



Australian Government

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination

Senator Trish Crossin
Chair
Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Crossin

I am writing in relation to the Committee's call for submissions concerning the matters before it.

Attached is a submission outlining the new arrangements for the involvement of the Australian Government in Indigenous Affairs. I am providing the submission to the Committee on behalf of agencies involved in implementing the arrangements.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wayne Gibbons', written over a horizontal line.

WAYNE GIBBONS
Associate Secretary

9 August 2004



**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION TO
THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Submitted by
the Office of Indigenous Policy Co-ordination,
Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs**

August 2004

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Purpose of the Submission

The purpose of this submission is to outline the new arrangements for the involvement of the Australian Government in Indigenous affairs. The submission seeks to explain how the new arrangements will work in practice. The submission also explains how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill relates to the new arrangements and how the arrangements have been implemented pending passage of the Bill.

Departments involved in implementing the new arrangements have provided separate descriptions on how they will use these arrangements to provide improved services and outcomes for Indigenous people and these are at **Annex A** to this submission. The departments are:

- Attorney-General's Department (AGD)
- Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA)
- Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)
- Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH)
- Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)
- Department of Finance and Administration (DOFA)
- Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA)

Rationale for Changes

ATSIC was established as a unique organisation – a body which would represent and advocate on behalf of Indigenous people; advise government on Indigenous policy issues and the co-ordination of activities affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and deliver a range of services to Indigenous people. On the basis of ATSIC's performance over the last 14 years the Government concluded that the roles given to ATSIC were inherently conflicting and could not effectively be fulfilled by a single organisation. In particular ATSIC's representational role made it difficult for it to make disinterested decisions about funding to particular communities, organisations and individuals.

In addition ATSIC was responsible for less than half of the Australian Government's spending on Indigenous programmes, with other programmes being delivered by mainstream agencies. There was a tendency for ATSIC and the other agencies to operate as individual service providers without necessary collaboration to achieve positive change with Indigenous communities. This focus on individual agency programmes also meant that there was a lack of strategic attention to the role of State and Territory Governments which predominantly deliver essential basic services such as health and education.

Participation in ATSIC elections has not kept pace with the growth in the Indigenous population. The proportion of eligible voters participating in the 2002 elections dropped to a record low (1 in 5). In those elections the number of women on the ATSIC board also dropped from five to one.

The final report of the ATSIC Review completed in November 2003 found widespread disillusionment and dissatisfaction among Indigenous Australians with the ATSIC model. The key themes emerging from the report were:

- a leadership deficit at the national level;
- a lack of coordination between the national and regional and local levels;
- duplication and overlap in roles and responsibilities between levels of government and uncoordinated service delivery;
- a need for outcome focused arrangements to drive performance in service delivery to Indigenous people;
- insufficient or no genuine local level engagement with Indigenous people; and
- a need for greater accountability and scrutiny of performance.

Framework for the New Arrangements

The new arrangements are a response to the key messages of the ATSIC Review report and build on the early learnings from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) trials. The arrangements are based on five key principles:

- **collaboration** between Australian Government agencies
- **leadership** from Ministers, senior agency staff and Indigenous representative bodies
- **flexibility** in the allocation of funds to meet emerging needs and priorities

- **a focus on need at the regional level** taking into account the diverse circumstances in different regions
- **enhanced accountability** to ensure that Indigenous people receive value for money from programmes directed to them

To implement these principles, a number of changes have been made to the way programmes and services are delivered to Indigenous Australians. A chart depicting the new arrangements is at **Attachment A**. A list providing details of responsibilities transferred to other departments and portfolios is at **Attachment B**.

Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs

The Ministerial Taskforce is chaired by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and provides whole-of-government leadership at the highest level on the directions and priorities for Australian Government policy and expenditure. It will drive improved performance in the mainstream delivery of services and programmes to Indigenous Australians including better coordination across the Australian Government and with other jurisdictions.

A key function of the Taskforce will be the annual review of the performance of Indigenous specific programmes and funding with a view to using the Indigenous specific funding pool flexibly and reallocating resources to the approaches that are shown to work best in addressing Indigenous disadvantage, including at the regional and local level.

The Ministerial Taskforce Charter outlines the government's long-term agenda, looking 20-30 years ahead, while focusing on the strategies to be put in place now to achieve improved outcomes. The Ministerial Taskforce will focus on measures such as health, education and employment. Other priorities include addressing Indigenous family violence, increasing economic development, improving community safety, and law and justice.

The Taskforce will develop a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the way the Australian Government does business with Indigenous communities – reviewing and re-engineering programmes and services to achieve more streamlined and flexible arrangements.

The Taskforce will seek advice from and be informed by the National Indigenous Council, regional representative networks, the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs and lessons learned from the Council of Australian Government (COAG) Trials.

The Ministerial Taskforce Charter and a statement of its functions and a membership list are at **Attachment C**.

Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs

The Group includes all Secretaries with responsibility for Indigenous-specific programmes and services, and is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The group will provide support to the Ministerial Taskforce including advice on the coordination of Indigenous policy and service delivery, the performance of Government programmes in improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians and on resource allocation across the Australian Government for Indigenous-specific programmes. It will also prepare a public annual report on the outcomes of Indigenous specific programmes.

The Secretaries Group will take collective responsibility at a national level for working with communities in a whole-of-government manner.

Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination

The OIPC has been established in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Its remit is to provide policy advice to the Government on Indigenous issues and to co-ordinate and drive whole-of-government Indigenous policy development and service delivery across the Government. At the regional level OIPC will establish and maintain a network of Indigenous Co-ordination Centres to promote co-ordinated service delivery.

The Office is also tasked with developing new ways of engaging directly with Indigenous Australians at the regional and local level, including through:

- *Regional Partnership Agreements* which will scope and customise Australian Government investment in a region in partnership with local Indigenous representative networks. Generally they will contain a broad statement of priorities and principles, but they may also be used to underpin a specific regional strategy agreed between government and the regional Indigenous representative network
- *Shared Responsibility Agreements* which will capture more specific partnership arrangements – they will set out the priorities and agreed shared responsibilities between government and community, and the agreed outcomes and benchmarks for measuring progress as well as feedback mechanisms. The agreements may be negotiated with family groups through to larger community groups.

The DOHA and FACS submissions provide examples of the use of Shared Responsibility Agreements to define regional priorities.

In addition OIPC will oversee relations with State and Territory Governments on Indigenous issues and will monitor and report on the performance of Government programmes and services for Indigenous Australians.

National Indigenous Council

The National Indigenous Council is being established to provide advice to Government, through the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Issues, on policy and service delivery issues affecting Indigenous Australians. Members will be appointed by Government on the basis of their skills, background and experience in order to assist in the delivery of improved outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The Council is intended as a group of experts, not as a representative body.

The National Indigenous Council will provide expert advice to government on how to improve outcomes through enhanced policies, programmes and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It will also alert the Government to emerging policy and service delivery issues and advise on priority areas for funding. The Council will promote constructive dialogue and engagement between the Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations on these matters.

The Council will not provide advice on specific funding proposals or specific planning or programme matters related to individual communities or regions.

Regional Representation

Leading up to the cessation of Regional Councils on 30 June 2005, the Australian Government will work with State and Territory Governments and Indigenous people to identify appropriate alternative arrangements to provide for Indigenous representation at the regional and local level. This may well lead to the establishment of different models to suit different regions and jurisdictions. The Regional Councils are being encouraged to participate in this process. The aim is to develop regional networks which will be involved in planning government services in a region.

Services to Indigenous Australians, particularly in regional and remote locations, will be supported by Regional Partnership Agreements at the regional level, and Shared Responsibility Agreements at the community or family/clan level.

The new regional representative networks will provide a focus on need at the regional level and promote collaboration between service providers at the Australian, State and Territory Government levels.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

COAG is taking a leading role in addressing the social and economic disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous Australians.

On 25 June 2004 COAG committed at all levels of government to co-operative approaches on policy and service delivery between agencies and to

maintaining and strengthening government effort to address Indigenous disadvantage.

To underpin this co-operation COAG agreed to a National Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians (**Attachment D**). The principles address sharing responsibility, harnessing the mainstream, streamlining service delivery, establishing transparency and accountability, developing a learning framework and focussing on priority areas. They committed to Indigenous participation at all levels and a willingness to engage with representatives, adopting flexible approaches and providing adequate resources to support capacity at the local and regional levels.

These principles will provide a common framework between governments that promotes maximum flexibility to ensure tailored responses and helps to build stronger partnerships with Indigenous communities.

They also provide a framework to guide bi-lateral discussions between the Australian Government and each State and Territory Government on the Australian Government's new arrangements for Indigenous affairs and on the best means of engaging with Indigenous people at the local and regional levels. Governments will consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their efforts to achieve this.

COAG trials

In order to improve the way governments interact with each other and with Indigenous communities to deliver more effective responses to the needs of Indigenous Australians, COAG undertook a trial of whole-of-governments co-operative approach in 8 communities/regions (one in each State/Territory). A number of the Departmental submissions (DEST, DEWR, DOHA, and FACS) provide information about specific trial sites.

The trials will continue to model new ways of working to inform the broader whole-of-government approach.

The key objectives in the COAG trial sites are to:

- tailor government action to identified community needs and aspirations;
- coordinate government programmes and services where this will improve service delivery outcomes;
- encourage innovative approaches;
- cut through blockages and red tape to resolve issues quickly;
- negotiate agreed project outcomes, benchmarks and responsibilities with the relevant people in Indigenous communities;

- work with Indigenous communities to build the capacity of people in those communities to negotiate as genuine partners with government;
- build the capacity of government employees to work in new ways with Indigenous communities.

The new Australian Government arrangements for Indigenous affairs draw on some of the early learnings from the COAG trials as they apply to government structures. These include:

- a requirement for strong, systemic and demonstrable leadership and commitment from the top;
- more effective co-ordination arrangements to allow for a whole-of-government approach;
- improved accountability, performance monitoring and reporting;
- the need to develop new ways of engaging directly with Indigenous Australians at the regional and local level to promote inclusiveness and avoid 'gate-keeping';
- the need to develop government skills in whole-of-government approaches and engagement with Indigenous Australians;
- more flexible and responsive funding arrangements.

The lessons learnt from these cooperative approaches will be applied more broadly. Flexibility was the key to the approach in order to reflect the needs of specific communities, build on existing work and improve the compatibility of different State, Territory and Australian Government approaches to achieve better outcomes.

Indigenous Coordination Centres

A network of Indigenous Co-ordination Centres (ICCs) has been established around the nation in 29 locations. Initially ICCs will cover programme areas such as the Community Development and Employment Programme (CDEP), Community Housing and Infrastructure, Broadcasting and Culture. Over time, the object is to build a single office in which all the Indigenous services managed by key departments – employment, education, community services, legal aid and health – will be represented.

ICCs are 'whole of Australian Government' offices, with staff from a number of government agencies, headed by a manager who is the focal point for engagement with stakeholders and who will be responsible for co-ordinating the efforts of all agencies in their dealings with clients on a whole-of-government basis. ICCs will not, however, be direct service delivery shopfronts like Centrelink offices. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs will provide an ICC manager and support

staff in each ICC through the Office of Indigenous Policy Co-ordination. Departmental submissions (AGD and DEST) describe the way in which other agencies will use ICCs to increase co-operation and collaboration.

ICCs will include “solution brokers” whose task will be to assist Indigenous communities and organisations to access appropriate programmes to address particular issues.

State and Territory Governments are encouraged to participate in the ICCs wherever possible.

Building on the COAG trials approach, the ICCs will work with Indigenous communities to design and deliver services in a co-ordinated way and in consultation with State/Territory agencies. Engagement with local Indigenous communities by Australian Government agencies will be co-ordinated with the ICC. The COAG endorsed Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery will be used to encourage a ‘joined-up’ approach by government at the regional and local level, including agreement on the consultative structures to apply following the cessation of Regional Councils and connecting in with the ICCs. As indicated above, the current COAG trials will continue and extend the insights from the trials to Indigenous service delivery and local Indigenous engagement more generally. The lead role of departmental Secretaries will be maintained in the COAG trial sites, with their lead agency personnel integrated into a co-ordination role with the ICCs.

Over the next 12–18 months, Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs) will be negotiated with Indigenous representative bodies in each region/sub-region (reflecting interest groupings – eg on Cape York or in the Murdi Paaki region in NSW) to guide strategic interventions in individual communities. To underpin a coherent investment strategy which overcomes overlaps or gaps, these will map both the:

- nature and extent of current funding going into the region; and
- arrangements for stakeholder engagement.

RPAs will also provide the mechanism for departments to resolve any differences of view on priorities for the region and the issues which need to be addressed in Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) at the local community level.

Consistent with the RPAs, SRAs will be developed at community/family group level, and will set out both individual and community responsibilities and the co-ordinated services to be delivered by the Australian Government (and desirably by the State/Territory Government) in the communities serviced by the ICC.

Effective governance arrangements, relevant skills and a whole-of-government ethos will be critical to the success of the ICCs. The overall

approach will be driven at a national and state office level by the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs and through regular meetings of state managers from Australian Government agencies.

Australian Government Budget

Resources transferred from ATSIC/ATSIS to Government agencies will be quarantined for spending on Indigenous specific programmes and will not be available for spending on non-Indigenous issues. In order to provide greater flexibility in funding, new arrangements will be implemented to allow the re-allocation of funding within the Government-wide pool of resources devoted to Indigenous-specific programmes. Departmental allocations will be able to be moved between agencies and between programmes, from year to year or more frequently, to support local strategies and whole-of-government objectives in general.

Each year Ministers will be required to bring forward a single co-ordinated Budget bid for Indigenous-specific funding that supplements the delivery of mainstream programmes for all Australians. The Ministerial Taskforce will report annually to the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet on the performance of Indigenous specific programmes and any proposed re-allocation of funding between programmes and portfolios. The single Budget bid will be informed by experience at the regional level, advice from the regional Indigenous representative networks and advice from the experts on the National Indigenous Council.

The new funding arrangements will provide greater flexibility in managing the budget to achieve improved outcomes. A number of the Departmental submissions (DCITA, DEST, and DEWR) indicate that agencies will be looking for ways to improve budget flexibility.

