

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 8

- Topic: 1. La Perouse – National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) - Indigenous Housing Project, and**
2. Bowraville – Property disposal

Hansard Page: 53

The Chair asked..... Mr Hunter, could we have an update in writing of exactly what is happening, from your view, with those two projects that Senator Ridgeway raised, particularly as you have the responsibility of community housing? Can we have the public notice of the information you gave on the La Perouse situation and information on exactly what is happening with the second one (Bowraville)?

Answer:

1. La Perouse National Aboriginal Health Strategy Project

The ATSIC Board approved La Perouse as a National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) Round 1 project in 1996 with a funding allocation of approximately \$3.8M over a three-year period. The approved Project largely provided for new housing, upgrading of existing housing, open space regeneration and drainage.

Implementation of the Project, however, has been on hold due to significant ongoing governance, management and operational problems within La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council (LPALC) over many years. In particular, the organisation's ability to ensure sustainability of any upgraded or constructed housing and related assets has been a major concern to both ATSIC, ATSI and FaCS.

Negotiations with the LPALC, its members and tenants in relation to the NAHS funding have been protracted and difficult. These negotiations have involved members of the Sydney Regional Council of ATSIC which, although supportive overall of the need for development at La Perouse, has expressed reservations about the management capacity of the LALC and a need to confront issues of accountability.

In early 2004, NAHS funding of \$140,000 was committed to engage a Community Development Facilitator (CDF) who has a focus of working with residents and LPALC on a range of management and sustainability issues as well as developing a community cohesion and capacity. As a result of the CDF work to date, there has been improved commitment to accepting responsibility for the sustainability of the housing as well as an improvement in management systems including rental collections.

As a result, FaCS has endorsed a proposal for a limited staged implementation of the NAHS project to build on these improvements and support further reform and commitment by tenants and LPLALC. The staged implementation will involve funding of \$1,450,000 and involve the construction of six units, replacement of two houses, and upgrade of a further one house.

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2. Bowraville

The Aboriginal Housing Company Limited (AHC) at Redfern has sought to transfer free of charge ownership of an unoccupied house in Bowraville to MiiMi Mothers Aboriginal Corporation (MMAC). The MMAC undertakes a number of activities assisting members of both the Indigenous and non-indigenous community of Bowraville.

The house at Bowraville was purchased by the AHC in 1997 with ATSIC funding as part of the relocation of its tenants from Redfern. The tenant subsequently vacated the house and since this time it has fallen into significant disrepair – estimated at over \$100,000. There are outstanding council and water rates accounts plus concern in regard to public liability issues due to the house not being occupied.

The AHC has sought to dispose of the house in response to its need to reduce costs associated with the property and support for the request from MMAC. The latter has indicated it has secured a commitment from Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) to fund the renovation of suitable premises to which it can secure title.

Under the ATSIC Act, disposal of the property by AHC requires the approval of the funding body, ATSIC. Arrangements from 1 July 2004 transferred the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program to FaCS and current administrative arrangements are for FaCS to provide advice to ATSIC in regard to any submission for disposal of residential property.

ATSIC policy and guidelines require a property to be disposed of at current market value and the proceeds to be used for housing and housing related purposes. These guidelines continue to be observed by FACS. The disposal of the house to MMAC at no cost will be contrary to policy and result in a loss of funds for Indigenous residential housing in an environment of considerable ongoing need.

FaCS would be supportive of recommending disposal of the property if MMAC is able to purchase it at current market value, thus allowing the proceeds to be applied to Indigenous residential housing need.

FaCS is endeavouring to assist MMAC in brokering additional funds to be able to purchase this or another property.

Branches/Offices/Consulted: IHIB, FACS State Office NSW

	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Name:	Peter Taylor	Robert Knapp
Position:	Assistant Secretary	Group Manager
Branch:	Indigenous Housing & Infrastructure Branch	
Group:	Housing & Disability	Housing and Disability
Work phone number:	03 86198005	02 6244 6593
Mobile phone number:	0419970769	0418 481 500
Sensitivity	YES	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES/NO	GM Initial

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 1

Topic: FaCS Presence

Hansard Page: 49

Senator Moore asked: You made a note that you now have a presence across regional Australia because of the ICC presence. My question on notice is: where would that differ from your presence to the Centrelink network? I would have thought that the Centrelink network was a very wide-ranging regional location. I would like some consideration of what would be the difference in how that operates.

Answer: FaCS has responsibility for a broad range of social issues affecting Australian society, including building stronger families and stronger communities. FaCS delivers targeted programs to individuals, generally through non-government and community organisations. The creation of Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) extended FaCS' reach into regional and remote areas through 35 outlets (including a new presence in 16 locations). While ICCs primarily focus on Indigenous policy and programs, this extended presence is allowing FaCS to better understand and respond to issues within regional and remote communities more broadly. Prior to the ICCs, FaCS was confined to state capitals and a very small number of staff outposted to regional centres.

Centrelink, as a separate government agency within the Finance Portfolio, delivers payments to recipients of income support for government (including FaCS) through more than 300 outlets across Australia. These outlets are located in regional and remote areas as well as metropolitan areas.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Name:	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Position:	Greg Poyser	Cate McKenzie
Branch:	National Operations Unit Manager	Group Manager
Group:	State and Territory Office Network	
Work phone number:	Communities	Communities
Mobile phone number:	02 6244 8599	02 6244 8569
	0421 590 666	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 7

Topic: FaCS Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Hansard Page: 53

Senator Carr requested: a copy of the FaCS Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Policy

Answer: Two FaCS documents are attached.

