On behalf of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), CDI organised a study tour of Indigenous issues in Australia for members of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and local government leaders from the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

The Central Highlands of Vietnam were the scene of bitter fighting 40 years ago. Much of the forest which once provided sustenance for hill tribes and hunting grounds for the rich has been destroyed and the movement of Vietnamese from the overcrowded Red River delta into the traditional domain of the hill tribes has generated local resentment and numerous social, economic, political and security challenges for the government. The government is now making an effort to protect the culture of the ethnically distinct traditional inhabitants of the highlands and promote compatible economic activity, while regulating the right of the Vietnamese newcomers to acquire land. There is a recognition that the situation is not one in which the demands of either the minority ethnic groups or the Vietnamese majority can be fully met. Against this background the delegation was interested in seeing at first hand Australian efforts to deal with tensions between Indigenous people and the majority immigrant population.

Before leaving Vietnam the delegation said it wished to focus on three areas, namely:

1. Land (including treatment of claims on ancestral land) and related issues of “co-habitation” - i.e. relationships between majority/minority and indigenous/immigrant groups in the same territory, settlement of disputes between them etc;
2. Poverty reduction - including job creation, economic empowerment; and
3. Education - maintaining ethnic identity (and language) versus mainstreaming.
The delegation comprised:

1. Hon. Mr. Trang A Pao, National Assembly Deputy for Lao Cai province, Chairman, National Assembly Ethnic Affairs Council, (Mông ethnic minority member), Head of the Delegation;

2. Hon. Ms. Tôn-nữ-thị-Ninh, National Assembly Deputy for Ba Ria in Vung Tau province, Vice Chairwoman, National Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee, Secretary General of the Delegation;

3. Hon. Mr. Y Ly Niê Kdǎm, National Assembly Deputy for Dak Lak province, Head of Dak Lak National Assembly Association, Vice chair, National Assembly Ethnic Affairs Council (Eđê ethnic minority member);

4. Hon. Mr. Nguyễn Văn Lang, Chairman, Dak Lak Provincial People's Committee;

5. Hon. Mrs. HLuoc Ntor, National Assembly Deputy for Dak Lak province, Vice Chairwoman, Dak Lak Women's Union (M’nông ethnic minority member);

6. Hon. Mr. Ðiều K’re, National Assembly Deputy for Dak Nong province, Head of Dak Nong National Assembly Association (M’nông ethnic minority member);

7. Hon. Mr. Y Thinh, Vice chairman, Dak Nong Provincial People's Committee (M’nông ethnic minority member);

8. Hon. Mr. Dao Xuân Quí, Vice chairman, Kon Tum Provincial People's Committee;

9. Mr. Dinh Diẹp, Director, Ethnic affairs Bureau, Kon Tum Provincial People's Council (Kadong ethnic minority member);

10. Mr. Bụi Thế Giang, Director, People to people Department, CPV Commission on Foreign Relations;

11. Mr. Đỗ Hùng Việt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Interpreter;

12. Ms. Lê Thị Yến, Foreign Affairs Department, Office of the National Assembly, Secretary of the delegation.
The program for the visit is attached below, and the delegation was accompanied during their visit by Mr Robert Goodrick.

Before arriving in Australia the delegation was provided with general briefing on the Australian system of government and current issues in Indigenous affairs. On arrival in Darwin on **16 February** the delegation met to settle the draft program and later in the day held discussions with the Chief Executive of the Northern Land Council (NLC) and his key staff. The discussions were wide-ranging and vigorous. John Sheldon and John Berto outlined the role of the Land Councils in the Northern Territory (NT) and indicated on a map the status of Aboriginal lands in the Territory. The Chief Executive Norman Fry highlighted links between the Vietnamese people and Indigenous people in Australia and emphasised the importance of sustainable development for communities on Aboriginal land. The delegation expressed interest in whether land was individually or communally owned, whether there was any limit on the amount of land a family could own and whether the land could be bought and sold. Mr Fry said that Aboriginal land was inalienable but could be leased. He noted that in Aboriginal society power in relation to land was not confined to men.