Improved accountability mechanisms

The new arrangements have been developed with mechanisms inbuilt to improve accountability at all levels. At the highest level the Ministerial Taskforce and the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs both have a new responsibility to report on the performance of Indigenous specific services and programmes. Departmental Secretaries will be directly accountable for specific programmes and services. Performance in Indigenous programmes and services will be included in their personal performance agreements. A number of the Departmental submissions (DCITA, DEST, DEWR, DOHA and FACS) describe how those departments will improve their accountability arrangements.

Funding mechanisms will move from a grants based process to contracts for services at both the local and regional levels which will allow greater accountability and monitoring of the success of services.

The role of the Office of Evaluation and Audit (OEA) will be enhanced to not only audit former ATSIC/ATSIS programmes but other Indigenous specific

programmes delivered by the Australian Government (see DOFA submission). This change strengthens accountability for all Indigenous-specific programmes not just those of the former ATSIC/ATSIS.

In addition, OIPC will have a key role in monitoring and reporting on the performance of the whole-of-government programmes and services for Indigenous Australians.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004 implements the Government's decision to abolish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

The Bill repeals the provisions in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989* ("the ATSIC Act"), which establishes the national board of ATSIC. It also makes consequential amendments to the ATSIC Act arising from the abolition of ATSIC. This includes the transfer of ATSIC's assets and liabilities to other agencies and the establishment of a new housing fund to be administered by Indigenous Business Australia to replace ATSIC's housing fund. The Bill also modifies the role of the Office of Evaluation and Audit, to take into account the abolition of ATSIC.

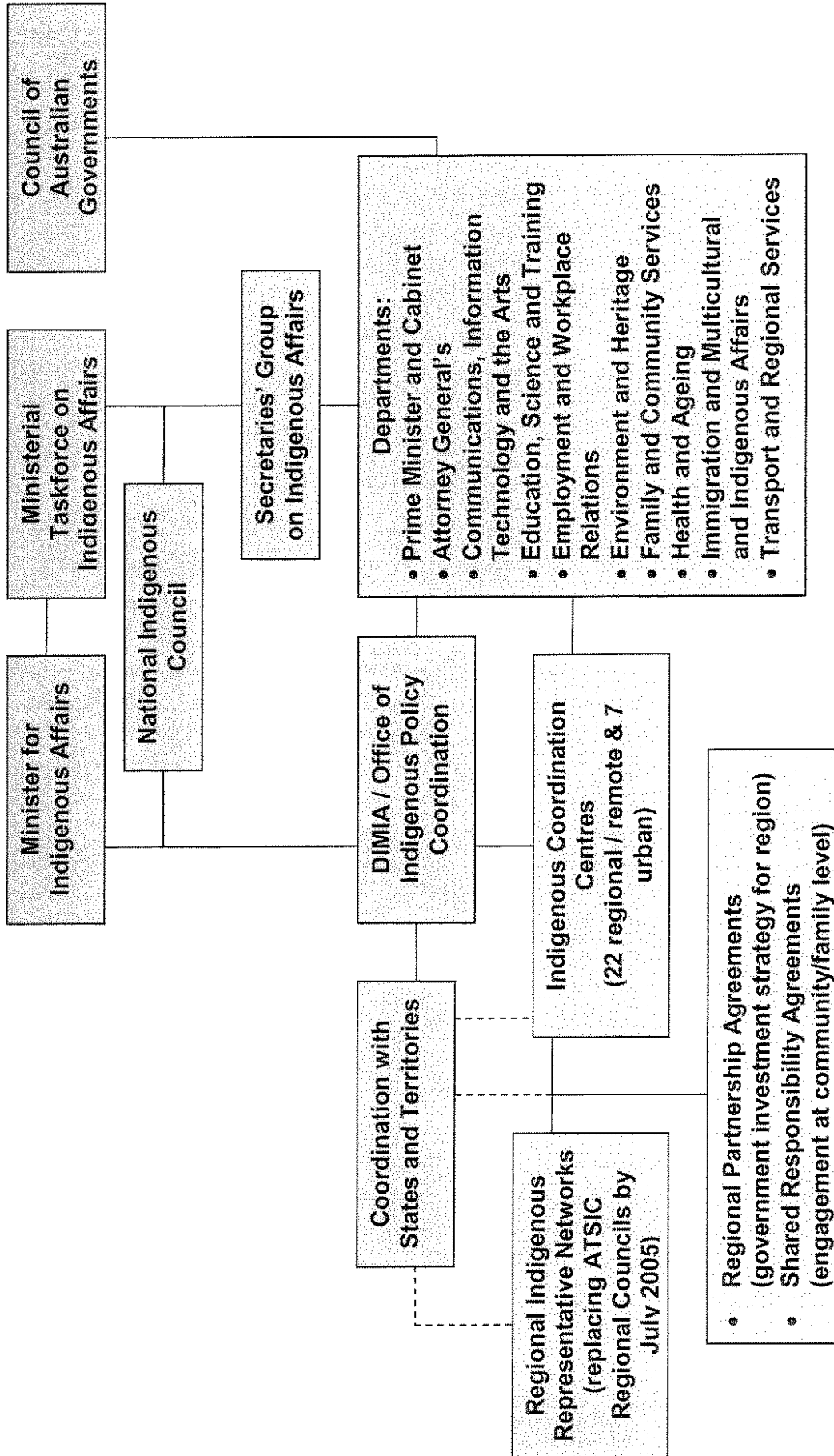
The Government's decision provided for the retention of ATSIC's Regional Councils until 30 June 2005. Accordingly the Bill provides for the abolition of the Regional Councils after that date.

The Bill also makes consequential amendments to a number of other Acts arising from the abolition of ATSIC.

Implementation of the new arrangements pending passage of the Bill

The great majority of ATSIC/ATSIS programmes and services were transferred to mainstream departments on 1 July 2004. A small number of programmes, such as the Housing Loans Programme and the Native Title Representative Bodies Programme, remain with a scaled down ATSIS. These programmes will be transferred to other agencies once the ATSIC Amendment Bill is passed.

NEW AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS ARRANGEMENTS



NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS IN INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

Indigenous rights
International Issues
Public Information
Repatriation
Planning and Partnership Development
Community Participation Agreements
Native Title and Land Rights
Indigenous Women's Development
Indigenous Women
Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Portfolio

Indigenous Land Fund
Indigenous Land Corporation
Torres Strait Regional Authority
Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations
Regional Councils

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services

ATSIC Housing Fund
ATSIC's functions under the Native Title Act
Business loans and programme grants made by ATSIC before 1 July 2003
Administration of the Regional Land Fund

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Community Development and Employment
Business Development programme

Employment and Workplace Relations Portfolio

Indigenous Business Australia

Department of Family and Community Services

Community Housing and Infrastructure
Family Violence
- Family Violence Prevention (shared with Attorney-General's Department)
- Family Violence Partnership programme

Family and Community Services Portfolio

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

Arts, Culture and Language
Broadcasting
Sport and Recreation

Department of Health and Ageing
Effective Family Tracing and Reunion Services

Department of the Environment and Heritage
Maintenance and Protection of Indigenous Heritage

Attorney-General's Department
Legal and Preventative
Family Violence Prevention (shared with Department of Family and
Community Services)

Education, Science and Training Portfolio
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Finance and Administration Portfolio
Office of Evaluation and Audit

MINISTERIAL TASKFORCE ON INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS CHARTER

Introduction

The Ministerial Taskforce will set the long term agenda, determining the Australian Government's vision for Indigenous affairs in 20-30 years, and focussing urgently on the strategies that need to be put in place now to achieve improved outcomes, recognising that:

- despite the significant commitment of governments of all persuasions over a long period, progress on the key indicators of social and economic well being for Indigenous Australians has only been gradual; and
- to make better progress there must be inter-generational change.

2. A key element of this will be testing Indigenous peoples aspirations: where do they want their communities (their children, grandchildren and older people) to be in 20-30 years time? What do they want their communities to look like?

3. In announcing the new Indigenous affairs arrangements on 15 April 2004, the Prime Minister signalled that the Government's goals are 'to improve the outcomes and opportunities and hopes of Indigenous people in areas of health, education and employment'. The Prime Minister had previously committed the Government to addressing Indigenous family violence as a priority.

4. The Ministerial Taskforce will focus on practical measures such as these and other related issues such as economic development, safer communities, law and justice.

5. However, the Taskforce recognises the importance to Indigenous people of other issues such as cultural identity and heritage, language preservation, traditional law, land and 'community' governance.

- these are issues on which Indigenous people themselves should take the lead, with government supporting them as appropriate.

6. The functions of the Ministerial Taskforce are set out in **Attachment C (i)**. Membership is set out in **Attachment C (ii)**.

The 20-30 Year Vision

7. The following statement encapsulates the Taskforce's long term vision for Indigenous Australians:

'Indigenous Australians, wherever they live, have the same opportunities as other Australians to make informed choices about their lives, to realise their full potential in whatever they choose to do and to take responsibility for managing their own affairs'.

8. The Ministerial Taskforce is determined to create the best possible policy environment in which this can be achieved.

9. The focus will be on supporting families and individuals rather than organisations – although these can have important roles in supporting families and individuals in many cases.

10. The Ministerial Taskforce will seek advice from and be informed by:

- a National Indigenous Council of experts;
- Indigenous representative networks established at the regional level to replace ATSIC Regional Councils, and by the work of the Regional Councils in the meantime;
- Indigenous people (families and individuals) more generally through a number of mechanisms;
- the Australian Government Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs; and
- lessons from the COAG Trials and elsewhere.

11. In determining key priorities for urgent action it will also be guided by the Productivity Commission's Report on Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, commissioned by COAG, in particular its seven Strategic Areas for Action:

- early child development and growth (prenatal to age 3);
- early school engagement and performance (preschool to year 3);
- positive childhood and transition to adulthood;
- substance use and misuse;
- functional and resilient families and communities;
- effective environmental health systems;

- economic participation and development.

Urgent Priorities

12. There are many urgent priorities in Indigenous communities that warrant focus and attention from the Taskforce. These include:

- inadequate housing;
- poor health;
- low life expectancy;
- poor educational outcomes;
- low employment rates;
- low self esteem;
- family violence;
- law and order;
- high population growth;
- isolation.

13. Taking account of the urgent priorities and its long term vision, the Taskforce will focus on three key areas of intervention for the development of coherent, cross agency approaches over the next 12 months:

- early childhood intervention, improving primary health and improving early educational outcomes;
- safer communities (including issues of authority, governance and law and order); and
- reducing dependency on passive welfare and boosting economic development and employment.

Doing Business

14. Through a single budget submission, to be brought forward by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Taskforce will:

- report annually to the Expenditure Review Committee on the performance of Indigenous specific programmes and services and the proposed allocation of resources across agencies; and

- review performance with a view to using the Indigenous funding pool flexibly and reallocating resources to the approaches that are seen to work best.

15. The Taskforce will develop a consistent approach to the way the Australian Government does business with Indigenous communities – reviewing and re-engineering programmes and services to achieve more streamlined and flexible arrangements.

16. The Taskforce will take account of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) deliberations on Indigenous service delivery arrangements.

Implementation

17. The Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs will support the Ministerial Taskforce in progressing policy development and implementation of priority strategies and initiatives.

FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL TASKFORCE

The Ministerial Taskforce will:

- provide whole-of-government leadership at the highest level;
- set directions and priorities for Australian Government policy and expenditure;
- be responsible for improved performance in mainstream delivery of services including better coordination across government;
- annually review a report from the Secretaries Group on the performance of Indigenous specific programmes and funding;
- recommend to ERC each year in the Budget process, the priorities for allocation of (quarantined) Indigenous-specific funding between programmes and across portfolios.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE MINISTERIAL TASFORCE

The Taskforce is made up of the following Ministers:

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs – Chair

Minister for Transport and Regional Services

Attorney General

Minister for Health and Ageing

Minister for Family and Community Services

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

Minister for Education, Science and Training

Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

Minister for the Environment and Heritage

Minister for Justice and Customs

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF PRINCIPLES FOR DELIVERING SERVICES TO INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

All jurisdictions are committed to achieving better outcomes for Indigenous Australians, improving the delivery of services, building greater opportunities and helping Indigenous families and individuals to become self-sufficient. To this end, and in delivering services to Indigenous people, COAG agreed to a national framework of principles for delivering services to Indigenous Australians.

Sharing responsibility

- Committing to cooperative approaches on policy and service delivery between agencies, at all levels of government and maintaining and strengthening government effort to address Indigenous disadvantage.
- Building partnerships with Indigenous communities and organisations based on shared responsibilities and mutual obligations.
- Committing to Indigenous participation at all levels and a willingness to engage with representatives, adopting flexible approaches and providing adequate resources to support capacity at the local and regional levels.
- Committing to cooperation between jurisdictions on native title, consistent with Commonwealth native title legislation.

Harnessing the mainstream

- Ensuring that Indigenous-specific and mainstream programmes and services are complementary.
- Lifting the performance of programmes and services by:
 - reducing bureaucratic red tape;
 - increasing flexibility of funding (mainstream and Indigenous-specific) wherever practicable;
 - demonstrating improved access for Indigenous people;
 - maintaining a focus on regional areas and local communities and outcomes; and
 - identifying and working together on priority issues.
- Supporting Indigenous communities to harness the engagement of corporate, non-government and philanthropic sectors.

Streamlining service delivery

- Delivering services and programmes that are appropriate, coordinated, flexible and avoid duplication:
 - including fostering opportunities for Indigenous delivered services.
- Addressing jurisdictional overlap and rationalising government interaction with Indigenous communities:
 - negotiating bi-lateral agreements that provide for one level of government having primary responsibility for particular service delivery, or where jurisdictions continue to have overlapping responsibilities, that services would be delivered in accordance with an agreed coherent approach.
- Maximising the effectiveness of action at the local and regional level through whole-of-government(s) responses.
- Recognising the need for services to take account of local circumstances and be informed by appropriate consultations and negotiations with local representatives.

Establishing transparency and accountability

- Strengthening the accountability of governments for the effectiveness of their programmes and services through regular performance review, evaluation and reporting.
- Ensuring the accountability of organisations for the government funds that they administer on behalf of Indigenous people.
- Tasking the Productivity Commission to continue to measure the effect of the COAG commitment through the jointly-agreed set of indicators.

Developing a learning framework

- Sharing information and experience about what is working and what is not.
- Striving for best practice in the delivery of services to Indigenous people, families and communities.

Focussing on priority areas

- Tackling agreed priority issues, including those identified in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report:
 - early childhood development and growth; early school engagement and performance, positive childhood and transition to adulthood; substance use and misuse; functional and resilient families and communities; effective environmental health systems and economic participation and development.

