

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 18 February 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(150 & 151) Output 2.3: Australian Citizenship

Senator Ludwig (L&C 39-40) asked:

How many recipients were in the previous five Australia Day citizenship ceremonies in the ACT?

In total, was it 82 or 81 that were recipients in the ACT Australia Day ceremony?

Answer:

The number of conferees at the ACT citizenship ceremonies in 2005 and in the previous five years is as follows:

2000	140
2001	149
2002	95
2003	92
2004	116
2005	82

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(152 & 153) Output 2.3: Australian Citizenship

Senator Ludwig (L&C 40-41) asked:

Who bears the cost of the 2005 Australia Day citizenship ceremony in the ACT?

Is that different from previous occurrences?

Perhaps you could give me information as to what costs the department shared with the Australia Day in the National Capital Committee from 2001 onwards, any other costs it incurred as a consequence of holding the Australia Day ceremony and the difference, if any, in that cost when the Prime Minister was invited to preside?

Answer:

Costs incurred by the Department in relation to the Australia Day citizenship ceremonies from 2001 onwards are as follows:

2001	\$877.33
2002	\$702.01
2003	\$989.27
2004	\$1067.55
2005	\$5555.98

Between 2001 and 2004 the costs were for native plants given to the conferees and staff overtime. The Department does not have information on the costs incurred by the Australia Day in the National Capital Committee or by the ACT Government.

In 2005, in addition to the cost of plants and staff overtime, the Department paid for the hire of chairs, the hire of venue as a wet weather contingency, hand held flags, and the preparation and printing of commemorative programs.

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(154) Output 2.3: Australian Citizenship

Senator Ludwig (L&C 41) asked:

Provide a list of all the government officials or ACT government members who were invited to the 2005 Australia Day citizenship ceremony in the ACT.

Answer:

The following elected representatives were invited to the Australia Day citizenship ceremony in the ACT:

Ms Annette Ellis, MP, Federal Member for Canberra

Mr Bob McMullan, MP, Federal Member for Fraser

Senator Gary Humphries, Senator for the ACT

Senator Kate Lundy, Senator for the ACT

Mrs Jacqui Burke, ACT Legislative Assembly Member for Molonglo

Mr Simon Corbell, ACT Legislative Assembly Member for Molonglo

Dr Deb Foskey, ACT Legislative Assembly Member for Molonglo

Ms Katy Gallagher, ACT Legislative Assembly Member for Molonglo

Mr Richard Mulcahy, ACT Legislative Assembly Member for Molonglo

Mr Ted Quinlan, ACT Legislative Assembly Member for Molonglo

Mr Zed Seselja, ACT Legislative Assembly Member for Molonglo

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(155) Output 2.3: Australian Citizenship

Senator Ludwig (L&C 42 and written) asked:

1 Regarding key finding number 9 (at page 12) of the November 2004 audit report into the management and promotion of citizenship services:

(a) What work has been done on analysing and addressing the differing timeliness standards between DIMIA offices?

2 As per p17 of the last November's Audit Report, the number of decisions on citizenship applications has fallen below the number of citizenship applications being made.

(a) Why is this?

(b) What steps are being taken to rectify this problem?

3 I note (for instance, at page 36 and 39 of the audit report) that the ANAO found that there are many instances where checks were not properly documented, or documented at all.

(a) What procedures did DIMIA have in place at that time to ensure that all checks are properly documented?

(b) Have the procedures since been updated?

(i) If so, what has been added to ensure that the check is properly documented?

(ii) If not, why not?

4 Similarly, on the same page, it is mentioned that the practices relating to photocopying identification documents

(a) How much leniency does DIMIA allow individual offices in establishing these sorts of protocols, and what is the rationale for allowing this leniency?

(b) Since the publication of the report, has DIMIA made any attempts to standardise these sorts of procedure?

Answer:

1. (a) The response to question number 156 addresses this issue.

2. (a) and (b) The Department originally estimated that in 2003-04 it would make 73,000 decisions on applications for the grant of citizenship. In February 2004 (Additional Estimates) the estimated number of these decisions was increased to 82,000, reflecting the increasing numbers of applications being made. The Annual Report for 2003-04 shows that the outcome for the year was 95,098 decisions.

A higher number of applications than decisions could reasonably be expected in the context of increasing numbers of applications. The reported figures show that, in 2003-04, the Department delivered around 22,000 (30%) more decisions on applications for the grant of citizenship than it had estimated at the beginning of the year.

The ongoing increase in citizenship application rates is considered to be a positive indicator of the community's views on the value of citizenship and the success of the citizenship promotion campaign. There were 98,643 applicants for grant of Australian citizenship in 2003-04 compared with 87,023 in 2002-03, an increase of 13.4%.

3. (a) A formal Quality Assurance (QA) process for citizenship services has been in place since January 2002. Every six months a sample of applications processed during the reporting period is selected at random and audited by managers against a checklist designed to assess the quality of processing and decision making. This provides an opportunity for managers to identify training issues and areas for improvement.

Since 1 July 2004 citizenship decision makers have been required to complete a checklist on the Department's client service system (ICSE). The checklist contains a number of mandatory fields that must be completed before an application can be approved.

Given the timing of the ANAO audit, and the caseloads on which the ANAO based its comments regarding the appropriate documentation of checks, it is likely that a number of the applications were processed prior to introduction of the ICSE checklist in July 2004. The introduction of this checklist has substantially enhanced the documenting of checks conducted prior to the approval of citizenship applications.

Overall the ANAO found that decisions relating to the grant of citizenship were made in accordance with legislative requirements and departmental procedures. The ANAO commented that staff were very aware of the need to ensure the requirements of the Citizenship Act were met before approval was given.

