poor (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

Housing in Angurugu was also rated as in very poor condition with chronic overcrowding. The RSD BMR reported that in 2006, 65 per cent of households experienced overcrowding; a much higher rate than average Northern Territory and national rates, at 38 per cent and 14 per cent respectively, although similar to many remote indigenous communities. The BMR also found that lighting and water in the community did not meet baseline standards. There was a lack of lighting across the community, maintenance was inadequate and there was insufficient water capacity to meet current peak daily demand.

At Umbakumba, there was a community school and pre-school; a local health clinic; a church; a community centre; a sport and recreation hall; a store; council offices; a Skillshare centre; a number of sheds for various purposes; a children's playground; a sports oval; and a basketball court. Six of these facilities were rated as poor, seven as fair and six as good. Housing was found to be in poor condition, with the turnaround time for maintenance extremely poor. Public internet access was available through the library, although this was considered to be very slow (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

The BMR judged community centres and facilities to be in good condition, but lighting inadequate and not meeting baseline standards for security and reliability. It also found overcrowding an issue, with 63 per cent of households rated as overcrowded in 2006.

Milyakburra had a community school; a local health clinic; a store; a shire office; a sports oval; and a night patrol shed. These facilities were in fair to good condition however internet access was possible only through the store. Housing was rated fair in Milyakburra (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

There was diesel fuel available in each of the Indigenous towns, and each of them had an airstrip, though these were unsealed at Umbakumba and Milyakburra (SGS Economics and Planning 2009). Angurugu is about 15 minutes from Alyangula by car and near the airport. Umbakumba is at least 45 minutes to an hour's drive from Alyangula on a very poor road, although this is currently being sealed as part of the RPA. Groote Eylandt is about two

hours' flight from Darwin and Bickerton Island about 10 to 15 minutes' flight from Groote or about an hour by sea. A school bus service operates between Alyangula and Angurugu

There is no permanent police presence in any of the towns, with all police being stationed at Alyangula. At the time of the baseline study in 2008, average call out time to Angurugu was two-and-a-half hours. There were also at that time no full-time resident teachers or nurses at Angurugu and Umbakumba and no full-time resident medical staff at Angurugu. These staff tended to reside in Alyangula due to lack of housing availability in the community. At the time of the BCP the Milyakburra health clinic was being serviced by a registered nurse two days a week as the incumbent nurse had left in 2008. The maximum response time was 30 minutes by plane during the day or one hour by boat during the night.

The Indigenous towns had access to very few of the facilities one would expect in a small rural town elsewhere in Australia. The water was not fluoridated, with consequent higher comparative levels of dental caries and other health impacts. The poor state of infrastructure and level of service delivery have been major drivers for the RPA.

## **Education**

Groote Eylandt has one of the poorest levels of school attendance in the Northern Territory, apart from Alyangula where attendance rates averaged 91 per cent and the Indigenous student population was 16 per cent.

The BCP in 2008 reported a pre-school in Angurugu while at Umbakumba and Milyakburra, formal and informal mothers clubs were regarded by teaching staff as helping establish regular routines and generally assisting children adapt better to the learning environment on commencing school (SGS Economics and Planning 2009, pp 68, 83).

The baseline study estimated school enrolments for Angurugu in 2008 at 242, with about 25 per cent actual attendance. The BMR conducted later reported average attendance at 36 per cent over the previous two years with significant social issues in the community and attendance remaining one of the key challenges. It noted strong enrolment figures in the early (pre-school) years, with a drop off at the time of transition to school, reflecting the autonomy given to children by parents. School enrolments and attendances tend to fall away during teenage years, although some older students return to school later to improve literacy and numeracy skills or other skills relevant to the workplace. Secondary enrolments were noted by the BMR to be 143 during the school year.

At the time of the BMR the Angurugu school was reported to be in dilapidated condition due to many years of vandalism.

The baseline study put enrolments at Umbakumba at 120 with about 50 students attending regularly. The BMR estimated that average attendance rates fluctuated in the 50 to 60 per cent range (BMR, p.88). These levels are higher than for the other communities in the region, but well below the average 'very remote' attendance rates of around 65 per cent across the Territory in 2008 and 2009.

The BMR found that many of the rooms and facilities at the Umbakumba school were in generally dilapidated condition.

Attendance at Milyakburra (a significantly smaller school) was noted in the baseline study to be 'relatively good, with up to 20 children attending on any given day and a core of 12 regular attendees' (SGS Economics and Planning 2009, p. 56). The My Schools website notes a variation in attendance from 33 students in 2008 to 23 students in 2009 and 26 in 2010, reflecting the high level of mobility and lack of stability in numbers.

Of the few who did attend school on the Archipelago, few would have had breakfast, showered and be wearing clean clothes. Levels of staff turnover were described as high and most teaching staff lived in Alyangula. Lack of suitable staff housing and community safety were the key issues here (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

Generally speaking, parents of Indigenous children on the island do not place a high value on education, despite strong messages from the leadership in the community, and attendance is seen as the responsibility of the child, rather than parents (SGS Economics and Planning 2009, pp. 68 and 76). Average rates of student turnover are high and the level of educational attainment for Indigenous students across all the communities was assessed as well below mainstream standards (SGS Economics and Planning 2009, p.78); Stakeholder interviews). This is a major barrier to employment and job readiness.

### **Economic development and participation**

According to the BCP, census data shows that in 2006 there were 184 working aged adults employed in Angurugu and Milyakburra, representing 25 per cent of the working aged population. Of the 15–24 years cohort, 11 per cent were employed as were 13 per cent of people aged over 65. These figures break down to 25 per cent of males and 8 per cent of females for Angurugu and 50 per cent of males and 36 per cent of females for Umbakumba. The BMR noted that in 2006 only 17 per cent of Angurugu's working Indigenous population (15 to 64 years) were employed and that the employment rate in Umbakumba was 46 per cent (SGS Economics and Planning 2009, p. 143; BMR, p.ix). According to data collected by the Northern Territory Government, there were 120 jobs (including vacancies) in Angurugu in March 2010, of which 13 were CDEP and 97 were held by Indigenous people.

The BCP reported that several job vacancies existed on the islands in both government and private enterprise and that the islands offered good economic potential compared to other remote Indigenous communities which lack a diversified industry base. It noted also that the islands' base industries offered a range of further business development opportunities.

### **Community health**

The BCP noted that while clinic staff members were well qualified and highly motivated, they believed that more acute clinical staff were required to meet the growing healthcare needs of the communities. The clinic staff also reported that there was a significant service gap in relation to preventative health education and mental health, with life skills being generally poor and little community understanding of the connection between health and hygiene, smoking, diet and exercise.

Ante-natal health and diet amongst Indigenous females was reported by clinic staff to be poor and the incidence of preventable injury or disease among Indigenous infants relatively high compared to non-Indigenous communities. The number of children who fail to thrive

(about 10 per cent) is of concern to health professionals. The implications of this situation for early growth and development and subsequent health and education outcomes are significant.

The level of chronic diseases in the communities is high, with heart, lung, kidney, liver and other organ failure being major causes of death. The level of mental health issues is considered to be much greater than the data show and some staff acknowledged a limited understanding of mental health issues. Mental health is seen as a high priority for community leaders (SGS Economics and Planning 2009, pp125-6).

Between 2003-04 and 2007-08, Indigenous people in the Groote Eylandt Statistical Local Area were most often hospitalised for dialysis, at 20 times the total national rate (after adjusting for age differences). Over the same period, hospitalisations for diseases associated with poor environmental health were more than four times the total national rate.

The BMR further noted that in Angurugu there were no current animal control by-laws and existing animal and pest control programs were below base level standards. This is a continuing risk to health.

MJD is a particular serious health issue for these communities, with estimates of the number of people believed to be at risk of developing the hereditary disease about 120 to 130. The BCP reported that the level of support provided through the aged care facility at Angurugu was considered by both the service provider and community leaders to be inadequate (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

An alcohol management plan has been in place since 2005 with a consequent reduction in fighting and violence. However, tobacco smoking is prevalent; with the authors of the BCP estimating that between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of adults were regular smokers (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

Cannabis has largely replaced alcohol as the drug of choice and social tensions are evident when it is less available (Stakeholder interviews). Employers regard the use of cannabis as a major impediment to Indigenous employment and the ALC regards addressing this issue as a high priority but many residents do not see it as a matter for great concern (Stakeholder interviews and RPC discussion).

## **Community safety**

At the time of the BCP in 2008, the community reported concern about the level of crime and the lack of police presence in the townships. The prevailing view was that the level of juvenile crime was much higher than indicated by official figures, particularly in Angurugu. The level of police presence had a direct impact on the number of professional and government staff prepared to live in the communities. The 14 police officers were all based in Alyangula and carrying out patrols from there, but with no facilities in Angurugu.

Milyakburra is the quietest and most stable of the communities although there are isolated incidents and the consequent resignation of the resident nurse had reduced the level of health service in the community to two days a week (SGS Economics and Planning 2009; Stakeholder interviews).

The BMR found that between 2006 and 2009 there were 332 offences committed in Angurugu, a 60 per cent decline. One in 16 offences were alcohol related and 26 per cent traffic offences. However the level of offence reporting is not necessarily a good indicator of the level of crime as family loyalties and lack of police presence both contribute to under reporting.

The BMR showed that between 2003 -04 and 2007-08, Umbakumba hospitalisation rates for assault were nearly ten times the total national average (after adjusting for age differences) and that between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2009, 26 people with an address in Umbakumba (all men) underwent a period of imprisonment. Nearly 40 per cent of these were aged 18 to 24 years. (See Case study 8, Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts for further discussion including findings from a recent Community Safety and Wellbeing survey)

### **Youth, sport and recreation**

The BCP in 2008 noted that several structured activities were provided in Angurugu and Umbakumba by various service providers but that the level of participation by young people was variable. 'Anti-social practices' such as cannabis smoking occurred amongst groups of young people.

The East Arnhem Shire Council was running a sport and recreation program based at Angurugu, and visiting Umbakumba three-to-four times a month. Participation fluctuated, with only a small core of children participating regularly. Sports such as AFL were being more regularly organised and attendance was increasing, though variable. Special events such as football visits and music were reported as better attended. Additional activities were also organised through the local schools by the Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra Youth Development Unit (GEMDYU).

There were no formal records of social or cultural events organised each year. Since the dissolution of community councils, there is no single point of contact for community activities other than funerals and ceremonies and community leaders believed that fewer activities were likely to be organised. However there was a variety of activities sponsored by organisations such as the ALC and the Anglican Church and by the Australian Government. Most residents, though, were more likely to engage in fishing trips or go 'out bush' than participate in organised events (SGS Economics and Planning 2009).

### **Leadership**

The Anindilyakwa are a conservative people and strongly patriarchal. Leadership positions tend to be taken by males and are largely inherited through family lines. Young, educated Indigenous men are largely unable to take up leadership positions in all walks of life, including employment, until the mantle of leadership is passed on by the elders. Women are considered responsible for child care, with implications for workforce participation. The report noted that women did not play an active leadership role in community matters although there are clearly some 'strong' women, as evidenced by the ban on alcohol and, according to ALC annual reports, there were five women on the ALC Board. Overall, this is a society which is somewhat resistant to change and where development and exercise of leadership in the mainstream conflicts with Anindilyakwa cultural roles. Traditional mores

and a general attitude of resignation and submission to fate limit flexibility and attainment. (SGS Economics and Planning 2009; Stakeholder Interviews)

## 2.3 Towards a Regional Partnership Agreement

Until very recently, the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities were regarded as highly dysfunctional. Levels of crime, violence and substance abuse were high, health and wellbeing indicators low, and employment and educational outcomes also very low. Government and other service providers (teachers, health, police etc.) largely withdrew either from the islands altogether or from the Aboriginal townships into Alyangula (Stakeholder interviews, Dillon 2007).

The Anindilyakwa people, for their part, felt abandoned and neglected. Lacking the essential infrastructure, investment and services which the majority of Australians would take for granted, they were largely disengaged, as reflected, for example in low participation rates for both education and employment and in high levels of alcohol consumption (Stakeholder interviews).

The initial impetus for change came largely from the communities themselves. In the 1980s a group of women decided to deal with alcohol abuse, leading ultimately to development of an alcohol management plan across the Archipelago which has been credited with a significant reduction in crime and violence, including family violence, although there has been widespread substitution with cannabis. There are now strict controls on the purchase of alcohol, including in Alyangula. This approach is seen as a model for other communities (Stakeholder interviews; Westbury, October 2010).

Approximately 10 years ago BHP's lease expired and the ALC, under the Land Rights Act, took the opportunity to secure formal recognition of Indigenous interests via an agreement with BHP that allowed the company to take out new mining leases and guaranteed royalty income and rigorous environmental oversight for the Traditional Owners. Although the mine was originally established in 1966, this was the first agreement between the Traditional Owners and BHP.

The wealth generated from the mining agreement has been invested and yields substantial income for the ALC (on behalf of the Traditional Owners), a significant portion of which is being invested in the community's future, with the remainder being distributed to residents (Stakeholder interviews).

The Australian Government's movement to long-term lease arrangements as an underpinning for investment in communities provided the ALC with an opportunity it was quick to grasp to underpin re-engagement of governments in its communities. Long-term township leases over Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra were used by the ALC as a lever to secure agreement to the first stage of the RPA in 2008 (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2011; Stakeholder interviews).

## 2.4 Regional Partnership Agreement Stage 1

The RPA between the ALC, the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government signed on 20 May 2008 was not the first of such documents to be signed in Australia. It is one of several similar arrangements across Australia. More detail on these can be found at Appendix C.

These agreements were significant, not only in that they built on the principles of collaboration and partnership, and included Commonwealth, state and local governments, as had the COAG trials, but they also involved in most cases the mining industry—a major employer—and tapped into a vein of social responsibility and business interest. They also built on the concept of placed-based solutions to local problems.

Development of the RPA on Groote was informed by these earlier experiences, particularly the agreements struck in the Ngaanyatjarra lands and the Pilbara region in Western Australia as well as the COAG trial at Wadeye in the Northern Territory. Major learnings were ‘a recognition that a fundamental challenge would be to get implementation right on the ground and that addressing the ‘governance of governments’ in delivering on the RPA commitments would be also critical’. Additionally, the agreements in Western Australia were regarded as ‘aspirational only’ and ‘falling far short of what we wanted at Groote’ (Stakeholder interviews).

More specifically, these learnings resulted in a focus on:

- the need to ensure that the responsibilities and timeframes of individual officers and agencies were clearly identified and rigorously pursued
- ensuring that the ALC had specific resources to support implementation, secure its own technical advice and monitor progress
- ensuring that the Commonwealth and Northern Territory ministers were signatories
- senior government officers from central coordinating agencies having the authority and muscle to call agencies to account
- having an RPA implementation steering committee chaired by senior officers from the Commonwealth, the territory and the ALC to meet quarterly and report on progress
- design and adoption of a pro-forma for reporting on individual projects including timelines for individual projects and identification of agencies and officers responsible
- commitment by both governments to specific resources to support implementation of the agreement, including establishment of a dedicated RPA secretariat to drive implementation and report on progress on individual projects, and
- the RPA operating as a ‘one stop shop’ for addressing program and service delivery in the region, thus ensuring coordination.

Additionally, the Anindilyawka people required that:

- any partnership had to be one of equals, to be reflected in the identification of key principles up front in the RPA
- there be mutual respect and a preparedness to build trust
- there be recognition of the importance of keeping their own culture and language strong
- governments re-engage in communities 'on terms that meant their own identified priorities were front and centre in the RPA and therefore constituted the key focus, rather than the individual program silos of the various partner government agencies'
- there be a disputes resolution clause with resort to independent arbitration as a last resort
- the ALC participate in the selection of tenders for key projects, and
- there is recognition that the RPA would need to be negotiated and implemented over two stages (Stakeholder interviews; Westbury, October 2010).

Essentially the Groote RPA was initiated and driven by a set of needs identified by Groote Eylandters themselves. The ALC engaged in extensive consultation with local communities to produce a 'shopping list of needs', with housing front and centre, which were presented at ministerial level. In this sense it was different from earlier initiatives such as the COAG trials and national partnerships, the NTER (and its successor Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory) and most of the earlier RPAs—a significant proportion of which were driven by governments and the mining sector—although in the case of the COAG trials at least there was significant community engagement and identification of projects.

Leadership was an important factor in development of the RPA. From an early stage, the ALC was assisted by former bureaucrats with a high level of expertise in government, including in Indigenous affairs, and an understanding of the community. These experts brought 'clout, capacity, skill and experience' and carried weight 'because of who they were and where they'd been'. They knew their way around government and were able to support the strong leadership being demonstrated by the Chair and Deputy Chair at the ALC, and leverage the commitment they were prepared to make to long-term leases (Stakeholder interviews; Westbury October 2010).

Stage 1 of the RPA included a number of key principles, high level outcomes, governance arrangements and a schedule of seven projects with objectives, targets, timelines and agency responsibility.

The key principles, agreed originally in the Heads of Agreement between the parties, signed in 2006 were:

- recognition of the need for all parties to strengthen effort to address the full extent of Indigenous disadvantage
- a spirit of cooperation, partnership and shared responsibility
- acknowledgement of the need to build the economic independence of the people in the region

- a focus on priorities agreed at the regional level
- willingness by government to be flexible and innovative
- commitment to improvements in accountability and performance monitoring by all parties
- a desire to achieve clarity of responsibility for service delivery and increased effectiveness across the three levels of government and understanding that greater certainty and stability in funding arrangements, including multi-year funding agreements, can facilitate more effective planning and service delivery mechanisms
- recognition of the need to build capacity and strengthen governance and
- the COAG National Framework Principles which underpinned earlier RPAs<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.5 Regional Partnership Agreement Stage 2

Stage 2 of the RPA was signed in November 2009 by the three signatories to Stage 1, as well as the East Arnhem Shire Council and GEMCO.

In addition to the principles articulated in the Stage 1 RPA, Stage 2 endorsed the service delivery principles contained in the COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement:

- *Priority principle:* Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.
- *Indigenous engagement principle:* Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.
- *Sustainability principle:* Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets.
- *Access principle:* Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.
- *Integration principle:* There should be collaboration between and within governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively coordinate programs and services.
- *Accountability principle:* Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

Stage 2 of the RPA involved a commitment from the Traditional Owners to more than \$14 million from their royalty-equivalent income (Regional Partnership Agreement between the Anindilyalwa Council, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Northern Territory

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<sup>2</sup>Sharing responsibility; harnessing the mainstream; streamlining service delivery; establishing transparency and accountability; developing a learning framework; and focusing on Priority Areas, being early childhood development and growth; early school engagement and performance; positive childhood and transition to adulthood; substance use and misuse; functional and resilient families and communities; effective environmental health systems and economic participation and development.

Government, the East Arnhem Shire Council and the Groote Eylandt Mining Company November 2009).

This contribution was conditional on securing matching funding from both governments to address major outstanding issues including sealing the Umbakumba Road, fluoridation of the communities' water supplies, a health clinic and the provision of teacher accommodation to speed up return of teachers to residing in the communities (both sets of infrastructure to be subject to payment of economic rentals). BHP Billiton also committed funding to support the RPA (Westbury October 2010). The preparedness of the ALC to commit this level of resources (and more since the signing of the RPA) has given it 'skin in the game' and, according to one key player, 'influence above their weight' (Stakeholder interviews).

## 3. The regional partnership approach

### 3.1 Rationale for a whole-of-government partnership approach

Whole-of-government approaches to tackling complex and intractable problems which involve a range of agencies have been used increasingly in the last decade in Australia as outlined above. The underpinning rationale is that a collaborative approach to the solving of problems will be more efficient at a bureaucratic level and more effective for citizens. There is particular interest in using this approach for Indigenous affairs to improve living conditions and services with a view to closing the gap in social, health and wellbeing indicators. A number of models have been trialled.

In particular, collaborative work through partnerships is meant to provide a wider range of opportunities for government and non-government agencies and industry to work together to meet policy goals. However, success of a partnership as a mechanism for improved outcomes is not a given. Working in partnership is enormously challenging, complex and multifaceted.

For whole-of-government strategies to work effectively a number of factors must be considered. Government agencies each have their own philosophy and culture, systems of resourcing, program governance and accountability processes and these differences may be huge barriers to collaboration (O'Flynn Janine 2011). Policy usually needs translation and adaptation for different levels of function; for example, policies on delivery of services are much more specific and practical and incorporate different elements than overarching aspirational policies. Partnership approaches work most effectively with flexibility to design interventions and allocate funds accordingly.

When the arrangements expand to include non-government and private enterprise partners to meet policy objectives and community needs the challenges escalate. Such participatory governance (Edwards June 2002) requires quite different ways of working which may fundamentally change the roles of all parties to a facilitative or enabling one rather than one of management control. It is likely to involve a substantial change of mindset by all parties, especially government, as each party may have to cede control to enable success.

New paradigms of thinking and working need to be embraced by all participants and all levels. As well the underpinning policy and administrative architecture should change to enable and support collaborative governance, with input by all parties to contribute to policy and strategy and at all levels to meet community needs. In other words, while the basis for whole-of-government partnership work is rational it presents many challenges, especially if the work to be undertaken and problems to be tackled are complex.

## 3.2 Readiness for a partnership approach

Partnerships are a more administratively complex and costly form of governance and the potential partners should consider whether the likely benefits are worth the costs. Potential partners should consider whether a range of prerequisites are present which increase the likelihood that a partnership approach will benefit government, the community and stakeholders.

Participatory partnerships such as the RPA are particularly challenging as they are a relatively new form of governance, dealing with longstanding and intractable problems. It is expected that there will be many unanticipated governance challenges and that a partnership culture and systems and processes will support successful evolution. The following discussion assesses the readiness for a partnership approach based on the following assessment criteria :

- community leadership and endorsement
- supportive policy environment
- political endorsement, commitment and shared goals
- partnership organisational elements
- clear principles to underpin the collaborative approach

The RPA was developed in a political environment which recognised the urgent need for change. The communities on Groote Eylandt Archipelago wanted to reshape their communities as outlined in Section 2.3. They had experienced a long history of various interventions without their agreement resulting in inadequate services and infrastructure. This combined with substance abuse led to community dysfunction with severe associated social, educational and health problems.

### **Community leadership and endorsement**

Despite this history the Groote Elyandt Archipelago communities under the leadership of the ALC and its Chair had already taken initiatives which created readiness for the RPA including the previously mentioned mining agreement and the development of an alcohol management plan.

These experiences empowered the communities through the ALC to take the initiative and offer to negotiate town leases in return for major government investment in the region through a specific governance mechanism (the RPA) to avoid the bureaucratic impediments to service delivery. Through the ALC the community was also able and willing to contribute to developments.

## **Supportive policy environment**

The trigger for the establishment of the RPA was the Australian Government's newly-developed initiative to reform land tenure arrangements on Indigenous land. This initiative made provision for improvements in the delivery of public housing, maintenance of public housing and infrastructure, economic development, private business investment and home ownership. It provided an opportunity for the ALC to comprehensively address key priorities including outstanding infrastructure and service delivery issues and it sought the agreement of the Traditional Owners to negotiate township leases over the three existing Indigenous townships in the region (Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra) in return for a RPA.

## **Political endorsement, commitment and shared goals**

The RPA had strong political support from the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government. This authorisation gave recognition to shared goals of government and the ALC and the benefits of taking a collaborative approach to entrenched problems. It also gave governments the capacity to prioritise effort for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago and the RPA the ability to use governance mechanisms which would allow them to implement reforms effectively. Importantly, resource commitment was also secured. While the ALC—representing the Groote Eylandt Community—was the initial champion of the RPA, the Australian and Northern Territory governments put strong effort into its establishment.

## **Partnership organisational elements**

The RPA was agreed after a long period of negotiation which resulted in a robust but flexible agreement which has been actively used as a tool for management of both stages. The principles of operation included in the RPA set its values and the framework for change and these have been a touchstone for the partners. The founders of the RPA took note of the lessons from the COAG trials and earlier RPAs as outlined in Section 2.4 of this report and ensured that there was a strong focus on supporting implementation.

Key priorities were identified so that the RPA did not over-reach and the implementation process had a better chance of being successful. All partners made commitment to resources for the agreed priorities. The RPA also included a commitment by FaHCSIA to resource a secretariat for skilled administration to support implementation. Additionally, it included processes for conflict resolution which recognised the challenges of securing agreement and cooperation during the implementation processes.

In summary, the evaluation has found that the establishment process for the RPA was sound, well planned, guided by evidence in accordance with good practice and underpinned by a commitment to succeed.

### 3.3 Governance structures and processes

The principles in the RPA (outlined in sections 2.4 and 2.5 of this report) and the strong focus on implementation are reflected in the governance arrangements put in place to manage the partnership and priority projects.

#### Regional Partnership Committee

Stage 1 established the RPC to meet at least quarterly and ensure that the parties were working well together to achieve RPA objectives. The RPC was to comprise senior representatives of each of the parties including the State Manager of FaHCSIA (Minutes and papers of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Committee 2009-2011), the Deputy Chief Executive of the Northern Territory Department of the Chief Minister, the Chair of the ALC, and additional representatives of the parties as required. The membership of the committee was expanded under Stage 2 to include GEMCO and the East Arnhem Shire Council.

The RPC was required to:

- provide strategic leadership for the RPA, ensuring a cohesive approach between parties, stakeholders and people living in the region
- agree on new priorities and areas for joint action, including leading negotiations on additional Schedules to the RPA
- be advised and consulted about any new initiatives the parties proposed to undertake that might impact on the operation of the RPA
- oversee the implementation and performance management of the RPA, including:
  - monitoring progress of projects contained in the schedules
  - analysing performance reports
  - ensuring that better outcomes are being delivered through the regional partnership approach, and
  - solving any problems and seeking to address any lack of progress on implementation. (Regional Partnership Agreement between the Anindilyakwa Council, the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory Government May 2008. Regional Partnership Agreement between the Anindilyakwa Council, the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory Government, the East Arnhem Shire Council and the Groote Eylandt Mining Company November 2009)

The RPC is supported by a secretariat and has met quarterly over the life of the RPA, both in Darwin and on Groote Eylandt. Chairmanship of the Committee has been shared between the State Manager of FaHCSIA, the Deputy Chief Executive of the Northern Territory Department of the Chief Minister (subsequently Chief Executive of the Northern Territory Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services) and the Chair of the ALC.

The committee regularly receives reports from key partners in the RPA, monitors and addresses issues as they arise (including outside formal meetings), monitors projects under the RPA and maintains a detailed implementation plan. The committee also keeps a watching brief on issues arising in the broader environment and invites participation from other parts of government on occasion. Discussions are open and frank and members of the committee are prepared to hold each other to account (Minutes and papers of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Committee 2009–2011).

Day-to-day management of projects is the responsibility of a number of sub-committees which report directly to the RPC. Each of the committees is supported by some secretariat facilities.

### **Infrastructure and Planning Working Group**

The Infrastructure and Planning Working Group was established early in 2010 to monitor and facilitate cooperation between the parties involved in progressing the RPA's infrastructure and planning objectives. Its membership comprises representatives from each of the parties to the RPA and it is chaired by a senior Northern Territory Government official. It has dedicated secretariat support provided by FaHCSIA.

The functions of the working group are to:

- monitor, coordinate and provide advice to the RPC on the progress of the capital works projects in Stage 2 of the RPA, and
- solve any problems and seek to address any lack of progress on implementation.

The working group has met regularly and provided comprehensive reports to the RPC. It is handling a number of complex projects, including the Umbakumba Road (but not SIHIP, which reports separately to the RPC) and has sought to balance timely completion and value for money with maximisation of opportunities for Indigenous employment (Minutes and papers of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Committee 2009–2011, Minutes and papers of Infrastructure and Planning Working Group 2010–2011).

### **Anindilyakwa and Training Education Board**

The board was established by the RPC in March 2010 to implement the key recommendations of the report, New Ownership, New Responsibilities produced under Stage 1 of the RPA. The board originally comprised nine members from the ALC and the Australian and Northern Territory governments and is chaired by the Chair of the ALC. The board replaced the Education and Training Taskforce which had taken the initial steps to implement the report and had recommended local control of education and training through a board of education. The Board of Education and Training was developed through discussions and planning with the community and held its first meeting in late 2010. The Education Taskforce was then dissolved.

The board's terms of reference are:

- provision of direction and vision for early childhood, school education and training and promotion of the importance of education and training

- provision of strategic advice and direction to school councils and supervision of council elections
- coordination and oversight of activities relating to the transition from schooling and training to work
- endorsement of individual school improvement plans and budgets, review of progress and of accountability requirements of schools to the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training
- participation in recruitment and induction of principals and teachers, and
- building effective links with the ALC, GEMCO, Northern Territory and Australian government's agencies, East Arnhem Shire, local businesses and community groups.

Recognising its role in implementing change to the system of education on the archipelago, the board includes community membership and is underpinned by a Groote Eylandt Archipelago Council with membership from each of the four local schools, each of which has its own council (Minutes and papers of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Committee 2009–2011; Minutes and papers of Anindilyakwa Education Board 2010–2011)

### **Youth Steering Committee**

This committee was established under the RPC to facilitate cooperation between the parties involved in progressing the youth objectives of the RPA; and specifically to engage and direct a consultant to develop and implement a youth strategy to respond to the needs of local young people. The committee is co-chaired by a male and female Anindilyakwa representative from the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET) and the ALC and has membership from the ALC, DET, East Arnhem Shire Council, FaHCSIA, the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families (DHF), AFL Northern Territory, Red Cross, Northern Territory Police and GEMYDU. It is supported by a secretariat provided by FaHCSIA.

The committee's key functions were to appoint and oversee the consultant, provide advice to the RPC on youth issues more broadly, recommend projects/programs to the FaHCSIA delegate for funding and address issues in the implementation of the strategy.

The committee held its first meeting in May 2010 and the youth strategy was developed and endorsed by the RPC in December 2011 (Minutes and papers of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Committee 2009–2011) (Minutes and papers of Youth Steering Committee 2010–2011).

### **Community Tasking and Coordination Group**

The Community Tasking and Coordination Group was established early in 2011 with membership from each of the RPA partners. Members of the community also attend. The group is chaired by the Northern Territory Police and is one of a number of such groups across the territory. Its purpose is to identify and resolve community safety problems in order to make Groote Eylandt Archipelago a safer place. Its functions are to:

- establish a community partnership policing approach
- consult with communities and support existing community safety groups, and
- monitor, implement and review community safety plans.

The group has met throughout 2011 and reports regularly to the RPC (Minutes and papers of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Committee 2009–2011) (Minutes and papers of Community Tasking and Coordination Group 2011).

## **Remote Service Delivery**

Under the RSD initiative, governments have committed to establishing a new integrated service planning and delivery mechanism with dedicated staff. The Regional Operations Centre is the single government interface in which Australian and Northern Territory government's staff work together to achieve the Closing the Gap objectives.

Government business managers and Indigenous engagement officers work with local communities and local reference groups to assist them in defining needs and inputting to government decision making. The overall process is governed by a Board of Management comprised of senior Commonwealth and territory officials and has a strong focus on improving the way governments work together.

Stage 2 of the RPA specified that the vehicle for implementation of the RSD in the Anindilyakwa region would be the RPA which would be the primary mechanism for coordinating government business. The RPC, which includes community representation, is the decision-making body and reviews the RPA annually to ensure ongoing alignment with community priorities, the RSD and the broader COAG agenda. The local implementation plans developed under the RSD mirror Schedule B of the RPA and any initiatives flowing from them can be added to that schedule. Co-membership at executive level on the RPC and the Board of Management (a government structure) ensures coordination between the RPA and the RSD however there remains some questioning of need for co-existence of these two sets of governance arrangements as the RPA is intended as the primary vehicle for delivery of the RSD on Groote Eylandt.

## **Community organisations**

The ALC Board has membership from the 14 family groups across the Groote Eylandt Archipelago and represents the Traditional Owners of the islands. Its role is to protect, maintain and promote Anindilyakwa culture and invest for the future.

Under the RSD, local reference groups have been established in Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra and local implementation plans developed for Angurugu and Umbakumba. These reference groups are managed by the government business managers and indigenous engagement officers who play an important role in coordinating effort across government and communities. There are also shire community advisory boards.

Additionally, there are a number of administrative and consultative groups in relation to SIHIP and Home Ownership on Indigenous Land, a consultative forum established by the ALC and the Office of Township Leasing to enable landowners to have input on land use,

and the Board of the MJD Foundation. As is clear from this description, there are a number of different consultative groups in the community, resulting in a significant resource burden for residents. This issue is further addressed in Chapter 6 of this report and in Case study 11, Governance development plan and training.

## 4. Effectiveness of the RPA as a partnership

The Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island approach to partnership through the RPA is unique. From the outset the RPA balanced multiple roles. It undertook the role of agenda and priority setting for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago; operated a delivery mechanism for major infrastructure projects such as SIHIP; became an avenue to support Closing the Gap initiatives under the National Partnership Agreement; and provided a mechanism to improve the working relationships between the Anindilyakwa people and government, including negotiating to meet their needs. It subsequently incorporated the RSD as part of its role. Many of the priorities required research, analysis and planning and the engagement of specialist functions.

A number of governance models exist and these emphasise differing aspects of partnerships according to the purpose of the enterprise. The model developed for this evaluation of the RPA contains features most common to partnership approaches for community development, developing countries and government partnerships. While the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Eylandt is unique, its effectiveness has been assessed against the critical success factors for similar partnerships as outlined in literature and in prior learnings through other regional partnership agreements. These include:

- the level of vision and leadership
- strategy and performance management
- partnership dynamics
- partnership influence
- participation and community engagement, and
- the impact of the partnership (Section 5).

### 4.1 Vision and leadership

Vision and leadership are identified in literature as two critical success factors for government/community partnerships (Australian Public Service Commission 2004; Atkinson 2005). As they are closely aligned they are combined in this section. This evaluation tried to determine the extent to which effective leadership has helped the RPA partnership develop a shared and cohesive vision.

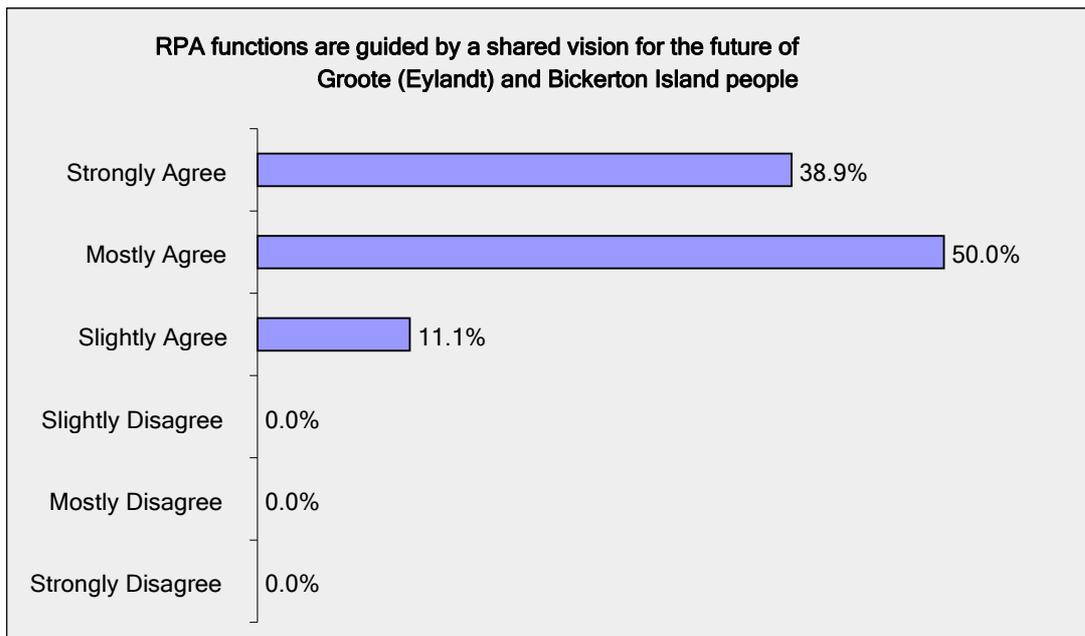
#### **Vision**

The evaluation examined:

- the future orientation of the work for the partnership
- the use of the 'broad vision' in planning the path to achieving outcomes, and

- whether key partners fostered the development of new leaders who could be champions of collaborative work and who could nurture the collaborative processes as they mature.

A survey of partners and advisors demonstrated broad agreement that RPA functions are guided by a shared vision for the future of Groote and Bickerton Islands people. The graph below illustrates that 50 per cent of respondents ‘mostly agreed’ and 38 per cent ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement ‘RPA functions are guided by a shared vision for the future of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island people. Only a small percentage—11.1 per cent—selected ‘slightly agreed’.



**Figure 1 RPA partners’ and advisors’ response to evaluation survey question on shared vision**

Interview responses largely mirrored the survey results with all partners noting that the RPA illustrated clear direction from the beginning. Building the enabling platforms for change has been the initial priority focus.