Within this National Framework appropriate consultation and delivery arrangements will be agreed between the Commonwealth and individual States and Territories.

DEPARTMENTAL SUBMISSIONS

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ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Introduction

On 1 July 2004, 53 ATISIS staff transferred to the Attorney-General's Department. A new division—the Indigenous Law and Justice Division (ILJD)—has been created within the Department's Civil Justice and Legal Services Group. ILJD has taken responsibility for the administration of the four programmes that transferred from ATISIS to AGD:

- legal aid
- law and justice advocacy
- prevention, diversion and rehabilitation, and
- family violence prevention legal services.

Links with non-Indigenous specific programmes

Staff of ILJD will liaise closely with other areas of the Department that have responsibility for other aspects of Indigenous-related policy and programmes. These include the Family Law and Legal Assistance Division, the Legal Services and Native Title Division, and the Community Justice and Safety Branch.

The Department sees some significant advantages in the transfer of this new responsibility. Shifting responsibility for Indigenous programmes to mainstream agencies will remove duplication and reduce expenditure on bureaucracy and structures in the management and implementation of government programmes and services. Access for Indigenous Australians to non-Indigenous specific programmes will be enhanced with a concomitant greater awareness of other options for Indigenous people. It will enable greater synergies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous programmes in the areas of legal aid, domestic violence and crime prevention.

To assist in achieving these objectives, AGD will ensure that staff responsible for the delivery of Indigenous-specific programmes liaise closely with those responsible for the delivery of related non-Indigenous specific programmes. For example, Legal Assistance Branch in AGD is responsible for the development, implementation and administration of Australian Government policy on legal aid, and for the direct grant of assistance in matters arising under a number of Australian Government statutory and non-statutory financial assistance schemes. To maximise their liaison, Canberra-based staff of ILJD will be co-located with staff of the Legal Assistance Branch.

Co-ordination and collaboration between agencies

The impetus of the reforms will be directed to improving the way agencies, at both Commonwealth and State/Territory level, interact with each other and with communities to deliver more effective responses to the needs of Indigenous Australians. AGD is coordinating transition activities in close co-operation with OIPC, and forging new links with other agencies. In addition, AGD is:

- supporting the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice and Customs in their involvement on the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs
- supporting the Secretary of the Department in his involvement on the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs
- supporting the development of bilateral agreements and partnerships
- advancing initiatives associated with the National Indigenous Justice Strategy
- supporting the work of the National Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee and other peak Indigenous organisations, in advising governments
- chairing the Native Title Coordination Committee, which includes representatives of Commonwealth bodies with roles in the native title system and advises Government on the operation of the native title system, and
- chairing the Native Title Consultative Forum, which includes representatives of Commonwealth agencies, State and Territory governments, peak bodies and Indigenous organisations involved in the native title system.

The AGD (through the Family Law and Legal Assistance Division, the Legal Services and Native Title Division, and the Community Justice and Safety Branch) already has strong relationships with key agencies on Indigenous-related issues. Contextualization of law and justice issues within the broader framework of Indigenous needs will be crucial in the delivery of programmes and services, and will be assisted by the creation of the Indigenous Law and Justice Division within the Department.

AGD has developed communication strategies to ensure that its regional staff are able to inform Indigenous communities about available programmes and services, and to communicate feedback from Indigenous communities to the Department's national office. Co-operative relations have been established between AGD staff and the staff of other agencies within ICCs and elsewhere.

Focus on regional/local needs

The AGD was not a participant in the COAG trials. Before the transfer of ATSiS staff to the Department, AGD had no staff outside Canberra (apart from some staff of Emergency Management Australia who are based in Mount Macedon, Victoria). Thirty-three of the staff who transferred from ATSiS to AGD are based in 19 different locations outside Canberra.

As the Department has no regional offices, those 33 staff are accommodated in ICCs. To assist in the smooth administration of the transferred programmes, all ILJD staff were brought to Canberra in July for a four-day induction programme. Staff have been briefed on the new service delivery arrangements that operate in ICCs. Strategies and work plans are being developed to ensure that these staff can deliver AGD's programmes in accord with those new arrangements.

The Department is developing arrangements with ICC management, and with other departments, to ensure continuity of programme delivery from those ICCs where AGD has no staff.

The newly-created Division has also established a regional operations unit to oversight the operations of AGD staff, and support the delivery of programmes, in the ICCs. This unit will provide a consistent framework for managing ILJD staff and programme outcomes in a national context.

The regional focus of the programmes that the Department now administers will be strengthened. On 28 July 2004, the Attorney-General announced details about the process for tendering of Indigenous legal services—one of the programmes that has been transferred from ATSiS to the Department. He also announced that a new and simplified model for the allocation of funding to these services will come into operation from 1 July 2005. Previously, funding was allocated on an historical basis; the new model will provide an open, accountable and equitable method for the distribution of funds which will take account of need across regions.

In addition, the Department now has responsibility for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services. Under a new Budget measure, the Government has allocated \$22.7m over four years to expand the number of these services from 13 to 26, with the new services to be mostly located in remote, rural and regional areas.

The Department is very pleased to have this opportunity to contribute to better outcomes for Indigenous people in these important areas in cooperation with OIPC and other Australian Government departments and agencies.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS

Introduction

The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts already has a record of working across government to achieve outcomes for Indigenous Australians. One of the benefits of mainstreaming will be a new concentration of expertise in Indigenous issues within the Department, which will streamline the Department's ability to target initiatives and improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians. DCITA will utilise these resources to continue to play a role in addressing some of the major social and economic factors that impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Broadly speaking, DCITA programmes promote cultural development, participation in sport and improved communication services. For Indigenous communities, strong culture is often an indicator of community health and safety. The links between DCITA programmes and improved outcomes for Indigenous people are various:

- Reliable telephone, IT and broadcasting services allow communities and individuals to participate in the economic and social life of the nation and access information and services available to other Australians.
- Participation in sport can be directly linked with improvements in individual health and community cohesion. Sport programmes in schools have been linked to education retention and employment readiness.
- Cultural programmes build community capacity by maintaining and stressing the importance of cultural knowledge and practices and generating income and employment opportunities. In many communities arts centres provide the only source of earned income.
- Language plays a central role in building cultural strength and addressing social dysfunction. The loss of a language means the loss of cultural knowledge of Australia's first inhabitants.

Together with the ATSISS programmes that are transferring to the Department, DCITA programmes have supported some of Indigenous Australia's highest-profile achievers—forging pathways to success and creating role models for young Indigenous Australians. Olympic medallist Cathy Freeman, AFL legends Jason Akermanis, Nicky Winmar and Michael Long, actors Deborah Mailman, Leah Purcell and Aaron Peterson, filmmakers Rachel Perkins and Ivan Sen, performers Christine Anu, Stephen Page and David Gulpilil, writers Sally Morgan, Ruby Langford and Kim Scott, artists Rover Thomas, Rosella Namock and Tracey Moffat are examples of those who have all received direct or indirect support from this portfolio.

These success stories are a source of pride and inspiration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They demonstrate potential paths for economic independence. The extended blend of programmes now managed by DCTIA will bring new opportunities to leverage quality benefits for Indigenous people and to maintain and strengthen the distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which lie at the heart of functional families and communities.

Managing the transition

Until 1 July 2004, DCITA was a relatively small Canberra-based policy department without a regional presence. While DCITA managed some important programmes, the primary focus was the provision of advice to Ministers. Many of the programmes were delivered by the 22 agencies that comprise the CITA portfolio.

As a result of the new administrative arrangements, DCITA has now assumed responsibility for programme budgets amounting to approximately \$42 million per annum and is integrating approximately 100 new staff into the Department. Most of these staff will be located in regional areas, and, consistent with the whole-of-government approach, will work in newly-established Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs).

This will be a challenge, particularly given the lack of an existing departmental state or regional network and the relatively junior profile of the staff mapped to DCITA.

To ensure that priority is given to the important task of integrating the transferred programmes with those of the Department and gaining increased benefits for Indigenous people, the Department has set up a high-level Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary to guide progress.

Over the coming period key tasks will include:

- managing the transfer of the former ATSIIS programmes and staff to the Department;
- establishing a regional network structure;
- identifying synergies and linkages between former ATSIIS programmes and other DCITA and portfolio initiatives, in order to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians; and
- coordinating the Department's input to the whole-of-government policy and strategy on Indigenous issues.

In terms of regional network management, DCITA is working with new Executive Level staff located outside of Canberra OIPC to form a leadership group who can assist with the transition and provide a level of guidance to ensure that programmes continue to be delivered smoothly at the local level on the ground. There will be a need for close cooperation between the ICC

managers and the DCITA network manager, particularly in the early stages of the transition.

The Department is also actively participating in a number of whole of government forums, including those focussed on economic development and early childhood intervention. This will assist it in revisiting the programmes and services it currently delivers and developing innovative responses to community needs.

Benefits of mainstreaming

DCITA telecommunications, broadcasting, arts, cultural and sport programmes are often interlinked with the programmes of other government agencies—enabling the delivery of information and services that are the responsibility of other agencies or indirectly delivering the outcomes sought by other agencies.

For example, a network of Indigenous community broadcasting services has traditionally been supported by ATSIIS Indigenous-specific programme dollars, by DCITA community broadcasting programmes and indirectly through the Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP). Remote Indigenous community broadcasting services can be integral to boosting economic and cultural development and building safer communities by:

- providing an effective delivery mechanism for information about government services that is tailored for specific audiences (for example by broadcasting in local languages);
- providing community-specific information about health, education and other initiatives (for example alerting people about visits to communities by health professionals);
- providing a forum for discussion of community priorities and concerns;
- providing a safe environment for young people to engage in creative activity and express their aspirations; and
- reinforcing a sense of community pride and esteem (such as by celebrating local achievements).

Mainstreaming presents an opportunity to work together on approaches to sector development that acknowledge the possibilities that community broadcasting offers communities and government agencies as a communications tool.

For example, the National Indigenous Radio Service Limited (NIRS) is a national radio service provided from a hub station in Brisbane. It primarily provides a bed programme to Indigenous media organisations that don't have the staffing or capital requirements to provide 24-hour high quality broadcasting to their audience. The NIRS supplies high quality entertainment

and important information to all members who then retransmit the service when relevant. It also provides a service for the translation of information campaigns in many Indigenous languages for broadcast over the network.

NIRS is supported by the ATSIIS Indigenous-specific programme dollars and by DCITA community broadcasting programmes.

NIRS can be received by over 100 Broadcasting to Remote Aboriginal Community Scheme (BRACS) units, 50 Indigenous Radio Stations and 40 other Community Radio Stations, and as such, provides a gate way for all Australian governments to communicate their message to Indigenous communities from Broome to Brisbane and beyond.

Another example of the inter-reliance of government programmes and services (and the opportunities offered through mainstreaming services) is the importance of effective telecommunications services, which are critical to the delivery of a wide range of social services to remote Indigenous Communities. Agencies delivering services rely on phones, fax, internet and videoconferencing to deliver health, education, justice and other services to Indigenous people in remote areas.

Telecommunications services are also important tools in themselves for the economic development and self-reliance. Functioning telecommunications services build safer communities and assist communities to achieve social, cultural and business aspirations.

Accordingly, DCITA currently works closely with a range of Australian and State government agencies, at national, regional and local levels, in implementing the Government's Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC).

During 2003-04 ATSIIS and the TAPRIC programme funded an initiative called the Multimedia Language Resource Project. The project, which will be conducted across two financial years, will result in the development of interactive CD ROM resources for ten Indigenous Language groups. The Indigenous language groups participating in this initiative are Adnyamathanha, Arabana, Ngaanyatjarra, Warakurna, Ngarinyman, Nyaqngumarta, Olkola, Paakantji, Palawa Kani and Wathaurong.

Co-ordination/collaboration between agencies

As noted above, the DCITA portfolio has already been working cooperatively with other agencies and is committed to securing strong collaboration between government agencies and community organisations.

In October 2003 an Indigenous Art Centre Strategy and Action Plan was jointly released by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations; and the Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Indigenous art centres are building capacity, maintaining culture and generating income and

employment opportunities in remote Indigenous communities, while also producing some of Australia's best and most sought after visual art. Strong art centres play a role in maintaining and strengthening cultural values—operating as meeting places and offering opportunities for training, education and enterprise. In some instances they are the only sources of externally generated income for a community.

The strategy is a recognition by all those with responsibility for supporting the Indigenous art sector that reform of the kind envisaged under the new arrangements for Indigenous Affairs (involving more coordinated effort by government) will be essential if the sector is to reach its full potential.

One outcome of the strategy is an Indigenous employment initiative supported by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to train art administrators, which is to be piloted in eight art centres in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. There is clear potential to develop further similar employment initiatives in conjunction with the arts and culture programme, community broadcasters and sporting organisations in Indigenous communities.

Focus on regional/local needs

As a result of the new arrangements, DCITA will now manage a network of staff located throughout Australia. For the first time, there will be DCITA staff on the ground in regional Australia—building the department's capacity to establish working relationships with communities and to advise on effective responses to specific priorities and emerging needs.

DCITA hopes to work with the new regional network to identify opportunities to address regional need—such as the innovative Kimberley Language Resource Centre. The Kimberley Language Resource Centre is an independent community-based organisation located in remote Halls Creek with members from across the Kimberley. The work of the Language Centres utilises emergent technology to strengthen numerous languages across the Kimberley region and simultaneously address local environmental pressures.

The Kimberley Language Resource Centre is leading the way in:

- producing interactive CD language teaching tools;
- introducing language 'nesting' in the local schools where elders regularly visit to teach and talk language to young children; and
- actively participating in scientific research.

Through natural resource management programmes such as the Ord Bonaparte Programme, language speakers have worked closely with botanists and scientists in capturing Indigenous people's detailed knowledge of the environment in which they have lived for thousands of years, and in combining it with traditional western land management techniques. It is believed that the

integrated data that has been the result of such projects will greatly improve land management techniques in the vulnerable ecosystems of the north.

Another relevant example of cooperation between agencies to deliver on specific regional needs comes from the National Archives of Australia. The Archives has extensive collections of records relating to Indigenous people and has produced a number of guides, publications and exhibitions. The Archives is currently offering a broad range of services and activities designed to make the stories held in the Archives' collections accessible to Indigenous people across the country.

