

ABORIGINAL CO-ORDINATING COUNCIL

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Youth councils network forum outcome

Young people on Aboriginal communities have formed a network of youth councils across ACC communities after learning something of how to have their say in issues which affect their lives and communities at a recent forum held in Cairns.

Aboriginal Coordinating Council Chair Thomas Hudson said young people's participation in community processes such as governance and other community activity was critical.

"What we hoped to do was help young people gain some of the knowledge and awareness they need to be able to do that," he said.

"That included increasing their awareness of the resources available to them, developing youth networks between communities and the establishment of an elected youth body to represent our communities in the far north."

He said it was hoped the forum would lead to the development of effective, user-friendly policy for young people at local government level.

"The conference was a unique opportunity for both youth workers and young people to gain support, knowledge and awareness of youth development and related issues within both their own and other communities," he said.

ACC 'Which Way You Mob' Project Coordinator Wendy Wust said feedback from the forum was positive.

"The biggest outcome was that it inspired them to form their own youth councils, which in turn we hope will inspire them to contribute to and take over some of the issues themselves," she said.

"That's not forgetting they've still got to listen to their elders but more so to just have a young voice in the community."

She said it meant, for example, that youth on a community who wanted to form their own club now had the means and the knowledge to generate and manage project funding for themselves.



'Which Way You Mob' Youth Forum participants at the Yarrabah Museum

"It was all about getting youth together to enable them to have the input they need into the community so they can see what's available to them and run it themselves," she said.

"Overall I felt that the participants had an informative, caring, sharing and learning three days.

"The interaction with each other has given them an insight on how other youth programs would be useful in their communities and most of all the "telling their stories" section has really hit home, it has made everyone realise that they are not alone with their problems and that they should unite and conquer issues as one."

For details on the 'Which way you mob', see page 10.



Weipa hosts history making football comp: p15

Prison rates targeted

The Queensland Government is aiming to halve the imprisonment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by 2011, Premier Peter Beattie has announced.

The target was set as Mr Beattie, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Minister Judy Spence, and Justice Minister Matt Foley signed a historic agreement with Indigenous Queenslanders - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement.

"For too long, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have been over-represented in the criminal justice system," Mr Beattie said.

"Half of the young people in youth detention are Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and they comprise almost a quarter of the adult prison population.

"The Justice Agreement sets a goal of drastically reducing this horrifying rate of incarceration during the next decade.

"It also sets out the practical mechanisms for reaching the target," Mr Beattie said.

Mr Beattie signed the agreement during a ceremony at Musgrave Park in Brisbane. Other signatories were:

- Chair of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board, Robert Anderson,
- Deputy Chair Cheryl Buchanan,
- other members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board*,
- Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Judy Spence,
- Attorney-General and Justice Minister Matt Foley,
- Police and Corrective Services Minister Tom Barton, and
- Youth Minister Anna Bligh.

Ms Spence said the Agreement showed the value of teamwork between the Indigenous community and the Government.

"The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board has been a driving force behind this agreement," Ms Spence said.

"The Board negotiated with the community, and made it clear to us that this was a critical document for Indigenous Queenslanders.

"The Premier and Ministers Foley, Barton and Bligh also acted on that message, demonstrating that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues are a priority across the Government."

Mr Beattie said the Government would strive to reach the target through better co-ordination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice policies, programs and services.

"All elements of the criminal justice system - the police, courts and corrections - have a role to play," he said.

"But fundamental to this agreement is recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must work with the Government on strategies for reducing contact with the law.

"Both the Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities realise that only by sharing responsibility and working in partnership can we reach our goals."

Ms Spence said the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement is an important part of the Government's plans for a Ten-Year Partnership with Indigenous Queenslanders.

"The agreement also matches the spirit of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report.

"The ongoing partnership between the Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples means the Agreement will remain a living document, regularly updated and with continuing relevance to the community."

In 1998 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders made up 3.2 per cent of the population but 23.1 per cent of adult jail inmates. In June 1999 Indigenous young people comprised 55 per cent of young Queenslanders in detention.

*Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board are Dr Anderson, Ms Buchanan, Mrs Rose Colless, Mrs Ruth Hegarty, Mr Henry Garnier, Mr Alfred Lacey, Ms Penny Tripcony, Associate Professor Jacinta Elston, Ms Leanne Wilson and Mr Richard Hoolihan.

From Peter's Desk



Community Services Act review

At the last ACC Full Council Meeting a Working Party was formed to work on the Review of the Community Services Act says ACC Chief Executive Officer Peter Opio Otim.

"The group met in early December and has drawn up an action plan which is a discussion paper covering all issues raised by the community councils has been prepared and sent to all community councils and other relevant agencies," he said.

"The working party expected responses to be sent back to the ACC by the end of the first week of Feb 2001."

Mr Opio Otim said the formation and support for the working party offered by the ACC indicated the commitment the ACC had to making sure that the entire exercise of the review of the CSA was comprehensively covered by all community councils.

Financial Administration Improvement Program (FAIP)

Mr Opio Otim said it was now certain that FAIP would be evaluated internally during the second half of the current financial year.

"This was contrary to the earlier suggestion that the evaluation process would have been undertaken externally," he said.

The FAIP comprises of three major projects: internal audit services, training services and Tailor-made Management Services (TMS).

Canberra visit

ACC Chair Thomas Hudson has met with the Minister for Local Government & Regional Services, Senator Ian MacDonald in Canberra says Mr Opio Otim.

Among the issues discussed were road funding to DOGIT community councils in Queensland. The minister advised the ACC that specific allocations had been given to each of the 15 DOGIT community councils in Queensland. A copy of the allocation was given to the Chair of the ACC and all community councils have been advised of their allocation.

Also discussed was the ACC submission on Financial Aid Grants (FAGs). The view expressed by the ACC was that the ACC must be represented on the FAG commission. The minister advised Mr Hudson that a draft discussion paper would be sent to the ACC for comments and a meeting would be held in March in Canberra to discuss the proposal.