*A key challenge to-date is to get the infrastructure in place i.e. housing, new clinic at Umbakumba, road to Umbakumba etc. By virtue of these projects coming to fruition, job opportunities will be available to people from Umbakumba (e.g. BHP creating 100 new ‘real jobs’), the new vocational centre will be linked to on island employment opportunities, fluoridation will create long-term positive impacts on oral health (as per World Health Organization statistics) coupled with improved dental visitation already secured under the RPA. Less housing overcrowding is a proven factor in improving health. (Stakeholder)*

Work on tangible products such as infrastructure was complex and challenging in itself and has proceeded effectively according to the capacity to deliver.

The higher number of 'mostly agree' responses compared to 'strongly agree' that the RPA has a 'shared vision for the future' indicates that respondents had some caveats about the clarity of strategic direction and believed there was room for improvement. Inherently, the RPA is a mix between more tangible short-term objectives aiming to redress major deficits in infrastructure and services and long-term change. The need to work on tangible enabling products is clear and agreed. Work on these has proceeded effectively according to the capacity to deliver.

*This practical orientation was also combined with aspirations for system level change and behavioural change. (Survey comment)*

However, the overall objective of the RPA is fundamental behavioural change, such as improving health and wellbeing, improving educational outcomes and increasing participation in employment. There was general agreement that these outcomes require a fundamental and long term change including evolution of social norms and a deliberate, more detailed strategy to underpin the work.

In essence, there is, to date, no encompassing strategic plan to provide the broader conceptual framework for RPA work. Discussion on this aspect is continued in Section 4.2.

## **Leadership**

Most of the literature reports leadership challenges in a partnership as being almost overwhelming. In this situation leaders work with a backdrop of complex, dynamic multi-organisational and multi-sector arrangements, each with its own culture and dynamics. Partnerships which require shared leadership arrangements presents additional challenges not only to the leaders themselves but to their respective organisations (Byson and Crosby 1992) where what is traditionally seen as effective practice is not as applicable. Instead, as Pettigrew 2006, notes partnership leaders need to accept the uncertainty and unintended outcomes likely to arise within complex systems, know that control of work is not possible and that more will be gained by influence. Leadership appropriate for government community partnerships is seen as being distributed, multi-layered and adaptive with a strong capacity to respond quickly to ever changing environments.

One of the roles of leaders is to establish the capacity and support for whole-of-government work in their organisations and to develop the skills to work in a partnership through to an operational level. This is regarded as a fundamental requirement for partnership success required for all levels of effort and by all partners, including government staff. This capacity incorporates clear vision and strategy, supported by a culture of collaborative work, changes in systems and organisational thinking and the skills and management practices to achieve results (Atkenson 2005; Edwards June 2002).

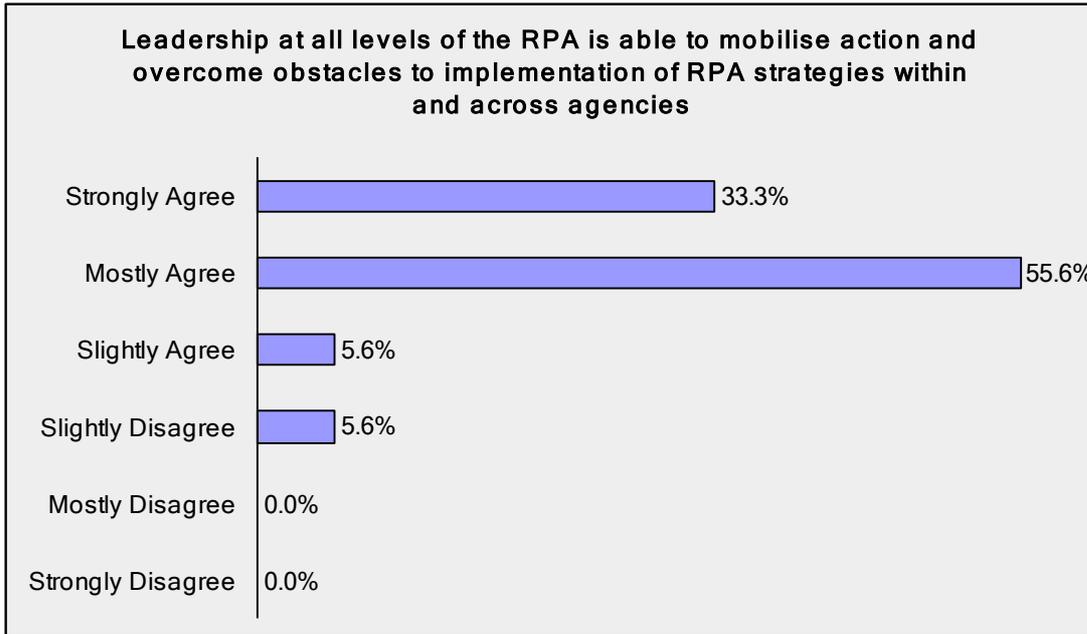
Literature shows the importance of training key players to work in a partnership, so they build collaborative problem-solving and planning, negotiation and influencing skills, an understanding of models of collaboration and the implications of these for policy and planning (Atkenson 2005; Australian Public Service Commission 2004). Findings from the literature demonstrate the need for leaders to develop different ways of working to support partnership activity as partnerships are usually formed when existing systems have failed to meet objectives.

Strong leadership of the RPA and commitment of leaders to results have been highly influential in securing the considerable achievements to-date. Survey respondents shared a high level of consensus that the RPA has been effective in ensuring that ‘things get done’.

Key principles were agreed as part of the formation of the RPA Stage 1 (see Section 2.4). These have been both a touchstone and a unifying force for the work of the RPA as work has evolved and the meaning and interpretation of principles have been tested. It is clear that they have supported the building of capacity for joint problem solving and negotiating solutions. Stakeholders note that this feature demonstrably matured and strengthened through the life of the RPA.

A number of senior people have influenced the agenda and their success in tackling hard issues such as improving the education system in the communities, changing providers for housing and securing agreement for fluoridation is noted by respondents. Long experience of key players in remote community work and commitment to the RPA contributed to making the partnership work. Partners also ensured that they had the technical evidence to underpin innovative work and advice on how to address intractable problems in the community.

Allocation of three co-chairs comprising senior members of the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory Government and the ALC equally responsible for the progress of the partnership has resulted in a sense of shared enterprise which has permeated all agencies. Leadership seems to have been genuinely shared between the major partners, especially the Commonwealth and territory governments and the ALC. This is significant as government has ceded hegemony—the principle of equality.



**Figure 2 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on leadership.**

Setting up the RPA required strong leadership from the Chair of the ALC and its staff. The Chair recognised the opportunities arising from policy changes and used those as a catalyst for the development of the Stage 1 RPA.

*This took the form of leveraging their agreement with the Commonwealth Government to negotiate township leases [over traditional lands] to secure a comprehensive RPA aimed at addressing a huge backlog of outstanding infrastructure (housing, essential services etc.) and service delivery needs.*  
(Interview respondent)

The ALC has had to provide leadership and the influence of the Anindilyakwa to support this original agreement. It has required continuous communication, education and negotiation with community members so they continue to develop understanding of the implications of the RPA for them. Many issues require ongoing negotiation, education and reassurance. Some stakeholders claimed that the ALC was not broadly representative of the 14 clans and that not all had endorsed the RPA agenda early on. The tension in implementing change has resulted in enormous pressure on the Chair of the ALC and he has continued this work at enormous personal cost.

*At the start talking to communities there was probably 50/50 per cent understanding and hesitation about the RPA because it was a new thing for us.* (ALC survey respondent)

However, community understanding and support for the role of the ALC in the partnership has increased as RPA work has achieved tangible results such as the road, housing and other facilities. Other consultancy reports such as recent work on governance in Groote Elyandt and Bickerton Island communities has revealed that the communities are now

beginning to appreciate that changes are happening and support for the work of the RPA is strengthening (Langford, 2011).

Similarly, the Australian and Northern Territory governments gave highest level endorsement to the RPA through the sign off by the relevant Commonwealth Minister and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. Such authorisation encouraged a creative and vigorous response to the challenges the RPA agreed to tackle and provided authority for decision making. Senior leadership has had the support of some key operatives within each organisation who have taken the role of brokers and bridgers who have been able to improve the understanding of agencies about how they work in partnership. In particular they have transcended program boundaries and systems issues to enable collaborative action. Key good practice skills they have demonstrated have been:

- deep understanding of government policy and administrative arrangements and development of creative responses to needs
- receptiveness to new ways of thinking and action and the capacity to influence their own organisations and their partners
- capacity to work effectively as change agents with a problem solving focus
- dispersion of knowledge
- working creatively with diversity and conflict, and
- managing risk effectively.

The RPC members have been influential in this and the secretariat has played an important role. However, it is evident that more training is needed at all levels of government and service delivery on working effectively in partnership and identifying amendments to systems which would enhance operations at all levels.

The evaluation team did not find evidence that government had formally identified the barriers posed by conventional arrangements on partnership work or that government staff understood how to address those needs with current systems. While such work is happening informally the evaluation team found no evidence that these questions had been raised or that particular training for involvement and administration through partnerships was occurring formally. It was more the case that while leaders understood the imperatives, those at the operational level were still constrained by program, funding and program boundaries. There was some evidence that staff were feeling hampered by their perception of inflexibilities in the government systems and were using conventional approaches to managing these initiatives. Atkinson (Atkinson 2005) notes that some officers can take the role of unintentional and benign saboteurs by not looking for opportunities to streamline systems to meet partnership needs and some examples were found of this happening. For example, one stakeholder quoted 11 separate funding proposals and contracts across agencies to design one training and employment project; and the case studies in this report provide further examples of multiple funders for sport and education unnecessarily slowing implementation. Significant process delays were another problem arising from the multiple accountability processes not being aligned to progress RPA endorsed work.

The extent and effectiveness of delegation of decision making for implementation is key to working in complex environments. Stakeholders believe that delegation of implementation

responsibilities is variable depending on the organisational culture and policies of each agency; downstream leadership, how processes are delegated in each agency and the strength of the relevant RPA sub-committee governing it. Many issues have emerged because program administration approaches have not necessarily supported the different ways of working which a partnership requires. Consequently there have been vertical and horizontal tensions which have caused frustration and hold ups. As well, support for implementation 'on island' where the effects of program implementation collide is too limited. These issues have been explored in the case studies of the Umbakumba and Angurugu Police posts, the building of the road and in the implementation of the SIHIP program.

Creating leadership sustainability and governance and management skills is recognised as fundamental to the development of Indigenous communities. This is a particular priority for the ALC, recognising the fragility of the RPA without a sound leadership succession plan. Development of governance capability is one of the priorities in the Stage 2 RPA. This priority was recognised as the ALC had an urgent need to develop capability rapidly to enable it to respond effectively to the implementation challenges arising from RPA work and the management of considerable change in the community.

Development of insight and skill is a long-term challenge but training, mentorship and experience for both current staff and potential leaders is beginning to happen. A comprehensive governance training program for the ALC and GEBIE is being implemented; further evidence of the future orientation of the ALC, supported by Commonwealth funding for a governance training officer (see Case study 11, Governance development plan and training).

Such initiatives could be designed for staff at all levels of government and in the community to build the depth of capacity of all organisations to work in partnership.

## 4.2 STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Analysis of this partnership dimension includes assessment of the extent to which strategic planning and performance management have been embedded within the partnership and the degree to which they are effective. These processes include the translation of the vision and goals into a strategic plan detailing the implementation process; processes that support responsiveness and flexibility; and management and review of these processes.

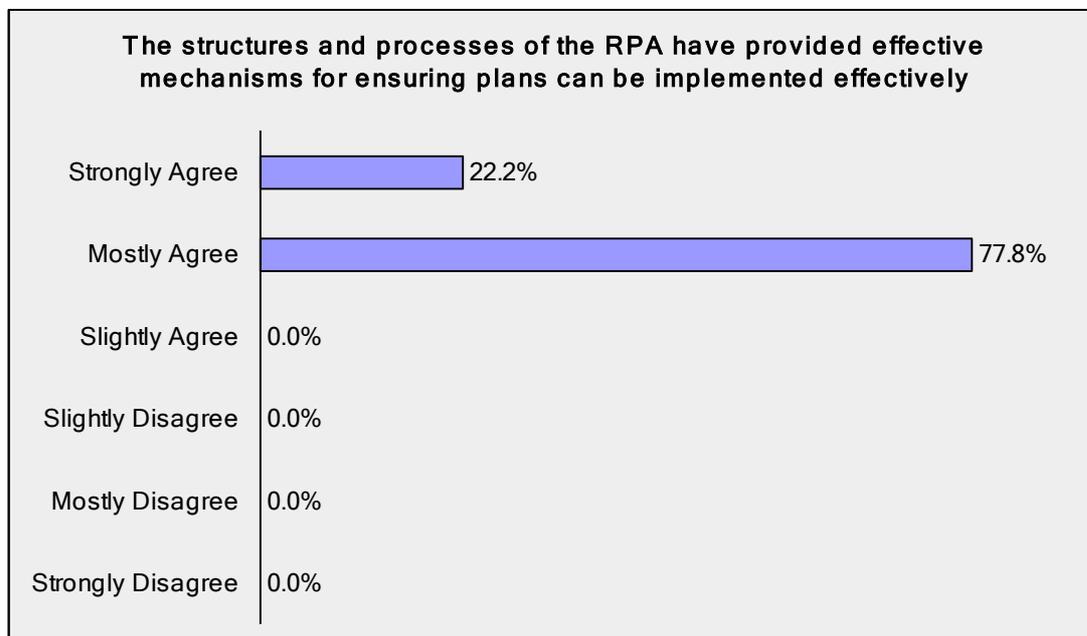
There is no strategic plan as such for the RPA and no mechanism to plan and measure progress. Current work is organised under goals, key streams of effort, or key priorities, with projects allocated against each priority. Progress on priorities is reported in each quarterly RPC meeting. The strong track record of implementation illustrates that this has been an effective approach especially for planning and implementing foundational work such as infrastructure development and evidence gathering.

Partners and stakeholders strongly agree (22 per cent), or mostly agree (77.8 per cent) that the structures and processes of the RPA have provided effective mechanisms for ensuring that priorities can be implemented in a timely way. Current mechanisms also fulfil the

requirements for transparency and accountability, consistent with one of the RPA governance principles.

The quarterly RPC meetings essentially perform a strategic reporting, management and monitoring function where progress against each stream of effort is reviewed and issues and problems raised. Sub-committees and individual agencies progress the related work and report regularly to the RPC.

Respondents acknowledged the effectiveness of the planning, management, and monitoring approaches taken to-date as they suited the initial challenges the RPA faced. However, many commented that there was now a need to develop an overall strategic plan which provided a conceptual framework and brought the various elements together. Many of the projects have involved gathering information and building evidence for planning and implementation. This has been an important step. While much of this evidence has been used for decision making there is much which could be further used for ongoing effort.



**Figure 3 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on structures and processes.**

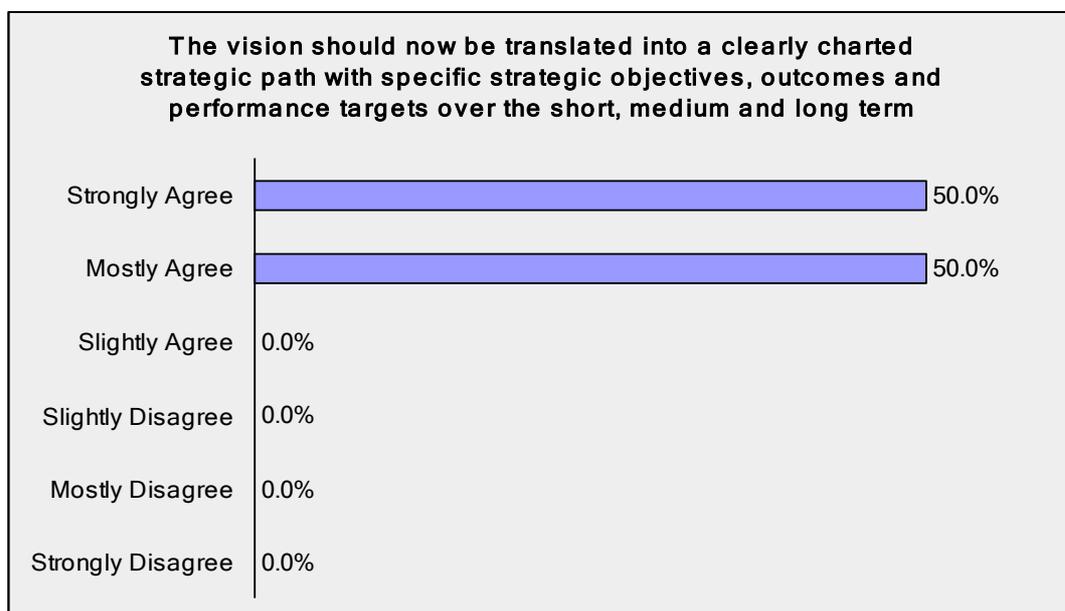
The RPA approach has involved the management of 60 projects over the life of the two agreements through 10 streams of effort. The aim of the RPA design was to overcome the difficulties in implementation that were experienced by other partnerships and this has been very successful. The effectiveness of this approach will be detailed in the section on impacts of the partnership. The work has been highly varied and the RPC has been able to marshal the different types of expertise and specialist input required with the structure and processes being sufficient to manage most challenges to-date.

However most of the initial work is meant to be a catalyst for mobilising fundamental societal and behavioural change including evolution of social norms to enable the Anindiyakwa people to realise benefit from these services. The current process is effective for

management and reporting on project plans but it is less than adequate for guiding, managing and monitoring effort which is more complex and connected.

The next step is to build priorities for change and more consciously integrate effort across programs. This is happening at service delivery level to some extent, for example, connections between economic development, education and youth, sport and recreation are being developed; but there is room for more support for this through the RPA.

An example of a high priority need which would be better addressed through integrated effort is tackling the high level of substance abuse, particularly the use of cannabis. Securing improvement involves demand reduction through a variety of strategies; health promotion, demand control strategies through law enforcement, and supportive approaches by employers and aligning effort across them.



**Figure 4 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on translating vision into a strategic path.**

More integrated approaches are required to streamline service delivery, leverage effort across sectors and build on cultural strengths of the community to build long-term behavioural change. Work to-date in education reform is an example of an innovative approach which is beginning to touch on these issues (see Case study 3, Education).

## Planning for the future

It is timely for the RPC to develop a strategic plan which reiterates the vision and shows how future activities will support achievement of that vision. Work must continue on important infrastructure and service delivery strategies but RPA partners and the broader RPC are noting the need for more attention to behavioural and attitudinal change beyond those initial building blocks, eventually leading to a tipping point for positive and sustainable community development. Committee members and stakeholders are now thinking about how the RPC can build strategically on the stronger capacity in the Groote Eylandt Archipelago as a

platform for gradual positive change: reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors to underpin a reduction in dysfunction, improvements in health, prevention of problems such as substance abuse and development of life skills and confidence to achieve. Such work will necessitate a rethinking of partnership member involvement, committee infrastructure required, a new program of work, investments required and the type of reporting needed. The focus will need to evolve to more coordinated community development and delivery policy.

More attention to and support for streamlining and connecting service delivery effort is one of the principles for remote service delivery that is incorporated in Stage 2 of the RPA. While the Government business managers undertake some of this work as part of the RSD strategy, in the view of many respondents, more work is needed on joint implementation and coordination infrastructure on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago to stimulate change and policy approaches to support more service connections. Silo delivery of programs by small fly-in-fly-out services is a strong feature of service delivery on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island. There may be an opportunity for some of these services to be combined to support more integrated care or at least pathways of care so peoples' support needs can be considered more holistically.

### 4.3 Partnership dynamics: practice and performance

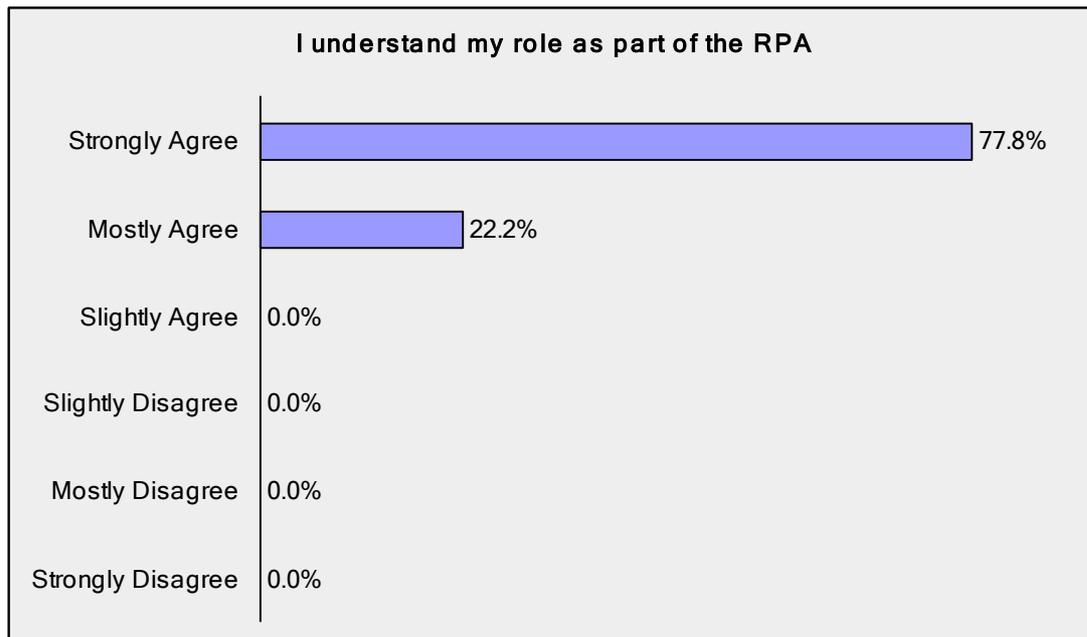
The success of partnerships in delivering on their objectives depends largely on their structures and approaches. The following discussion will focus on critical success factors for partnerships including the following elements: role clarity, trust, collaborative approaches, involvement of key stakeholders, communication (vertical and horizontal), organisational structures and processes, and decision making processes.

#### **Role clarity**

Organisations involved agreed that they understood their role as contributors to RPA work and were committed to making a robust contribution, as illustrated in the figure below. This has been a key enabler for whole-of-government participation.

Current conception of roles is largely agency and program based rather than around interdependence to achieve shared goals. Although there are shared goals and strategies,

there has, to-date, been little rethinking of roles on a holistic basis.



**Figure 5 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on translating vision into a strategic path.**

As part of strategic planning the partnership could benefit from some new thinking on roles and responsibilities both at the conceptual level and through the layers of administration as new initiatives and projects are identified. For example, the development of the youth strategy will require new thinking about holistic and more interconnected approaches to support implementation of education initiatives. These initiatives are already challenging the thinking about roles and collaboration at the policy, strategy and practice level to facilitate the type of work that this strategy proposes.

Designing the most effective forms of administration is an integral part of such strategic planning. One of the considerations is how resources across strategies could be combined to support local implementation, for example, the work of the Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board and implementation of the local implementation plans supporting the youth and community safety strategies. The government business managers see themselves as

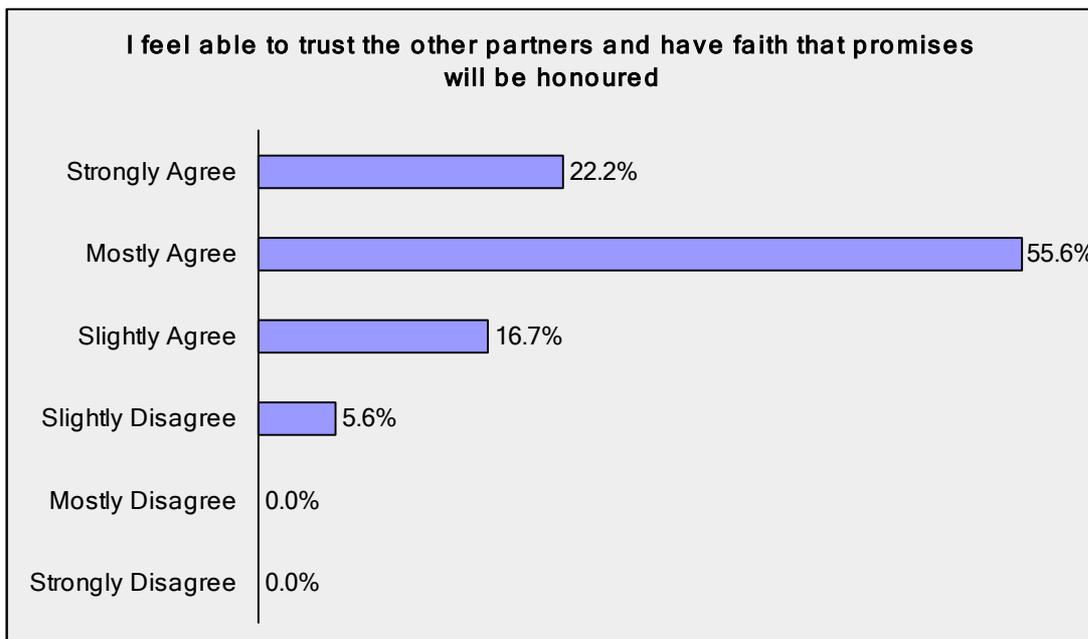
*... the glue working between service providers, governments and the community – they speak with stakeholders and are able to gauge where things may be going off the rails – and identify where problems or difficulties are emerging. (Stakeholder survey)*

However they are formally the face of Government and more strategic and purposeful integration of this resource with activities under the RPA may benefit its implementation substantially.

## Trust

‘Trust is widely recognised as a core feature of partnership relationships and one which facilitates joint work. It is an issue which must be addressed if partnerships are to enhance joint system integration’ (Walker et al 2008).

The health of the RPA is also indicated by reasonably high levels of trust that other partners would ‘do what they committed to’ as reported in the figure below and implicitly not undermine partnership work. The high levels of trust illustrated in Figure 6 have been underpinned by the high level authorisation, a signed partnership agreement, agreed resource commitment, and a strong commitment towards shared goals – all essential elements of collaborative work.



**Figure 6 RPA partners’ and advisors’ response to evaluation survey question on trust.**

Although trust has been tested by lack of clarity on policy positions, difficulties in implementation and delays in partners meeting commitments, successfully working through such issues has resulted in a maturing of relationships. Some agencies have demonstrated lower levels of skill and commitment to partnership work as required and this has tested relationships and slowed the progression of the work. Stakeholder examples of threats to trust mainly related to poor communication which slowed progress of work, long delays in meeting commitments such as funding and failure of agencies to overcome administrative blocks or to explain them. Program implementation problems also have tested trust, for example, with SIHIP and the improvement of community policing (see Case studies 2, SIHIP and 8, Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts).

For the Anindilyakwa community, the levels of faith in the capacity of the RPA to deliver improvements to the community has improved over time as relationships between government and the community have developed and the delivery of commitments occurred.

*In the early stages it wasn't meant to be, there was a lot of people involved and lots of agreements and disagreements. At the start there wasn't a lot of trust when balanda had conversations with us. They had different thoughts and different ways*

*of saying things. Now it is slowly coming into place and working very well. In meetings now we talk honestly between leaders of the ALC and Balanda. (survey respondent)*

Some tests have been met well such as the partners holding firm and not commenting separately to the media when the SIHIP program had significant difficulties with contractors not delivering quality housing stock in a timely way.

Other issues such as the relocation of the RPA secretariat to the ROC which administers the RSD strategy raised many concerns. To the ALC it seemed to be a breach of the spirit of the agreement with government. At face value the ALC was concerned that government commitment to the RPA agreement was waning and that support would be reduced. The issue was resolved by FaHCSIA agreeing to review the arrangement after six months and the ALC was pleased that the level of support had been maintained. There is also an ongoing concern about possible government intention to incorporate the RPA under the RSD strategy administrative arrangements.

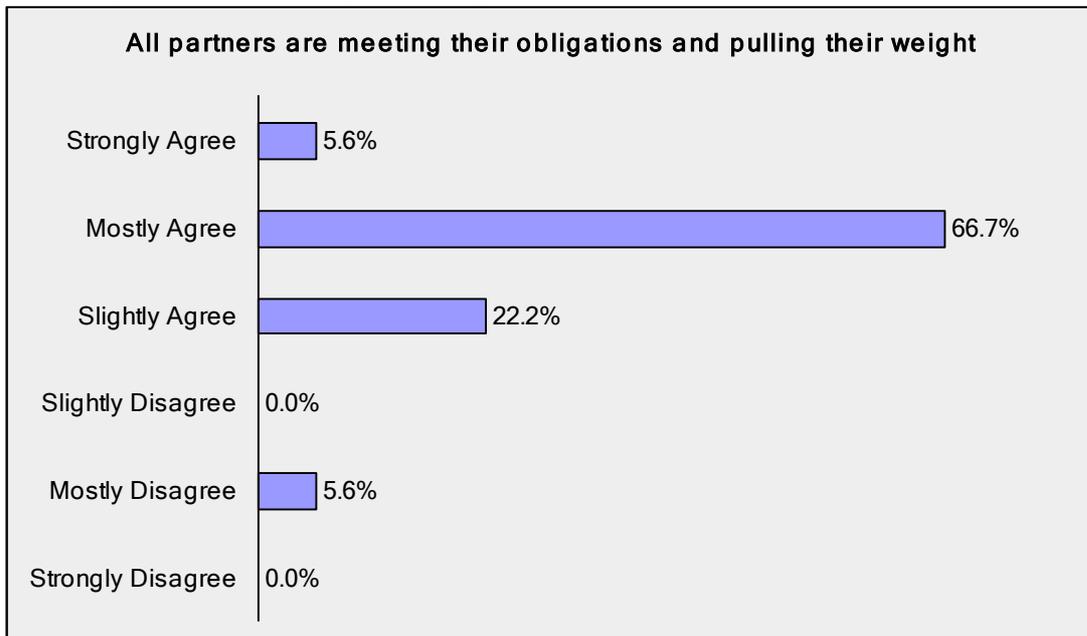
There are some signs of emerging issues which will need attention and hard conversations and action as the following respondent comment illustrates:

*The agreements only show those articles that the partners felt able to deliver on. Really difficult or contentious tasks are not in there. (Survey respondent)*

However, that most survey respondents agreed or mostly agree with the statement 'I feel able to trust the other partners and have faith that promises will be honoured' indicates that the RPA has been successful in building and maintaining the trust of partners and their respective agencies and that it has a good platform to build on.

*The accountability and transparency that applies under the RPA is unique in my opinion while some agencies have struggled to come to terms with this. But in overall terms there has been strong support for the approach being taken. (Survey respondent)*

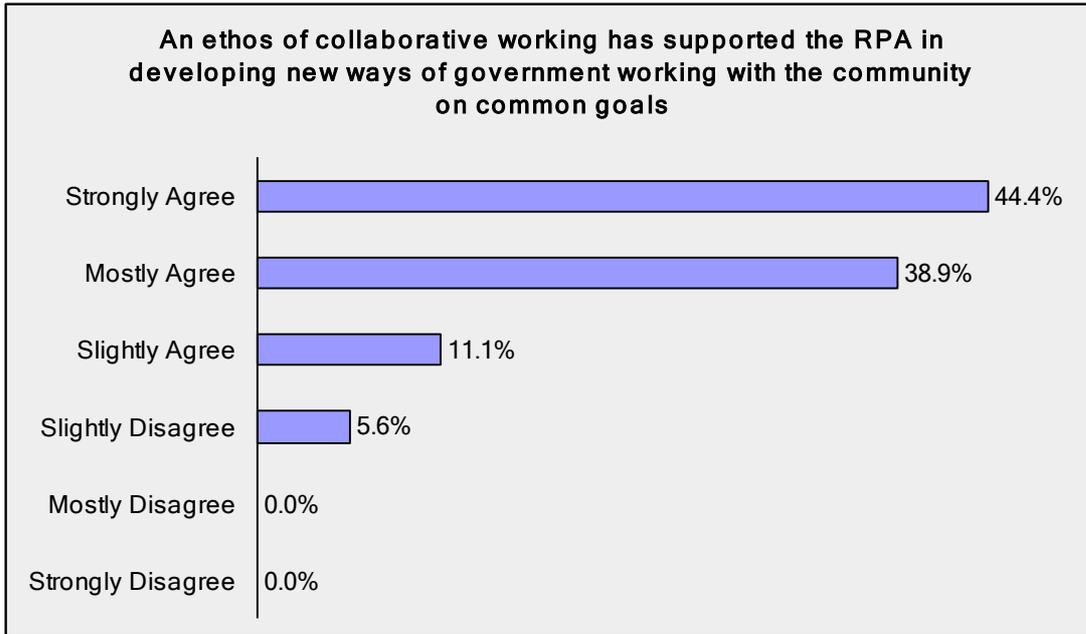
Despite these statements most respondents agreed that the RPA partners were 'meeting their obligations and pulling their weight'.



**Figure 7 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on meeting obligations**

### **Collaborative approaches**

The willingness to collaborate and enacting this through the RPC and sub-committee processes and through implementation of deliverables is another vital underpinning for a partnership approach. Most respondents agreed that collaboration in the RPA was effective with 44 per cent of respondents strongly agreeing and 38.9 per cent (total 82.9 per cent) mostly agreeing with the statement 'an ethos of collaborative working has supported the RPA in developing new ways of government working with the community on common goals'. This collaboration has been highly important to the success of the RPA, and it has matured over time.



**Figure 8 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on collaborative working.**

The benefits of collaboration have been clear and case studies (see Appendix B) illustrate the interconnectedness of the work undertaken and the importance of involvement from all appropriate agencies. Most initiatives have cross-agency funders and implementation arrangements and it is the view of many respondents that without collaboration the RPA would not have achieved so much to-date.

Collaborative processes are never easy and the strength of the collaboration is made clear in the following statement by a survey respondent.

*Effective implementation on the ground is a key issue due to senior representation from the Commonwealth, Northern Territory Government and the ALC on RPA committee cross or individual agency issues has been sorted out on a number of occasions. The requirement that individual agencies except [sic] responsibility for reporting against identify [sic] timeframes for individual projects and that this has been formed the basis that the focus of RPA meetings has also been important along with a critical retention of a dedicated RPA secretariat.*

However some of the difficulties which have arisen and are illustrated in the case studies emphasise the need to support further development of collaboration through negotiation at the committee level and agency review of priorities.

*The agreement is not binding but is generally well supported. There still appears to be reluctance to do some of the tasks that add value to people's lives, e.g. installing mobile phone services to Umbakumba. (Survey respondent)*

*The capability to "mobilise" intent, allocation of resources and agreed action are quite separate things. (Survey respondent)*

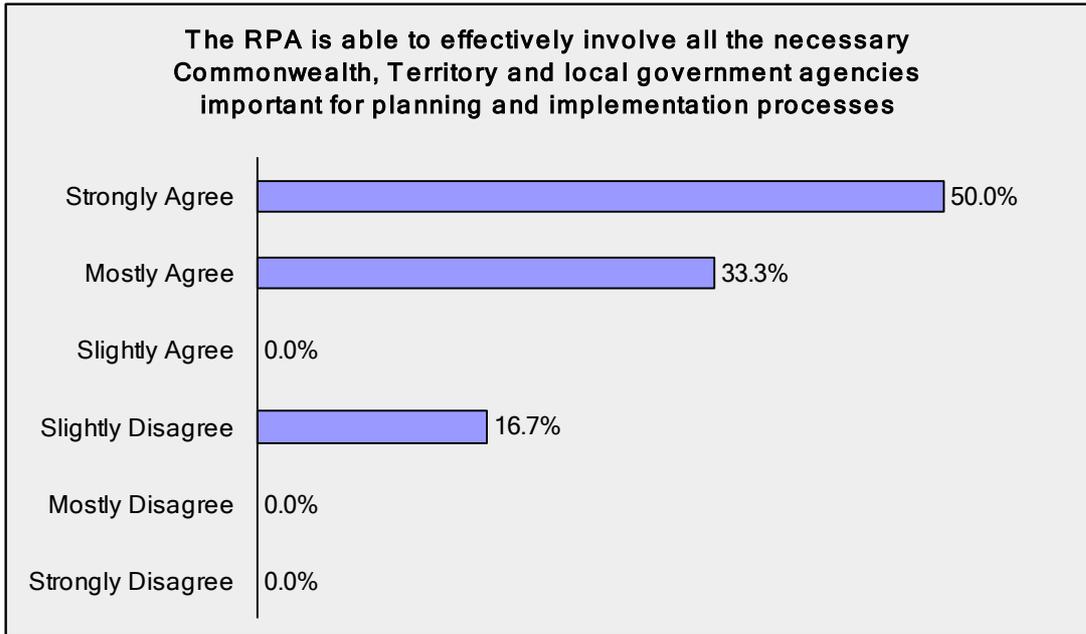
The policing of Umbakumba is an example of where collaborative processes have not been able to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the community in a timely way. This issue has been a constant source of friction between the ALC and Northern Territory Police because there has been unwillingness to respond to community requests and have police live in the community. Current Northern Territory Police policy and administrative arrangements have not supported this move. This is an example of vertical and horizontal tensions which partnerships experience because of broader policy limits or even conflicts with meeting needs at the community level. There were a number of examples of such tension.

