

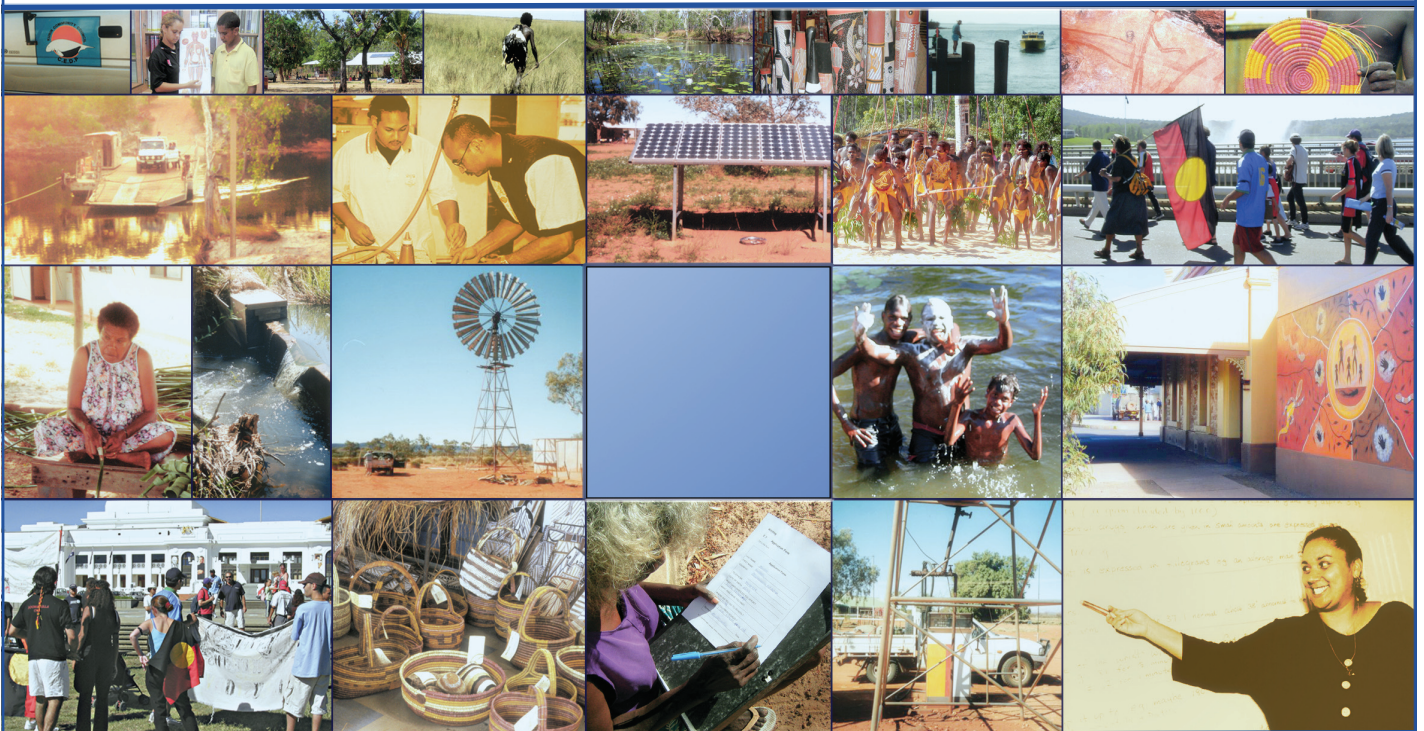
CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC
POLICY RESEARCH



The Challenge of 'Closing the Gaps' in Indigenous Socioeconomic Outcomes

Jon Altman, Nicholas Biddle and Boyd Hunter

CAEPR Topical Issue No. 8/2008



ANU COLLEGE OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Some methodological caveats.....	3
Long-run analysis of Indigenous socioeconomic change.....	7
Prospects for closing the gaps	7
Concluding comments.....	8
References.....	11

TABLES

Table 1. Socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Australians, 1971–2006.....	3
Table 2. Socioeconomic outcomes for other Australians, 1971–2006	4
Table 3. Ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes,1971–2006.....	5
Table 4. Absolute and relative change in Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes, long and short series.....	6
Table 5. Estimated Indigenous to non-Indigenous outcomes, 2041	9

