

Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

**SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

4 FEBRUARY 2005

Questions on Notice for all Departments

Question 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:

The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) has in place accountability arrangements to ensure it is able to meet its obligations to Parliament, government, ministers, stakeholders and clients. DCITA has undertaken an assessment of the ex-ATSIS programs with a focus on improving their effectiveness and accountability. In addition, like other agencies which have assumed responsibility for ATSIC/ATSIS's programs, the outcomes of DCITA's programs will be reviewed as part of the public annual report on the performance of Indigenous programs by the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs. The Office of Evaluation and Audit (Indigenous Programs) will also conduct audits and evaluations of Indigenous-specific programs, including those administered by DCITA.

Question 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

DCITA has developed and implemented a set of specific funding procedures for Indigenous programs, consistent with its Chief Executive Instructions, which identify delegation responsibilities. In addition DCITA has reviewed program guidelines for 2005-06 and these have been streamlined to reflect:

- revised assessment processes;
- Ministerial responsibility for funding decisions;
- improved key performance indicators;
- whole of government priorities for Indigenous affairs; and
- clearer delineation between funding programs.

Question 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:

DCITA program managers and regional network managers are working in collaboration with staff in the Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) to deliver programs in consultation with Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities will continue to be closely involved in the delivery of these programs.

Question 4:

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

Answer

Mainstreaming provides an opportunity to improve links and synergies between DCITA mainstream programs and Indigenous specific programs.

Question 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:

DCITA has a number of funding agreements with Indigenous organisations. These agreements contain schedules detailing a range of program specific arrangements including agreed outcomes, milestones and resource commitments. DCITA is participating in the 2005-06 whole of government funding round for programs previously administered by ATSIC-ATSIS. OIPC is developing a whole of government funding agreement in consultation with departments for the 2005-06 funding round.

Question 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?

Answer:

The nature of the DCITA programs meant that coordination prior to mainstreaming was primarily with ATSIS and the OIPC.

Question 7:

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

Answer:

DCITA has existing internal and external reporting and evaluation mechanisms in place which will apply to the Indigenous programs. In addition, DCITA is working with the OIPC on a whole of government reporting project.

Questions on notice contained in transcript - DCITA

Question:

Senator Carr asked:

Could each Department provide a breakdown by classification of representation of ongoing Indigenous employees? It would be good if we could get a time series – perhaps 2003-04 and the most recent one for 2005?

Answer:

At 30 June 2004 the Department had two staff (APS5 and EL1) that voluntarily identified as Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders. This information will be updated during the year as part of the Annual Report process.

Table 1 provides a breakdown by classification of the 50 Indigenous staff that transferred from ATSI to the Department on 1 July 2004.

Table 1

Indigenous Staff transferred from ATSI on 1 July 2004		
	1 July 04	10 Feb 05
SES 1	1	1
EL 2	2	1
EL 1	1	1
APS 6	4#	4
APS 5	9*	9*
APS 4	20	19
APS 3	12	10
APS 2	1	1
TOTAL	50	46

* Includes two non-ongoing employees

Includes one non-ongoing employee

Question

Senator Carr asked:

How many Indigenous people are acting in those senior positions that are currently vacant?

Answer

There are currently four senior positions vacant in the Regional Network. Only one of these positions is currently filled (by a non-indigenous employee) in an acting capacity.

Question:

Senator Carr asked:

How many employees does CAAMA have? Do you know, Mr Buettel? Several hundred isn't it?

Answer:

In its funding submission to ATSSIS, received on 1 April 2004, CAAMA identified 24 employees whose positions are supported by funding under the Indigenous Broadcasting Program or income earned from the activities engaged in with that funding support. DCITA understands that CAAMA operates other businesses and would have staff employed in those businesses.

Question:

Senator Carr asked:

We are not that far from the end of the financial year. They have said to me that in the past they have been able to establish well before this what their budgetary situation will be in the next financial year. At this time, they are not able to tell their employees or the people running their programs what moneys are available. Is that a situation that applies to other public broadcasters funded by the department?

Answer:

The Government provides funding to the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) under an annual funding agreement which is renegotiated every year. The CBF receives funding early in the financial year and conducts two grants rounds under which funds are awarded on the basis of merit. The first round is usually held early in the financial year. Only when the outcome of the second round is announced will community broadcasting stations who have applied for grants in 2005-06 know how much, if any, funding they will receive during that year.

The national broadcasters are funded triennially. The Government announced in the context of the 2004 election campaign that it intends to maintain their funding in real terms.

Question:

Senator Carr asked:

I would like you to take on notice how notification of funding has varied from previous years.

Answer:

DCITA understands that the timing of the 2005-06 whole of government funding submission process being coordinated by the OIPC is similar to the timing in 2004-05 when the process was managed by ATSSIS.

Question:

Senator Ridgeway asked:

Could you explain how the regional arts fund will now operate? Is the funding going to be the same? Are you able to provide any funding figures for the ongoing operation?

Answer:

From 2004-05 to 2007-08 the Regional Arts Fund (RAF) will continue to operate in the same manner as it operated from 2001-02 to 2003-04. The program will be managed by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), and delivered in each State by the Regional Arts Organisation and in the Territories by the Arts Ministry.

The RAF funding was continued in the 2004-05 Budget at the same level: \$10.732 million over 4 years. Following an election commitment, the funding will be increased in the current Additional Estimates process by \$5.389 million over 4 years. The total funding will be \$16.121 million over 4 years.

The Indigenous Regional Art and Culture Support (RACS) program, for which DCITA assumed administrative responsibility from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service (ATSIS) on 1 July 2004, supports activities that maintain the depth and diversity of cultural practice within Indigenous communities. The RACS program objectives, which remain consistent from 2004-05 to 2005-06, are to:

- foster, maintain and preserve regional and local Indigenous arts and cultures; and
- support community participation in the process of cultural transmission.

The focus of RACS funding is on local or regional cultural centres, activities which support the maintenance and revival of cultural practice and presentation to the general public of displays of Indigenous arts and cultures in activities such as cultural festivals, exhibitions, ceremonial activities, dance performances, theatre and literary displays.

Besides the removal of the requirement of economic outcomes for all activities, there are no significant changes to the objectives of the 2005-06 RACS program guidelines. The program retains its regional focus to meet the 'on-the-ground' cultural needs of Indigenous communities.

There was no reduction of funding for the RACS program as a result of the transition of administrative responsibility to DCITA. Total RACS funding in 2004-05 is \$6,361,248. The 2005-06 allocation has yet to be determined.