Anthropologist David Mearns expanded on the Aboriginal relationship with land, emphasising that land was not seen as a means of production but as something religious and symbiotic, so that man and the land took care of each other. The Native Title regime legislated since the Mabo case had not affected East Arnhem Land because the land there had not been taken for pastoral use. Even on pastoral land there had been co-existence in the NT for a long time. Mr Mearns said in answer to a question that this did not mean that no exploitation of the land was occurring. He said that cattle companies were being formed and mining exploitation was going on, with care being taken for sacred places and culture. He described the process of striking rent and royalties agreements with mining companies.

On pastoral leases the Native Title Act (NTA) had given a right to negotiate and a right to make a claim under the NTA. The process was slow and expensive and most mining companies wishing to mine on pastoral leases subject to Native Title claims preferred to negotiate a settlement rather than go to court.

Sacred sites received a further measure of protection under the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA). In this sense, the NT can be seen as providing the highest level of protection for Aboriginal culture in Australia. In answer to questions, Mr Mearns said that living conditions for Aboriginal people in the NT varied and were sometimes poor in remote communities. In answer to further questions the election of NLC members and the financial arrangements were explained.
The delegation noted that the income from the land was passive and that it was not the Aboriginal communities themselves who were doing the developing. Mr Berco described the importance of Aboriginal labour in the NT economy, particularly the pastoral industry, and agreed that dependence on royalties had created social problems. He said that the emphasis was now on capacity building but noted that economic development of Aboriginal land faced many challenges arising from the difficulty of access to remote areas and the vastness of the areas involved. Governments would have to continue providing basic services.

On 17 February the delegation met with senior policy advisers to the NT Government, including advisers on education. Mr Richard Preece outlined the government structure in the NT and provided information on the population and economy, particularly the relatively high percentage of Aboriginal people in the NT compared with other States and Territories, and hence their importance to its economy. Questions were asked about the gap between rich and poor, on services received by Aboriginal communities and on the learning of languages. Mr Preece noted that the average non-Indigenous income in the NT was $38000 and the average Indigenous income was $8000, consisting mainly of welfare payments. He said that the level of education was not good and the fact that many did not speak or write English well militated against employment opportunities. The delegation mentioned Vietnam’s experience with access to services and improved access that had resulted from making services such as agricultural advisory services more mobile. Mr Preece mentioned problems with health, particularly among the very young, and with education funding where schools were funded on a per capita basis and resources always lagged behind school population.

The delegation was interested in whether there were boarding schools for Indigenous students, as there were in Vietnam. It was noted in reply that because of the diversity of languages boarding schools would have limited value.

Ms Morrison expanded on the language learning situation in the NT. She said that there were 54 languages spoken and 14 two way learning programs. Not all languages had a written form or had had dictionaries written for them. The churches had helped with dictionaries. SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) International had made a major contribution to language learning.

In answer to questions it was noted that Aboriginal people in the NT had a very high illiteracy rate (about 70%), that they received health services on the same basis as the rest of the population, and that there were Aboriginal radio stations but no radio programs in Aboriginal languages.

In the afternoon of 17 February the delegation visited Charles Darwin University (CDU) for a discussion about land use and management with Bruce Campbell from
CDU, Paul Josif and Peter Pender from the NLC, and Robyn Knox, who had worked with Aboriginal women on land matters. Dr Campbell focused on using forest exploitation to alleviate poverty, through empowering smallholders to gain more from logging by using portable sawmills; producing plantation timber on a small scale, diverting to production of non-timber products such as oils, medicines, foods, fibres and fuel; selling environmental services: and managing conservation areas. The last three in particular had been important for Aboriginal people in the NT. In answer to a question Dr Campbell said that too much attention was given to the time lag between planting trees and production when there were so many opportunities for exploiting forest land before the trees were harvested.

Robyn Knox outlined the Caring for Country program which was aimed at creating jobs for Aboriginal people on Aboriginal land. Assistance was given in planning land management and the focus was on working with Aboriginal knowledge and skills to ensure best practice and promote economic and cultural value. The objectives of Caring for Country were to increase the participation of Aboriginal families; establish a best practice approach to environment management threats such as weeds, feral animals and fire; a best practice approach to awareness, conservation and use of Indigenous knowledge; sustainable resource based enterprises to support land and sea management activities; increase access to training and education; support communities networks; improve access to quality information about environmental impact of development activities, and effective delivery of services by the Caring for Country Unit.