The Challenge of 'Closing the Gaps' in Indigenous Socioeconomic Outcomes

Jon Altman, Nicholas Biddle and Boyd Hunter
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
The Australian National University

Jon Altman is Professor and Director, Nicholas Biddle is a Research Fellow, and Boyd Hunter is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of 'closing the gaps' has attracted considerable attention in Australia during the early days of the new Rudd government elected in November 2007. This is partly because while in Opposition the current Prime Minister had announced his support for a 'Closing the Gap' campaign—championed by Oxfam, and over 40 other Indigenous and non-Indigenous non-government organisations—that focuses on eliminating the 17 year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and other Australians. The notion appeared again as part of the national apology to the Stolen Generations made on 13 February 2008, where specific reference was made to closing the gaps in Indigenous child mortality within set time frames. More recently, on 20 March 2008 the new Prime Minister signed a declaration of intent to eliminate the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and other Australians within a generation, by 2030 (Oxfam Australia 2008).¹ On 5 April, while overseas, Kevin Rudd made a commitment to have annual progress reports on meeting this target tabled in parliament.

The precise origins of the term of 'closing the gaps' can be traced to the special programs of governments in New Zealand in the 1990s that sought to target Maori and Pacific Islander disadvantaged groups with assistance (Te Puni Kōkiri 2000). In Australia, a similar policy of targeted assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders had come to prominence in the late 1980s with the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy of the Hawke government committing to statistical equality in employment, income and educational status between Aboriginal and other Australians by the year 2000. There is no substantive difference between 'closing the gaps' and 'statistical equality': both concepts seek to eliminate socioeconomic disparities. This too was the intent of the Howard government's notion of 'practical reconciliation' that came to prominence after John Howard's election victory speech in October 1998. As a policy framework, practical reconciliation sought to reduce Indigenous material disadvantage in the areas of health, housing, education and employment (Altman 2004). This goal was closely aligned with a growing emphasis during

1. See <<http://www.oxfam.org.au/media/article.php?id=446>>.

the decade from 1998 on mainstreaming or normalisation, but successive Howard governments were careful not to stipulate precise timeframes for achieving such goals although the Productivity Commission was commissioned to provide biennial reports on progress towards addressing Indigenous disadvantage (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2003; 2005; 2007). A strong case can be made that the goal of practical reconciliation, without any clearly specified timeframes for achievement of such goals, was itself highly symbolic. It was good political rhetoric but did not provide a basis for a comprehensive policy framework.

It was only in the aftermath of the Northern Territory National Emergency Intervention that the Howard government committed to concrete targets with its pledge to 'stabilise, normalise and exit' 73 prescribed communities in five years (Altman and Hinkson 2007). Arguably, this pledge was a commitment to close the gaps within that time frame. In response to the federal intervention, the language of 'Closing the Gap' was adopted by the Northern Territory government in August 2007 with its *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*.²

This background paper sets out to do three things.

First, we use available Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the five yearly censuses to examine change in Indigenous socio-economic outcomes. We do this in absolute and relative (to the non-Indigenous population) terms viewing each set of census results since 1971 as a snapshot describing the Indigenous situation. This builds on earlier research that provided a historical account of Indigenous socioeconomic change between 1971 and 2001 (Altman, Biddle and Hunter 2005). The initial aim of this paper is to update this time series with 2006 Census data that became available late in 2007. Examining such change over time has been a core objective of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) since its establishment in 1990.

Second, and more innovatively, we use observations from data collected in past censuses to estimate *when* the existing statistical gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes might close, in situations where there is a convergence in outcomes. We are not aware of such extrapolation being attempted in the past across a similar number of variables. We debated whether to make these extrapolations to 2020, 14 years on from the 2006 Census, or to 2041, to provide symmetry with the 35 year series available from 1971. We decided to look at predictions for closing the gaps by 2041 despite the fact that the further out one estimates the more room there is for error. This is mainly because a lot of the 'closing the gaps' targets will be generational or multi-generational and in that context 2020 is just too arbitrary and too close.