1. FaCS Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2003-05
2. Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – Indigenous Business is Everybody's Business 2004

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Name:	Elisa Martin	Cate McKenzie
Position:	Section Manager	Group Manager
Branch:	People	
Group:	Corporate Support	Communities
Work phone number:	02 6200 9637	02 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	0409 906 776	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: All Departments 2

Topic: Transparency of resources

Written Question:

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 delivers its programs under the Australian Government guidelines for accountability and effectiveness and will continue to consult with Indigenous sector representative bodies.

FaCS is working under a coordinated approach with other key agencies to develop new reporting arrangements to support appropriate accountability arrangements for future joined up government initiatives. In the context of cross-portfolio collaboration, the proposed role of the Office of Evaluation and Audit (Indigenous Programmes) in examining the performance of programmes across Government will also provide a useful independent examination of the FaCS portfolio's ability to utilise its programmes to flexibly respond to local issues.

FaCS will also contribute to the annual report to be released by the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous affairs on the performance of Indigenous programs

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Contact officer:		Cleared by:
Name:	Geoff Richardson	Cate McKenzie
Position:	Branch Manager	Group Manager
Branch:	Indigenous Policy	
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	(02) 6212 9197	(02) 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	1419 787 475	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: All Departments 3

Topic: Control of Indigenous programs

Written Question

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:

The 'mainstreaming' of Indigenous programs does not mean that Indigenous organisations are no longer involved in the delivery of services to indigenous people. Apart from the funding directed by FaCS to State and Territory Governments through bilateral agreements e.g. aspects of the Housing and Infrastructure Program (under similar arrangements to that which were in place with ATSIC/ATSIS), wherever possible project funding will be directed to Indigenous community controlled organisations, hence the community control will be at the community (delivery) level.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Name:	Geoff Richardson	Cate McKenzie
Position:	Branch Manager	Group Manager
Branch:	Indigenous Policy	
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	02 6212 9197	02 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	0419 787 475	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Friday February 4 2005

Question No: All Departments 5

Written Question

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:

Q1. Yes

Q2. Those programs that transferred to FaCS from ATSIIS have continued to operate on the funding agreements developed in ATSIIS.

The standard FaCS funding agreement which forms the basis of the Department's arrangements with service providers contains a schedule which would normally include milestones and deliverables around implementation.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Name:	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Position:		
Branch:		
Group:		
Work phone number:		
Mobile phone number:		
Sensitivity	YES/NO	GM Initial
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: All Departments 6

Topic: Indigenous Business Australia

Written Question

What coordination took place between (Indigenous Business Australia) IBA and your agency on business development-related programs before the mainstreaming of services. Has that changed as a result of the new arrangements?

Answer:

The Department did not have any ongoing relationship with Indigenous Business Australia prior to the implementation of new arrangements for indigenous policies and programs. This has not changed since the implementation of the new arrangements.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Name:	Craig Kentwell	Cate McKenzie
Position:	Section Manager	Group Manager
Branch:	Indigenous Policy	
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	02 6212 9593	02 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	0414 875 992	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: All Departments 7

Topic: Reporting arrangements – new programs

Written Question

Senator Carr asked: When will your agency have in place the reporting arrangements for measurement and assessment of its new programs?

Answer:

The Family Violence Partnership Program (FVPP)

The department developed reporting arrangements in the form of a Project Implementation Plan in October 2004, which was approved by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The reporting arrangements on the implementation of the four-year program provide measurement and assessment of the program in its entirety on the partnership between the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments through quarterly reports.

Individual projects with State and Territory Governments funded under FVPP are covered by funding agreements which comprise specific reporting and measurement processes relevant to that particular project.

The Family Violence Regional Activities Program (FVRAP)

The FVRAP has been aligned to FaCS business and priorities. A service delivery charter was developed and approved in August 2004 for this program. The department is currently working in collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Policy and Coordination in the development of an Australian Government Indigenous Management Information System using an integrated approach to the implementation and reporting measures for FVRAP. This process will be in place for the 2005-06 funding period.

Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP)

National arrangements for annual performance reporting for the CHIP have remained largely unchanged following its transfer into the Family and Community Services (FaCS) portfolio. Therefore national CHIP performance reporting will continue as before but from now on will be included in FaCS' Annual Reports.

CHIP program output reports will also contribute to the annual reports to Commonwealth-State Housing Ministers under a National Reporting Framework on Indigenous housing agreed by Ministers in 2001.

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Branches/Offices/Consulted:

	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Name:	1. Dr Loucas Nicolaou (FVPP and FVRAP) 2. Peter Taylor	1. Glenys Beauchamp 2. Robert Knapp
Position:	1. Branch Manager 2. Branch Manager	1. Group Manager 2. Group Manager
Branch:	1. Indigenous Family and Child Wellbeing Branch 2. Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure	
Group:	1. Families and Children 2. Housing and Disabilities	1. Families and Children 2. Housing and Disabilities
Work phone number:	1. (02) 6212 9587 2. 03 8619 8005	1. (02) 6212 9309 2. (02) 6244 6593
Mobile phone number:	1. 0417 244 326 2. 0419 970 769	1. 0413 385 936 2. 0418 481 500
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 2

Topic: Evaluation

Hansard Page: 53

Senator CROSSIN asked.....It has been put to us many times during this inquiry that that might be one source of evaluation but that, to be truly independent and critical to moving the situation forward, other outside bodies need to do it. You cannot have the main agency that is coordinating these trials also evaluating them. That can happen but it is not seen to be adequate. Is there any suggestion from FaCS, for example, that you might get IATISIS, CAEPR, HREOC or some other independent statutory authority also to conduct an evaluation for you?

