

**A Resource Guide for Councils in South Australia
for the
May 2003 elections**

**INVOLVING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
PEOPLE IN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

August 2002

*“Local Government commits to.....developing strategies that improve the level of participation of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in local government at all levels.”
(Local Government Association of SA Policy, carried unanimously by Council representatives at
its 2000 Annual General Meeting)*

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

An initiative of

Local Government Association of SA and the SA Government Office of Local Government with the support of the Commonwealth Local Government Incentives Program

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- the members of the SA Local Government Aboriginal Policy Officers Network;
- the Councils who responded to the LGA Circular and questionnaire; and
- Yaitya Warra Wodli Language Centre Inc.

Companion Publications (refer “8. Promotional Material and Publications”)

Promotional Poster

- *Your Local Government Council – Get Involved May 2003 Elections*
- Fact Sheets
- *What’s Local Government all about?*
 - *Voting in the May 2003 Local Government Elections*
 - *Being a Councillor in Local Government*

Other publications and resources included in the Information Package with the Resource Guide provided to all Councils are as follows:

- *Examples of Working Together in SA, November 2000* (LGA, SA Government)
- *So you want to be on Council* (LGA)
- *Making the decision to Get Involved in Local Government* (ATSIC)
- 25 x Electoral Roll Enrolment Forms (State Electoral Office)

Cover Artwork

The cover artwork by Tamara Watson depicts pathways to places and communities, and the hand grasping the crystal ball is a symbol of taking control of the future. Tamara’s family are Tanganekald people from the Coorong in South Australia. This artistic work has been reproduced on the Fact Sheets and Poster prepared as part of this project.

FOREWORD

We know that historically very few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have nominated as candidates in Local Government elections in South Australia (as elsewhere in Australia), and even fewer have been successfully elected as a Local Government Councillor. It is also worth noting that even fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been elected to State and Federal parliaments but that a significant number of MPs have previously served as Councillors. It is also understood from anecdotal information that enrolment and voter turnout amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are lower when compared to the overall population.

This low participation rate was highlighted in the *Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People 2 Report* released in August 2000¹, which made a range of recommendations for future strategic directions for increasing the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Local Government business. In relation to elections and voting, it was noted that there appeared to be a direct relationship between the timely provision of information prior to Local Government elections, and the level of interest in nominating as candidates or registering to vote.

In response, the LGA and the Office of Local Government, with the support of the Commonwealth Local Government Incentives Program, have prepared this resource guide to support Local Government Councils in preparing their community awareness campaigns leading up to the 2003 Local Government periodic elections.

In particular, the guide responds to requests for practical and culturally appropriate information to further Councils' efforts in encouraging increased voter turnout of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and sparking their interest in standing as candidates in Local Government elections.

This project has built on the relationships already established between Councils and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and Local, State and Commonwealth Governments. It has been developed with support from the Department of State Aboriginal Affairs (DOSAA), the State Electoral Office (SEO), and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), with input from LGA's Aboriginal Policy Officers Network, former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Government Councillors, and Local Government Councils in South Australia.

The collective contribution of all those involved in the development of this resource guide is acknowledged and has been greatly appreciated.

We welcome your continued contribution and effort to increasing the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Local Government business, and hope that you will find the guide of practical use not only for the 2003 elections, but into the future.

Mayor Johanna McLuskey
President
Local Government Association of
South Australia

Hon Jay Weatherill MP
Minister for Local Government

Mr Brian Butler
ATSIC SA Zone Commissioner

¹ Gould J and Heylen M, *Local Councils Belongs to Aboriginal People 2 Report*. The Review Project was a collaborative initiative between LGA, State and Commonwealth Governments, funded through the Commonwealth's Local Government Development Program.

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1. WELCOME TO THE RESOURCE GUIDE

The development of this resource guide responds to just one of the recommendations in the "Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People 2 Review Report."

Other recommendations which focus on fostering increasing access to and involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Local Government relate to the following:

- advancing reconciliation between non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in South Australia;
- increasing cultural awareness amongst Council staff and Councillors;
- employing Aboriginal Project Officers in areas where there are high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents;
- establishing Aboriginal Advisory Committees and consultative forums (within the terms of the Local Government Act or less formal arrangements). This will also help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain an insight into how Councils function, and become familiar with formal meeting procedures; and
- establishing mentoring programs for newly elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors.

In general, the focus of the recommendations is on creating a more welcoming Local Government environment, which values and respects the richness of cultural diversity and fosters good working relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. **A range of good examples of Councils working together with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are profiled in "Examples of Working Together in South Australia, November 2000" released with the Review Report** referred to above.

This resource guide contains information and guidelines to assist Local Government Councils in South Australia to:

- gain a better understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture; and
- target community awareness strategies aimed at increasing their participation in Local Government elections and voting.

Many Councils have long standing and good working relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their experiences have contributed to the development of this resource guide. In these cases, the material in this guide will be familiar but nevertheless, it may provide some useful reminders and new ways of thinking about familiar techniques or ideas to further develop what is already being done.

Other Councils may have had less involvement, mainly because there are fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in their area, and/or there seems to be no identified or specific local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group or community. In these instances, the information in the resource guide may be new and as such could well provide the basis for increasing cultural awareness in the Council organisation in general, and pave the way for establishing new relationships with, and encouraging the involvement of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Local Government business.

In particular, the resource guide responds to questions raised by Councils about cultural issues, and how best to target election awareness campaign material to capture the interest of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The guide complements, rather than duplicates other publications about Local Government elections and voting, such as

- LGA's "So you want to be a Council Member",
- ATSIIC's "Getting Involved in Local Government", and
- State Electoral Office publications, such as "Local Government Elections – Candidate's Handbook for Postal Elections"

The information and pro-formas contained in the resource guide may be adapted and/or reproduced to meet the requirements of specific Councils in South Australia. The resource guide is also available for down load from lga.net.

2. MAPPING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATIONS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

As at the 2001 census the population of South Australia was 1,414,470 of which 1.7%, or 23 425 people, identified as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.²

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are defined as those who identify as, and are recognised as such, by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.³ This is the accepted definition which is most widely used by State and Commonwealth Governments, where proof of Aboriginality is sometimes required for access to programs and project grants.

In Local Government Council Incorporated Areas

About 80% of the South Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population live in the 68 Local Government Council areas incorporated under the Local Government Act 1999. Within these areas, which geographically comprise about 15% of the State:

- about 54% live in the Adelaide metropolitan area; and
- about 46% live in country areas.

In the metropolitan area, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is dispersed, with particular population concentrations in the north west and northern Local Government Council areas of the Cities of Port Adelaide Enfield, Playford and Salisbury. High population concentrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also located in the southern area of the City of Onkaparinga. In addition, it is noted that meeting and gathering places in the City of Adelaide are population destinations for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A schedule of total population and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by Local Government area is attached at Appendix A.