The extrapolations undertaken here are based on several assumptions about historical official observations that measure relative Indigenous socioeconomic status. Obviously it is not possible to assume that there is always going to be convergence in outcomes, so the following analysis merely provides several scenarios to estimate some temporal bounds on when the gaps might be closed. It is important to emphasise at the outset that improving the socioeconomic circumstances of a whole sub-population relative to the rest of the population is a complex policy task. We only focus on optimistic scenarios where there is convergence as these provide evidence of what might happen in the future if all the macroeconomic factors were working in the right direction to close the gaps, as is currently the case.

Third, we make some general observations about what these findings might mean for government policy at the national level.

ABS:

Australian Bureau
of Statistics

CAEPR:

Centre for
Aboriginal
Economic Policy
Research

2. Available at <http://action.nt.gov.au/plan_of_action/docs/closing_the_gap.pdf>.

Table 1. Socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Australians, 1971–2006

Variable	1971	1981	1991	1996	2001	2006
Unemployment rate (% labour force)	9.0	24.6	30.8	22.7	20.0	15.6
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	42.0	35.7	37.1	40.7	41.7	43.2
Private-sector employment (% adults)	29.7	17.2	20.5	21.6	n.a.	32.8
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	46.1	47.3	53.5	52.7	52.1	51.2
Median weekly personal income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	217.5	244.8	245.6	246.7	267.4
Household size	4.6	4.1	4.0	3.6	3.4	3.4
Median weekly household income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	784.9	757.7	n.a.	913.2	1,072.7
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	26.1	19.7	19.1	26.1	26.8	30.0
Never attended school (% adults)	22.7	10.7	5.1	3.1	3.2	2.7
Post-school qualification (% adults)	3.2	5.0	9.5	12.8	18.2	23.8
Degree or higher (% adults)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.2	3.3	4.4
Attending educational institution (% 15–24 year olds)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	27.7	33.4	34.4
Population aged over 55 years (%)	7.3	6.4	6.2	6.3	6.7	8.2
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	50.0	56.0	57.0	57.0	56.0	n.a.
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	50.0	64.0	64.0	64.0	63.0	n.a.

Note: 'n.a.' means that the data was not available in that year.

Source: 1971, 1981, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses.

SOME METHODOLOGICAL CAVEATS

This analysis faces some methodological caveats that we categorise into three groups: practical problems, methodological issues and conceptual difficulties. One practical issue is that, over the last 35 or so years, the size of the Indigenous population has increased dramatically. One reason for this is that Indigenous people have become increasingly confident about self-identifying as Indigenous since 1971. This means that one cannot be entirely sure that observations are due to real changes in outcomes rather than to changes in composition of the population. Technically, this is referred to as 'the compositional issue' and it cannot be solved with historical data. However, it is noteworthy that this compositional issue abates over time as the census is more and more inclusive (Altman, Biddle & Hunter 2004). We deal with this issue below by using two series, 1971–2006 and 1996–2006, when we make predictive estimates. Another practical problem is that changes in census questions and coding make it difficult to get precise comparisons over time.

Table 2. Socioeconomic outcomes for other Australians, 1971–2006

Variable	1971	1981	1991	1996	2001	2006
Unemployment rate (% labour force)	1.6	5.8	11.4	9.0	7.2	5.1
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	57.8	58.2	56.3	56.4	58.9	60.5
Private-sector employment (% adults)	45.6	41.0	40.6	46.3	n.a.	52.1
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	58.8	61.8	63.6	62.0	63.4	63.7
Median weekly personal income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	395.6	396.8	382.5	440.5	465.2
Household size	3.4	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.6
Median weekly household income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	1,087.9	990.4	n.a.	1,171.6	1,375.3
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	70.5	73.4	70.2	72.5	72.9	73.4
Never attended school (% adults)	0.6	0.7	1.0	0.7	1.0	0.9
Post-school qualification (% adults)	23.7	27.7	32.3	39.1	41.6	45.9
Degree or higher (% adults)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	11.2	14.8	18.3
Attending educational institution (% 15-24 year olds)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	49.0	54.8	55.2
Population aged over 55 years (%)	17.1	18.6	19.6	20.4	22.0	24.7
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	68.0	71.0	74.0	75.0	76.0	n.a.
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	75.0	78.0	80.0	81.0	82.0	n.a.