Although safety has improved markedly since community success in mobilising the development and implementation of the Alcohol Management Plan, perceptions are that the state of community safety is fragile and needs little provocation to dissipate. This is an example where police and the community appear to have different and firm views and even high level negotiations have been slow to progress the issue.

Although a police post and accommodation have been built at Umbakumba, it was until recently used minimally although police were patrolling the community according to the terms of the RPA. The lack of office IT and telecommunication facilities was cited by police as a major barrier to locating police in the community and incident reporting was not deemed to be high enough to warrant this resource allocation. All signs point to gradual improvement in the situation (see Case study 8). Constant pressure from the ALC and the RPA has resulted in progress, with IT capacity being recently installed in the Umbakumba Police Post, paving the way for police resources to be used more effectively while in that community.

### **Involvement of key stakeholders**

It is vital that key stakeholders responsible for carriage in particular areas be involved in partnership work. The work fostered by the RPA has been comprehensive and it has garnered support from a large number of agencies across government. Figure 9 captures responses to the question 'the RPA is able to effectively involve all the necessary Commonwealth, territory and local government agencies important for planning and implementation processes'.



**Figure 9 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on RPA involvement of government agencies.**

Some survey respondents noted that this was a 'key strength' of the RPA while other responses were more measured.

*Agree that the RPA can involve all necessary sectors but to-date has not done this effectively. Currently the training and welfare sectors are more heavily represented than (say) economic or regional development. We need to see a transition.*

*The major disappointment has been local government who [sic] by virtue of being based in Gove have demonstrated a limited commitment to the RPA by way of financial contribution. Nevertheless they have been at the table to assist in sorting through cross-agency issues when (shire) interests are directly involved.*

At the same time the East Arnhem Shire Council has expressed frustration at the limitations posed by their financial constraints. Their view is that:

*There is a huge commitment from both Council and staff- just no funds to demonstrate this.*

The resource constraints are real and the role the role and nature of involvement by the East Arnhem Shire Council in the RPA must take this context into account.

However, there was evidence that many problems could be ameliorated by East Arnhem Shire Council to improve communication and participation with the RPC and its subcommittees (Refer to Case Study 9; Angurugu and Umbakumba Clubrooms).

As the key priorities of the RPA change over time, particularly as a result of planning processes, the involvement by partners should be reviewed and amended accordingly. A

number of stakeholders mentioned the need for agencies such as the Northern Territory Department of Health to be more actively involved at the strategic level as changes occur.

While the benefits of collaboration have been clearly stated, it is also recognised that collaboration is costly in time and effort. All respondents discussed the administrative effort of collaboration and changes to collaboration approaches might need consideration of any extra burden and resourced accordingly. For RPA partners and committee members alike, the burden of meetings and support for the partnership is considerable and is additional to other strategic work. Cross-memberships of senior people on committees is utilised to enhance communication and provide a unifying direction. This is where developing strong partnership leadership and management capacity through organisations is important so that work can be effectively delegated and momentum maintained. Such action would benefit a range of current partnership activity.

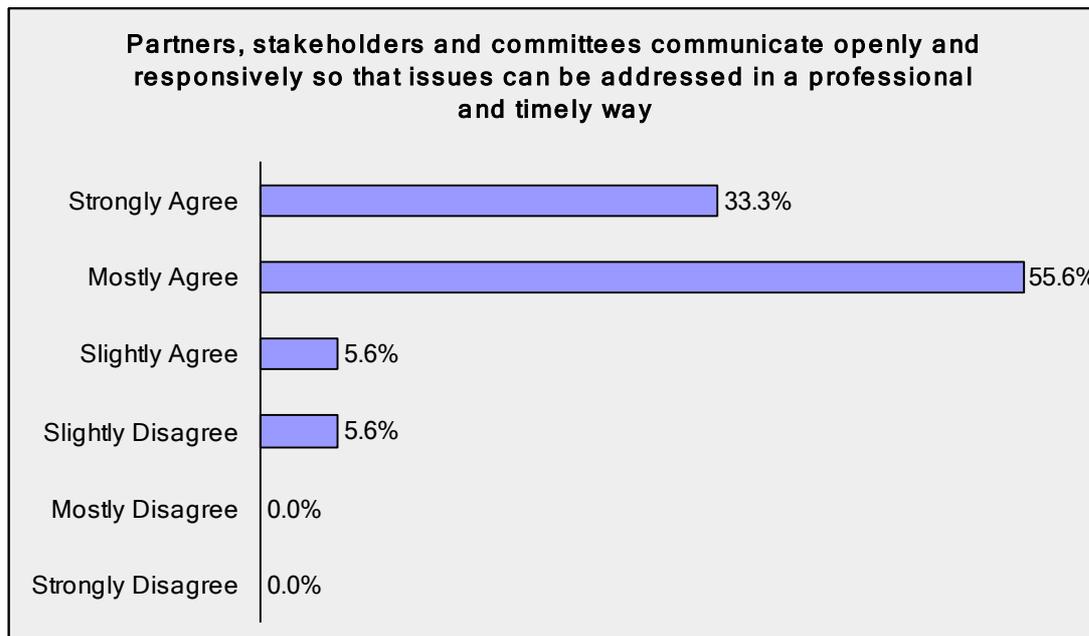
The YSC and the CTCG had strong duplication of membership and content and at the time of the evaluation they were not necessarily a productive use of resources. This is likely to be a characteristic of early development as both committees were newly established in 2010, and in the process of finding their way. Both committees are now refining their directions and the YSC has presented a five-year implementation plan to the RPC for consideration. A priority should be to review the role and membership of both these committees, assess how their work can be streamlined and agree clear programs of work. Both these committees are involved with program implementation on the archipelago and it is clear that their work would be enhanced with more administrative support. The secretariat has provided as much support as possible on Groote Eylandt but its location in Darwin makes this expensive and it is not able to be present at all meetings. Teleconferencing into meetings is done but is ineffective due to poor telecommunications equipment on Groote Eylandt. The secretariat has committed to reviewing its level of support as the youth strategy begins to be implemented.

## **Communication**

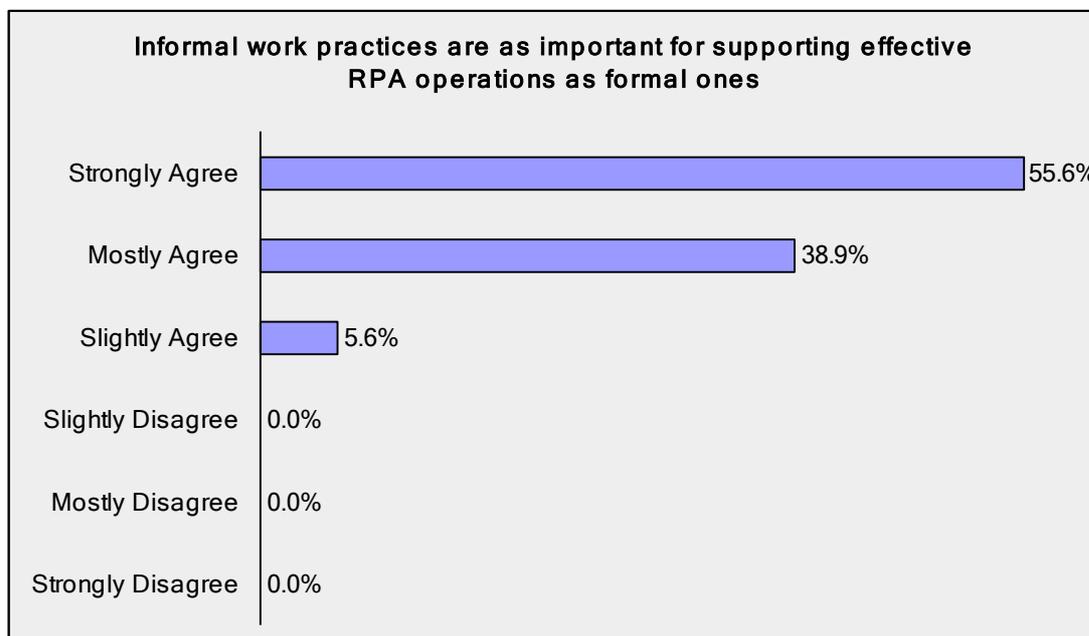
Good communication is at the heart of an effective partnership and a key enabler of partnership effectiveness and it requires ongoing attention. High quality communication processes are evident in RPA work with 88.9 per cent of respondents mostly agreeing (55.6 per cent) and strongly agreeing (33.3 per cent) with the statement that partners, stakeholders and committees communicate openly and responsively so that issues can be addressed in a professional and timely way. A number of successes and disappointments were raised by respondents. Some questions were raised about poor communication within and from the East Arnhem Shire Council leading to delays in delivery of, for example, the AFL clubroom, and in a couple of areas non-responsiveness to requests for briefings and progress reports. Clearly the RPC has to maintain vigilance as this has been an ongoing frustration for implementation and continuity of some initiatives.

The ability to progress the agenda informally is another key working attribute that contributes to partnership effectiveness, with most respondents (88.9 per cent) either strongly agreeing or mostly agreeing with the statement that 'Informal work practices are as important for supporting effective RPA operations as formal ones'. They were seen as particularly

important 'for relationship building and manoeuvring through bottlenecks'. This attribute is demonstrably strengthening over time.



**Figure 10 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on communication.**



**Figure 11 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on informal work practices.**

The RPA secretariat has performed a vital role as a catalyst in supporting communication and relationship development processes. Strong policy and strategic capability as well as informed and sustained administrative support have been valued as it has supported

agencies to understand the issues and respond more effectively in the context of the partnership. This ongoing support has contributed markedly to the refinement and maturation of administrative processes.

### **Administrative arrangements: organisational structures and processes**

The RPA organisational structures and processes were outlined in Section 3.1. It comprises a committee with executive functions and a series of sub-committees with a variety of functions according to the tasks allocated, with individual agency coordination of funding contributions and implementation. Most of the partnership literature advocates organisation and process in some form. Important criteria for administrative good practice include processes to ensure:

- planning functions are shared and transparent
- implementation is monitored and parties are kept accountable for their commitments  
Conflict resolution processes (both formal and informal) are known and understood
- agreements are underpinned by formal written agreements, contractual or memorandum of understanding arrangements
- communication is open and transparent within and across partner organisations, and
- decision making processes are shared and transparent.

### **Planning functions**

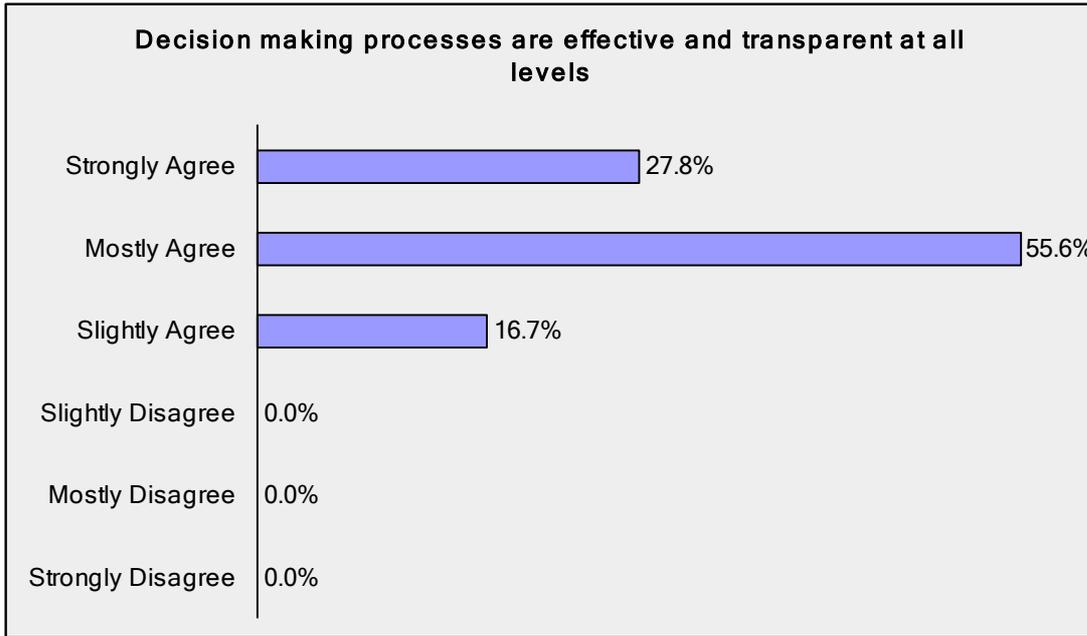
Current work is documented as goals, key streams of effort, key priorities with projects allocated against each priority. Progress on priorities is reported in each quarterly RPA meeting. It is apparent that reporting and monitoring processes ensure transparency in both financial and non-financial resources and accountability of each partner.

### **Implementation monitoring**

The RPC meetings conducted quarterly essentially perform a strategic reporting management and monitoring function where progress against each stream of effort is reviewed and issues and problems raised. The sub-committees undertake the work and make recommendations and raise issues with RPC. Much of the underpinning work by committee members is conducted informally and all stakeholders now have an understanding that that this is a productive way to work and that the capacity to do so is improving as people develop more depth of understanding and processes and relationships mature. Formal contract resolution processes in the contract provide confidence that parties will keep to their commitments (see heading 'Trust' in section 4.3)).

### **Decision making is shared and transparent**

Systematic, streamlined and transparent decision making, monitoring and reporting processes exist and work best at the RPC meeting level. All respondents agreed with this with only 16.7 per cent slightly agreeing.



**Figure 12 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on decision making processes.**

*The RPA committee comprises senior membership so decisions can be made quickly and responsive to community conditions and needs. It's an excellent forum – very effective.*

*Strong mechanisms and implementation plans have been put in place and are very effective. This has been a good achievement in getting us this far.*

*The RPA quarterly meetings are an important structure for monitoring and managing issues.*

*The government structures that the RPA have proved durable and effective. (survey comments)*

The RPA Secretariat has played a substantial and critical role in supporting partners and stakeholders of the RPA. It has supported committee meetings, evidence gathering, and communication between members and followed up with member agencies to ensure they met their commitments. The role was well conceived and led, and all members acknowledged their professionalism and commitment as a major reason for the success of the RPA.

The extent and effectiveness of decentralisation of decision making for implementation is also one of the evaluation criteria for effective partnership functioning (Atkenson 2005). Stakeholders believe that decentralisation of implementation is variable depending on the organisational culture and policies of each agency; downstream leadership, how processes are delegated in each agency and the strength of the relevant RPA sub-committee governing it. Many issues have emerged because program administration approaches have not necessarily supported the different ways of working which a partnership requires. Consequently there have been vertical and horizontal tensions which have caused

frustration and hold ups. As well, individual support for implementation 'on island' where the effects of program implementation collide is too limited. These issues have been explored in Case study 8, Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts, Case study 1, Umbakumba Road upgrade and Case study 2, SIHIP.

*We need to do a lot more to support the Local Reference Groups, improving the performance of all local committees and boards and simplifying our engagement tools, messaging and documents. (Survey respondent)*

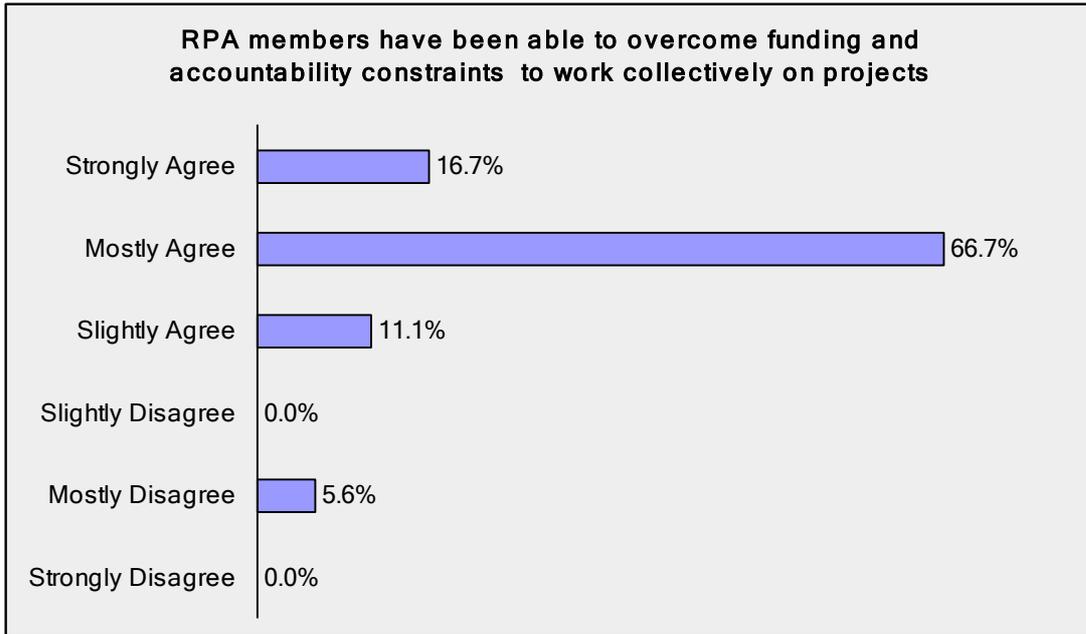
Respondents noted that there is room for improvement and that it was important not to become too complacent with the status quo.

*Not all mechanisms have developed at the same rate and therefore are at different levels of maturity.*

*I think this has been a work in progress and improvements are being made as the RPA progresses. For example, the slow and problematic start to SIHIP [and its problems] with lack of quality control are symptoms of not having proper structures and processes.*

*I still believe there needs to be a better integration of the views of the three communities and broader leadership in this process. (Survey comments)*

Some of the above comments reflect recurring system issues which are difficult to prevent and to which partnerships are vulnerable. For example, it is argued that some of the problems with SIHIP can be attributed to broader program start-up issues and therefore not defects with RPA processes. Rather, the secretariat was able to intervene to resolve situations as they occurred.



**Figure 13 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on overcoming funding and accountability constraints.**

The lower involvement of the East Arnhem Shire Council is attributed by some stakeholders to resource constraints and other organisational issues such as the varying level of support from elected councillors. It is also unclear how the East Arnhem Shire Council addresses the work on Groote as part of their internal planning processes, whether it is incorporated as business as usual or there are arrangements to give some priority to RPA work. Clearly, the East Arnhem Shire Council role is important in the design and implementation of many programs at community level and there is potential for them to have a more solid role in the RPA. Similarly policies on community support from GEMCO are influenced by a broader BHP Billiton agenda. Just as with government some delays in financial contribution may be attributed to internal policy and systems dynamics.

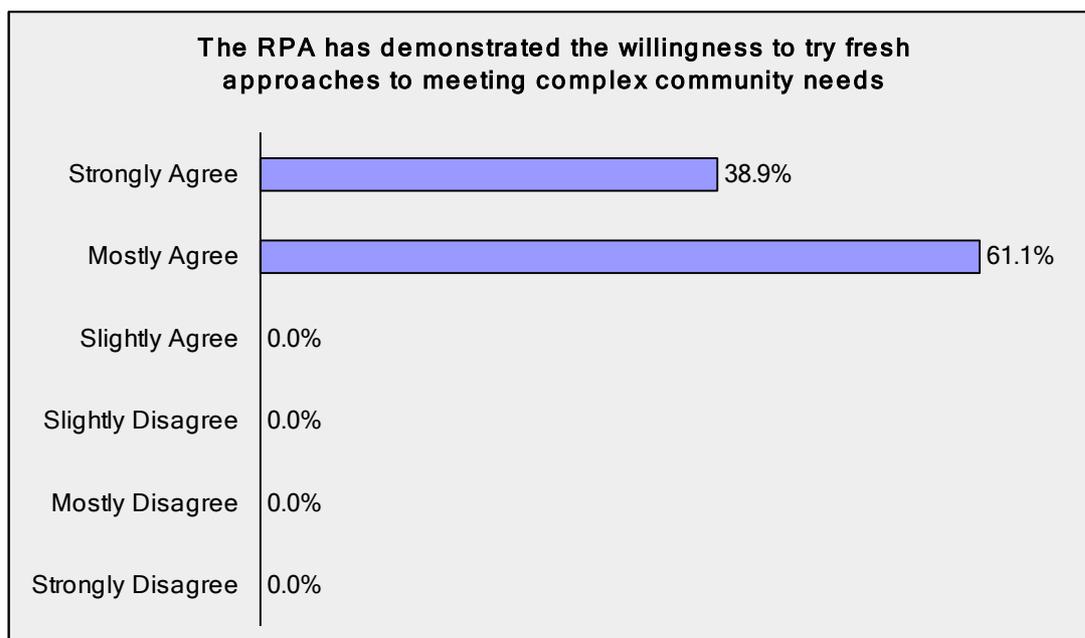
Partners and stakeholders strongly agree (22 per cent), or mostly agree (77.8 per cent) that the structures and processes of the RPA have provided effective mechanisms for ensuring good practice across the above criteria and that the work of the partnership is implemented effectively. Current mechanisms also largely fulfil the requirements for transparency and accountability, consistent with one of the RPA governance principles. The strong implementation track record illustrates that this has been an effective approach especially for planning and progressing foundation work such as infrastructure development, planning and evidence gathering.

Joint partnership governance training for agencies would make explicit some of the differences between regular mainstream administration and administration of partnership projects. This would enhance the ability of staff members who are involved in implementation to understand the principles of partnership working and the different challenges it presents. Development of a toolkit of models and approaches to support planning and problem solving combined with regular review would be an effective approach to supporting staff to undertake multiple roles rather than having to make partnership work

blend with current individual agency administrative agency processes and standards. Such differences have led to implementation difficulties in infrastructure building programs such as SIHIP and the AFL change rooms as outlined in detail in Case studies 2 and 9.

### Responsiveness of the RPA

The policy and strategy environment is dynamic and resources are constrained. To be responsive to community means many fresh approaches need to be tried. The evidence through the case studies and interviews has been that partner agencies have tried many new arrangements to respond more effectively to challenges. The approach to education and training is one example of a new strategic approach which was embraced by the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the ALC. (see Case study 3, Education). Pathways from school to employment have been conceived to develop work skills, and improve employability of school leavers with GEBIE and GEMCO being incorporated in that effort. See Case study 4, GEBIE Job Shop and Case study 5, GEMCO training and mentoring.



**Figure 14 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on the RPA's willingness to try fresh approaches.**

The RPC has also been able to respond effectively to a dynamic policy and program environment which has posed both opportunities and setbacks. Timelines have been changed due to unforeseen difficulties, administrative arrangements have changed due to resource constraints and new programs such as the RSD strategy for Umbakumba and Angurugu have been introduced. These have been accommodated under the RPA by adding Schedule D which outlines how the RSD strategy will work with the RPA.

## 4.4 RPA influence

The ability to influence other parties is another key sign of an effective partnership as its track record instils faith in members and others to commit funds, and trust in the enterprise's ability 'to get things done' effectively. This criterion considers the extent to which the RPA has exerted influence over government organisations, funders and partner organisations to change their approaches and enhanced understanding of what can be achieved through the partnership process. Questions about influence encompass:

- How much does the partnership influence government and other organisations?
- How much does this influence stimulate change within partnership members – new ways of understanding, thinking and action?
- How much does the partnership change itself as it matures to a different identity?  
(adapted from Pettigrew 2006)

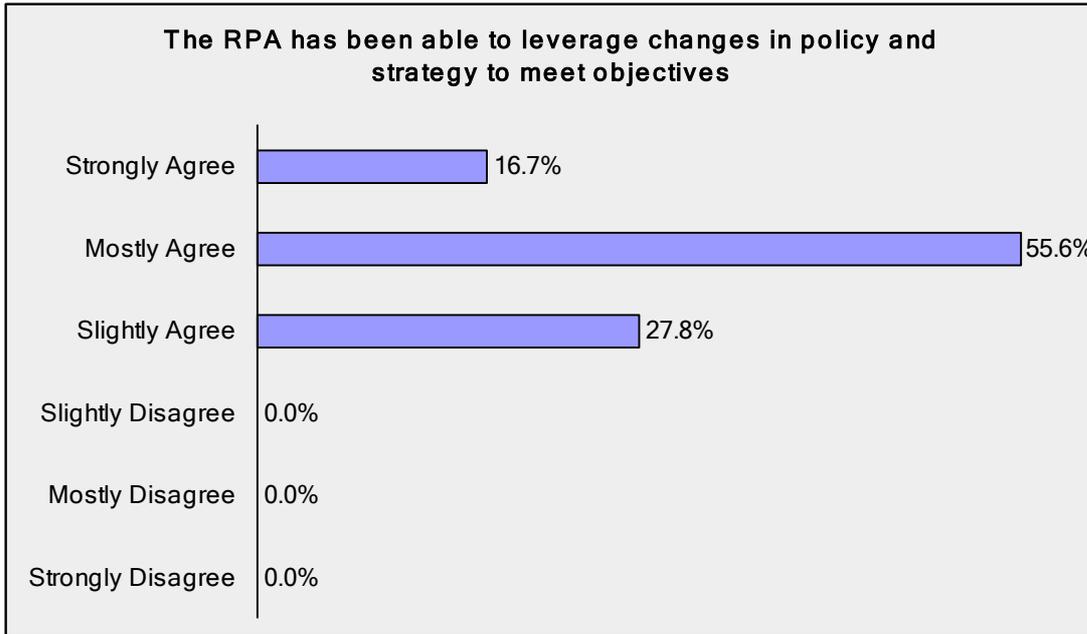
### Influence on government

The partnership has had a marked influence across government and other organisations with many expressing confidence and support for the partnership and its processes. Stakeholders have stated that needs and required action are expressed clearly and involve community perspectives. This then enables individual organisations to cooperate. The following stakeholder comment is representative of many:

*The RPA is more effective than other collaborative processes such as the RSD strategy as the decision making processes include community members at all levels.*

Respect for the RPA capacity to negotiate and deliver is also evident in the number of proposals which have been funded, policies which have been developed or amended and changes to program implementation arrangements which have been negotiated.

Survey respondents also agreed that the RPA had been influential in changing policy and strategy although there was more variation in the response with 16 per cent strongly agreeing, 55 per cent mostly agreeing and 27 per cent slightly agreeing as illustrated in Figure 15 below.



**Figure 15 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on RPA's leveraging ability and influence on policy and strategy.**

A level of influence was already evident at the time of the signing of Stage 2 of the RPA with Schedule D confirming the primacy of the RPA as the vehicle for implementing the RSD, consistent with the priority placed on locally identified needs and the operation of the RPA as a 'one stop shop'.

Other significant developments for the community were ensuring the implementation of fluoridation on Groote Eylandt which required the development of a Northern Territory Government policy for fluoridation in remote areas, (see Case study 7), collection of evidence to support planning and infrastructure and garnering collaboration where it was important for success, such as SIHIP and training.

Many stakeholders express the belief that RPA influence was critical to getting a lot of projects off the ground and that it provided a model of how things could work for communities. Many see it as 'a beacon' for others (Stakeholder interviews).

Other stakeholders were less sure:

*The RPA should influence the change in policies to make sure Groote Eylandt a safer place to live in.*

*Could do better. For example trying to change the policy and infrastructure around providing women's and men's wellbeing centres – rather than 'cooling off' shelter and 'safe houses'- has been extremely slow – despite opposition from the community from day 1 of the delivery of the shelters. The community did not ask for them and does not want them (in the current form where they look like prisons).*

*I have not seen strong evidence of new policy approaches or best practice transferable strategies except for the use of royalty monies for the road project and the capital development model.*

## **Innovative responses**

The RPA has fostered innovation. The establishment of the MJD Foundation, (see Case study 6, MJD) is a clear example of an innovative response to a pressing community need which was not being addressed satisfactorily under separate program arrangements.

The RPA has also stimulated innovative collaborative arrangements in the community, for example the involvement of GEMCO and GEBIE in supporting formal educational effort (see Case study 4, GEBIE Job Shop and Case study 5, GEMCO training and mentoring).

## **Influence on government and other members of the RPA**

Many influences have been incremental but noticeable. Participants in partnership processes say that they have increased their understanding of collaborative working and are professionally benefiting from the RPA arrangements which enable cross-agency effort. The arrangement has increased understanding and supports staff to collaboratively tease out new ideas and approaches.

The RPA Secretariat has played a major influencing and educative role in this as it has worked with agencies on various tasks to ensure appropriate responses are developed, are appropriate and carried through. It has enhanced clearer understanding of beliefs and value systems of partners who may often be on the other side of the fence and of the advantages of joint action to meet shared goals.

Because of this, community confidence in government through the partnership approach has improved with examples identified through the report. It has also enhanced the understanding of what can be gained through collaboration. Differences of view and policy are gradually being ironed out rather than remaining barriers to development.

It is clear that the RPA has made a difference in the community, with many government interviewees saying that RPA implementation was superior to that in other remote communities, and was trusted to see things through. However it is also clear that new challenges are emerging as the work evolves and new approaches and more purposeful effort will be needed to respond effectively.

Stakeholders working to implement reforms at the local level, including the EASC, GEBIE see reforming government implementation architecture to support more effective place-based needs analysis and implementation design as a key priority.

## **4.5 Participation and community engagement**

The level and quality of community participation and engagement is a key aspect of a social partnership such as the RPA to ensure the voice of the beneficiaries—community members—is heard and acted upon. The literature on partnerships suggests the following ways to promote effective engagement include:

- being sensitive to and responding where possible to cultural and practice differences

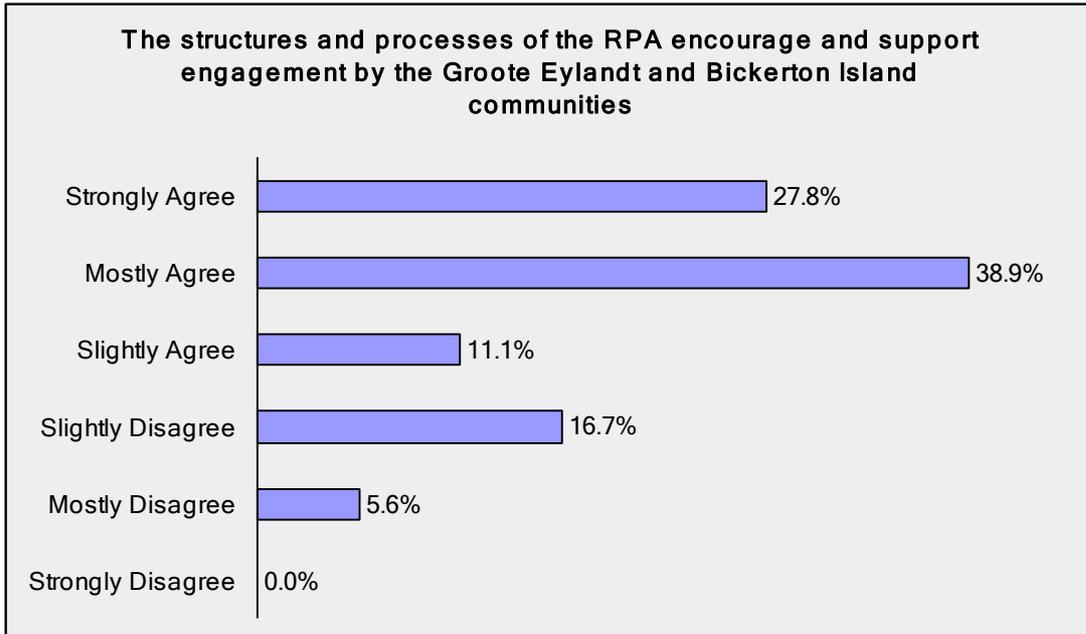
- developing practices to ensure alternative voices are heard, including providing tailor-made opportunities for the community to participate and involvement at all types of decision making
- consulting with the key stakeholders – including community leaders and recognised community spokespeople
- developing a warm and open culture so that the community members feel respected and welcomed
- putting the community and affected individuals at the centre, and
- Building the capacity of the community to build and participate in an increasingly informed way.

Indigenous community engagement in Australia has largely incorporated flexible processes of interaction and this has been the case with the Groote Archipelago. The assessment of engagement is informed by the principles of good engagement (Cavaye 2004, Cavaye 2004 a.) which incorporate continuity and sustainability of engagement.

In implementing the above RPA members including the ALC have been cognisant of:

- Balancing the local community needs with the wider public interest.
- Getting the level of consultation right to meet varying needs, especially avoiding over consultation on multiple issues when many different agencies and services are involved.
- Dealing with the low threshold of community skills to understand complex issues so they understand what is being discussed and as part of these addressing anxieties related to the belief that change will undermine valued traditional norms and beliefs.
- Building trust that concerns and needs are being addressed when much of the early work such as planning is lengthy and invisible to people. Part of this is addressing anger at a legacy of poor previous engagement and inaction.

In the survey of stakeholders two statements were put forward – whether ‘the structures and processes of the RPA encourage and support engagement by the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities’, and ‘whether engagement processes enable the voice of all key groups in the community to be heard’. The summary of responses is illustrated in Figures 16 and 17 below.



**Figure 16 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on RPA structures and processes supporting community engagement.**

The RPA structures and processes have provided engagement by a number of means. The partners include the ALC which provides leadership and representation through its own consultation, education and negotiation processes with the Anindilyakwa people.

There are layers of representation: the ALC's own board whose meetings are open to the community; officers, both general staff and Anindilyakwa staff, whose role it is to meet with the community in a number of forums; and community representation on sub-committees including the YSC and the CTCG, and the Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board. For committees such as the YSC and CTCG other community members may attend when the meetings are held locally. The local reference groups at Angurugu and Umbakumba supporting the RSD strategy are also linked into this effort.

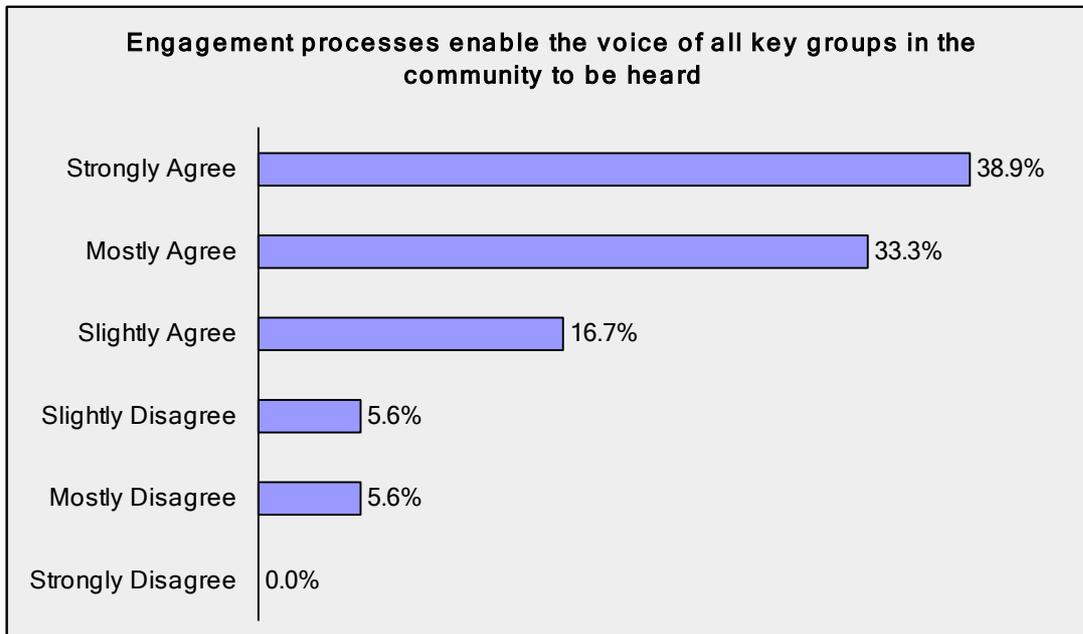
*[Government business managers] coordinating the local reference groups facilitates engagement by all stakeholders including the ALC, shire and where appropriate GEMCO and other community stakeholder groups. The shire have [sic] been slow in engaging with all stakeholders especially through the [local reference groups] but are [sic] now coming on board. The ALC has been strongly supportive.*

Cross-membership of many RPA committees enables people at all levels to hear the community voice first hand. Each individual program also engages in community consultation as part of separate program delivery processes.

There is much community consultation activity and the local people have opportunities to be engaged in all processes.

*The ALC has representatives from all 14 clans and where projects relate to particular groups they are generally consulted by the ALC and the government agency.*

*When the RPA first started the community saw the RPA as a government body dealing with government issues. But as time went on it was seen as being part of the ALC's work and that the communities would benefit from it. Communities are able to speak up and voice their concern and engage in the work of the RPA.*



**Figure 17 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on processes allowing communities to be heard.**

The level of influence by the Anindilyakwa people depends on their level of understanding and experience of the issues and personal capabilities as well as the quality of the engagement processes. The level of input depends on the capacity of local people to contribute and how well they speak English; low levels of literacy on the Archipelago limit effective participation to those who feel confident to contribute. This means that some highly competent people are overburdened. Some community members noted that a lack of ability to understand the issues effectively lowered their confidence levels. As an ALC respondent said:

*This is a very important question. We need more groups of people to be leaders who need to be taught to interact with Balanda people. There is also a need to recognise who the key people are to talk to.*

*The Indigenous voice has been a bit silent at some meetings but they have been represented very effectively by their consultants.*

The skill and capacity of services and program administrators in consulting the community is also a major factor in how well the community voice is facilitated and heard. The importance of training in consultation and engagement processes was frequently stated as was the use of translators to ensure better involvement in some meetings (see Case study 11, Governance development planning and training). Calls for cross-cultural training to build a bridge across cultures have been frequently made (Ramsay, 2006).

