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Media release - Jobs, housing, health, education, and culture - all important for Indigenous Australians

A new book suggests that the best policy response to current issues affecting rural and remote Indigenous communities involves attending to cultural and regional differences as well as providing jobs and better education.

A book of essays drawn from the proceedings of an Australian Social Science Academy workshop, *Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia* calls for a balancing of these priorities if federal government resources are to be used effectively.

Written by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, among them anthropologists, demographers, and economists, the papers provide a historical perspective on remote Indigenous economies along with accounts of successes and failures.

In the past few years, the book's editors say, the Australian federal government has significantly revised its priorities concerning remote Indigenous communities. Attempts to improve the poor health, education and low levels of employment in many communities have taken precedence over the outstation movement and self-determining governance.

At the same time, this collection suggests that, if they are to prove successful, strategies to improve health, education and employment cannot ignore the particular values and concerns of remote Indigenous life. These values and concerns involve regional ritual and kinship relations as well as the fear of racism in large population centres where more jobs seem available.

As well as documenting the current and increasingly serious employment situation for many Indigenous Australians, the essays canvas various forms of response. Crucial aspects of family life, education and Indigenous governance are also analysed.

The collection is required reading for all Australians who wish to be better informed concerning the current situation and the future of Indigenous communities.

Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia

Edited by Diane Austin-Broos and Gaynor Macdonald

ISBN: 1-9208982-0-4

Price: \$A38.50 plus postage

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