Answer:

The COAG Tripartite Steering Committee agreed in November 2004 to conduct an independent evaluation of the Wadeye COAG trial site. The purpose of the evaluation will be to inform future processes and action within the trial site and to assess the impact of the trial to date. Draft terms of reference have been completed and are currently being considered by the community. Once all partners have agreed to the TOR, the Tripartite Steering Committee will put the evaluation out to tender.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Name:	Greg Woodroffe	Cleared by:
Position:	Acting Branch Manager	Cate McKenzie
Branch:	Northern Territory Office	Group Manager
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	(08) 8920 8951	02 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	0408 720 595	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	GM Initial
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	

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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 3

Topic: Aboriginal Hostel Limited

Hansard Page: 56

Senator Carr asked ... Was it the practice with past machinery of government arrangements to have Aboriginal Hostels reporting to two ministers, and can you give me an explanation for why the change, if it has occurred, occurred?

Answer:

The Minister for Family and Community Services is the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL).

The functions relating to the evaluation and audit of Indigenous programmes and operations were transferred from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to Finance as a result of the amendment to the Administrative Arrangements Order of 24 June 2004.

The Minister for Finance and Administration also has a joint oversight role with respect to AHL to ensure appropriate transparency and accountability, and the efficient and effective delivery of services. This is consistent with the Department of Finance and Administration's (Finance) arrangements for the oversight of Government Business Enterprises and other commercial entities.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Branches/Offices/Consulted:		
Name:	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Position:		
Branch:		
Group:		
Work phone number:		
Mobile phone number:		
Sensitivity	YES/NO	GM Initial
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 4

Topic: Services to non-Indigenous people from ICCs

Hansard Page: 58

Senator Carr asked: I would like to know whether or not you will provide some services to non-Indigenous people from ICCs.

Answer: In relation to the Alice Springs ICC, FaCS is not currently delivering services to non-Indigenous people through this ICC outlet. The Alice Springs Regional Office is located in the Jock Nelson Building, the same location of the Alice Springs ICC although both offices are situated on separate floors. The building is known as the Alice Springs Commonwealth Centre as it also houses regional offices of the Department of Education Science and Training and the Australian Taxation Office and was formerly the site for the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations regional office.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Name:	Contact officer: Greg Poyser	Cleared by: Cate McKenzie
Position:	National Operations Unit Manager	Group Manager
Branch:	State and Territory Office Network	
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	02 6244 8599	02 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	0421 590 666	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	GM Initial
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 5

Topic: Activity testing

Hansard Page: 59

Senator Carr asked: Does FaCS have responsibility for any activity tests?

Answer:

Following the AAO changes, FaCS has no programs that have either an activity testing dimension or a remote area exemption component.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Branches/Offices/Consulted:		
Name:	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
David Kalisch	David Kalisch	David Kalisch
Position:	Group Manager	Group Manager
Branch:		
Group:	Social Policy Group	Social Policy Group
Work phone number:	02 6244 6380	6244 6380
Mobile phone number:	0417 421 460	0417 421 460
Sensitivity	YES/NO	GM Initial
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: FaCS 6

Topic: Smartcards

Hansard Page: 60

Senator Carr asked:

1. Explain the nature of smartcards – do they limit expenditure on certain items?
2. What are the details of the nature of any work done on smartcard, the forms of consultations, and whether or not there have been discussions or work undertaken about the linking of the integration of smartcard and other technologies into the Family Income Management project.

Answers:

1. A smart card is a credit-sized card containing a computer chip that can store and transfer monetary value. Smart cards can pre-allocate income for regular essential expenses such as groceries, power and phone bills and rent, leaving less disposable cash or readily accessible funds in keycard accounts vulnerable to 'hacking'.

2. In 2002, the Cape York Family Income Management project (FIM) investigated instituting smart card technology in Aurukun as a means of enabling cashless shopping, in conjunction with the main project activity of helping families budget and save. However, the infrastructure costs quoted proved beyond the project's means at the time.

In early 2004, a smartcard provider and Westpac developed a draft proposal at the request of Cape York Partnerships on how smartcards might enhance the operations of FIM and benefit FIM families. This draft was considered by the FIM Working Group in April 2004. (The FIM Working Group oversees management of the project, and comprises community, government and Westpac representatives). The community representatives initially endorsed the proposal and approved Cape York Partnerships submitting it to government seeking funds to support a smartcard trial in Cape York.

Cape York Partnerships elected not to lodge the proposal at that time, but to seek government assistance to investigate a range of options to improve FIM operations, including comparing these with smartcard.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Name:	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Craig Kentwell	Cate McKenzie	Group Manager
Position:	Section Manager	
Branch:	Indigenous Policy	
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	02 6212 9593	02 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	0414 875 992	0402 944 449
Sensitivity		YES/NO
Cleared by your Group Manager		YES
		GM Initial

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: All Departments 1

Topic: Mechanisms for ensuring greater accountability

Written Question

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:

In response to the new Indigenous affairs arrangements the Office of Evaluation and Audit Indigenous Programs has been created within the Department of Finance and Administration. The Office of Evaluation and Audit Indigenous Programs (OEA-IP) has an independent audit role focused on Australian Government Indigenous-specific programs and services. While its main focus will be audit activities it will also have an independent evaluation role based on risk and materiality levels. The OEA-IP will develop its forward work plan in consultation with mainstream departments and the ANAO to prevent duplicate audits. FaCS Indigenous specific programs will be included in this process.

FaCS will also be contributing to the annual report on the performance of Indigenous programs that will be released publicly by the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs.