While there are many opportunities to engage, the number of meetings across all activities on the Grootte Eylandt Archipelago is burdensome to all actors.

*One of the many issues that is largely misunderstood by a number of players is that many Indigenous communities are sick to death of being continuously consulted by government agencies regarding the same issues over many years yet very little or nothing substantive seems to happen. Both the RPA 1 and 2 proposals reflected what people had been actively seeking by way of support from governments the many years. A clear view that emerged was that they wanted actual action not further endless bouts of so-called 'consultation' i.e. 'Delay is the most devastating form of refusal'. Nevertheless community consultation has been critical around issues relating to housing design, AFL activities, youth strategy, the health clinic, road clearances etc. in other words engagement has occurred on [a] required basis.*  
(Survey comment)

The introduction of the RSD strategy has brought an additional whole of government consultation mechanism with the instigation of local reference groups and the development of local implementation plans. From the RSD strategy perspective the separate consultation processes are providing valuable information and responses to needs which would otherwise be unmet or not prioritised. From the perspective of the ALC and some RPC members, much effort is duplicated, especially where it is concurrent with other major consultative efforts. They believe that the community would be better served with a combined and complementary approach.

The Visiting Officers Notification process administered by the Government business managers was an attempt to coordinate consultation visits. While this process has been very valuable it has evolved as more of a means to book accommodation than to manage the large number of consultation visits because of the lack of structures and resources to do more (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2011).

Most stakeholders believe that engagement and participation processes have become more effective over the life of the RPA but there is considerable room for further rationalisation of consultation structures and improved management. Most advocated reduction of the volume and repetitive nature of engagement processes and more coordination of engagement as a minimum step. The evolution of the RSD on the Eylandt needs to be viewed in this context.

While rationalisation and improvement of consultation is an ongoing need including some constraint on who is seeking formal engagement processes, the challenges remain. The ALC and the Government business managers could take a more proactive approach to align their work. Opportunities could be made to reduce the number and increase the quality of visits by encouraging more thematic engagement activities around particular issues of relevance across agencies. This would aid integration of service approaches and planning effort for example, in youth services or community safety. Such approaches would enable building on current committee processes.

Support for the existing community engagement processes is provided by communication through an ALC newsletter presented in an attractive format. It provides clear evidence of the number and variety of things that are happening as a result of the RPA.

The RPC, particularly the ALC, has had to build confidence in the RPA process, manage the frustration with processes and community anxiety about whether community investment will achieve the outcomes sought. This is an ongoing task by all actors. However there are signs that more trust of and satisfaction with RPA stewardship is emerging with community members noting that ‘if you want something done go to the RPA’<sup>3</sup> (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2011).

Both theorists (Atkenson 2005) and stakeholders believe that for social partnerships engagement should have the overriding purpose of community development rather than an individual program focus. Substantial improvements to current practice for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago may require an evolution of structures, processes and resources to support engagement and communication. The rationalisation and refocusing of engagement processes should mirror this objective.

### **Summary: RPA governance effectiveness**

The governance of the RPA is effective, dynamic and responsive to needs. It performs well on all the dimensions for effective partnership operation despite the fact that one partner is participating less than anticipated. The partnership has matured and strengthened over time and has demonstrated strong capability to develop responses which meet challenges. The role of the East Arnhem Shire Council needs review with a view to clarifying what their potential contribution is compared with their capacity to deliver. As an organisation the East Arnhem Shire Council needs to more firmly understand the implications of RPA membership for their planning operations and priorities and negotiate a productive role. Clearer protocols for all partners based on the principles might clarify expectations by all members enabling them to participate more effectively.

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<sup>3</sup> Such comments have also been captured through community consultation activities related to a number of projects which are in progress.

## 5. Achievements/impacts of the partnership

The true test of a partnership is in the impacts it delivers<sup>4</sup>. The objective of the RPA is to achieve sustainable and measurable improvements for people living in the Anindilyakwa region across a range of outcomes. Activity is focused on 10 streams of effort:

- township leases
- planning and infrastructure
- housing and development
- education outcomes
- economic development and participation
- community health
- community safety
- youth, sport and recreation
- leadership and governance, and
- support for the partnership.

In most of these areas significant progress has been made in putting in place the fundamental building blocks necessary for achievement of ultimate outcomes.

Importantly, the Anindilyakwa people themselves are starting to see tangible progress in a number of areas, particularly basic infrastructure such as roads and housing and the return of some teachers to living in the community. Those most actively engaged in the partnership are also able to see the development of enablers such as communication, trust, leadership and commitment and are seeing service providers begin to work more actively together.

While the impacts of the partnership have been felt across a number of areas, the key question for all partners and stakeholders is whether the RPA has made a difference worth the investment. In reviewing administrative data collected generally such as that for education, health, policing, and social security, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island do not show strong progress in recent years. This result is consistent with communities across the Northern Territory and there is now more appreciation that the improvements in community development will take considerable time to be realised. In this report, the approach taken to analysis of impacts incorporates the concept of 'additionality' (Hind 2010). Use of this approach is particularly important where the benefits of investment articulated in terms of outcomes will be seen only in the longer term. Other aspects such as inputs, investment and outputs are vital to the achievement of outcomes and should be documented and valued as a part of securing progress towards change.

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<sup>4</sup> The information in this section is drawn from the RPA, minutes of RPC meetings, briefing papers, the case studies, respondent interviews and the survey of stakeholders. Information is triangulated. For the ease of the reader each source has not been delineated unless it is more heavily drawn on.

However, equally important for the work of the RPA is the development of understanding of how such an arrangement has contributed to synergies and multiplier effects between projects so that there is more effective use of scarce resources and simplification of complex delivery systems at community level as well as more congruent approaches to community development.

The following section outlines the impact of the RPA in its identified priority areas. It also examines the building of infrastructure and service capacity and the capability to work as a partnership across Commonwealth and Territory governments, local government, non-government organisations, Indigenous people and private industry for more effective planning and implementation of priorities. This includes building the governance capability of the ALC and organisations on Groote Eylandt, increasing the experience and willingness of organisations on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island to work collaboratively, and building effective working relationships between governments and the Anindilyakwa people and also with the mining industry. Additionally, consideration is given to the building of evidence and insight on the nature of the problems and approaches which might be more effective in the Groote Eylandt Archipelago context and the influence on policy and strategy for remote areas.

A key achievement of the RPA has been in developing approaches that not only tackle each of the identified problem areas, but also recognise the need to address underlying social and infrastructure issues to gain positive achievements across several of the problem areas. These approaches underpin more comprehensive and enduring reform.

## 5.1 Township leases

The objective of this project was to establish long-term secure tenure over townships to facilitate certainty for residents, secure a basis for government investment, support better service delivery, attract private investment and facilitate business development and home ownership.

Under the leadership of the Chair of the ALC, the Traditional Owners moved early to grant 40-year leases to the Australian Government over the townships of Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra under section 19A of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. The leases, which are renewable for a further 40 years, were signed on 4 December 2008.

As an outcome of this process, a consultative forum of Traditional Owners was established and worked extensively with the Office of Township Leasing. The establishment of this forum will assist in future productive engagement between the Traditional Owners and government, business and service providers.

## 5.2 Planning and infrastructure

This stream of effort builds on the signing of leases and focuses on the development of supporting infrastructure and effective town planning to cater for future need. Signing of the leases secured government funding for a detailed town planning study as well as for the Angurugu to Umbakumba Road. GEBIE provided funding from royalties to construct

government staff housing at Angurugu and Umbakumba in return for long-term economic rental arrangements and contributed funding for the Umbakumba Road. GEMCO provided a funding contribution to roads including upgrade of the Emerald River Road and Rowell Highway and in-kind support including rock for the public jetty at Alyangula, access to pit water and access to diesel on site at attractive rates.

As a result of the granting of the leases, the boundaries of the townships have been surveyed and commercial buildings valued. A town plan is in place for each of the townships which means that they are now part of the formal planning process in the Northern Territory. Further development will take place in the context of area plans for commercial, industrial and residential development. Groote Eylandt townships are among the first to have official town plans.

GEBIE is building 18 houses of which 10 are now complete. Seven houses will be occupied by teachers. Negotiations are proceeding between GEBIE and the Northern Territory Government over payment of commercial rent; however these issues are complex due to the high level of investment which has been made by GEBIE and the high weekly rentals which would be involved for full cost recovery.

The contract for the Umbakumba Road project was signed on 7 April 2011 and work commenced on 4 July 2011. As Case study 1, Umbakumba Road upgrade, outlines a number of project delivery issues have arisen, however it is expected that the road will be completed by mid - 2012 (subject to an early onset of the wet season not occurring), still well ahead of the original scheduled 2013 date.

The road has provided jobs for 23 Indigenous people. Fifteen of these have recently been trained and accredited with work in zone traffic management. While original expectations around Indigenous employment appear to have been met, some argue that greater efforts could have been made to maximise local participation and expenditure on Groote Eylandt and there are still challenges in relation to individuals establishing regular work patterns.

Telecommunications issues have been more difficult to resolve, with improved capacity and capability critical across a number of areas including education, policing and health. The RPC is developing a proposal which it hopes to discuss with Telstra early in 2012.

The establishment of the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group to plan, coordinate and oversee management of the major infrastructure projects covered by the RPA has been a significant addition to capability. This group has worked collaboratively and productively across agencies, taking a strategic view of capacity development and providing a constructive forum for dealing with difficult issues. It is attempting to sequence projects to rationalise limited capability on the islands and create ongoing employment opportunities.

### **5.3 Housing and development**

The objective of this stream of effort was to relieve overcrowding and improve living conditions as well as maximise employment and business outcomes for the Anindilyakwa people by providing new housing and repairs and maintenance of existing housing. The project also aimed to introduce new housing options and financial management services and

increased investment in community development initiatives, through development of a cultural centre and establishment of a local construction company.

Government funding was provided to construct 26 new houses in Stage 1 and 54 in Stage 2 under SIHIP as well as functional refurbishments with a focus on health and safety issues, painting and other improvements to all current houses. Additionally, there was commitment to provide integrated financial management services to help people improve money management skills and make an informed decision about home ownership.

The Aboriginal Benefits Account contributed funding to develop a cultural centre and the establishment of a GEBIE construction company (GCC).

By the end of October 2011, 37 of the 80 houses promised under SIHIP Stages 1 and 2 (Case study 2, SIHIP) had been completed, and 40 were underway. Of the rebuilds, 28 were completed, with nine underway, while 41 of 66 refurbishments were completed with one underway. These are expected to be completed by December 2013, against a completion date of 2012 in the RPA. There will be 190 new, rebuilt and refurbished houses in total, of which 80 will be new houses. Repairs and maintenance components are also complete.

In terms of infrastructure, subdivision design is complete, with construction 85 per cent completed in Umbakumba and 25 per cent complete in Angurugu; head works were part designed and construction commenced at Angurugu.

By the end of 2013, total housing stock will have increased by 66, with 14 houses having been demolished and new houses built on the existing lots. More houses need to be built and there will need to be discussions about internal movement to reduce numbers in some houses.

Future challenges remain in terms of ongoing housing repairs and maintenance as well as delivery of basic community services such as rubbish collection and road maintenance. There are community concerns about delays in housing repairs and provision of regular municipal services. The Northern Territory Government and the shire are working to review and streamline business processes which appear to be impeding progress but fundamental issues remain about the shire's capacity to provide municipal services at a level which would be considered satisfactory in other parts of Australia. These issues have been raised with the RPC and work is underway within the Northern Territory Government on whether funding for ongoing repairs and maintenance could be allocated directly to GCC, rather than flowing through the shire, however current arrangements are in place until August 2012.

Financial management services are being delivered by Red Cross, and Indigenous Business Australia is delivering community information sessions about home purchase. Until December 2011, Indigenous Business Australia had a contract with GEBIE to assist in referring suitable applicants to money management and to educate and engage the community in the advantages of home ownership. The Australian Valuation Office is valuing properties on Groote Eylandt and the Northern Territory Government is finalising its home ownership policy. The first application for a home loan has yet to be received.

Indigenous business capability has been enhanced through the completion of the cultural centre and establishment of GCC. GCC has experienced some teething problems but

ultimately will deliver 70 houses, which is five less than planned, but they are considered to be high quality rebuilds with some additional bedrooms.

An employment and workforce development plan had been drafted and as of November 2011, 25 Indigenous workers were employed under SIHIP.

In terms of leadership capability, one government official has commented that he is seeing 'a cohesive leadership group emerging around housing, which is able to hold robust discussions' and advance the agenda. The next challenge for the RPA will be to assess further housing requirements, to ensure that there is capability and capacity for ongoing maintenance and that positive social mores are developed around healthy living and educational practices.

## 5.4 Better education outcomes

Stage 1 of the RPA provided government funding for a review of education needs on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island. The review was to inform further work on improving education outcomes from early childhood through schooling to tertiary education and training. Consistent with the Closing the Gap initiative, the RPA aimed to create pathways into education from early childhood, support family relationships and cognitive and social development and improve both educational attainment and rates of employment.

The report of the review, *New Ownership New Responsibilities: Review of Education in the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Region*, was completed under Stage 1 and now forms the basis for reform. The report provided broad ranging and comprehensive recommendations for reform of education on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

Many of the report's recommendations are being implemented as outlined in Case study 3. The Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board has been established to provide overall strategic leadership and accountability and a college of education with an executive principal now has oversight of activity from early childhood through schooling to vocational education and training. The college, named Ngakwurra-Langwa College (Our Way) brings all four schools in the region under the same operating framework under the guidance of the College Director.

All the schools on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago are treated as one to facilitate sharing of resources and professional development and interaction between the schools is increasing. Many new teachers have been recruited and school staffing has been refreshed. An early childhood coordinator has been appointed to develop an integrated service model across government and non-government organisations and the community.

School councils have been constituted for each school and parents are being involved in decision making about school priorities. Two Indigenous traineeships have been implemented, an early childhood language and literature course and a mentor tutor support program are operating and a children's playgroup and an Indigenous parenting support service established.

Eight houses have been built in Umbakumba and teachers are now living in the community rather than commuting from Alyangula. Communities report that these arrangements are

making a difference as the teachers and the school are now seen as more integrated with each community and as having more influence on community members. A site has been identified for the principal's new house. Design for a new crèche/child care facility at Umbakumba is nearly complete and funding has been provided by the Australian Government. GEMCO is committed to constructing an early childhood training centre at Alyangula which will provide training for child care workers and places for young children.

Implementation of the education review report's recommendations has resulted in more local control, ownership and responsibility for education through membership of the Board of Education and local school councils. At Milyakburra strong community involvement, together with quality and focussed teaching underpins higher attendance and vastly improved student outcomes on the 2010 National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy tests. Indigenous enrolments and attendance have increased at Alyangula and cooperation between this school and the Angurugu School have resulted in increased attendance of children from the community of Malkala.

Additionally, partnerships between education and other stakeholders are being established to maximise opportunities for child and youth development and wellbeing and adult activities. These include involvement by health, sport and recreation providers, development of a youth strategy, development of the 3-to-9 Program which constitutes a series of activities after school hours for adults and families and preparation for the workforce with support from GEMCO and GEBIE. The 3-to-9 Program is open to community members and has parents and families attending. It provides opportunities for community members to gather, share skills and learn skills. Ideas on how these skills can be utilised for micro-business are emerging, for example, some community members are now producing items for sale, such as cubby houses and clothing. Angurugu School and the Ngakwurra-Langwa College have recently been recognised for the partnerships they have developed with local industry and the potential they have for local students.

School attendance fluctuates and is still problematic. However the college is in the early stages of working with all communities to improve school attendance, for example, finding a way to reduce absence related to 'sorry business'. There are a number of approaches being undertaken to increase parental involvement with schools on the assumption that this will result in more effort by parents to ensure children attend.

Across the Groote Eylandt Archipelago progress in attendance and achievement is gradual and uneven however there are early signs of progress such as test results from the second year of the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation program which show marked improvement in pre-literacy areas such as syllable awareness, sound awareness and alphabet recognition.

Many challenges remain. Resources and school buildings in Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra community schools are lower than those of Alyangula, which is able to offer an environment and educational opportunities comparable to a Darwin school. The state of Angurugu School is of particular concern to the board however painting and rectification work funded by the Northern Territory Government is expected to be undertaken early in 2012. Challenges in retaining children at school beyond the primary years are high and the opportunities are limited for children in English as a second language community schools to

become proficient in English so they can perform well at high school. Significant change will take a generation and ongoing commitment by all parties will be essential.

## 5.5 Economic development and participation

Projects under this stream of effort were focussed on improving coordination of employment and training services, ensuring effective collaboration between stakeholders, and building the employment aspirations and capacity of local Indigenous people to take up employment and training opportunities and thus enhance local employment outcomes.

DEEWR provided funding to develop a regional employment and economic development strategy, support the development of a 'job shop' through GEBIE, employ an economic development officer, and undertake business planning and business skills training as well as a feasibility study of a local bus service.

By the time the second stage of the RPA was signed in November 2009, the Job Shop was established in Angurugu and GEBIE had developed a regional employment and economic development strategy, a business plan, and a transport feasibility study (see Case study 4, GEBIE Job Shop). An economic development officer has been in place for the last two years. The transport study recommended adopting a strategy of cost reduction for airline services to Groote Eylandt and limited road transport services. The employment and economic development strategy provided an economic profile of the region, outlined the main economic development opportunities, provided a regional framework for Indigenous economic development, and outlined practical strategies to achieve economic development.

Noting the precedent value of its own employment of Indigenous people, GEBIE committed to providing positive pre-employment and career opportunities for Indigenous people in a supportive environment with skills training, professional development, and career pathways. GEBIE's target is to have 70 per cent Indigenous employees. At the end of 2009, in a total workforce of 62 people, GEBIE was employing 39 (63 per cent) Indigenous staff. The Job Shop was providing mentoring and pre-employment services and had improved collaboration with local employers and the community more generally.

GEBIE was awarded the Job Services Australia contract in 2009 and by 15 November 2010, the Job Shop had placed 225 Indigenous people into jobs, with 112 resulting in 13- and 26-week employment retention outcomes. Additionally, 67 remote education outcomes had been achieved. During that period, GEBIE Job Shop had carried out 63 individual and group-based work experience activities. This included accredited training, certificate courses, work experience job placements and work for the dole projects.

Stage 2 of the RPA committed to creation of a local employment and economic development board as a forum for major employers in the region to share information and best practice and improve collaboration in achieving sustainable employment for Indigenous people. The board was established and convened in January 2010, with responsibility for coordinating implementation of the economic development and employment strategy. The board has not been meeting recently however GEBIE is currently working to re-establish it.

During Stage 2 of the RPA, DEEWR has provided additional funding for training and mentoring support for 36 Indigenous employees of GCC, including the employment of two dedicated Indigenous employment coordinators; updating the GEBIE business plan to help the organisation in managing change and expanding its businesses; and developing an Indigenous training and employment servicing model, to provide a seamless transition from school to work for local Indigenous people.

The employment and economic development strategy noted that as a high priority both GEBIE and the ALC needed to increase their capacity by accessing business and financial management expertise, improving internal processes and reviewing governance.

A new general manager has been employed bringing an improved business focus, greater accountability and budget discipline and improved internal cohesion. The Job Shop is focussing on building its capability to deal with the 453 cases on its books.

The Job Shop is working with Job Find under the CDEP program funded by FaHCSIA to improve training and employment opportunities for local Indigenous people. It has worked with DEEWR to achieve appropriate classification of people under the JSA, therefore ensuring that they get the support they need. It now has an Indigenous-specific contract and is seen by GEMCO and the Mining Council as having a critical role in getting Indigenous people job ready by addressing issues such as literacy and numeracy and the life skills required to sustain employment as well as actual work experience.

The Job Shop is also working with GEMCO and with the education sector to build pathways to employment through trade training centres such as the one to be attached to the child care centre in Alyangula. Work on the trade training centres at Angurugu and Umbakumba is expected to commence shortly with funding issues still delaying the proposed centre at Alyangula. It is proposed that all centres will also serve as cyclone shelters and the Alyangula centre will also be a recovery centre.

GEBIE provides work experience in the office environment, and is working with GEMCO (Case study 5, GEMCO training and mentoring) on a structured training and recruitment program incorporating 'job ready' training for jobseekers. The program coordinates with the Mining Council's program at Batchelor College and will be to Certificate 2 level with relevant mining job-related skills. This training will be supplemented by mentoring and on-the-job training including driving simulation. The first intake is due in early 2012.

GEMCO plans to employ approximately 100 local Indigenous people who will be offered an employment benefits package. At the completion of training, candidates will be streamed into a job of choice in large drafts to ease cultural adjustment in the workplace. Some 20 mentors and a mentor supervisor have been trained and placed in the various departments. GEMCO has also commenced a study to determine changes that may be required to the workplace to achieve greater cultural alignment.

GEBIE and GCC have emerged as sound local business enterprises engaged in operating the quarry to supply the Umbakumba Road project, and building houses and the new health clinic at Umbakumba. The establishment of GCC has, in the view of one key player, been 'a great success' generating jobs, apprenticeships and a great deal of local pride.

Refurbishment of the disused Angurugu School of Manual Arts and establishment of a vocational training facility has encouraged skill development in the community and assisted local people to make things which are useable and used. The Angurugu carpentry project is also teaching men general handy man skills, time management and organisational skills. Items such as a trolley for the Angurugu School welder, a cubby house for the pre-school and tables for the Sport and Recreation Centre have been produced and are in use. Five families have now ordered smaller cubby houses for their own use.

Other enterprises in the community include engaging women to paint the SIHIP houses, establishment of a horticultural garden in collaboration with one of the schools, and skill development for young adults through the 3-to-9 Programs at Angurugu and Umbakumba involving sewing, cooking, nutrition and catering and calendar making

The East Arnhem Shire Council also offers training including articulation to civil construction Certificate 3 and mechanical skills Certificate 1, of which 20 have recently been completed. Other training includes environmental waste management, motor, truck, machinery, backhoe and loader licenses, and fire warden and computer training. The shire is able to provide some ongoing employment, for example 19 jobs in aged care, parks and gardens, night patrol, cleaning and payroll, but recent budget cuts may impact on its capacity to continue funding these or new positions.

An enormous amount has been achieved in this area, not least the establishment of ongoing capacity and capability to generate business enterprise, create employment opportunities and develop the life and technical skills of local Indigenous people to engage in employment. Projects such as the threatened species research and education facility due for completion in March 2012 and building of the new Umbakumba clinic and aged care accommodation at Angurugu will provide further opportunities.

However, big challenges remain in achieving large scale attitudinal and behavioural change which will allow local Indigenous people to engage with opportunities for enhanced quality of life achieved by Australians more broadly. Addressing systemic issues such as welfare and royalty dependence and widespread use of cannabis will be critical here.

## 5.6 Improved community health

The main objectives of this stream of effort were to enhance primary health care services and oral health outcomes and improve support for sufferers of MJD. These objectives directly relate to the COAG health building block.

Government funding was provided under Stage 1 to undertake a scoping assessment of health infrastructure needs in Angurugu and Umbakumba, to improve primary health care facilities in both communities and to undertake studies on the future care needs of MJD sufferers and of fluoridation of drinking water.

Completion of these studies has provided a knowledge base for the development of further strategies and activities in these areas (see Case study 6, MJD and Case study 7, Fluoridation).

With about 30 per cent of its population estimated as at risk of developing MJD, attention to this issue is a priority for the community. Prior to the signing of the RPA, no single agency or department made specific provision for people with MJD and they were being offered aged or disability care which did not provide for their special needs. The ALC was committed to seeing the needs of those living with MJD and their families on Groote Eylandt adequately addressed and to seeing an organisation established to advocate on their behalf.

The Machado Joseph Disease Foundation (MJDF) was established under Stage 1 and now has some financial resources to support its operation. The MJDF sees itself as a grass roots organisation that addresses issues from the viewpoint of both individuals living with MJD and their families.

Government funding was provided under Stage 2 for the establishment of a dedicated position in Darwin in the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families to assist in coordination of support for MJD sufferers. The ALC has committed funding to research and GEMCO has provided funding for two years for key projects to assist sufferers of MJD. GEBIE and the ALC also provide a range of ongoing in-kind support.

A memorandum of understanding has been signed in relation to care and support services for MJD sufferers, their families and carers, and an implementation group and plan established. The group meets quarterly and reports to the RPC half yearly. The Groote community is involved through a working group called the Groote Supported Client Reference Group.

The MJDF commenced work in May 2008 and since then has implemented several research and practical support projects within the Groote community. GEMCO funding is used to meet a range of needs such as staff accommodation, equipment, ramps and hydrotherapy training. Future projects include the provision of a vehicle to provide wheelchair transport, support for MJD clients in permanent residential care in Darwin and education activities. MJDF has also secured sponsorship support from a wide range of corporate organisations (e.g. Vincent Aviation and Toll Marine) and one-off grants from various philanthropic bodies and government agencies.

The MJDF has assisted in employment of staff to work with individuals and families living with MJD, provision of therapeutic and respite support, education of community members and service providers, linking individuals with MJD with the range of services they need and applied research aimed at improving peoples' well-being. Problems arising from MJD are more complex than previously understood as is the anticipated sharp increase in prevalence. Finding adequate resources to respond to these challenges, substantially ignored before RPA establishment, is an ongoing issue.

As a result of the fluoridation study and a significant funding contribution from the ALC through GEEBIE, the Northern Territory Government has agreed to install, operate and maintain fluoride treatment plants in Angurugu and Umbakumba (see Case study 7, Fluoridation). GEMCO has agreed to maintain existing chlorination equipment at Angurugu. However the new groundwater supplies will be treated independently, removing reliance on GEMCO supplies. GEMCO supply will be in emergency situations only. Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation (PowerWater) has integrated provision of fluoridation and chlorination systems and will cover the other water supply system components, including

gas chlorination treatment systems, at Angurugu. The equipping of bores is being covered through Australian Government funding.

Discussions initiated by the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group also resulted in agreement with PowerWater and the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families to establish a community awareness program on the benefits of fluoridation, based on work done in Queensland. This resulted in documentation on frequently asked questions, flyers, posters and talking posters, as well as articles in the Groote newspaper and the Land Council's publication, *Ayakwa*.

Tenders have been let and the contract commencement meeting was held in November 2011. Process design is 90% complete and groundwater drilling has been completed at Angurugu, thereby reducing dependency on surface water supply provided by GEMCO/PowerWater.

Construction is due to be complete off site in May-June 2012 and it is expected that new bores will be equipped by mid-2012 and then the treatment systems commissioned directly after the completion of the rising mains and bore equipping.

The RPA has clearly been vital in achieving progress to-date. The poor oral health status of the community was identified by the ALC as a top priority and its ongoing commitment to achieving fluoridation together with its willingness to make a capital contribution clearly influenced the final decision to proceed with both Angurugu and Umbakumba. The support of the RPC was critical to this success. The Northern Territory Government now has a clear public policy position which supports the extension of water fluoridation to communities with populations of 600 or more living in areas where naturally occurring fluoride is less than 0.5 mg/L. Department of Health Oral Health Services is working in partnership with PowerWater remote operations on the delivery of water fluoridation to a number of remote locations in the Top End of the Northern Territory.

Capital funding was provided by both governments to improve primary health facilities at Angurugu and provide a new clinic at Umbakumba. The Umbakumba clinic had been described in the BCP as in poor condition. The nearest hospital is at Gove. GEBIE will contribute the remaining funding for Umbakumba subject to finalisation of an agreement with the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families on future economic return. Design and location of the clinic is agreed and construction is expected to commence in early 2012.

GEBIE's commitment to undertake enhancement of the Aged Care Centre at Angurugu has encountered a number of difficulties, not least a concern from Traditional Owners that the planned site will impact on sites sacred to the Anindilyakwa people. Stakeholders are working together to address these issues.

GEMCO and the Northern Territory Government have provided funding for two new ambulances and medical equipment. GEMCO also provides a fire and emergency service on Groote Eylandt, and in-kind support, particularly accommodation, for medical staff visiting communities.

## 5.7 Safe communities

Addressing substance abuse and improving community safety are the key objectives in this area.

A report on substance abuse has been undertaken and a strategy is being developed to address its recommendations. Preliminary discussions between key stakeholders have identified reduction of supply and consumption and management of the impact of substances abuse as the primary goals and strategies are being developed in consultation with communities. Stakeholders acknowledge that it will be critical for them to work together closely and holistically on this issue and that community ownership will be vital. The success of the Alcohol Management Plan is testimony to this.

The Dog Operations Unit conducts regular searches of planes bound for Groote Eylandt and visits Groote Eylandt four times a year. Groote is a priority focus for the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk at Katherine and a taskforce has recently been established to focus on Groote Eylandt. Large amounts of cannabis have been seized. The ALC believes that there is a significant cannabis economy in the Archipelago and accords this issue high priority. Drug, and particularly cannabis, use is an ongoing and serious problem which will need to be addressed before significant employment gains can be made and community safety assured.

Levels of policing have been contentious. At the time of the signing of the RPA police were serving all four Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities, including Alyangula, from the Alyangula Police Station with an allocation of 13 staff. The Groote Eylandt Archipelago is considered by police to be well staffed (see Case study 8, Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts).

Under the RPA a police post with overnight officer accommodation was funded by the Australian Government for Umbakumba. Funding was also provided for an office for visiting police at Angurugu and for a community police officer.

The Northern Territory Government agreed to develop an operational plan for both facilities and for the deployment of police officers to significantly increase police presence in Umbakumba, committing to provide at least one programmed visit per week and two unscheduled visits per week. Police attendance at each community is reported at each RPC meeting and the Northern Territory Police have been maintaining at least a minimum level of service as agreed. Angurugu is proactively patrolled day and night, officers stay overnight at Umbakumba every fortnight (at minimum) and Milyakburra is proactively visited by officers from Alyangula.

The ALC and the communities have acknowledged these developments and greater efforts by police to engage at the community level. However it is the ALC's view that a major service gap remains and that the townships of Umbakumba and Angurugu will only enjoy normal levels of community safety when there is a commitment to full-time resident police in these communities. The Umbakumba community report that they need a permanent police presence to prevent incidents and that the police do not understand their needs or how to

intervene most productively in the community because they do not spend enough time in Umbakumba working with community leaders.

The police claim to have very few calls out to the community. However, official records are not likely to represent the actual incident levels. The level of incidents reported in Umbakumba has actually increased from 37 in 2004-05 to 58 in 2010-11 and there is no means of understanding the nature and level of incidents which are not reported. Families are unlikely to report family members.

The Northern Territory Police have maintained that it would not be feasible to have a fully operational station in Umbakumba due to a problem with communications capacity which has prevented police being able to access the police records system and they have continued to provide services such as driver licensing from Alyangula. Recent installation of new IT equipment should make the facility more operational for police to use.

Relationships between the police and the communities are strained, although much better than they were reported to be before the 2004 Alcohol Management Plan. Police report lack of assistance from the community in resolving difficult situations and they are largely seen as outsiders who come grudgingly to the community when they are called and only if it is a critical matter.

Recent developments are more positive. A review of remote policing services across the Northern Territory is underway, which may have implications for Groote Eylandt. Meanwhile, the full-time community police officer has commenced and the community believes that this is producing better relationships. She is working on developing the community safety plan, building on the existing plan which has been judged to be effective. She has also been working closely with the Angurugu School to increase attendance.

Facilities at both Angurugu and Umbakumba are now complete with the Angurugu facility to be officially opened in February 2012. With both these facilities becoming operationally effective, police have revised operating procedures to provide an increased service. Alyangula police will provide a permanent police presence in Angurugu on a daily basis and the facility will operate as a police shop front. There will be a minimum weekly overnight patrol at Umbakumba, which is a greater commitment than under the RPA and a minimum monthly overnight patrol in Milyakburra, subject to the availability of accommodation. While on duty in all three townships, police will make contact and liaise with community stakeholders including residents and service providers.

These new arrangements will mean the availability of basic front counter services in Angurugu and Umbakumba. Custody facilities will continue to be available only in Alyangula. These latest developments are acknowledged by the ALC and the other partners as a big step forward, particularly in relation to Angurugu; however their objective remains to have police resident in each township.

Funding was also provided under the RPA to upgrade cyclone shelters and support the operation of the women's safety house and the men's cooling down centre at Angurugu. Staff members have been trained for both centres, the women's facility has opened in a new building and women are increasingly visiting the shelter and being assisted to make statements in relation to violent incidents. The proposed trade training centres in Angurugu,

Umbakumba and Alyangula will also operate as cyclone shelters. The CTCG and local reference groups are developing as forums for community members and services to monitor community safety, identify needs and issues and agree on actions. Where possible, government departments are integrating with local reference groups to ensure consistency of messaging and action.

The police have been responsible for convening the CTCG and a range of service providers and community members attend. Members are now expressing a need for more clarity and a more strategic and structured approach to the work of the CTCG. Developing the role of the CTCG and progression of the community safety agenda is an ongoing challenge.

## 5.8 Youth, sport and recreation

Enhancing the quality and range of services to support youth, sport and recreation has involved a number of projects under Stage 2 following the success of the AFL club sponsorship program developed under Stage 1 (see Case study 9, Australian Football League Angurugu and Umbakumba clubrooms). Stage 2 committed to continuing the AFL Remote Regional Development Program. This included government funding for a regional development manager and two Indigenous trainees and to upgrade the Umbakumba oval. GEBIE committed funds for club facilities in Angurugu and Umbakumba, a bus to transport players and supporters and an AFL school program and, with GEMCO, a local leagues and juniors competition. GEMCO also committed to in-kind contributions to junior football and other sports development.

A partnership has been developed with Geelong Football Club which has visited Groote Eylandt three times. A Groote Eylandt Football League has been established and meets regularly and senior competitions now operate with six teams in the senior league. Junior competition between Angurugu, Umbakumba and Alyangula is currently being established. Four players from Groote participated in an under-13 school sport AFL exchange in Darwin in May 2009.

The regional development manager is working with the Groote Eylandt Football League to develop a code of conduct, umpire training and health promotion activities such as an anti-smoking campaign, healthy lifestyle carnivals and a school Cats program. Training and skill development positions are in place in Angurugu and Umbakumba.

A healthy lifestyle carnival held in Alyangula in April 2009 was attended by 75 students from all the island communities.

The Umbakumba Oval has been upgraded however the club facilities project has experienced delays and is well behind schedule. Only the Angurugu change room facility has been constructed to-date with the Umbakumba facility not due to be completed until the 2012 dry season. The Angurugu facility has arrived on Groote Eylandt from Darwin but is not yet operational.

The basketball program for women has been less successful (see Case study 10, Basketball). The plan was to introduce a program through Basketball Northern Territory and establish a basketball league with senior and junior competitions and skill development

clinics, coaching workshops and referee accreditation programs. The overall objective was to increase the participation of Indigenous women and girls in sport.

The initial funding agreement covered 2008–09 and 2009–10 and Basketball Federation Australia was subsequently successful in a funding round for 2010–11 to continue the program.

The program was established and Basketball Northern Territory employed a regional development officer and, after experimenting with a fly-in/fly-out role, funded a part-time female officer on Groote Eylandt. The Groote Eylandt Basketball Project included clinics at Angurugu, Umbakumba, and Milyakburra, as well as ‘mums and bubs’ basketball sessions at Angurugu and Alyangula. All these clinics worked towards inter-community basketball competitions. The results showed:

- 58 activities over 145 hours were delivered for an average of 412 participants per quarter including two disabled participants
- an average of 13 Indigenous people were involved with management of basketball activities per quarter with a number of Indigenous people undertaking accredited training, and
- 96 per cent of program participants were female, exceeding the target of 90 per cent.

The RPC reported that there was good uptake for about six months (one ALC officer commented that ‘the women and girls loved it’) however funding was not continuous and lack of accommodation on Groote Eylandt, difficulty in sourcing appropriate vehicles and lack of stability in staffing made it difficult for the program to become embedded in the community. Efforts are being made to address these issues.

Nevertheless, this program and the AFL program have demonstrated the return on investment which can be achieved through high quality youth, sport and recreation activities. Equally, it is clear that temporary funding of what are basic services in mainstream communities and lack of service infrastructure are ongoing challenges for the Anindilyakwa region.

Stage 2 also provided for development of a youth strategy to coordinate existing services, identify gaps and support engagement, personal development and leadership development for youth. It was envisaged that, through the RPA, parties would work together to coordinate new activities with those already provided through Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra Youth Development Unit and the East Arnhem Shire Council.

The Anindilyakwa Youth Strategy, was developed in consultation with young people and focussed on culture, community and family as well as the other key areas in the RPA. It made seven recommendations:

- creation of one local youth work/recreational service for the archipelago
- creation of a youth services hub complex in Angurugu
- a holistic approach to ongoing and rational funding
- organisation of a youth services network
- creation of a youth services professional development program and budget

- design and implementation of a local youth worker/recreational officer traineeship program, and
- housing of agency personnel within communities.