Recently, the Archives collaborated with the Dhakiyarr Wirrpunda's descendants, the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and Film Australia in telling the story of Dhakiyarr, an elder of the Dhudi-Djapu clan of east Arnhem Land, the first Aboriginal person to have his case heard by the High Court of Australia. The Archives will be launching a website on the Dhakiyarr case to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the High Court case in November 2004.

The Dhakiyarr Story—a Film Australia documentary based on the Archives' records—was broadcast on the ABC in May 2004. In June 2004 an album, *In Memory of Dhakiyarr*, produced by the Archives was presented to the Wirrpunda family at a reconciliation ceremony at Dhuruputjpi in east Arnhem Land by the acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. The ceremony was attended by the Director-General of the Archives and by the Archives Director in the Northern Territory, Phyllis Williams, an Indigenous woman who assisted in making the ceremony such a success.

Funding flexibility

DCITA is beginning work on a detailed analysis of incoming programmes and their synergies with existing mainstream portfolio activities. Once this assessment is completed we will be better placed to determine the extent of funding flexibility within the portfolio. This analysis will also inform the whole-of-government deliberations of funding priorities for Indigenous communities.

Improving accountability

As mentioned above, DCITA is conducting an assessment of incoming programmes, with a focus on improving their effectiveness and strengthening accountability.

In addition to improvements in accountability of incoming programmes, the new arrangements offer an opportunity for a portfolio-wide perspective of the impact of CITA investment in Indigenous Affairs. The CITA portfolio comprises 22 statutory authorities, government business enterprises and executive agencies—including for example Australia Post, the Australia Council, the National Museum of Australia, ABC and SBS. The new arrangements are a trigger for a cross-portfolio assessment of current investment, aimed at increasing accountability.

One example is the Indigenous Sport Programme, which includes a national network of 50 Indigenous Sport Development Officers working within the various state and territory departments of sport and recreation. To add value to this national network of development officers, the programme has targeted 16 national sporting organisations to play a more active role in increasing participation, infrastructure and skill development in Indigenous communities.

The programme is currently delivered under a Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and DCITA (formerly under an MOU between ASC and ATSIC/ATSIS). One of the benefits of bringing the programme under one portfolio include the opportunity to reassess the MOU and strengthen the data collected, in order to assess the effectiveness of the Indigenous Sport Programme in meeting the stated aims. There is potential for improved research and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data about the effectiveness of activities undertaken as part of the programme

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

Introduction

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) has a long history of providing Indigenous education and training programmes in support of a broader strategy of alleviating Indigenous disadvantage. The formation of the Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) provides a real opportunity to better integrate education and training initiatives with employment activities including Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), health initiatives and family and community and regional infrastructure programmes.

The Department is keen to participate in the new administrative arrangements. Although DEST's administrative arrangements have not been directly impacted by the decision to reassign ATSIC and ATSI programmes to mainstream departments, the proposed reforms provide new opportunities for the Department to work with other agencies and further improve its effectiveness at achieving outcomes for Indigenous people.

DEST has a large regional network of some 300 staff located in every State and Territory. It has offices in some 44 locations. Many of the officers in our Indigenous Education Units in particular are involved in working with Indigenous communities and families on Indigenous education, training and higher education matters. DEST has about 10 per cent of its staff identified as Indigenous Australians – many of these staff work in our regional network.

DEST is also currently active in whole of government work with Indigenous communities. As the lead agency for the Murdi Paaki region in NSW and a committed participant in seven other Council of Australian Governments (COAG) trial sites, DEST has considerable experience in working with Indigenous communities and across agencies at Australian, State and local government level.

The reforms of DEST's Indigenous programme delivery arrangements under the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP) and Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) are congruent with the Government's broader changes to Indigenous service delivery arrangements. DEST's reforms are addressing the need to place a greater focus on Indigenous communities in areas of greatest disadvantage (such as remote communities) and providing more holistic approaches (such as 'whole of school' projects under IEDA). These reforms also improve accountability so that the effectiveness of programmes can be better assessed.

Coordination/collaboration between agencies

In this initial implementation phase, DEST has been active in a number of interdepartmental working parties focusing on issues of importance in shaping the new ICC arrangements. These include recruitment, communication, and training and development for the ICC Managers.

Given the importance of the initiatives DEST is working to have its regional network integrated into the new ICCs at the earliest possible opportunity. Staff in DEST's State and regional network in particular will work within the new coordination arrangements. Our State Managers will work closely with metropolitan, rural and remote Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) staff.

Our network staff will be part of the 22 rural and remote ICCs. In each State and the Northern Territory there are some 15 locations where former ATSIC offices are located and where DEST has a regional or district office. In these 15 ICC locations, ie where a DEST office already exists, measures are being implemented so that a 'virtual' presence can be established in the ICC until the physical co-location can be achieved. In seven ICC locations where DEST currently has no regional office, DEST has sought expressions of interest from staff to work on a temporary basis to help establish the Department's presence. These locations are: Derby (WA); Ceduna (SA); Roma (Qld); Coffs Harbour (NSW); Tamworth (NSW); Bourke (NSW) and Queanbeyan (NSW). DEST staff will commence work in some of these ICCs in early August 2004. The longer term aim is to appoint on-going staff to these seven locations to ensure that DEST is engaged in the government's new administrative arrangements from the outset. Other DEST regional offices in each State and the Northern Territory are being mapped to an ICC according to the former ATSIC regional footprint so that coordinated working arrangements can be established quickly.

Over time DEST's regional network will be joined physically or affiliated 'virtually' with the ICC regional 'footprint'. Arrangements are well underway for our staff to have IT access to the OIPC desktop to ensure that information is shared and that effective communication occurs. An internal DEST working group has been convened to look at issues such as accommodation, office space, lease arrangements, IT infrastructure, training and communications, to deliver on this intention.

DEST regional network staff are attending the initial ICC staff training being held in July-August in each capital city and in several regional locations.

DEST is also actively participating in the four newly established interagency working parties that reflect the Ministerial Taskforce's identified priorities:

- early childhood intervention, primary health and early educational outcomes;
- reducing dependency on passive welfare and promoting economic development and employment;
- safer communities; and
- the single budget process.

These working parties have representation from a variety of Australian Government Departments. The working parties will develop individual action plans to address their priority area, including the articulation of current and future work of Departments to better enable coordination and collaboration between agencies.

For DEST, an important focus will remain on the development of 'whole of community' and 'whole of school' strategies to increase school attendance and improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous young people, and to dovetail these with employment and training outcomes as is being done with current DEST funding in a range of locations.

Reflection on lessons from the Murdi Paaki COAG Trial

DEST is the COAG lead agency for the Murdi Paaki region which covers one-third of NSW, stretching around the Victorian, South Australian and Queensland borders – an area of 300,000 square kilometres. The Department is also an active participant in seven other COAG Trial sites.

Murdi Paaki consists of nine Local Government Areas and includes 16 major communities: Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Cobar, Collarenebri, Coonamble, Dareton, Enngonia, Goodooga, Gulargambone, Ivanhoe, Lightning Ridge, Menindee, Walgett, Weilmoringle and Wilcannia.

According to the 2001 ABS Census, 7,542 Indigenous people resided in the Bourke ATSI Region (the boundaries are consistent with Murdi Paaki), representing 14% of the total population of the area, and approximately 7% of the total Indigenous population of NSW.

A guiding principle DEST has adopted in its lead agency role, is engaging with the community in a partnership to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous children, families and communities in the Murdi Paaki region. Among other things this involves actively listening to community needs and ensuring that actions are taken following consultation with, and agreement of, all the parties.

Significant consultations have taken place between the Indigenous communities of Murdi Paaki, the Australian and State governments. Much has been achieved to date in terms of building capacity at both government and community level and ensuring common understandings in relation to the outcomes sought.

Much of the success of these new arrangements underscores the need for openness and trust between government agencies and the communities. Communicating what government is doing and, as importantly, what other communities are doing is very important. Communities need to know what is going on in their area of influence so they can make an informed decision on the way forward and they need to know what is available from government. Also critical is the need to strengthen community capacity to engage with government. Community representative groups need to be skilled or

appropriately supported to be able to effectively represent the views of the community and deal with government.

In Murdi Paaki, DEST and other agencies are providing assistance to the community working parties with secretariat support and with regular meetings and information. A monthly newsletter directed to community working parties is produced jointly with State agencies and the Chair of the Regional Council to communicate what government is doing and to help communities share information about what is being done in their communities. Regular meetings of chairs of working parties are also held.

We have knowledgeable and credible staff on the ground supported more broadly by our regional network. This local presence allows direct access and ensures good communication flow and helps to provide an effective working relationship.

DEST, together with the NSW government and the communities, are planning to use rigorous performance monitoring to guide the ongoing implementation of the COAG Trial and refine the ways that the communities and governments work together. The monitoring framework aims to assist communities and governments by providing timely information in the following areas:

- progress in implementing the Trial (including the formation of community working parties and collaborative arrangements between communities and governments);
- community perspectives on the Trial and on community-government interactions; and
- outcomes in key priority areas (such as school attendance, and literacy and numeracy levels).

In summary, DEST's experience is that the COAG approach provides the potential for:

- a more holistic approach;
- enabling governments and the community to look at the bigger picture;
- allowing a more efficient and effective use of both government and community resources; and
- enabling government to more efficiently and effectively tailor services to the needs of the community/region.

How DEST will work to produce joined-up services at the local level through the ICCs

In addition to ensuring that it works closely with OIPC and has a presence in all rural and remote ICCs as outlined above, DEST is ensuring that its people have the relevant training and skills to effectively manage the delivery of

services to Indigenous communities within a whole of government framework. For example, DEST is making a significant training investment in its Indigenous Education Network (IEN) with the delivery of a programme based on the Public Services Training Package Diploma in Government qualification over the period December 2003 - December 2004. This will help DEST officers continue to work effectively with communities, build strategic alliances and adapt to changing circumstances.

Work is also planned to examine the specific needs of staff working in a whole of government environment (based on DEST's experience to date) to identify any specific skill requirements and to subsequently inform a staff development strategy.

Members of the IEN, and other key personnel in the DEST State and National Offices will attend the ICC orientation training programmes conducted in July-August 2004.

As a participant in the ICC DEST can offer to other agencies the benefits of its broad range of skills and experience. This skill and experience, particularly in terms of implementing programmes in the field and providing feedback to 'Canberra' to influence policy reform and development, will provide substantial support to the ICCs and their parent agencies.

As part of its existing responsibilities DEST works alongside an extensive network of education and training service providers right across the country. The new ICC arrangements will enable other agencies to use these networks to develop stronger relationships with a wider range of service providers and community members. DEST supports such networks through, for example, services provided via the Industry Training Strategies Programme to support and expand Indigenous peoples' participation in formal and nationally recognised training programmes, specifically New Apprenticeships and Training Packages. Services include advice, assistance, research and promotional activities to support New Apprenticeships Centres (NACs) and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), peak employer associations, Vocational Education and Training (VET) organisations, Indigenous agencies and/or Indigenous communities.

Questacon currently runs a range of outreach programmes, some of which are targeted solely at Indigenous youth (eg Shell Questacon Science Circus, Questacon's contribution to the CrocFest programme). The Questacon programmes which specifically target regional and remote Indigenous youth focus on inspiring an interest in science and learning about science. Frequently the 'tools' of these programmes include health themes such as diabetes. These skills may prove to be of interest and use to other Australian Government agencies which are developing communication strategies for the delivery of their programmes to Indigenous communities.

Focus on regional/local needs

DEST considers that the improved local Indigenous structures and regional partnerships established as a result of the new administrative reforms will provide an opportunity to improve its understanding of clients' needs and issues, and to improve its communication of information about DEST services and programmes to communities.

Individual initiatives such as the whole of school intervention strategy will also involve the use of local Indigenous structures and regional partnerships. Multilateral and bilateral discussions will also be held with stakeholders about regional level data reporting, performance indicator requirements, and principles for setting targets under the new accountability framework.

In particular, negotiations will be undertaken with the Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies (IECBs) and the Indigenous Support Units (ISUs) on new funding agreements associated with the 2005-2008 quadrennium plans for Indigenous specific funding. This is in addition to discussions for the VET sector to be held with the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council and the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers.

DEST will encourage and facilitate engagement between its contracted service providers and the Indigenous regional networks through the ICCs to ensure that the needs of Indigenous people are being appropriately identified and met. The DEST service providers would include those for programmes such as:

- New Apprenticeships;
- New Apprenticeships Access;
- Language, Literacy and Numeracy;
- Jobs Pathway;
- Partnership Outreach Education Models;
- Workplace English Language; and
- Basic IT Enabling Skills for Older Workers.

Funding flexibility

DEST is supportive of the concept of flexible funding arrangements to meet emerging needs and priorities and to achieve cross-portfolio objectives. DEST has provided a contribution of \$445,000 in both the 2003-04 and 2004-05 financial years to the Flexible Funding Pool established by the Indigenous Communities Co-ordination Taskforce to support the COAG trails. There are some challenges associated with improving flexibility and the transportability of funding between agencies and possibly tiers of government. This is particularly relevant where funding is provided under Commonwealth

legislation, and expenditure has to be in accordance with the objectives of the Act. The majority of DEST's Indigenous programme funds are appropriated in this way. The management and accountability complexities arising from the need to be more flexible are being explored and will take time to work through in the context of shared responsibility agreements.

Improving accountability

Under the new arrangements for Indigenous affairs DEST, along with other agencies, is conscious of the need to act with openness and transparency.

DEST is committed to robust performance monitoring to gauge the effect of its programmes. Indeed, this is reflected in the monitoring and evaluation framework developed for the Murdi Paaki trial (see previously). The Department has a culture of evaluation, recognising the importance to the Australian public that the policies and programmes deliver important social outcomes. These social outcomes are reflected in the Outcomes and Outputs Framework that the Department is accountable for to the Australian Government.

With regard to Indigenous specific programmes, there is alignment between the Department's strategic priority of improved learning outcomes for Indigenous students and the overarching Outcome Statement of 'Students acquire high quality foundation skills and learning outcomes from schools'.

The *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training* is indicative of the commitment to intra agency measures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Indigenous education programmes. The purpose of this report is to enable the Minister for Education, Science and Training to report to the Parliament on the progress of Indigenous education and training in Australia.

To illustrate further in relation to DEST's Indigenous education funding, the new accountability arrangements for IEDA and IESIP includes a strengthened performance and reporting framework and new requirements to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the IEDA and IESIP programmes.

