



The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

NATSICC Media release

Superannuation And Indigenous Workers

There is a shift in governmental policy to raise the preservation and retirement age for superannuation access in line with the increasing life expectancy in the Australian population. However, this is not representative of the Indigenous community who can expect to live 10 years less than non Indigenous people. Combined with the increased financial stress suffered by Indigenous people, the argument for lowering the 'preservation age' for Indigenous people grows stronger. As is detailed below, other options exist in making Superannuation more relevant to Indigenous people and they should be explored. Put simply, raising the 'preservation age' will mean that less Indigenous people will live long enough to access their funds.

NATSICC was very pleased to accept Catholic Super's offer of Gold Sponsorship of the 2012 NATSICC Assembly in Melbourne because the issue remains unresolved for Indigenous workers. The decreased life expectancy of Indigenous people combined with the complex nature of family structures in Indigenous families combine to make the issues of correct beneficiaries and respecting the deceased's last Will and Testament an important issue. The issue itself is prevalent in the Superannuation industry as a whole, contributing up to a third of all complaints to the Superannuation complaint tribunal.

Superannuation has become an issue as more and more Indigenous people attain self determination and are gaining employment in 'official' positions that demand employer contributions. NATSICC believes that education is a very important facet of Indigenous people accessing and understanding their Superannuation. Statistics show us that indigenous people spend a shorter amount of time in each job (for many reasons including short contracts, casual employment and other factors) and are more likely to have several positions over a working lifetime. The result is often small amounts of superannuation spread across several different funds. Australian Tax Office research discovered that better educational and consultative processes are required to encourage Indigenous Australians to utilise services such as Super Seeker (the Government's unclaimed super website).

The repercussions of early release of superannuation are complex and far reaching for everyone, including Indigenous people. There have been calls for superannuation to become available to victims of domestic violence. NATSICC argues that the social security frame work should provide urgent and immediate assistance. Superannuation may then be of use in funding long term improvement in the lives of those suffering domestic violence rather than satisfy acute/short term needs.

Determining if Superannuation becomes available at an earlier date is only part of a required rethink on 'future proofing' future generations through adequate Superannuation. There are currently extenuating circumstances that can facilitate the early release of Superannuation. NATSICC is of the opinion that these regulations have the scope to be more individualised and take into account a person's health, life expectancy and circumstance. Indigenous and non Indigenous Public Service

staff with relevant experience should be involved in assessing early release of superannuation. Additionally, the Superannuation Industry should be provided with targeted training in relation to the issues that Indigenous people face.

Additionally, the Government should be utilising existing public funding avenues to improve the living conditions, health, education and the employment rate of Indigenous people rather than Indigenous people having to take percentages of their own funds and jeopardising their future living capacity.

Contact: Thelma Parker 0457 603 376