(b)(i) The QA checklists were amended in late 2004 in line with the ANAO's recommendations. The updated checklists are currently being used to review citizenship applications decided during the six month period from 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2004. The overall level of detail now recorded in the QA checklist has increased significantly to improve the auditing of decisions made on citizenship applications, particularly in relation to the processing, and recording of the assessment, of applications.

(b)(ii) Not applicable.

4. (a) State and Territory offices are provided with decision-making and procedural advice in the form of the Australian Citizenship Instructions (ACI) and the Standard Interview Framework (SIF). The ACI and SIF include advice of what key

documentation must be sighted and photocopied during the application and interview process. These are minimum requirements. While some offices/officers choose to photocopy more documents than those specified in the ACI and SIF, the minimum standard is being met.

The ANAO report noted that, while practices relating to photocopying identification documents varied widely in the offices visited, key documents were copied in the offices visited. In a number of the cases in which the ANAO noted that all documents were photocopied, the applicant had been interviewed by Australia Post, rather than by DIMIA. This approach is not considered inappropriate by DIMIA as Australia Post staff are not expected to make assessments on citizenship applications. It also ensures clients are not subsequently asked by DIMIA for documents they had in fact already presented to Australia Post during their interview.

(b) The ANAO comments have been brought to the attention of the citizenship program managers in all of DIMIA's State and Territory offices. Citizenship program managers have been asked to remind staff of the minimum requirements set out in the ACI and SIF.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(156) Output 2.3: Australian Citizenship

Senator Ludwig asked:

1 I note at page 40 of the report that five out of 13 offices did not meet the standard for timeliness of processing?

- (a) Which offices were they?
- (b) what steps have been taken to remedy these failures?
- (c) What procedures were in place at the time to ensure that all offices were up to standard?

2 Why did DIMIA fall 34% short of its 75% target for processing within 30 days for e-lodgement forms?

3 What action has DIMIA taken to improve the timeliness of processing of e-lodgement forms?

- (a) What are the figures for the current reporting year of number of e-lodgements processed within 30 days?
- (b) Is it now the case that e-lodgements are faster than snail mail, or not?

Answer:

1. (a) The five offices that did not meet the service standard in 2003-04 were the ACT and Regions, Adelaide, Cairns, Southport, and Thursday Island.

(b) and (c) The standard is a national, program-wide performance standard for processing applications for the grant of citizenship. In 2003-04, at an aggregated national level, this standard was exceeded despite a significant increase in the number of applications received.

Increases in application rates are not always evenly spread across offices nor do they take account of the level of application processing resources available to the Department at a particular location. Another factor which impacts on processing times at a particular office is the complexity of the applications received. The impact of a relatively small number of complex applications on a small office will be disproportional to that on a large office.

2. DIMIA's ability to meet the 30 day target is largely dependant upon the applicant making and attending an appointment for interview within 30 days of e-lodgement. This internal service standard is no longer considered to be an

appropriate measure given that some of the significant variables are beyond the Department's control.

3. E-lodgement is the first step in the ongoing development of e-processing for citizenship applications. DIMIA acknowledges that there are still a number of refinements to be made to the e-lodgement process.

Systems changes to come into effect in July 2005 will direct certain e-lodgement clients to immediately contact the Citizenship Information Line to make an appointment for interview, rather than wait to receive a letter asking them to do so. This is expected to have a positive impact on processing times for e-lodged applications.

3. (a) Between 1 July 2004 and 31 December 2004, 33.9 per cent of e-lodged applications were decided within 30 days of lodgement.

(b) The Department does not have statistics which would enable comparison of the average processing times for applications lodged by mail and those e-lodged.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(157) Output 2.3: Australian Citizenship

Senator Ludwig asked:

1. In your annual report of last year (p143), it is mentioned that the Reader's Guide to the Act was still outstanding. I am unable to locate the Australian Citizenship Reader's Guide on your public website. Has this been completed?
 - (a) If not, what stage is it at and when can we expect it to be completed?
 - (i) Given that the Review recommended its development in 2001, isn't it a rather large amount of time that has passed? Is it normal to take three years to complete these type of publications?
 - (b) If yes, it is not accessible on your website. Could you address this?
2. Could you provide the amount of money spent on the Australian Citizenship Promotion campaign in 2003-04?
3. Is there data available on the number of press, radio, television and internet items relating to and surrounding Australian Citizenship Day for 2004?
 - (a) If so, what is it and does it represent an increase or decrease from last year?

Answer:

Responses to Questions 1 and 2 were given at the hearing. Hansard pages 42 and 43 refer.

3. Yes. The Department commissioned Media Monitors (MM) to prepare a qualitative evaluation report on the 2004 Australian Citizenship Day Campaign. The brief, however, did not include collection of data on internet items.

3 (a) MM reported a total of 458 items during the period 1 August to 30 September 2004 related to Australian Citizenship Day: 163 press, 220 radio and 75 television items.

MM reported that media coverage for Australian Citizenship Day 2004 was lower than the volume for 2003, which comprised 208 press, 237 radio and 202 television items – a total of 647.

MM reported trends which could explain the drop in coverage. These included: decreased media appearances by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs compared to 2003; reduced interest from television due to a focus on the Athens Olympics; and the absence of a high-profile visual event in 2004, unlike 2003

when the special Qantas in-flight citizenship ceremony generated a great deal of coverage.

Notwithstanding the decrease in media coverage, applications for this period were 8.5 per cent higher than for 2003, increasing from 16,726 for August – September 2003 to 18,145 for August – September 2004.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(158) Output 2.4: Appreciation of Cultural Diversity

Senator Ludwig (L&C 43) asked:

Last year it was noted that five agencies did not meet the performance indicator 2 of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* and that DIMIA had given support, including training, to improve that indicator. How many of the five agencies took up the offer of DIMIA training?

