

*New working relationships have been formed...*

## **Meeting the Challenge**

In the first year of the Government's Response to the Gordon Inquiry, *Putting People First*, new challenges have emerged, working relationships have been formed, and significant progress has been made on the ground.

*Putting the Pieces Together*, the Report of the Gordon Inquiry was a map of the successes and failures of Government service delivery to the Aboriginal community. In this first year of the Government's Response the focus has been on meeting the challenge of mainstream government services reaching Aboriginal communities that the Gordon Inquiry identified.

*The appointments made are 'owned' by the local indigenous community.*

Over the past year the Government has moved rapidly to increase the safety of women and children through a range of initiatives. But it has also managed the business of Government in a different way. For example, the appointment process and locations for Child Protection Workers have been determined in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSIC) Regional Councils. On the ground this has resulted in 25 new Child Protection Workers being appointed, and, most importantly, those appointments being 'owned' by the local Aboriginal communities.

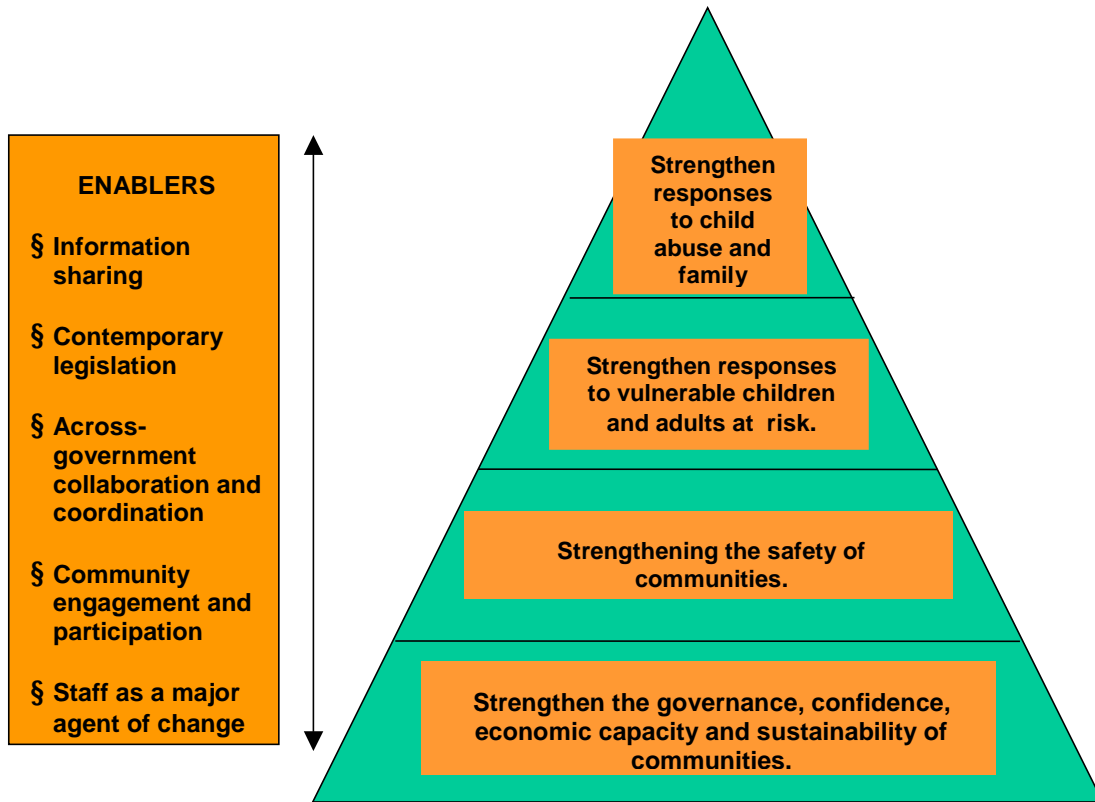
But *Putting the Pieces Together* also went further to make it clear that Aboriginal family violence and child abuse was linked to many other factors which affected day to day life in Aboriginal communities. The focus of Government is now shifting to those other issues.