'Ground breaking' Queensland leaders' forum

In a historic move, Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives elected under both commonwealth and state legislation have united to form a powerful new forum to speak with "one voice" on indigenous issues.

The ground breaking agreement to set up the Queensland Indigenous Leaders' Forum (QILF) was signed in Brisbane by the combined elected representatives of the 150,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Queensland.

Launching the new forum, indigenous leaders say they see the QILF as a historic and positive new way forward for this State and the people we are elected to represent.

"A new way that rightfully includes us on all the issues and the decisions that affect us.

"Our Indigenous Leaders' Forum will pursue both our traditional, inherent and citizens rights and the practical and everyday needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"This covers everything from health, housing, education, jobs, and training to reconciliation, constitutional reform and recognition.

"It also a practical way for us to take up our responsibilities as leaders, as people, and as communities for bringing an end to our welfare dependency and entrenched disadvantage.

"The intention of QILF is to also invite Indigenous peak community based organisations to work through policies and strategies in a unified approach to effectively lobby governments," they said.

Signatories to the powerful new partnership are the Aboriginal Coordinating Council representing the 17 Queensland DOGIT communities, the Island Coordinating Council representing the 20 island communities and councils in the Torres Strait, the Torres Strait Regional Authority and the seven ATSIC Regional Councils covering all mainland Queensland.

The QILF Agreement was signed by Mr Thomas Hudson, Chairman of the Aboriginal Coordinating Council, Commissioner Eliah Doolah on behalf of the Island Coordinating Council and the TSRA and the Deputy Chairman of ATSIC, Commissioner Ray Robinson.

They say the establishment of the QILF will end problems of uncertainty and ambiguity governments often claim in identifying, determining or ignoring indigenous views on indigenous affairs policy and legislation.

"We have agreed to set up the QILF so we can offer all governments, including the State government, one port of call. And speak authoritatively and decisively with one voice," they said.

Thomas Hudson, Chairman of ACC
Commissioner Eliah Doolah, representing the ICC and TSRA

Commissioner Ray Robinson, Chairman ATSIC's Qld State Advisory Committee
13 October 2000

'Strong & unified voice' - Pryor

ATSIC Commissioner Jenny Pryor has commended the ACC for initiating a new forum of elected indigenous leaders in Queensland aimed at achieving a strong and unified voice to government.

Ms Pryor told the ACC Full Council Meeting that the formation of the Queensland Indigenous Leaders Forum (QILF) was an initiative which came from ACC Chair Thomas Hudson and Deputy Chair Alf Lacey.

right thing by our people."

She said the idea of the group was not to assume a mandate, but to share some of the concerns and issues concerning all indigenous peoples in Queensland.

"Most importantly I think it's about time that we all put our difference aside and I think that's been proven with the initiative that your chairs have taken by instigating the leaders' forum," she said.



Forum membership includes all ATSIC regional councils, the ACC, the TSRA and the ICC.

"It was an initiative in regards to all the elected leaders right throughout the state need to get together because we are responsible and are elected to service the same people," she said.

"We need to put our differences aside, especially from state and commonwealth, and lets talk about doing the

Ms Pryor said to save costs the Leaders had agreed to meet before SACs meetings with ATSIC taking on the responsibility of resourcing the forum and the actions it took.

"This has been agreed to until we can work out whether it needs a separate secretariat or not, but we all felt quite strongly that we didn't want to set up another entity, we're there as a united voice and we can all share the resourcing so no one takes over," she said.

Cooperative management plan for Silver Plains

The Beattie Government has returned 193,000 hectares of land on Cape York Peninsula to its traditional owners in one of the largest land handovers to Aboriginal people in Queensland's history.

During a ceremony at Coen, Minister for Natural Resources, Rod Welford, also announced the balance of the 'Silver Plains Pastoral Holding' - one of the state's most biologically rich areas - would become national park.

"This is the type of positive outcome that was sought by the Goss Labor Government when it had the vision to acquire Silver Plains in 1994," Mr Welford said.

"It ensures land with significant conservation value is protected and enables the traditional owners to own or cooperatively manage areas with major cultural heritage significance.

"I am delighted the Beattie Labor Government has been able to finalise these arrangements and take such a positive step towards reconciliation.

"It is about empowering the Aboriginal people - giving them back their land and giving them the chance to build something for their people on their own country."

The Goss Labor Government acquired the Silver Plains Pastoral Holding in November 1994 from the Princess Charlotte Pastoral Company for \$4.5m.

The Indigenous Land Corporation is paying the state \$562,000 representing a 25% contribution by the Aboriginal parties to the total acquisition cost as part of the

negotiated settlement.

About 25,000ha of the 193,000ha has significant conservation values.

It will be subject to a conservation agreement under the Nature Conservation Act to be negotiated over the next 12 months following transfer of the land.

"This freehold title is the most secure title the Government can provide and recognises four aboriginal clans - the Kaanju, Umpila, Lama Lama and Ayapathu people - as the traditional owners of the land," Mr Welford said.

"The newly-formed Kulla Land Trust and our Government will work together to ensure permanent protection of the natural and cultural values that exist on the freehold land, particularly along the coastline and adjacent to the proposed National Park.

"The balance of the Silver Plains aggregation - about 122,000ha - will become the McIlwraith Range National Park and this will occur after negotiations with the Kulla Land Trust about cooperative management.

"Interim tenure arrangements are being considered including gazettal as a 'Reserve for Environmental Purposes' while these negotiations are finalised."

The McIlwraith Range area includes some of the state's most biologically rich and unique areas.

It includes the most elevated rainforest in Cape York Peninsula, an extensive range of grassland communities, the largest undisturbed stands of hoop pine, spectacular riverine rainforest and extensive vegetated sand dunes.