In the country areas, there are five specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities living on Aboriginal Lands Trust land located within a local Government Council area. These are as follows.

Communities	Local Government Council
Point Pearce	District Council of Yorke Peninsula
Raukkan/Point McLeay	The Coorong District Council
Koonibba	District Council of Ceduna
Davenport	City of Port Augusta
Umoona	District Council of Coober Pedy

A larger number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live outside of the communities above in country areas and townships, and in "Out of Local Government Council Areas".

Out of Local Government Council areas

20% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in remote and rural parts of South Australia. Statistically, the most populated area is the Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands, with smaller communities residing in the Maralinga Tjarutja lands, Nepabunna (near Leigh Creek), Gerard (near Berri), Yalata (near Ceduna) and in the townships of Oodnadatta, Maree and Copley.

² Population data sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2001 Census data. More detailed information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in South Australia (based on 1996 Census data) is contained in the report "Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People 2 – A new Strategy, June 2000" (Refer footnote 1)

³ Department of Premier and Cabinet, SA, January 1998

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regional Councils

There are three ATSIC Regional Council areas in South Australia, namely:

- Patpa Warra Yunti (administration located in Adelaide)
- Wangka-Wilurrara (administration located in Ceduna)
- Nulla Wimia Kutju (administration located in Pt Augusta).

The metropolitan area and all of the 18 metropolitan area Local Government Councils fall within the ATSIC Regional Council Area of Patpa Warra Yunti.

ABS Census and Racial Identity

It is important to note that nominating racial identity in the ABS census is a choice of the individual.

Historically, the willingness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to identify their race and cultural background has been affected by a range of factors, not the least of which has been negative attitudes and perceptions about government agencies and authorities. For these reasons, the accuracy of the census and other statistical data in this regard can be questioned.

However, we can note from the ABS census data that in 1991 the statistical recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in South Australia was .95% of the total population, this increased to 1.24% in the 1996 census data and to 1.7% in the 2001 census data. This trend suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are increasingly declaring their cultural heritage.

3. INVOLVING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

“Australia has many cultures. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are special because their values are those of Australia’s first peoples.”
(Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation - Key Issues, 1994)

History tells us that since European settlement in 1788, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced considerable regulation and supervision by governments and other institutions, in addition to experiences of disadvantage as a result of dislocation from home lands and government policies.

In general, statistics demonstrate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have poorer health status, achieve lower educational levels, and have much higher percentages of unemployment than the rest of the population in Australia. Clearly these factors hinder increased participation in the social, economic and cultural life of the community in general.

In more recent times, it has been recognised by various Governments and State and Commonwealth Equal Opportunity laws, that special measures need to be taken to address this disadvantage. A range of programs have been implemented over time, which aim to achieve equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australian society.

Equity means treating people fairly and in accordance with principles of social justice, not necessarily the same.

That is, for those groups in our society who experience disadvantage, we may need to take steps - special measures – to enable those groups to have a chance of achieving the same outcomes as people or groups not so disadvantaged. This is sometimes called “levelling the playing field”, which is a similar concept to “levelling the playing field” through the handicap scoring system in golf for instance.

It is also important to note that one of the objectives of Councils is to “*seek to provide services facilities and programs that are adequate and appropriate and seek to ensure equitable access to its services, facilities and programs*” (Section 8(i) Local Government Act 1999).

As with all LGA election promotional work, the resource guide does not suggest Councils provide support or information to advantage particular groups, which is not available generally to all voters or potential candidates. Rather, it is aimed at providing assistance to Councils who want to ensure their general promotional work is more effective in reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to overcome historical barriers and educational disadvantage which many of these people continue to experience.

For things to change we may have to do things differently.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING – Relevant Issues

From our research findings and conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, some common themes emerged about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views about elections in general, and Local Government in particular. These are as follows:

Voting Procedures

- Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people said they did not have confidence in the voting process, and in particular were concerned that voter declarations compromised the secret ballot. Declaration voting is also a requirement for ATSIC elections.
- ATSIC elections are seen to be more relevant than Local Government elections, particularly in regional areas where ATSIC is recognised as the major source of funding and provider of infrastructure, health and some local government type services.
- There are low numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women involved in ATSIC elections as candidates, and this has also been so in Local Government elections.
- Voting papers were said to be hard to follow and not easily understood, and help was needed to work their way through the papers.

Communication and Networks

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is based on verbal, not written communication.
- Urban and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people generally have English literacy skills. This is less so in more remote areas, which are in out of Local Government incorporated areas.
- Relatively few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are fluent in the written form of traditional languages.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information networks are different than those of the general population, and are based on verbal communications, and informal structures.
- A reasonable level of English literacy skills is required to participate and manage the tasks required of a Local Government Councillor.

Information about Local Government

- Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not know what Local Government does, and its relevance to daily life is not well understood. It was noted that this is also often the case in the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- Candidates profile was said to be the most important information for voters.

Potential Candidates in Local Government Elections

- Potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates are likely to be high profile, respected members in the local community.
- Realistic information needs to be provided about what is involved in being a Councillor, for example, the role, the workload, the time commitment required, and the fact that it is a Councillor's role to represent the whole of the community not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also said that they did not always feel welcomed by their Local Government Council, and that their cultural traditions and protocols were not widely understood by Council staff and Councillors.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP

The objectives of Local Government provide for Councils, in the performance of roles and functions to:

- be responsive to the needs, interests and aspirations of individuals and groups within its community (Section 8 (b));
- seek to ensure council resources are used fairly, effectively and efficiently (Section 8(h)); and
- seek to provide services, facilities and programs that are adequate and appropriate and seek to ensure equitable access to its services, facilities and programs (Section 89 (l)).

The following principle and policy statements are also noted:

- *"Local Government is seen to have a responsibility to encourage non-discriminatory participation of all citizens in building democratic communities which share power and ensure a more equitable allocation of community resources"* (Australian Local Government Association).
- *"Local Government commits to ... developing strategies that improve the level of participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in local government at all levels."* (LGA Policy, carried unanimously by Council representatives at its 2000 AGM.)

Involvement in Local Government elections and voting presents an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to influence local decision making and to be involved in community leadership.

4. SOME PRACTICAL STEPS

In this section, we highlight the practical steps and some things to think about to help foster a culturally inclusive and welcoming environment, and to minimise the perceived barriers to increase the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Local Government elections.⁴ Other information about cultural characteristics is included at Appendix B, which serves as a reminder or first time look at the key cultural issues, differences, and protocols.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

- Promote positive attitudes within the Council organisation, and facilitate cultural awareness and an understanding of Aboriginal cultural traditions, and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.
- Consider the “front desk” environment. Make sure it is a user friendly and welcoming space, and the diversity of visitors is respected. Display Aboriginal art works, photographs, and posters.
- Ensure client service officers have access to a list of Aboriginal organisations and networks in Council’s community information directory to enable appropriate referrals.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to feel comfortable talking to another Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, or someone who is well known in the local community. Consider nominating a contact officer to talk to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about election and voting issues. It is important to remember, however, that relationships need to be built over time, and it is important to take an active and consistent approach in this regard.