Note: 'n.a.' means that the data was not available in that year.

Source: 1971, 1981, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses.

A key methodological issue is that the ABS did not initially have a great deal of experience in collecting comprehensive statistics about Indigenous Australians before the 1971 Census. While the ABS has learnt from its experiences over time, the improved data coverage (and hence quality) may itself alter the accuracy of observations.

Conceptually two main issues need to be emphasised. First, the distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes is based primarily on the use of an Indigenous identifier as a census question. Even here there is some variation because a special enumeration strategy is used in very remote regions that allows ABS staff to target Indigenous people and assist them in completing specially designed Indigenous personal and household census forms (Altman and Gray 2000). What is important to note is that the Indigenous sub-population used here (and generally) for comparative purposes is a statistical aggregation of individuals who identify, or are identified, as Indigenous rather than a sociological category. Second, the social indicators that are drawn from census questions reflect the social norms of the dominant mainstream society. Arguably, a number of social indicators that we use mean different things to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Table 3. Ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes, 1971–2006

Variable	1971	1981	1991	1996	2001	2006
Unemployment rate (% labour force)	5.63	4.24	2.70	2.52	2.78	3.06
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	0.73	0.61	0.66	0.72	0.71	0.71
Private-sector employment (% adults)	0.65	0.42	0.51	0.47	n.a.	0.63
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	0.78	0.77	0.84	0.85	0.82	0.80
Median weekly personal income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	0.55	0.62	0.64	0.56	0.58
Household size	1.35	1.32	1.38	1.33	1.31	1.31
Median weekly household income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	0.72	0.77	n.a.	0.78	0.78
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	0.37	0.27	0.27	0.36	0.37	0.41
Never attended school (% adults)	37.83	15.29	5.10	4.43	3.20	3.00
Post-school qualification (% adults)	0.14	0.18	0.29	0.33	0.44	0.52
Degree or higher (% adults)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.20	0.23	0.24
Attending educational institution (% 15–24 year olds)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.56	0.61	0.62
Population aged over 55 years (%)	0.43	0.34	0.32	0.31	0.31	0.33
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	0.74	0.79	0.77	0.76	0.74	n.a.
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	0.67	0.82	0.80	0.79	0.77	n.a.

Note: 'n.a.' means that the data was not available in that year. Results have been rounded to two decimal places.

Source: 1971, 1981, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses.

Following Altman, Biddle and Hunter (2005), our analysis here focuses only on national outcomes. The main shortcoming of this approach is that a national analysis loses the diversity in geographic outcomes. However, an advantage of a national analysis is that it lessens the possible impacts of a changed Indigenous population composition alluded to above. It is impossible to undertake rigorous sub-national analysis because of the large regional variations in the unexplained component of population growth.

There have been eight censuses between 1971 and 2006, but not all provide reliable information about Indigenous Australians. The 1976 Census only analysed information on 50 per cent of the population (as a cost cutting measure) and is therefore difficult to compare with the other censuses. And the 1986 Census is not available to us in a usable form. Consequently, we have excluded the 1976 and 1986 Censuses from our analysis here. The other consideration is that some data were not collected in all censuses. For example, income data was not collected in 1971.

Table 4. Absolute and relative change in Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes, long and short series¹

	Outcomes long series 1971–2006: absolute change	Outcomes long series 1971–2006: relative change	Outcomes short series 1996–2006: absolute change	Outcomes short series 1996–2006: relative change ²
Unemployment rate (% labour force)	—	+	+	—
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	+	—	+	—
Private-sector employment (% adults)	+	—	+	+
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	+	+	—	—
Median weekly personal income \$A (2006)	+	+	+	—
Household size	+	+	+	+
Median weekly household income \$A (2006)	+	+	+	+
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	+	+	+	+
Never attended school (% adults)	+	+	+	+
Post-school qualification (% adults)	+	+	+	+
Degree or higher (% adults)	n.a.	n.a.	+	+
Attending educational institution (% 15–24 year olds)	n.a.	n.a.	+	+
Population aged over 55 years (%)	+	—	+	+
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	+	+	—	—
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	+	+	—	—

1. Based on Table 3. Note that where data are not available for one census the latest available data are used.

2. Some improvements are due to minor positive changes not evident in Table 3, where ratios have been rounded to two decimal places.