Answer:

Four of the five agencies took up DIMIA's offer in a direct manner. They were: the Australian National Maritime Museum; the National Library of Australia; Questacon – the National Science and Technology Centre; and the Social Security Appeals Tribunal. These agencies were provided with comprehensive tailored advice on improving reporting against the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*. This included advice on performance indicator 2 of the Provider role in particular.

Advice to the fifth agency, ScreenSound Australia, was provided as part of feedback to the Australian Film Commission with which it integrated prior to the 2004 reporting period.

Representatives from the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and the Australian Film Commission also attended a half day training seminar covering all aspects of reporting.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(159) Output 2.4: Appreciation of Cultural Diversity

Senator Ludwig (L&C 43) asked:

In relation to DIMIA meeting the requirements of performance indicator 2 of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*, provide a copy of the input received from all divisions and state and territory offices and the assessment that was made.

Answer:

In preparing the Access and Equity Annual Report, DIMIA requests that departments and agencies provide several examples of relevant activities for each performance indicator of the Performance Management Framework of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society* (the *Charter*) relating to their role of government.

The purpose of these examples is to demonstrate that the *Charter* is being implemented within the contributing department or agency.

For DIMIA's contribution in 2003, the following examples were drawn from divisions in Central Office and state and territory offices and submitted against performance indicator 2 of the Provider role.

Examples from Divisions in Central Office, Canberra

The Settlement Database, managed by the Settlement Branch of the Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Division, contains data about settler arrivals in Australia. This information assists service delivery in relation to matters such as community grants programs, English language training, translating and interpreting services and access and equity.

In 2003, the Department conducted a Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants. The Review focussed on the settlement services funded by DIMIA including specialist services provided by the Migrant Resource Centre/Migrant Service Agency (MRC/MSA) network, the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS), the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), and the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). The review was informed by, among other sources, analysis of data collected by the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) commissioned by DIMIA's Research Section.

The Department produces Community Information Summaries that describe

overseas-born communities by birthplace, and their descendants who are living in Australia. These summaries present a broad range of demographic and socio-economic characteristics drawn from the 2001 Census.

Translated information, principally visitor visa application forms, and information about applying for citizenship is available in a number of languages on DIMIA's website. Census data on eligible non-citizens is used in determining the selection of languages for translation.

DIMIA monitors and reports on its performance against its *Client Service Charter* through service standard performance data obtained from individual offices onshore and offshore.

The Department developed translations in 14 languages of the *Information Sheet for Occupiers*, which compliance officers give to occupiers of premises whenever they execute Migration Act search warrants. Language data collected in the field was used in the selection of languages for translation.

Examples from State and Territory Offices

DIMIA's NSW office provides reports from the Settlement Database to community organisations, government departments including State, Commonwealth and Local, and to MRCs and MSAs. This information contains data on place of birth, family composition, English language ability, languages spoken and stated intended address/settlement location, which enables these organisations to monitor the changing demographics in their areas of responsibility and to inform and target services appropriately.

DIMIA's SA Community Liaison Officers give advice on the use of the Settlement Database information provided on the Internet and respond to queries relating to specific statistical data requests. This includes advice on requests where the information required is not available on the Internet.

The Settlement Planning Unit of DIMIA's Victorian office conducted an analysis of 2001 Census data to be used for planning of settlement services and made a formal presentation to community representatives on their findings.

DIMIA's WA office is an important stakeholder within Centrelink's Multicultural Consultative Forum. This gives DIMIA opportunities to share information and to establish linkages and cooperation between DIMIA and other State and Commonwealth government organisations, as well as non-government agencies.

DIMIA was assessed as meeting this indicator well, based on the number of relevant examples provided.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(160) Output 2.4: Appreciation of Cultural Diversity

Senator Ludwig (L&C 44) asked:

Are there any departments still noncompliant with performance indicator 2 of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*?

Answer:

In 2003, five departments and agencies were identified as being non-compliant with performance indicator two of the Provider role of the Performance Management Framework of the *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*. As indicated in the 2004 Access and Equity Report, which was tabled in Parliament on 15 March 2005, this number has fallen to one.

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(161) Output 2.4: Appreciation of Cultural Diversity

Senator Ludwig (L&C 44) asked:

What was the cost of the *Diary of Australia 2005 – A Nation of Diversity* and the distribution of it?

Answer.

The design, printing and distribution cost for 6000 copies of the *Diary of Australia 2005* was \$57,693.00.

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(162) Output 2.4: Appreciation of Cultural Diversity

Senator Ludwig (L&C 45) asked:

How many copies of the *Diary of Australia 2005 – A Nation of Diversity* were printed, how many were distributed and how many are still in stock? Provide a list of the major community groups and the areas that copies were sent to.

Answer:

6,000 copies of the *Diary of Australia 2005* were printed, of which all but 190 had been distributed as at 11 March 2005. Requests for copies continue to be received, and it is unlikely that there will be any remainders.

The Diary was distributed to all Federal, State and Territory parliamentarians, local governments, heads of Commonwealth agencies, diplomatic missions, members of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and the Council for Multicultural Australia, *Living in Harmony* grant recipients and Migrant Resource Centres, and to community organisations throughout Australia.

Copies have also been distributed in response to individual requests from community associations, children's services centres, TAFEs, schools, childcare centres, medical and respite centres, multifaith organisations, journalists, community development officers and EEO representatives and harassment contact officers of various instrumentalities, including juvenile justice, police and fire services.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(163) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 4) asked: In relation to the removal of remote area exemptions trials, provide a list of the communities, their size and the number of people on income support.

Answer:

The table below provides the number of people on activity tested income support payments as these are the only people that will be affected by the remote area exemptions trials – i.e., some income support payments are not activity tested and will therefore not be included in the trials.