The Best Ways to Communicate

- Talking to people, individually or in groups, is the most effective way to communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. This is particularly effective if arranged through respected community leaders.
- Tap into locally established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gatherings and forums, and ask for an invitation to talk to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at their meeting places.
- Make sure that meeting processes are informal, and avoid Local Government jargon.
- Talk through the voting process which is seen as complicated “government business”. Use flow charts and diagrams to illustrate points where possible.
- Take along posters or notices for display in meeting public places, about arrangements for Local Government elections. These visual displays are reminders about what to do and provide discussion points in meeting places. Take a ballot pack and sample voting papers and show each step in the process from voting to counting.
- Make efforts to engage local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artists or industry in the development of this material.

⁴ Some of the information in this section is drawn from *Examples of Working Together in South Australia, November 2000*

Arranging Meetings and Venues

- Convene meetings in places that are familiar to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which could be in community gathering spaces, or in parks or reserves. The formality of Council offices and Civic Centres can be intimidating environments for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have to travel long distances to attend meetings, particularly in country areas. Check out what are the suitable days and times for meetings.
- Consider whether transport can be offered to encourage attendance, for example, using the Community Bus.
- Provide refreshments and take account of special dietary requirements, such as diabetes.
- The role and responsibilities of Local Government Councils are not well understood by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If matters are raised that are not related to Local Government business or elections and voting, try to make appropriate referrals to other agencies or information sources.

***What does culturally inclusiveness mean?
It means respecting the culture, and treating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
with respect and dignity.***

5. THE KEY MESSAGES - ENCOURAGING INVOLVEMENT

Getting involved in Local Government provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to **take a further step towards being involved in local community leadership, and contributing their ideas and thoughts to the decisions about what happens locally.**

Voting in Local Government Council elections is about voting for who has a say about what happens in the local community. The people who get elected to the Council help to decide what happens locally. Each candidate standing for election may have different views about the future of the local community and voters can choose to vote for the person whose views are most like their own.

So, by voting and/or standing as a candidate in the elections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can help to influence decisions about the sort of place their community will be. It is about their future and voting for the representation they want on Council.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are likely to benefit from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors being elected to Local Government Councils, for example, **councillors can play an important role in enhancing Council understanding of cultural issues so decision making can be better informed. It also demonstrates that Aboriginal Councillors can represent the rest of the community.** Here are some of the Local Government issues Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors may be able to influence.⁵

Increasing Voter Turnout

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors can (through their electoral campaigns and on an on-going basis) encourage people in their local community to vote at Local Government elections and to get involved in Local Government business through consultative forums.

Protecting the Environment

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's strong cultural connections to the land and waters, brings a further dimension to the collective knowledge about environmental management. As such, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors can play a role in contributing to the debate about development, native title and land management matters, and enhancing awareness about environmental matters to the benefit of all.

Supporting Community Development

- Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors say they have been able to achieve a higher priority for cultural activities and services. This can apply to cultural issues impinging on council decisions, support for cultural festivals and National Aboriginal Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) events, and providing cultural services such as information on family histories through libraries.

Sport and Recreation

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors could also play a role in fostering participation in sport and recreation at Council facilities. This may be through reviewing policies on charging fees or dress requirements, the better location of facilities, or promoting specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sporting events.

There may be other more specific examples to add which are relevant to your Local Government Council area.

⁵ Some of these examples are cited in the ATSIC publication, *"Making the decision to get involved in local Government"* Local Government Handbook

REPRESENTATION

The reality of the State demographic situation is, that

“... there are only a limited number of Council situations where an Aboriginal person could be expected to be elected to a Local Government Council other than where widespread support for the candidate existed through the total community. This means that Aboriginal people cannot be expected to be elected to local government to represent Aboriginal issues alone but can be expected to be elected to play a part in representing the community as a whole.”(page 56)⁶

Sometimes there is an expectation that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander councillor will solely represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but in actual fact the councillor has a responsibility, the same as all non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors, to take account of the interests of the whole community in making decisions.

Similarly, there is also an expectation that non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors will inform themselves, understand the views and aspirations, and represent the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the local community.

FEELING ISOLATED IN AN UNFAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT

Being new to the job, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillor may feel particularly isolated in an unfamiliar system of governance, a different cultural environment, and a formal structure of debate and decision making.

It is also important to recognise that there are significant community expectations placed on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is elected to a position of authority. For example, an expectation that the Councillor can effect immediate change or influence issues which are outside the purview of Local Government. Some of these expectations relate to social issues such as poor health and housing and drug dependency, or criminal justice issues. It is noted, however, that in cases where there is significant community concern, Councils may have a role to play in representing local community concerns and needs at a regional, State or Commonwealth Government level.

Special efforts may be needed to overcome the unfamiliarity and sense of being a “voice in the wilderness”. Examples of strategies which have been adopted by some Councils, and have proved to be successful, are as follows:

- Mentoring arrangements between newly elected Councillors and experienced Councillors.
- Cultural awareness and familiarisation sessions with Councillors and key Council staff.

⁶ cited Janet Gould + Associates *Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People 2 Report* from Morton 1994..

6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ELECTIONS) ACT 1999 (SA)

The Local Government (Elections Act) 1999 sets out the requirements for the conduct of Local Government elections. The Act prescribes how elections are to be conducted, sets out the timetable for the election, eligibility relating to nominations, enrolment and voting and also prescribes the method of vote counting.

THE VOTERS ROLL

The voters roll is a combined list of all those listed on the State electoral roll and all those on the Council voters roll.

ENROLMENT

- ✓ Enrolment is automatic for Australian citizens over the age of 18 years of age living in the council area (including tenants) who are on the State electoral roll, and
- ✓ property owners and occupiers, including bodies corporate and groups of persons, who pay council rates.
- ✓ In addition business or commercial tenants/occupiers who do not pay rates and persons not on the State roll but resident within the area can lodge the prescribed application form with the council prior to close of the roll on **13/2/2003** to have their name added to the council voters roll. **(Note: City of Adelaide close of roll is 6/2/2003).**

Voting in Local Government elections in South Australia is not compulsory. Elections are conducted entirely by postal voting in the metropolitan area while rural councils can apply to conduct elections utilising polling booths.