A member of the delegation expressed support for the idea of partnerships as outlined by Dr Campbell and asked whether there was any potential for Australian companies to provide funds and know-how to develop Vietnamese forestry industries. He asked also whether there was a problem with damage to soil caused by eucalypts. Dr Campbell said that there was always a trade-off between the consumption of water and elements of fast growth. However there were different kinds of eucalypt for different requirements.

On 18 February the delegation visited the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education south of Darwin. At a meeting with the principal and staff the delegation received a briefing on the structure of the Institute and some of its features. Some of the points mentioned were that the general aim was for students to return to their communities on graduation. Many courses were delivered in communities, especially in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) area. The Institute was not multilingual but in some VET courses students could demonstrate capacity in their own language. Accommodation was provided on campus. Students were subject to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme on the same basis as non-Indigenous students. The delegation noted that in the Central Highlands of Vietnam children learnt Vietnamese to prepare for higher education. The delegation then
spoke to the senior students and visited the library and language education centres on campus.

After lunch the delegation visited Batchelor School. They saw a number of classrooms and were briefed on some initiatives which had been introduced there over the last 2 years which had resulted in increasing the participation of Indigenous students in classroom activity.

On 19 February the delegation were able to see some of the local wildlife on the Adelaide River, including crocodiles and a variety of birdlife.

Before leaving for Sydney the delegation took an opportunity on 20 February to review the program and underlined their interest in the participation of Aboriginal people in political and social life and the wider economy. They also expressed interest in the position of recent immigrants in Australian society as a possible source of insights into relations between ethnic groups in Vietnam. Some interest was also expressed in visiting a remote Aboriginal community but it was pointed out that this was probably not feasible if the group’s visit was confined to Darwin and other major cities.

The delegation’s first engagement in Sydney was with the staff of the Jumbunna Indigenous Centre of Learning. Martin Nakata summed up the Indigenous situation succinctly, pointing out that it was very difficult to run a single Indigenous education policy for the whole country because the circumstances of communities were so diverse. He emphasized that the national teaching language is English and the manner of teaching tended to be English. So too, the fact that education was essentially a State and Territory responsibility did not promote uniform standards. He also pointed out that until relatively recently there was little Indigenous participation in education. It was therefore no surprise that the level of Indigenous education was still very low.

In answer to a question about Indigenous participation in political life, Megan Davis said that Indigenous rights were at the same level as those of the rest of the population. She said that the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) would mean that Indigenous people would have recourse, in terms of political change, only to the ballot box. She noted that some liberal democracies like Australia and USA often had difficulty in accommodating small political groups in their political system, although other developed countries such as those of Scandinavia seemed to deal with this issue more successfully.

More information was give about Indigenous participation in education, including the fact that only 38% of Indigenous students finish school, and only 0.8% of teachers are Indigenous. In answer to a question Mr Nakata said that education was
compulsory for Indigenous children as for non-Indigenous children. Where there were special education laws for Indigenous children they were about resources. In answer to another question Martin said that there were incentives for Indigenous people to seek education but they were less generous than previously and were means tested. There were also incentives to join the public service and government departments had indigenous recruitment strategies but not at senior levels. ATSIC used to have senior managers but no longer did so. The treatment of Indigenous employees was now no different from affirmative action. As far as illiteracy elimination was concerned, the Commonwealth Government has a scheme, but it does not target Aboriginal students specifically, rather it provides funds to the State school system to deal with illiteracy.