Community	Population	Activity Tested Payments *	
		Newstart Allowance	Youth Allowance
Gunbalanya	1,200	167	27
Bidyadanga	1,000	39	< 20
Canteen Creek	200	< 20	< 20
Ali Curung	700	49	< 20
Yirrkala	800	74	< 20
Nguiu	1,450	269	42
Milikapiti	400	52	< 20
Pularumpi	335	25	< 20

* Data provided by Centrelink on 25 February 2005. The data is based on customers identified by the home or postal address as provided to Centrelink and it is possible that some of those customers actually reside at another location. Customer numbers of less than 20 are indicated by "<20" to prevent identification of individuals.

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(164) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 7) asked: In relation to the newspaper reports concerning changes to the CDEP, in what ways were the reports inaccurate?

Answer:

We are not in a position to answer this comprehensively as it is the responsibility of the Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) portfolio.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(165) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 9) asked: How many Indigenous staff are you aware of who are currently on extended leave in your organisation?

Answer:

As at 3 March 2005, there are 5 Indigenous OIPC staff who are currently on extended leave.

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(166) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 10) asked:

How many times have officers of ATSIIS and OIPC met with the Indigenous Officers Network?

Answer:

The Indigenous APS Employees' Network (IAPSEN) is an initiative supported by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). Its membership is open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees of Commonwealth Government Departments and Agencies.

Agencies are at times invited to attend meetings of the network. At the time of the announcements concerning the future of ATSIIS and ATSIIS the Branch Manager of the ATSIIS People and Development Branch attended meetings of IAPSEN in Canberra and Melbourne. The same officer, now transferred to the APSC, has since attended meetings in Townsville and Brisbane. The APSC continues to support IAPSEN and meetings are held every two months on average.

At the IAPSEN dinner of 25 November 2004, a senior OIPC officer gave a presentation on the new arrangements in Indigenous Affairs.

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(167) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 14) asked: When was the contract signed with Westpac and how much was Westpac paid for its services in the last year?

Answer:

ATSIC engaged the services of Westpac in 1998-99.

In 2003-04 Westpac fees were:	ATSIC \$78,764
	ATSIS \$21,546
	TOTAL \$100,310

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IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(168) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 15) asked: In relation to ATSIC and ATSIIS, provide a list of all contracts let in 2003-04 and in the current year with details of date, the contractor, the processes, whether or not it was an open or limited tender, and the duration of the contract.

Answer:

The schedules of all contracts let for both ATSIC and ATSIIS during 2003-04 and 2004 -05 are included at Attachments A-D.

ATSIC Contracts 2004-2005

Contractor	Description	Procurement Method	Amount	Period
Denigu Pty Ltd	Facilitate a Zone Meeting of the Many Rivers and Kamilaroi Regional Councilors and Commissioner Rick Griffiths and to work with other invited key Stake Holders to prepare a submission from the combined Councils to the Senate Select Committee on Indigenous	Select Tender	\$19,855	12/07/2004 - 29/07/2004
Jacobs Sverdrup Australia Pty Ltd	To develop a South West Zone Plan for the Perth Noongar & Noongar Country Regional Councils	Sole Quotation	\$5,975	16/08/2004 - 27/08/2004
Raelene Beale	Stage 2 of Policy Development Project contract services of Facilitator to conduct a series of Policy Development Workshops, 5 policy statements for inclusion in Alice Springs Regional Councils Final Regional Plan.	Sole Quotation	\$4,900	7/12/2004 - 9/12/2004
PACE LEARNING	To engage a facilitator to run a series of regional community forums across Queensland.	Sole Quotation	\$15,950	18/02/2005 - 18/03/2005
PACE LEARNING	To engage a facilitator to run a series of regional community forums across Queensland.	Sole Quotation	\$24,860	22/11/2004 - 31/01/2005

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(169) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 15 -16) asked: In relation to the article that appeared in *The Age* on 1 November 2004, which stated that half of the Indigenous businesses funded by ATSI loans had defaulted on repayments, is the article correct?

Answer:

At the time of the article in the Age ATSI had a total business loan portfolio of 542 loans of which 249 loans were in arrears i.e. 45.9%. Currently there are 501 current loans of which 262 of these accounts are in arrears, i.e. 52.2%.

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), the agency now responsible for previous ATSI Business Development loans, is currently working with 127 clients to ensure the issue of arrears is resolved and the debt is repaid in full. Of these, 108 clients have entered into a scheme of arrangement where the client is complying with the repayment arrangement.

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(170) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Carr (L&C 16) asked: In relation to the recovery of loan repayments, how many actions are there planned, how many have been acted against and how many have been able to make repayments?

Answer:

As outlined in response to Question No. 169, of the 262 clients who are in arrears, action has been taken to either enter into an arrangement for repayment or an appropriate legal process is underway to recover the debt.

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(171) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Johnston (L&C 18-20) asked: Provide information on the receivership of Presspower.

Answer:

On 14 April 1999, after its directors had placed Presspower into voluntary administration on or about 13 April 1999, and after receiving advice from ATSIIC's business agent, ATSIIC appointed David Coates of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu (DTT) as its Receiver and Manager.

On 21 May 1999 the Receiver/Manager closed the operations of Presspower due to continued operating losses.

Presspower has been a complex case which required the Receiver Manager to investigate the affairs of the company in great detail as it involves both criminal and civil issues.

ATSIIC is keen to retire the Receiver Manager as soon as possible, however, ATSIIC must ensure that the Receiver Manager has discharged all of his obligations.

ATSIIC has sought legal advice from the Australian Government Solicitor as to the merits of retiring the Receiver Manager immediately.

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(172) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Crossin asked:

1. In their submission to the Senate Committee of Inquiry into Indigenous Administration, the Social Justice Commission (Submission 3 to the Committee) say that under section 8(1) ...” The establishment and maintenance of a representative Indigenous organisation within government constitutes a special measure under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth).” Therefore does not the abolition of ATSIC (a representative body) constitute a breach of this act? If not why is that?
2. Has legal opinion been sought on this and if so what was it? Can a copy be provided to the Committee? If not, why not?