In addition to accountability processes to Parliament, FaCS has a range of mechanisms to ensure accountability, including:

- The FaCS Internal Audit Program;
- The FaCS Service Delivery Framework, which provides the basis under which FaCS develops, implements and delivers its programs. This Framework covers the whole program lifecycle including policy development, program design, implementation, management and evaluation. The Framework also incorporates minimum standards for all programs to follow in each of these areas. An element of the Service Delivery Framework is the performance management framework that each program is required to develop along with supporting information such as program guidelines. The performance management framework includes the development of performance indicators for each program;
- FaCS' engagement with OIPC and its coordination of Indigenous service delivery, provides an additional layer of consideration related to effectiveness and value of FaCS Indigenous targeted programs in a whole of government context; and

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

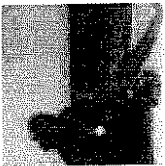
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

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- FaCS' participation in negotiations through Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) with Indigenous communities under the Shared Responsibility Agreement Framework to determine service delivery needs and reciprocal arrangements. The agreements will clearly identify agreed performance measures and benchmarks, which will improve the effectiveness and accountability of programs and services directly at the community level.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Name:	Geoff Richardson	Cate McKenzie
Position:	Branch Manager	Group Manager
Branch:	Indigenous Policy	
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	02 6212 9197	02 6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	1419 787 475	0413 385 936
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial



Most importantly, Indigenous people should be supported and encouraged to be primarily responsible for shaping the future for the next generations.

Everyone working in FaCS is committed to making Indigenous business their business.

FaCS provides a wide range of services to Indigenous people through mainstream and specific programs. They include income support payments for the unemployed, disabled, youth, families and the aged delivered by Centrelink, employment assistance for people with a disability and a range of other programs and services delivered through State and Territory governments.

Our purpose is to take the lead and work with others to help families, communities and individuals build their self-reliance and make choices through:

- Economic and social participation
- Prevention and early intervention
- A responsive and sustainable safety net.

FaCS is committed to achieving this purpose by strengthening program ability to deliver to Indigenous people.

FaCS goal is to be as flexible as necessary to address the main issues facing Indigenous people, and to deliver services that best suit local needs.

A range of programs can contribute to an outcome, and a single program can contribute to several outcomes.

Indigenous business is everybody's business

Statement of Commitment to
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Indigenous Business is Everybody's Business 2003




FaCS Seven Key Commitments



Indigenous people continue to be the most disadvantaged group in Australian society. This *Statement of Commitment* by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) is our pledge to tackle the entrenched social and economic disadvantages experienced by many Indigenous Australians.

It commits FaCS to doing things differently. In particular, the Statement recognises the need for a more collaborative approach. FaCS and key stakeholders—both within and outside the organisation—need to combine energies, expertise and resources to build on existing strengths, assets and capacities and forge partnerships that help solve the complex problems facing many Indigenous people. These important partnerships will help FaCS develop policies and deliver services that better meet the needs of all Indigenous people.

To that end, FaCS has adopted the motto, 'Indigenous business is everybody's business'.


Mark Sullivan
Secretary

Commonwealth Department of Family
and Community Services

*FaCS is committed to strengthening
and supporting Indigenous individuals,
families and communities become
more self-reliant.*



FaCS will:

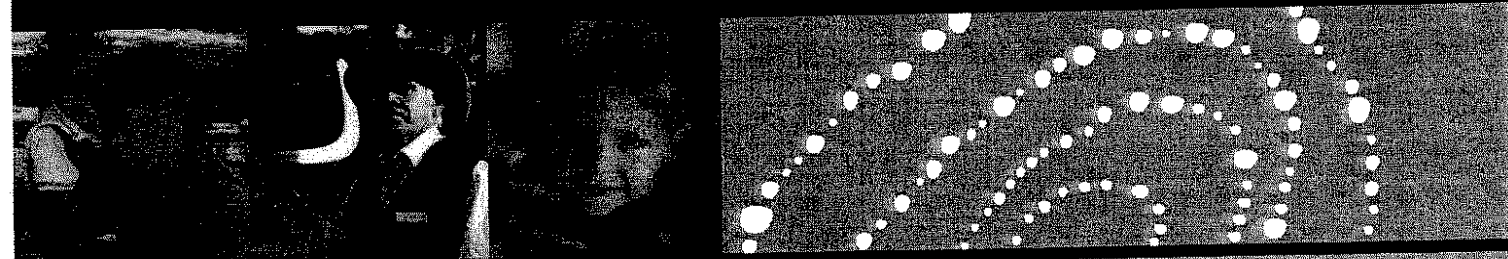
1. **Better target RESEARCH AND EVALUATION** so Indigenous needs are more clearly identified.
2. **Develop POLICIES AND DELIVER SERVICES** that are appropriate and relevant to Indigenous individuals, families and communities.
3. **Adopt a COORDINATED AND INTEGRATED APPROACH** to resolving Indigenous issues through partnerships between key stakeholders.
4. **Maintain and improve** links with other providers and partners, to help **INFORMATION SHARING** and to **IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES**.
5. **Support** the FaCS network and Centrelink with the **RESOURCES** to enable delivery of services and commitments.
6. **Identify CHAMPIONS** to promote and raise awareness of Indigenous issues within FaCS.
7. **Develop and implement** an Indigenous **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION** strategy.

FaCS embraces an emerging school of thought that seeks to tackle entrenched social and economic disadvantage in Indigenous communities in a different way. The approach—endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in November 2000—is based on forming partnerships between Government, communities and other stakeholders so that Indigenous people become self-reliant rather than more entrenched in the welfare system.