KEY DATES ON THE 2003 ELECTION TIMETABLE

Voters Roll closes	Thursday 13 February (City of Adelaide closes Thursday 6 th February)
Candidate Nominations Close	12 noon Thursday 27 th March 2003
Votes to be received by Returning Officer	12 noon Monday 12 th May 2003

The Returning Officer for all Local Government elections in South Australia is the State Electoral Commissioner who is able to appoint Deputy Returning Officers and Electoral Officers. For the 2000 LG elections some councils nominated a member of staff for approval to be the Deputy Returning Officer while in other cases the Commissioner appointed officers from the State Electoral Office or the Australian Electoral Commission as Deputy Returning Officers. All Deputy Returning Officers carry out their role in strict adherence to directions and delegations from the Returning Officer.

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE

Our research findings and consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people indicate that some people have difficulty in understanding the printed material provided to assist postal voting. This difficulty is a barrier and disincentive for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participating in voluntary Local Government elections. There also appears to be an under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the Voters Roll.

Our research also shows that experience from compulsory State Government elections suggests that offering support and assistance at polling booths, particularly by suitably trained Aboriginal or Torres Strait people, may help to address this difficulty.

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

To assist in overcoming these barriers and difficulties, Councils may want to consider whether it is appropriate to make any special arrangements within the terms of the Local Government (Elections) Act, as follows.

Section 31 – Special arrangements for the issue of voting papers

The returning officer may make arrangements for

- *the personal delivery of voting papers to persons who reside at, or who attend, a specified institution, a specified part of an institution, or a specified place, and who are entitled to voting papers under this Act; and*
- *the attendance of electoral officers at a specified institution, or a specified part of an institution, or a specified place, in order to assist persons in voting and to collect completed voting papers.*

Section 41 – Voter may be assisted in certain circumstances

A person wishing to vote at an election who is illiterate or physically unable to carry out the procedure may be assisted by a person of the voter's choice above the age of eighteen years, but not being:

- a person who is a candidate for election, or acting on behalf of such a candidate (whether with or without the candidate's authority) must not act as an assistant to a person voting at an election.
- a scrutineer must not act as an assistant to a person voting at an election or poll.

Section 43 – Issue of Fresh Postal Voting Papers

If the Deputy Returning Officer is satisfied that the original ballot-paper/s forwarded to the elector, following written advice from the elector:

- has not been received by the elector, or
- has been lost, or
- has been inadvertently spoiled,

the Deputy Returning Officer may issue replacement ballot-paper/s to the elector.

A form for this purpose is available from the Council.

Voting at Polling Places - Schedule 1

Councils outside of the Metropolitan Adelaide area may apply to the Returning Officer to conduct elections at polling booths as well as by the use of advance voting papers. This determination can not be the subject of a delegation to a Deputy Returning Officer. The Returning Officer needs to be satisfied that traditionally there has been high levels of voter participation where elections have been conducted at polling booths, and that the use of exclusive postal voting is unlikely to result in a significant increase in voter participation. The election or poll is to be conducted in accordance with a scheme set out in the regulations.

Mobile polling booths and various methods for the delivery or collection of votes may also be permitted, including at places in the vicinity of polling booths. The Returning Officer may vary or revoke a determination if the level of voter participation has reduced over one or more elections or polls, or with the concurrence of the relevant council.

Councils who wish to find out more about any of the above options are invited to seek further information from the State Electoral Office, refer contact details in Section 10 of this resource guide.

7. DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY AWARENESS STRATEGY

This section contains a checklist to assist in developing a community awareness strategy for the Local Government 2003 periodic elections, specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Clearly, the strategy targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will need to be developed in a timely manner taking account of critical closing dates for the voters roll and nominations as a candidate, in consultation with the nominated Deputy Returning Officer for the Council. It will also need to be integrated with Council's general election campaign leading up to the 2003 elections, and other regional initiatives such as Candidates' Forums scheduled by the LGA if relevant.

Further information about the State wide Local Government election awareness campaign will be provided through LGA Circulars, and/or enquiries can be made direct to the LGA.

CHECKLIST

√	Steps to Take and Ideas to Consider	Key Issues for Consideration
□	<p>Decide who will be responsible for developing the strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options may be the Deputy Returning Officer, Governance or Public Relations Officer, Social Planner, or Community Development Officer. • A small Project Team could be convened as a consultative group to prepare, implement, and evaluate the success of the strategy. 	<p>If you decide to form a small Project Team try and involve an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representative. Options may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Council Committee member; • Council's Aboriginal Project Officer; • Community Consultative or Dreaming Forum representative; • Reconciliation Networks; • Aboriginal agency representative • Previous Councillor; or • Community leader.
□	<p>Decide what policy decisions need to be made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the arrangements and available resources for Council's election campaign? • Will any special arrangements within the terms of the Local Government (Elections) Act be made? <p>Note: Information and/or approval may be required. Contact the Returning Officer, State Electoral Office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resources available will impact on the scope of the strategy and how it will be implemented. • Review any steps that Council has taken in the past to provide assistance to voters, or to increase awareness. What worked well, what did not work so well? • What special arrangements are likely to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voter turnout and why?
□	<p>Make arrangements for these decisions and endorsements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Section 4 – <i>Enhancing Relationships</i> to assess if any action needs to be taken in this regard.
□	<p>Clarify processes, time lines and arrangements for Council's campaign leading up the 2003 Local Government elections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Aboriginal person could be asked to be available to assist voters to complete postal voting requirements. For example, an employee of an Aboriginal agency, a CDEP manager, or a respected community leader. For further information, contact the State Electoral Office.

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Identify the Key Stakeholders and Prepare a Mailing list – Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of Council Committees or Consultation Forums; • previous Aboriginal Local Government or ATSIC Councillors; • current ATSIC Councillors in the region; • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders; • people who provide services to Aboriginal communities and support groups; • people who are high profile, well known and respected by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; • Aboriginal Liaison/Contact Officers at TAFE or UniSA campuses; • Aboriginal Women’s Groups; and • Aboriginal Women’s support services. 	<p>If you are not sure who the key stakeholders are here are some ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check the Contacts list in Section 8; • contact Aboriginal specific service providers in the region, such as community health centres, housing agencies and other support groups; and • enquire at the ATSIC Regional Council office. Refer Contacts list in Section 8. <p>Check out whether Aboriginal service agencies (or DOSAA) are able to provide a community group/agency mailing lists for your local area.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Consult with key stakeholders to encourage their support and involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek support in promoting involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Local Government elections. • Ask about ideas for information dissemination and distribution of promotional material, and update your mailing list • Identify any established forums or gatherings you could attend to talk about elections and voting • Enquire about any cultural protocols that should be observe • Identify appropriate venues for information sessions, other than Council offices and the Civic Centre. 	<p>Consultations could take the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-on-one conversations, or • a planning session with interested parties to further develop the action plan. <p>This process may also identify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential candidates interested in standing for nomination as a Local Government Councillor, and/or • role models who could “champion the cause” and encourage involvement in Local Government elections. Role models (for example, sporting and artistic personalities) could be involved in local and media promotions and press releases.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Identify information dissemination, and distribution outlets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the information gained through your consultations • Update the key stakeholder mailing list as new contacts are identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there special meeting places where promotional posters about enrolment, elections and voting could be placed as reminders and talking points? • Are there Aboriginal specific newspapers or publications circulated in your area where an editorial or advertisement could be placed? • <i>Koori Mail</i> and <i>Indigenous Times</i> (national publications) are widely read by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but check out any local media options. (Check the Contacts list in Section 9.)