Answer:

1. The ATSIC Act was enacted in 1989 to establish a representative body to facilitate the provision of funding and programs for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. The Racial Discrimination Act does not prevent Parliament from modifying or repealing the ATSIC Act.
2. No.

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(173) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Crossin asked:

In answer to my question on notice No. 81 of November 2004 (asking about how the NIC is consulting Indigenous people) it was stated that the NIC has no funds for travel for consultations; the NIC is not a representative body and has no consulting role. It was said the Ministerial Taskforce will seek advice by Indigenous people through other mechanisms such as the Australian Government Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs. Can you explain exactly how a group such as this will involve Indigenous organisations and people in having input into policy and planning? In particular from Indigenous people such as from much of the Northern Territory remote areas.

Answer.

There appears to be some misunderstanding of the answer previously provided in relation to the role of the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs.

By way of clarification, the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs provides advice to the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs. The Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs is not directly involved with Indigenous organisations and people. However, most Secretaries on the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs and their departments have worked closely with Indigenous communities at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) trial sites they sponsored over a number of years. The response to Question on Notice No. 81 was indicating that the Secretaries' Group is one of several advisory bodies to the Government.

The Government has also established the National Indigenous Council (NIC). The NIC provides advice to government through the Ministerial Taskforce, but is not a representative body. The NIC, as part of its Terms of Reference, will promote constructive dialogue and engagement between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations. It is also expected that the NIC will use its contacts and networks to assist the Government with consultation.

In addition, the Government has a range of specialist advisory groups on which Indigenous experts are represented.

The second part of the question relates to how Indigenous organisations and people will have input into planning and policy. The new arrangements put in place by the Government for the improved delivery of services to Indigenous Australians involve a key focus on dealing directly with people on the ground. The key mechanisms

through which this is being achieved are the development of Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs). In addition, the government has and will consult on specific issues where appropriate. For example, consultations have occurred on alternative regional representative arrangements. Because of the differences between regions it is expected that different regions will arrive at different approaches. Advice is also fed through to the national level, to inform the strategic decisions made by the Ministerial Taskforce and the advice developed by the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs and the NIC.

Communities in the Northern Territory are encouraged to develop SRAs that meet the needs of their local area. Negotiations are taking place with a number of communities and it is anticipated that there will be a number of agreements signed in the Northern Territory in the near future.

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 18 February 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(174) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Crossin asked:

(1) Mainstreaming over a period of several years in Health and Education has not succeeded in significantly closing the disadvantage gap that Indigenous people suffer. Prior to the establishment of ATSIC it had not worked either. What evidence do you have that mainstreaming will work now?

(2) How will these mainstreamed programs be evaluated and by whom? In particular I would ask what input or role will come from Indigenous people in both setting benchmarks and assessing outcomes?

Answer:

(1) Dr Peter Shergold answered this question during his presentation to the Senate Select Committee on the administration of Indigenous Affairs.

Dr Shergold's response can be found in the official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings dated Tuesday 8th February 2005. (A copy of the relevant section of the response is attached.) In addition, individual agencies provided answers to standard questions from the Committee on the issue of mainstreaming as it related to their operations.

(2) Aside from the ongoing role of the Auditor-General, all mainstream departments have arrangements to monitor and evaluate the performance of the programs they administer. In addition, the Office of Evaluation and Audit – Indigenous Programs (OEA – IP) has a key role under the Government's new arrangements for Indigenous affairs.

The OEA – IP has an independent audit and evaluation role focused on Commonwealth Indigenous specific programs and services. OEA - IP is located in the Department of Finance and Administration. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Act provides legislative authority for actions undertaken by OEA – IP. OEA – IP will have legislative powers regarding access to documents and premises, and will undertake financial and performance audits and evaluations of organisations funded under Indigenous specific programs. The OEA – IP is developing a three-year rolling evaluation plan in consultation with mainstream departments.

In addition, a role of the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination is to monitor and evaluate performance at a whole-of-government level. It will be supporting the

Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs in the development and public release of an annual report on the performance of Indigenous programs.

The Government's new arrangements provide Indigenous Australians at the community level with greater opportunities for involvement in the design and delivery of services than was previously the case. Indigenous people may also take part in setting benchmarks and assessing outcomes through the Shared Responsibility Agreement process.

Senator CARR—I have quite a few.

CHAIR—That is not a surprise.

Senator RIDGEWAY—I am a bit concerned about being limited to two questions. I want to put that on the record.

CHAIR—We will see how it goes.

Senator RIDGEWAY—Dr Shergold, I want to go to one of the speeches you gave last year, where you remarked that the solution to functional demarcation rarely lies in the structures of officialdom. Given that there appears to be no research available that gives any support to the view that mainstreaming would or should work—in fact, there is probably a body of literature that indicates mainstreaming would fail—how do you respond?

Dr Shergold—The point I made in my speech, which I strongly adhere to, is that complex problems, particularly in public policy, are rarely resolved by structures. Public servants are remarkably good at structures. Put public servants together for half an hour and they can rearrange the boxes very easily. They can create new departments, create new agencies and shuffle the divisions around. In my experience, it is never the solution.

The solution that is required here on Indigenous affairs is necessarily a whole-of-government solution. One of our key failings, I think, in terms of public policy is the failure to have a whole-of-government approach to issues. Certainly I learnt when I was secretary of the education department that I could not improve the standard of education in schools if I was not also dealing with the hearing problems that the kids suffered. I knew that I could not get good results in schools if, when children returned home at night, they were subject to family violence. In other words, we have to link the whole together, and that is why my view is that the way we need to do it is not by creating new structures or new boxes. That is only a part of the solution. The key is to change the culture of how public servants deliver public policy. That is my first point.

