

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1

Output Group: 1.2 – Assistance to individuals including those with special needs.

DEST Question No. E719_05, E720_05 & E721_05

Senator Ridgeway provided in writing.

Question:

What are some suggestions as to exchangeable things/behaviours which you and Indigenous communities can bargain with? (Things from either side)

Would the Department even sign an agreement which assured Indigenous people basic rights – things the rest of the country take for granted – in exchange for behavioural change?

Do you have some guidelines as to what are acceptable and unacceptable bargaining tools – eg: I assume you cannot bargain with basic citizenship rights? Can we get a copy of those guidelines?

Answer:

Shared Responsibility Agreements

Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) are agreements between the government and Indigenous communities or groups to provide a discretionary benefit in return for community obligations. These discretionary benefits may take the form of extra services, capital or infrastructure *over and above* essential services or basic entitlements.

They can involve all or some of the people in a residential community. They can be developed in remote communities, regional areas or urban areas if Indigenous people locally decide they want to make changes in this way.

As outlined recently in the first of regular bulletins from the Secretaries Group, SRAs, as new tasks, will evolve over time, and need to have as key elements:

- one or more priority issues identified locally by Indigenous people (e.g. increased school attendance, healthier kids, stronger governance, Indigenous people able to get into available jobs and including how CDEPs best support community needs);
- government agencies' commitments to support initiatives to address community priorities;
- a description of the discretionary benefit(s) that will flow to the community;
- an outline of the obligations the community commits to in return.

These are the basic components of an SRA. Once this has been negotiated, regular feedback arrangements need to be agreed between the community and government so that progress can be monitored by both partners to the agreement.