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Contact LGA to identify what support is available for running a Potential Candidates Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess whether the available support materials are suitable, or can be adapted for your purpose. Assess whether it would be convenient and/or suitable for potential candidates in your area to attend any LGA scheduled regional forums. <p><input type="checkbox"/> Obtain relevant written support material/publications for potential candidates from LGA and State Electoral Office.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA have prepared guidelines and power point presentation pro-formas for convening Potential Candidates Forums, which are available electronically through lga.net. LGA will be convening Potential Candidates Forums in consultation with relevant Councils in key regional locations. A component of these Forums will target the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Schedule date for Candidates Forum (if not LGA scheduled Forum) to be convened either specifically for potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates, or combined with general Candidates Forum.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Book venue and make arrangements for equipment and catering as required.</p>	<p>It is suggested that Forums be held at a venue that is familiar to relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The formality of Council offices and the Civic Centre can be unfriendly environments for some people.</p> <p>Alternative: Meet potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates at a familiar location (or the venue if appropriate) one hour before the scheduled starting time, meet and greet the candidates, explain format of the session, and take to the Forum venue.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Write newsletter articles, press releases and arrange placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer example in Section 8 <i>Promotional Material and Publications</i>. 	<p>Ask local Aboriginal and Torres Strait community leaders and role models to be involved in media interviews, or use their quotes in newsletter articles and press releases.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Collate promotional material and send to key stakeholder mailing list Prepare letter of invitation to be involved in Local Government elections. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promotional poster; fact sheets about Local Government, May 2003 Elections, and Being a Councillor. a reminder of the closing date for voters roll and nominations to stand as a candidate. name and contact details of person to contact at Council if interested in standing as a Candidate; and <p>Note: Glossy versions of the promotional poster and fact sheets are provided. Councils can also use/modify the text and incorporate logos using the text document at Section 8 <i>Promotional material and publications</i>.</p>	<p>Mail out in plenty of time before closing of voters roll.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13th February 2003 or 6th February 2003 in City of Adelaide. <p>Other options in letter of invitation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advice about Candidate's Forum – Include a flyer, advising of date and venue; and information about any special arrangements to assist voters (have text endorsed by Returning Office/Deputy Returning Officer).

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Attend Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community gatherings and forums leading up to the closing date for enrolling to vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to people about Local Government elections and promote involvement. • Leave posters and fact sheets. Follow up and answer questions at a later date if necessary. 	<p>Ask for permission to attend.</p> <p>Check out whether there are any other cultural protocols to observe.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Convene Candidates Forums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Session about Local Government and role of Councillors 	<p>Nominations for Candidates close at 12 noon on 27th March 2003</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Review and evaluate the Strategy after close of voting, to assess</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates standing for election • Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates successfully elected • Perception of voter turnout • Review the campaign strategy, what worked well, what did not work so well. • Keep records to refer to for next Local Government election. 	<p>Involve the Project team and key stakeholders in the review through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations and consultations • A simple self completion survey • Ask about their views about the strategy, their perception of voter turnout, and feedback they can give from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in general.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Provide feedback to key stakeholders from the review and evaluation</p>	<p>Thank key stakeholders for their interest and their involvement.</p>

The examples and pro-formas referred to in the above checklist are included in section 8, which follows – “Promotional Material and Publications”

The pro-formas and examples are also available for down load from lga.net as word documents.

They may be adapted, photocopied, or reproduced to meet the requirements of specific Councils.

8. PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL AND PUBLICATIONS

Several copies of the graphic designed fact sheet publications as listed below have been provided with this Resource Guide to all Councils, together with a promotional A3 poster. The text used in the facts sheets follow in Word format.

- *What's Local Government all about?*
- *Voting in the May 2003 Local Government elections*
- *Being a Councillor in Local Government*

An example newsletter article/media release also follows after the fact sheets.

If additional copies of the Poster and/or Fact Sheet are required, the following options can be considered.

- The publications can be photocopied. The fact sheets have been designed to accommodate black and white photocopying.
- The generic text can be modified to reflect Council specific practices and services, and re-produced using Council's standard format and design for community publications.
- Enquiries about obtaining the documents as pdf.files, or purchasing additional copies of the poster and fact sheets provided with the Resource Guide, can be directed to Margaret Heylen at margheylen@adelaide.on.net by 20 December 2002.

WHAT'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT ALL ABOUT?

We have three types of Government in Australia – Local, State and Commonwealth Governments. Local Government is different to the State and Commonwealth Governments because it is at the “grass roots” and well placed to know about the views and ideas of people in the local community and to influence what sort of place the Local Government Council area will be in the future.

Local Government in South Australia is made up of 68 separate Councils covering all of the metropolitan area of Adelaide and the more densely populated country areas. About 80% of the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in South Australia live in one of the 68 Council areas, and have the right to access the services provided by Councils, vote in Local Government elections, and stand for nomination as a Councillor.

The more remote areas where fewer people live are not within Local Government Council boundaries, but local services are provided at those places under other arrangements with Community Councils. These remote areas include Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands, Maralinga lands, and at Yalata, Nepabunna and Gerard where Community Councils lease land through the Aboriginal Lands Trust. Five other communities live on land leased from the Aboriginal Lands Trust within Local Government Council areas as follows:

Communities

Point Pearce
Raukkan/Point McLeay
Koonibba
Davenport
Umoona

Local Government Council

District Council of Yorke Peninsula
The Coorong District Council
District Council of Ceduna
City of Port Augusta
District Council of Coober Pedy

Each Local Government Council is a different size, has a different number of people living in the area, and has different community facilities and public spaces, but no matter what size or where a Council is, its responsibilities include:

- representing everyone in the community, and making plans and decisions about what sort of place the area will be now and in the future
- providing services for the well-being of people who live and work in its community, and striking a balance between social, environmental and economic matters
- talking to people in State and Commonwealth Governments about what needs to be done locally.