Emergency services to target 2.4 per cent employment

An Indigenous Employment Strategy within the Department of Emergency Services meant greater numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will be employed by Queensland's Emergency Service organisations.

Emergency Services Minister Stephen Robertson said the plan would result in hundreds of new jobs throughout the portfolio for indigenous Queenslanders.

"It means a lot more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will be employed as ambulance paramedics, firefighters, counter disaster and rescue staff, and public servants in my department," he said.

"This employment strategy reflects the Beattie Government's commitment to the reconciliation process and to creating more job opportunities for all Queenslanders."

Mr Robertson said the Department of Emergency Services had set a target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to make up 2.4% of the department's total workforce by 2002.

"The department currently employs 43 ATSI staff (0.6% of total) so the target will initially create 100 plus new job opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islanders throughout Queensland," he said.

Key initiatives to achieve the 2.4% employment target include:

- Queensland Ambulance Service to set an employment intake target of 10% for ATSI students in the Student Paramedic Program from 2000-01 onwards;

- Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority to set an employment intake target of 5% for indigenous applicants from the total number of intake positions available from 2000-01;

- Increased employment of ATSI trainees with offers of permanent employment in the department, using vacant AO2 positions.

- Establishment of a force of multi-skilled "Emergency Service Officers" to be located within remote and rural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. Officers will be trained in first aid, fire fighting and prevention, search and rescue, workplace health and safety, and counter disaster management skills to service local ATSI communities.

Mr Robertson said 50 "Emergency Service Officer" positions would be created and filled over a five-year period to service remote and rural communities.

"This new force will be the result of

a partnership between the QAS, the QFRA, Counter Disaster and Rescue Services and ATSI community councils and will be jointly funded by the three agencies and participating councils," he said.

"These indigenous officers will help greatly improve the delivery of emergency services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and improve the quality of life for people living in those communities," he said.

The indigenous employment strategy will be underpinned by the development and coordination of a Cross Cultural Awareness Training program for all staff across the department at all levels.

Mr Robertson said the Beattie Government was committed to delivering world-class emergency services to all communities - regardless of size and location - to achieve a safer community and a better quality of life for all Queenslanders.

"These priorities can be achieved only if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in the development of appropriate policy, programs and service delivery mechanisms," he said.

Water supply problems 'ongoing' for Woorabinda residents: Kemp

Water supply continues to be an ongoing problem for the community of Woorabinda says Council Chair Steve Kemp.

Mr Kemp said the current crisis stems from the failure of the government to finalise water allocation rights to ensure a permanent supply to the community via a pipeline.

"It's an ongoing thing, back in 1994 or so they put a couple of bores down, they did studies about either putting a weir in or putting in a pipeline from Booralaba," he said.

"They put the bores in and it's artesian water but was only supposed be a short term thing, maybe 20 years at the most.

"And we've had problems with the bores so a lot of money has been spent on them."

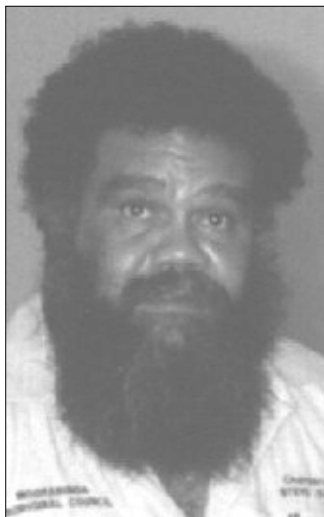
He said a leak in the main reservoir of the town had cost up to 200 000 litres a day.

"That should have been the responsibility of the relevant government department but they didn't come to the party until we've had the water crisis this time," he said.

"We've got that rectified, we got the

tank fixed and we've now managed to shut down one bore so we're not using so much electricity."

But he said the recent crisis had required the use of a saltwater bore and



home delivery of water supplies.

"Our drinking water bore collapsed and we had to use our saltwater bore which is estimated to be three times saltier than the ocean," he said.

"So we had to mix that with creek

water and chemicals so we could drink it and we also had to hand deliver it because the reservoir was also down.

"We had volunteers hand delivering in 10 litre containers for two to three weeks but those are the things we've got to do.

"The bore is fixed now but we've got to do some more tests on the reservoir, even though we can't do that until we've got another header tank so it's pretty complex.

"But there's a few questions to be asked, the community is grateful for the water but we need a long term thing so this doesn't happen again."

He said at present the Woorabinda had drinking water but needed the allocation.

"Once we get the allocation and then if we get the money we can put a pipeline across so we've got a long term water supply," he said.

"They've got a pipeline to Banana and that's a population of 30 people.

"So we're asking the question because we've got 1500 people and those people should come before cattle and crops."

New renal service set for Bamaga

Renal services have been provided to help address the high rate of renal disease in Indigenous communities in North Queensland say Health Minister Wendy Edmond and Member for Cook and Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Steve Bredhauer.

A four-chair satellite haemodialysis unit would be established at Bamaga Hospital and should be operational by the middle of this year, Mr Bredhauer said.

"For many patients this means that they will be able to have dialysis close to home, rather than having to move to Cairns for on-going treatment," he said.

"This new service at Bamaga is very good news for local families and the entire community."

The plan to establish the new service is part of Queensland Health's Northern Zone Renal Services Plan 2000-2010, which outlines strategies to address the burden of renal disease in North Queensland and increase access to renal services.

"Across the Cape and Torres Strait over the next three years Queensland Health will contribute \$3.5 million toward the initiatives outlined in the first phase of the Renal Services Plan," Ms Edmond said.

"This will be enhanced by Commonwealth funding of \$1.5 million.

"These initiatives include early detection of diabetes and renal disease, comprehensive management of diabetes and hypertension, and access to renal specialist services and dialysis.

"The rate of renal disease is particularly high among Indigenous people in North Queensland, because of high rates of high blood pressure, diabetes and infections," Ms Edmond said.