Broadly, the new accountability conditions for accessing Australian Government Indigenous education targeted funds are:

- reporting against school attendance benchmarks for all students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous);
- education providers transparently reporting their expected and actual expenditure on Indigenous education from their own sources. This is to ensure that the supplementary funding provided reaches the intended recipients, and to guard against substitution;
- participation in DEST initiated studies which will provide detailed information on specific outcomes that cannot be readily measured

using performance indicators; and

- participation in data quality assurance processes.

The performance monitoring and reporting framework will be based on the current suite of IESIP performance indicators. The framework will act as an overarching measure of the achievement of the goals of the Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP) in key areas of Indigenous education. Where appropriate, the suite of performance indicators will also be aligned with the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) key performance measures for the National Goals of Schooling and the COAG measures for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

The strengthened accountability requirements for IEDA include:

- an evaluation strategy based on sampling, case studies, research, focus groups and reviews to assess the effectiveness of the different elements of IEDA;
- specific performance information from providers; and
- performance data being reported annually in the *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training*.

Accountability requirements tied to IESIP funding for 2005-2008 include:

- reporting that allows identification of regional differences rather than just aggregate State level data which often masks large regional variations. Data on regional differences will be required for remote, rural and metropolitan locations;
- agreement to performance indicators and targets to significantly and measurably accelerate the rate of progress in improving Indigenous education outcomes and attendance; and
- agreement to participate in measuring and reporting the outcomes of national and other IESIP strategic projects, especially in remote areas.

This new approach to accountability will provide continuity of data from one quadrennium to the next, allowing the Minister for Education, Science and Training to report progress over time in achieving the objects of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act* which reflect the 21 long term goals of the AEP.

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Introduction

DEWR is committed to the new approach for the delivery of services to Indigenous Australians and can foresee many opportunities to streamline services and maximise outcomes achieved for Indigenous Australians. DEWR is supportive of the move to a whole of government approach to servicing Indigenous Australians and has a demonstrated track record in harnessing the potential of mainstream services to deliver tailored Indigenous employment and business development services across Australia. The focus has been on ensuring increased employment outcomes and economic development opportunities for Indigenous Australians. The new arrangements will provide further opportunity to improve potential outcomes through the co-location of key employment and business development programmes in a single portfolio, combined with an agreed whole of government approach which will see all agencies focus on how they can best contribute to flexible responses to meet the priorities of Indigenous Australians on a regional basis.

Opportunities under mainstream servicing

DEWR has achieved considerable success in drawing on mainstream services to contribute to Indigenous-specific strategies that result in improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes. The *Indigenous Employment Policy* draws on mainstream Job Network services and supplements them with Indigenous-specific programmes such as Structured Training and Employment Projects, the Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Programme and the Indigenous Small Business Fund to provide support and tailored services to Indigenous job seekers.

Both the supply of a job ready workforce and employer demand for that workforce need to be stimulated if Indigenous unemployment is to be effectively addressed. Through the *Indigenous Employment Policy's* flexible suite of programmes DEWR is well placed to support employer commitment.

The *Indigenous Employment Policy* was introduced in 1999 in recognition of the particular disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the labour market. The introduction of the *Indigenous Employment Policy* has increased the emphasis on creating opportunities for Indigenous people in the private sector. The flexibility of assistance provided through the *Indigenous Employment Policy* builds on three key principles:

- boosting the demand for jobs in the private sector and small business to improve the level of participation in private sector jobs;
- addressing the supply of Indigenous workers through appropriate and innovative assistance that prepares Indigenous people for available jobs, including giving priority to accredited employment-

- based training such as traineeships and apprenticeships; and
- improving the matching of supply and demand, particularly through Job Network.

Mainstream programmes, such as the Job Network, are specifically tailored as appropriate to meet the needs of Indigenous jobseekers and the community. For example, all Job Network Members in areas with high Indigenous populations are specifically required to demonstrate their expertise in assisting Indigenous jobseekers. Success in this area by providers (the number of jobseekers placed in jobs and their sustainability) is given high priority in performance monitoring.

In addition, specific fee for service arrangements have been developed in consultation with the community and implemented in a number of localities including in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, to reflect their particular circumstances and local labour market needs.

The new arrangements will further complement and help build on the Indigenous Employment Centres (IECs) initiative. IECs were established in 2002 under *Australians Working Together* with the aim of assisting CDEPs to improve employment outcomes. IECs are CDEPs which are funded specifically to assist in moving participants off CDEPs in locations where there are jobs.

The first IECs commenced delivering services in April 2002. More IECs opened later in 2002, in 2003 and again in 2004. There are currently 33 IECs providing services to IEC participants across Australia.

Overall Outcomes

The outcomes achieved to date under the Indigenous Employment Policy demonstrate the potential for significant outcomes to be achieved for Indigenous Australians by harnessing the delivery capacity of mainstream services. For example, in 2003-04 around 37,000 Indigenous job seekers participated in Job Network and 22,000 were placed into a job. Over 4050 participated in Work for the Dole and Transition to Work programmes. During the same period over 9,900 Indigenous job seekers have been assisted under the Indigenous Employment Policy through Structured Training and Employment Projects, Wage Assistance, CDEP Placement Incentive, Indigenous Employment Centres and the National Indigenous Cadetship Project.

Evaluation of IEP

The outcomes are supported by evaluations undertaken of the *Indigenous Employment Policy* to examine the effectiveness of the policy in producing outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The Stage One IEP evaluation (May 2002) reported that solid progress had been made in the first two years of implementation, with promising progress in the level of job seeker participation, a strong shift towards engaging the private sector, and higher levels of employment outcomes than under previous programmes.

The Stage Two *Indigenous Employment Policy* Effectiveness Report was finalised in 2003. Findings indicate that the IEP continues to make a positive contribution to the employment prospects of Indigenous job seekers, particularly in the private sector. This evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the *Indigenous Employment Policy* in terms of the difference it makes to employment outcomes for Indigenous people. It is estimated that together, Intensive Assistance, Wage Assistance and STEP (including Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment) were responsible for between 2400 and 4300 new jobs for Indigenous job seekers per annum. These estimates of new jobs can be compared with calculations made by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research of 3400 additional jobs required each year to maintain the status quo in Indigenous employment to working age population ratios, and 10 000 each year to achieve employment equity by 2011.¹

New arrangements: CDEP

With the move of CDEP to the employment portfolio DEWR foresees significant opportunities to improve the links between the employment functions of CDEP and DEWR and DEWR's mainstream employment programmes to maximise positive employment outcomes.

CDEP is now Australia's largest Indigenous programme, involving more than 37,000 participants with expenditure of \$550m per annum.² Data from the 2001 Census shows that CDEP participants comprise around 18 percent of Indigenous employees across the country.³ The CDEP Scheme is more significant to remote and very remote regions where it accounts for over 50 per cent of Indigenous employment. Despite this geographical skew, many participants are in areas with access to employment opportunities. The ATSI Annual report for 2002-03 records that well over one-third of participants are in non-remote areas⁴. In addition, many participants in remote locations, do

¹ CAEPR Paper No. 251/2003 *The Future of Indigenous Work: Forecasts of labour force status to 2011* by B.H. Hunter, Y.Kinfu and J. Taylor

² It is estimated that foregone income support payments represent two-thirds of the CDEP budget.

³ Source: ABS 2001, Census cited in Productivity Commission: *Overcoming Disadvantage Report 2003* Supporting Table 3A.5.3. It is estimated that the 2001 ABS Census identifies 60% of CDEP participants (as CDEP participants). It is unknown how many of the remaining 40% identified as employed, unemployed or did not specify their labour force status. Due to varying methods of data collection, CDEP participants in remote and very remote areas were far more likely to have their participation identified.

⁴ ATSI Annual Report Table 2.26 CDEP participant numbers by ATSI regional cluster at 30 June 2003. These are Australian Taxation Office (ATO) determined zones.

have access to off-CDEP employment opportunities, including local jobs in the community. DEWR, through Job Network and the Indigenous Employment Policy can support CDEP organisations to maximise employment outcomes including in remote locations as illustrated by the following case study.

Flinders Island, Tasmania

The Flinders Island Aboriginal Association (FIAA) is a stand alone CDEP based at Lady Barron on Flinders Island.

FIAA operate a well run community organisation with responsibilities in health, housing (they are the largest rate payer on Flinders Island), agriculture and mutton bird harvesting. Utilising CDEP the organisation operates Thule farm (the second largest farm on Flinders Island which was purchased by the Indigenous Land Corporation and which FIAA leases) and have turned the property around from its run down state in a few short years.

FIAA are currently looking to re-open the Fish Factory at Lady Barron. They own the building and have funds to re-fit the factory. They are working to put together an additional funding package so that they can become operational and provide approximately 30 employment opportunities for community members. DEWR is working with FIAA on a STEP application to assist with pre-employment training and employment costs.

Business and economic development

Again DEWR sees significant opportunities with the new arrangements to maximise business and economic development initiatives for Indigenous Australians and communities. Under the *Indigenous Employment Policy*, a number of measures were introduced to help support Indigenous business development or promote self employment, including:

- *Indigenous Self Employment Programme* - assists individuals to establish their own small business by providing business advice and support, financial literacy training and funding assistance of up to \$5,500 through a loan funding arrangement. The loan assists with the non-wage set up costs of business for individuals who meet certain eligibility criteria. 78 loan agreements were signed in 2003-04.
- *Indigenous Small Business Fund* - fosters the development of businesses owned, operated and managed by Indigenous people and promotes sustained Indigenous employment opportunities. Assistance is available for individuals and Indigenous organisations for activities including feasibility studies, business planning, marketing and other facilitative projects. In 2003-04, 52 projects were approved at a cost of \$2.1mn.
- *Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme* - increases the level of employment of Indigenous Australians by improving the access of Indigenous businesses to commercial finance and culturally appropriate

professional support and mentoring. Flexible assistance packages are available over three years to help stimulate Indigenous business development for loans ranging from \$50,000 - \$500,000. A key feature will be the provision of interest rate subsidies to ease debt servicing requirements during the business start-up phase. The programme is delivered in partnership with the Westpac Banking Corporation. This programme was only recently introduced and a number of enquiries have been made.

In addition to the above, CDEP adds further capacity to support business and enterprise development. The recent ATSIC CDEP Policy of March 2004 indicates that over 40 per cent of CDEP activity contributes to economic development, particularly in remote areas which often have a limited economic base.

The economic programmes that were proposed to be moved to the Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio as part of the Government's new Indigenous servicing arrangements included:

- Business Development Programme (BDP);
- Home Ownership Programme (HOP); and
- Indigenous Business Australia (IBA).

With the addition of these programmes, the Portfolio will be better placed to support economic development for Indigenous Australians and in so doing, support the new jobs that flow from these arrangements all contributing to a higher standard of living for Indigenous Australians.

Co-ordination/collaboration between agencies

DEWR see much advantage in the new formal collaboration mechanisms being put in place, including ICCs, and believes they will have an important role to play in promoting strong and sustainable co-ordination and collaboration arrangements between agencies. They should also foster flexible and innovative approaches to meet community needs. DEWR currently has a presence in every ICC.

The practical potential for utilising mainstream services alongside Indigenous specific services and working in collaboration in a whole-of-government framework to maximise linkages and outcomes, is clearly demonstrated in the development of solution brokerage capabilities within the Department and DEWR's role in the COAG whole-of-government trials.

Solution brokerage is a key priority of the Department under its current business plan. DEWR has defined solution brokerage as the capability to identify opportunities and be innovative, flexible and outcomes orientated, drawing together the various programmes/services across all levels of Government, industry and the community to achieve desired outcomes. This capability includes stakeholder liaison skills and has already been used to some success to support improved Indigenous outcomes.

DEWR has had the lead agent role in the COAG whole of government trials for both the Cape York and Shepparton trial sites. A key part of this role has been working with other Government agencies (both at the Australian Government level and at the State and local Government level) as well as with Indigenous representatives to determine priorities and appropriate responses to those priorities in the trial sites, using the shared responsibility framework.

DEWR's experience with the COAG trials is set out below.

Cape York Experience: Governance and Relationships

Developing a Regional Approach:

A cooperative and sound working relationship has been established directly between the Australian Government and the key Indigenous leaders in the Cape as part of the COAG trial. A number of regional strategies focussed on economic development, promoting better education and employment outcomes and improving Indigenous health, including through addressing substance abuse issues (see below) have also been developed by the key Indigenous leaders and are being progressed through the COAG trial.

Regular meetings have been held with Australian Government agencies to identify and develop effective measures to underpin and further develop these key regional strategies. Those meetings have allowed the Indigenous leaders to provide direct feedback and comment on the design of new policy initiatives. Together with the other mechanisms in place to progress the trials (the Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce and the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Issues) this has meant that quick progress can be made on key issues that would otherwise take some time to progress.

Specific regional initiatives that have been supported and progressed as part of the COAG trial and which have involved a range of government and other partners include the Weipa Multi Purpose Facility, the Cape York Leadership Institute and rollout of the Whole of Health planning process (see below), the Family Income Management (FIMS) project, the Balkanu Business Hubs project and the Computer Culture project in Coen. The support of corporate philanthropic organisations, through the Indigenous Economic Partnership has also been critical to helping get these projects underway and to providing hands on and support and leadership at the local level to complement other government support for the projects.

Working at the Community Level:

As part of the COAG trial, the Australian Government has been working closely with the Queensland Government to implement its *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* strategy.

A Negotiation Table process for undertaking community consultations with government has also now been put in place, to assist communities to identify key priority issues that need to be addressed using a shared responsibility framework. Whilst the Negotiation Table process is at different stages in each of the communities, it has been used to help support and develop responses to local (and regional) issues. The Australian Government has been an active participant in designing and supporting the Negotiation Tables in each of the Cape communities, and the shared responsibility framework underpins the community level negotiations, with an emphasis on local partners taking responsibility for addressing issues in their own communities. Representation at the Negotiation Tables in the various Cape communities has been shared between various Australian Government agencies, with the representative agency having responsibility to act on behalf of other relevant agencies.

Specific cross government coordination arrangements

Coordination arrangements have been put in place to support collaboration at all levels of government (Australian, State, and local government and including community) to support the Cape York COAG trial. These are listed below. It is envisaged these arrangements can now be streamlined in light of the new ICC model now being implemented in Cairns.