My second point is that I think mainstreaming has been an enormous failure. If I thought we were returning to mainstreaming in the old sense I would not support it at all. But define mainstreaming. All the literature that I have seen says there are a number of qualities to mainstreaming. The first is that you do not have Indigenous specific programs. The second is that each department and agency makes its own decisions in a non-coordinated way. The third is that you do not have an Indigenous specific agency. The fourth is that you have national programs that are delivered in the same way no matter where they are delivered. Those are the four key ingredients of mainstreaming.

The government's new approach is completely at odds with each of those four criteria. It is committed to maintaining the funding for Indigenous specific programs. It has established an Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination and Indigenous coordination centres across the country. It has made it clear that the mainstream departments have to work together, and it has said that there needs to be flexibility in programs so they can respond to local need. What we have here is a quite new approach. It will not work quickly; this is in for the long term. It is not mainstreaming in the sense of the articles that have been written criticising it. It is a new whole-of-government approach, and that is what I am committed to.

Senator RIDGEWAY—Can I go to the question of shared responsibility agreements and the example of the Mulan community agreement in Western Australia. Given what you have just said, does that represent the benchmark that the federal government are establishing? Is it fair or reasonable to accept that on one hand the government will discharge its obligations by providing two petrol pumps and on the other the community is left with the challenge of reducing instances of trachoma by being asked to wash the faces of children? Is that fair and reasonable?

Dr Shergold—It is fair and reasonable if the shared responsibility agreement expresses the negotiated will of the community. It is very easy to become paternalistic in this regard. It is very easy to become paternalistic and say that I, sitting in the Prime Minister's department or sitting in Canberra, know what is best for the people in a community. One thing that is clear to me is that that sort of paternalism has failed and it has failed disastrously. With shared responsibility agreements, I see every one of them being different and every one of them setting different balances in terms of shared responsibility.

Of course, the one thing that is clear with the shared agreements is in terms of the additional benefits. It is not a requirement in order to access the benefits that are available to all Australians. For some communities, it may be that the discretionary benefit that they would like is two petrol bowsers; for others, I know, it is a swimming pool. For the SRA in which I was engaged, they wanted air-conditioning at home so their children could come back to do homework in appropriate conditions. In other communities, it is to set up a women's resource centre. Each community decides what discretionary benefit they want and the government works with them to say, 'What are the key objectives that we should set here?' It might involve combating domestic violence, improving attendance at school or trying to deal with the awful disease of trachoma. I have no idea at this stage what the 50 shared responsibility agreements will look like. They will probably be set in place by the middle of this year. What I do know is that for the first time they will genuinely reflect community decision making.

Senator RIDGEWAY—Do you think that washing faces, in and of itself, will cure a disease like trachoma without looking at other determinants?

Dr Shergold—Of course I do not believe that, Senator. I do not believe that for one moment.

Senator RIDGEWAY—Why is it fair and reasonable?

Dr Shergold—It is not fair and reasonable, and that is not what is set out in the shared responsibility agreement. It is entirely fair and reasonable that a community can sit down with the Commonwealth government and the WA government and say, 'This is a major issue facing our community. There are things that we as leaders in the community can do to try and address that. Personal hygiene and cleanliness is one of those things. In return, there are things that this community would really benefit from that we would like to see.' And there is a commitment on the part of the WA government in regard to what action they need to take in terms of primary health care. Now that is what is captured in that SRA. Perhaps sitting here in Canberra I could say, 'Well, I don't think your commitment to washing the faces of children is what I would put forward.' But I feel a great sense of achievement sitting here in Canberra knowing that that is what the community has put forward. I am not going to sit here or have my secretaries sit here in Canberra second-guessing what communities want and the action that communities want to take.

Senator RIDGEWAY—How will you evaluate that shared responsibility agreement?

Dr Shergold—I anticipate that shared responsibility agreements will develop over time.

Senator RIDGEWAY—I am talking about this particular one in Mulan.

Dr Shergold—In each instance we will be evaluating the outcomes from that program. Again, this is a crucial part of a shared responsibility agreement. Senator Ridgeway, you would know far better than I that often where we have failed in the past is from not appropriately evaluating the government commitments that have been made. You and I know you can go to the homelands in the Pitjantjatjara lands and you can see a community centre that the government has put there at some stage, you can see a solar windmill, a shed for equipment and a bulldozer. You can visit that community and you find that the community centre has been broken down, the equipment is not stored in the shed and has broken down and the solar wind power has broken down. It is the most immense failure of government because government has not said quite clearly: this is what we will deliver in this first stage of the agreement and, if both sides meet their obligations, then we will deliver more and more and more. That is why I say shared responsibility agreements will develop. They may start by only focusing on one or two issues but if both sides deliver—or all three sides because I hope the state governments will be involved—then what you would expect is to see shared responsibility agreements becoming increasingly comprehensive over time in terms of knowing that the investment that is being put in there has worked effectively.

Senator RIDGEWAY—In relation to the inroads that have been made in Indigenous affairs, isn't it true that the areas where there has been success have been for those programs administered previously by ATSIC?

Dr Shergold—You are saying that success is in programs delivered by ATSIC?

Senator RIDGEWAY—Yes.

Dr Shergold—No. The very last trip that I undertook as CEO of ATSIC was through the Pitjantjatjara lands and the example I have just given was the one that I came face to face with. It was just a specific instance, and I thought to myself: what an absolute failure. Every time the ATSIC board had made the decision to put an extra facility into that homeland it was a good decision but, as the CEO of ATSIC, there had been a tremendous failure to ensure that what government had put in had been maintained. There had been a failure to drive home that message of shared responsibility and, as a result, you can visit any community in this country and see just where government assets have been put in and are now in very poor condition. That is not because of the community per se; it is because the government and the public servants have not done their job, and very often when we have put in infrastructure we have not thought through the full consequences.