A problem for comparative inter-censal analysis is that questions asked and coding of responses changed significantly between censuses. Fortunately, the last three censuses have broadly similar questions and provide comparable estimates. In our analysis we took two approaches reported below. First, we report the maximum comparable observations at the national levels since 1971, acknowledging that earlier statistics might be less robust. Second, we focus on the more accurate 1996–2006 series noting that this will be influenced by recent rapid expansion of the Australian economy.

LONG-RUN ANALYSIS OF INDIGENOUS SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGE

In Tables 1, 2 and 3 we present information from six censuses about 15 comparable variables. The complex processes for generating these comparative statistics have been described in some detail in Altman, Biddle and Hunter (2004) and will not be revisited here. It is imperative to note that these tables are providing observations at six points in time, but that neither the Indigenous or non-Indigenous populations at each observation period is necessarily the same (births, deaths and overseas migration aside).

All these variables are self explanatory. However, interpreting Indigenous labour force status is complicated by the impact of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP) as participants in this scheme are regarded as employed for official statistical purposes. We do not have any problem with this categorisation but do note that the rapid expansion of this scheme particularly in the period 1986 to 1996 (Sanders 2005) had an impact on unemployment rates and the employment to population ratio. It would have far less, possibly no, impact on either private sector employment or labour force participation rates.

The outcomes from these three tables are summarised in absolute and relative terms in Table 4. This summary is provided according to changes observed for a long series, 1971–2006 and for a short series 1996–2006. Absolute differences are based on Table 1 data, and relative differences from Table 3 which provides Indigenous to non-Indigenous ratios.

The outcomes from these statistics are presented in Table 4 with a plus (+) to indicate improvement and with a minus (-) to indicate decline in socioeconomic outcome. Our findings can be briefly summarised as follows. For the longer series there are improvements in 12 of 13 variables in absolute and 10 of 13 variables in relative terms. For the shorter, more statistically reliable series, there are improvements in absolute terms for 12 of 15 comparable variables and in relative terms for nine of 15 variables.

It is noteworthy that in the most recent inter-censal period 2001–2006, there was absolute improvement in all but one variable. This suggests that the Indigenous population benefited from the overall expansion of the national economy. In relative terms, however, there was improvement in a lower seven of 12 comparable variables, suggesting that closing the gaps was made difficult by the higher relative prosperity of the non-Indigenous population.

In overall terms, both series suggest that in absolute and relative terms Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes have improved at the national level. These findings are very much at odds with the dominant discourse of Indigenous affairs policy failure in the past 35 years.

PROSPECTS FOR CLOSING THE GAPS

To close the gaps in socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Australians, each of the relative ratios in Table 3 would need to be at 1.00 reflecting parity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ratios. For negative measures of well-being like the unemployment rate or never attending school, the ratio would need to

CDEP:
Community
Development
Employment
Projects

come down to 1.00; for positive measures of well being like labour force participation or personal income, the ratio would need to increase to 1.00. It is important to re-emphasise our earlier proviso that these variables all reflect mainstream rather than Indigenous social norms.

In order to estimate prospects for closing the gaps we have focused our analysis on those variables from both the long (1971–2006) and short (1996–2006) series that are converging, that is the variables with positive signs in Table 4. For each converging variable, we have calculated the average annual rate of improvement. Once this annualised rate is calculated, any number of exercises can be undertaken. One such exercise would be to calculate the number of years that it would take to achieve parity (1.00). We undertook this exercise, but found that some variables were estimated to converge so slowly that parity may not be achieved for several hundred years (and in the case of one variable, median household income, for over 2,000 years). Making such estimates seemed relatively meaningless to us because historic performance over the last 35 years and current policy settings are going to have little meaning with such distant out-years.

