

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2008-09
2-3 June 2008

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

TOPIC: ATSIC

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Eggleston

QUESTION No. BI-4

During the 2020 summit there was discussion of the establishment of a peak Aboriginal organisation to replace the abolished ATSIC. How did AIATSIS's find their experience with ATSIC and what is AIATSIS's view of the re-establishment of a peak Aboriginal body and does it feel that such a move will help it achieve its agency outcomes?

ANSWER

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) was in the same Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs portfolio as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) prior to its abolition. Involvements with ATSIC included the production of independent research arranged on a grant or consultancy basis. Following the announcement of the review of ATSIC on 12 November 2002, AIATSIS made a formal submission to the review that identified a potential future role in the provision of independent research by means of the joint creation of a National Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Policy Research. In the same submission, AIATSIS provided a detailed literature review of options for the restructuring of ATSIC. The options paper was subsequently published as a Discussion Paper on the AIATSIS website.

The final report of the review was overtaken by the abolition of ATSIC. With the demise of ATSIC, AIATSIS did pick up an increased work load particularly in the area of disseminating information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and history to the wider Australian public. Our research of policy issues is now distributed among multiple government departments. Whilst AIATSIS has not formulated a view on the most appropriate format of a proposed new peak Aboriginal body, in multiple research projects AIATSIS has identified the importance of the principle of meaningful involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in policy and program development. If a new body is created, AIATSIS, as an independent statutory authority, would welcome opportunities to conduct new research and provide background research materials to facilitate the policy and program considerations of the new body.