In regard to poverty reduction, Ruth informed the delegation that statistics for Aboriginal people were like those for very poor developing countries. There was no considered poverty reduction strategy in Australia, but all Australians had access to welfare if they could not access employment. Ruth also remarked that there was still a perception in some parts of the wider community that if Aboriginal people were unemployed it was their own fault. However, she noted that in remote communities there was little opportunity for participation in the market economy, and that in urban indigenous communities racism and inadequate housing were still major concerns. She was also concerned that the present Commonwealth government sought to use the language of mutual obligation in regard to aboriginal people even when employment possibilities did not exist. She referred to the Mulan case where parents were required to wash their children in return for basic infrastructure which would be regarded as a right by other communities. Ruth also noted that there was a great deal of rhetoric about economic independence but it was not appropriate to many communities. Martin said that in the health area the issues were also similar to those in developing countries, with trachoma, diabetes, and rheumatic fever being prevalent. He identified a shortfall in health expenditure of about $400 million but the government had committed only $43 million.

Nicole Watson briefed the delegation on the 1991 Deaths in Custody Report and noted that incarceration rates had worsened not improved since then. The number of female Indigenous prisoners had risen by 262% and Indigenous juveniles made up a high percentage of the juvenile prison population.

In answer to a question about the government’s perception of the major reasons for poverty, Martin said that the government saw the problem in terms of individualism and tended to blame individuals. More was being discovered about the relationship between poverty, education and health, and the current research might be of interest in the Vietnamese context.
After lunch the delegation traveled to Parramatta to meet with senior staff of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (ALC). The delegation gave a general briefing on the issues of interest to it and Geoff Scott outlined the structure of the NSWALC and the differences between the system in NSW and that in the NT. He said in answer to a question that in NSW, land councils owned the land returned by land claims—not the claimants directly—but that land could be sold, unlike the inalienable land returned under land claims in the NT. He noted that the problems the Council was facing included a dysfunction between land claims and historical or cultural attachment to the land, inequitable distribution of wealth between land councils, and a dilemma over distribution of wealth.

Mr Scott said that both the NSWALC and the NSW Government had begun addressing the impact of the abolition of ATSIC, which had increased distrust of government among Indigenous people. The challenge continued to be to bring together the diversity of views across the whole Aboriginal community. The delegation noted that in Vietnam 18% of representatives are from ethnic minorities, and that the use of quotas for representation had been controversial. The delegation emphasized that in Vietnam land was scarce, but was treated as a commodity and was regarded as a major means of production.

The delegation next day held discussions with senior staff of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs to get a government perspective on Indigenous issues in NSW. A generous amount of printed briefing material was provided. Ivan Simon, Program Director of the Aboriginal Communities Development Program made the main presentation. He said that the key features of this program, which aimed to provide environmental health and essential infrastructure, were community participation in the development of projects and ongoing maintenance, and close co-ordination of government services. The program targeted 22 priority communities, promoted local training and employment and encouraged community agreements about the distribution of profits from local enterprises associated with the delivery of services.

The delegation agreed that programs should create opportunities for sustainable development and noted the need for such programs to be evaluated for achievement of objectives. The delegation also noted that the program did not set targets.

In answer to a question Mr Simon said that the program did not provide for the purchase of houses but that this could be done under a Commonwealth program. As far as targets were concerned, Mr Simon said that there was a debate about the level of need in each State and Territory. In any case the Commonwealth was not prepared to fund on a target basis. There was also a debate about rural and remote need versus urban need and the Commonwealth had reduced its funding for urban need.
The delegation asked about the number of families in the 22 selected communities and noted that in Vietnam the practice was to survey need and then set targets.

Sue Lindsay spoke about the current NSW Government plan for dealing with Indigenous disadvantage “Two Ways Together”, noting that it was linked to a Commonwealth framework identifying disadvantage. One of its objectives was to co-ordinate action across government agencies. She noted also that there was a 2% Indigenous employment target at all levels of the NSW Public Service. Ms Lindsay also drew attention to NSW’s program for revival of Aboriginal languages.

In answer to a question the delegation was informed that commercial assistance, apart from mentoring and brokering, was not provided by the State Government but that commercial financial assistance was available from the Commonwealth Government. There was no microcredit program but the general welfare system addressed the same needs.

The meeting concluded with a short presentation by Dave Ella from the Aboriginal Education Committee on problems with Aboriginal education. He said that there were Aboriginal schools in NSW but only at the pre-school level. The main objective of the Committee was to work towards keeping children in school and reducing the 89% drop out level. Parent involvement was crucial in achieving a better retention rate.