"We not only recognise the problem, we are taking action to deal with it. Queensland Health has put in place a comprehensive range of prevention and treatment strategies to address the burden of disease on Indigenous communities."

The Bamaga haemodialysis unit will be constructed at the hospital at a cost of about \$310,000. The capital funding will be provided by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. The new service will be recurrently funded by Queensland Health.

Other renal services will be established throughout North Queensland in coming years.

The priority areas for provision of treatment services are the Torres Strait and Cape York Districts, followed by the expansion of services in Cairns and Townsville.

Development underway for Cape York roads

Transport and Main Roads Minister Steve Bredhauer has outlined funding options to upgrade the Peninsula Developmental Road.

Mr Bredhauer said the Investment Strategy would explore ways to upgrade the 524km unsealed section - extending from Lakeland to Weipa - within the next 20 years.

"The strategy outlines a range of upgrading and maintenance options to realistically meet community and industry expectations," he said.

"It shows that about \$330 million - at present day costs - would be required to upgrade the Peninsula Developmental Road to a fully bitumen-sealed standard, with significant measures to improve flood immunity," Mr Bredhauer said.

"The strategy also explores several other options, ranging from increased investment in maintenance through to an upgrade along the full length between Lakeland and

Weipa," he said.

Mr Bredhauer said the Investment Strategy concluded that bitumen sealing and significantly improving flood immunity between Laura and Lakeland was justified because of high traffic volumes.

"Within competing priorities for available road funds, it is difficult to justify a similar level of investment on the Laura to Weipa section, on traffic grounds alone.

"As strategic and environmental considerations also come into play, the Strategy looked at variations in the extent of bitumen sealing that should be carried out between Laura and Weipa," he said.

"The final decision on this issue will depend on a range of factors. For example, limiting bitumen sealing on the Laura to Weipa section means that we will continue to place heavy demands on the Cape's limited gravel resources to carry out gravel re-

sheeting," Mr Bredhauer said.

He said the Peninsula Developmental Road was a strategically important road and its role had been considered in a State-wide context through the Regional Roads Investment Strategy.

"A full \$330 million investment in the Peninsula Developmental Road over the next 20 years has to be considered in the context of other needs throughout Far North Queensland and the rest of the State, and of wider State and Federal objectives," he said.

He said Main Roads had also arranged for key local community members to meet with Federal and State representatives in Cooktown, Coen and Weipa.

"The aim is to reinforce what has already been well documented in the Investment Strategy and briefings from earlier comprehensive consultation," Mr Bredhauer said

Roads a priority for Cape region: Bredhauer

Qld Transport and Main Roads Minister Steve Bredhauer has announced record funding for road networks for some of the most remote regions in the country - Cape York Peninsula, the vast Gulf country and Torres Strait.

Mr Bredhauer said a record \$195 million would be spent on roads in the vast electorate of Cook over the next five years.

He said a number of important road projects in the region would be funded through one of the state's most significant road transport initiatives - the Roads Implementation Program - a five-year \$5.3 billion dollar program.

Major achievements in this financial year will be the completion of the Byerstown Range crossing on the Peninsula Developmental Road by April, and the new bridge across Big Annan River on the Cooktown Developmental Road early in 2001.

\$14 million will be spent on building and sealing a new alignment over the Byerstown Range, just south of Lakeland.

This project will complete the bitumen seal between Cairns and Lakeland on the Peninsula Developmental Road. Construction is well advanced and is on target for completion by mid 2001.

Another \$4.4 million will be spent on sealing of the Coen to Coen Aerodrome section on the Peninsula Developmental Road to provide improved all-weather access to one of the most remote airports in Queensland.

This work was well advanced and was to be completed in time for Christmas last year.

\$7.96 million to complete the construction of high-level, two-lane bridges and approaches at the Big Annan River

and Annan River overflow just south of Cooktown on the Cooktown Developmental Road.

\$981,000 Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme subsidy to upgrade the access road to bitumen seal standard from the Lockhart River Community to the barge ramp. Construction was planned to start in October 2000.

\$751,000 Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme subsidy to upgrade the existing bed crossing over the Wenlock River with a single-lane concrete bridge. Work has started and was expected to be complete by December 2000.

\$362,000 Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme subsidy to upgrade the access road to bitumen seal standard from the Pormpuraaw Community to the airstrip. Construction should have been completed before this year's wet season.

Mr Bredhauer said longer-term plans for Cape York outlined in the Program included over \$40 million on a number of projects to complete the bitumen seal on the Cooktown Developmental Road by the end of 2005.

"The road transport needs of communities in the Cape, the Gulf, Torres Strait and other remote parts of far north Queensland are of paramount importance to me," he said.

"I'm determined to provide real opportunities for people in remote areas, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Minister said every million dollars spent on roads provided 17 jobs in road building and related industries.

"We'll be providing 17,500 jobs throughout the state from this initiative," he said.

"We're spending money where it counts - in communities where there is a real need."

Forum builds from faith and values of tomorrow's community leaders



Leadership, community service and networking were the major themes of a recent National Student Leadership Forum on Faith & Values attended by ACC staff member Kaarena Kennell in December last year.

Ms Kennell said the forum was inspiring, encouraging and intensive.

"It was an honour to meet many wonderful people, though it was amazing that a lot of the people I meet new little or nothing of Cape York Peninsula Communities or The Torres Strait," she said.

She said the aim of the forum was to bring together future leaders from both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds.

"It's aim was to inspire young people to become good leaders," she said.

"The forum was not about professional politics, rather to encourage young people to make a difference in whatever field they had an interest in.

"The only requirement was a willingness to come & discuss the issues in an open, creative manner and to respect

one another opinions."

She said the format of the forum was to help build relationships.

Its aims and activities included:

- Meet with each other & with a member or Senator from Parliament in small groups;
- Listening to key note speakers from sporting heroes, church members, Members of Parliament and local community organisation leaders;
- Participate in elective seminar groups on different leadership themes;
- Community service activity; and,
- Time to relax, play volleyball and have fun.

