

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR AUSTRALIA

The Howard Government



RESULTS FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The Howard Government has moved on from the old approach of "separating" Indigenous people and their problems and overturned political correctness to focus on results.

Aside from the national emergency measures, 2007/08 expenditure on Indigenous-specific programs and services across government will be a substantial \$4.0 billion (a 67% real increase on the \$1.7 billion spent in 1995/96). Importantly, significant steps have been and are being taken to get better value for money from this expenditure, including:

- Abolishing the inefficient and wasteful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) so that government deals directly with Indigenous Australians.
- Transferring ATSIC programs, service delivery (and accountability) to competent mainstream agencies.
- Coordinating the work of Government agencies to make it easier for Indigenous Australians to deal with government.
- Introducing Shared Responsibility Agreements which are developed at a local level between government and Indigenous communities or families, spelling out what all partners will contribute to bring about good outcomes (so far more than 250 SRAs have been developed).

Despite the difficulties, progress is being made:

- The unemployment rate for Indigenous adults has fallen from 30.0% in 1994 to 12.8% in

2004/05. Over the same period, Indigenous long-term unemployment has fallen from 14.2% to 5.1%.

- In the 12 months to May 2007, Job Network placed into employment some 46,100 Indigenous job seekers, an increase of 13% over the previous 12 months.
- School retention is still far too low, but improving. Between 1998 and 2005, the percentage of Indigenous students progressing to year 12 has increased from 32% to 40%. The percentage progressing to year 11 has increased from 52% to 62%.
- A decline both in deaths from circulatory disease and in hospitalisation for pneumonia has occurred at a faster rate for Indigenous than for other Australians.

In June 2007, the Howard Government took decisive action to introduce emergency measures in the Northern Territory to protect aboriginal children from abuse. In the words of the Prime Minister:

"There comes a point where the obligations of national governments take over. Action cannot be delayed by concerns that it's not 'culturally appropriate'. No culture - and certainly no indigenous culture - believes child abuse is appropriate...I believe the Australian Government's obligation to the vulnerable indigenous children of the Northern Territory is clear, compelling and paramount. Where possible, it's to give them the chance of a childhood and some hope for the future." (speech to the Sydney Institute, 25/6/2007)



For more information about our achievements and plans for the future