If you put two houses into a community which clearly needs 12 new houses, if you are not careful you will go back the next year, as you know, and those two houses are broken down because they have been overcrowded. So what we have got to introduce is to make manifest this notion of shared responsibility. Public policy on Indigenous affairs has changed profoundly over the last 30 years. I think there is one constant: shared responsibility. The difficulty is how well

we have implemented it. CDEP is the classic shared responsibility program. The government puts in the money from welfare benefits and it foots capital oncosts in return for the community doing certain things with the resources it receives—fundamentally, a shared responsibility agreement.

Senator RIDGEWAY—If ATSIC is a marked failure, as you believe, how do you explain the fact that at least four former CEOs of ATSIC, you being one of them, have all been promoted in the Australian Public Service to holders of high office, if you like, in terms of supposed failure or success? How do you explain that?

Dr Shergold—I do not think the failure of public policy can be attributed to a single person: the CEO of ATSIC, the chair of ATSIC, the minister for Indigenous affairs. This has been a challenge for public policy to find ways to try and overcome the appalling, deep-seated socioeconomic disadvantage faced by Indigenous Australians. The aim is to keep trying to find better ways of delivering. I am not saying that ATSIC alone has been a failure. During the time that I was there I was fortunate to see the most extraordinary leadership provided to ATSIC, and I think that some of the things ATSIC did were of a high order and, in an auditing sense, with a high level of accountability. What we did, however, in ATSIC—and I think it was partly because of the emphasis on the national board of commissioners—was to focus probably too much on the centre and not enough on the local community level in the way we delivered, with the local communities not having that opportunity to negotiate in a flexible way for what those communities wanted and what they wanted the government to deliver.

Senator JOHNSTON—Dr Shergold, if this new direction is going to be successful, I take it there will be some benchmarks that indicate that success. What are you looking to as indicative of success and how long do we have to wait? Is it health, education, self-reliance, life expectancy?

Dr Shergold—I think you have to focus on the type of outcomes you have suggested, and that is why I think the report that is now produced by the Productivity Commission, which focuses on outcomes, is very helpful. In my view, there are process outcomes and socioeconomic outcomes. In terms of process outcomes, what I would want to see in any evaluation is that communities are increasingly able to work in partnership with governments to deliver in a shared responsibility way what all sides want. In terms of socioeconomic outcomes, the things I am looking for are very specific. Yes, they are educational outcomes, school retention rates and school attendance rates. Yes, they are primary health outcomes and training outcomes. Those are the things that we should be looking at.

Although it is easy to focus on the failures of public policy, it is worth saying that not everything is bleak. Sometimes I think that we do a poor job with the Australian public in suggesting that no matter how we spend the money, it makes no difference. There are signs of improvement. The fact is that year 10 and year 12 retention rates have improved, attendance at university has improved, more people are accessing new apprenticeship training, life expectancy has increased, immunisation programs have worked. The frustration is the slowness with which those improvements take place and the fact that sometimes absolute improvements do not reflect relative improvements—that is, relative to the wider community. Sometimes you seem to take some steps forward and then take some steps back.

I think this is for the long term. I think the Prime Minister has made it clear that if you are assessing outcomes it has got to be over the long term. It is not going to be simply year to year. It is over five years and 10 years. Our experience has suggested that things are simply not going to change overnight.

Senator JOHNSTON—You have seen the lands—and I am gratified to hear you say that you have been out to the lands—you have seen the communities, and you have observed the day-to-day functioning of those societies. How important do you see it that SES personnel and officials responsible for delivery and maintenance of services actually visit those communities—and not just those communities but also Redfern and other inner urban communities where Aboriginal people gather, in Perth, Adelaide and other places?

Dr Shergold—I think it is very important. One of the great benefits I see in the COAG trials, and one of the great benefits of having a group of secretaries oversight the public administration of Indigenous affairs, is that an increasing number of people at the very top get to understand the problems that are faced—not just in remote areas but, as you say, in urban centres. I think that has had a profound effect and I know, in speaking to some of my colleagues who had not had that experience, that it has been both challenging and moving for them to come face to face with what is one of the most difficult areas of public policy.

I think it is very beneficial that those who are now managing the Indigenous coordination centres are generally at a more senior level than those who used to run the old ATSIC regional offices. There are now mostly EL2s but a significant number of SES officers taking on that role. I think that is very important. In trying to get people to apply to be managers of an ICC one of the things we have done is to say to them, ‘Although your experience is largely in Canberra’, or perhaps Sydney or Melbourne, ‘we will see it as a good career move for you to go and work in a remote or regional centre and do this job for two or three years.’

Senator CROSSIN—Dr Shergold, we had a number of public servants appear before this hearing last week; and I have to say, from my point of view, a number of them seemed to have their eyes rolled to the backs of their heads and their eyes glazed over. Senator Johnston and I asked a number of them if they had been outside the eastern seaboard triangle—and not too many had, I have to say. I suspect you have moved a little sideways in your definition of ‘mainstreaming’, but how exactly do you plan to achieve this? You are actually talking about a major cultural shift in the way in which public servants think; let’s face it, it is a major shift in their paradigm. What sort of training, cross-cultural awareness or other facilities do you plan to instigate to achieve this?

Dr Shergold—Let me state: if you think that I have defined ‘mainstreaming’ wrong, tell me; but that is what I understood—

Senator CROSSIN—No, I did not say ‘wrong’. I just said that I thought you had shifted your position a bit today.

Dr Shergold—I do not think I have changed my position. I have always been committed to the directions in which we are moving as public servants. Cross-cultural training is important, but I suppose my key emphasis at the moment, on which I focus not just secretaries but also all the agency heads who serve on the management advisory committee, is whole-of-government

approaches. This is not just a matter of Indigenous affairs. It is crucially important here because of the complexity of Indigenous issues, as we both know. But we need that same whole-of-government approach for dealing with national security, for example.