Ms Kennell said she was nominated to attend the forum by Karen Jacobs & Phillip Bowie from QLD Health, Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs Services, in conjunction with Peter Sjoquist from Rock Challenge.

"It has given me a whole new outlook in which to view leadership," she said.

Heritage funding boosts for north Queensland

Cultural heritage projects in north Queensland have received financial support as part of the State Government's Community Cultural Heritage Incentive Program.

Environment and Heritage Minister, Rod Welford announced a total of \$178,500 would be allocated to 16 projects across Queensland.

"We're taking a new approach to heritage conservation in Queensland and listening to local communities' views on which projects they'd like to see protected," Mr Welford said.

"Cultural heritage is an important

part of our identity and provides economic returns through tourism.

"These conservation projects will have positive flow-on effects, creating jobs, and helping to retain skilled tradespeople in rural and regional centres."

The recipients of funding in north Queensland include:

- The Rirmerr Aboriginal Corporation, Cairns, for the Management of Cultural Heritage Places at Lakefield National Park. Includes Indigenous management of recording places, recording and monitoring

impacts and developing and implementing protection strategies (\$10,000)

- Mareeba Shire Council for formal documentation of cultural heritage information of Reserve for Recreation R76, Mount Molloy. (\$10,000)

- Indigenous research for the publication of 'Paint Up'. Muyinda Aboriginal Corporation, Mornington Island (\$15,000)

- Croydon Shire Heritage Study (Aboriginal and Historical Places) Croydon Shire Council (\$20,000)

Focus on Homelands Forum...

Move to policy required for funds

The rights and needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Queensland to move back to their land has been overwhelmingly endorsed at a historic meeting of Indigenous representatives and leaders from around Queensland, as an urgent and top priority for all governments.

Prior to the Homelands conference, which was attended by more than 120 people, ATSIC Commissioner Jenny Pryor told the ACC Full Council Meeting Queensland's indigenous peoples should be aware there was funding available for Homelands projects in the state.

"The Homelands Conference came about in the Northern Territory first, and I think for too long at a national level everyone has thought Homelands are only something for Alice Springs or the Northern Territory people, forgetting people over here in Queensland," she said.

"But now I think there is that push for homelands and outstations, it's back on the state's agenda and there's probably golden opportunity."

She said there was a need for Regional Councils to be aware of the funding available and to start implementing a policy for homelands or outstations.

After the forum Ms Pryor said there was overwhelming dissatisfaction

with the Indigenous Land Council from across the state.

Other key resolutions passed by the delegates included:

- * support for a treaty and regional agreements in Queensland by 2001
- * a Queensland Homelands policy
- * a national public holiday in recognition of the late Dr Kumantjayi Perkins
- * a Queensland Land Summit involving all government agencies
- * and new funds to be made available by all levels of government to support the homelands movement.

The meeting also called for the Queensland government to abolish its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board, which is appointed, and replace it with the Queensland Indigenous Leaders Forum, who are all elected representatives.

The forum passed 14 resolutions (see page opposite) which will now be forwarded to the ATSIC Board and to State and Federal governments, for action.

Commissioner Pryor said the forum delivered a "strong and clear message from the indigenous people of Queensland to all governments on how and where they want to live".

She said State and Federal policies, funding, resources and even

understanding of the need was "abysmal".

Commissioner Pryor said the forum had identified both a strong outstation and homelands movement has been under way for more than 20 years in parts of Queensland, and a new and growing range of demands from people wanting to return to country all round the state.

"But these needs are not being met and often not even on the agenda of governments, ministers or their bureaucracies," she said.

"The strong message today from this forum to government is not just that they must be on the agenda, but they need to be right at the top of the list.

"The Federal government is sitting on a multi-billion dollar budget surplus, so governments can no longer say the money is not there, because the government's own official figures say it is there."

She called for both the State and Federal Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs to now get commitments from their respective cabinets for new funding and programs to support the homelands movement.

"If they are not prepared to do this, and acknowledge the needs of our people, then they should step aside for a minister who will," Commissioner Pryor said.



ACC Executive members Peter Guivarra, Steve Kemp & Alf Lacey with ATSIC Commissioner Jenny Pryor



Resolution 1 Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC)

That the Queensland Homelands Forum call on the ATSIC Board of Commissioners and the Federal Minister of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the Hon John Herron to disband the Indigenous Land Commission and redirect all of its funds and functions to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Such funds and functions to be administered through the relevant ATSIC Regional Council programs in acquiring lands for Aboriginal people, in particular it is intended to provide direct assistance in strategic management of such land and to address the issues of dispossessed Aboriginal people of Australia.

Resolution 2 Annual Public Holiday to commemorate Dr Perkins' life

As the federal government has given the late Dr Perkins a state funeral, this forum of a wide range of Indigenous peoples, supports the request of a public holiday annually in Dr Perkins honour as he has paved the way in Indigenous Australian Affairs.

Resolution 3 Treaty

That because our Homelands lands, waters and seas were colonised without our consent in agreements or treaties, the Queensland Homelands Forum want a negotiated settlement by way of Regional Agreements or Treaties by the end of Federation Year 2001 as a step towards implementing a Queensland's Homelands Policy.

Resolution 4 Resourcing of the Queensland Homelands Movement

That funds be made available by all levels of government to resource the Queensland Homelands movement, including but not limited to infrastructure, policies and strategic planning.

Resolution 5 ATSIC Queensland Regional Council Plans to incorporate Homelands Policies

That all as a matter of priority ATSIC Queensland Regional Councils immediately start to develop Homelands Policies which will be included as part of their Regional Council Plans.

Resolution 6 Policies and Programs for Homelands

That all levels of government develop and implement appropriate programs and policies specific to Homelands and provide equitable funding.

Resolution 7 Review ATSIC National Homelands Policy

That ATSIC review the National Homelands Policy and its restrictiveness which does not allow for self-determination in the way in which we live.