This evolution can be clearly seen in the three priorities outlined in *Putting People First*:

- The urgent need to strengthen and improve responses to abuse and violence in Aboriginal communities.
- The need for long term strategies and solutions to address the endemic nature of abuse and violence in many communities.
- Meeting the needs of current and future generations of Aboriginal children through simultaneous, long-term environmental, social and economic improvements that will result in sustainable communities.

There has also been significant additional resources committed to the Government's Response, both from existing and new funding. This demonstrates a real 'sea change' in how indigenous matters are managed within a broad range of departments. For example, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet has redirected

**Figure 1: The Government’s Strategic Response Framework**



expertise into dealing with indigenous issues.

This Progress Update provides information regarding partnerships between the Government and the Aboriginal community, the new way of working within Government, actions to date, systemic change and continuing implementation.

**Partnerships**

The Government is dedicated to the Statement of Commitment with ATSIC, working through its Regional Councils. The Statement of Commitment is a living document with each party learning new ways of working both internally and with each other.

*The Government is strongly committed to the Statement of Commitment with ATSIC .*

At the Indigenous Affairs Advisory Committee (IAAC) meeting in November, ATSIC Regional Councillors clearly articulated the need for more support, expertise and resources to fully participate in the broad range of planning and decision-making forums they are now included in. Both the Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service (ATSIS) have responded positively to this request. Funds have been set aside to provide support and training to both ATSIS and State Government regional officers.

*The next stage of partnership is joint planning*

The first stage of partnership between the State Government, ATSIS and ATSIC in regard to *Putting People First* has been through an engagement process. The process has provided the opportunity for decisions to be taken at a local level. For example, the engagement between ATSIC Regional Councils, Government regional officers and community members, resulted in agreed priority locations for the placement of Aboriginal Support Workers. This month, the Regional Councils will also be provided with information about some flexible funds available under the Government's Response to the Gordon Inquiry to disseminate through communities. Government and Regional Councils will then work together to build applications and to evaluate requests.

The next stage of partnership is joint planning. The State Government, ATSIS and ATSIC have agreed on a process by which planning at a regional level is done in a collaborative fashion. In many areas this has already been occurring, for example in housing and some health services. However, an overarching framework will allow for a uniform structure, and support for planning in new areas. The first priority is Aboriginal family violence and child abuse prevention plans.

*Putting People First* made a commitment that the Commonwealth and State would work in partnership to address Aboriginal child abuse and family violence. This partnership is being demonstrated through the development of a Bi-lateral Agreement on Indigenous Child Protection.

The commitment is also apparent in the work at the Western Australian Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) Trial Site. Following the lead of similar trials in other States, Western Australian Government agencies are taking strong steps to contribute meaningfully to those communities within the Trial Site, which have already been identified as priorities under *Putting People First*. The COAG Trial Site aims to make real changes in how Governments, non-Government agencies and communities work together. But more importantly, it will also significantly improve the social, cultural and economic outcomes for the people living in that area.

## New Ways of Working Together

*Doing things differently and better has become a mantra for many Government agencies.*

The Government is committed to improving the way it delivers services to the Aboriginal community. Without communication, collaboration and coordination between Government agencies the full benefit of services cannot be felt on the ground.

'*Doing things differently and better*' has become a mantra for many Government agencies – as they look to improve service delivery to Aboriginal communities by improving how they do business.

A good example of commitment to this principle is the work of the Department for Community Development in engaging with ATSIC Regional Councils to locate, recruit and select Child Protection Workers, Aboriginal Support Workers and Strong Families Coordinators. A total of over 50 officers are being appointed through a process which closely involves ATSIC Regional Councils.

The Government has also formed strong working relationships with many communities, their leaders and elders. This has enabled location-based responses which have proven very effective.