I think one of the key changes has been the extent to which secretaries now come together at that most senior level to discuss government issues. There is the Secretaries Committee on National Security; we are now going to have a secretaries committee to oversight the tsunami aid package to Indonesia; and there is the secretaries committee on Indigenous issues. All of those are ways in which we can ensure that we are sending out messages to the service about collegiate, cooperative, coordinated leadership. And, yes, there are quite a lot of courses on that that are now being delivered or developed by the Public Service Commission. We have put out publications on the issue of whole of government, and I am using every opportunity to emphasise in speeches that I give why that is important—and in that emphasise that how well we succeed in the delivery of Indigenous affairs is one of the real tests of whether or not we have got a whole-of-government approach working.

Senator CROSSIN—Earlier you made some comments about not necessarily having to rely on or have structures in order to achieve outcomes or measure these outcomes, but you are dealing with a society that is very reliant on structures through their moieties, their clan groups and their language groups. One of the significant pieces of evidence that we have heard from probably every Indigenous witness in the course of this inquiry is their emphasis on wanting a structure that is a conduit between the community and the grass roots, and the ICCs. They want some formalised process to be able to feed their concerns into, and to monitor and evaluate, when government do not come to the party. If you have been following this, you will know that there are some very sophisticated models of regional assemblies, regional councils or whatever name particular areas have given to that. Has there been any reconsideration of enabling ICCs to recognise the work that has been done and to have a formal regional community body, whatever it may be called, to assist in this process—to give some satisfaction to Indigenous people that their voices will genuinely be heard?

Dr Shergold—You cannot have shared responsibility agreements unless you are dealing with community voices. There has to be someone to sign off and agree. There is a clear commitment to working with Indigenous representative organisations at the community level, at the local level and at the regional level. Whether those are appointed organisations or elected organisations, we will work with them—the government is committed to working with them. At the regional level there are all sorts of possible structures. Some communities and some state and territory governments are saying, ‘We’d like something that looks a bit like the regions that existed under ATSIC.’ Some are saying, ‘We’d like to work with land councils,’ and some want to work with local government authorities. What I anticipate is that there will be a whole series of different arrangements for different communities and different regions, reflecting what best suits that community or region.

Senator CROSSIN—How is that going to be legitimised come 1 July? How is it going to be formalised so that Indigenous people clearly know what is happening in their region, who they communicate with and how they do that?

Dr Shergold—In part that is a decision that is for them and in part it would obviously reflect the regional agreements that are negotiated with the states and territories, but most of all I think

it is important to focus on the community. We know there are many communities that would actually like to deal with government on the basis of communities. There are other communities that would feel it was better to negotiate with government on the basis of a larger region. It is up to communities what organisations they want to represent them.

Senator CROSSIN—Will ICC managers be given the authority to recognise those regional structures if Indigenous people want them?

Dr Shergold—They will be authorised to work with whatever structures Indigenous communities want—the representative organisations that exist or maybe new representative organisations that will emerge. Some of them will be elected, some of them non-elected and some of them may be just a community meeting. There are all sorts of possibilities.

Senator CROSSIN—We have seen evidence of all of those possibilities.

Dr Shergold—That is right. The only thing that the government has made clear is that it will not fund organisations to have an elected structure. It is a matter for the organisations themselves.

CHAIR—This is your last question, Senator Crossin.

Senator CROSSIN—Okay. I have actually got two more so I might be able to come back.

CHAIR—Are they short?

Senator CROSSIN—They may not be. Dr Shergold, I do want to ask you about your comments on CDEP and your belief that it has been a success in terms of shared responsibility agreements. My experience in this position and getting around to Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory is that people are moving beyond CDEP and that it has outlived its life. It may well be working for some people in some communities but in a lot of communities people actually see it for what it is—commonly called ‘black fellas work for the dole’. You actually have Indigenous people in communities as child-care workers on CDEP, but if they were a child-care worker in Alice Springs they would be getting \$32,000. Is there no recognition that that is not a shared responsibility agreement? There is no incentive there.

I hear lots of arguments that there are no labour market programs in some areas so it is very hard to move Indigenous people off CDEP into jobs. The reality is that, in 80 per cent of cases in communities, the jobs are actually CDEP positions. They need to be moved off CDEP or paid for what they are worth. There are people working in aged care homes on CDEP and school assistants on CDEP. White fellas in Alice Springs who are school assistants are not on the Work for the Dole program. Is there some recognition in terms of the government’s responsibility that there needs to be a critical examination of the way some of these programs operate and that Indigenous people need to be listened to with regard to the fact that they might not necessarily want to maintain the status quo? I am talking about an across-Australia approach here because CDEP is national.

Dr Shergold—There is a very, very strong recognition of that by the government. CDEP has been a program for 30 years now. It was based upon the principle of shared responsibility. The

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING: 18 February 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(175) Output 3.1: Indigenous Policy

Senator Crossin asked:

If the ATSIC Act Amendment Bill 2004 is passed, I believe the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will be abolished. This provides for TI people living on the mainland (the majority). Who will administer their affairs?

Answer:

We understand that Senator Crossin's question appears to refer to the Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OTSIA) rather than the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OATSIA) which until July 2004 operated within the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. OTSIA was created within the context of the establishment of ATSIC and therefore ceased to exist in the context of ATSIC being abolished.

Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland will be covered by the new arrangements and have the opportunity to participate in SRAs and other initiatives with other Indigenous people in their region. In addition, OIPC continues to provide funding to the National Secretariat of Torres Strait Islander Organisations Limited (NTSIOL) to represent mainland Torres Strait Islanders in dealings with the community, government departments, statutory corporations and the Aboriginal community.

All relevant agencies now have the responsibility for ensuring effective implementation of programs to Indigenous people, including Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland. Performance of mainstream agencies will be monitored through a range of mechanisms, as outlined in the response to question on notice no. 174(2).