Resolution 8 Second Queensland Forum on Homelands

That this Forum invites appropriate decision-makers from all tiers of government and all relevant external agencies to attend a second Forum on Homelands which will develop a strategy for developing and supporting Homelands within Queensland.

Resolution 9 Develop Queensland State Government Policy on Homelands in partnership with ATSIC and Traditional Owners

That the Queensland State Government develop a policy on Homelands in partnership with ATSIC and Traditional Owners.

That a working party similar to that set up for negotiating the Queensland Bilateral Agreement be established to carry out this resolution.

Resolution 10 ATSIC Resourcing for Homelands

That ATSIC allocate program specific funding for Homelands, and guarantee to a percentage of NAHS funding for Traditional Owners to assist in homelands infrastructure.

Resolution 11 Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board

That Commissioner Pryor write to Minister Judy Spence on behalf of this Forum to have the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board abolished and give full recognition for the carriage of providing advice to the State Government be given to the Queensland Indigenous Leaders Forum.

Resolution 12 Review and Status Report on Homelands in Cape York Peninsula

That there be an audit of all existing homelands / outstations in Cape York and a review of all Homelands established in Cape York.

From this review that appropriate policies be developed for the Cape.

Resolution 13 Resourcing Homelands

That a structure be developed where people on Homelands receive maximum benefits from ATSIC programs.

Also, that ATSIC develop separate economic and development programs for Homelands.

Also, that Homelands Resource Centres to be located in more practicable geographical locations.

Resolution 14 Queensland Land Summit

That the Queensland Homelands Forum request Commissioner Pryor to approach the Department of Premiers to set up a Queensland Land Summit to explain the different types of land tenure in Queensland and the State Government's commitment to ongoing support for management of land handed back to Indigenous people.

Focus on ACC Staff...

'Which way you mob' keeping youth in schools

Operating on a system of reward for keeping in school, rather than only gaining attention for misbehaviour, is the focus of the ACC's Which Way You Mob youth project.

ACC staff members Mercy Baird and Wendy Wust along with project worker Phil Venables, on secondment from the Department of Families Youth & Community Care, have engaged in an intensive program of community visits since mid-2000 to promote the project which has been a huge success.

"Since mid-June the program has really taken off in that we've embarked on a heavy program of community visits to promote the project," Mr Venables said.

"Wendy & Mercy did some work with the department in Brisbane on forging an identity, a stronger more youth friendly identity for the project and after consultation with youth the project was given the title of the 'Which Way Youth Project' or the long title is 'Which Way You Mob' Youth Project."

He said youth had been involved in giving feedback every step along the way.

"The kids were involved in providing feedback about the logo which is an energetic looking boomerang representing kids energy in going out and coming back into the communities," he said.

"And we've run a pretty successful campaign funding round, I think \$115 000 for 11 projects in eight communities mostly run over the school holidays but not all.

"There's quite a few just straight bush camping programs but there was a couple of excursions to reward kids and to give kids better life skills experience in the outside world.

"Wujal Wujal, Yarrabah and Lockhart River have all done trips."

He said while each community was different, all had achieved a measure of success.



"Lockhart has just doubled its numbers of young people attending secondary school outside of Lockhart and so they're really keen to keep those kids out at school and they were rewarded for sticking at it at school," he said.

"And that really has been a theme which has emerged at the Full Council Meeting and in lots of different places where they're saying that to get attention at the outset you've got to do something bad and then people will do something for you, take notice.

"A lot of communities are trying to get onto rewarding kids for doing the right and I think in many ways offending was a rational choice for kids who have really got no future.

"And so I think communities are beginning to recognise they need to be looking at different ways and finding a future for them."

He said Hopevale provided a good example of one of the projects many success stories.

"In Hopevale we were told that children going out to the camp needed a lot of assistance in learning how to resolve conflict and get on with each other but by the end of the camp things were just pumping along beautifully for the kids," he said.

"What we've tried to do is look at where the community is at and build on and mobilise on current commu-

nity strengths.

"So in Yarrabah there was a strong music tradition and they wanted to buy music equipment so they could have ongoing music workshops for young people.

"Lockhart River has got a strong dance tradition and so we funded a group of dancers to go to the Indigenous Youth Dance forum in Broome leading into the Stompen Ground Festival.

"That was a big success and the Lockhart River dancers

were invited to dance in schools as well as at the main Stompen Ground festival.

"And as a result of the positive publicity they got over there they've been invited to an international indigenous dance festival in Malaysia this year.

"So that was a real cultural, social learning for those who went and it's leading onto other things."

He said similarly successful camping programs had been run at Hopevale, Injinoo, Umagico and Mapoon.

"The other thing the program has done is with Wendy & Mercy's work in Doomadgee setting up a youth council and through that activity is being generated for young people, but there's still a lot of work to be done," he said.

"We're just about to widen the program to provide grants for youth action planning, for young people accessing outstations or any crisis response on a community, putting in a plan to be able to respond quickly to that crisis, whether it be an outbreak of substance abuse or youth suicide.

"And funding for the development of youth councils and any other specific one-off projects that communities may want to run.

"The project is currently being evaluated but will run until June 2002."

Infrastructure, operations and management pilots on track at half way point for training

The ACC's Infrastructure, Operations and Maintenance pilot project is already almost half way through its training period says Manager Ted Wymarra.

"There was six pilot communities - Woorabinda, Yarrabah, Hopevale, Wujal, Kowanyama & Pormpuraaw - where the training has involved sewage works, up keep of water supplies, some environmental awareness as well as making people aware of the importance of hygiene," he said.

"We actually started with about 35 trainees and now we're down to about 23 across the whole six communities which means I think they will be the likely stayers.

"We've also developed a video made with local people and David Hudson, who's a well-known person across the communities."

He said he hoped, given the project's success, funding would be found to continue the work with other DOGIT communities.

