# 4  Strategic areas for action

## 4.1  The rationale

As explained in chapter 2, the headline indicators reflect the most important long term outcomes for Indigenous people, while the strategic areas for action provide a focus for action by governments and Indigenous people to improve outcomes in the short to medium term.

Evidence and strong logic suggest that targeting government action in the seven strategic areas can help overcome Indigenous disadvantage. The identification of seven strategic areas assists policy makers to focus on the root causes of social and economic disadvantage, so that over time, improvements in the headline indicators can be achieved.

None of the strategic areas is service or agency specific, even though their names may suggest otherwise. For example, although 'Early school engagement and performance (preschool to year 3)' suggests that policy action in the education area is the main focus, education is only one influence on change in that area. Action in a range of other areas is also very important. Housing overcrowding, poor nutrition and hearing impediments are just some of the factors that can affect school attendance and performance.

## 4.2  Strategic change indicators

For each of the strategic areas for action, a few key indicators have been chosen, based on the selection criteria discussed in chapter 2:

- relevance to priority outcomes
- sensitive to policy interventions and changes in policy settings
- actions in the strategic areas for action result in positive outcomes over time in the headline indicators
- meaningful to stakeholders and principally to the Indigenous community
- supported by strong logic or empirical evidence

- unambiguous and clear in meaning and interpretation

- the existence of, or ease of developing, supporting data sets.

The strategic change indicators reflect the collective efforts of governments, their service delivery agencies and Indigenous people themselves. Most are 'outcome' indicators that measure the actual level of Indigenous disadvantage. Some 'output' indicators, however, are so closely linked to outcomes that they have been included, for example, measures of access to water, sewerage, and primary health care.

Following consultations in 2006, some changes were made to the strategic change indicators included in the 2005 Report. The changes are summarised in chapter 2, and detail on specific indicators is set out in relevant sections of the report.

Although the framework is largely based around reporting statistical data against each indicator, it is not possible to reduce everything that matters to statistics. There are currently no robust statistical measures for key elements of the framework, such as culture and governance. Therefore, the Report includes case studies to illustrate the significance of these elements to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. Case studies have also been used to supplement statistical reporting for many other indicators across the Report.