

Consultation on Statehood The Territory and its Mobile Population

- A 2004 Audit Report on enrolments for the Australian Electoral Commission shows that the Northern Territory has the highest population movement rate of any Australian State or Territory.
- With a movement rate of 26.39% in the electoral rolls¹ it remains a challenge for the Statehood Steering Committee to provide information on Statehood that will reach Territory voters who may leave the Territory before a vote on the Statehood question, or perhaps arrive and enrol just in time for the vote.
- There is however, a constant and growing population in the Northern Territory; Aboriginal Territorians.
- Aboriginal Territorians comprise approximately 30% of the total Northern Territory Population¹.
- According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Northern Territory's population is the most youthful of all States and Territories and the Aboriginal population continues to increase.
- The Terms of Reference for the Northern Territory Statehood Steering Committee require the Committee to educate Territorians in a fair and balanced manner about Statehood: *The process is to take into account respect for and proper recognition of the indigenous people of the Territory and Indigenous people are to be involved in all stages of the process.*
- This approach reflects the fact that Aboriginal peoples in the Northern Territory are an increasingly large proportion of the community and also are the Territorians most likely to remain living here generation after generation.
- The Statehood Steering Committee aims to provide Statehood specific education for Aboriginal peoples to better understand Statehood.
- During the 1998 referendum, there is a view that a campaign by the Land Councils urging Aboriginal Territorians to vote *No* contributed to the overall rejection of the Statehood model then on offer.
- Studies indicate the *No* vote reflected a lack of clarity as to what Statehood means for Aboriginal Territorians and a general lack of trust in Government seeking to change the current structure.
- Promoting the opportunity of Statehood for all people living here in the Territory is a key task of the Statehood Steering Committee.

¹ Australian Electoral Commission Sample Audit Field Work Report April 2004 page 30
¹ ABS figures from 1996 show the Aboriginal population of the Territory was 28.5% with a 2.3% annual growth rate for Aboriginal Australians. 56 875 Aboriginal Territorians were recorded in the 2001 census. The next census will be held in 2006.