- Australian Government representation on the Queensland Government *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* Chief Executive Officer Committee (Dr Peter Boxall and Mr Wayne Gibbons have regularly attended these meetings, which include State Government heads of agencies);
- A Brisbane based high level working group comprising the DEWR State Manager, DATSIP (Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy) and ATSIIS;
- A regular Australian Government agency heads meeting (which includes State Government as appropriate);
- A Cairns group of Australian Government and State Government officials to support the trial;
- A DEWR officer is co-located with the Queensland Cape York Strategy Unit;
- Arrangements are also in place to coordinate Queensland and Australian Government support for and participation in the Negotiation Tables: and

- Regular consultations are held with key Cape York leaders and their organisations;
- Community Councils and Community Justice Groups have been participating in Negotiation Tables with the Queensland and Australian government

Involvement in the COAG trials has indicated some elements of best practice that will be adopted in the new collaboration arrangements, including:

- The need to identify and focus on key priorities. At present, in Cape York, development of employment initiatives is proving a focal point for progress and acting as a catalyst for coordination and greater community involvement. Similarly strong coordination, community involvement, government, stakeholder and business support occurred in the context of establishing the Weipa Multipurpose facility. Often a concrete project or outcomes focus can bring about improved governance and community involvement rather than seeking to establish governance mechanisms more broadly.
- The identification of a project manager, officer or lead sponsor has also brought results. Without a clear point of responsibility and accountability progress is often slow and confusion occurs.

An area which has already been flagged for further work as part of the new collaboration models around ICCs is the development of financial and contractual arrangements to support common projects and rationalisation of government funding from different government sources for communities. The Indigenous Communities Coordination Taskforce commenced a process earlier in this year, focussing on some specific Cape communities with the objective of rationalising funding sources for the community.

Shepparton Experience: Governance & Relationships

Community

A new community governance mechanism-the Aboriginal Community Facilitation Group (ACFG) has been established. Members from the Group are drawn from key local Indigenous organisations including representatives from employment, education, health, sporting and community organisations.

For members of the ACFG, this is the first time they have all met together as a group to identify and develop ways of addressing common issues. The Group meets every month. Australian government representatives (DEWR as lead agent, on behalf of Australian Government) as well as State and local Government, meet regularly with the ACFG. In its role on behalf of Australian Government, DEWR has facilitated direct connections with other relevant agencies as required to support and progress the Shepparton trial.

Community and government

A Compact or Shared Responsibility Agreement has been signed by the ACFG, the Australian Government, the Victorian Government, the Greater Shepparton City Council and the ATSIC Binjirru Council.

The Compact identifies 11 key strategic priority areas for action-they are all clustered around the need to build stronger families in the Shepparton Indigenous Community. Priority areas include: employment, education, justice, housing, health, as well as building governance and pride in the Shepparton Indigenous community. For 2004, employment/ education, building stronger families and supporting youth have been identified as the strategic priorities to be focussed on.

A facilitator, to support the Group, was funded by the State Government in 2003 and works full time to support the ACFG and its members on the COAG trial.

Through the trial, and these new relationships, a number of projects have gotten underway including focussing on employment (Ladders to Success), education and young people. All projects have been built on collaboration with government partners (either at the State level or with other Australian Government partners). DEST for example have been actively involved in supporting a range of education initiatives including funding for a specific school to work transition project.

Cross government coordination arrangements (Australian, State, local govt where applicable)

As with Cape York, a number of specific arrangements have been put in place. There will be scope to streamline these with the new ICC arrangements.

- All levels of Government are represented on the Steering Committee for the ACFG and meet with the ACFG each month to progress initiatives in the priority areas.
- A high level group of officials (Australian and State Government) also meet regularly in Melbourne to progress initiatives to support the trials. Meetings between key officials are also convened on an as needs to basis to resolve issues as they arise.
- A forum of Australian Government agency representatives also meets regularly.
- The Australian Government has had a locally based officer in place to support the trial since late 2002. The Victorian Government has also placed a local officer in Shepparton to support the trial and work with their Australian Government counterpart to coordinate and act as a broker between relevant State Government agencies.

- Specific Taskforces of relevant local players have also been formed to oversee work on specific initiatives eg education and school retention issues.
- The ACFG has also nominated key individuals to work directly with Government on their behalf to work on specific initiatives.

Similar elements of best practice have emerged (as with the Cape York trial) that will be adopted in the new collaboration arrangements, including:

- Identification of particular projects and key priorities, where local players have key roles and responsibilities is the most effective way of progressing initiatives. The Ladders to Success project got underway following agreement to support the project from key players, and then appointing a Board to oversee management and implementation of the Project.
- Valuable contacts being established and spin off projects scoped for other areas in Victoria (outside of the trial site). For example, a multi-employer STEP project (similar to the Ladders Project in Shepparton) has commenced in Mildura. At least one other Indigenous community has also directly approached DEWR, on behalf of Australian Government, to consider implementation of a COAG style approach to their community issues.

Focus on regional/local needs

The management and delivery of employment services is already implemented through a comprehensive network of State offices in DEWR. Indigenous Employment Managers in each State and Territory focus on delivery of elements of the Indigenous Employment Policy in each jurisdiction. Under the Active Participation Model, there was also a commitment to provide employment services to all areas in Australia, and new services, either Fee for Service of Flexible Servicing Arrangements have been put in place to provide employment services to remote areas in Australia.

The new Indigenous affairs arrangements provide an opportunity to deliver these services even more effectively, by providing better linkages with other Government services and programmes through the ICC structures. Scope will be provided to promote and build on better connections between complementary government programmes and Job Network services for example so that services to individual Indigenous job seekers can be enhanced.

More importantly, the new representation arrangements for Indigenous communities will assist with providing the opportunity of identifying local or regional priorities and sharing responsibility for shaping and implementing appropriate responses.

It is clear, using the Shepparton experience, that many Indigenous communities are keen to develop immediate and direct contacts with

government service providers so that they too could be provided with joined up approaches that were tailored to their immediate needs.

The COAG trial experience has shown how employment initiatives can be built into and developed more effectively as part of joined up approaches with other Government agencies (at all levels) to address local or regional priorities. The Ladders To Success Project in Shepparton is supported by all levels of Government, and importantly has secured commitment of 60 local employers to provide jobs for Indigenous people in the Shepparton region. In Cape York, the Weipa Multi Purpose Facility, which combines support for better education and training services to the local community, is tied directly to the objective of improving prospects for Indigenous employment with key local employer, Comalco.

In DEWR's experience, successful projects involving partnerships between industry and Indigenous communities can better be executed by developing approaches at the regional or local level. Projects that succeed are generally those with:

- direct involvement of Indigenous communities/ groups (representing labour supply) and employers (representing labour demand) with an emphasis on shared responsibility;
- a commitment to achieving realistic goals and an understanding of the issues by the parties involved;
- access to flexible support (eg funding, training provision etc) to ensure effective place based approaches;
- cross portfolio government support contributing to integrated approaches;
pre-employment work readiness training for those Indigenous people with a limited employment history; and
- on-going mentoring support for employees to assist with retention in employment.

The new ICC structure will assist with ensuring these best practice approaches can be put in place successfully at the local level, by harnessing the support of all relevant government agencies and by meeting directly the needs of the local Indigenous community.

Funding flexibility

DEWR has been supportive of emerging new flexible funding arrangements for the COAG trials and will continue to support more broadly the development of flexible funding arrangements to facilitate the introduction of Indigenous policy measures under the new arrangements. To date:

- DEWR provided a contribution (\$0.5m for both 2003-04 and 2004-05) to the Flexible Funding Pool (FFP) established by the ICCT to support the COAG trials.
- DEWR has made use of the FFP to support particular projects in the Cape York COAG trial site.
- DEWR was one of several agencies to bring forward a new Budget initiative in 2004-05 as part of the OATSIA cross portfolio submission on Indigenous measures (the Indigenous Youth Employment Consultants measure was brought forward through this mechanism).

Improving accountability

Strong contract management and accountability procedures are already in place in DEWR to manage the delivery of employment services. These arrangements will now be extended to include the new programmes in the portfolio (or proposed to be moved to the portfolio). DEWR is also keen to work in a coordinated approach with other key agencies to develop new reporting arrangements to support appropriate accountability arrangements for future joined up government initiatives.

- A multi faceted approach is used to manage the effective delivery of employment services by external providers. Rigorous procedures are put in place to manage purchasing arrangements based on proven past performance, ongoing contract management is undertaken and an extensive performance regime improves job outcomes.
- This leads to comprehensive and regular performance reviews of all Job Network members and other employment service providers. Particular focus is placed on assisting disadvantaged job seekers, including Indigenous job seekers, into jobs, with high performers well placed to attract additional business in an area from other providers.
- Overall, DEWR invests significantly in ensuring public scrutiny and accountability of its programmes and providers and supports all staff to undertake accredited education in contract management qualifications.
- As indicated above, the Indigenous Employment Policy was introduced in 1999 and formal evaluations have occurred twice. New measures have been introduced to strengthen the IEP as a result of these evaluations, including introduction of specific measures to assist Indigenous job seekers, the recent expansion under the Active Participation Model to provide employment services to remote areas and the recently announced Indigenous Youth Employment Consultants.
- A Budget review of the IEP is scheduled for the 2005-06 financial year and further reviews of the programme will take place on a regular

basis.

- DEWR will ensure that appropriate reporting arrangements are put in place to enable accurate measurement and assessment of the new programmes now within portfolio responsibility, including CDEP and the Business Development Programme.
- An important reporting objective will be to adapt and respond to the Council of Australian Government's *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* reporting framework finalised at the end of 2003. Some preliminary work has commenced in the DEWR trial sites to consider the application of this framework at the local or regional level, and this is supported by the broader performance and evaluation monitoring process that will be managed by the OIPC.
- In the context of cross-portfolio collaboration, the proposed role of the Office of Evaluation and Audit in examining the performance of programmes across Government will also provide a useful external examination of the Employment and Workplace Relations Portfolio's ability to utilise its programmes to flexibly respond to local issues.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Introduction

The Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) has significant engagement with Indigenous Australians through a broad range of existing established Departmental responsibilities and programmes aimed at meeting environment conservation objectives and addressing Indigenous expectations in the management of country. These range from co-management arrangements with Traditional Owners of Kakadu, Uluru and Booderee National Parks, expansion of the Indigenous Protected Areas Programme under the National Reserves System Programme, funding for natural resource management activities under the Natural Heritage Trust Programme to Indigenous communities, a range of heritage grants programmes that include support for Indigenous people, to participation in a wide range of Departmental policy responsibilities that have application to Indigenous Australians.

The Indigenous Heritage and Environment Programme (IHEP), also known as the Preservation and Protection of Indigenous Heritage Programme is a small grants Programme (\$3.2m) that has been transferred to DEH. Responsibility for the Programme sits well within the existing framework of Heritage programmes and activities managed by the Department. Indigenous heritage is a particular feature of the new DEH heritage legislation that was introduced as of 1 January 2004. The new heritage system establishes a National Heritage List and places that have Indigenous heritage values of acknowledged national significance can be nominated for inclusion in the List. As well, there are a number of places now included on the Commonwealth Heritage List that have Indigenous heritage values. Mainstreaming the IHEP and locating it with existing heritage programmes will encourage synergies with existing DEH heritage policy and programme responsibilities as well as enhance the operation of the IHEP itself.

Operation of the IHEP

Prior to its transfer to DEH, the Programme was operated mostly on a devolved basis at the regional level by ATSIC regional bodies. Responsibility for decision-making of grants to be approved, administration of approved grants and delivery arrangements for the grants was devolved to and carried out at the regional level. Only a small component of funding was retained at the national level to allocate across the broader cross cutting issues.

The mapping of resources to DEH for the Programme reflects the proportional level of staff time required to administer and deliver those grants approved for regions (noting that not all necessarily have grants approved). In many cases this amounts to small percentages of staff time allocated against regions where projects are currently allocated.

DEH is conducting a review of the Programme in order to assess the most effective and efficient delivery mechanism under the new arrangements now

applying to Indigenous responsibilities formerly managed by ATSIC. It is likely that stronger centralized management and administration of the Programme could be a more effective means for management, delivery and oversight of the Programme at the national level. The devolved regional administration and delivery arrangements would therefore be changed with the introduction of more nationally focussed advertising of the Programme, assessment and approval of grants, monitoring and evaluation of milestones and outcomes. There will still be a component of regional administration and management, particularly with community based projects.

This would be consistent with management of similar grants programmes for which DEH is responsible. It would also ensure a number of increased efficiencies and benefits including greater synergy and linkages with existing DEH programmes, more flexibility for funding to meet regional and local needs, and greater ease of transparency and accountability of approvals of grants, equity in allocation of funds and administration of the Programme in line with ANAO requirements.

Relationship with the ICCs and State Offices

It is expected that the ICCs and State Offices will provide valuable assistance to DEH with respect to certain aspects of the Programme. As DEH does not have a regional or local level presence, the support of staff from other Departments in the ICCs will be sought on a fee for service basis to assist in some of the management requirements for grants approved in their areas. This could include meeting with grantees to discuss problems or issues with meeting grant requirements, community visits to discuss possible appropriate grants and assistance with filling in grant applications, and providing a valuable link to DEH on local or regional issues that could impact on administration of the Programme more generally.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

“Indigenous Business is Everyone’s Business”

Introduction

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) is responsible for shaping social policies and ensuring they are delivered efficiently through partnerships with other government and non-government organisations. As well as families, FACS focuses on groups with differing needs such a young people and students, people living in rural and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The Department’s responsibilities include income support, housing assistance, community support, youth services, disability services, and family support including family payments, child support and family relationships.

FACS is part of the Family and Community Services portfolio which is responsible for a broad range of social policy issues affecting Australian society and the living standards of Australian families, communities and individuals.

The portfolio accounts for about one third of Commonwealth budget expenditure (estimate of \$68 billion in 2004-05). It consists of the Department of Family and Community Services, including the Child Support Agency; the Social Security Appeals Tribunal; Centrelink, which delivers income support payments and services on behalf of FACS; and the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Within the key overarching FACS strategic outcomes of stronger families, stronger communities, and individuals reaching their potential, our focus more recently has been on investing in early childhood development and strengthening families; focussing on participation; and improving implementation and service delivery.

Our Commitment to Indigenous Australians

Underpinning the Department’s commitment to strengthening and supporting Indigenous individuals, families and communities to become more self-reliant is its Statement of Commitment to Indigenous peoples *“Indigenous Business is Everyone’s Business”*.