Priority initiatives for consideration were:

- a feasibility study into the creation of one local youth work/recreation service for the archipelago
- creation of a youth services hub facility at Angurugu
- establishment of a school to work transition program and a local Indigenous liaison officer position
- creation of a football academy facility and program at Angurugu school
- creation of a junior ranger coordinator position and reintroduction of the program
- creation of a youth services professional development program and budget
- creation of a senior student campus/spaces at Angurugu school
- creation of youth participation structures and programs of support
- support for a comprehensive driver education program
- reintroduction of the community policing/school constable model and blue light discos, and
- development of an effective community radio station with strong youth involvement and focus.

The strategy provides an integrated approach across a number of areas and a comprehensive platform for development. It has been endorsed in principle by the RPC and work will now proceed on establishing priorities and identifying initiatives which can be funded and implemented. Further action will be critical to enhancing the engagement, skills, confidence and general wellbeing of young people in the Anindilyakwa communities.

## 5.9 Leadership and governance

The RPA identified leadership and governance as crucial to effective service delivery and reforming relationships between the community and government agencies. This issue is also emphasised in the RSD National Partnership Agreement. The projects identified in this stream had the objective of providing leadership development and support for Indigenous women, men and youth to assist participation in shire governance structures and other consultative forums.

Initial workshops run by FaHCSIA in 2008 and 2009 were based on the national Indigenous Leadership Program and provided sessions on leading well in your family and community and understanding values, vision, goal setting and community development.

The FaHCSIA Indigenous Leadership Programs aim to:

- increase the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians;
- strengthen communities through the development of leaders; and
- develop Indigenous leadership capacity.

In Groote Eylandt a total of 74 individuals (35 male and 39 females) were targeted for leadership for leadership training in the period 2008 – 2010. Of those targeted individuals, there was an overall course participation rate of 48.6% (17 men; 19 women).

Under Stage 2, FaHCSIA, GEBIE and the ALC committed to working together to identify and provide further support for emerging leaders on Groote Eylandt, including opportunities to participate in training and RSD workshops off-island, and practical support for career development through the Job Shop. FaHCSIA and the ALC also committed to funding a consultant to assess the effectiveness of current governance structures together with training required and develop appropriate training plans and modules (see Case study 11, Governance development plan and training).

Governance mapping and a governance development plan have been completed in consultation with key people in the community and further workshops held. The ALC has appointed a new governance and development officer, funded by FaHCSIA, who will take on responsibility for working with staff and the board on training and governance needs, developing procedures and a five-year plan in terms and words that are meaningful for local people. This officer was able to work with the consultant in training for the board and executives to prepare her for takeover of monthly training sessions for the board. These sessions, as part of regular meetings, will focus on a particular area of governance and involve the board members developing policy and procedures in their own words. During these sessions the meeting rules developed during the last meeting will also be reviewed and endorsed as part of an iterative process of continuous improvement. Attention is being given to creation of rules and procedures around things such as attendance and decision making.

The issues have been challenging for staff and management alike as new concepts have been introduced and policies and processes are being developed incrementally. However governance conversations about roles and responsibilities are starting to become part of the way people work.

The ALC has had many requests from other organisations on Groote Eylandt to utilise governance training expertise which is currently focussed on addressing the governance needs of the ALC and GEBIE as part of a five-year governance development plan. While the Regional Operations Centre has supported governance and leadership training for local reference groups, it remains a challenge for the future to develop a critical mass of people with an understanding of key concepts and the skills to put them into practice. Building governance capability will take time, and will require a combination of formal learning and support to put new concepts and skills into practice.

## 5.10 Supporting the partnership

This stream of effort was devoted to putting in place the capability and capacity to support the partnership to achieve its objectives. The RPA provided for a baseline data study (the BCP) and its replication by the end of 2011 as well as for a full household census/survey. These studies were intended to improve the capacity to plan, measure outcomes and development in the communities, assist in evaluation of the effectiveness of the RPA and provide information to inform further priorities.

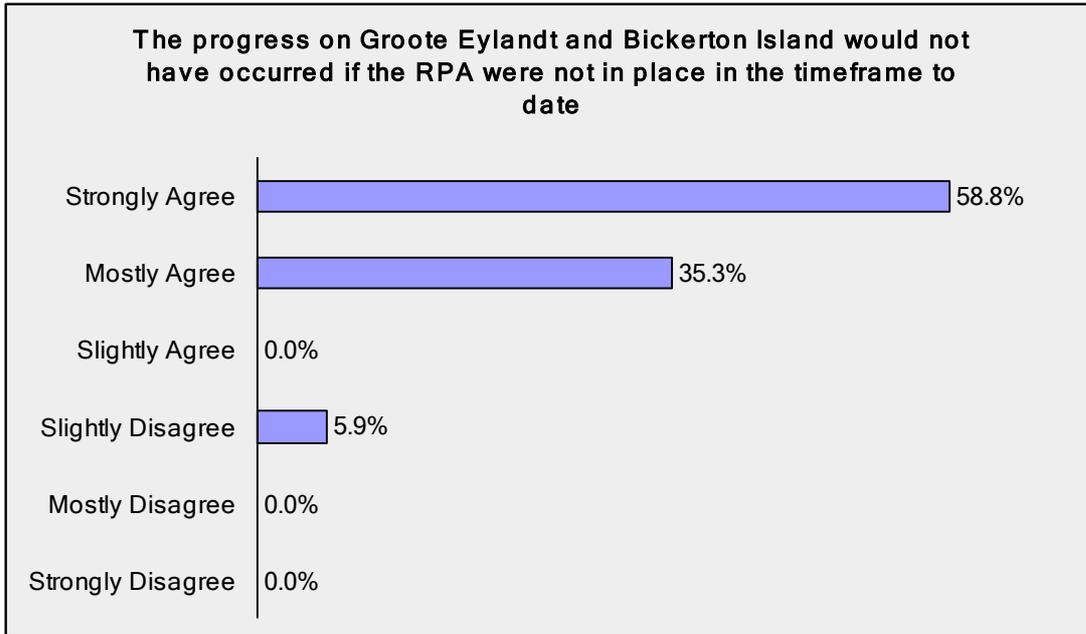
FaHCSIA also committed through the RSD to employing a local Indigenous engagement officer and a government business manager in each of Angurugu and Umbakumba to facilitate engagement between the communities and government and to provide a single point of contact for coordination of government services in each community. The RPA also provided for the RPC to remain the primary governance vehicle and to ensure ongoing alignment with community priorities, the RSD and the broader COAG agenda. Funding was also provided for an RPA coordinator position at the ALC.

As outlined above, the RPC has been established with clear terms of reference and a full-time secretariat and has been meeting regularly since its inception. It has governed the partnership effectively and provided an ongoing forum for project monitoring, raising and progressing of issues and development of relationships. Membership has been consistent, attendance good and conversation robust when required. A communications strategy has been implemented. A regional partnership newsletter initially established under the RPA has been superseded by a regional newsletter *Aikwa* under the auspices of the ALC.

The BCP was completed in 2009 and the household survey in June 2011, providing a thorough demographic analysis of the communities, and of existing capacity and needs. This has been supplemented by comprehensive baseline mapping exercises (BMR) in 2010 for Umbakumba and Angurugu under the RSD.

## 5.11 Discussion of achievements

Achievement under each stream of effort has been substantial, with the majority of projects being completed or significantly progressed. While not seeing much evidence of progress in the first year or so, community members can now see tangible evidence of the fruits of the partnership in houses, roads and other building, activities around schools and in the community, workshops, training and so forth. At one of its recent meetings the RPC noted that there was 'a positive vibe' around the RPA.



**Figure 18 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question on the difference the RPA has made to progress on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island**

However there is still much to be done. Many of the problems highlighted in the baseline study (BCP) still remain. Insufficient housing is still an issue and will take time and further commitment to resolve. Health and educational issues are ongoing and partly intergenerational in nature and will take years of patient investment. Behavioural change has barely started. There are still low levels of literacy, high levels of cannabis use and low readiness for employment.

Many stakeholders expressed the view that governments need to evolve and develop their capacity to work genuinely collaboratively across boundaries and with communities. In particular the partnership with the East Arnhem Shire Council will need further work. Governments need to learn and internalise new ways of working which are truly collaborative and place-based. Inherent in place-based planning is that the driver for investment is not the requirements of various government programs and their separate consultative and accountability requirements but rather governments adopting a whole-of-government approach to needs and priorities identified by local people. Such responses require change to systems, processes, attitudes and beliefs as raised in the rationale for partnership working (see Section 3.1). While the RPA accommodated the introduction of the RSD by developing an additional schedule (Schedule D) to the RPA more clarity is needed on how the RSD and the RPA integrate their work (Stakeholder interviews).

The program logic identified signs of progress towards change in four areas; community, service system, economic and social development and governance. In terms of this model the following general comments can be made:

- The community is increasing its involvement but steps to behaviour change are still tenuous, for example, there is still resistance to participation in education and training although there are signs of progress. The local Indigenous communities will

also have to develop new behaviours, attitudes and social norms if they wish to take advantage of the initial investment and work towards a society where they and their children enjoy the same standard of living, wellbeing and opportunities as other Australians.

- Services, as observed through committee meetings, are developing a willingness to work collaboratively and also have understanding of each other's roles. This has enabled some things to proceed which would not have otherwise, but it is early in service system development. Barriers to this are outlined in Section 6.
- Economic and social development activities have improved the infrastructure and the RPA now has firmer foundations on which to build further activity. Economic activity on the Groote Archipelago has been boosted through GEBIE but the developments are young. There are some early successes in encouraging more work participation and the establishment of pathways from school to work need to be consolidated.
- Governance development has largely proceeded according to the logic model. Its major new challenge is to focus structures and effort towards supporting behaviour and attitude change.

The challenge for the RPC going forward is to build on the foundations that have been laid and develop strategies that link the various streams of effort so that capabilities and behaviours are built for the future. For example, how can the Anindilyakwa people use the new houses to develop living patterns that will support healthy children and encourage them to attend school and to do homework? How can parents use the opportunities to build on their own education and skills to engage in the workforce, earn a good income and further nurture and support their children to grow and develop so that they can grasp further opportunities? How can leadership capability be developed across the community so that increasing numbers of young people develop the willingness and the skill to take over from the current leaders across all walks of life?

The ALC is acutely aware of these issues and, with the support of the RPC, is developing a longer term strategic plan to address the key priorities and needs of township residents beyond the life of the mine. Its focus in particular is on working with young people to build a future for them strongly grounded in the Anindilyakwa culture.

## 6. Barriers to the effectiveness of the RPA

The RPA initiatives for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago are being delivered in a context of high disadvantage. The following are key areas that hamper progress.

### **The development challenges are high across every domain**

The extent of socioeconomic disadvantage including poor health, low levels of literacy, limited English skills and a backlog of infrastructure needs means that the capacity to respond to opportunities and reforms is generally low. There are high levels of community dysfunction reflected in substance abuse, especially cannabis, poor educational attendance, low levels of work participation and poor perceptions of community safety due to violence. Community attitudes towards schooling and work have also been a barrier to community development. Few Anindilyakwa people reach old age due to poor knowledge of preventative health and traditional beliefs hampering their access and take up of services. The regularity of deaths and early deaths with accompanying periods of mourning severely disrupts community functions.

Challenges for reform are further compounded by high percentages of children being developmentally vulnerable on the Australian Early Development Index. There are many interrelated reasons for this and some are being addressed through the RPA. For example overcrowding in houses is a problem which through the efforts of the RPA will be ameliorated in the future.

### **History and engagement**

Government has strengthened its efforts to engage with Indigenous communities across Australia. However continuing practice of engagement has been largely informed by historical practice rather than an objective examination of what is needed in each area and the deficiencies in this practice are evident on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

It has resulted in a higher quantity of engagement processes by governments through each program area and too little thinking about how to build on information which has already been produced (Stakeholder views). There is evidence on Groote Eylandt that although community members do want to participate, and feel processes are respectful, many are feeling overburdened by the plethora of processes involved. Others have noted that many of the processes seem repetitive – (many programs are very similar) – the concepts alien and the jargon impenetrable causing some key community influencers to become disengaged (Community member views). There is a sense that a proportion of the engagement effort is for ‘government’ rather than the citizens as they do not see tangible change in practice due to their input. Some of this situation is due to the lack of expertise and information held by citizens involved. As flagged in Section 4.5 there are still challenges in developing effective, streamlined engagement processes for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago. Much government community consultation is outside the RPA areas of responsibility but the ALC is involved with all program areas across government and the non-government sector.

Working through the RPA, the ALC has proposed strategic mechanisms for engagement to try to reduce this burden. It has recently provided advice to the RPC on which representatives should be consulted on particular issues and suggested approaches to implementation (RPA meeting December 2011). Such work forms a starting point for broader discussion on optimal approaches to meet a range of needs, especially as part of a strategic planning process.

Thinking in this area should take into account the following factors to address the concerns raised.

- Much is known about community needs and preferences and implementation issues on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island. The RPA has also produced a body of information through research and consultancies. Most consultancy reports such as those on governance, the youth strategy, community safety and education have also incorporated citizen input and are endorsed by citizens. Those engaging with the community should review the evidence which currently exists.
- Engagement processes can and should be developmental for all parties involved. There has not been effort put into organised cross-cultural development which aims to build bridges in understanding between the archipelago communities and governments and which touches all parties involved, such as occurred in some COAG trials.
- Where there has been consistent involvement with community members on particular programs such as housing development, a body of citizens who have considerable understanding and expertise is being formed.
- New approaches to deal with complex, interrelated issues such as youth, and drug use might benefit from thematic or other approaches.
- Regular collation (six monthly or annually) of information from a variety of sources and provision of this to the community would benefit all parties and assure the community that government has heard and understood what they are saying.

### **Policy and program barriers**

While governments generally agree on the objectives of Indigenous policy, there is often a lag in understanding and evidenced-based approaches to implementation of these objectives (Edwards, 2002). The strategic and collaborative approach taken by the partnership to meeting a shortfall in essential services and infrastructure has been effective in implementing priority objectives. The commitment to funding these in the short term and in a timely way combined with the coordinated approach has reaped major benefits. These efforts are providing a much improved platform for change and community development but barriers to realising this remain.

It is evident that the short time horizons for the RPA and for much program funding hamper sustained and strategic effort and timely investment to meet needs effectively and to support incremental change in social norms. For example, comprehensive and effective investment in early childhood development, parenting programs, health promotion and illness prevention

have been identified as essential to improving the outcomes for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago communities.

To reap benefits, a strategic, organised and synergistic approach by funders and the ALC would seem optimal to meet the needs of the region.

It is commonly agreed that approaches to investment in communities through multiple small programs and services combined with short-term funding approaches limits effective change and development. The 'conceptual horizon' of individual programs constrains the ability to develop and implement a broad place-based response as each initiative has limited scope to respond flexibly to particular needs in a given area. There is evidence through the case studies on the police posts, education, sporting programs and employment that policy implementation issues, funding lags and uncertainty limit capitalisation on investment in a timely way. Many advances have been made because GEBIE and GEMCO have been able 'to fill the gaps' and enable additional but highly important extensions to funding to enable things to happen in a timely way, for example, funding travel, accommodation, provision of expertise or meeting a funding gap.

Although there is policy agreement that place-based planning should be undertaken, it is evident through the literature and stakeholder discussions that agreement on what that means and reflection of that in how governments, and programs work together, will differ from place to place. Multiple place based approaches exist with program place based approaches and more effort and investment could be applied to a more comprehensive place-based planning approach through the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA. The objective of such work would be to work more collectively to support integrated planning and implementation. This in turn should rationalise effort to support highly complex initiatives to change social norms, for example, reducing drug related harms. Such an approach should also develop thinking on a range of systems and governance aspects, for example, effective administration of shared funds, how data can be shared, and potential for more streamlined effort to address social and economic determinants including behaviour change. Such thinking would inform thinking on place-based planning and implementation more generally as the barriers to effective streamlined effort are commonly experienced (O'Flynn et al, 2011)

### **Service system barriers**

The Groote Eylandt Archipelago has suffered from poor service infrastructure overall with schools, recreation facilities and opportunities for education, training and development being very limited. Although there is considerable progress in building and upgrading facilities there is still much to be done to support adequate service provision.

As is well recognised, service delivery is also compromised by a shortage of accommodation for staff which limits the employment of skilled staff and service delivery such as dental services. DEEWR, for example, reported that it was unable to offer adult literacy development programs because accommodation was unavailable for its staff.

The service delivery system is dynamic, fragmented and complex. Much service provision is limited, characterised by fly-in-fly-out services, and interrupted provision. While this evaluation did not explore this issue with Anindilyakwa residents, discussions with survey

respondents indicated that people find the system confusing and alien and that access and uptake of appropriate care and support in a timely way is compromised. People tend to fall through the cracks especially where they have complex conditions such as MJD and where access to adequate services requires a sophisticated understanding of what is available.

Under the RPA, service providers are connected through committees such as the YSC and the CTCG. While these forums have generated understanding of program roles and some networking, development of a more collaborative and integrated service system is a long way off. Ways of working in a strategic, coordinated and less silo-based way should be explored through strategic and implementation planning processes.

## **Workforce**

The Groote Eylandt Archipelago offers more opportunities for work than other remote communities because of the presence of GEMCO. The lack of access to a skilled workforce for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago is an ongoing barrier to implementing the RPA priorities, service provision and sustained development. Stakeholders expressed frustration in having to contend with the ongoing difficulty of attracting and retaining a suitably qualified workforce. While remoteness is itself a barrier there are many challenges to be overcome in attracting, building and retaining a skilled workforce.

Low literacy levels, poor health reducing the capacity for full time work, the low aspirations to work and traditional beliefs result in a high level of passivity and consequently less interest in work. Of those who gain employment, retention rates are poor. Most Indigenous employees occupy relatively low-skilled positions. Improving literacy is the highest priority to building work readiness, and building participation for the Indigenous people on the Archipelago is a very high priority requiring long-term effort.

Most of the skilled workforce is flown in at great cost to all employers and there is high turnover of personnel. They also consume scarce housing resources. In the medium-to-longer term this arrangement does not support the economic and social development of the Anindilyakwa people on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago. It is acknowledged that this problem is complex as community housing needs are still being met. However there are many development advantages to building the workforce to support service and economic development capacity on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

## 7. Important governance issues

Three key issues have emerged which require early attention. These are: the need to give some certainty about the duration of the RPA; resolving ongoing issues in relation to administrative processes for the RSD strategy within the RPA context and more clearly defining the RPA's role as an instrument for place-based planning. Addressing these issues is important for developing the basis for planning and change management.

### 7.1 Duration of the RPA

There is limited empirical research on partnership lifecycles and duration and what has been done is not applicable to the RPA situation which is concerned with redressing profound disadvantage and geared towards generational change of behaviours and norms. The key issue is the ability to sustain collaboration over long time frames and that eventually a transition to other more permanent practice will need to occur. No timeframes are suggested in the literature.

The current partnership is in place until 2014 and the ALC strategic plan, which is likely to influence the future RPA agenda, is due for completion by April. The ALC wants the partners to consider a Stage 3 to the RPA and, as demonstrated by the responses to the survey below, many stakeholders expressed broad agreement with the RPA, or a similarly effective arrangement, continuing. Governance planning for the future will require serious consideration soon if the initial investment in this community is to be fully realised, and to support the development of a strategic plan for the future.

During this evaluation concerns were regularly raised about how RPA work will be continued after the current agreement has expired. Some survey respondents had the view that the government policy for RPAs advocated a set time span and that once the set agenda had been achieved then the work of the RPA should be transitioned to other arrangements. Some views from government stakeholders follow:

*From a Commonwealth point of view, the RPA extends only as far as stage 2. The possibility of a stage 3 is a matter for government.*

*Given that there is now a Remote Service Delivery National Partnership which has agreed action plans based on the RPA model, I am not confident that the RPA needs to stand separately for things to continue, though it has created a strong partnership between governments and Anindilyakwa, and still offers opportunities for the future.*

However the majority of respondents disagreed; 64.5% mostly disagreed or strongly disagreed with that proposition although the perspectives varied to some degree. The following range of survey comments include government, industry and ALC stakeholders

*The RPA has facilitated the building of a good framework and governance structures that have been improved and built on over time. It is becoming a good working machine, though it will need to periodically be reviewed to assess its effectiveness.*

*I would argue that some form of partnership agreement ought to remain in place between governments and the ALC to ensure a coordinated and planned approach to identifying needs and delivering services that ensures transparency, accountability and reduces waste and inefficiency over the long term.*

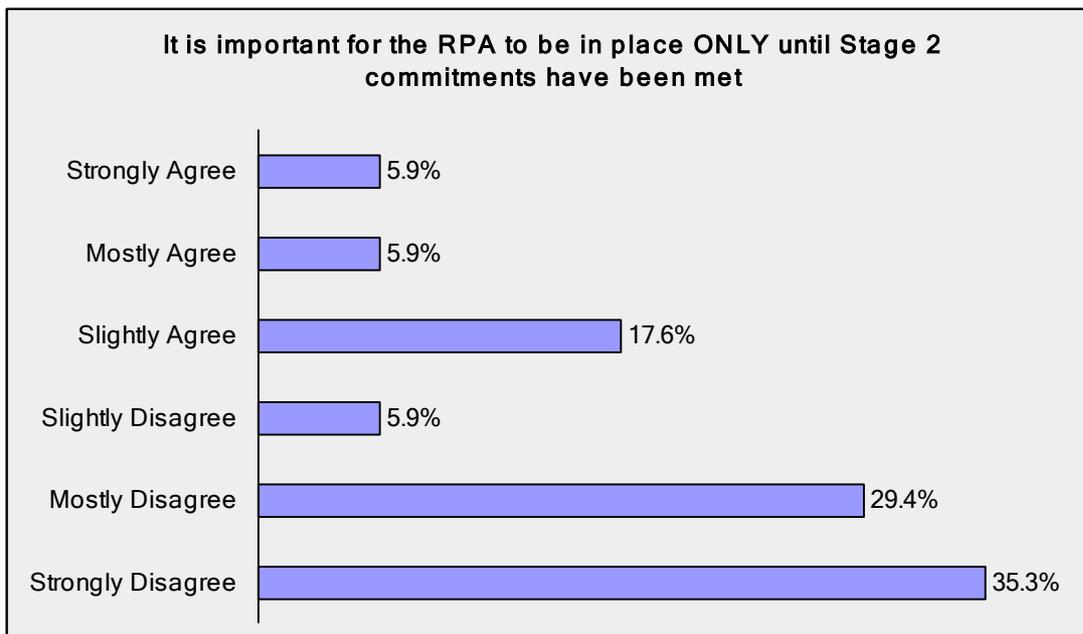
*A consistent and collective effort is needed to make real change.*

*This would be seen as abandoning the process. We still don't know what success looks like.*

*Now that momentum has been created it needs to carry on until a suitable entity, such as the ALC, is strong enough to take over.*

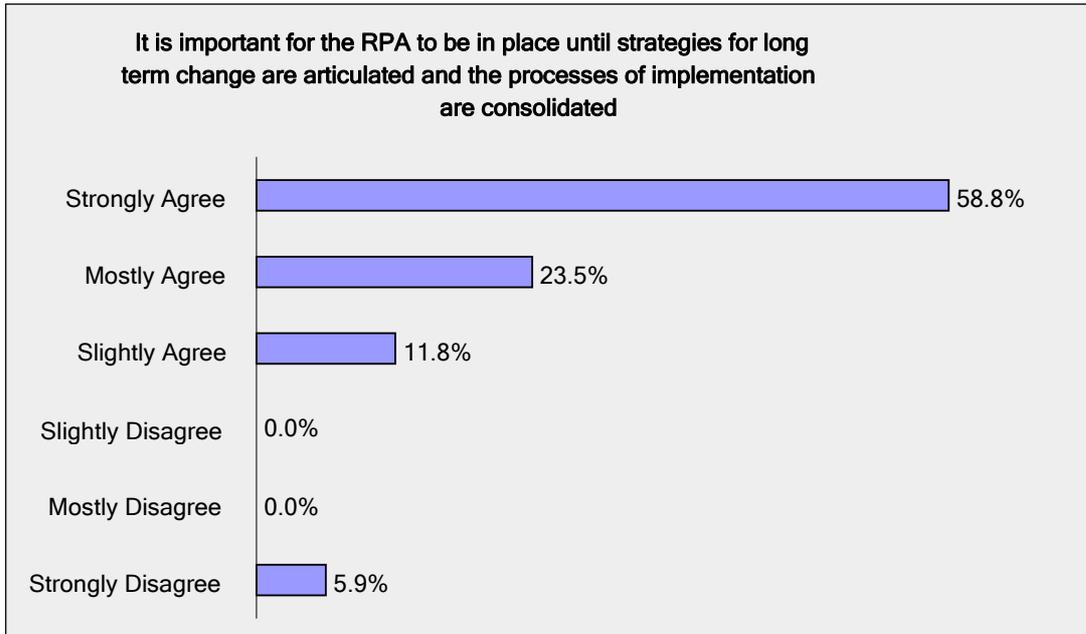
*There has to be an embedding of the strategies and commitments to ensure those objectives have been achieved.*

*The RPA Stage 2 should only be allowed to expire if its ongoing goals and commitments are able to be transferred to a similarly robust framework/agreement e.g. a Local Implementation Plan. This is because the aims in the RPA will take a long time before we will see the intended outcomes to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. The RPA is being used by government as a blueprint to test a lot of programs and policies and I see merit in this continuing.*



**Figure 19 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question relating to limiting the duration of the RPA only until Stage 2 commitments have been met**

The responses to the following survey statement: 'It is important for the RPA to be in place until strategies for long term change are articulated and the processes of implementation are consolidated', also indicate strong support (82.3% strongly agreeing or agreeing) for the RPA to continue for the time it takes to ensure that collaborative work is part of 'business as usual' and transition to such arrangements is effected.



**Figure 20 RPA partners' and advisors' response to evaluation survey question about whether the RPA should be in place until strategies are in place for long term change and processes of implementation are consolidated**

Survey responses reinforce the importance of a partnership approach enduring until the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities are better equipped to manage their own affairs or to work effectively with government systems. Community members now express confidence that the RPA processes are inclusive and effective.

*When the RPA first started the community saw the RPA as a government body dealing with government issues. But as time went on it was seen as being part of the ALC's work and that the communities would benefit from it. Communities are able to speak up and voice their concern and engage in the work of the RPA.*

*RPA is a critical platform for ensuring an effective partnership prevails between all the key players and that in turn a more rational approach is taken to the delivery of services and determining priorities. Otherwise it will signal a return to the jungle (e.g. one central Australian community had over 440 agency visits last year involving over 1100 man days)*

The comments below indicate that the work of the partnership needs to develop a greater focus on change and building on the work which has been done.

*We need to be focussed on building and growing in terms of education, safety, children's wellbeing, healthy lifestyle etc. We need the RPA to help us along the process in the long term.*

*We are ready to move into stage 3. I recommend that the RPA continues past stage 2, there is so much that we can do and that the RPA can achieve.*

*I would argue that some form of partnership agreement ought to remain in place between government and the ALC to ensure a coordinated and planned approach to identifying needs and delivering services that ensures transparency, ensures accountability and reduces waste and inefficiency over the long term.*

The main risk of long-term partnerships continuing is that they become stale and lose momentum. The evaluation team has observed that this partnership is vibrant and achieving strongly. It has been a dynamic, responsive arrangement which has strengthened over the life of Stages 1 and 2. Success has in part generated the ongoing commitment to results and a highly varied agenda has required input from a range of new parties over time. It has now progressed to the point where different challenges involving major developmental work need to be addressed, for example, implementing education reforms, the youth strategy, and the substance abuse strategy.

A risk for the RPA is the burden of involvement for the very senior decision makers and whether their effort can be sustained. However, their leadership and committed involvement at the RPA meetings has been raised as a key reason for the success of the agreement. There may be potential for their day to day involvement to be decreased if more of the decision making could be delegated, supported by attendant risk management processes. Training to support depth of understanding of partnership working along with the development of common protocols might support the building of capacity within agencies so that more senior people can minimise their input to the very strategic level.

Another key risk of early termination of the partnership or major change to its arrangements is that the gain for investment in terms of time, resources and relationship building with the community is not realised. As indicated in Section 1, there is growing understanding by governments that solutions to complex social problems require years of sustained effort if sustainable benefits are to be achieved,

A key question for governments is the extent and form of commitment to the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities beyond 2014. While it could be argued that this is a policy question to be considered by governments at that time, nevertheless it is high amongst community concerns and GEMCO and the shire also have to plan their commitments.

If it cannot be resolved in the near future it would be opportune for governments to begin the process that will help inform that decision. Signalling 'in principle' intentions would inform strategic planning and other decisions. It would be timely, for example, to use the RPA arrangements as a vehicle for assessing the information that might inform governments of possible options, including risks to continuing positive improvements if there is a lengthy period of uncertainty.

## **7.2 Integration of Government strategies**

The following discussion aims to elucidate the nature of the issues which essentially arise from the general practice of government programs and strategies working in parallel as outlined under 'Barriers' in section 6. As mentioned above resolution of these issues will provide insights for future whole of government community partnerships.

For this discussion we are using the RSD strategy as an example of the issues which arise because of the concerns raised during the consultation process. The RSD strategy, while formally integrated into the work of the RPA, operates as a whole of government strategy under separate administrative arrangements. A number of stakeholders, especially the ALC, believe that more alignment is necessary. Features such as additional consultative processes are seen to be duplicative and divert attention and resources from, rather than enhancing the work of the RPA. This is not the view of Government business managers and RSD managers who have sought to clarify how the government structures mesh through governance mapping (Langford 2011) and by contributing to committees and working groups on the Eylandt. As part of planning for the future these issues need to be addressed by the partners to ensure that there is not perceived or actual duplication and to 'make sense' of the arrangements which co-exist.

Additionally, while the objectives and overall intent of the RPA and RSD are consistent, the role of the RSD as part of the RPA is not clear. Decision making processes appear to differ, with the Anindilyakwa community not involved in the high level decision making and resource allocation processes of the RSD. This arrangement carries the risk that the integrity and accuracy of communication is compromised as it goes up the line and examples of this were provided. Finally, the coverage of the two partnerships differs with the RSD strategy applying formally only to two Groote Eylandt communities and not formally incorporating work for Bickerton Island. Even if the needs of all communities are met through other government programs these arrangements do not make sense to the community.

For the ALC, the strength of the RPA is that they are a partner in the RPA at all stages of planning, development and implementation and are able to raise concerns about individual issues as they arise and contribute to their resolution. This is considered a respectful and capacity building approach. The ALC has also expressed anxiety that the RPA will be morphed into a RSD governed Local Implementation Plan process which does not retain the key features which have ensured the success of the RPA. The possibility for better alignment should be addressed in the near future.

The discussion to date illustrates some of the challenges and complexities in working in partnership with communities and there are scant models of effective implementation architecture for the RPA to emulate. Here the tension between governments' top down budget and accountability arrangements which lead to each program operating independently undermine the ability to optimise local responses to needs and perpetuate the problems described in Section 6 - Barriers to the effectiveness of the RPA.

This discussion is an example of issues raised in the section about working in government community partnerships where to some extent all parties need to cede some control and reduce the rigidity of the funding and accountability arrangements so that more effective and efficient models of local implementation can be developed. Addressing these issues is the next important challenge for partners to the RPA as it moves to support changes in social norms on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

## 7.3 Improving place-based implementation arrangements

What exists currently is a hybrid placed-based planning model with the RPA involved in collaborative planning and implementation of a range of government programs which have been delivered separately. Until now, this approach has been very successful because effort has been focused on building physical and organisational infrastructure and generating evidence for further change. The RPA is now faced with more emphasis on facilitating and supporting behavioural and attitudinal change which is a very long term and complex undertaking involving concerted multi-sectoral effort. Current approaches are unlikely to meet development and support needs unless more attention is given to collaborative governance structures at the local level which overcome the barriers outlined in Chapter 6 and through many case studies such as, Case study 4: Education, Case study 8: Angurugu and Umbakumba police posts and Case study 6; Machado Joseph Disease. The aim of such structures is to ensure more integrated, systematic and holistic responses to needs and more aligned approaches to positive change on the ground.

The process to-date has been instructive in showing how strategies can be interconnected, for example, combined and aligned activity in education and training is demonstrating how collaboration can result in enhanced capacity. However, as highlighted, experience to date has also strongly illustrated the need for flexibility and responsiveness; for example, discretionary funding for things like transport and accommodation for both part time and permanent workers and so on. The ALC, GEMCO and GEBIE have had some capacity to provide support but ongoing needs outstrip their capacity. Rigid program implementation guidelines and accountability processes combined with short term funding limit the capacity of many parties, including the East Arnhem Shire Council, to develop sustainable strategies to meet need.

A number of respondents argued for a more rational, streamlined and predictable approach. The delivery of the ALC strategic plan will be an opportunity to consider providing support in a way which addresses the needs of Indigenous communities in a more holistic and sustained way. The evaluation team understands the complexities of any such undertaking under current budgetary processes and the real constraints on resources. However the need to develop implementation architecture for more streamlined integrated effort has been consistently raised in audit reports and also by evaluations of COAG trials (Stewart, 2011).

RPA work has guided much thinking on how objectives can be more successfully implemented in remote communities. It has demonstrated the importance of a culture of collaboration and an innovative responsive approach 'to get things done'. This model has provided the glue for strategic coordination of effort. Such an approach now needs to be designed for more connected local implementation.

There is a dearth of information and evidence on good practice for implementation of joint community-government effort in remote settings. While there is agreement on the overall principles there is little to guide the design of connected work at the local community and individual service delivery level, for example, the integration of work on the ground. Evaluations of partnerships have not to date detailed models to guide devolved

implementation of regional, place-based and long-term effort and do not fully inform effective approaches to place-based effort in remote communities. The RPA could provide further important contribution to policy development on how to design implementation which would have features such as high responsiveness, person centred approaches, seamless service delivery and known pathways of care supported by systems and protocols to guide collaboration across program streams.

The Youth Strategy, for example, is one where multiple sectors need to be involved, where momentum is required and effort must be sustained to effect desired change. Pooled funding to support the planning and implementation of this strategy might be an effective way to stimulate fresh thinking on more integrated or aligned work and administrative systems to support this. Such approaches are consistent with the principles of remote service delivery.

## 8. Lessons learned

### 8.1 Critical success factors

The success of the RPA arrangements cannot be attributed to one factor or indeed several factors in isolation. It is the combination of a number of key inputs and processes that has determined the overall success.

Commonwealth and territory ministerial support for the work of the RPA has been vital for underpinning its successful functioning.

Partnership work is community-driven. The strategic and future-oriented approach originating from community needs and articulated by the ALC has proven highly successful and the ability and willingness of the community to contribute substantial financial resources has provided strong leverage in negotiations. The emphasis on effective implementation taken by the RPA draws from the experience of COAG trials and earlier RPAs and has proven a sound strategy for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

The principles underpinning the RPA have been important as a touchstone for positive working relationships, and set the tone for professional collaboration and trust that participants will deliver on their promises. They might need refinement as the RPA evolves.

Strong, high level leadership and commitment has been pivotal to RPA success. However more effort is needed through all organisations to educate and support staff to work effectively in a social partnership arrangement and develop approaches and systems of work to underpin this so that partnership work can be more sustainable in the longer term.

The regional approach has been and continues to be significant as it responds to the 'sense of place' held by the community.

The formation of evidence to support place-based change has been important to ensuring the needs of the community are accurately charted and has provided a sound platform for sustainable change.

The RPA approach to implementation has involved separate agencies funding and being accountable for implementation of specific initiatives. This approach has served the partnership well for large infrastructure projects. It is now appropriate to take a more integrated and comprehensive approach to planning and service development with a focus on improving the social and emotional wellbeing of the Anindilyakwa people.

The allocation of funds to support the initial program of work provided a sound base for delivery and was instrumental in the high level of achievement to date. However essential work is still dependent on small amounts of unreliable short-term program grants funding.

Implementation has been strongly supported by the ability of GEBIE and GEMCO to respond to resource unanticipated needs as they emerged. It has not been able to meet all needs and flexibility needs to be built into current funding arrangements e.g. through brokerage funds.

The RPA approach to implementation needs to evolve from funding of programs through separate agencies with individual accountability arrangements to a more integrated and comprehensive approach to planning and service development for change. A pooled funding approach which is administratively efficient and flexible would better support the change agenda.

Developing more effective responses at the local level is likely to require alignment and integration of effort across governments, services and programs to support the conceptual policy and strategy connections across policies.

Conflicts between state or national upstream policies and systems may have to be addressed in order to have streamlined collaborative approaches at the local level. Such issues are often more apparent at the local service delivery level where guidelines and contractual arrangements do not support needed action. While issues are unanticipated partnerships need clear protocols to respond incrementally to issues as they are raised.

A stable long-term approach to resourcing and services is vital to ensure the current investment is built on and contributes to sustainable change.

## 8.2 ‘Replicability’ of the Groote Eylandt Archipelago RPA approach

The evaluation team was asked to consider whether the approach taken for the Groote and Bickerton Island RPA was replicable and views on this were varied among those consulted during the evaluation. The following incorporates the insights gained.