There is an identified need for Government flexibility in program-making, a need to build on strengths already existing in Indigenous families and communities, and a need to encourage pride in Indigenous history, traditions, culture and spirituality.



Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services



Statement of Commitment to
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Indigenous Business Is Everybody's Business 2003

facs Indigenous

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Foreword by the Secretary

As the centrepiece of one of our departmental events to celebrate NAIDOC Week 2002, I had the pleasure of announcing the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services' *Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*.

Indigenous people continue to be the most disadvantaged group in Australian society. The *Statement of Commitment* explains the way we, as a department, intend to tackle the entrenched social and economic disadvantages that continue to face many Indigenous Australians.

It commits us to doing things differently. In particular, it recognises the need for us to take a strong collaborative approach. We need to combine our expertise, energies, and resources with those of our key stakeholders, both inside and outside of the organisation. The forging of true partnerships, combined with a strong commitment to helping solve the complex problems facing Indigenous people, will help us to develop policies and deliver services that better meet the needs of all Indigenous people.

The *Statement of Commitment* identifies seven areas where we are committed to making a difference in terms of our relationship with and outcomes for Indigenous people. Underpinning this Statement are a number of principles and specific approaches that will be progressively actioned to achieve the objectives set. Under current developments, for example, are the FaCS Indigenous Policy Framework, Research and Urban Agendas and an Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Strategy. It is anticipated that the FaCS Indigenous Policy Reference Group will oversee the development of these documents.

As a department, we must ensure that Indigenous issues are a priority for all policy and program areas. 'Indigenous business is everybody's business'. This is the underlying theme of the *Statement of Commitment* and a message that I am sure you will embrace.



Mark Sullivan
Secretary

Indigenous Business is Everybody's Business

FaCS is committed to strengthening and supporting Indigenous individuals, families and communities become more self-reliant.

Seven Key Commitments

FaCS will:

1. **Better target RESEARCH AND EVALUATION** so Indigenous needs are more clearly identified.
2. **Develop POLICIES AND DELIVER SERVICES** that are appropriate and relevant to Indigenous individuals, families and communities.
3. **Adopt a COORDINATED AND INTEGRATED APPROACH** to resolving Indigenous issues through partnerships between key stakeholders.
4. **Maintain and improve** links with other providers and partners, to help **INFORMATION SHARING** and to **IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES**.
5. **Support** the FaCS network and Centrelink with the **RESOURCES** to enable delivery of services and commitments.
6. **Identify CHAMPIONS** to promote and raise awareness of Indigenous issues within FaCS.
7. **Develop and implement** an Indigenous **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION** strategy.

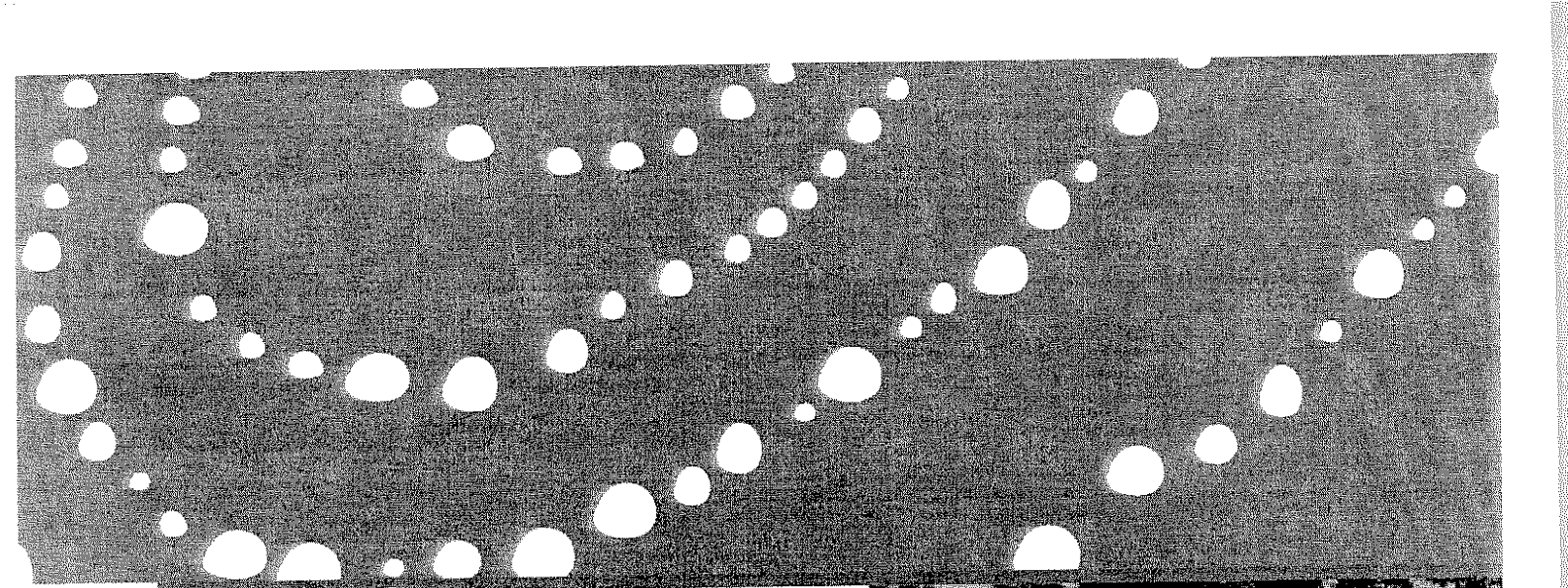
Background

Only a co-ordinated and integrated approach across Government will help address the complexity of problems facing Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Australians represent 2.1 percent of the population. As a result of high fertility and high mortality rates, the Indigenous population is increasingly becoming younger, with a median age of 20 compared with 33 years for the total Australian population. Indigenous people are also becoming more urbanised with around 72 percent living in locations of more than 1,000 people.