This Statement of Commitment, launched by the Secretary in 2002, identifies seven key commitments for the department and its employees:

- Better target research and evaluation so Indigenous needs are more clearly identified;

- Develop policies and deliver services that are appropriate and relevant to Indigenous individuals, families and communities;
- Adopt a coordinated and integrated approach to resolving Indigenous issues through partnerships between key stakeholders;
- Maintain and improve links with other providers and partners, to help information sharing and to identify opportunities;
- Support the FACS network and Centrelink with the resources to enable delivery of services and commitments;
- Identify champions to promote and raise awareness of Indigenous issues within FACS; and
- Further enhance our Indigenous recruitment and retention strategy.

FACS has embraced the necessity to tackle entrenched social and economic Indigenous disadvantage. The Department is emphasising collaboration, including forming partnerships between Government, communities and business, to collectively reduce the level and impact of disadvantage on Indigenous individuals, families and communities. Critically the new approach recognises how much needs vary from region to region and we are committed to showing leadership, being collaborative, focussing on regional need, being flexible in tailoring our programmes to meet the needs of Indigenous Australians, being accountable for our performance and using performance evaluation for learning.

Strategically, FACS will work with other stakeholders to develop a shared policy and planning framework. This will involve the genuine participation of Indigenous people and identify need in economic, human, social and environmental dimensions, and the necessary relationship between each. This will facilitate an integrated response that can be applied in our contribution to the development of Regional Partnership Agreements and Shared Responsibility Agreements.

Integrated responses to better meet Indigenous need is also supported by our Indigenous Policy Reference Group comprising senior managers across the Department. This group shares information and has developed an Indigenous policy framework, a coordinated approach to Indigenous research needs for the Department, monitoring our obligations in our *Statement of Commitment* and is currently developing a youth action plan involving all areas of the Department.

Also important to the Department is its Indigenous Officers Network which will now be strengthened by the number of Indigenous employees transferred to the Department. The Network is well positioned to inform and advise on matters affecting Indigenous staff within our organisation. The group will also be a valuable source of advice on Indigenous affairs for the Department.

Mainstreaming – an Enhanced Departmental Capability and an Opportunity for a more Integrated Approach

The functions transferred to the Department are the Community Housing and Infrastructure Programme (CHIP) and the Family Violence Prevention Programmes. Aboriginal Hostels Limited has also been transferred to the portfolio and reports to both the Minister for Family and Community Services and the Minister for Finance.

These programme transfers provide an opportunity to improve strategies to streamline service delivery arrangements and to link the programmes with other functions of the Department. For example, having one portfolio with responsibility for key elements of the social housing system, including Indigenous specific housing programmes, facilitates a more integrated approach to the provision and administration of housing assistance. The key elements of the social housing system, now located in one area of the Department, include: the *Commonwealth State Housing Agreement*, including the *Aboriginal Rental Housing Programme*; the *Community Housing and Infrastructure Programme*; *Rent Assistance*; and *Fixing Houses for Better Health Programme*.

Linked to these programmes are other related functions administered by the Department such as our homelessness programmes. These include the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme* and the *Household Organisational Management Expenses Advice Programme (HOME)*, the latter being an early intervention approach to preventing homelessness. Aboriginal Hostels Limited is also in the business of providing hostel accommodation services for Indigenous clients, and with this now located within the portfolio comes a valuable partner in providing a continuum of accommodation and housing assistance to Indigenous Australians.

The transfer of family violence functions to the Department's families and children's area will similarly ensure key linkages are made to further improve family well-being through adequate and culturally appropriate support for families. This fits into a very comprehensive suite of family and children's programmes managed by FACS, including childcare services, family relationship services and a focus on prevention and early intervention support such as through the recently announced Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

As well as Indigenous specific programmes, most of our other programmes and income support payments assist Indigenous Australians. Indeed, our mainstream programmes often include Indigenous focussed services or initiatives. In addition to those mentioned above, the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*, the *Family and Community Networks Initiative* (the entire initiative focussed on supporting Indigenous communities), the *Reconnect* programme, the *Child Abuse Prevention Programme*, the *National Disability Advocacy Programme*, and the *National Illicit Drugs Strategy* each fund a number of Indigenous-specific elements. Similarly, our childcare

support programmes provide a range of Indigenous children's services including playgroups, long day care and cultural projects.

With the transfer of the functions of *Community Housing and Infrastructure Programme* and Family Violence initiatives, we will be able to build on our integrated approach to meeting the needs of local communities. We look forward to continuing to engage and work with local communities and other Australian Government agencies and indeed other stakeholders, be they state and territory governments, community and private sector organisations to address in a joined up way the needs of Indigenous Australians.

Overall the integration of activities within the department will improve the development of consistent policy objectives, programme design and administrative arrangements around programme management and service delivery. Key performance indicators will be aligned and reporting and monitoring arrangements will be consistent.

What's more, this broader suite of policies and programmes can be accessed by Indigenous people through single contacts with the Department – often to be located in Indigenous Coordination Centres – thus providing easy access to advice and information for stakeholders.

An Enhanced Regional and Local Presence to Support Integration

Prior to the transfer of functions from ATSISS the portfolio of Family and Community Services, through its service outlets, had a very wide reach into regions and local communities, including rural and remote Indigenous communities. With the transfer of functions the portfolio is now represented through:

- the Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICC) network;
- a network of FACS offices in 20 locations across Australia (including every capital city);
- 35 Child Support Agency offices;
- Over 1000 Centrelink service delivery outlets including six Remote Area Service Centres (with a further six to be established), and a number of Centrelink call centres, including one Indigenous call centre in Darwin.

With this reach through our comprehensive network of offices, we have a good opportunity to build on our good track record of working closely with local communities, whether rural, remote or metropolitan.

Overall, 215 staff have transferred from ATSISS to FACS, with 158 located in the FACS State and Territory Network and the ICCs. This has given the Department a comprehensive regional presence. In general, this will facilitate its interface with the diversity of Indigenous people while specifically, it will

enhance the Department's work on negotiated participation and shared responsibility agreements.

On top of this, the Department's commitment to making *Indigenous Business Everybody's Business* means that all programmes — whether Indigenous specific or general — must be designed and administered in a way that takes into account the needs of Indigenous clients.

The Department's *State and Territory Office Network* is responsible for the FACS staff in the Indigenous Co-ordination Centres. The network is responsible for managing service delivery and working to develop integrated solutions on behalf of the Department's business or programme managers in our central office. Our network staff, who may be working on several programmes, are well placed to see linkages and interdependencies or anomalies across our programmes and those of other agencies and governments. The network and central office will work closely together in the design of programmes to align outcomes and outputs to enable integration to take place.

The Department's Indigenous Policy Branch will have an important role in this work. Staffing has been bolstered with the addition of an SES officer and others at the APS level to enhance its policy, research and programme management skills. This will accelerate the Department's work on welfare reform and economic and social participation, and on using its programmes to build Indigenous capacity, all key strategies for reducing Indigenous welfare dependency and passivity and fostering economic development.

The Department is already providing training for its new staff, through both the State and Territory Office Network and the Central Office. The State and Territory Office Managers (or their senior nominees) have already visited the ICCs and have met with the new FACS staff and ICC managers (or acting managers).

New staff have already undertaken orientation sessions, as well as training in programme management, particularly for the transferred functions. Briefings have also been provided to all FACS staff about the people and programmes being transferred, and to give an opportunity for the exchange of information.

For the longer term, the Department is developing a programme for all staff to raise their awareness about Indigenous culture and their understanding, not only of current situations and issues but also their causality. This aims to improve communication with Indigenous clients and to foster the application of 'best practice' remedies.

Building Expertise through Innovation, Evaluation and Learning

We are developing service delivery models and approaches that provide flexible responses to meet the local and regional needs of communities. These are developed within the context of a wide range of programme responses managed within the Department as well as linking with other

Australian Government agencies and other levels of government. Models being piloted draw on our experiences in managing programmes and feedback from communities and providers. We are keen to continue to be innovative and work through the Indigenous Coordination Centres to ensure a joined up approach across Government. As a start, the NSW State Office is trialling the bringing together of other Indigenous and mainstream programmes in the ICCs.

An example of trialling models of service delivery and support to meet local needs is the delivery of the Government's *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*. The Strategy is targeted to meeting regional and local needs to improve early childhood outcomes.

One element of the Strategy, *Communities for Children*, will support up to 35 disadvantaged communities with funding of up to \$4 million per community for local early childhood initiatives. In this, non-government organisations are taking the lead in working with local communities. This recognises that local organisations are best placed to understand local needs and facilitate local engagement, partnerships and collaboration.

Some of the Indigenous communities to benefit under this initiative include Kununurra, Tiwi Islands and East Arnhem Land. There are also many other communities where there will also be a focus on improving outcomes for Indigenous families and children under the Strategy.

Wadeye – A FACS led COAG Trial

The department is also involved in the trial agreed to by all governments to work with Indigenous communities in up to 10 regions. The aim is to investigate and provide more flexible programmes and services based on priorities agreed with the communities. The Department has lead responsibility for the Australian Government in working with the community at Wadeye, a remote community 420 kilometres south-west of Darwin with a population of more than 220 – 1500 of them under 25 years old.

The partnership with the community and the Northern Territory government was formally recognised on 21 March 2003 with the signing of a Shared Responsibility Agreement. Signatories were the Minister for family and Community Services, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and more than 70 representatives of the 20 land owning groups that sit on the Thamarrur, the Regional Governing Council.

The Wadeye community wants governments to work with them on: women and families, youth and construction. The community want employment and training to be given a high priority across the three areas. Initially a number of programmes have been developed including a family programme and 'local jobs for local people' plan and the establishment of an education and training board. The partnership at Wadeye has informed the Department's understanding of what is required in delivering programmes and services to local Indigenous communities.

Partnerships and collaboration

In addition to our lead agency responsibilities in Wadeye and other initiatives mentioned above, we have also been involved in working with local Indigenous communities through other initiatives to build self reliance and improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians. An example is the Department's work over the last few years in relation to the Family Income Management Programme in Cape York.

Governance and partnership arrangements for this programme has included family and extended family groups, community workers, regional representatives, state government, other government agencies and the private sector, all of which have made either significant financial and/or in-kind contributions to the success of the project.

Outcomes have been impressive with nearly 600 Indigenous participants improving their ability to cover essential living costs, reduce and manage debts, and save for and purchase hundreds of items such as white goods, furniture etc. Spending on food is increasing while spending on alcohol or gambling is decreasing. The use of nutrition and pharmacy accounts is contributing to better health outcomes, and many participants also contribute to education accounts. Workers also provide consumer information in relation to major purchases and loans. The project is starting to see a shift in participant orientation from daily survival to longer-term planning and saving for the future.

The Australian Government in its last budget allocated additional funding to extend this type of money management and financial literacy initiative to other sites.

FACS has participated in a number of trials of joined-up and collaborative approaches that aim to achieve integrated outcomes. These include work in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) trial sites and the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*. Also under the auspices of the Welfare Reform Working Group of the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Committee, FACS has been developing bilateral collaborative projects with state/territory governments to promote economic participation for vulnerable groups in locations of particular concern, consistent with State/Territory policy priorities. The Victorian project involves assisting residents' transition into economic and social participation in the Parkside Estate in conjunction with the State Government's Neighborhood Renewal programme. In NSW relevant Australian Government and State Government agencies are joining up their activities in support of the NSW Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy in Mt Druitt.

Our experiences in these programmes show us that programmes can deliver multiple benefits when considered part of a broader service system.

Accountability

The Department will continue to work across Government to ensure we meet the robust reporting arrangements to be put in place and to test and continue to improve the effectiveness of our interventions. We are also working to ensure consistent accountability requirements across programmes to reduce the administrative impact on service providers and communities as well as to ensure stronger linking of government programmes on the ground.

Our internal Indigenous Policy Reference Group has met with the Productivity Commission to obtain a better understanding of what we need to do in FACS to measure whether our interventions are achieving improved outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The Productivity Commission report, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Key Indicators 2003*, prepared at the request of COAG, will inform the development of our performance framework. We will work with other agencies across Government, including the Productivity Commission, to ensure a consistent approach and to continually improve the choice and range of indicators.

We will also work towards developing an accountability framework that aligns with other comprehensive reporting mechanisms already in place, for example, the Productivity Commission's *Report of Government Service Provision* and the comprehensive reporting arrangements of our national programmes e.g. Housing and SAAP.

Summary

Indigenous societies are small-scale and are based on family and community. The Department's focus on the strengthening of Individuals, Families and Communities thus gives it an important role in the whole-of-government effort to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.

The new arrangements for Indigenous Affairs provide FACS with the opportunity and impetus to look at Indigenous issues and problems in a much more holistic framework than has been possible previously. The Department's enhanced regional presence, its new staff, and its commitment to ensure that all its programmes are supportive of (or at least not detrimental to) Indigenous wellbeing ('Indigenous Business is Everyone's Business') will support this broader approach.

Yet, the Department does not underestimate the challenge in making sure the new arrangements, and indeed our programmes and interventions, make a difference and improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians. In acknowledging the complexity of the task, we recognise value in learning from our new colleagues in the Department and in ensuring that our partnerships with the Indigenous community are effective, culturally appropriate and sustainable.

The Department looks forward to the challenge and contributing to the success and leadership of Government through the Indigenous Coordination Centres.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND AUDIT

Introduction

An important element of the Australian Government's new Indigenous Affairs agenda is a more robust accountability framework for Indigenous programmes. Under the arrangements proposed by the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act Amendment Bill 2004* (the Bill), the Office of Evaluation and Audit (OEA) will continue to play a central role in measuring the performance of the Australian Government's Indigenous-specific programmes and its funded service providers.

Current legislative arrangements

Section 75 of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989* (the *ATSIC Act*) established OEA within ATSIC. The Director of Evaluation and Audit (the Director) is a statutory office holder who was appointed by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs under section 77 of the *ATSIC Act*. The Director is the head of OEA.

Briefly, OEA regularly evaluates and audits the operations of a number of bodies within the Indigenous Affairs portfolio, including ATSIC, Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL), Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) and the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA). These bodies can also request OEA to evaluate or audit particular aspects of their operations. OEA can also audit the operations of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) following a request from the Minister or ILC.

The Minister, ATSIC, TSRA, AHL and IBA can also request OEA to evaluate or audit the operations of a body or individual who has received a grant, loan or guarantee from one of these portfolio bodies, but such an evaluation or audit may only concern those grants, loans or guarantees.