A South Australian Government law - the Local Government Act 1999 - sets out the “rules” for Council business. Councils also deal with other laws, like the laws about building and development, keeping pets and animals, parking and traffic, and public health and safety.

Councils are close to people in the community and represent and respond to local issues. Councillors are community leaders and help to plan what sort of place the area will be in the future.

WHO MAKES UP A LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Local Government Councillors are people who live in the Council area who are enrolled to vote. They are elected by local people in a similar way to how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regional Councillors are elected. General elections for Local Government Councillors are held every three years by voluntary postal voting. Sometimes the Council area is divided into sections called wards, and people vote for representatives for the wards rather than the whole Council area. Staff are employed at the Council office to act on Council decisions and provide services locally.

The head of the elected Council is either the Mayor if elected by all voters in the area, or Chairperson chosen by Councillors after the election. Councillors are community leaders and are very involved in community work. They are not paid wages, but they are entitled to an annual allowance or honorarium. Most expenses related to Council business are also paid by the Council.

Rules for the elections are set out in another law, called the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999. This Act also says who has the right to vote and nominate as a candidate to be elected as a Councillor. Another publication in this series, called "LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS – Elections and Voting", explains these rules.

Here is how a Council works.

- Elected Councillors are responsible for deciding on the plans and policies to guide what sort of place the local area will be, and what services Council will provide in the local community.
- Council staff are employed to carry out Council policies, to act on Council decisions, to provide services, and to provide advice and information about Local Government business to residents, ratepayers and visitors to the area.
- The head person employed at the Council Office might be called the Chief Executive Officer, the Town Clerk, the District Clerk, the City Manager or some other similar title.
- Councils may form committees of their elected Councillors and Council staff to deal with some tasks, such as work related to development, finance, recreation and so on.
- Councils can also invite members of the community to be involved in consultation forums and share their knowledge.
- When major planning decisions or changes in the community are being considered, Councils will ask local people what they think before they make a decision.
- Anyone can go to a Council or Committee meeting to listen to what is talked about and the decisions that are made.
- Councils also write minutes of their meetings, and reports about how they do business and manage their affairs. These records are available for the public to read.

WHAT SERVICES DO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS PROVIDE?

Each Council decides what services it will provide in its local area. The services vary from one area to another, and depend on the size of the Council area, the number of people living in the area, where the area is located, the physical environment, what the priority needs of the local community are, and the resources and funding available.

Generally, Councils do not provide health services, public housing, public transport, education, water and power supplies, legal services, or social support services. State and/or Commonwealth Governments are responsible for providing these services throughout Australia.

Local Government Council business mainly involves:

- land use planning and assessing development and building works
- infrastructure such as local roads, stormwater drains and footpaths
- looking after public places like parks and reserves, public toilets, ovals and playing fields
- rubbish collection, waste management and recycling services
- public health and safety, like inspecting places where food is prepared to make sure they are clean, and ensuring fire prevention measures are in place
- dog and cat management and control
- promoting good environmental management
- helping to create employment, for example by attracting new businesses to the area.

Most Councils also provide community services and facilities, such as:

- library and Information services
- community centres and halls
- community Bus service
- arts and cultural programs and events, like supporting NAIDOC Week
- things for young people to do and places to meet
- help for people who are older or people with a disability
- supporting community groups and volunteers in the area
- working together with other community groups.

WHERE DO THE FUNDS COME FROM TO PROVIDE THESE LOCAL SERVICES?

Local Government Council services are funded by Council rates paid by people who own property in the Council area and other fees and charges, such as building approval application fees, dog registration fees, hall hire fees, and waste management fees. Some funding also comes from State and Commonwealth Governments, for example to run Libraries.

Most Councils also work on local projects with regional, State and Commonwealth agencies. Examples include building walking trails, protecting and preserving history and heritage, building and maintaining tourist facilities, arts and cultural facilities, and reconciliation initiatives.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS?

Getting involved in Local Government business is an opportunity for you to influence what will happen in your neighbourhood now and in the future. That is, you can influence what your Council does, how it spends its money, what services and facilities it provides, what development takes place in your neighbourhood, and what local issues are taken up by your Council. Here are some ways you can get involved.

- **Vote in the May 2003 Local Government Elections.** Voting is voluntary and anyone over the age of 18 years who is an Australian citizen has the right to vote. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are Australian citizens, but you must be **on the State or Council Electoral Roll by 13th February 2003, or 6th February in the City of Adelaide** Council area to be eligible to vote. You can find out more about your voting rights in another publication in this series, "LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS – Elections and Voting".
- Find out from your local Council Office what services they currently provide and what is available to you.
- Go along to a Council or Committee meeting and listen to what is talked about and what decisions are being made.
- Contact your elected Councillor and talk about what issues you think are important in the local area. Ask how you can be involved in consultation forums.

***Get involved in Local Government business - Vote in the May 2003 elections
Its about your future so vote for the representatives you want!***

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN STANDING AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE MAY 2003 LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS?

Nominations to stand as a candidate close at 12.00 noon 27th March 2003.

Contact your local Council or visit the following web sites:

- Local Government Association of SA www.lga.sa.gov.au
- SA Government - Office of Local Government www.localgovt.sa.gov.au
- State Electoral Office - www.seo.sa.gov.au, or telephone 08 8401 4300

VOTING in the MAY 2003 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

General elections for all Local Government Councils in South Australia are held every three years.

- The next elections will be held in May 2003.
- Voting in Local Government Council elections is voluntary, by secret ballot postal voting.
- To exercise your right to vote, you must be on the Electoral Roll.

This brochure answers some of the questions people often ask about why voting is important, who is entitled to vote, and what you need to do to be involved. Another brochure in this series explains what Local Government business is all about. At the end of this brochure there is a list of some places you can go to get more detailed information about Council elections. The best place to start is at your local Council office.

VOTE FOR YOUR NOW AND YOUR FUTURE

Voting in Local Government Council elections is about voting for who decides about some key things that happen in your local community. The people who get elected to the Council will help to decide what happens locally – your now, your future. Each candidate standing for election to the Council is likely to have different views about what should happen in your local community, and you can choose to vote for the person whose views are most like yours.

A story about what each candidate thinks is important will be posted to you with your postal voting papers. You can also contact the candidates and talk to them about what they want for the area and why they want to be elected. All Councillors represent everyone in their community so ask them what they know about the things Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people think are important, and how they will represent you and your people. You may decide that some candidates will be better at representing you than others.

By voting, you can help to influence what sort of place your community will be. It is about your future so vote for the representative(s) you want. Talk to other people you know and encourage them to vote too.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RUNNING THE ELECTIONS?

The person who is responsible for running the elections is called the “Returning Officer”. The Returning Officer for all Local Government Council elections is the State Electoral Commissioner, who is appointed by the Governor following a recommendation and resolution by both Houses of Parliament. The State Electoral Commissioner is also responsible for conducting State parliamentary elections.