At a lunch hosted by the Aboriginal Medical Service the delegation was able to meet the staff of the Service, some of whom had worked in Vietnam. After lunch some members of the delegation held discussions with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), which had been involved in the setting up of a technical cooperation program with Vietnam. David Robinson gave a detailed briefing on the structure and work of HREOC, noting that its international work was only a small proportion of its overall work and involved mainly activity through the United Nations or similar regional bodies. The China-Australia Human Rights program was the largest overseas program, and HREOC hoped to develop a technical co-operation program on human rights with Vietnam along the same lines.

The delegation asked a number of questions about the operation of HREOC, including about its effectiveness and its independence. It also asked what were the main target countries and was told that HREOC was most interested in neighbouring countries and its interest was largely determined by government policy.

Darren Dick from the Office of the Social Justice Commissioner and Yvette Park from the Native Title Unit gave a short presentation on Indigenous issues. Mr Dick mentioned that the Government intended to deal directly with Indigenous people after the end of ATSIC.
The delegation noted that it was not possible to compare the situation of immigrants with the situation of Aboriginal people and that if it was against government policy to give preferential treatment to Indigenous people it would take a great many years to improve their lot by only a few percent.

The delegation enjoyed a short ferry cruise of Sydney Harbour after the meeting with HREOC and one member of the delegation left that night for Vietnam.

The following day the delegation travelled to Canberra where their first meeting was with the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). After an introduction to the AIATSIS building and its operations by Rod Stroud and Kirsty Parker the delegation visited the audio archives and inspected the equipment used for recording languages and producing tapes. Similar work was being done in Vietnam and there was discussion about the possibility of co-operation. The delegation then discussed the work of the Native Title Research Unit with Lisa Strelein, Peter Veth and Dr Patrick Sullivan. Dr Sullivan said that the Council of AIATSIS determined the general direction of research. The research staff had academic and field experience and usually became involved in contemporary issues such as health and governance in the context of research. He mentioned co-operation between the Unit and other bodies such as the Co-operative Research Centres on Health and Desert Knowledge, and the Intellectual Property Institute in Melbourne, and also the grants made by the Unit for other research.

Brendan Delahunty led a discussion on law and justice matters, noting that there was a regrettable trend in the States and Territories of removing juveniles into the prison system when they turned 16. This affected Aboriginal juveniles disproportionately because of their over representation among juvenile offenders. Diversion initiatives were taking place but they did not include Aboriginal offenders as much as they should.

Following the discussions the delegation was invited to attend a ceremonial dedication of the Institute’s new conference room by a group of traditional men from Yirrkala, who performed a dance based on their shark totem.

The Chairman of AIATSIS, Mick Dodson, then held discussions with the delegation in the new conference room. The delegation was interested in whether AIATSIS received fellows from abroad to conduct research. Mr Dodson said that last year the AIATSIS had had its first researcher, from Canada, who had worked on a comparative study of Canadian and Australian Indigenous people. He said that AIATSIS also had overseas members. The delegation noted that a historical perspective was useful only for dealing with the future, and asked how the work of AIATSIS contributed to improving the status of Aboriginal people, especially
economic empowerment and social participation. Mr Dodson pointed out that historical research was only a small proportion of AIATSIS’ work. The main focus was on contemporary issues, such as health. The Native Title Unit was also important. He noted that last year AIATSIS grants dealt with governance and capacity building. Development was another focus, and not only economic development. There was also a family history and community access program.

The delegation asked if AIATSIS was independent. Mr Dodson said that AIATSIS had to comply with government policies but was semi-autonomous. AIATSIS tended to stay out of Indigenous politics. It was asked by government to comment on policy and had to appear before Parliamentary committees. It sought to be constructive in its comments on government policy.

The delegation provided a briefing on the Vietnamese situation, noting particularly that the situation of ethnic minorities was different from the situation of Australian Aborigines. Nevertheless AIATSIS was an interesting model for Vietnamese research bodies.