By almost all socio-economic indicators, Indigenous Australians are the most disadvantaged group in Australia. Their profile is different from other Australians, and also varies between their own communities. Indigenous Australians have twice the national average rate of unemployment; lower participation in the education system; the highest rate of incarceration; the highest rate of infant mortality; and poor health and housing situations. Suicide rates are high, and many in Indigenous communities suffer major alcohol and other substance abuse problems.

FaCS embraces an emerging school of thought that seeks to tackle entrenched social and economic Indigenous disadvantage differently. The approach is based on forming partnerships between Government, communities and business, so that the level and impact of disadvantage on Indigenous individuals, families and communities is reduced.



The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) at its November 2000 meeting endorsed this new approach. The Council noted that programs needed to be flexible and co-ordinated across Government agencies, with a local focus to produce local outcomes. It resolved to adjust programs and services to enable partnerships to develop between Indigenous people and Governments.

FaCS provides a wide range of services to Indigenous people through mainstream and specific programs. They include income support payments for the unemployed, disabled, youth, families and the aged delivered directly by Centrelink; employment assistance for people with a disability; and a range of other programs and services delivered through state and territory governments. Community organisations provide assistance to the homeless and childcare, and other measures that focus on building business and community partnerships.

Our purpose is to take the lead and work with others to help families, communities and individuals build their self-reliance and make choices through:

- Economic and social participation
- Prevention and early intervention
- A responsive and sustainable safety net.



FaCS is committed to achieving this purpose by strengthening programs and policies. Programs such as *Family and Community Networks Initiative*, *Reconnect*, *Innovative Childcare* and the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* have a special resonance in relation to the needs of Indigenous individuals, families and communities. FaCS commitment therefore, includes being as flexible as necessary to address the many issues facing Indigenous people, and to deliver services that best suit local needs. A range of programs can contribute to an outcome, and a single program can contribute to several outcomes.

The FaCS commitment to Indigenous Australians includes developing partnerships between key stakeholders (internal and external to FaCS) who have a role in policy development and service delivery to Indigenous communities. These include the communities themselves and/or their representative organisations, other government and non-government agencies, and the corporate sector.

Commitment One

Better target RESEARCH AND EVALUATION so Indigenous needs are more closely identified.

Effective use of research and evaluation is central to integrated policy development. FaCS currently supports and/or seeks advice from organisations such as the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research; the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare; the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute; the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Our State and Territory Office Network, Workplace Health and Diversity Team and Indigenous Officers' Network are valuable sources of administrative data and local connections. More effort is still needed within FaCS and other service providers to improve their comparability, reliability, availability and effectiveness of data collections.

There is a risk that the ability to respond quickly to emerging issues can be hampered by a heavy reliance on evidence-based research being conducted prior to action being taken. To ensure that our research and evaluation efforts achieve their goals, FaCS will:

- Strike an appropriate balance between conducting evidence-based activities and taking action; and between quantitative statistical data and good qualitative information obtained using culturally appropriate and ethical methodologies (for example, focus groups).
- Conduct research together with Indigenous communities and organisations, to increase feedback and give participants a sense of ownership about the findings. Research will include a skills development and transfer component; eg training and use of Indigenous people in research and evaluation.
- Encourage program-makers to factor into program evaluation an adequate assessment of the impact on Indigenous clients, and plan for this by seeking the additional resources needed. The FaCS Research and Evaluation Framework specifically identifies key Indigenous-focused research questions of interest to the department.



Commitment Two

Develop POLICIES AND DELIVER SERVICES that are appropriate and relevant to Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

FaCS will be proactive rather than reactive when identifying needs and developing policy, and will keep up with current research and policy developments in Australia and overseas. We will foster good professional and personal contact with Indigenous communities and other agencies.

To develop appropriate policies and services, FaCS will:

- Use advisory groups as resources for policy development and to maintain dialogue with Indigenous communities and organisations. Advisory bodies will also be consulted about issues affecting Indigenous people.
- Consider the impact of proposed policy initiatives on Indigenous people. Where appropriate, we will consult with other key stakeholders when developing or modifying policy. FaCS will always try to consult with Indigenous people or their representative organisations in this process.
- Work to increase flexibility and avoid a 'one size fits all' approach. Programs will be critically examined to ensure that they are appropriate to the needs of Indigenous communities and families.
- Ensure programs demonstrate clear goals, performance monitoring and reporting requirements. Reporting should include identification of any impediments to access programs, and how these will be addressed. Where practical evaluation processes should include feedback to participants.



- Where possible, make funding cycles reflect the longer time frames required for many Indigenous projects. Programs should also be flexible and minimise the administrative burden on recipients. Efforts should be made to transfer skills to Indigenous participants as part of policy and program development.
- Devote greater effort to breaking down program silos, coordinating effort and involving all key stakeholders.
- Emphasise in service delivery agreements our commitment to Indigenous people and communities, particularly in the Business Partnership Agreement with Centrelink.