Further examples of *doing things differently and better* can be found in many Government agencies. This engagement has costs, and can be time and resource intensive – but almost inevitably results in a better outcome.

There are four key planks in this Government commitment, and the following progress has been made:

*Human Services Directors General Group formed..*

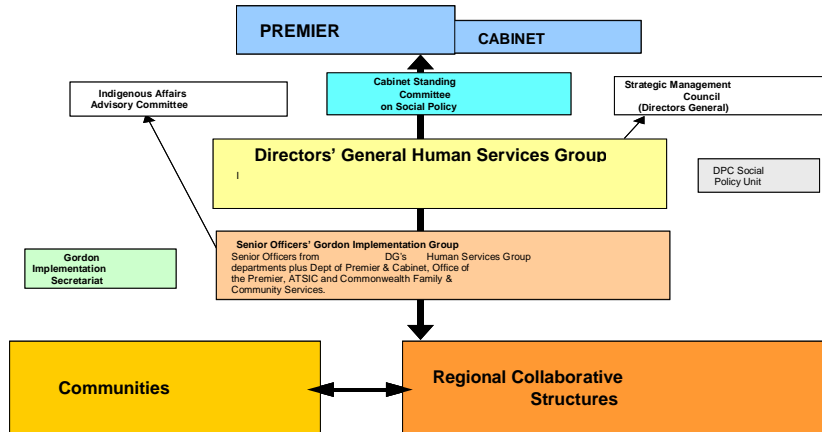
- *Streamline the number of existing high-level management and coordination structures.*

A Human Services Directors General Group has been formed which has replaced previous Directors General Groups. The current structure can be seen at [Figure 2](#).

Senior Officer Groups are currently being reviewed to ensure clear purposes and reporting requirements – streamlining the number of Groups as necessary.

Figure 2: Structures of Government

*Skill and support regional and local managers to plan, manage and deliver local integrated services.*



- *Skill and support regional and local managers to plan, manage and deliver local integrated services.*

Each Government department, and ATSI, have taken responsibility for improving the skill of, and support to, regional and local managers to plan, manage and deliver services. Three key Government commitments contribute to this:

- Ø The appointment of 12 Strong Families Coordinators across the State who are responsible for improved inter-department collaboration, coordination and leadership at the case level.
- Ø The development of the Community Building and Security Needs Program to partner priority communities in implementing place management strategies.
- Ø Development, with ATSI, of a program to deliver support, skills and training to regional officers in the areas of planning, managing and delivering local integrated services.

*The Government is also committed to sustaining this change over time.*

- *Ensure local managers and workers actively engaged and developed relationships of trust with community leaders and members.*

Government officers continue to develop strong, sustainable, relationships with ATSI Regional Councils, Aboriginal communities and leaders. For example, planning is now well advanced in the Ngaanyatjarra lands area, an important priority location, for provision of Government services, the construction and lease of service hubs in Warburton and the development of a Justice Agreement between the community and Government.

- *Set in place processes to improve case management and the provision of integrated services to families.*

This is being achieved through a number of new across Government strategies and services discussed below under *Action to Date*. The legislative program set out below will further improve case management.

This commitment to *doing things differently and better* is a first step. The Government is also committed to sustaining this change over time – so that the advances are not only short term actions, but also long term change.

## **Actions to Date**

### **Strengthening Responses to Child Abuse and Family Violence**

- *Expansion of the Child Protection Unit*

*Putting People First* committed to expanding the capacity of the Child Protection Unit (CPU) to provide services to children who are victims of abuse. Implementation is now well advanced. A separate facility is being created for non-acute clients. A site has been identified, and leasing arrangements and capital works have been completed. New acute assessment and treatment rooms for the CPU within Princess Margaret Hospital have also been funded, and are now complete.

