

Questions on Notice for all Departments

1. One of the most experienced researchers on Indigenous Australia is Professor Jon Altman of the ANU. He has said that the re-allocation of programs from ATSIC to departments is 'rewarding departments that have not performed and penalizing ATSIC in many areas where it has performed. It is unclear what mechanisms have been put in place to ensure accountability by mainline departments to administer these Indigenous specific programs more effectively than ATSIC between 1990 and 2004'. What mechanisms is your agency working with that will ensure greater accountability than under ATSIC?

Answer:

A Statutory Authority, the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs*, was transferred to the Education, Science and Training portfolio in the reallocation of ATSIC programmes. DEST did not receive any former ATSIC/ATSIS programmes but is playing its part as part of Indigenous Coordination Centres at the local level to promote joined up approaches to improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

2. How will your agency provide greater transparency than ATSIC did in showing who gets what resources in the Indigenous programs in your portfolio?

Answer:

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) will continue to use the Minister's National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training as a key tool for detailing the efforts associated with the range of Indigenous education and training programmes, and outlining the state of play in Indigenous education and training programs in Australia.

The annual report will continue to provide a picture of what is being achieved around the nation in relation to Indigenous education and training, and bring into focus the areas in which additional and concerted efforts are required.

DEST programmes will also be covered by the annual report on the performance of Indigenous programmes to be prepared and released publicly by the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs. The Office of Evaluation and Audit (Indigenous Programs) will also play a role in the audit and evaluation of DEST's Indigenous programmes.

3. Worldwide, research on Indigenous service delivery indicates that Indigenous control is central to program success. How will your Indigenous programs be controlled by Indigenous people? What evidence can you point to in your areas of responsibility that suggests your department is more appropriate to administer your programs than would be an Indigenous-controlled organisation such as ATSIC or a successor to ATSIC?

Answer:

DEST did not receive any former ATSIC programmes.

4. What evidence is there that mainstreaming provides opportunities that were not already present?

Answer:

N/A as DEST did not receive any former ATSIC programmes. However, DEST will be playing its part in progressing whole-of-government solutions through Shared Responsibility Agreements at the local level.

5. AIATSIS has recommended that agreements entered into with indigenous organisations contain substantive commitments, including timetables, resource commitments and implementation plans (submission 144, p.4). Is your agency entering into agreements with Indigenous organisations? Do they include these features?

Answer:

Most Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) agreements with Indigenous organisations are made under Indigenous Education Agreements (IEAs). IEAs are a form of funding contract specifically created by DEST to administer funding under one or more programme elements, which advance the objects of either Sections 10 or 11 of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*.

Each IEA consists of a main contract body, which defines the parties to the agreement and sets out standard terms and conditions governing the contract, and one or more Schedules relating to the specific funding elements to be covered by the agreement.

Each Schedule complies with AIATSIS recommendations, setting out the relevant:

- section of the Act under which the funding payments are made;
- name of the funding element;
- details about the assistance to be provided, including amounts and resources committed, timetables, required milestones, other available resources to be used and conditions;
- term of the agreement;
- administrative component of funding provided;
- performance and other required reporting;
- ownership of intellectual property and materials; and
- insurance and other requirements.

While IEAs are normally entered into with education providers (as defined in Section 4 of the Act), other persons or bodies may be contracted to deliver specified projects whose purpose is to advance the objects of the Act. IEAs of this kind could be negotiated with appropriate community organisations or bodies at a local level.

6. What coordination took place between IBA and your agency on business development-related programs before the mainstreaming of services? Has that changed as a result of the new arrangements? [NA]
7. When will your agency have in place the reporting arrangements for measurement and assessment of its new programs? [NA]

Hansard transcript Friday 4 February 2005 - the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs.

Question:

Senator Kim Carr asked on 4 February 2005 to DEST:

- 1) When is the evaluation of the COAG trial that you are the lead agency for going to be undertaken?
- 2) When do you expect the review to start?
- 3) Who will do the review?
- 4) Is the approach or the agreement process a public document?

Answer:

The lead agencies for the Murdi Paaki COAG trial are the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the NSW State Department of Education and Training (DET). The Murdi Paaki Regional Council is the third key partner. DEST, DET and the Murdi Paaki Regional Council are all members of a Steering Committee that has responsibility for progressing priorities and providing high-level coordination of the trial, based on the principles of shared responsibility.

A monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed by the Murdi Paaki Steering Committee (MPSC) to assist in implementation and to assess the impact of the Murdi Paaki Trial. The framework aims to meet the reporting requirements of the COAG initiatives as well as the management requirements of the projects and community expectations. It was agreed by the MPSC to circulate this draft to the other COAG trial sites for their information, feedback, and use if appropriate. A copy is attached.

The first element of the Murdi Paaki trial to be evaluated relates to Indigenous community perspectives on the Trial. To this end, the Murdi Paaki Steering Committee agreed at the 19 October 2004 meeting that DET (NSW) and DEST would each contribute \$10,000 per year over a five-year period to fund an ongoing evaluation of community governance and leadership. A request for quote was issued to four companies on 24 December 2004 to undertake focus groups and interviews with six communities to collect and monitor qualitative information on community governance in the Murdi Paaki region. A final decision on the successful tenderer is pending.

The next meeting of the Murdi Paaki Steering Committee is scheduled for 2 March 2005. This meeting will discuss an approach to the findings of the focus groups, the first round of which are scheduled for completion in April 2005.