Current administrative arrangements

The Administrative Arrangement Orders of 24 June 2004 made the Minister for Finance and Administration responsible for the administration of Division 9 of Part 2 of the *ATSIC Act*. This is the part of the *ATSIC Act* that establishes OEA and the Director, and defines their functions and powers. Accordingly, the Minister for Finance and Administration can now request OEA to undertake evaluations and audits, and the Director now reports to the Minister for Finance and Administration. Office of Evaluation and Audit staff are public servants employed by the Department of Finance and Administration.

Changes for OEA proposed in the Bill

Under the Bill, OEA will be required to prepare a programme for the evaluation and audit of Indigenous-specific programmes administered by Australian Government bodies. The first programme would cover the period ending 30 June 2007, and each subsequent programme would cover 3 years. In developing the programme, the Director must have regard to the audit priorities of the Minister and also of the Minister having primary responsibility for Indigenous affairs.

The Bill also proposes that OEA and the Director be given functions and powers to evaluate and audit all relevant programmes across the whole of the Australian Government, rather than only those delivered by bodies in the Indigenous Affairs portfolio, and the operations of bodies and individuals who receive money or other property under those programmes.

A 'relevant' programme is a programme, or a programme component, under which money is provided, including on loan, or a guarantee is given, or an interest in land is transferred, for the purpose of furthering the social, economic or cultural development of Aboriginal persons or Torres Strait Islanders. Previously, OEA has only been able to evaluate and audit the use of funding delivered through the Indigenous Affairs portfolio.

New approaches to evaluation and audit

Previously, OEA regularly evaluated and audited the operations of bodies in the Indigenous Affairs portfolio. OEA has only evaluated and audited funded services providers pursuant to *ad hoc* requests from the Minister. OEA will use its expanded functions to conduct a programme of evaluations and audits of funded service providers across a range of relevant programmes delivered by several Australian Government agencies.

OEA's programme of audit will focus on cyclic audits of service providers. Service providers could be selected along programme lines; for example, OEA might evaluate and audit the operations of a number of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEPs). Alternatively, service providers that have received funding under a relevant programme might be drawn from a random sample, across all funding sources.

Following each evaluation and audit, OEA will report to the Minister on the funded activities of the particular service provider, making findings and recommendations about its financial control environment, performance management and corporate governance. These reports will inform programme management decisions by relevant Australian Government agencies, and will provide assessments about issues that could feasibly arise in relation to the operations of other similar programmes or providers.

From time to time OEA will issue consolidated reports drawing together common findings, recommendations and themes arising from the audits. Relevant Australian Government agencies will be able to use this information

for policy and programme development purposes, resulting in better targeted and higher quality programmes for Indigenous peoples.

OEA will also undertake evaluations of Indigenous-specific programmes administered by Australian Government agencies. OEA's evaluations will determine what developments and achievements have been achieved by relevant programmes, measure their general efficiency and effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement or reform. Programmes planned for evaluation will be selected on the basis of the level of funding allocated to the programme; a risk assessment; and the time elapsed since OEA's last major evaluation of the programme or any other external or independent evaluation of the programme.

OEA will continue to undertake 'special' evaluations and audits of funded service providers pursuant to requests from the Minister. These will examine particular concerns about the probity of service providers' operations and the propriety of their decisions and actions.

Memorandum of Understanding

Pending the proposed legislative changes, the Administrative Arrangements Orders have put in place alternative arrangements that will give effect to the Government's new Indigenous affairs policy.

Accordingly, the Director proposes to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretaries of agencies responsible for delivering Indigenous programmes to give effect to OEA's proposed role.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGEING

Introduction

Indigenous specific health and substance use programmes were mainstreamed by relocation from ATSIC to the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) in 1995. DoHA is the lead agency for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Indigenous whole of government trial being conducted in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands (AP Lands), South Australia. Both these experiences have produced some learning that can be fed into the new service delivery arrangements for Indigenous affairs.

The benefits of mainstreaming

DoHA has over 9 years of experience with managing Indigenous specific programmes. The Department has pursued a two pronged approach to improving the health status of Indigenous people, which aims to:

- Improve accessibility and responsiveness of the mainstream; and
- Provide complementary action through the Indigenous specific health programmes.

The experience of DoHA has shown that location of Indigenous health programmes within a mainstream department has been advantageous in terms of providing better leverage to influence: mainstream health programmes to tailor service delivery to specifically meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; a coordinated approach between the Commonwealth, State/Territory governments, ATSIC and the community controlled health sector to addressing the health needs of Indigenous people; and a steady increase in funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

An example of influencing mainstream health programmes to better meet the needs of Indigenous people has been demonstrated through reforms to the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). This includes the newly introduced Indigenous adult health check on the MBS, which will improve early detection of previously undetected chronic disease, and Section 100 of the *National Health Act 1953*, which allows for supply of pharmaceuticals covered by the PBS to clients of remote area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services. The partnership approach is embedded in the Framework Agreements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, which will be described later in the submission. Furthermore, since 1996, funding provided through Indigenous-specific programmes has doubled in real terms.

A recent review of the Australian Government's Indigenous health programmes has confirmed that the directions that have been taken since the

current Government was elected in 1996 are sound and that progress is being made in addressing the health needs of Indigenous people.

Under the new Indigenous Affairs arrangements, the only programme to be transferred from ATSIS to the DoHA has been the Link Up Programme. This programme is part of the Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) National Inquiry into the *Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. This consisted of a \$63 million package initially over a 4 year period commencing in 1998/99, and then a further \$11.25 million to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to establish a national network of family Link Up organisations to provide family tracing, reunion, and support services to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have lost contact with their families and communities as a result of past laws, policies and practices of Australian Governments.

The benefits of the transfer of the Link Up programme from ATSIS to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) in DoHA include:

- Co-locating programme management of complementary programmes with a similar target population. OATSIH administers the Bringing Them Home (BTH) Programme, one component of the Government's response to the HREOC report. The BTH Programme has supported the placement of BTH counsellors and education and training programmes within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health organisations, while encouraging links with Stolen Generations and Link Up groups.
- Opportunities to develop strategic policy to build collaboration and improve on the group working relationships between Link Up caseworkers and BTH counsellors.
- Better access to common training opportunities for Link Up case workers through the emotional and social well-being regional centres. Twelve Regional Centres are provided with recurrent funding under the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Programme administered by OATSIH. Further initiatives in Regional Centres have been supported through Bringing Them Home Programme Funds.
- Improved efficiencies of programme administration.
- An integrated and strategic approach which makes the services simple and easy to access, for the affected population.

In addition, two major published reports, the Evaluation of the Link Up Programme (2003) and the MCATSIA Report on the BTH Programme (2003), recommend the need to increase the formal relationships between the Link Up programme and the BTH counsellor programme, and the need for a lead

agency at the Australian Government level to ensure an integrated and strategic approach to simplify the service delivery system. The transfer of the Link Up Programme to OATSIH will better facilitate achievement of these recommendations.

Coordination/collaboration between agencies

There are some existing models for cross-government collaboration at a regional level and jurisdictional level which provide a good foundation for Indigenous Coordination Centre work at the regional level and for bilateral Commonwealth/State collaboration. Between 1996 and 1999 DoHA established Framework Agreements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (Framework Agreements) in each State and Territory and the Torres Strait. Signatories are: the Australian Government; State/Territory governments; the Aboriginal community controlled health sector; and ATSIC and the Torres Strait Regional Authority. Framework Agreements are the primary vehicles for ensuring collaboration in resource allocation, joint planning and priority setting for service delivery between key stakeholders in Indigenous health within each state and territory. Aboriginal Health Forums or partnerships have also been established under the Framework Agreements to oversee this collaborative work. Under the Framework Agreements and Aboriginal Health Forums all jurisdictions have undertaken a joint regional planning process that has identified gaps and opportunities in health service provision for Indigenous Australians, and priorities to improve health services, including mainstream services, and environmental health through a rational and justifiable process. A key advantage of the Framework Agreements and related mechanisms is that they maintain a strong emphasis on the responsibility of mainstream health programmes in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

With the mainstreaming of ATSI services and the abolition of ATSIC, Framework Agreements and membership of Forums in future may only involve the three remaining partners (plus the TSRA in the Torres Strait). The development of Indigenous Coordination Centres at the regional level will provide one mechanism for ongoing representation of Aboriginal communities in whole of government health planning and priority setting.

The COAG Indigenous whole of government trials also provide important learning on how coordination/collaboration between agencies can be achieved. In the AP Lands, as in other COAG trial sites, structures have been established for collaboration both across the same level and between the different levels of government. These in most sites have consisted of, at a minimum, a Head of Commonwealth Agencies Group and a Steering Committee (or equivalent) consisting of all partners of the Shared Responsibility Agreement to provide overall strategic direction for implementation of the COAG trial. In the AP Lands, a COAG Steering Committee was established in April 2003, with membership consisting of representatives from the Department of Health and Ageing (as lead agency), Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Council, the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and ATSIC. A central agency (the

Department of Premier and Cabinet) has now become directly involved and cross agency activities at a state level are now being implemented in a coordinated manner through a newly established Taskforce. The Taskforce has been working with the Coordinator of State Services to the APY Lands, the Hon Bob Collins, to ensure better service delivery. Commonwealth agencies have been invited to join the Taskforce. Future partners for the AP Lands trial are currently being reviewed taking into consideration the SA government AP Lands Taskforce, the abolition of ATSI/ATSIC and a broader representation of Anangu and Anangu organisations.

It will be important that the new arrangements consider and build on the existing arrangements in order to maximise the likelihood of success. Whole of government structures at a State government level are also in place in a number of other sites. It is important that linkages are established between these and new collaborative arrangements and that the roles and responsibilities of each structure are clarified.

DoHA supports the strategy that development of relationships with the State governments is pivotal to a whole of government approach and that metropolitan ICCs have a clear role in this regard. Although leadership for the new arrangements in Indigenous Affairs will come from the Australian Government, it will be crucial to harness involvement of State governments in this process. For almost all Australian government Indigenous specific programmes, a formal relationship with State and Territory governments is essential for effective planning. If it is agreed that justice, education, health and physical infrastructure are core services that should be available to all communities, the State and Territory governments must be involved as partners from the beginning.

It had been proposed that the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) be asked to agree to cross government forums in each State/Territory. Some jurisdictions have already successfully established such forums in relation to the COAG trials. It will be important to clarify:

- Whether Indigenous community representatives should be included on the forums.
- The relationship between these forums and existing cross government forums. This is critical for DoHA as State and Territory governments are key partners in the planning and delivery of health services.
- Role of PM&C and Premiers/Chief Ministers Departments in the forums.

There are a couple of jurisdictions, in particular the NT, where productive relationships with State governments have been formed and where there is a preparedness to look at developing new ways of working. Some modelling and momentum may be able to be grown within this relationship that then can be exportable to other jurisdictions.

Focus on regional/local needs

Planning between regions and at a State-wide level

The new arrangements will need to address the question of how planning across regions or at a State-wide level will occur in relation to health services and programmes. Under the Framework Agreements described above, relative priorities are determined between regions as well as within regions. This sort of review and assessment is vital for allocating funds for new or expanded services when assessing gaps and unmet needs for service delivery. Planning arrangements across regions is also a threshold issue for all national programmes.

Regional representative networks

Following cessation of the Regional Councils on 30 June 2005, the Australian Government will work with regional networks of locally determined representatives of Indigenous communities and organisations in planning roles and responsibilities of communities and government agencies and programmes to address regional and local community needs.

State and Territory governments have a range of mechanisms for Indigenous community engagement (regional, cross-government or sector specific) that may offer a structure to build on.

The COAG trial experience has shown that representation of the local or regional Indigenous communities in the COAG trial partnership is not a simple issue. Identifying a group with the authority of the "community" to enter agreements on behalf of the community is challenging and has taken in excess of 12 months in some cases. It can be problematic to rely on one representative organisation because this is seen as endorsement of one organisation and can promote gate keeping and regional tension between community organisations. A suggestion that is drawn from what has been established in a couple of COAG trial sites, is a coalition of Indigenous organisations (ie in the form of a working group) in order that the range of Indigenous interest groups' views in an any given area are represented. For example in Shepparton and the ACT, the Aboriginal Community Facilitation Group and the Indigenous Working Party have been established respectively, to ensure the range of Indigenous organisations is represented in a community partnership arrangement.

Existing regional priorities and projects

In September 2003, the AP Lands COAG Steering Committee endorsed a Shared Responsibility Agreement (SRA) between the four partners, which includes five broad regional priorities. These are:

- improving health and wellbeing

- improving education attainment, training and employment opportunities
- improving access to a range of social and community services
- improving physical infrastructure such as essential services, roads and housing
- supporting and strengthening existing regional governance structures.

Two COAG endorsed projects to address some of these priorities have progressed in this trial despite the difficulties in signing of the SRA by all partners. Firstly, implementation of the Regional Stores Policy project auspiced by Nganampa Health has been funded through DoHA's Regional Health Services programme and phase 1, which includes development of a strategic implementation plan, is expected to commence shortly. Secondly, the PY Ku project (a network of Rural Transaction Centres) is now currently being assessed for funding by Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTARS) central management and development component of this project has been funded by the COAG Trials' Commonwealth Flexible Funding Pool for 2004-05. Further projects being considered include Community Participation Agreements and Kuka Kanyini, a multi-faceted approach to management of land, endangered species, native food sources and feral animals.

Again, it will be important that any regional partnership agreements and shared responsibility agreements established under the new arrangements take into consideration and build on existing priorities and projects that have been established under the COAG trials.

Improving accountability

The Commonwealth and States and Territories health departments under the auspice of Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) are developing the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework* (National Performance Framework), which will provide the mechanism for quantitative measurement of progress against the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* (National Strategic Framework). The National Strategic Framework, a key policy document for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, endorsed by all Cabinets and signed by all Health Ministers in July 2003, outlines nine key result areas requiring whole-of-government action that all governments are committed to collaboratively achieving over the next ten years.

The National Performance Framework is a policy driven mechanism for assessing outcomes and outputs for the funds invested by State/Territory and Australian governments. A consequence of the Health Performance Framework is Commonwealth/State agreement on an accountability framework that replaces the current 56 National Performance Indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. It forms a base that is consistent with measures that can be used in the annual Review of Government

Services prepared by the Productivity Commission, and can also inform refinement of the COAG endorsed Indigenous Disadvantage report prepared by the Productivity Commission.