As noted above, we decided to use the historical series to estimate Indigenous to non-Indigenous ratios in 2041, 35 years on from the latest available 2006 Census results. This timeframe provides symmetry with the period 1971–2006 and also seems realistic, in terms of past progress, as a period over which one might anticipate observing significant changes. We believe that this is the first time that such an approach, using simple linear extrapolation based on annualised changes in past observations, has been used.

Our findings are summarised in Table 5. We found that historical observations indicate that parity might be achieved for two variables in the long series and three variables for the short series, with only one, 'never attended school', being achieved according to both estimates (in two and 14 years respectively). We also found that a number of variables will be approaching parity, that is have a ratio greater than 0.8. But some ratios like 'home ownership' or 'holding a degree' and 'population aged over 55 years' are estimated to be a long way from parity.

Two additional comments need to be made about Table 5. First, a number of the estimates seem quite sensitive to the time series used. This is not surprising because of the compositional issue discussed earlier, and because one might expect difference based on such very different time frames. Second, the short but statistically more reliable series 1996 to 2006 appears surprisingly volatile with more estimates of parity, but more apparent divergence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes. This mainly reflects the better socioeconomic outcomes enjoyed by non-Indigenous Australians relative to Indigenous Australians during this decade-long economic boom.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This brief paper has been prepared for the Australia 2020 Summit to provide some statistical basis for discussions, especially about past policy performance and future prospects for closing the gaps. Our analysis focuses on the national picture for two reasons. First, this is the only jurisdiction for which we have comparable longer-term official statistics. And second, future assessments of progress in 'closing the gaps' are likely to be undertaken at the national rather than sub-national level. It should be emphasised that we do not question that Indigenous outcomes in many remote situations are worse than these statistics suggest. But we also note that there are a number of statistical collections that do not show a great deal of regional difference. For example, Hunter (2006) used National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002 data to show that poverty levels are not directly linked to remoteness.

From an analytical perspective it is always risky to make excessively precise claims about long-range forecasts. For example, most forecasts become unreliable quite quickly and are rarely reliable after a decade has lapsed. Accordingly, our estimates must be interpreted as optimistic or best-case scenarios for

Table 5. Estimated Indigenous to non-Indigenous outcomes, 2041

	Indigenous / non-Indigenous ratio in 2006	Ratio in 2041 based on 1971-2006 observations ¹	Ratio in 2041 based on 1996-2006 observations ¹
Unemployment rate (% labour force)	3.06	PARITY	DIVERGING
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	0.71	DIVERGING	DIVERGING
Private-sector employment (% adults)	0.63	DIVERGING	PARITY
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	0.80	0.82	DIVERGING
Median weekly personal income (A \$2006)	0.58	0.61	DIVERGING
Household size	1.31	1.26	1.22
Median weekly household income (A \$2006)	0.78	0.86	0.78
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	0.41	0.45	0.58
Never attended school (% adults)	3.00	PARITY	PARITY
Post-school qualification (% adults)	0.52	0.90	PARITY
Degree or higher (% adults)	0.24	n.a.	0.39
Attending educational institution (% 15-24 year olds)	0.62	n.a.	0.83
Population aged over 55 years (%)	0.33	DIVERGING	0.41
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	0.74	0.79	DIVERGING
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	0.77	0.96	DIVERGING

1. Ratio = Indigenous/non-Indigenous.

Note: The trends are based on the maximum period for which comparable data was available. For example, the long-run convergence for income was calculated from 1981 as there were no available estimates for 1971.

the possibility of closing the gap, if current improvements in outcomes continue. Our estimates are not a prediction of what will happen, but rather a description of what may happen if current improvements continue.

The information we present here suggests that a degree of policy realism and caution is required in new policy commitments. The only way to measure closing the gaps outcomes will be with the sorts of statistics that we have presented here, inadequate as they might be from a public policy or Indigenous perspective. These statistics will form the basis for assessing any commitments to closing the gaps, they will constitute

the main evidence base that will measure progress and ensure accountability. Under such circumstances we would counsel that commitments to 'reducing disparities' might be a more realistic policy goal than 'closing the gaps'.