After lunch the delegation visited the Office of Indigenous Policy Co-ordination and spoke with staff. Deirdre McNally and other staff presented an overview of the position of Indigenous people in Australia, and described the changes in government policy which had occurred in the previous year. They said that the new approach was based on shared responsibility and would be a whole-of-government approach. The three priority areas for improvement for Indigenous Australians were to be early childhood intervention, safer communities, and building Indigenous wealth. This would be done by partnerships directly between governments and communities, encouraging self-reliance. The Wadeye community was mentioned as an example, where the no school, no pool rule applied and as student numbers rose more resources were arriving.

The delegation asked what body oversaw OIPC and said that in Vietnam the government had a committee and that the National Assembly also had a committee to oversee ethnic affairs. The delegation also pointed out that a Ministerial task force was not the same as a committee of the legislature, but was informed that the Senate Estimates Committee and a permanent Indigenous Affairs committee also played a role. The delegation noted that the development gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous was huge and asked whether the government had a comprehensive policy. The delegation also asked why ATSIC was being abolished and was informed that the circumstances of Indigenous people had not improved significantly in 15 years and that the government had made a judgement that dramatic change was needed. There was also a view that while Indigenous employment rested with ATSIC other agencies could say that it was ATSIC’s business and avoid responsibility. Other points made by OIPC were that the
government is committed to ending passive welfare and encouraging home ownership among Indigenous people as a means of self-reliance.

Following the discussions with OIPC the delegation was taken on a tour of the Museum of Australia.

On 25 February the delegation held discussions with the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University. The Director Jon Altman compared the Vietnamese and Australian economies and said that Indigenous GDP is 20-25% of non-Indigenous GDP. He also pointed out that Indigenous people tended not to have assets. Colonisation of Indigenous Australia continued at least until the 1930s when Indigenous people began to have a voice. While Indigenous people now owned 20% of Australia the land was land not wanted by white settlers because it had little value for pastoral purposes. The recognition of native title in 1992 and the Native Title Act challenged the whole land tenure system in Australia. In 1998 the Commonwealth Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act was amended to make land claims more difficult, after pressure from white commercial interests.

On 23 February Minister Vanstone had said that the government wanted to see Aboriginal land used for economic development. Some Aborigines agree and others want to keep the land in the NT alienable.

On the issue of cohabitation, in which the delegation had expressed interest, Professor Altman said that the frontier had moved in colonial times with forced migration of Aborigines to missions and settlements. There was now tension between the owners of land and the historical occupiers. There was also animosity between conflicting claimants, so severe in some States that there was genuine doubt about the benefit of Native Title. The native Title process had been more effective in more remote areas.

Professor Altman said that much of the land now controlled by Aboriginal people had little value from the development point of view in the past two centuries but could have more value in this century because it was environmentally intact. The compulsory negotiation process could result in projects of great value being shared between Indigenous owners and others. However, it was important to remember that land rights did not include resource rights like minerals, forests or fisheries. This was the case for both land rights and Native Title.

The delegation was interested in the relationship between CAEPR and government. Professor Altman explained that CAEPR received some support from government, and also from ANU and other sources. Because Indigenous affairs was very politicized, CAEPR tended to be criticized by all sides, Aboriginal and non-
Aboriginal. On the question of the valuing of land, Professor Altman said that so far the spiritual connection with land had not been valued. The delegation asked whether resource depletion was taken into account in valuing land. Professor Altman said that government did not recognise that some Aboriginal people still lived off the land and there existed a non-market, customary, economy. This was one way in which the claims process was biased against Aboriginal people.

On the question of political empowerment Professor Altman noted that government was now saying that it wanted to deal with Aboriginal people directly. This was what mining companies used to say. It was difficult to avoid the conclusion that government had not learnt from previous mistakes.

Following Professor Altman’s presentation, John Taylor presented some statistics on poverty among Indigenous Australians and referred the delegation to CAEPR’s publications and web-site, including CAEPR Discussion Paper 266. Mr Jerry Schwab then opened the discussion on Indigenous education and training. He said that many policies recognised the importance of language and culture and there had in the past been bilingual programs. However, the Commonwealth government had withdrawn support from them and the emphasis was now on learning English. He said that education had always been mainstreamed but existing Indigenous programs would continue, with the emphasis on remote areas. The Commonwealth Government was making more use of special projects motivated by political concerns. There was less control than before at the local level and school councils had less discretionary funds. For many programs there was a “carrot and stick” logic, e.g. Wadeye.