There are some factors relating the RPA that might be unique and difficult to replicate. These include:

- the ability of the community to commit substantial resources to leverage agreement
- a contained community with one language and culture
- personal commitment of ministers, and
- the strong involvement of the most senior government personnel.

Nevertheless, the following principles drawn from the approaches taken at Groote would seem applicable in a variety of situations.

### ***There must be equality between the partners and appropriate authority***

An outstanding feature of the RPA is that the Indigenous people are equal partners in all aspects. This is recognised in the agreement and in all decision making processes. At Groote this has been driven in part by the community’s capacity to contribute financially to the enterprise, but equality should not depend on financial contributions alone. The community’s stake in the partnership is crucial and could be garnered in other ways such as through commitments to specific community efforts and government funding to support governance, planning and expert advice.

Finally, the partnership members should have the authority of their host organisations to participate effectively and make decisions on behalf of the partnership.

***The needs and aspirations of communities should be the driving force in partnerships***

Another key factor in the RPA is that the community leaders have identified an overall vision, priority issues to be addressed and objectives for their community and the partnership has been driven by these. The community has a clearly identified role in the partnership and has accepted shared responsibility for identifying acceptable outcomes and for their achievement. The existence of the ALC as a high level governance body for Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island provides opportunities for community representation through a variety of structures such as community bodies, and topic specific committees which involve more general feedback through the ALC board. Staff of the ALC also provide an important support and liaison service to the community.

A critical lesson from the Groote experience that has wider applicability is that the community definition of 'place' for the focus of program activity is important. This has been illustrated by the exclusion of Milyakburra as an identified RSD site; a matter of concern for the Anindilyakwa people. (Stakeholder Interviews)

***The objectives and priorities of partnership members must be shared by all parties.***

This is a fundamental requirement for government community partnerships and in the case of the Groote Archipelago, this agreement and commitment is reflected formally in the RPA.

***Detailed planning and negotiation of partnership arrangements and work program prior to the commencement the partnership is essential.***

The RPA had a stage of sound planning to assess readiness, what was achievable, secure agreement on principles and secure funding arrangements. Stage one of the partnership had a manageable work program. Part 1 also incorporated planning for Stage 2. This planning period has been essential to its success.

***Principles of operation formed a touchstone for the way the partners operated with each other.***

The principles of operation for the RPA agreement have been a touchstone for all partners and underpinned partnership operations. They supported the development of collaborative processes and helped maintain trust.

***Partnerships need to be adequately resourced to undertake their tasks.***

Partnerships need to have the resources that are appropriate for the work they have to do. Resources include access to relevant information and necessary expertise by all partners as well as financial resources, the absence of which have been a hindrance for the East Arnhem Shire Council. It is essential to have a dedicated and skilled secretariat that is responsible to the partnership governance group to support partnership planning and operations. As well this secretariat should have access to flexible funding sources to purchase expert advice or evidence gathering to support partnership decision making. They are also needed to cater for unanticipated needs. Secretariat skills should incorporate both

high level policy and administrative experience to enable them to interpret needs, identify policy issues, support decision making and understand the most effective responses. In particular they should be skilled in establishing and managing arrangements that ensure transparency and accountability.

***The duration of the partnership should reflect the time it takes to undertake the work.***

Much work in Indigenous affairs is highly complex and challenging and it is likely that progress will be slow. The duration of the partnership should reflect the situations being addressed rather than broader program or political considerations and how work will be sustained.

### **Responsive and efficient management**

Highly skilled and policy wise secretariat support has been essential to the success of the RPA in addressing the policy questions and strategic implementation issues which arise across sectors. The RPA has had input from senior cross agency administrators who have been authorised to address the complex and unforeseen questions which arise. This has enabled management of the partnership to be responsive and transparent. Committee structures supported good communication and joint effort from strategy design to implementation action. This enabled informed and sensitive approaches at all levels with approaches amended as required.

## 9. Summary and conclusions

### 9.1 Effectiveness of the RPA partnership and operations

The RPA is working very effectively as a partnership between government, Indigenous people and industry, apart from less than optimal involvement of the East Arnhem Shire Council. Authorisation by the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and the Australian Government Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has been the key driver for collaboration, giving priority to work on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago and to working strategically to meet needs identified by that community.

The partnership and stakeholders have demonstrated high levels of satisfaction on all the dimensions of partnership examined.

#### **Vision and leadership**

The leadership and commitment by all partners has been fundamentally important to achieving partnership success and to the capacity of the RPA to evolve its approach to meet emerging demands. It has enabled the partners to work through the tensions and problems that have arisen. That the three original partners—the ALC, the Northern Territory Government and FaHCSIA—have been catalysts for joint action has encouraged participation by the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities and nurtured collaboration to ensure commitments are implemented. This has led to a strong sense of engagement and mutual respect and trust that partners will keep their commitments.

#### **Strategy and performance management**

The RPA approach has been focused on clear goals and is highly organised and well supported administratively at least at the partnership level. Its mechanisms and structures support implementation of projects through a collaborative approach where needed.

There has been an emphasis on good practice and attention to ensuring decisions are based on sound evidence.

The RPC has managed the overall business of the RPA and the work of the sub-committees very well. Committee approaches have supported professionalism, bridged organisational and interpersonal differences and matured skills in partnership working. People have stayed at the table and shown persistence in dealing with difficulties and delays – some of which have been, and continue to be, fairly challenging. There is a good record of producing tangible products and outputs from all committees.

Implementation and reporting processes provide transparency minimise risk and in the main have been highly effective in terms of delivering results according to plans. However, to prevent avoidable delays and problems the Committee needs to ensure that there is clear accountability for each piece of work, giving those responsible the authority to act and

ensuring they take responsibility. Respondents noted that when delays or difficulties occur it is sometimes difficult to know who to talk to. Such situations arise from the vertical/horizontal management tensions which can occur with partnership arrangements, changes in responsibility as work progresses and turnover of staff. The secretariat advises that more formal approaches are needed.

These attributes have resulted in a stable operation that has started to underpin effective, cooperative and efficient social action. It is timely now to develop new approaches for community development, and consider a coherent strategy for reform. Challenges include:

- how to stimulate change in behaviours and social norms to achieve better health, better school attendance and more participation in work and training, and
- how to develop a service system which has the flexibility to be able to focus on meeting needs on the Archipelago rather than responding to the requirements of program silos.

Such approaches will need more attention to policy and funding ramifications for each partner.

Stakeholders strongly agreed with the need to develop a strategic plan for the partnership that details a set of specific strategic objectives, performance targets, and appropriate measures of progress. Current accountability mechanisms would need to evolve to support that change. They are now geared towards measuring inputs and outputs, not change. This is the emerging challenge for the RPA.

The secretariat administrative structures and support established by the RPA have worked well and continue to be vital to-date. However, these structures are less able to support implementation of projects on the Archipelago itself and have, in the case of some projects, required extensive negotiation and effort. The employment by the ALC of staff to support the RPA has also strengthened effective implementation.

The focus of performance measurement should now be not only on project implementation but on progress towards change and overall impact. In doing so it is still important to establish milestones and review points.

## **Partnership dynamics**

The partnership exudes a feeling of vitality noted by the RPC meeting attendees (RPC meeting December 2011). The principles underpinning collaboration have been largely observed. The relationships between partners are characterised by high levels of collaborative working and a sense of openness and trust that promises will be honoured. The use of memoranda of understanding and contracts underpins that trust.

Although strong disagreement on issues does occur, reassurance is provided by a process for escalation and conflict resolution if needed. Such arrangements are necessary for a healthy partnership. In this partnership the process has not been relied upon. The RPA is characterised by an ethos of collaborative working, both formally and informally. Relationships are maturing as the RPA evolves and this is resulting in more effective

informal working relationships which build on the formal processes and ensures problems are resolved in a fairly timely and effective manner.

## **Influence**

As a strategic place-based partnership the RPA has exerted influence within and beyond its remit. For example, it informed the design of the RSD and the development of a fluoridation policy for remote communities, and policy, strategy, research and services more broadly. Many stakeholders have mentioned that it is a beacon for others as it is actively working on problems and 'things are getting done on Groote Eylandt' faster than in other places.

### **The RPA's key achievements as a partnership include:**

- Improved response by government and GEMCO to the needs of the Anindilyakwa people; having the ALC as a partner has ensured more effective negotiation with government by the Anindilyakwa people and provided supportive mechanisms on the ground for assessing needs, education, communication and negotiation.
- Ensuring accountability for each partner through effective implementation and follow up of priorities in the RPA.
- Effective implementation of national priority programs, such as SIHIP, on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.
- Managing the building of infrastructure such as the Umbakumba Road which will provide all season access for this community to services located across Groote Eylandt and building sporting facilities, and cyclone shelter.
- Stimulating more collaborative work on complex and entrenched problems where a number of agencies need to be involved in solutions, such as education from birth to work, MJD, youth services and community safety.
- Securing enough resources to undertake most of the work in a reasonably timely fashion.
- Gathering the evidence to guide development and good practice implementation of strategies in the future.

Through its work the RPA is contributing to knowledge, skills and insights for working effectively in participatory partnerships where whole-of-government effort combined with community and industry effort is important for effective planning and implementation. It demonstrates strong professionalism and confidence that the partnership mechanism can work effectively.

## **9.2 General impacts of the RPA on the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities**

### **Building the evidence base**

A number of studies have been conducted to build the evidence base for action. This includes the education report: *New Responsibilities New Opportunities*, governance studies, research to underpin fluoridation, the Groote Eylandt Economic Development Strategy and

the youth strategy. These supplement a number of studies conducted as part of the NTER evaluation which support good thinking about responses on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

### **Ensuring that the basis is in place for planning and economic development**

Town plans and leasing arrangements are now in place to allow for economic and infrastructure development. A population study has been done to support ongoing infrastructure and service planning.

### **Building of housing, transport and other infrastructure**

Progress in implementing complex infrastructure projects has been effective and steady with the housing program being completed ahead of time and Umbakumba Road two-thirds complete. The Anindilyakwa Archipelago communities are noting changes on the ground and report that 'things are getting better'.

### **Building of local capacity**

The building of service capacity on the archipelago is progressing. There have been delays, but considering the dynamic policy environment, the fiscal constraints and the remoteness of the Groote Eylandt Archipelago, this is to be expected.

GEBIE has developed as a local business enterprise which has successfully managed several complex and interrelated projects in town planning, infrastructure and housing through its new arm, GCC and is also operating a quarry. The Job Shop has been established and is successfully operating a government contract, the MJDF has been founded and is improving service capacity for MJD sufferers and the ALC has embarked on a five year program to build its governance capability.

### **Mobilising change**

One of the key achievements of the RPA has been in developing the structures, partnerships and processes that have mobilised change across the communities. Programs aimed at identifying and mentoring community leaders, developing leadership skills among women and skilling staff members within the various organisations have all been initiated. Growing community engagement in tackling education problems is another positive impact.

### **Building better education outcomes**

The RPA has taken a strategic approach to education with an initial review of the problems and detailed planning to implement findings from the review. Community engagement in the education plan has been a key feature with the establishment of an education board controlled by the community. The school arrangements have been restructured with changes to key teaching personnel to support the new approaches. Houses for teachers have been built in the communities with many teachers now living locally rather than commuting from Alyangula. Education has been linked to jobs and sport and community activities.

It is too early to assess the impacts of these changes in terms of improved school attendance and educational outcomes while infrastructure and facilities remain behind mainland standards. However, some early signs are promising, particularly with involving parents in discussions and problem solving to improve school attendance.

### **Improving health and community wellbeing**

The community health planning initiated under Stage 1 of the RPA has resulted in considerable advance in identifying and tackling MJD, the greatest single health risk for the Groote Eylandt people. Through the work of the MJDF, government, philanthropic and industry support has been achieved for research and practical services.

Another significant achievement in addressing health issues has been commitment to and commencement of work on fluoridation of the water supply for Angurugu and Umbakumba. A community awareness program has also been introduced.

As well, community health facilities in Angurugu have been upgraded and a new clinic is expected to be built in Umbakumba during 2012. Enhancement of the Aged Care Centre at Angurugu is also underway.

## 10. The way forward

The Grootte Elyandt and Bickerton Island RPC still has a large agenda to complete under Stage 2 of the RPA. Part of this agenda is to build on and expand the responses to-date in fields such as education, youth and employment and to take strong action to address the barriers to improvement such as low levels of literacy, substance abuse, especially cannabis, lifestyle and health issues and the service and system structures which impede place-based responses. There was strong support for taking stock and refining thinking on forward direction for the RPA.

### **RPA planning for the future.**

As indicated in Section 4.2 it is timely for the partnership to develop a strategic plan, to review its vision, further clarify its directions, ascertain how their role relates to other government and community initiatives and how the RPA can support community development and change more purposefully.

There is a need to focus the planning approach on developing strategies to achieve change and integrating projects in a longer term development framework. A strategic plan should provide a regional place-based planning and community development approach. It should work holistically on the underpinning causes of problems and barriers to development such as improving literacy, social and emotional wellbeing and reducing substance abuse. This approach should underpin and support changes in the narrative, building aspirations and a sense of possibilities by community members. Such a holistic approach to planning and implementation will enable involvement of other parties on the islands such as non-government organisations as part of the service and capability development infrastructure.

The strategic plan should incorporate strategies for social change and development and provide a conceptual framework for integration of approaches and sub-plans such as the youth strategy and those mooted for employment and all post school education on the islands. The strategic plan and sub-plans should articulate to an action plan that maps out how objectives will be achieved.

Developing a strategic plan would involve addressing questions such as:

- What is the vision of how the community will be in 15 years' time, and what are the steps that it is hoped will have been made in 5 years and 10 years? These steps essentially become enabling objectives.
- What is the role of the RPA in supporting these developments?
- What is the best approach to planning, management, funding and accountability processes to achieve the changes desired? For example, could comprehensive implementation planning and local management provide Could pooled funding and local management provide a more effective and responsive approach?
- What streams of effort are needed to achieve this? How can current streams of effort address in a more interrelated way the long standing and connected causes of the socio economic problems such as poor social and emotional wellbeing, substance abuse, family dysfunction, low literacy levels, low valuing of education

and work participation and substance abuse? What are the most important priorities?

- What are the required contributions of partners to meet needs? Who should be involved?
- What changes are needed in the service system to better support change? How can strategies and services be better connected to deal with common or interrelated issues? Education, health, youth services and employment, for example, have many synergies and there are opportunities for more streamlined effort. Issues to be considered are referral patterns, support for families as well as individuals, collaboration on developing service pathways and community building activities. How are all services including non-government to be incorporated in this approach? How can the system and policy architecture support such functioning and what are the models of service which would be most effective?
- What are the strategies to ensure service and infrastructure projects are part of the community development process and utilised as mechanisms to strengthen the community and diminish problems?

## **Reporting and monitoring structures**

The terms of reference for this assignment requested a plan for future monitoring of performance including performance indicators and targets. This is normally done against a strategic plan which is yet to be developed. It requires much developmental thinking and consensus building and was not possible at the stage and within the resources allocated for this assignment. The following provides some guidance on developing a monitoring and reporting framework.

Future reporting and monitoring arrangements should be developed as part of a strategic plan and this reporting should meet the requirements of accountability and measuring progress towards outcomes as well as how changes to implementation and delivery approaches are being made.

One conceptual framework and rationale for information collection should be developed and levels of data collection be consistent with that. Both qualitative and quantitative data should be used to communicate what is happening, and the issues remaining.

All parties should commit to collection and use of an integrated set of data. Part of the role of the data collection is to explain connections and changes so that synthesis of information across data sets can be considered; for example, the relationship between school enrolments and police incident data. In doing so several levels of reporting to mirror the layers of effort should be considered.

**Table 1:** Possible monitoring and reporting information

Level	Type of information	Sample criteria
Community eg. Health and community services	Service information – participation, engagement, aggregated progress information.	Client numbers and relevant service use. Client feedback. Impacts of service. Needs unmet. Service pathways  Progress in community development – evidence of change (improvements and deterioration).
Service	Administrative data from services and formal government collections.	Collaborative projects. Collaboration to meet objectives.  Approaches and systems to ensure needs are covered.  How complex individual and family needs are being addressed.  Issues in service delivery.  Progress against the seven platforms under the COAG agreements.
Projects	Progress information.	Progress against timeframes successes and issues.
Sub-committee	Information from implementation of plans. Data collected for government administrative purposes. E.g. school enrolments.	Situational analysis: Progress against milestones and targets.  Risks and their management  Trends and changes in service and implications
RPA	Information for management of the RPA, monitoring of progress, issue resolution,	Sub-committee data. Collation of selected administrative data

Level	Type of information	Sample criteria
	responding to new challenges.	Reporting to government against the COAG agreements. Effectiveness and efficiency

Much of the data mentioned currently exist but are not synthesised into formal reporting processes. For reporting purposes the RPA should select the indicators required and the frequency of reporting for each purpose.

A report collating progress against a strategic plan which also identifies current and ongoing challenges should be produced annually for governments and other partners. Both qualitative and quantitative information should be included.

Attention should also be paid to progress against the objectives and principles of the National Indigenous Reform Agenda.

### **Program logic**

Further developing the program logic would be a sound start to such strategic thinking. It would assist in identifying what changes are required and in identifying steps to change (evidence based) and would help focus thinking about what the RPA could do. It would also assist in enabling a focus on outcomes (instead of restricting the thinking to inputs) and on objectives and targets and the 'signs of success' or evidence that change is occurring. This process would need to be collaborative to ensure that assumptions are made explicit and are shared. It also needs to be iterative to enable adaptation of the logic as understandings are refined or in response to a dynamic policy and program environment. The program logic at Appendix A could be used as a basis for discussion.

### **Overcoming system barriers and fragmentation of services**

The RPA should try to implement its 'one stop shop' focus at the service delivery end of the spectrum and advocate for a more integrated approach across service delivery agencies. At a minimum this would mean delivery agencies having common principles of service delivery such as 'no wrong door'<sup>5</sup>, development of effective referral pathways, information sharing protocols, long-term core funding for essential services to avoid service disruption, and possible pooling of resources; both funding and staffing. There are many models in the community service field which would inform the effort and would equip services to respond to priorities. Ideally it would include the RPC making decisions on at least some of the service structures so that more substantial and sustainable services can be built and maintained. If current grant funding strategies are maintained, contracts should require services to work collaboratively; including involvement in place-based planning to address needs and monitor progress.

### **RPA delivery support**

<sup>5</sup> 'No wrong door' is an approach which means that consumers can enter any service with the expectation that if it is not the most appropriate one then they will receive assistance in accessing the most relevant service or bundle of services. This might mean referral or case management approaches.

The RPA should consider supporting delivery capacity on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island with some administration on Groote to support the secretariat, take on implementation coordination and support local committees. This could include some people already undertaking supporting functions like the coordinator for the Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board, the role of the Government business managers and Indigenous engagement officers and the ALC RPA coordinator.

## **Engagement**

The RPA should develop an overall engagement and coordination strategy so that instead of ad hoc and piecemeal engagement based around individual programs or initiatives there is a more thoughtful and systematic approach around thematic areas of need or priorities. Examples include: developing holistic and integrated approaches for youth and mobilising sustained and coordinated approaches to substance abuse, i.e. how health promotion, recreation services, schools, health, alcohol and drug services, police and family support services can ensure there is a coherent approach.

## **Building the capacity of the Anindilyakwa people**

There is a need to develop strategies to address key barriers to reform. Priorities include a substantial investment in literacy for all age groups, addressing underpinning problems such as cannabis use and building the capacity of the services and the community to realise its strengths through leadership and governance development.

## **Workforce development: community members**

Strategic workforce development is a highly important part of building community capacity. Opportunities exist through the Dugong Resort, GEBIE and GEMCO but these could be extended to government and community services. The pathway should be developed from building readiness for work, to specific work skills like computer literacy, to TAFE qualifications and building opportunities to further develop those with TAFE qualifications and where possible building pathways to professional skills. A successful example already exists in the Northern Territory of progressing teacher's aides to teachers.

## **Workforce development: government and service officers**

The ability to work in partnership and devise local approaches to place-based planning and service delivery are other priorities. Training for government officers, service providers and community organisations would assist in achieving the objectives set by COAG and remote service delivery strategies. Objectives of such training include enabling staff officers to understand the implications for their work, freeing up thinking about what is possible under existing funding and accountability systems and developing ideas on models of service which are possible. It would assist officers to move beyond vertical silo structures and operate more effectively as part of a whole-of-government enterprise. As steps to partnership working are being considered across many fields of effort such capacity building would extend beyond the work of the RPA.

While there is individual program-based effort to encourage workforce participation, a more strengthened and coherent workforce effort across sectors may be more effective in building a critical mass of community members over time who can participate in employment.

There is a high degree of overlap in core skills required, especially in the health and community service sectors making it possible to collaborate on training programs and pathways for core skill development especially for human services. Such approaches make it more viable to provide training on the Archipelago, produce a critical mass of people with core skills, and a supportive learning environment with many providers able to provide supervision and support.

## **Considerations for government at the Territory and Commonwealth level**

As argued in Section 7.3, the success of the RPA provides an opportunity to consolidate and further develop approaches to place-based planning. Many believe that all programs and services operating on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago should work through the RPA, whether government or non-government services, to support those objectives to the maximum degree possible.

There is scope here to build on the RSD approach of developing a single face of government. Governments should consider pooling some program and grants funding for a period of, say, five years, so essential services have more capacity and flexibility and can operate more rationally to serve a spectrum of needs.

There is potential to use Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island as 'lighthouse' sites – experimental and educational sites for these initiatives to generate more understanding by policy makers of what works on the ground. This would include consideration of the issues which have to be catered for at delivery level, the engagement processes which are most effective and service arrangements which work. Such work could be used to educate and inform others in similar type of work.

These proposals are not without their difficulties, as already recognised, but the period remaining in the current RPA provides an opportunity to explore what can be done to overcome the system and policy barriers to work in remote communities and identify evolutionary steps to change.

# 11. Recommendations

## For the RPA

1. Review the role of the East Arnhem Shire Council in the partnership especially to ascertain:
  - how best the East Arnhem Shire can contribute to the partnership
  - what opportunities and barriers exist in fulfilling that role, and
  - a clear agreement on how the East Arnhem Shire Council can contribute in ongoing RPA work.
2. Review the arrangements for delivering RSD through the RPA to clarify issues and enhance collaboration. The aim of such analysis would be to consolidate policy agendas and better align processes of planning and implementation at community and system level.
3. Nominate a person for each project who will be fully responsible to the RPC for management, responding to enquiries and communicating to senior officers and partners about project status and to community members.
4. Ensure that all subcommittees have leadership and adequate administrative support, especially those located on the islands, for example, the Youth Committee.
5. Review the sub-committee structures and membership as the balance of the effort moves more towards changing the aspirations and behaviours of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island citizens.
6. Develop training for government staff, and partners to support partnership work at all levels including;
  - a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of partnership work,
  - skills in collaborative planning and reporting for shared outcomes,
  - determining the implications of partnership for existing budgetary and accountability systems and organisational thinking
  - improving the ability of individuals and organisations to develop and manage improved approaches
  - the ability to negotiate and problem solve across government agency and community interests.

## Planning

7. Develop a strategic plan over the next year to provide a clear pathway and milestones for development and a framework for subsidiary work e.g. education, employment and youth strategies. This plan should inform the way forward and guide preparation for partnership work beyond the current RPA ending in 2014. It should also provide a framework for assessing resource needs, governance structures and protocols. Key features to consider include:
  - realistic time horizons, identifying changes sought in 5, 10 and 15 years,

- priorities for development identified through the strategic planning process being undertaken by the ALC
- a place-based approach which consolidates cross agency planning and implementation so that the underpinning causes of problems and barriers to change can be more comprehensively addressed, and
- supporting more integrated community level planning and implementation between agencies and services.
- a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework

### **Reporting, monitoring and evaluation**

8. Future reporting and monitoring and evaluation should be aligned with an overall strategic plan. Where appropriate, reporting processes should incorporate progress towards COAG targets, community development and individual development. Success measures should be developed as part of the strategic planning.

### **Engagement strategy**

9. The RPA should build on recent proposals and information about current community consultation and engagement arrangements to ensure that consultation is less burdensome and more effective for all players. The processes should:
  - encourage agencies, programs and services to look at needs of the community more holistically, for example, pursuing a theme-based rather than program-based approach on such as youth development ,involving government personnel from a number of programs, and
  - continue to build the capacity and expertise of islanders to be more informed and confident to engage with government and services.

### **Governance development strategy**

10. Consider expanding the governance development approach for the ALC, GEBIE and local reference groups to a strategy for service providers and governance personnel involved with managing and contracting services for Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

### **For government policy and strategy**

11. Give early attention to considering how the RPA work can continue beyond the life of the current agreement. This information is important for strategic thinking and planning and for any transition arrangements that emerge.
12. Consolidate and build on the RPA successes in place-based planning and implementation by consolidating funds for multiple short term grants and ongoing programs to support more holistic and integrated effort and to increase administrative efficiency.

13. Consider assured funding for core services for a five-year period, renewable and adjustable on audit and or evaluation to support sustainable change.
14. Consider trialling a community controlled, place based flexible funding pool for youth services with the design incorporating administrative efficiency and responsiveness to need.
15. Consider developing the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA as a pilot site designed to:
  - Develop and test planning, funding and accountability structures which support joint work in remote community settings
  - Develop and test collaborative strategies for community development
  - Develop understanding of good practice for effective partnership development, place-based planning and implementation, governance development and effective community engagement processes at all governance levels, and
  - Provide a source of information, advice and resources to those planning or setting up partnerships
  - Test evaluation approaches such as developmental evaluation (similar to action research) which facilitates improvement in an ongoing way in this setting for particular strategies such as the youth strategy
  - Develop an evaluation methodology which is able to assess comparative progress towards outcomes in pilot and non pilot-sites.

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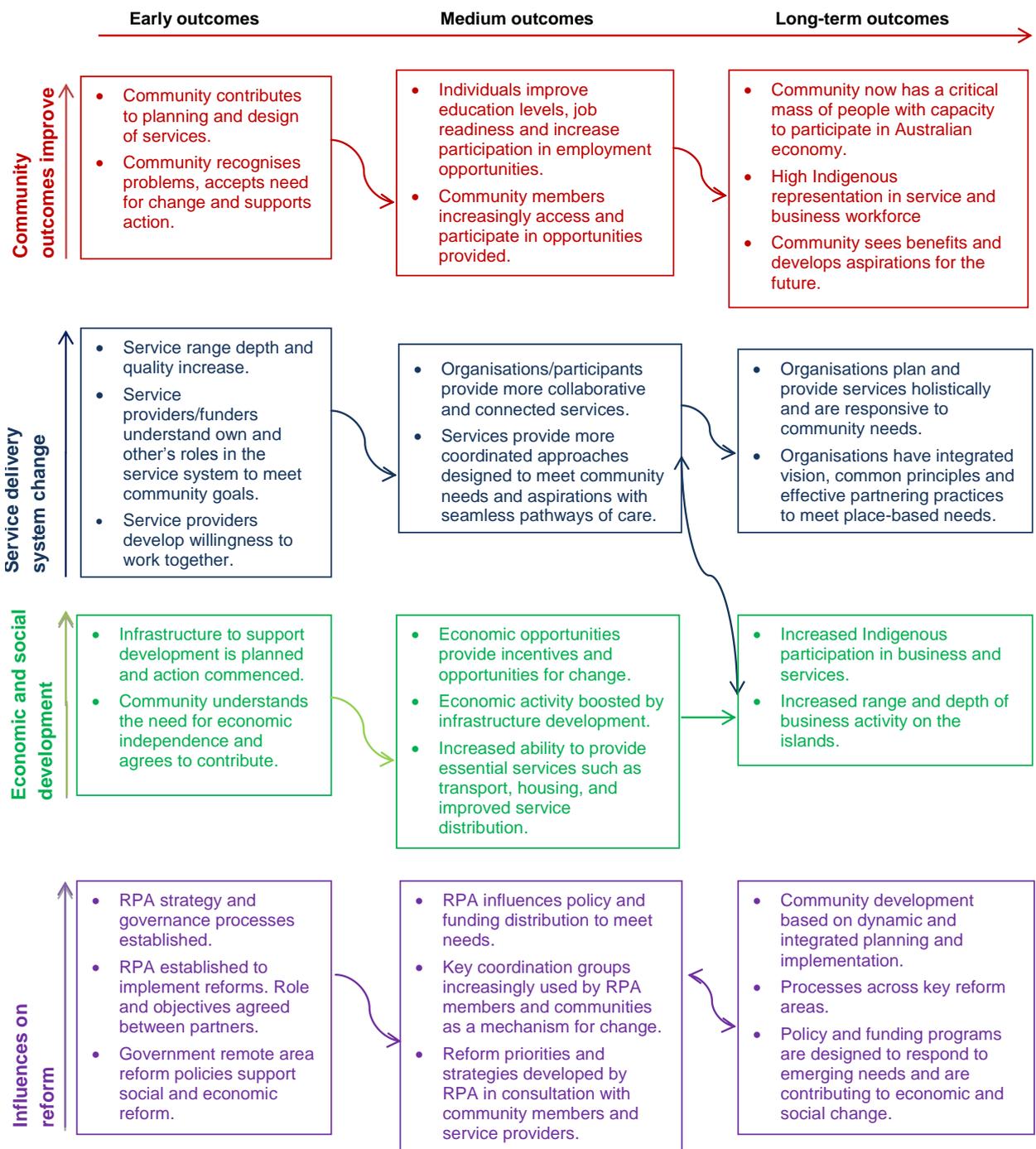
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# APPENDIX A—PROGRAM LOGIC

## RPA is a force for accelerated social and economic development for Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities



Strong Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities participating fully in Australian Society



# APPENDIX B—CASE STUDIES

## Case study 1: Umbakumba Road upgrade

### Objective

The aim of the project is to upgrade the existing gravel road between Angurugu and Umbakumba with a two-lane sealed pavement and to maximise the potential for local employment opportunity, including increasing rates of Indigenous people entering and remaining in long-term, meaningful employment.

### Background and context

The road is an important link between Umbakumba on the east side of Groote Eylandt and Alyangula and Angurugu on the west and is 47 kilometres long. The existing gravel road is in poor condition (due, according to one interviewee, to 'inefficient maintenance procedures') and subject to severe deterioration during both wet and dry seasons. Upgrade to the road will improve access to Umbakumba.

The project is part of a broader program under the RPA to deliver infrastructure to the island communities. The program seeks to ensure that infrastructure and planning cater effectively for future need and address Indigenous disadvantage by delivery of capital works. It aims also to enhance opportunities for business and enterprise development and employment in the region. Other aspects of the program include improvements to town planning, road maintenance and safety and government staff housing.

### Planning and oversight

The project is managed by the Department of Construction and Infrastructure. Project reporting is through the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group to the RPC.

Membership of the working group includes relevant Northern Territory Government departments, the ALC, GEMCO, the East Arnhem Shire, the Office of Township Leasing, the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program and the Aboriginal Benefits Account. GEBIE has been in attendance at some meetings.

The purpose and functions of the working group are to monitor, facilitate cooperation, provide advice, solve any problems and address any lack of progress in relation to implementation of the capital works programs. Further, the working group coordinates projects to achieve economies of scale and maximise short, medium and longer term Indigenous employment and business opportunities in the construction industry.

The project is subject to a detailed project management plan (February 2010) which covers design and geotechnical scope, environmental approvals, the project schedule, risks and issues management, deliverables, project governance, management process, costs and funding.

The total project cost estimate was \$22 million, including project delivery and excluding GST. Funding was provided by the Northern Territory Government (\$5.5 m plus project delivery costs), the Australian Government, through the Aboriginal Benefits Account (\$9.5 m) and GEBIE (\$5 m). An additional \$5 m has been made available by the Aboriginal Benefits Account if required. GEBIE is also providing an in-kind contribution, sealing aggregate and construction of water bores, estimated at \$2 m. GEBIE is required to source any required additional funding as per a project management and funding agreement signed in June 2011. GEMCO and the East Arnhem Shire Council were originally to provide in-kind support where applicable; however appear to have actually played no role in the project.

DCI is acting as project manager on behalf of the joint clients, GEBIE and the Department of Lands and Planning (DLP).

Timing for completion of the project in the schedule to the RPA is 2013. However a risk analysis undertaken early in the life of the project identified timing as a major risk to cost minimisation (due on the one hand to cross cultural issues and the need for significant consultation and relationship building, and on the other, to the limited building season and the high costs of stand down and remobilisation in a remote community) and the project plan identifies December 2011 as the completion date for the project. The project plan also reflects the GEBIE Job Shop's estimate that about 20 Indigenous people were likely to be interested in gaining work on the project and notes that provisions for mandatory local content were to be included in the specified requirements for the contractor.

The contract was awarded on 7 April 2011 to Fulton Hogan Construction Pty Ltd, a company based in South Australia with an emerging presence in the Northern Territory, with a contracted completion date of 5 January 2012. Within the contract there is a range of responsibilities placed on the contractor, including local workforce training/up skilling and project employment opportunities and ensuring no introduction of pest flora and fauna species on to Groote Eylandt.

## **Progress of implementation**

Work commenced on the project on 4 July 2011. The GEBIE quarry has commenced operations and is generating road aggregate. Operations were initially under an existing inter-departmental memorandum of understanding however a full commercial license is now in place for GCC to operate the quarry as a commercial venture. Negotiations are in progress between GEMCO and GEBIE to close the GEMCO white rock quarry and source all requirements from GEBIE.

A number of project delivery issues have arisen which has affected the project completion date. These issues are being addressed by the project team under the terms of the construction contract. It is expected that the road will be completed by mid – 2012 (subject to the timing of the wet season), still well ahead of the original scheduled 2013 date.

A total of 75 construction personnel are employed on the project, including 23 Indigenous people. Fifteen of these have recently been trained and accredited with work zone traffic management. After initial issues with quality and aggregate sizing, the white rock quarry established by GEBIE is providing material to the road contractors at agreed rates. GEMCO is considering closing its white rock quarry and processing only black rock. The quarry is a

good local venture for employment and training which is well on the way to becoming an established commercial entity and a 'sound local business enterprise'.

## **Quality of implementation**

Concerns about road safety and traffic management were raised by the ALC Chair. These issues have been addressed by warning signs and posters advising travellers of the road works and cautioning them to slow down and to wear seatbelts. Additionally, a road safety program has been developed for Groote Eylandt, including a road safety forum in the community, plans to offer a driver's licence program and visits by road safety officers to schools to work with teachers on the Safer Roads curriculum. Local people are being trained to provide on-site traffic management.

Some ALC stakeholders expressed the view that letting of the contract for the road had been problematic, with undue focus on price. They argue that, ironically, this has led to increased costs in an environment where every effort was being made to contain costs.

It should be noted that the ALC was actually a member of the contractor selector panel, although initially only as observers. Normal Northern Territory Government procurement processes were followed rigorously.

Cost blow-outs on the project were identified as early as February 2010, before the tender was let, and further issues have occurred during contract implementation which has led to concerns. There have been a number of contributory causes. Some of these have led to variations and extensions of time to the contract which will have cost implications. These increased costs could have an adverse impact on the ALC/GEBIE funding for the projects and they have expressed concern in relation to these matters.

## **Governance**

Governance structures have on the whole proved robust. The Infrastructure and Planning Working Group has provided effective coordination, monitoring and control for the project and through its meetings and regular reports to the RPC has been open to hearing concerns and to addressing issues raised. A project control group established in the first part of 2010 included the ALC and GEBIE. Generally, problems have been able to be discussed informally and the relationship with GEBIE was described by one government participant as 'a pretty good relationship'.

The original tender detailed logistical factors to consider including seasonality, local conditions, barge costs, access to fuel and water, and accommodation costs on Groote Eylandt and this will mitigate to some extent against additional cost claims from the contractor.

There have, however, been issues arising from the multiplicity of roles played by GEBIE as client, funder, business enterprise and supplier of essential materials for the project. Without doubt, GEBIE has benefited from the opportunity to develop and operate the quarry and there has been clear support from the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group for GEBIE to be involved in all the construction projects under its watch as a means to increasing

employment, training and apprenticeships. An ongoing maintenance role for GEBIE has also been discussed.

However, as a client and funder, GEBIE has experienced some frustration about its level of involvement and control and delays in making the contract available for its perusal. The Northern Territory Government employed a probity advisor early in 2010 to ensure that there were no conflict of interest issues around GEBIE's multiple roles, and this appears to have satisfied government requirements. The contracting department has been scrupulous in protecting the commercial confidentiality of the successful contractor; however as a client and funder, including funder of last resort, GEBIE has felt exposed. It should be noted that access to copies of the DCI/Fulton Hogan construction contract has now been provided for the Aboriginal Benefits Account (with the exception of some commercial-in-confidence information) although not for the ALC.

Some discussion early in the project on mechanisms to manage GEBIE's multiple roles may have avoided this situation. However managing potential conflicts of interest would have been challenging for a relatively new organisation which is still establishing its governance and management structures. These issues will need to be addressed for future projects.

Concern to minimise costs has been an over-riding objective for all members of the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group and completion of the project within the revised timeframe is seen as critical by all parties. From the perspective of skills development and ongoing employment, some stakeholders pointed to the advantages of staging large projects over a number of years to maximise the opportunity to sustain employment and apprenticeships. However this militates against the concern of all parties to contain costs, and of governments to be able to show early and tangible results. These are ongoing issues for a community which has immediate and urgent needs for adequate infrastructure and ongoing needs for capability and skill development.