We note that the statistical evidence from the past 35 years can hardly be described as policy failure at the national level. At the same time, our estimates of when gaps might be closed in the future suggest that the current policy framework is clearly not delivering outcomes fast enough. This in turn implies that if the Australian government is serious about closing gaps in a generation then a fundamentally new policy framework might be required to ensure structural change of such a degree as to significantly accelerate the rate of relative socioeconomic improvement for Indigenous Australians vis-à-vis other Australians. Such a new framework will need to address a number of challenges including:

- The guaranteed delivery of citizenship entitlements to all Indigenous people on an equitable needs basis
- A massive increase in infrastructural catch-up investment to meet past neglect in areas such as housing, and health, educational and community facilities, especially in remote regions
- A fundamental reallocation of property rights in resources to confer commercially valuable rights alongside existing land and native title customary rights
- Allocation of property rights in emerging markets like carbon and biodiversity credits to Indigenous Australians.

In the last year, the issue of poor Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes has very quickly become a mainstream issue, a little like climate change. This, though, does not mean that the apparently intractable problem of closing the gaps or reducing socioeconomic disparities necessarily requires mainstream solutions. In reality, the diversity of Indigenous circumstances that are masked by national level statistics suggest that an innovative policy framework is required that is at once universalistic in meeting citizenship entitlements and yet is flexible and effective in targeting both aspirational and regional differences. This in our view will require fundamental changes in fiscal federalism in Indigenous affairs that will ensure Commonwealth and State/Territory expenditure accountability to Indigenous citizens. It will also require the re-establishment of regional institutions for Indigenous engagement in economic development and planning. Such a new framework will require a philosophical basis that can honour the two ideals of equality and plurality—ensuring Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes get better, while respecting a diversity of life worlds.

REFERENCES

- Altman, J.C. 2004. 'Practical reconciliation and the new mainstreaming: Will it make a difference to Indigenous Australians?' *Dialogue*, 23 (2): 35–46.
- and Gray, M.C. 2000. 'The effects of the CDEP scheme on the economic status of Indigenous Australians: Some analyses using the 1996 Census', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 195*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, Canberra.
- and Hinkson, M. (eds) 2007. *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise and Exit Aboriginal Australia*, Arena Publications Association, Melbourne.
- , Biddle, N. and Hunter, B.H. 2004. 'Indigenous socioeconomic change, 1971–2001: A Historical perspective', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 266*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, Canberra.
- , Biddle, N. and Hunter, B.H. 2005. 'A historical perspective on Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes, 1971–2001', *Australian Economic History Review*, 45 (3): 273–95.
- Hunter, B.H. 2006. 'Revisiting the poverty war: Income status and financial stress among Indigenous Australians' in B.H. Hunter (ed.) *Assessing the Evidence on Indigenous Socioeconomic Outcomes: A Focus on the 2002 NATSISS*, ANU E Press, Canberra.
- Northern Territory Government 2008. *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*, available at <http://action.nt.gov.au/plan_of_action/docs/closing_the_gap.pdf>.
- Oxfam Australia 2008. 'Oxfam welcomes decision by Prime Minister Rudd to sign nine point plan to end Aboriginal health crisis', press release dated 20 March 2008, available at <<http://www.oxfam.org.au/media/article.php?id=446>>.
- Sanders, W. 2005. 'CDEP and ATSIC as bold experiments in governing differently—but where to now?' in D. Austin-Broos and G. Macdonald (eds) *Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia*, University of Sydney Press, Sydney.
- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2003. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003 Report*, Productivity Commission, Melbourne.
- 2005. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005 Report*, Productivity Commission, Melbourne.
- 2007. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007 Report*, Productivity Commission, Melbourne.
- Te Puni Kōkiri/Ministry of Māori Development 2000. *Progress Towards Closing Social and Economic Gaps between Māori and Non-Māori: A Report to the Minister of Māori Affairs*, Te Puni Kōkiri, Wellington.