The meeting concluded with an account by the delegation of Vietnam’s policy on ownership and use of land. The delegation expressed the view that while there were some aspects of the Australian experience of interest to Vietnam, there were areas where one country was doing better than the other and vice versa. The leader of the delegation mentioned that in Vietnam politicians and senior officials contribute 1 day’s salary per month towards a poverty reduction strategy in Vietnam.

The delegation left Canberra later on 25 February and departed Australia for Vietnam the following day.

**Conclusion**

In all the discussions held during the tour, members of the delegation energetically questioned their Australian counterparts about the situation of Indigenous people in Australia and about the policies being followed by government in the areas of interest the delegation had nominated. While the area of land management was very important in the Vietnamese context, the delegation soon saw that the Australian
situation was very different from that in the Highlands of Vietnam, where no ethnic group was more indigenous than the others. Had there been more time the delegation would have been interested in exploring relations between immigrant groups in Australia as a possible source of insights into the situation in Vietnam. In the area of education the delegation found more to compare and were able to come to their own firm conclusions about the relative strengths and weaknesses of government policy and practice in Australia and Vietnam. They also found interesting the technical facilities used in organisations such as AIATSIS to preserve and promote language. As far as poverty reduction and development of self-sustaining economic activity were concerned, the members of the delegation quickly perceived the problems which dependence on passive income was likely to generate in a community and were surprised that not more had been done to close the wealth gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by developing sustainable economic activities employing local people on Aboriginal land. By the end of their tour, the members of the delegation had a better understanding of the difficulties faced by Aboriginal communities and government in promoting economic activity in remote areas on land which, as CAEPR pointed out on the final day, had become Aboriginal land only because European settlers had judged it unsuitable for economic exploitation.
## Program

### Darwin

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday February 16, 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>11:30 General briefing Lower Jabiru Room</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14:00 - 16:00</td>
<td>Visit to Northern Land Council, Casuarina to discuss land management, poverty reduction and governance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday February 17, 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>09:30 - 11:30 Visit to Office of Indigenous Policy, NT House</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14:00 - 16:00</td>
<td>Visit to Charles Darwin University, Casuarina campus</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday February 18, 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>08:30 – 15:00 Field Visit to Batchelor Institute, Batchelor NT to see Indigenous controlled tertiary institution and discuss education issues</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday February 19, 2005</strong></td>
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<td>Jumping Crocodiles or other activities and free time</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday February 20, 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:00 Review of Program</td>
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<td>Travel to Sydney</td>
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### Sydney

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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday February 21, 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>09:30 – 11:30 Visit to Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at University of Technology, City campus, Broadway – Education and other issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14:00 – 15:30</td>
<td>Visit NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Parramatta to discuss land management, poverty reduction and governance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday February 22, 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10:00 – 14:00 Visit NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Centennial Plaza</td>
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<td>12:00 – 14:00</td>
<td>Lunch discussions with staff from Aboriginal Medical Centre, Redfern</td>
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<td>14:30 – 17:00</td>
<td>Discussions with Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission followed by Sydney Harbour Cruise</td>
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<td>18:00 – 21:00</td>
<td>Dinner with Consulate-General Mr Nguyen The Phiet at the Consul-Generals Residence</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday February 23, 2005</strong></td>
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<td>14:00 Travel to Canberra</td>
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### Canberra

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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday February 24, 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>09:30 – 13:00 Visit Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to discuss education, training and culture protection.</td>
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<td>13:30 – 15:30</td>
<td>Visit Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination, Lovett Tower, Woden to discuss full range of issues at national level</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>Visit to The National Museum of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday February 25, 2005</strong></td>
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<td>10:00 – 12:00 Centre for Aboriginal Policy Research (CAEPR) Hanna Neumann Building, The Australian National University</td>
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