While original expectations around Indigenous employment appear to have been met, some argue that greater efforts could have been made to maximise local participation and expenditure on Groote Eylandt. A local Indigenous team is successfully patrolling the road, although establishing regular work patterns for individuals remains a challenge. Against this, it should be noted that the local Indigenous people who have been trained and are 'proudly patrolling' the road with stop/go signs have never had jobs before, are managing workplace expectations such as very early starts and are, as one interviewee put it, 'loving it'.

## Case study 2: Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP)

### Objective

SIHIP in the Northern Territory aims to provide, by 2013:

- housing that meets residents' needs and current Northern Territory Government standards and effectively reduces overcrowding at lower than previous whole of life costs
- opportunities for training and employment of Indigenous people and a sustainable workforce in each community for the ongoing construction, maintenance and management of housing
- stepped change improvement in the delivery of major housing programs in the Northern Territory and a basis for the delivery of future housing programs and schemes, and
- tangible benefits for all parties through the fostering of positive inter-relationships.

On Groote and Bickerton, through Package 4, SIHIP is intended to deliver 80 new houses with associated infrastructure and to rebuild and refurbish around 110 houses.

### Background and context

A Commonwealth/territory-wide program under the aegis of COAG, SIHIP commenced in the Northern Territory in late 2008, shortly after the initial RPA was signed. Stage 1 of the RPA does not formally anticipate SIHIP; however the parties committed to improved housing outcomes involving provision of new housing, repairs and maintenance of existing housing and introduction of new housing options as well as increased investment in community development initiatives.

Stage 2 of the RPA, signed in November 2009, recommitted to the housing outcomes identified in Stage 1, and completion of those Stage 1 projects still in progress, and identified a number of new projects to address remaining overcrowding and to maximise employment and small business outcomes for the Anindilyakwa people. The RPA formally recognised SIHIP through the first two projects identified; viz., 54 new houses for Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra in addition to the 26 houses committed to under Stage 1 of SIHIP, and functional refurbishments to community housing with a focus on safety issues.

Schedule C to the RPA clarified how SIHIP (recently reviewed at the national level) would be implemented on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island. The Schedule comprised an agreement between the Australian and territory governments and the ALC which committed to the seven objectives of SIHIP as well as the principles and objectives of the RPA and reflected the goals set out in the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

The Schedule accepted the rationale underpinning the selection of a Strategic Alliance methodology<sup>6</sup>, viz., the ability to drive down prices, reduce delivery times and attract larger companies with capacity to partner smaller companies with local expertise, use local labour and engage effectively with the community. It outlined arrangements for developing and implementing a community engagement plan, an information sharing protocol, an employment and workforce development plan, quality assurance requirements and home ownership; all issues arising from Stage 1 of SIHIP. The Schedule also outlined governance arrangements.

During 2009 a number of issues had been raised about the performance of the Earth Connect Alliance. Following investigation of these issues by the Northern Territory and Australian governments, the alliance was formally concluded in March 2010 and, after a transition process, a new alliance partner was commissioned to complete Stage 1 and undertake Stage 2.

## **Planning and oversight**

Unlike other infrastructure elements of the RPA, SIHIP is not overseen by the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group which at its first meeting noted that SIHIP projects were outside its purview. However there is a SIHIP representative on the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group.

The Australian and Northern Territory governments are jointly responsible for the leadership and program management of SIHIP. Government alliance representatives on the Alliance Leadership Team are the first point of contact for the ALC on implementation issues. The ALC represents the interests of the communities of Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra and was part of the decision making process for the alliance partner for Stage 2, consistent with the RPA, the size of the investment and its concerns regarding Stage 1.

Subject to commercial confidentiality, all information is shared equitably between government and ALC representatives. There are clear commitments from government to support community engagement, including through administrative and secretariat support to the SIHIP Working Group and housing reference groups. A Package Alliance Management Team is responsible for delivery, and the Implementation Group oversees implementation. The Implementation Group comprises the government alliance representatives, a senior representative of the alliance partner and the Chair, and Manager of the ALC. The Implementation Group provides quarterly reports to the RPC.

The work is being delivered by the alliance partner and a sub-alliance with GCC and PowerWater. The primary responsibility for management of delivery risk rests with the Alliance Leadership Team and the sub-alliance. GCC itself was created under Part 1 of the RPA with funding from the Aboriginal Benefit Account.

The SIHIP process involved a Package Scoping Proposal developed by the Program Owner, a Package Return Brief, developed by the Alliance Partner and, following acceptance of the

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<sup>6</sup> Alliance partnering is relatively new in Australian construction. It involves two or more parties agreeing to work together to share decision making and risk and places a high premium on relationship building. It is considered useful for projects with significant levels of complexity and uncertainty. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Report no 167, pp 18-20.

latter, a Package Development Report (PDR) which outlines the total agreed scope of work, including outcomes, costs, deliverables, a community engagement plan and an employment and workforce development plan. The PDR also details infrastructure inclusions required to support the net additional houses for each community. Subject to confidentiality clauses in the Schedule, the ALC was able to comment and substantially influence the project.

### **Progress of implementation**

Since the signing of the RPA, Groote Eylandt has become part of the formal planning process for the Territory, with town plans being developed and formally gazetted under legislation. These plans were amongst the first for Indigenous communities in the Territory.

By the end of Stage 1 of SIHIP, 16 of 26 new houses were at varying stages of completion and the transition arrangements provided for these to be completed by the new Alliance Partner and GCC. Through the RPA, GCC was provided with all the materials required to complete the buildings and, in addition, a \$300,000 contribution to labour costs. There was also agreement to complete 37 refurbishments and rebuilds. These uncompleted tasks were carried through into Stage 2 of the RPA.

By the end of October 2011, 37 of the 80 houses promised under SIHIP Stages 1 and 2 had been completed, and 40 were underway. Of the rebuilds, 28 of 43 were completed, with nine underway, while 41 of 66 refurbishments were completed with one underway. These are expected to be completed by December 2013, against a completion date of 2012 in the RPA. Ultimately GCC will deliver 70 houses under Schedule C which is five less than planned, but they are considered to be high quality rebuilds with some additional bedrooms. There will be 110 new and rebuilt houses in total, of which 80 will be new houses. Total housing stock will be increased by 66, as 14 houses will be demolished and new houses built on the existing lots. The RPC has been advised that at the end of the program there will be sufficient housing to stop overcrowding, but that there will need to be discussions about internal movement to reduce numbers in some houses.

In terms of infrastructure, subdivision design was complete, with construction 85 per cent completed in Umbakumba and 25 per cent in Angurugu; head works were part designed with 35 per cent construction undertaken at Angurugu. An employment and workforce development plan had been drafted and as of November 2011, 25 Indigenous workers were employed under SIHIP.

### **Quality of implementation**

At the December 2010 meeting of the RPC, the ALC expressed a number of concerns about the operation of SIHIP, including reduction of SIHIP funding and an agreement with the shire about repairs and maintenance which did not appear to be consistent with commitments in Schedule C. None of these issues had been discussed with the ALC. The Land Council was also concerned that targets were not being met and that quality would be compromised in the rush to completion. The Committee agreed to its call for an internal review of SIHIP to avoid a crisis early in 2011. It also agreed that the ALC should have opportunity to comment on the draft review before finalisation and that the ALC should have greater involvement in infrastructure planning.

The review, tabled at the June 2011 meeting of the Committee, noted the following areas for improvement:

- governance; the review experienced difficulty in tracking decision-making processes and establishing reasons for delay;
- coordination between parties;
- level of support for the SIHIP Working Group and communication with the community about allocations and property and tenancy management;
- quality and project management in relation to the alliance and sub-alliance.

It is worth noting that the position of Senior Government Representative, pivotal in effective implementation and monitoring of Schedule C, oversight of the Alliance and sub-alliance and effective stakeholder engagement, has not been occupied since June 2011.

The review made 20 recommendations around strengthening governance and stakeholder engagement, community engagement, the re-setting of relationships to focus on community benefits, project management, quality assurance, employment and trade training. These recommendations are being implemented progressively.

The ALC has also raised community concerns about the probability that some houses will be finished but will not be able to be handed over due to the fact that the various services, including subdivision roads, will not be constructed, therefore restricting service connection. It appears that SIHIP is operating on efficiencies of scale including concurrent building and design and installation of services such as water and sewerage, which is not the usual practice. It has also been suggested that insufficient funding has been provided under the program for infrastructure and certainly these issues have been experienced in other communities, such as Maningrida. The East Arnhem Shire Council has applied for additional funding for the rectification of existing roads in Angurugu, although SIHIP will construct the new roads in the subdivisions. Additionally, there are emerging concerns about the overall impact of all the construction on the provision of utilities. GEMCO is working to address issues in the supply of electricity, sewage and water but it is recognised that demand management may become an issue. Tenders for the required sewerage works are being let. Water services and the roads are expected to take longer.

## **Governance**

Alliance partnering was chosen as the form of contracting for SIHIP because it was considered the most appropriate method for a program with a range of ambitious objectives and complex delivery variables. This was the first time alliance contracting had been used in Indigenous housing in Australia.

Its advantages were considered to include consortia with a range of necessary skills, the capacity to combine the expertise of large firms with local experience and to incubate new local ventures, shared risk, whole of life and transparent costing, stakeholder consultation and community involvement, flexibility and continuous improvement.

SIHIP clearly experienced problems, both nationally and at the local level on Groote and Bickerton. It was reviewed twice and recommendations made for improvement. However the national review, driven in large measure by political and media criticism about cost and

delays concluded that the overall program design was sound and that while there had been delays, the lead time for construction was less than under the most recent large-scale Australian remote Indigenous housing program. The delay was attributed to an initial underestimate of the time required to develop the initial packages of work. The review also found that an imbalance had emerged between program objectives and that design and community engagement had been elevated to the detriment of unit cost. Adjustments were subsequently made to design and unit cost.

A clear learning from the project is that longer term planning is critical, particularly given the multiplicity of potentially conflicting objectives, the complexity of the task, the number of players involved and the short window for construction in a tropical climate. Some would also argue that if community engagement, training and employment for local Indigenous people are serious objectives, additional time and cost must be built in.

People at senior level in both government and the Alliance Partnership commented subsequently that the alliance contracting method was inherently flexible enough to allow for major policy shifts mid-stream. It should also be acknowledged that the approach nurtured the birth and development of a new local enterprise in the shape of GCC which has engendered a sense of great pride, including through school apprenticeships. It is not insignificant that Schedule C to Stage 2 of the RPA deliberately endorsed both the objectives of SIHIP and the alliance methodology while recognising that a number of issues needed to be addressed.

Similar comments can be made about the internal review. While there were clearly issues to be addressed, such is the nature of the partnership under the RPA that the ALC was able not only to raise its concerns, but to have issues explored and recommendations made which should improve overall governance.

At its September meeting the RPC noted the improved communications and working relationship with the Housing Reference Group and advice that the SIHIP Implementation Group was demonstrating cohesive leadership, capable of having robust discussions. This must be regarded as a significant achievement of the partnership, the strength of which was credited by one senior bureaucrat with having achieved more funding under SIHIP than other comparable communities.

It is clear that governance of technically complex initiatives such as housing and infrastructure requires diligent attention to information flows and efficient decision making and sign off arrangements at each step by all parties involved. As well there is a need to have effective 'field intelligence' to ensure that early warning of problems occurs.

## Case study 3: Education

### Objective

To close the gap in educational experience and outcome for the Anindilyakwa people on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

### Background and context

The education system had been failing the Anindilyakwa people. Their educational outcomes were one of the lowest in the Northern Territory. School attendance had been poor for many years, attainment levels were well below standard for Australian children and literacy levels across the whole community were low. This meant that the Anindilyakwa people were unable to take advantage of significant existing and potential employment and economic opportunities available on the islands.

Under Stage 1 of the RPA a comprehensive independent review of education in the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island region was commissioned to explore how education in the region could be brought up to standard and to lay out a blueprint for reform. The report, *New Ownership New Responsibilities: Review of Education in the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Region* provided comprehensive and broad ranging recommendations and now forms the basis for reform.

The project was initiated by the ALC which had sought action from government over a number of years to improve the provision of government services and infrastructure, including housing for teachers to live in the communities and school buildings of an appropriate standard. The ALC was also deeply concerned about the standard of education being delivered in the Groote Eylandt region.

Underlying causes of the problems of low participation in schooling and poor educational outcomes are complex and interrelated. Social indicators of health and well-being are very low. These include: poor health outcomes, low employment levels, low educational outcomes and low literacy levels, high use of cannabis and overcrowded living conditions. Readiness for school is very low. Diagnostic information from the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation project demonstrates clearly that children's verbal skills are significantly lower than national norms. Therefore a major investment in pre-literacy work with families and early childhood providers is critical to success at school. There is also a lack of commitment by parents to ensuring that children attend school following a couple of generations of disengagement. Moreover, each community is different and has different challenges in regard to education.

The independent review was designed to inform the RPA response to closing the gap in education and has support from all the RPA partners. Education from early childhood through schooling to training is a major priority under the RPA. It was agreed that many agencies need to be involved with the community in improving the standards of education and infrastructure to support it as well as developing clear pathways from school to work. It was clear that a new approach to education and training was needed and that this approach

had to be multifaceted so that the underlying socio-economic conditions could be addressed in tandem.

## **Planning and oversight**

A steering committee including the ALC, Northern Territory DET and DEEWR was established to oversight the review. Ongoing implementation of the report was managed by the New Opportunities New Responsibilities Education Taskforce with similar membership. This group recommended that a board of education be established to increase community engagement and local control and improve opportunities for all students. This was agreed to by the RPC and a board of education and training was developed through an iterative process so that the community was involved in the discussions and planning. The Education Taskforce was dissolved with the commencement of the operations of the board.

Membership of this board under a chairperson nominated by the ALC includes one nominee from the ALC, four nominees from the school communities (one from each), one nominee each from Northern Territory DET, DEEWR, DHF, and GEMCO. Most of the board members are local, in line with the principle of the importance of the community taking responsibility for change. The board is seen as having an important role in promoting parent and community involvement in education. The Board of Education and Training had its inaugural meeting in mid-2010. It will meet quarterly with the capacity to convene additional meetings as required.

The terms of reference for the board are broad ranging and are drawn from the recommendations for change in the report New Opportunities and New Responsibilities. Some of the purpose and functions include:

- Provision of vision and direction for early childhood, school education and training through the development of an Anindilyakwa Education and Training Strategic Plan.
- Provision of strategic advice and direction to school councils and supervision of council elections. Endorsement of individual school improvement plans and associated budgets and reviewing progress against those plans.
- Participation in individual principal selection processes and in the recruitment of teachers and their induction to Groote Eylandt Archipelago schools.
- Participation in the accountability of schools to Northern Territory DET.
- Advocacy and promotion of the importance of education and training.
- Provision of strategic advice and direction to school councils and supervision of council elections.
- Coordinating and overseeing activities that relate to the transition from schooling and training to work.
- Building effective links with the ALC, GEMCO, Northern Territory and Australian government agencies, East Arnhem Shire, local business and community groups.

Decisions will be reached by consensus rather than by voting. Partners are collaborating with funding and in-kind services.

## Progress of implementation

It has taken approximately two years from the receipt of the report to establishment of the education governance structures. The partners needed time to consider the recommendations of the report, many of which were innovative and far reaching and had broad education system implications. A way forward was agreed.

In the interim the Education Taskforce agreed on a common goal: 'to improve education and training on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago from early childhood, schooling to vocational education and training and to make recommendations to the RPA committee'.

The report provided a clear pathway to improving educational outcomes on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago and many of its recommendations are being implemented.

Resulting changes in approaches to education include the following:

- Introduction of more local control, ownership and responsibility for education through a board of education and training chaired by the ALC, with majority ALC nominees and with Northern Territory DET accountable to that board.
- The approach to education will cover needs from early childhood through schooling to vocational education and training.
- A college of education has been established to oversight this spectrum of activity with an executive principal appointed.
- Partnerships between education and other stakeholders are being established to maximise opportunities for child and youth development and wellbeing. These include involvement by health, sport and recreation providers, youth strategies, and preparation for the workforce with support from GEMCO and GEBIE. This represents a range of Commonwealth and territory funding sources.
- All the schools on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago are treated as one to facilitate sharing of resources and professional development. This change is aligned to the Northern Territory Growth Towns Strategy.
- Many new teachers have been recruited and school staffing has been refreshed.
- The development of a 3-9 program which constitutes a series of activities after school hours for adults and families. Many providers and community members contribute to this program.
- School councils have been constituted for each school and parents are being involved in decision making about school priorities.

Eight houses have been built and teachers are now living in the communities rather than commuting from Alyangula. Communities report that these arrangements are making a difference as the teachers and the school are now seen as more integrated with each community and as having more influence on community members.

School attendance fluctuates and is still problematic. However there are early signs suggesting some improvement. The college is in the early stages of working with all communities to improve school attendance, for example, finding a way to reduce absence related to 'sorry business'. There are a number of approaches being undertaken to increase parental involvement with schools on the assumption that this will result in more effort by parents to ensure children attend.

Milyakburra School, for example, involves parents with the school, has a literacy advisor to assist parents, a nutrition program providing breakfast and lunch for the children and a playgroup on the premises. Four-year-olds and their families are encouraged to join in with the early years' classes in preparation for their first year of schooling. While there have been promising educational outcomes as represented by advances in NAPLAN scores by children with high attendance levels, it must be noted that Milyakburra is a very small component of the overall school population and outcomes so far are not necessarily indicative of the broader population on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

Other initiatives are also progressing well. The 3 to 9 Program is open to community members and has parents and families attending. It provides opportunities for community members to gather, share skills and learn skills. Ideas on how these skills can be utilised for micro business are emerging, for example, some community members are now producing items for sale, such as cubby houses and clothing. Across the Groote Eylandt Archipelago progress in attendance and achievement is gradual and uneven across schools and little sustainable improvement has been made. Engagement of middle and senior students and ensuring there are pathways to employment is a very great challenge. Progress is being made with partnerships and a couple of good individual outcomes but more widespread outcomes need systemic changes to attendance. This is being addressed but will take time. Stakeholders believe that construction and operation of a residential facility on island could be particularly helpful in lifting attendance and employment outcomes as well as offering some options for more remote students, for example, at Milyakburra and Umbakumba.

Resources and school buildings in Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra community schools are much lower than those of Alyangula, which is able to offer an environment and educational opportunities comparable to a Darwin school. Challenges in retaining children at school beyond the primary years are high and opportunities limited for children in ESL community schools to become proficient in English so they can perform well at high school.

## **Governance**

Implementation of the report has mirrored the principles of the RPA, especially the need to strengthen effort by all parties and sectors, a spirit of cooperative partnership, willingness by government to be flexible and innovative and recognition of the need to build capacity and governance.

There has been a stepped approach to implementation so that proper community consultation could occur. Ongoing ownership and commitment have been increased through establishment of processes to increase participation in school life and building local influence on style of education through school councils. These are considered to be important steps in improving educational outcomes. The importance of the advocacy and advisory roles of the board established through agreed terms of reference should be noted.

These clear roles of the parties in implementing change have been underpinned by suitable planning and implementation structures.

Improvements in the resource base have been secured with key contributions from a range of partners: Northern Territory DET, DEEWR, GEMCO and the ALC. Investment from this range of partners supports a coherent approach from cradle to work.

A high priority has been identified as establishing effective links with other sectors e.g., housing, and the work of other committees such as the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group, the Youth Steering Committee and the CTCG, including through representative membership on these committees. Discussions on this are in the early stages.

Other key factors for success have included a direct reporting relationship to the RPC strengthened by direct access to senior levels of government for effective resolution of high level problems. The board has also focused on quality and transparency of approaches and on continuous improvement especially through the use of expert advice. It has been very consultative with stakeholders and communities in its design and implementation and responsive to community issues.

Through the Education Taskforce and subsequently the board the RPA has developed innovative and promising approaches to tackling one of the most endemic of the closing the gap problems. While progress is slow, the issues are difficult, complex and longstanding and will take persistent effort. The Education and Training Board is intending to develop a strategy to guide this approach. Some key strengths of the approaches taken by the RPA and the underpinning Education Taskforce and board include:

- the ability to formulate and implement an agreed reform approach
- identifying and implementing at an early stage necessary changes at the school level, particularly staffing and policies
- gaining the necessary support and commitment from other agencies for comprehensive 'wrap around' approaches
- adopting a strong focus on school attendance (recently supported by penalties for parents for child non-attendance)
- linking education reforms effectively to other RPA reforms and priorities, e.g. small business development
- integration with broader reforms under the NTER and the Education Revolution, and
- an intensive and effective approach to community consultation bridging western pedagogy and community priorities.

In summary, the two major factors in progress to-date are:

- the framework and approaches of the RPA itself with key players committing to serious reforms and agreeing detail, and
- community ownership and accountability of government education providers to a board chaired by the ALC and with a majority of ALC nominees.

## Case study 4: GEBIE Job Shop

### Objective

The Job Shop aims to provide local Indigenous people and employers with a central coordination point for Indigenous employment and training.

### Background and context

Under Stage 1 of the RPA, the Australian Government committed, through DEEWR, to fund a regional employment and economic development strategy, a transport feasibility study, an economic development officer and a job shop model.

The regional employment and economic development strategy was to provide a coordinated strategic approach to breaking down barriers to employment and preparing Indigenous people for local employment and business opportunities. The Job Shop, to be run by GEBIE, was seen as a key mechanism for delivery of the strategy, to be supported by DEEWR through its regionally-based personnel and through funding for pre-employment training, mentoring and employment placement services.

The purpose of the development officer position was to liaise with employers and stakeholders to identify employment opportunities within the labour market and feed this information back to GEBIE Job Shop to assist with forward planning, skills matching and job seeker preparation.

### Planning

By the time the second stage of the RPA was signed in November 2009, a regional employment and economic development strategy had been developed, the Job Shop had been established and GEBIE had also developed an Indigenous employment strategy.

The employment and economic development strategy:

- provides an economic profile of the region, its industries and labour market including industry profiles and projections
- outlines the main economic development opportunities that will influence the nature and rate of the region's economic growth over the next five years and beyond
- sets the vision, goals and strategic framework for the region's approach to Indigenous economic development, including the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and a framework for all parties to work together, and
- outlines practical strategies to achieve the goals of economic development for Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

The strategy notes that as a high priority both GEBIE and the ALC need to increase their capacity by accessing the required business and financial management expertise, improving internal processes and reviewing governance.

GEBIE's Indigenous employment strategy noted that the employment of Indigenous people within the ALC and GEBIE would provide an important statement to stakeholders that

Indigenous employees make a positive contribution to the workforce and that GEBIE could only expect other employers on Groote Eylandt to employ Indigenous people if GEBIE itself was proactive and leading by example.

GEBIE committed to:

**Pre-recruitment:** Providing positive opportunities and experiences for potential Indigenous recruits.

**Recruitment:** Effectively promoting GEBIE as an employer of choice and career opportunity for Indigenous people.

**Retention:** Providing a supportive environment, skills training, professional development, and career pathways for Indigenous staff.

This would involve establishing and meeting a percentage target for the employment of Indigenous Groote Eylandt staff, focussing on skills development for Indigenous staff to increase their knowledge, independence, job security and self-sufficiency as well as succession planning and increasing the employable pool of job seekers through GEBIE Job Shop. GEBIE also committed to recruiting for its managed businesses and businesses in which it has an equity stake.

At the end of 2009, in a total workforce of 62 people, GEBIE was employing 39 (63 per cent) Indigenous staff. Its target is to have 70 per cent Indigenous employees.

A number of elements of the strategy fall within the charter of the Job Shop. The Job Shop's role is to:

- engage, advise and liaise with GEBIE executive staff and board members to promote the strategy and increase awareness of employment within GEBIE's businesses and also with local employers
- develop processes to attract and retain Indigenous staff
- actively work with GEBIE investments to encourage recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff
- maintain current employment and community networks and develop new links between business and communities
- assist individual Indigenous staff members with professional development
- provide support to work areas
- provide cross cultural and reverse cross cultural awareness training and resources to all staff members, and
- ensure that services are delivered across the Groote Eylandt Archipelago by establishing a presence in Milyakburra community and Umbakumba and visiting on a regular and scheduled basis.

Stage 2 of the RPA committed to significantly enhancing local employment outcomes in all industries in the region and improving coordination of employment services. It also committed to implementing the outcomes of the economic and employment strategy.

During Stage 2 of the RPA, DEEWR has provided the following additional support:

- **GCC, \$395,000 over 18 months (July 2011 – January 2013)**

The project provides funding for training and mentoring support for 36 Indigenous employees of GCC, including the employment of two dedicated Indigenous employment coordinators.

- **GEBIE Business Plan and Funds Distribution Policy, \$30,000 over 7 months (February – September 2011)**

Armstrong Muller Consulting assisted GEBIE with updating its business plan to help the organisation manage change and expand its businesses. As part of this project, the consultant has also developed a funds distribution policy which sets some guidelines and consistency around the distribution of royalties.

- **Groote Eylandt Training and Employment Mapping Project, \$93,040 over 6 months (October 2011 – April 2012)**

Through discussions with GEBIE, Groote Eylandt College and Northern Territory DET, DEEWR has engaged Matrix on Board Pty Ltd to develop a wraparound Indigenous training and employment servicing model, aimed at providing a seamless transition from school to work for local Indigenous people. The consultant will provide a high level document detailing a comprehensive analysis of the current situation, funding options, logistical issues and legislative impediments to identify gaps and/or duplication in funding.

## **Progress of implementation**

The Job Shop commenced operating in Angurugu in December 2008 and by March had finalised an implementation plan. GEBIE was awarded the Job Services Australia contract shortly after this.

By the end of 2009, the Job Shop was providing mentoring and pre-employment services and had improved collaboration with local employers and the community more generally.

The Job Services Australia contract commenced on 1 July 2009. By 15 November 2010, GEBIE Job Shop had placed 225 Indigenous people into jobs, with 112 resulting in 13 and 26-week employment retention outcomes. Additionally, 67 remote education outcomes had been achieved. During that period, GEBIE Job Shop carried out 63 individual and group-based work experience activities that included accredited training, certificate courses, work experience job placements and work for the dole projects.

## **Quality of implementation**

The Job Shop has matured since its inception in 2008. Winning the Job Services Australia contract was a considerable achievement, requiring significant partnership support. Recent employment of a new general manager is resulting in an improved business focus and is bringing greater accountability and budget discipline as well as greater internal cohesion. The Job Shop is focussing on building its capability to deal with the 453 cases on its books.

The Job Shop is working with Job Find under the CDEP program funded by FaHCSIA to improve training and employment opportunities for local Indigenous people. It has worked with DEEWR to achieve appropriate classification of people under Job Services Australia, therefore ensuring that they get the support they need. It now has an Indigenous specific contract and is seen by GEMCO and the Mining Council as having a critical role in getting Indigenous people job ready by addressing issues such as literacy and numeracy and the life skills required to sustain employment as well as actual work experience.

The Job Shop is also working with GEMCO and with the education sector to build pathways to employment through trade training centres such as the one to be attached to the child care centre in Alyangula which will offer training in child care.

## **Governance**

The RPA has clearly been instrumental not only in the establishment of the Job Shop but in providing mechanisms and support for it to build the critical relationships in the community, with GEMCO and the education sector and also with government. Through providing a shared agenda and structures through which effective working relationships can be developed, the RPA has brought a level of integration and cohesion not previously evident.

## Case study 5: GEMCO training and mentoring

### Objective

The objective of the GEMCO Training and Mentoring Program is to prepare and place one hundred additional Anindilyakwa people in mainstream mining jobs over the next four years.

### Background and context

The GEMCO mine provides many opportunities for mainstream employment for Anindilyakwa people. It has over many years offered employment opportunities for local people and is the biggest single employer of Indigenous people on Groote Eylandt with a current level of 55 and a target of 155 over the next four years.

GEMCO is seeking more Indigenous employees for both economic and community development reasons but the low levels of literacy, educational attainment and job readiness mean that local people need a lot of preparation before they can take up employment in the mining industry. The high prevalence of cannabis use also precludes many people from employment as the mining industry has a strict policy of no tolerance on drug use. As well, the high drop-out rates of Indigenous people on training programs and in early employment mean that GEMCO has to rely on 'fly-in, fly-out' workers.

Over the years GEMCO has tried training programs and built knowledge on how to work with Indigenous people. It has been refining its recruitment, employment and mentoring models and is now offering a new model with Groote Eylandt partner involvement. GEMCO's commitment under the RPA is to offer opportunities for training and mentoring for 100 local people. As part of this commitment it will offer five school-based apprenticeships per year.

As a partner under the RPA, GEMCO has seen opportunities to improve the success of its local employment efforts by working in collaboration with the ALC and its offspring, GEBIE, and with schools to generate more effective collaboration and link its investment in training and mentoring to the efforts of those bodies.

### Planning and oversight

The project is managed by GEMCO which reports directly to the Regional Partnership Committee and involves GEBIE and the Ngakwurra Langwa College in its planning and delivery.

The implementation process has four phases which have been informed by years of previous effort. The phases are:

#### 1 Recruitment

It is planned to support three drafts of 15 Indigenous employees of the 20 per year, commencing in February 2012. The recruitment process includes attitude and aptitude assessments, medical checks, life skills training and language training. This process includes preparing job applicants for interview.

This phase will be outsourced to the GEBIE Job Shop as lead agency for CDEP, Job Services Australia and Centrelink efforts. It is anticipated that this phase will be based on a 13 week 'Job Ready' program funded by CDEP. GEMCO will pay fees for additional outcomes related to company requirements. As part of this arrangement GEBIE has appointed a manager and planning is occurring between the Job Shop and other agencies.

In preparation for this recruitment process GEMCO has established a mentoring and training network and a mentor supervisor was appointed in September 2011.

## 2. Pre-employment phase

This phase, linked to and perhaps integrated with the Job Ready recruitment phase, includes a program aimed at providing Certificate 2 level training in a discipline related to mine employment and which suits the attributes of the candidates. It includes further expansion of language skills and relevant machinery competencies. Initially the program will use existing training designed by the Minerals Council of Australia in association with Batchelor College. It includes an 'away' program at the College where students are introduced to a rigorous routine alternated weekly with onsite training at GEMCO and time off at home. Candidates also acquire a machinery licence in this phase. This process will be reviewed at conclusion.

Candidates are employed under trainee conditions until qualifications are gained and other employment conditions met.

## 3. On-the-job training phase

This phase lasts approximately six months and incorporates a structured introduction to the workplace and heavy vehicle driver/operator training. Transfers to a mainstream job in GEMCO will occur as participants qualify. Employees are placed in mainstream jobs under agreed conditions. Potentially this might include housing and other family benefits. GEMCO continues training in relevant areas such as literacy and job related skills and supports integration into the workforce.

## **Progress of implementation**

It is planned to have three intakes per year, with a target of 20 people per group for the first two years and 30 for the last two years. Planning is completed for commencement in 2012.

With input from local Indigenous people, GEMCO has refined its approaches to Indigenous training and employment over the years. Although many challenges are experienced because of the different paradigms of work and learning held by Indigenous people, GEMCO has accepted that work values and skills are learned gradually. Low literacy levels and poor command of English also hamper Indigenous people in their effort to engage in a work environment which necessarily has uncompromising approaches towards occupational health and safety. Therefore training which increases preparedness for work, provides the underpinning skills and attitudes and makes people work ready is highly valued in the workplace.

GEMCO is contributing to the development of these training programs, particularly in schools and in collaboration with GEBIE through advising on workplace health and safety systems that reflect GEMCO practices. An understanding of these requirements is a fundamental prerequisite for work at GEMCO.

## **Governance**

The RPA governance arrangements have provided encouragement for the major employer on Groote Eylandt to take a more collaborative and integrated approach to improving training and employment for local people. It is recognised that there are common objectives, and collaborative work with GEBIE and the College of Education has meant that a pathway for mutually supportive action has been developed. The College of Education has a 'birth to work' approach to education, and GEBIE's Job Shop provides training and support for employment. The RPA has provided authorisation for private enterprise, the ALC through GEBIE, and government to work more strategically and effectively to optimise use of limited resources. These are highly innovative arrangements which have emerged as a result of RPA initiatives.

## Case study 6: Machado Joseph Disease (MJD)

### Objective

To implement the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to care and support services of MJD clients, their families and carers in the Groote Eylandt Region through the MJD Foundation (MJDF) which will explore the future implications of care for MJD clients, and provide evidence based services and the most effective responses to needs of those living with MJD.

### Background and context

MJD, previously known as 'Groote Eylandt Syndrome', is a hereditary neuro-degenerative condition which has been prevalent in the region for about four generations. It is an inherited autosomal disorder meaning that each child of a parent with the defective gene has a 50 per cent chance of inheriting the disease. Furthermore, it has an anticipation effect meaning each generation is affected earlier in their life course and their demand on services is increasing as aged care services are not structured or funded to meet their needs. The prevalence of MJD is increasing dramatically with current predictions that numbers with the condition will increase from 52 to approximately 200 in the near future.

'MJD, like other systemic degenerative disorders, impacts on an individual's opportunities and capacity at multiple levels. Because the disease affects every aspect of the sufferer's life (as well as their carers and family), service requirements cross the departmental boundaries that government and non-government service provision inevitably impose. It affects adults and children and creates needs that are met by multiple arms of the health service – acute care, palliative care, aged and disability services, rehabilitation services, genetic and diagnostic medicine and community nursing' (MJDF 2010-11 Annual Report). It requires a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral approach.

Community members have a limited understanding of the nature of MJD and historically ascribed it to being a curse. As a result people living with MJD and their families frequently experience discrimination and become socially isolated. Education about this condition is still needed for those living with MJD, their families, the broader community and service providers. Effective intervention relies on community members understanding the causes of the disease and the most effective approaches to maintaining a quality of life for people with the disease.

Prior to the formation of the MJDF, no single agency or department made specific provision for people with MJD and they were being offered aged or disability care and they were being offered limited services which did not provide for their special needs.

The establishment of the MJDF in 2008 occurred as a result of the combined efforts of the ALC and a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals who had fought hard for a number of years to secure recognition of the needs of individuals and their families living with the disease and to secure resources to improve their wellbeing.

The MJDF is recognised as a grass roots organisation that addresses issues from the viewpoint of both individuals living with MJD and their families. It therefore prides itself on being very much in touch with community-based issues and concerns.

## **Progress of implementation**

This priority was incorporated in Stage 1 of the RPA which was signed off by both the Australian and Northern Territory governments and the ALC in the same month and included a commitment of \$100,000 from the Traditional Owners, \$100,000 establishment monies from the Commonwealth and agreement from the Northern Territory Government to appoint an MJD coordinator. The ALC followed up soon afterwards with a further \$1,000,000 commitment towards research. The MJDF commenced work in May 2008 and since then has implemented several research and practical support projects within the Groote community. GEMCO has also committed \$200,000 which is used to meet a range of needs such as staff accommodation, equipment, ramps and hydrotherapy training. Future projects include the provision of a vehicle to provide wheelchair transport, support for MJD clients in permanent residential care in Darwin and education activities. GEBIE and the ALC also provide a range of ongoing in-kind support and GEBIE has just announced a \$300,000 donation per year for 5 years commencing 1 July 2012. MJDF has secured sponsorship support from a wide range of corporates (e.g. Vincent Aviation and Toll Marine) and one-off grants from various philanthropic bodies and government agencies.

Over its relatively short life the MJDF has been involved in a range of activities such as employment of staff to work with individuals and families living with MJD on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago, provision of therapeutic and respite support, education of community members and service providers, linking individuals with MJD with the range of services they need and applied research aimed at improving peoples' well-being.

The MJDF is funding research projects aimed at improving the day to day lives of people living with MJD (e.g. sleep disturbances, urinary incontinence and potential pharmaceutical treatments to slow or ameliorate disease symptoms). The MJDF also works closely with the Northern Territory Government's previously contracted medical geneticist (Assoc. Prof John MacMillan) to improve education about the disease, and is now running careworker and family carer education. Strong partnerships have also been developed with a number of corporate sponsors.

## **Governance of the project**

The MJDF is an independent charitable organisation with a volunteer Board who set the governance and strategic direction of the organisation. The MJDF has two senior staff members that manage the day to day operations of the organisation. The MJDF is a key stakeholder of the MJD Implementation group defined as part of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in August 2009 between MJDF, DHF, the East Arnhem Shire Council, the ALC and FaHCSIA.

The project is managed by the MJDF through the Memorandum of Understanding Implementation Group and includes key stakeholders such as the MJDF, DHF, the East Arnhem Shire Council, the ALC and FaHCSIA.

The memorandum's overall objective is to establish a framework for service providers and funding bodies to work together to improve health and well-being outcomes for MJD clients and their families and carers in the Groote Eylandt region.

The project also involved a commitment by DHF to engage an MJD coordinator based in Darwin to assist in coordinating the delivery of support to individuals and their families living with MJD from across the various divisions within DHF.

The Groote community is involved through a working group titled the Groote Supported Client Reference Group.