Indigenous Australians access Commonwealth mainstream services at much lower rates than non-Indigenous people. Barriers include the way programs are designed, how they are funded, how they are presented, and their cost to users. Other impediments for those living in remote locations include lack of services, and the need to travel long distances to access available services.¹

States and territories are the major service providers, so the Commonwealth has limited influence over the way programs are prioritised. However, the Commonwealth can indirectly influence the development of partnerships, including taking a whole-of-government approach and through agreements and other collaborative arrangements that improve coordination between all levels of government and other agencies.²

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FaCS and Centrelink work to strike a balance between the delivery of mainstream income support and Indigenous-specific programs and services. For example, Centrelink's 'life events' model demonstrates how a response can be made to individual needs with an integrated package of services. There may continue to be justification for Indigenous-specific programs (eg FaCS Multifunctional Aboriginal Childcare Services, and Centrelink's Indigenous Customer Service Officers) where Indigenous people have expressed a wish for them.

Special attention will be given to mainstream programs and services to ensure they are delivered in a culturally appropriate way that is more responsive to Indigenous needs. Indigenous-specific programs and services will not be used as a substitute for any failings of mainstream programs—rather, mainstream programs will be modified as required.



² op cit, *We Can Do It!* p xviii

Commitment Three

Adopt a COORDINATED AND INTEGRATED APPROACH to resolving Indigenous issues through partnerships between key stakeholders.

All departmental staff are key stakeholders in the process of strengthening and supporting individuals, families and communities to become more self-reliant.

Key stakeholders external to FaCS and Centrelink include:

- Indigenous people, communities and organisations;
- Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OATSIA), Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs;
- Office of Indigenous Policy, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, (OATSIH), Department of Health and Ageing;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC);
- Research bodies—for example, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS);
- Indigenous consultative forums;
- Other Indigenous peak bodies, for example the Secretariat for National Aboriginal Islander Child Care (SNAICC);
- Non-Indigenous community organisations;
- Other Commonwealth agencies; and
- State, Territory and local governments.

A key goal is to build relationships, including with the corporate sector, that will produce long-term, sustainable benefits for Indigenous people. FaCS approach acknowledges that many solutions are likely to come from Indigenous people themselves, building on existing strengths, assets and capacities of individuals, families and communities. It is critical that FaCS help forge partnerships between Indigenous people, other levels of government and the corporate sector to increase program coordination and flexibility.

To facilitate partnerships, FaCS will apply the following principles:

- Partnerships will be formed to help Indigenous people make choices and become more self-reliant;
- Partnerships will be honest, respectful and equal relationships;
- FaCS will partner with communities on a whole-of-government basis, and establish simplified reporting and accountability arrangements. Government intervention should result in an improvement in individual, family or community functioning, and should be enabling, rather than directive.
- Partnerships will be developed with individuals or consortia of key stakeholders who can contribute to building sustainable communities. Communities and community groups need not contribute financially—their input could be people or information. FaCS will usually be expected to make a financial contribution, or a contribution in-kind of an equivalent financial value.

Commitment Four

Maintain and improve links with other providers and partners, to help INFORMATION SHARING AND TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

Commitment Five

Support the FaCS network and Centrelink with the RESOURCES to enable delivery of services and commitments.

FaCS will position itself to gain in-depth knowledge and expertise from key stakeholders. Gaining this expertise and sharing knowledge requires resources and is critical to the success of programs, and for establishing a common understanding and focus amongst stakeholders.

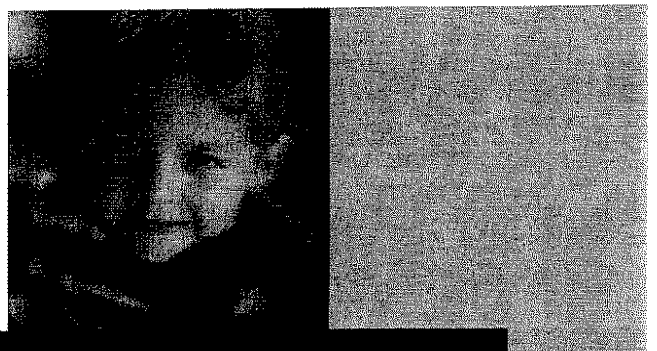
To this end, FaCS will:

- Ensure all program areas improve links and share information on Indigenous issues within FaCS and externally, and will allocate time and resources accordingly.
- Consult with Indigenous communities and organisations. The minimum aim would be to hold discussions with formally identified community leaders, opinion leaders and clients who may access services or programs. To support this approach, a number of things could be considered, for example:
 - invitations are extended to other government and non-government agency representatives, as appropriate;
 - information is provided in plain English and assistance given to participants for whom English is not their first language;
 - adequate time is allowed for consultation, and factors such as distance, ceremonial obligations and seasonal conditions are factored in.

Resourcing is central to achieving our commitments, but that does not necessarily mean employing additional staff. Resourcing could involve better deployment of existing staff; better utilisation of existing local resources such as Centrelink Customer Service Centre staff and ATSIC field workers; or simply working smarter.

To maximise FaCS resources, FaCS will:

- Make the most effective use of existing resources, and look at the longer-term when considering additional resourcing. For example, resources used now for preventative or capacity-building measures could lead to reduced resources to alleviate social and economic problems in the future.
- Ensure that Indigenous issues are kept at the forefront of staff consciousness.




Commitment Six

Identify CHAMPIONS to promote and raise awareness of Indigenous issues within FaCS.

Commitment Seven

Develop and implement an Indigenous RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION strategy.



To drive change and keep Indigenous issues firmly in the consciousness of the organisation, FaCS is committed to becoming an advocate of Indigenous issues.