"We now have TAFE as the planning institution that delivers all the modules so there's two full-time planning instructors for six communities," he said.

He also said the recent appointment of Project Manager Darren Miller had eased his workload considerably.

"Because of the positions I hold I've had my hands full so what we decided to do is advertise for a project officer," he said.



"Darren was the successful applicant and now he's been with us for close on two months and we are very pleased."

Mr Miller said he had already been to a number of the communities and is well known to some of the staff involved in the project.

"I was the Training Development Officer at Yarrabah as well as being a current Councillor there," he said.

"I will be concentrating mostly on the details of the project but especially training in terms of working with all of the other stakeholders, most importantly the community people to ensure we get these trainees through.

"At the end of the day what we need to aim for is to get that knowledge and skills to those people so they can operate and maintain the sewage and water systems."

Mr Miller is also studying for the completion of his Bachelor of Arts degree with James Cook University.

"I'm majoring in politics and hopefully I'll complete that in a short period of time," he said.

He said the ACC had been supportive of his studies, allowing him to do two subjects each semester.

ACC lead role in DV recommendations

The ACC has taken a leading role in finding ways to implement the recommendations of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Womens' Taskforce on Violence Report.

ACC Community Justice Officer Gwen Schrieber says much of her work at present is in close partnership with women from all the DOGIT communities researching ways of implementing and funding the 123 recommendations within the report.

"Hopefully later on down the track we as the ACC along with the women from the DOGIT communities will be able to implement some of those recommendations," she said.

Ms Schrieber said violence not only affected the individual involved but also the whole family as well as the community.

"So it's a burning issue at the moment that needs to be addressed and has to



be addressed holistically," she said.

"It's common knowledge there is a high rate of suicide within our communities as well as an escalating consumption rate of alcohol and we still have a high incarceration of our men within the prison system.

"So that really needs to be addressed but it has to be addressed in a culturally appropriate way."

She said she was highly aware that each community was different but that there was ways to overcome that.

"Ways to overcome that is to have our elders in the community involved, because in the past the elders of our respective communities have held that status of being able to discipline the young ones and we need to bring that back," she said.

"Customary law hasn't been officially endorsed but we would like that to be recognised and I feel that our elders need to regain that status again.

"That would help to alleviate a lot of the social problems our remote communities are experiencing at the moment.

"For example the elders' justice group operating in Hopevale is working very well where they have an elder from each of the clan groups.

"Before a young offender goes to the magistrates court, they go before the elders first who try to speak to the young ones before sentencing."

Focus on ACC staff...

Motor vehicle video program filming complete

Filming on 17 communities for the Consumer Awareness Program's video project on motor vehicles has finished says ACC Consumer Affairs Officer Andrew Lewis.

"Aspects of motor vehicles covered under the program included buying the right car, affordability, getting finance, signing contracts, warranties, advice on problems and basic car maintenance," he said.

Mr Lewis said filming went very smoothly and those who participated seemed to enjoy their involvement.

"The filming went very well, every community we went to people were ready and willing to participate," he said.



"The cooperation was excellent and the acting ability of those who participated was of a high standard."

He said an entire set of motor vehicles video program was currently with the Queensland Office of Fair Trading for their review and comment.

"When the Office of Fair Trading review process is completed the videos will be distributed to all the communities," he said.



He said the ACC was now considering the next program which they hope will consist of both a video and an interactive cd.

"Depending on funds, this next program will cover dealing with debt," he said.

"The program will focus on offering advice to people who are either in a loan default situation or about to be, and will offer alternatives and the best way to handle the situation."



Focus on ACC Full Council Meeting...

ACC echoes federal housing fund call

The Aboriginal Coordinating Council (ACC) has echoed the calls of Queensland Public Works and Housing Minister Robert Swarten for more federal funding to be put into housing on Aboriginal communities.

Following Mr Swarten's address to the ACC Full Council Meeting, ACC Chair Thomas Hudson said he had been shocked to learn that the federal government put in only half the dollars the state government did into housing on communities.

"Housing is an ongoing problem for all of our communities and the government has just announced a \$680 million surplus - what are they doing with that money?" he said.

Mr Hudson said despite a couple of areas of concern from ACC Councillors the meeting with the Minister had gone well.

"I feel that he listened to our concerns and he has made a number of promises to follow-up on those areas of concern," he said.

"I think he's been helpful in that he's seen the wrongs and he tries to make them right.

"But without that support from the federal government that's still going to be very difficult."

Mr Swarten said Queensland contributed twice the amount provided by Canberra for Aboriginal housing under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement.

"The federal government's contribution has remained static for the past 10 years," he said.

Mr Swarten also told the Full Council Meeting that most communities had made progress in tackling rent arrears.

The Minister had twice warned he would freeze individual allocations to communities unless action was taken over the matter following an Auditor-General's report detailing an arrears bill of around \$5 million for 34 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities.

Mr Swarten had refused grants to three communities for not returning rent collection reports or their performance "raised considerable concern".

He said officers of the Department of Housing would meet with the three councils whose grants have been frozen to discuss their performance and future funding arrangements.

He also said accumulated arrears would continue to pose a problem despite improved collection rates, but most councils were maintaining or developing strategies to reduce annual arrears which would hopefully also erode the backlog.

"I congratulate the vast majority of community councils which have tackled this difficult issue and are meeting with success," he said.



Council Chairs at the last ACC Full Council Meeting (L-R): Billy Daniel, New Mapoon; George Ropeyarn, Injinoo; Ken Walden, Doomadgee; Peter Wallace, Wujal Wujal; John Coleman, Pormpuraaw; Steve Kemp, Woorabinda; Peter Yeatman, Yarrabah; Ken Bone, Cherbourg.

CJC needs written complaints - Butler

The Criminal Justice Commission's primary area of concern relates to criminal conduct or dismissful conduct by public servants or politicians says CJC Chair Brendan Butler.