All project management is given over to the MJDF whose scope includes a broader area of the Northern Territory than just the Groote and Bickerton Island communities. The connection through the RPA occurs through strong personal contacts and relationships established since the initiation of the MJD project. This form of loose and informal, but well established, relationship is a core component of the governance of the MJD project and is heavily reliant on pre-existing links with members of the RPA in ALC, the Northern Territory and Australian governments and the MJDF. This is a legacy of the way the MJDF was established and how it came to be included in the RPA

The project has faced a number of difficulties, including reported initial resistance from DHF to meeting the Northern Territory Government commitment under Stage 1 of the RPA to appoint an MJD coordinator (which delayed an appointment for 24 months) and conflicting data regarding the prevalence of MJD within Northern Territory remote communities. DHF has more recently demonstrated a more responsive and collaborative approach to engaging with MJDF on these and other related issues. The RPA written commitments relating to MJD and strong support from the RPA secretariat and the Northern Territory Government coordinating agency have proved crucial in ensuring commitments have been met.

Problems arising from MJD are more complex than previously understood as is the anticipated sharp increase in prevalence. Finding adequate resources to respond to these challenges which were substantially ignored before RPA establishment is an ongoing challenge. Much of the funding is short term. This is an example of the RPA taking the initiative in tackling problems which affect a much broader region than the Groote Eylandt Archipelago and which have hitherto been inadequately addressed.

## Case study 7: Fluoridation

### Objective

The project aims to improve oral health outcomes for the community, particularly through fluoridation of water supplies at Angurugu and Umbakumba.

### Background and context

Water fluoridation has been proven to be beneficial in preventing occurrence of tooth decay in early childhood, and osteoporosis and hardening of the arteries in adulthood. The World Health Organisation rates fluoridation as one of the top ten issues in preventative health.

Oral health and the poor oral health status of the people on Groote Eylandt were identified by the ALC as a key issue to be addressed. The ALC pointed to the need to increase services and to deliver water fluoridation. Stage 1 of the RPA provided for joint funding by the Australian and Northern Territory governments of an assessment of fluoridation of drinking water at Groote Eylandt. The assessment was to investigate options for delivering fluoride to improve the dental health of children in Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra through engagement of a consultant to advise on technical requirements, personnel and the feasibility of fluoridating smaller communities' water supplies.

The study was undertaken by Hunter Water Australia in 2008, through PowerWater on behalf of DHF. It acknowledged the proven health benefits of fluoridation and stated that the objectives of the project were to:

- examine options for supplementing the treated water fluoride concentration in the drinking water supplies of remote Northern Territory communities with populations in excess of 800 people, and
- identify the suitability of the recommended system for fluoridating the water supplies of Umbakumba, Angurugu and Milyakburra, noting that two of the three communities had populations of less than 800 people.

The report noted that there were no legislative powers in the Northern Territory to regulate the addition of fluoride to potable water supplies and recommended adoption of the Queensland code of practice. It found that the per capita annual operating cost of providing fluoridation in Umbakumba would be slightly less than double that for larger communities and, for Milyakburra, some three and half times that for Angurugu. It concluded that the decision to fluoridate Umbakumba's water supply should be based on the perceived net health benefit given the increased marginal cost of operating a fluoridation system for a smaller population. In the case of Milyakburra, it noted that resources may not be available to operate the fluoridation plant in such a small community and that the efficacy of fluoridating its water supply when many larger communities remained without fluoridation was questionable.

A cost-benefit analysis was subsequently undertaken by DHF to establish a minimum community size at which the benefits of water fluoridation outweigh the costs over an assumed 30-year life of a water fluoridation plant. This study noted that while overall rates of

dental caries in Australian children were low, rates of diseased, missing and filled teeth were between two and five times higher for Indigenous children and that dental caries are strongly correlated with low naturally occurring water fluoride levels. It acknowledged also that fluoridation of public water supplies has been shown internationally to be effective in reducing the prevalence of dental caries in children, and that because of equity of access, is the only fluoride intervention with a demonstrated ability to narrow the disparity in oral health outcomes. The benefits of water fluoridation were assumed to be a reduction in dental caries, quantified as dental care costs.

On the basis of the analysis, DHF concluded that water fluoridation was cost beneficial in Angurugu, but not in Milyakburra nor, on balance, in Umbakumba and that therefore alternative forms of fluoride delivery should be considered for the latter two communities.

The DHF position was contested by the ALC. It claimed that the detailed cost-benefit analysis had in fact shown that fluoridation of the Umbakumba water supply would be cost beneficial, with a breakeven point at around seven years. It also disputed the accuracy of the population figures used in the analysis. Finally, it pointed out that adult dental services were only provided one week a month on Groote Eylandt and less often for children, that Umbakumba residents had to travel to Alyangula or Angurugu to receive them, that available figures demonstrated serious evidence of widespread dental caries, that large numbers of Indigenous people do not present for treatment at all, and that the study ignored indirect costs such as time off school and work, impacts on chronic diseases and the intergenerational benefits of fluoridation. Finally, it expressed concern that this analysis was likely to form the basis for development of a more general policy approach to fluoridation across remote Northern Territory Indigenous communities.

## **Planning**

In Stage 2 of the RPA, GEBIE committed to funding installation of fluoride treatment plants at Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra, with the Northern Territory Government accepting responsibility for the ongoing operation and maintenance of the plants. GEMCO subsequently undertook to maintain the equipment at Angurugu. The plants were to be constructed by the end of 2010.

The project has been managed through the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group since early 2010 and, under its aegis, there was further exploration of costs and options during 2010. The outcome was that tender documentation was developed by PowerWater early in 2011 and the tender for installation of fluoride treatment plants in Angurugu and Umbakumba let a few months later to West Water Northern Territory which has considerable experience in this area.

PowerWater has will be installing integrated fluoridation and chlorination systems at a number of Territory Growth Towns in 2012 and this approach is being taken at Angurugu. This will provide better whole-of-system integration and economies of scale in treatment process delivery. This approach has added additional time and complexity to the Groote Eylandt installations but PowerWater considers that this will result in better value for money both in terms of capital cost and ongoing maintenance and operator training costs.

The decision to include Umbakumba as well as Angurugu was influenced by the fact that the ALC, through GEBIE, had committed to making a significant capital contribution. As a result of testing the market, it became clear that costs for installation of fluoride plants had been significantly underestimated, and that the \$500,000 originally contributed by the ALC would be insufficient for fluoridation of all three townships. The ALC/GEBIE subsequently agreed to commit an additional \$250,000 to the project. The Northern Territory Government agreed to proceed with Umbakumba as well as Angurugu and to cover the other water supply system components, including gas chlorination treatment systems, at Angurugu. The equipping of bores is being covered through Australian Government funding.

Discussions initiated by the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group also resulted in agreement with PowerWater and DHF on establishing a community awareness program on the benefits of fluoridation, based on work done in Queensland. This has resulted in documentation on frequently asked questions, flyers, posters and talking posters, as well as articles in the Groote newspaper and the Land Council's publication, *Ayakwa*. The ALC has been consulted throughout this process and built a strong relationship with DHF.

### **Progress of implementation**

Planning and tendering has taken longer than originally anticipated. The fluoridation plant installation has been incorporated and rescheduled to be combined with the water supply upgrades associated with chlorination and groundwater drilling and other water supply headworks.

This has resulted in some delays in the introduction of fluoridation; however, benefits will result from fluoridation being fully integrated with the supply systems in Angurugu and Umbakumba.

However the tender is now let and the contract commencement meeting was held in November 2011. Process design is 90% complete and groundwater drilling has been completed at Angurugu, thus reducing dependency on surface water supply provided by GEMCO and Power Water.

Construction of the treatment units is now expected to be complete in May/June 2012. The treatment systems will be commissioned directly after the completion of the rising mains and bore equipping.

### **Governance**

The RPA has clearly been critical in achieving progress to-date. The poor oral health status of the community was identified by the ALC as a top priority and the agreement to assess fluoridation of drinking water and the feasibility of undertaking this in small communities was in itself an achievement at a time when the Northern Territory Government did not have a clear public policy position on the issue.

The ALC's ongoing commitment to achieving fluoridation and its willingness to make a capital contribution clearly influenced the final decision to proceed with both Angurugu and Umbakumba, in spite of the original position taken by DHF. In this process the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group and the preparedness of senior government representatives to

pursue the issue and have the tough conversations were critical. The Northern Territory Government now has a policy which supports the extension of water fluoridation to communities with populations of 600 or more living in areas where naturally occurring fluoride is less than 0.5 mg/L. Department of Health Oral Health Services is working in partnership with Power and Water Corporation Remote Operations on the delivery of water fluoridation to a number of remote locations in the Top End of the Northern Territory. PowerWater will combine the delivery of water fluoridation with upgrades to the water treatment system. This policy position was reflected in the tender which was let for the supply of fluoridation systems and covered a number of Northern Territory communities. The ALC was included in the tender evaluation process with respect to Groote Eylandt.

## Case study 8: Umbakumba and Angurugu police posts

### Objective

One of the priorities of the RPA was to increase the levels of community safety on Grootte Eylandt and Bickerton Island. The establishment of the Umbakumba Police Post was intended to enable police to reside overnight in the township on a needs basis and where operational circumstances allow and to serve as a base during their one programmed visit and two unscheduled visits per week. The Angurugu Police Post was committed to under Stage 2 of the RPA and construction was due to be completed in January 2012.

### Background and context

The Umbakumba community had historically suffered high levels of violence and property damage before community leaders introduced an alcohol management plan which was implemented in 2006. Other causes of community disruption and violence included: high unemployment levels, children not attending school and wandering the streets and the use of cannabis, with violence occurring when none was available.

A recent Community Safety and Wellbeing Research Study (N-Carda Group 2011) conducted with community involvement illustrates how complex community safety issues are for this traditional community. While residents say that 'Umbakumba is safe now' (FaHCSIA 2009, p. 6) and how it is a much safer and happier place than it was three years ago, there is an underlying memory and fear of the violence and use of weapons in the recent past. Many women also expressed a belief in black magic which caused them fear.

A strong current concern is the high level of cannabis use and the consequent problems. The Umbakumba residents also noted that community wellbeing was improving with the increasing availability of housing, the increase in real jobs and improvement in school attendance meaning that there were fewer people, especially youth, wandering around. The return of resident teaching and health staff has also proved beneficial as has the impact of the Night Patrol, which has been particularly useful. These are all considered significant drivers of positive change.

Family and skin groups are the first line of support for Umbakumba residents and services tend to be called on if they are unable to deal with any problems. However many problems are too difficult for them and they believe the state of safety is fragile; they report uneasiness and the need for high vigilance especially at night. In order to support community members to prevent harm and to consolidate their gains they would like a constant police presence.

A similar request for a permanent police presence has also been consistently put forward by Angurugu residents who have complained of up to two hour delays from the police in responding to call-outs and who believe they should be able to experience normal levels of community safety enjoyed by other Australians.

Increased community safety has been a priority under the RPA from Stage 1 and it is also a priority under the Closing the Gap initiatives.

Police currently serve all four Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island communities, including Alyangula, from the Alyangula Police Station with an allocation of 13 staff. The Groote Eylandt Archipelago is considered well staffed. Umbakumba is located 46 kilometres from Alyangula, Angurugu 15 kilometres and Bickerton 20 kilometres. Bickerton is only accessible by boat or plane and service to Umbakumba will be enhanced with the upgrading and sealing of the highway.

## **Planning and oversight**

A police post—a basic office with overnight officer accommodation—was funded by the Australian Government for Umbakumba. The Northern Territory Government agreed that it would provide for the deployment of police officers to significantly increase police presence in Umbakumba. The provision of a dedicated police office has also been funded under Stage 2 of the RPA for Angurugu and construction of this facility is due to commence. It is unclear whether funding of a position which was recommended in a previous report (The Allen Consulting Group 2010) has been provided. The Commonwealth also provides funding for the Community Police Officer who was recently employed.

Construction of the Umbakumba police building was managed by the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group which reports to the RPC. This project was carried forward from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the RPA.

With the signing of the RPA the Northern Territory Police committed to provide at least one programmed visit per week and two unscheduled visits per week. Police attendance at each community is reported at each RPC meeting and the Northern Territory Police are maintaining at least a minimum level of service as agreed. The Groote Eylandt Police report that officers are rostered to stay overnight at Umbakumba at a minimum every fortnight.

## **Progress of implementation**

The Umbakumba police post was handed over by FaHCSIA to Northern Territory Police in June 2009. There are ongoing discussions on the use and role of community level policing in Umbakumba. Community safety issues are brought forward by the ALC as a partner and through the CTCG.

The Umbakumba community report that they need a permanent police presence to prevent incidents while the police report that they have very few calls out to the community. However, there is no means of understanding the nature and level of incidents which are not reported, and families are unlikely to report family members, so the official records are not likely to represent the actual incident levels. The relationships between the police and the community are considerably strained, although much better than they were reported to be before the alcohol management plans. Police report lack of assistance from the community in resolving difficult situations. The community report that the police do not understand their needs or how to intervene most productively in the community because they do not spend enough time in Umbakumba working with community leaders.

Police are seen as outsiders who come grudgingly to the community when they are called and only if it is a critical matter. The Umbakumba community believes that the employment of a Community Police Officer is producing better relationships. The Northern Territory

Police maintain that it would not be feasible to have a fully operational station in Umbakumba. They have argued that the police post lacked suitable IT infrastructure which did not allow police to conduct their roles efficiently in the community and that work productivity decreased if they remained in the locality for lengthy periods.

Many RPA members and stakeholders believe that community members should be able to have the same level of service that is enjoyed by any individual community. Many members of the community believe they are being denied a service and that to some extent police have been avoiding community contact.

The Northern Territory Police claim that the Groote Eylandt Archipelago is well served with police officer numbers and that there would be significant productivity losses and a loss of response capacity and flexibility if officers were spread across communities; in particular if the facilities occupied did not have all the interoperability and capability required to perform all police functions. Recently a sign for the police post has been erected which makes police presence more visible.

The RPA partners have argued that the unprecedented investment that has been made under the RPA by all the partners into the delivery of improved housing and infrastructure, education and training, increased employment and sustainable economic development is being put at risk due to the continued inability to secure a permanent police presence. The ALC has raised this matter in correspondence with Australian Government Minister Macklin and Northern Territory Chief Minister Henderson.

With the new police post in Angurugu becoming operational and the interoperability of Umbakumba, new standard operating procedures have been developed to enhance services to both communities. This includes full-time police presence in Angurugu during rostered police shifts seven days a week and an overnight service to Umbakumba on a weekly basis, these being additional to regular patrols, both proactive and reactive. This is a significant increase in service levels. These procedures will be reviewed in June 2012 by the CTCG.

## **Governance**

The development of the police post itself was relatively straightforward. However, implementing its role and use effectively was not. Underpinning assumptions by the community and the Northern Territory Police about how that facility was to be used were either not explicit or not shared. The Umbakumba residents are requesting a preventative approach and the police have been taking more of a responsive approach. While a preventative policing and community development role is now being taken up by the new Community Policing Officer, this officer cannot be used for general policing. At least one police stakeholder believes that rather than having one specialist officer, all police should be learning to exercise this role as part of their work so that a good cop/bad cop scenario does not develop.

At the local level, the CTCG is a forum for community members and services to assist in monitoring community safety, identifying needs and issues and agreeing on actions. Across remote communities Northern Territory Police are responsible for such groups but on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago it also reports to the RPC. Members are now expressing a need for more clarity and a more strategic and structured approach to the work of the CTCG.

The CTCG role has been focused on current issues rather than long-term strategies and is seen as a forum to report community safety needs to the police rather than a collective approach by all agencies involved to addressing community safety issues. The police have been responsible for convening the CTCG and a range of service providers and community members attend. Police suggest that lack of experience with the secretariat role has hampered efforts to progress agendas with the CTCG.

In August 2011, police within the CTCG framework took over the primary responsibility from the Department of Justice in the role of developing community safety plans. A draft plan is due to be developed by March 2012. The development of the plan is the primary role of the Community Police Officer. One of its challenges is the development of the role of the CTCG as well as progression of the community safety agenda.

Although the building has been completed and the visiting program enhanced, the policing role in the community has not been resolved to the satisfaction of community members. As a result this is an ongoing item on the RPC agenda despite efforts by the ALC and RPA members to negotiate a solution which is satisfactory for the Umbakumba community. The Umbakumba residents believe that the broader community development agenda, specifically the Alcohol Management Plan, the activities for children and youth, and the improvements in education, health and other services support the development of community safety. This approach is consistent with the underpinning philosophy and the principles of the RPA. However there is no clear implementation strategy for this to happen. CTCG membership is voluntary and incorporates broad perspectives but there is no clear remit, leadership, planning process or resource allocation to ensure that strategies align to prevent problems and develop and implement effective responses to them.

An additional frustration for both the community and police is that the general telecommunications infrastructure that is required from Telstra to provide mobile coverage in the area is not funded and involves significant costs. A funding source has not yet been identified to achieve this outcome which would enhance community safety in Umbakumba and contribute to overall communication, development and wellbeing. Additionally, police communications infrastructure that was required in Umbakumba had been significantly delayed and was only recently installed, becoming operational from 27 November 2011, over two-and-a-half years since the police post was built.

The failure to resolve the issue of community safety to the satisfaction of the Northern Territory Police, RPA members and the community illustrates how difficult it is for regional partnerships to resolve issues when institutional or system policy does not align with the locally agreed principles and practices such as in the RPA.

It is clear that establishment of police facilities in the communities is only part of the response required. Resolution of this case may affect broader policing policies across the Northern Territory and needs to be considered in that context. The RPA can raise these issues and also illustrate the connection across programs but their resolution requires tackling government policy on place-based responses in remote Indigenous communities. It is not clear whether this is considered part of the RPA remit. It also illustrates the need to canvas upstream barriers and enablers to downstream implementation effort.

## Case study 9: Australian Football League Angurugu and Umbakumba clubrooms

### Objective

To build on the success of the AFL project in Stage 1 and consolidate AFL's position as part of building the quality and range of services to support youth, sport and recreation in the Anindilyakwa region, by constructing change rooms for the AFL football grounds at Angurugu and Umbakumba.

### Background and context

Developing the sustainability and capacity of AFL in the Anindilyakwa region contributes to community participation and a healthy lifestyle. Building change rooms will provide a base for teams, a focal point for gatherings, storage capacity for equipment and possibly a place where refreshments can be served.

An AFL officer is funded through the RPA but employed by AFL Northern Territory to facilitate the development of the sport on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island. The officer lives on Groote Eylandt which is seen as crucial to success of the sport and to the contribution to healthy lifestyles.

AFL is becoming an important part of community life. Senior football has six teams and competitions across Groote Eylandt and attracts strong community participation. Junior football encourages initial participation in the sport and creates pathways for talented footballers to develop their skills. It is linked with in-school football and is seen as an important tool for personal development as well as improving participation in school and the community. Interschool competition is on the agenda but lack of availability of transport is seen as a major impediment to success.

Multiple partners have been involved in the funding of various aspects of AFL such as administration, coaching and umpiring. They include AFL Northern Territory, DEEWR, the Northern Territory Government and GEBIE, the business arm of the ALC, as well as FaHCSIA.

While AFL is seen as a highly important part of youth and community development, the implementation has been incremental. There are questions on how its further development links with the shire sports, youth and recreation plan and also the youth strategy for the Anindilyakwa region.

## **Progress of implementation**

Under the RPA Stage 2, GEBIE committed \$500,000 to construct change rooms for the AFL football grounds at Angurugu and Umbakumba communities.

The project which is being implemented under the supervision of the East Arnhem Shire Council has been underway for some considerable time and is well behind schedule.

The shire arranged to have the two buildings constructed in Darwin and for them to be 'barged' to Groote Eylandt for installation. The shire's affiliated building company, Region C, is undertaking this work.

Only one change room facility has been constructed to-date. The shire has not provided specifications or plans to the RPC. On 13 September 2011, ALC representatives, including one Groote Eylandt AFL person, visited the shire's facility in Darwin to inspect work to-date. While the change room construction is seen to be of good quality, there were some concerns expressed by the ALC/AFL representative about the internal layout. The shire appreciated the feedback and it has agreed to make some minor alterations but to incorporate the suggestions more fully in the second facility destined for Umbakumba and on which work is yet to commence. The shire was unsure when the Angurugu facility would be sent to Groote Eylandt or when work would commence on the Umbakumba facility.

An unresolved concern is whether or not the shire has submitted development applications for installation of the buildings on site. Without appropriate approvals, PowerWater will not connect services unless installation dates are assured. This lack of ability to plan may lead to further delays.

## **Governance**

This project is part of the RPA priority to enhance the quality and range of services to support youth, sport and recreation in the Anindilyakwa region. It forms part of the youth strategy and its continuing implementation is overseen by the Infrastructure and Planning Working Group.

Throughout the project the ALC and the RPC have had to seek information on progress and questions have not always been answered. If plans and specifications had been supplied there would not have been the need for alterations.

It appears that the East Arnhem Shire Council has worked on the project in isolation and provided limited information when it has been sought. There is lack of clarity on who was responsible for project management and the level of collaboration is questioned by the other partners. At the point of writing representatives of the shire were unavailable for interview and therefore unable to offer an alternative perspective.

While the shire has been responsive to suggestions and is amending the design of the change rooms, communication between the shire and the ALC about the progress of the project has been less than optimal. It also raises questions about the resource capacity of

the shire to meet its obligations and its commitment to a collaborative approach. The shire is responsible for a regional youth, sport and recreation strategy. It is unclear how the AFL program for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago fits into this.

The lesson from this case study is that when collaboration and governance break down outcomes are compromised even though the building of the AFL change facilities is at face value, technically simple.

## Case study 10: Basketball

### Objective

The overall objective of this project was to increase the participation of Indigenous women and girls in sport by providing a basketball program on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

### Project objectives

- To fund Basketball Northern Territory to employ a full-time basketball development officer to increase the participation of Indigenous people (particularly Indigenous women) in sport and physical activities on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.
- To establish junior and senior basketball competitions in Angurugu and Umbakumba (Groote Eylandt) and Milyakburra (Bickerton Island).
- To extend an invitation to Alyangula (Groote Eylandt) to participate in the Groote Eylandt basketball competition. This project complements a similar AFL competition being established that primarily targets young men. The senior basketball league will be offered to women; a junior competition will also be offered for younger females.
- To provide opportunities for skill development in basketball coaching and umpiring, using the existing basketball infrastructure in Angurugu, Umbakumba and Alyangula.

### Background and context

Basketball programs are highly important for the women and girls on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago. Outside school hours programs are an important opportunity for them to develop health promoting recreational practices.

### Progress of implementation

Funding was provided through the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) for the 2009–10 year to support all aspects of competitive basketball. These included developing a range of skills through playing basketball, while learning about other aspects of the game such as coaching, umpiring and organising a basketball carnival. The Groote Eylandt Basketball Project included clinics at Angurugu, Umbakumba, and Milyakburra, as well as 'mums and bubs' basketball sessions at Angurugu and Alyangula. All clinics worked towards inter-community basketball competitions.

Activities such as skill development clinics in coaching and referee accreditation programs were planned. Following completion of the initial project it was intended to consult the ALC and the community on options for further development in the region. There is no information on whether this has actually occurred and any outcomes of those discussions.

Government reported many implementation problems consistent with the limited sporting and general infrastructure in the region:

- Lack of accommodation on Groote Eylandt where accommodation is generally not readily available; there is one resort which does have vacancies during off peak tourist periods however the cost was in excess of \$400 per night.

- Difficulty in sourcing appropriate vehicles – hire cars are available on Groote Eylandt, however 4WD vehicles are difficult to source. In many instances female participants from Bickerton Island were unable to participate in the games due to unavailability of transport.
- Timing of activities – community funerals played a large part in the cancellation of planned visits during the year; this is unavoidable. School holidays and the wet season were also contributors to lower participation rates.
- Basketball Northern Territory staffing – a basketball development officer was employed in August 2009 but resigned in November 2009. A subsequent officer was employed in mid-December 2009.
- Delivery model – during consultations with the ALC, Basketball Northern Territory, FaHCSIA and DOHA, the delivery model for this activity was reviewed and it was determined that two positions were required – a full-time basketball development officer based in Darwin and a part-time Indigenous community liaison officer based on Groote Eylandt. In February 2010 a suitable female candidate was identified.

Despite these difficulties and slow establishment, Basketball Northern Territory was seen as delivering activities and meeting project requirements.

- 58 activities over 145 hours were delivered for an average of 412 participants including two disabled participants per quarter
- an average of 13 Indigenous people were involved with management of basketball activities per quarter with an average of 19 Indigenous people undertaking accredited training<sup>7</sup>
- 96 per cent of program participants were female, exceeding the target of 90 per cent.

The initial funding agreement covered 2008–09 and 2009–10 and Basketball Federation Australia was subsequently successful in a funding round for 2010–11 to continue the program.

## **Governance**

This project is part of the RPA priority to enhance the quality and range of services to support youth, sport and recreation in the Anindilyakwa region. It forms part of the youth strategy and its continuing implementation is overseen by the YSC. The program was very popular and has highlighted the thirst for such opportunities on Groote. Good participation has also demonstrated the potential return on investment that can be achieved through high quality youth, sport and recreation activities which enhance social and emotional wellbeing and eventually lead to positive impacts on health.

However, this project illustrates a number of governance problems with the implementation of programs on Groote Eylandt.

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<sup>7</sup> No information is available on the numbers actually accredited.

Problems with set up and implementation of the project could have been ameliorated if program deliverers had a better understanding of the reality of work in remote communities which need to be anticipated and managed.

Some delivery problems may have been avoided or reduced if a number of issues had been dealt with in the planning and implementation of the project such as:

- Consulting local organisations to ascertain potential opportunities for collaborative work and pooling resources for things like transport of participants to games and seeking assistance for alternative accommodation.
- Having realistic and ongoing budgets to cover needs.
- Understanding the implications of off- island service providers delivering services in a fly-in-fly out manner. This does not allow for flexibility when ceremonial matters occur with the consequent cancellation of activities. It also leads to staff turnover so programs lose momentum.

While the objectives were sound, the opportunity to build sustainable sporting capacity was jeopardised because:

- the delivery of the program was sporadic and it is now not running
- while the training offered to local women through the program was a key design strength it only had value if the program continued and the women were able to use and further develop the skills gained, and
- the fly-in-fly-out nature of the Basketball Development Officer role impeded the ability of that person to really have a strong influence on developing the sport on Groote.

This project can be contrasted with the AFL program where the Sports Development Manager lives in Angurugu, has built rapport with the community and is able to be flexible when issues arise. AFL has become an important focus for all communities and the approach taken leads to more general community development outcomes.

Additionally, 12-month funding rounds have made it difficult for a program manager to take a strategic approach to building and influencing the sustainable development of a sport which may take years to be an established part of community life.

Currently there are no opportunities for girls to participate in sport and build their skills and this has led to considerable community disappointment

This experience illustrates how short-term funding for basic services creates community cynicism about the seriousness of government investment in remote communities. Current program design does not take sufficient account of the lack of infrastructure in these places. It would have been better for funders to consider sustainability issues at the program design phase to ensure the gains could be maintained.

# Case study 11: Governance development plan and training

## Objective

To improve the governance capability of the ALC and GEBIE to undertake their roles more effectively through a period of role change and growth.

## Background and context

Improving governance capability was raised as a priority by the ALC from Stage 1 of the RPA and it was agreed as one of the RPA areas of action. The RPA recognised that the ALC and GEBIE would experience increased pressure and workload in implementing their responsibilities. The ALC and GEBIE play vital roles in the lives and welfare of the Indigenous people of the Groote Eylandt Archipelago. The elected members, management and staff of both organisations carry out significant statutory responsibilities, and deliver services to the people of the region. The governance role also includes representation of the Traditional Owners and other community members of the region

In particular, the objective was 'to establish a governance development plan, in consultation with GEBIE and the ALC that is specifically relevant to the cultural and geographical context of the Groote Eylandt Archipelago. The aim of the plan is to progressively build the ability of the governing bodies, management and staff to do their respective jobs confidently and effectively, to operate strategically in their demanding environment, and to engage with their regional residents and communities in order to deliver improved services and outcomes. It was also stipulated that 'the plan should identify strengths and weaknesses in each organisation and determine actions to address these factors' (ALC-GEBIE Governance Project, Terms of Reference 18 June 2010).

This project is consistent with broader government priorities. Improving the governance capability of Indigenous communities is also one of the key priorities under the 'Closing the Gap' COAG agreement. Under that agreement it is intended to improve the Indigenous institutional capacity and experience base so that Indigenous people and organisations are better able to communicate and negotiate with government and stakeholders and utilise opportunities more effectively, work in partnership, effectively deliver services, administer funding from government and other sources and fulfil statutory responsibilities. Improved governance capability is seen as an important underpinning for building trust, mutual respect and personal responsibility. Improved involvement in governance activities builds leadership capability and also increases opportunities for economic and social participation.

Many organisations – Indigenous, government and non-government also recognise their need to build governance capability in working collaboratively and in building effective approaches to working with remote communities to achieve objectives. The ALC had many requests from other organisations to participate in their training program and utilise governance training expertise which is currently focused on addressing the governance needs of ALC and GEBIE as outlined in its five-year Governance Development Plan.

Under RPA Stage 2 a separate project involving mapping existing governance structures was also undertaken at Angurugu and Umbakumba by consultants engaged by FaHCSIA across a number of remote service delivery sites.

## **Progress of implementation**

In July 2010 FaHCSIA provided a grant to the ALC and GEBIE to develop a governance development plan and training program for both organisations.

In September 2010, the ALC contracted a consultant following a selective tender process to develop a governance development plan in consultation with GEBIE and the ALC that would:

- identify the governance development needs of the seven GEBIE directors and 25 ALC members
- identify the governance needs of GEBIE and ALC staff
- develop an action plan to address the identified needs, and
- implement a governance training program and support system based on those needs.

Since that time the consultant has assessed ALC and GEBIE governance structures and consulted staff and ALC and GEBIE directors to identify the governance challenges and training needs faced by both organisations.

Based on those consultations, in mid -February 2011, the consultant presented a final report (*Building Strong Governance for Our Future*) to the ALC Executive and GEBIE Directors for their consideration and endorsement. The report set out recommendations for:

- governance training and a professional development program
- governance building with elected members
- succession planning and a youth leadership program
- engaging with Traditional Owners and community members, and
- organisational governance including structures, management, finance, strategic planning, dispute resolution, communication and information, and monitoring and evaluation.

In respect to the Governance Training Program, the following governance units were agreed:

- understanding governance
- culture and vision
- leadership for governance
- our governance roles and responsibilities
- community participation, voice and engagement
- decision making and meetings
- making and enforcing policies

- accountability and monitoring performance
- financial oversight and management
- strategic planning and direction
- negotiation and mediation, and
- succession planning and mentoring

The ALC executive and GEBIE directors endorsed the plan and reinforced the importance of its implementation, including that it be done slowly and systematically, starting with an initial five-year period. While the consultant was engaged to deliver monthly governance training sessions for the members, directors and staff as part of a proposed stage two of the governance project, she identified the need to recruit an in-house governance development /training officer as a priority. Because the Governance Development Plan is incremental and ongoing, the ALC sought and secured funding for a new full-time position with the ALC for a governance training and staff development officer (now referred to as a governance development manager). This officer was able to work with the consultant in carrying out preliminary training for the executives, directors and staff in August and September to prepare her for takeover of monthly training sessions. These sessions, as part of regular meetings, will focus on a particular area of governance and involve the board in developing policy and procedures in their own words. As well, during this session the rules developed during the last meeting will be reviewed and endorsed. The Governance Development Manager will continue to coordinate the implementation of the five-year Governance Development Plan, including delivering monthly training for the executives and directors and carrying out other governance and training activities.

So far implementation is progressing smoothly. The issues have been challenging for governing members, staff and management alike as new concepts have been introduced and policies and processes are being developed incrementally.

### **Governance of the project**

The ALC identified the need to build their own governance capability and they were funded for this project by FaHCSIA through the RPA process. Funding for the additional staffing resource (the Governance Development Manager) was approved by the relevant Australian Government Minister via the provisions under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Land Rights Act*. The ALC implemented this project and provided reports to the RPA Committee.

The whole process of governance evaluation and strategic development was implemented efficiently and effectively and there is provision for incremental improvement of governance capability through ongoing development and quality improvement processes.

More work needs to be done with the various working groups and committees underpinning the RPC and other services involved in collaborative effort to develop a critical mass of people with commitment and skills needed to achieve the RPA goals and objectives. Such shared knowledge as can be developed will support more effective analysis of needs, problem solving and implementation.

The project has contributed to creating a momentum within the wider community, where there is a growing demand for a developmental approach to governance building. This

raises a question for the ALC and the RPA as to how their existing work can be leveraged so that more capability and capacity for governance and leadership can be built across a range of organisations and informal committees serving the community and involving community members. However the challenge for the ALC and GEBIE will be to resist undermining their own demanding in house governance program and staff capacity, as a result of being pressured to deliver governance training for other organisations and committees (many of which are not related to the RPA initiative and have been established by various government agencies).

Indeed the governance report identified the great number of informal governing committees, working groups, task forces and reference groups as potentially undermining effective governance on Groote and placing excessive demands upon the time and energies of a small number of community leaders.

For the RPA the lesson is that the demand for governance development for the Groote Eylandt Archipelago is strong and the ALC experience can inform a more strategic approach to responding to these needs. One of the features of the ALC experience is that building governance capability should be culturally informed and locally managed, done over time, built on the basis of self-evaluated need and actual roles to be implemented and that a single workshop will not provide that experience.

In addition there is the question whether youth leadership workshops can be developed on Groote Eylandt to strengthen this approach instead of being treated separately and delivered in short-term workshops. The issue for improved return on investment for the governance project is developing an understanding of how further investment can build capability coherently rather than in separate projects where the learnings might not be consolidated.

While this project has been contained to the ALC and GEBIE it has uncovered a broader community and service development need which the RPA could address strategically, especially as government has identified this as a key priority. It has also contributed to understanding of what elements of governance training are useful for agencies working on the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

# APPENDIX C—EARLIER REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

A regional partnership agreement had been signed in August 2005 between the Ngaanyatjarra Land Council, the Australian Government, the Western Australian Government and the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, providing for 'joint innovative action' and shared responsibility for service delivery and investment for Indigenous people. The projects under the agreement focussed largely on governance, planning and capability building and the RPA was supplemented by three shared responsibility agreements dealing with communities on a case-by-case basis.

A memorandum of understanding between the Minerals Council of Australia and the Australian Government signed in June 2005 provided for a further eight RPAs, the first of which was signed in relation to the East Kimberley region of Western Australia in November 2006. These RPAs were based on the National Framework Principles for Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians endorsed by COAG in 2004 and responded to the inequity in employment outcomes evident in the 2001 census data.

The agreements, six of which were in Western Australia, four in South Australia and one each in Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, focussed mainly on employment, enterprise development and training outcomes and were signed by the Australian and state/territory governments, and in most cases major mining enterprises and local governments. Their guiding principles were:

- collaboration and partnership between the parties and with Indigenous communities based on shared responsibilities and respect for culture, customs and values
- integration of sustainable development considerations within the memorandum of understanding partnership decision-making process, and
- joint commitment to social, economic and institutional development of the communities with which the parties engage. (Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project n.d.)

A number of RPAs have been signed since Stage 1 of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island RPA; however none appear to be as comprehensive and strategic in their view of the future. Several of these RPAs appear more limited in scope and others are actually considered to have been completed. On Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, however, the ALC at least has expressed interest in a third stage of the RPA which it regards as part of a longer journey involving intergenerational change.

## APPENDIX D—PEOPLE CONSULTED

AFL NT	Ian Brown
ALC	Thomas Amagula Grant Burgoyne Mike Collins Lindsey Davison Elayne Fernandez Ross McDonald Joaz Wurramara Tony Wurramarrba
Anindilyakwa Education and Training Board	Illona Wilson
Consultants to the ALC	Bill Gray Fran Hinton Diane Smith Neil Westbury
DEEWR	Chris Fitzgerald Rhonda Sattler Ruby Lonsdale Valerie Rowlands
DoHA	Jenny Norris
East Arnhem Shire Council	Ian Bodill Paul Piney Gordon Walsh
FaHCSIA	Trish Canty Dave Chalmers Carita Davis Mike Dillon Barry Johnson Michelle Kinnane Iris Lowe Wendy Matthews Brian Stacey Ming Toh

	Emma Vanian Joanna Virtue
Formerly ALC	Richard Preece
GEBIE	Greg Mitchell Nicole Prudames
GEMCO	Scott Perkins
Minerals Council of Australia	Chris Nott
Machado Joseph Disease Foundation	Libby Massey Nadia Winthrop
Ngakwurra-Langwa College	Mark Monaghan
Northern Territory Government	Andrew Kirkman
Northern Territory Police	Danny Bacon Lee Morgan
NT Department of Lands and Planning	Ernie Wanka
NT Dept of Construction and Infrastructure	Peter Campos
NT Dept of Education and Training	Vicki Bayliss
NT Housing, Local Govt and Reg Services	Ken Davies Matthew Fagan
NT PowerWater	Lindsay Smith