- *Expansion of Sexual Assault Resource Centre(s)*

Sexual Assault Resource Centre(s) (SARC), in both the metropolitan and regional areas are to be expanded. The expansion is to provide:

- Ø Outreach services to selected sites in the metropolitan areas and regional locations.
- Ø Increased crisis capacity and telephone support to rural services and general practitioners.
- Ø The education and training of service providers, particularly the development of partnerships with relevant Aboriginal health service providers.

Two new officers are being appointed to the metropolitan SARC. Planning has commenced to establish metropolitan outreach services, commencing with Joondalup Health Campus.

Expansion of services in regional locations - Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Mandurah, South Hedland and Bunbury - to commence this financial year.

Both CPU and SARC staff have commenced joint training for Aboriginal health and counselling workers in regional areas.

- *Video Evidentiary Unit*

*Putting People First* committed to establishing a Video Evidentiary Unit to strengthen the approach to child abuse investigations. The Video Evidentiary Unit is to be established in 2003-04 and will be staffed by specialist interviewers. It will be located with the CPU facility, fit-out has commenced and the Unit will be operational in January 2004.

- *Remote Policing Services and Multi-functional Facilities*

During 2003 the Western Australia Police Service has established sites for 7 multi-functional facilities and commenced planning in a number of locations. Remote policing services have also commenced in some locations, ahead of the purpose built facility. This planning is occurring in collaboration with other relevant Government agencies and the communities.

- Ø Warburton – The community have been engaged in the decision making process. Increased police presence via patrols has been established on an interim basis. An interagency/community working group developed a model for service delivery. The architectural brief is being developed and building will commence this financial year.
- Ø Balgo – Agreement has been established with the community to upgrade the existing infrastructure. An interim on-going service is in place via patrols. Planning is continuing.
- Ø Kalumburu – Planning with the community has commenced. Issues related to land availability and the impact of the wet season means building will commence in 2005.
- Ø Warmun, Dampier Peninsula Bidyadanga and Jigalong – Locations are scheduled for 2004/05 and 2005/06.

- *Inter-jurisdictional Police Facilities*

*Putting People First* also committed to the establishment of 2 inter-jurisdiction police facilities with the Northern Territory.

- Ø Kintore (NT) – agreement reached between Northern Territory Police Service & Western Australia Police Service (WAPS) with a formal commitment being prepared. WAPS officer will be in place in February 2004. Legislative amendments being developed by an interstate working group to increase the effectiveness of the facility.
- Ø Warakurna (WA) – Initially to be located at Docker River (NT) but in principle agreement reached on a preferred location at Warakurna.

- *Child Protection Workers*

The locations of Child Protection Workers funded under *Putting People First* have been determined by the Department for Community Development through engagement with ATSIC Regional Councils. Of the 25 positions, all have been advertised with some requiring re-advertising. Workers have been recruited in Broome, Balgo, Derby, Mandurah, Port Hedland, Roebourne, Kununurra, Fitzroy Crossing, Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Geraldton, Newman and nine in the metropolitan area. Most of these officers have received training and already commenced. The remaining three positions –Kununurra and Laverton (two positions) – are subject to further recruitment strategies.

- *Strong Families Program Expansion*

All 12 appointments have been made and officers are commencing in 2003. Locations are Midland, Joondalup, Fremantle, Cannington, Mandurah, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Albany, Broome, Port Hedland, Bunbury and Northam.

### **Strengthening response to vulnerable children and adults at-risk**

- *Aboriginal Support Workers*

14 new Aboriginal Support Worker positions were funded under *Putting People First* to enhance the accessibility of counselling and support services for vulnerable children and youth exhibiting at-risk behaviour. The Department for Community Development has recruited those officers through engagement with ATSIC Regional Councils and local non-Government service providers. In many cases the Aboriginal Support Workers will be located with non-Government agencies such as health services, which will allow better access to at-risk youth. Nine of the positions are at regional

locations - Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Kununurra, Laverton / Warburton, Marble Bar, Mt Magnet and Northam with 5 in the metropolitan area.