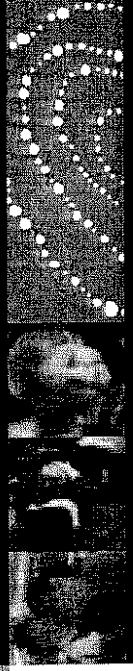
To achieve this, FaCS will:

- Aim to have all staff become Champions for Indigenous people.
- Encourage executives to promote Indigenous issues and support staff who work on these issues to bring about change in the department and in other agencies.
- Support Indigenous Champions and the FaCS Indigenous Officers' Network to operate as inductors, coaches, mentors and guides for employees whose business touches on Indigenous issues, or who interact with Indigenous communities or their representatives.
- Encourage all FaCS staff to attend cross-cultural awareness training.

FaCS will promote job opportunities for Indigenous people. In line with the outcomes of workforce planning and in consultation with our Indigenous Officers' Network FaCS will:

- Take a direct and effective role in promoting work opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within FaCS.
- Deliver on Indigenous recruitment and retention initiatives, including a program of Indigenous cadetships and traineeships.
- Increase the number of Indigenous graduates.
- Explore ways of developing partnerships with external organisations, to enhance the skills of Indigenous staff.
- Work in partnership with other agencies on retention, and support initiatives for Indigenous officers through programs such as buddying and mentoring.
- Use the development of a FaCS recruitment strategy as a springboard to further projects across the entire organisation.

Indigenous Business is Everybody's Business



Most importantly, Indigenous people should be supported and encouraged to be primarily responsible for shaping the future for the next generations.

Everyone working in FaCS is committed to making Indigenous business their business. FaCS provides a wide range of services to Indigenous people through mainstream and specific programs. They include income support payments for the unemployed, disabled, youth, families and the aged delivered by Centrelink, employment assistance for people with a disability and a range of other programs and services delivered through State and Territory governments.

Our purpose is to take the lead and work with others to help families, communities and individuals build their self-reliance and make choices through:

- Economic and social participation
- Prevention and early intervention
- A responsive and sustainable safety net.

FaCS is committed to achieving this purpose by strengthening program ability to deliver to Indigenous people.

FaCS goal is to be as flexible as necessary to address the main issues facing Indigenous people, and to deliver services that best suit local needs.

A range of programs can contribute to an outcome, and a single program can contribute to several outcomes.

Indigenous business is everybody's business

Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
Indigenous Business is everybody's Business 2003



FaCS Seven Key Commitments



FaCS is committed to strengthening and supporting Indigenous individuals, families and communities become more self-reliant.

Indigenous people continue to be the most disadvantaged group in Australian society. This *Statement of Commitment* by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) is our pledge to tackle the entrenched social and economic disadvantages experienced by many Indigenous Australians.

It commits FaCS to doing things differently. In particular, the Statement recognises the need for a more collaborative approach. FaCS and key stakeholders—both within and outside the organisation—need to combine energies, expertise and resources to build on existing strengths, assets and capacities and forge partnerships that help solve the complex problems facing many Indigenous people. These important partnerships will help FaCS develop policies and deliver services that better meet the needs of all Indigenous people.

To that end, FaCS has adopted the motto, 'Indigenous business is everybody's business'.



Mark Sullivan
Secretary
Commonwealth Department of Family
and Community Services

FaCS will:

1. **Better target RESEARCH AND EVALUATION** so Indigenous needs are more clearly identified.
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6. **Identify CHAMPIONS** to promote and raise awareness of Indigenous issues within FaCS.
7. **Develop and implement** an Indigenous **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION** strategy.

FaCS embraces an emerging school of thought that seeks to tackle entrenched social and economic disadvantage in Indigenous communities in a different way. The approach—endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in November 2000—is based on forming partnerships between Government, communities and other stakeholders so that Indigenous people become self-reliant rather than more entrenched in the welfare system.

There is an identified need for Government flexibility in program-making, a need to build on strengths already existing in Indigenous families and communities, and a need to encourage pride in Indigenous history, traditions, culture and spirituality.

Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Friday February 4 2005

Question No: All Departments 4

Written Question

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

Answer:

FaCS is committed to the whole of government approach of working together with other mainstream departments to provide programs that have the flexibility to enable them to respond to local need, and to link more effectively with FaCS mainstream programs and those of other agencies.

FaCS participates in the Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs that provides collegiate, cooperative and coordinated leadership. FaCS has an Indigenous Reference Group that focuses on indigenous policy and service delivery. FaCS is involved in the ICCs and is committed to working cooperatively with all levels of government to deliver programs that are flexible and meet needs at the local level.

FaCS is committed to ensuring greater accountability of programs through accountability processes to Parliament, the Office of Evaluation and Audit – Indigenous Programs (OEA-IP) process, and FaCS' internal mechanisms including its Internal Audit Program, the FaCS Service Delivery Framework, and its engagement with the OIPC in a whole of government context.

The achievements at the COAG trial site at Wadeye in the Northern Territory (where FaCS is the lead agency) has involved mainstream agencies from Commonwealth and State governments working together with community leaders. This shows that significant outcomes can be achieved through provision of flexible services through mainstream agencies that are committed to collaboration. These include more flexible funding arrangements; streamlining contractual arrangements between governments and communities; negotiated performance targets and reporting requirements; and better linking Indigenous specific programs to mainstream programs.

Branches/Offices/Consulted:

Name:	Contact officer:	Cleared by:
Craig Kentwell	Craig Kentwell	Cate McKenzie
Position:	Section Manager	Group Manager
Branch:	Indigenous Policy	
Group:	Communities	Communities
Work phone number:	6212 9593	6244 8569
Mobile phone number:	0414 875 992	0402 944 449
Sensitivity	YES/NO	
Cleared by your Group Manager	YES	GM Initial