

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 1 November 2005

IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

(255) Output 3.1: Whole-of-Government Coordination of Policy Development and Service Delivery for Indigenous Australians

Senator Siewert asked:

Are there policies or programs in place or under development that are concerned with moving from a 'partnership' model to a model based on greater local ownership, especially given the findings of international capacity development research that local ownership is essential for effective and sustainable development outcomes?

Answer:

The Government's Indigenous Affairs arrangements, particularly the development of Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs) rely very much on communities wanting to, and being capable of, taking ownership and responsibility for their development at a local and regional level. Partnerships forged with governments, industry and other groups, mean that other stakeholders will also take their share of the responsibility for improving the outcomes for Indigenous people in an effective and sustainable way.

Many of the SRAs signed to date are thematic in nature, addressing one or two simple community priorities. The communities involved in these SRAs have demonstrated significant ownership in the identification of priorities and in the negotiation of, and participation in, agreed community contributions.

In response to community requests, the Government will work with communities to develop more comprehensive approaches to identified priorities that include agreement making. Community ownership of the process will be demonstrated through communities:

- articulating long term goals;
- developing their own local solutions to priorities;
- utilising a wide range of existing resources and community assets to effect long term change, including strong leaders, catalysts for change (eg mothers who want a better future for their children), land, infrastructure, or potential economic development; and
- working with government to design the practical steps to reach their goals, such as changes to government funded services and community obligations.

The Government acknowledges the need to assist communities to realise their potential and participate in the development of comprehensive SRAs and RPAs. To this end a range of resources, including a Panel of Experts and a Multi User List of providers (see response to Question 254) are being provided.

A critical issue in moving forward is to ensure that SRAs are not just another funding source. The key to this is the strength and integrity of the mutual obligation/reciprocity arrangements which underpin the agreements. The increased community ownership that will be associated with developing comprehensive SRAs and RPAs will be key to sustaining reciprocity and reducing passivity over the long term.