- *Safe People Safe Places*

This is discussed further below under *Program Development*.

- *Culturally Appropriate Counselling Services*

The Gordon Inquiry and the Government's Response identified a need for long term culturally appropriate counselling and therapeutic services for Aboriginal people who have experienced trauma and violence.

A framework and objectives have been established for this initiative in collaboration with significant Aboriginal organisations. The Government is currently seeking tenders for the development of service specifications and anticipate a service provider will be selected in the near future.

### **Strengthening Community Safety**

- *Community Building and Security Needs Program*

This is discussed further below under *Program Development*.

- *Community Partnerships Fund*

The Community Partnerships Fund was established under *Putting People First* to provide small grants to communities and organisations. The focus of the grants is to build trust between Government agencies and communities by the funding of locally driven projects. The Department for Community Development is managing the fund and information regarding the criteria for funding is being made available to communities through ATSIC Regional Councils.

- *Community Futures Foundation*

The Community Futures Foundation was established under *Putting People First* to develop new and innovative initiatives for economic development in Aboriginal communities. The Government is currently considering a range of proposals which may be funded out of this allocation.

*The Government is committed to breaking down systemic barriers.*

### **Actions on Systemic Change**

The Gordon Inquiry clearly showed where systemic barriers, or blockages, reduced the effectiveness of Government –

particularly in across-Government case management.

The Government's Response committed to break down these systemic barriers and enable more effective service delivery, particularly in the areas of:

- Contemporary child protection legislation.
- Strengthening the reporting of inter-agency child protection protocols.
- Information sharing and data collection.
- Appropriate advocacy, review and complaints mechanisms for children.
- Appropriate child death review mechanisms.

*Strong legislative program to progress commitments made in Putting People First.*

To progress these commitments the Government's legislative priorities include:

- The *Children and Community Development Bill* has been introduced. The Bill includes provision for minimum standards of care, improved review and appeal mechanisms and promotion of the importance of collaboration between agencies.
- Legislation to amend the *Health Act 1911*, and consequential amendments, to mandate medical personnel to report children under a certain age with a sexually transmitted infection and to enable the Department of Health to share information with other relevant departments. These amendments are to enable earlier identification of children at risk and the sharing of essential information between agencies. This will allow resources to be provided to those families in need.
- The *Privacy and Information Protection Bill* which includes provisions to enable government agencies to share information in certain circumstances particularly where the health, safety or welfare of an individual is at risk.
- Work is continuing on legislation to enable Western Australian Courts to accept video interviews in cases involving children and vulnerable adults.

*Child Death Review Committee and Independent Review Committee have reported to Parliament.*

In addition, the Department for Community Development has been responsible for putting in place advocacy, review and complaints mechanisms for children and appropriate child death review mechanisms.

The Government has established a Child Death Review Committee (CDRC) and an Advisory Council on the Prevention of Deaths of Children and Young People

(ACPDCYP). These committees are now operational.

The CDRC was established on 16 December 2002 and undertakes reviews of particular cases where children and young people known to the Department for Community Development have died. The committee has met on 16 occasions during the year, completed four reviews with many ongoing and tabled its first annual report.

The ACPDCYP is intended to reduce or prevent the deaths of children and young people aged 0-17 years in Western Australia, promote their health, safety and well being through the review and analysis of relevant information and research, and making recommendations. The Council was established on 28 April 2003, meets quarterly and has already met on 2 occasions.

The Government's commitment to systemic change was clearly shown in its Response to the Gordon Inquiry – and continues to be demonstrated through the legislative program and through its commitment to accountability and appropriate review mechanisms.

*New priorities are emerging within agencies and across Government.*

## **Continuing Implementation**

Agency implementation of many initiatives under *Putting People First* is now well advanced, staff are employed, services planned and grant processes well underway. As such new priorities are starting to emerge within each agency and across Government generally.