The Returning Officer may appoint a Deputy Returning Officer to each Council to help run the elections. The Deputies are usually people who work for the State or Commonwealth Electoral Offices or they can be someone nominated by the Council who is approved by the Returning Officer. Other people, called Electoral Officers also help out during the elections and provide people with information and advice about what to do.

All these people are trained by the Returning Officer and it is their job to carry out their role in strict adherence to directions and delegations from the Returning Officer.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO ENROL TO VOTE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS?

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are encouraged to enrol to vote as well as anyone who is
- √ 18 years of age or over at the time of voting,
 - √ a resident – **you do not have to own a house to be entitled to vote,**
 - √ a ratepayer in the Council area. This could be a person who owns a house or other people who own property but who are not residents like people who run a business, and
 - √ an Australian citizen (all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders born in Australia are Australian citizens).

You must be enrolled to be able to vote.

HOW DO I GET ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL ROLL?

Rolls close for 2003 Local Government elections on Thursday 13th February 2003 (6th February in the City of Adelaide).

If you are already on the State Electoral Roll (which means you vote in State and Federal elections which are compulsory) then you are automatically on the Local Government Council Roll.

You only have to enrol once, but if you move somewhere else to live you will need to fill out another form to let the Electoral Office know so they can send you information to your new address.

- **If you have changed your address recently, you will need to fill out a form** at any Post Office or Electoral Office **before 13th February 2003 (6th February for the City of Adelaide Council area)** to make sure your voting papers are sent to you at your new address.

If you have not voted before, or just turned 18 years of age, all you need to do is to go to any Post Office and fill in an enrolment form. You must enrol by

- **6th February in the City of Adelaide elections, or**
- **13th February 2003 for all other Council areas in South Australia.**

HOW DO I GET MY POSTAL VOTING PAPERS AND WHAT DO I DO?

Everyone who has enrolled will receive postal voting papers – called a *Ballot Pack* – in the mail near the end of April. The Ballot Pack will include:

- ballot papers and envelopes,
- a short story (“profile”) of each candidate, and
- information about what to do and how to vote.

If you do not receive your papers or lose them, go to your local Council office and tell them. You can fill out a form and get new ballot papers.

- Follow the instructions in the Ballot Pack and complete the ballot paper.
- Fill out the declaration on the back of the ballot paper envelope.
- Post it back so the Returning Officer receives it by **12.00 noon on Monday 12th May.**

HOW CAN IT BE A SECRET BALLOT IF I HAVE TO SIGN THE BALLOT PAPER ENVELOPE?

The laws about elections say the declaration on the back of the ballot paper envelope must be completed so the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer can check that you are on the Electoral Roll.

After this is checked, the Returning Officer tears the declaration section with your name and signature off the ballot paper envelope leaving the sealed ballot paper envelope with your vote in it. After this is done to all returned ballot paper envelopes, they are then put together and mixed up, so no-one can know which is your envelope. It is a secret ballot.

WHAT IF I NEED HELP TO FILL IN MY VOTING PAPERS?

If you have any trouble understanding what to do, ask someone you know and trust to help you. Special arrangements can sometimes be made to help people who are sick or have trouble with reading or writing. You can ask at the Council office if you, or someone you know, needs help to vote.

HOW ARE THE VOTES COUNTED?

A system called “Proportional Representation” is used for counting the votes in Local Government Council elections – similar to the system used in ATSI elections and the State Upper House

elections. It is based on each candidate gaining a “quota” of votes to get elected. The “quota” is worked out on the basis of dividing the number of votes by the number of vacancies plus 1, and adding 1 to the result as follows:

$$\frac{\text{(Number of formal votes)}}{\text{(Number of vacancies + 1)}} + 1 = \text{Quota}$$

It sounds quite complicated, but it is a fair way of counting votes especially where there are several vacancies to be filled. If you would like to know more about the way votes are counted, you can see where to go for further information at the end of this brochure.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHO WINS THE ELECTION?

After all votes are counted and the successful candidates are known, the Returning Officer lets the Council office know about the results and notices are put in the “Government Gazette” and local newspaper. If you do not see the notice in the paper, you can ask at the Council office about the election results.

SO I HAVE VOTED, BUT HOW CAN I KEEP INVOLVED IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS?

- Contact your elected Councillor and talk about what issues you think are important in the local area, and ask how you can be involved in consultation meetings.
- Get involved in community meetings and events run by the Council.
- Go along to Council and Committee meetings and listen to what is talked about and what decisions are being made.
- Find out from your local Council Office what services they provide locally and what is available to you.
- Ask your local Councillor or someone from the Council Office to come along and talk at your gatherings about Council business.
- Ask community and sporting groups you are involved with what they know about Council business and whether the Council can assist them in some way.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT STANDING AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE MAY 2003 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS?

Refer to another brochure in this series – “*Being a Councillor in Local Government*” available from your local Council office. **Nominations to stand as a candidate close at 12.00noon on 27th March 2003**

For further information about Local Government Council elections and voting matters contact your local Council office, or visit the following web sites

- Local Government Association of SA www.lga.sa.gov.au
- SA Government - Office of Local Government www.localgovt.sa.gov.au
- State Electoral Office www.seo.sa.gov.au.

BEING A COUNCILLOR IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government Councillors are elected representatives of the people who live and do business in the local Council area. Councillors play a very important community leadership role and influence the decisions that Councils make about what happens locally. A Councillor gets involved in

- deciding on Council plans and policies for the local area
- guiding Council affairs
- ensuring Council resources are used fairly for the benefit of everyone in the community, and
- talking to local people about their views and ideas for the area, and
- letting others know on the Council, regionally and in State and Commonwealth Government agencies, about the local community issues.

Councillors are not paid wages but they are entitled to receive an annual allowance. The annual allowance paid to Councillors varies from Council to Council, but is between \$1500 and \$6000 for Councillors and up to four times the fee of a Councillor for a Mayor or Chairperson. Expenses related to Council business can also be reimbursed, for example, telephone and travelling costs, fees for child care or care of other relatives paid so that a Councillor can attend Council meetings.

Taking on a community leadership role also means taking on extra work – there are Council agendas, papers and reports to read, meetings to attend, and community events to go to. The work of a Councillor also involves getting out and about in the community and talking to people who live and work in the area about their views and how they want to be represented. At the same time Councillors carry on with their other work, including looking after their families. But despite the extra work and time commitment required, there are many rewards.

Here are some of the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors.