Mr Butler was speaking in response to a question from the floor at the November Full Council Meeting in relation to avenues of action for communities or individuals over the Welfare Fund.

"What we do is where complaints are made to the CJC about criminal activity through public servants or politi-

cians, we assess the complaint to see whether or not its firstly something that falls into our lawful area of jurisdiction, secondly whether or not it's something that we can productively investigate," he said.

But he also said he was unable to give an immediate answer about "how we would deal with that".

"If that's something you want to raise with us we'll certainly assess it in the way we would other matters and see whether or not it is something we

should be looking at," he said.

"I'll give you this undertaking is that we'll go back and we'll have a look at what you're raising and we'll see how that fits in with what we are able to do."

ACC Deputy Chair Alf Lacey said the Aboriginal Coordinating Council needed to lodge a formal complaint with the CJC.

Mr Butler said if a letter was written it would be treated as a formal complaint and dealt with as such from there.

Focus on ACC Full Council Meeting...

Audits better but costs to rise

The main components of fees charged for audits carried out by the Auditor-General's department are time spent as well as travel and accommodation costs for staff Paul Shipperley told the November Full Council Meeting.

Mr Shipperley said the department was compelled to operate and report to Parliament.

"The cost of the audit is largely made up by Audit staff or private auditors who are engaged on a contract basis in addition to those costs there are the cost of travel and accommodation while we're on site, there are some additional costs by the Audit Office as well in terms of the finalisation, any work or involvement from our office," he said.

"They're the main components so based on the time that's spent the rates we charge per hour are rates which are approved by the Treasurer and that's essentially the system to which we are operating.

"We are compelled to operate, even though we are a statutory office and we report to Parliament, we still receive our funding but we have to work within that.

"And we are working towards our own cost recoveries for funding - that's the only alternative we have for our

ongoing financial viability, we can't do that overnight that's taking time to achieve."

He said charges varied according to the amount of work required.



Auditor General Len Scanlan, ACC Chair Thomas Hudson and Paul Shipperley

"So in theory at least a larger organisation requires longer time spent on council, all the travel costs, so theoretically it may cost more.

"But that may not necessarily be the case if there's any difficulties the auditors encounter, particularly for any smaller councils there could be a disproportionate cost in that case."

Auditor-General Len Scanlan told the meeting the department had a

genuine interest in seeing improvements to Council audits.

"Quite sincerely we want you to be successful and when we see improvements and you're doing your work well, we genuinely feel very good about it and we're not looking for more material of a negative nature to fill our reports.

"As you would expect our obligation is to tell Parliament like it is and I hope that we can continue to say that things are continuing to get better."

A word from ACC Auditor David Brown

"We've continued with our Financial Administration Improvement Program (FAIP) and apart from continuing with the routine internal audits for councils, we've also established some very productive workshops," says ACC Auditor David Brown.

"We had a very interesting and productive workshop in October with the Woorabinda and Doomadgee councils concerning the Review of the Community Services Act.

"This gave an opportunity for these councils to set on record very positive recommendations for change and these were amalgamated with the other suggestions and recommendations which came from the other councils, documented and fed into the Full Council Meeting process.

"Following that process the ACC decided to take the consultative mechanism further and establish a four-member working party to be supported by officials from the ACC and independent legal counsel.

"It's hoped they will be able to establish certain ground rules to ensure that the ongoing consultation process is efficient, well-researched and produces as wide a range of opinion from the community as is possible.

"The ACC audit section was also fortunate to have been invited by the Doomadgee Council to assist them with a workshop in Mt Isa in November where once again we were able to work through a number of issues of concern to the council.

"At the end of the day we were able

to produce a new organisational structure for the council which carries one hundred per cent input from the council so everyone was quite pleased with that outcome and we will be following up with them concerning further implementation.

"In regards to our training our consultative with TAFE continues and TAFE personnel are operating on the planned visitation program to councils delivering training for council members in ethics, council roles and responsibilities and also for council staff in various aspects of financial accountability.

"Both of these strands involve locking into the conventional tertiary education system where participants will undergo pre-determined and approved courses which at the end of the day provide certificates and lead to higher levels of study."

Historic Weipa carnival 'kick starts' Cape AFL

The first ever Australian Rules Football carnival in Cape York was history making on a level with Cathy Freeman winning gold at the Olympics, says AFL Regional Area Development Officer for the Cape, Torres Strait and the Gulf, Keith Sambo.

Teams made up from schools in 15 communities across the Cape participated in the carnival, held at Weipa in October last year.

Mr Sambo said it was good to see the AFL getting out to remote communities and working with "grassroots people".

"Whoever was lucky enough to see Cathy Freeman win gold at the Olympics, that was history in the making, this is time now for these kids to make their own history in regards to sports," he said.

"When I look at all these kids running around, we're looking at the future of the Cape, the Gulf and the Torres Strait."

He said it was also about showing them other communities and developing friendships.

"To show them that they can go out, achieve things and bring that knowledge there back to their community," he said.

"It's been tremendous, it's just been an inspiration to see these kids out here running around, the adults here having fun.

He said he had been inspired by some of the results he had seen.

"I saw something today that was very inspirational and encouraging when the Torres Strait played Yarrabah," he said.

"Torres Strait was too strong and too fast and gave them a bit of a touch up but at the end of the game I saw a little Yarrabah boy and a big Torres Strait boy walking hand in hand at the end of the game and that's what it's been about.

"That's what I told the kids right at the beginning - that there's an opportunity here to meet kids from different regions and you never know, there could be some connection.

"And they've met heaps of kids, they've made heaps of friends and because next year we'll have the same carnival they'll meet again."

He said it was also important that the AFL had organised some role models to be present.

"Robbie AhMat is from Thursday Island and he's got some of his people here, Adam Goode is a young player, big and tall, and Gilbert McAdam who played for the Lions and it's given the kids a lot of vision that 'hang on' dreams are achievable," he said.



Full Council Meeting Dinner November 2000