## **Regional Planning**

Planning conducted at a regional level links Government and communities, and improves the match between needs and services. Currently planning is occurring within Government, and within ATSIC but in many policy areas plans are not linked.

The IAAC has endorsed a framework being developed and implemented to create a regional planning partnership between ATSIC and the Government. In 2004, the Government and ATSIS will work together to develop the framework with a view to implementing it in the next financial year.

*Training ensures that staff are an agent of change within Departments and communities.*

## **Training**

Appropriate training is one key aspect of ensuring Government officers are agents of change within Departments and communities.

New officers recruited under *Putting People First* have been undergoing intensive training in the new directions within Government, cultural sensitivity and skill areas.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is also undertaking a project to examine the provision of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity training across Government. The project is considering the guidelines and standards, that should apply to the provision of such training.

As discussed above, in 2004 training will be provided on a regional basis in the areas of collaboration, coordination and planning. This training will be conducted as a workshop so that the learning is based on the strengths in each region and the outcomes are specific to that region.

*A number of services in one location creates a 'critical mass' for change.*

### **Location Based Responses**

One of the key bases of *Putting People First* was that a number of services in one area, combining effectively, is the best recipe for change.

- **Ngaanyatajarra**

The Response in Ngaanyatajarra builds upon the many strengths that already existed in the lands. The Ngaanyatajarra lands has been the first region where many initiatives from *Putting People First* have been implemented. This includes:

- Ø Advanced planning for a multi-functional facility in Warburton.
- Ø Development of a multi-jurisdictional facility to be shared with the Northern Territory to service part of the region.
- Ø The provision of a full time Police presence.
- Ø Recruitment of 2 Child Protection Workers – to commence in January 2004.
- Ø Recruitment of an Aboriginal Support Worker.
- Ø Expansion of Victim Support Services, Child Witness Services, Perpetrator Programs and Community Supervision Agreements to better reach the region.
- Ø Community Building and Security Needs Program Place Management Initiative.
- Ø Social Activities Programs and repairs to sporting facilities.
- Ø Advanced planning for a *Safe People Safe Places* Program run by the Women's Council in the region.

The total new funding for the area is in excess of \$1 million per annum with over \$1.5 million in capital expenditure. This does not include those regional services which have been increased to better service that region, such as Victim Support Services.

These new initiatives combine with existing Government services, strong Local Government services and Commonwealth and ATSI commitments in the region to create a 'critical mass' on support.

### **Balgo**

In October 2003 the community of Balgo was in a state of crisis after a number of young people attempted self harm and committed suicide. The community, and regional service providers, looked at the strengths in the community – and asked the government for additional help in some areas.

Regional service providers collaborated and brought forward a plan. This plan highlighted the initiatives that the community and local service providers could deliver. In addition, a number of supports have now been funded by *Putting People First* in the community, including the placement of a youth worker and activities funding. Perhaps most importantly, a youth coordinator has been appointed to look at the long term needs of young people in Balgo, and to recommend a sustainable community based approach to those issues.

This crisis in Balgo highlights that the Government needs to be, and is, flexible enough to respond to crises on short notice. A response is most effective where it is led by local and regional service providers, and builds on their strengths rather than imposed from above.

Balgo is also part of the COAG Trial Site and has been identified by ATSI as a community of priority. Under *Putting People First*, Balgo is the site for a multi-functional police facilities, a Community Building and Security Needs Program and a Child Protection Worker (already engaged).

*Responses led by local and regional service providers building on community strengths are most effective.*

*The Security Building and Community Needs Program is both 'top down' and 'bottom up'.*

### **Program Development**

- **Security Building and Community Needs**

The Government in its Response to the Gordon Inquiry committed to engage and build partnerships with Aboriginal communities at all levels to:

- Ø prevent future child abuse and family violence in Aboriginal communities; and
- Ø develop and strengthen communities governance capacity, confidence, essential services, infrastructure and economic sustainability.

