

COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION

INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION

From: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

(3rd Submission, in response to questions asked in attached letter)

Submission No.: IFI/SUB/33

Date Received: 09/06/2000

In particular, the operations and structure of the Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corporation Limited (MPRHCL) have been identified as a positive model for other organisations to consider in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their own housing services.

MPRHCL was established in 1997 as a non-profit organisation with the broad aim to maximise housing outcomes for Indigenous people in the area. It was created following a study into Indigenous housing in the ATSIC Murdi Paaki Regional Council area which revealed significant deficiencies in the provision of housing, including insolvency and financial difficulties confronting some of the local Indigenous community housing organisation.

MPRHCL, currently provides housing services for up to 30 communities with housing programs. Approximately 400 properties are either owned (177) and/or managed (223) by MPRHCL on behalf of local community organisations. It has an Indigenous Board made up of representatives of the local Community organisations.

MPRHCL, objectives include:

- the establishment of a single management structure to coordinate and control housing
- development in the region;
- clarification of the respective roles and responsibilities for housing services of the Murdi Paaki Regional Council, State government departments and other agencies;
- to improve and increase housing availability to Indigenous families in the region;
- to efficiently collect rental payments for housing provided or arranged by MPRHCL;
- maximise employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people; and
- implement a common approach/framework for services to each community.

ATSIC has just let a consultancy to assess the effectiveness of Murdi Paaki Regional Housing Corporation Limited (MPRHCL), as a Regional Housing Organisation in the context of.

- the reform agenda to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Indigenous Community Housing Sector.
- MPRHCL's objectives for the organisation.

The consultancy is linked to a broader consultancy let by the Aboriginal Housing Office of New South Wales to look at strategies for streamlining asset management and providing recurrent support to Indigenous Community Housing Organisations.

The environmental health and design consultancy firm, Healthabitat, has been engaged by ATSIC to manage the F11BH project which will involve on the spot assessment of the state of repair of houses and provision of urgently required maintenance. Approximately 1000 houses in about 20 communities in four States and the Northern Territory will be selected. Depending on outcomes and support for the first round of projects ATSIC will consider extending the program in future years. Communities to be assisted have been or will be selected by the relevant State Housing Authority (except in Queensland) on the basis of need and other criteria such as size of community defined by numbers of houses - in order to develop a good sample etc. The average cost of fix work per house will be around \$3,000. Apart from the direct benefits of repair work, on-the-job training and employment will be provided to community residents.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Housing

1. ATSIC outlined a number of issues and initiatives in relation to the housing and infrastructure function on which the Commission would like further information:

- the CHINS survey, we look forward to ongoing discussions with ATSIC about the way the survey results can be used and hope to gain early access to the data files (we will be writing to you separately to arrange access);
- the development of a ten year strategic plan for housing and infrastructure, we would appreciate an opportunity to look over the plan as soon as it becomes available;
- the Murdi Paaki Regional Council initiative that involved a rationalisation of community housing organisations, we would like any detail that will help us understand the approach used;
- the pilot '3000 house project' with HealthHabitat that has recently been agreed to, we would like information on how communities will be selected for the project and some indication of the information that will flow from the project (although we appreciate the completion date is outside of our timetable); and
- the links between housing and infrastructure provision (in particular municipal services) and the CDEP program.

Indicators of Indigenous Need for Employment

2 Concerning the Commission's proposals for indicators of Indigenous need for employment, ATSIC seemed to agree with the Commission's first three proposals -that is (i) the necessity to increase employment of Indigenous people; (ii) the need to prepare Indigenous people for entry into the labour market; and (iii) the need to develop Indigenous economies.

3 However, ATSIC suggested that the fourth indicator proposal (the need to support and sustain Indigenous communities) was not a good idea, and that a better indicator might be the need to raise Indigenous engagement in the economy. Can ATSIC elaborate more on what it means by this indicator and suggest how the Commission might calculate it?