This initiative brings those two components together. Working from both the 'bottom up' and the 'top down' it builds on the strengths of the community, different levels of Government and non-Government agencies.

The regional ATSI/State Government engagement structures will be guiding local implementation. The top-down co-ordination is being managed by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Particular initiatives include:

- Ø A Metropolitan place management proposal being developed in connection with Strong Families and the Northbridge Policy. Action on the ground will commence by March 2004.
- Ø The initial Warburton Place Management project, due for finalisation in December 2003. The next step is to resource the community to build capacity. This is being planned by Government and the community.
- Ø Initial discussions have occurred in regard to proposals for the Yamatji region and at Jigalong.

Work will commence for all other initiatives in priority locations early in 2004.

*New funding has been identified for the housing requirements arising out of **Putting People First**.*

- **Safe Places, Safe People**

There was a clear need for the identification of safe places/people within communities, where Aboriginal children can go.

- Ø Metropolitan - Discussions are being held with an Aboriginal agency regarding the co-ordination of the metropolitan Safe Places initiative. Work has already taken place to establish a plan to implement a number of safe houses across the metropolitan area. The plan includes a communication strategy to inform children, young people and families on accessibility. This accessibility is via a free call number, police and other community agencies or self-referral.
- Ø Ngaanyatjarra Lands - Discussions with regard to providing a fulltime service to address family violence in the Aboriginal communities on Ngaanyatjarra Land is occurring with the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Domestic Violence Service.

- Ø Other Communities - The Department for Community Development is working with the other communities- Warmun, Kununurra, Leonora, Roebourne, Hedland – to develop Safe People, Safe Places models relevant to each community.

### **New Areas of Expenditure**

- **Housing for regional and remote workers**  
New funding has been identified and provided to the Government Employees Housing Authority (GEHA) to address the housing requirements arising from commitments in the Response. Over 30 new officers have been recruited in regional and remote areas, many of them requiring Government assisted housing. The additional funding will enable high quality accommodation to be provided to those Government officers working on Gordon initiatives in all areas of the State.
- **Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership**  
The Government has contributed \$405,000 over three years to the \$5 million Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership.

The Partnership has been formed by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Rio Tinto, the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation Foundation, the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives will play key roles in each state.

The Partnership will initially focus on three projects relevant to WA:

- Ø Modeling data to get a clearer picture of child health issues in Western Australia;
- Ø Reduction of the impact on children, of smoking and alcohol during pregnancy; and
- Ø Community capacity building to shape and implement child health and safety initiatives.

This work will also contribute to the evaluation of *Putting People First*.

*A monitoring and evaluation framework has been jointly developed with ATSIC.*

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

A monitoring and evaluation framework has been jointly developed with ATSIC. This framework will provide common ground for Government and ATSIC in the reporting of performance indicators and evaluation information.

The framework provides for three levels of monitoring and evaluation:

- The agency level for specific initiatives;
- The interagency level for a specific 'place', for example Warburton, or region; and
- The whole of Government level encompassing the overall effectiveness of the Response.

The COAG Indicators on Indigenous Disadvantage and other sources provide key indicators for monitoring.

The indicators will provide the basis for accountability reporting and bi-annual progress reporting.

Planning is underway to link this framework with other Human Service strategies such as the Homelessness Task Force, Early Years Strategy and the Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership.

## **Conclusion**

The Government remains strongly committed to *Putting People First* and to working with Aboriginal communities to address child abuse and family violence.

*Putting People First*, to date, has resulted in the recruitment of over 50 officers with over 30 of those located in regional Western Australia – many in remote communities.

The commitment to Aboriginal child abuse and family violence is a long term one, and requires strong leadership from both the Government and the Aboriginal community. New needs and challenges will emerge, but the partnership between Government and the Aboriginal community is now strong and will meet these challenges.