- **Represent your people at the local level**, raising issues that are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as the wider community. You will be taking a further step toward being involved in gaining greater control over what happens in your community.
- Find out what Council services and facilities are available and **encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access and use Council services and facilities.**
- **Help to Raise awareness of Aboriginal cultural issues and concerns** so Council decisions are better informed. For example, things like looking after the land and water, and promoting cultural events like NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week.
- **You can be a role model in your community, and encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to vote** in Local Government Council elections, and get involved in Local Government business generally. It is about their community, the sort of place they want it to be, now and in the future.

WHAT DOES BEING A LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLOR INVOLVE?

Once successfully elected, your role as Councillor will involve:

- participating in Council meetings, which are run using formal meeting rules
- reading and understanding reports and recommendations, including financial and social research reports
- being able to “read between the lines” for hidden agendas and vested interests
- dealing with issues that sometimes may not seem important to you or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people generally
- presenting your arguments, and debating with other Councillors
- public speaking at community events.

It is expected that all Councillors will conduct themselves in a manner that promotes a high standing of the Council within the community, and in accordance with principles of honesty and fairness that generates community trust and confidence in the Council. There are laws which set

out specific rules for Councillors and you might want to find out more about these before nominating as a Councillor. Refer to "Where to go for more information" on the back of this brochure.

Training and support is provided to newly elected Councillors to help them find their way around Local Government business. You will find many people, including more experienced Councillors will want to help you learn about the work of the Council. Most Councillors have said that they had to learn new things very quickly. There are other things current and previous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors say potential candidates need to understand.

- Once elected, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors are in the minority and there may be high expectations from within the Council and the local community.
- It is the job of all Councillors to represent everyone in their community, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This can be difficult, because sometimes the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people think you just represent them.
- Because of the high expectations placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councillors, you need to be realistic about what issues you can influence, and what is possible to achieve and act on in your role as a Councillor.

You will need lots of energy and courage to try new things, and be prepared to keep in touch with and respond to your local community – you will be a "community voice". Some of the skills that will be helpful are:

- good listening and communication skills
- good organisational and leadership skills
- making links with community - being part of the networks, and
- being able to manage your time well.

All Councils operate differently and expect different commitments from their Councillors. You can talk to an existing Councillor in your Council area or someone at your local Council office about what is required.

WHO CAN NOMINATE AS A CANDIDATE IN THE MAY 2003 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS?

Local Government Council elections are held every three years. Generally, anyone who is entitled to vote can stand as a candidate. Candidates must be

- √ over 18 years of age, and
- √ a resident or ratepayer in the Council area, and
- √ an Australian citizen (all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people born in Australia are Australian citizens), and
- √ on the Electoral Roll.

People who are not entitled to nominate as a candidate include Council employees, or candidates for election in other Local Government Council areas.

The State Electoral Commissioner runs the elections, which are conducted by voluntary postal voting. Country Councils may apply to the Returning Officer to conduct elections at polling booths. The Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 sets out the rules for the elections. Another brochure in this series explains more about the rules of elections and ***Voting in the May 2003 Local Government Elections***.

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR CANDIDATES?

The Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 sets out the rules for nomination and standing as a candidate. Some of the requirements and procedures are as follows.

- √ Candidates must **nominate by 12 noon on Thursday 27th March 2003** for the May 2003 Election.
- √ Nomination forms are available from the Council office or State Electoral Office or Deputy Returning Officer.
- √ Nomination involves completing and lodging nomination forms with an Electoral Officer appointed for the Council, including an accurate candidate profile of no more than 150 words and a photograph.
- √ A copy of the voters roll is available to candidates at the Council Office.
- √ All campaign material must be accurate, and include the name and address of the person authorising the publication and the name of the printer.
- √ Candidates must keep records of campaign donations and after the election, submit a return, which lists any donations or gifts received for their campaign.

It is illegal to do certain things, for example, there are rules about being honest, not interfering with voters or the secret ballot, and not assisting people to vote. Some practices can result in a fine or imprisonment.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN BEING A CANDIDATE?

Running as a candidate will involve time, money and effort, so before you commit yourself you will need to do some research and find out some local information.

- Get to know the local issues and area really well so you are clear about what and who you will be representing. The local Council office can provide maps of the Council area and wards, and population information. It is also advisable to attend Council meetings to become familiar with what is discussed and the meeting procedures.
- Work out what issues you will campaign on and who you are up against. You will need to be able to let people know what you stand for so they can decide whether to vote for you.
- You will need to plan your campaign and how you will market and promote yourself. You could encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enrol and vote. Tell them why you think they should vote for you, and why their vote is important. You might want to consider door knocking, letterboxing brochures, or meeting people at local gathering places.
- Work out who can help promote you as a candidate. Are there high profile people who will speak up for you and encourage people to vote for you? Who can you ask to help you with your campaign tasks? Are there any opportunities for you to talk to the local media?
- If there are the same number of positions as candidates nominated, you will automatically be appointed as a Councillor. It is wise to find this out before you put too much energy and effort into your campaign.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call into your local Council office and ask for a package of information for potential candidates. You will also find the following publications very useful.
- *So you want to be on Council – A Guide for anyone considering nominating for election to their local Council* prepared by the Local Government Association of SA (LGA). Telephone 8224 2000 for a copy, or visit the LGA web site at www.lga.sa.gov.au
- *Candidate's Handbook for Postal Elections – Local Government Elections* prepared by the State Electoral Office, South Australia. Telephone 8401 4300 for a copy, or visit the web site at www.seo.sa.gov.au
- *Making the decision to get involved in local government – ATSIC Local Government Handbook*. The handbook has useful information for potential candidates about making the decision to get involved, planning an election campaign, gaining political support, and marketing and media promotion. You can telephone ATSIC and ask for a copy on 8237 2153.

EXAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE/MEDIA RELEASE

“Aboriginal people urged to stand as candidates and vote in Local Government May 2003 elections”

Aboriginal people are being urged to become a “community voice” as Local Government Councillors. Historically very few Aboriginal people have nominated as candidates in Local Government elections in SA - as elsewhere in Australia - and even fewer have been successfully elected as a Local Government Councillor.

[Spokesperson] said there are opportunities for Aboriginal Councillors to:

- represent their people at the local level, raising issues that are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as well as the wider community;
- encourage Aboriginal people to access and use Council services and facilities;
- help raise awareness of Aboriginal cultural issues and concerns so Council decisions are better informed; and
- be a role model in the community, and encourage more Aboriginal people to vote.

[Spokesperson] also urged Aboriginal people to “get involved” in Local Government business and vote in the May 2003 elections.

“You can influence what your Council does, how it spends its money, what services and facilities it provides, what development takes place in your neighbourhood, and what local issues are taken up by your Council.

Brochures are now available at the Council office which answer some of the questions people often ask - why voting is important; who is entitled to vote; what you need to do to be involved, and what Local Government business is all about.

[insert local role model's name] is also urging local Aboriginal people to vote in the Local Government May 2003 elections. *[name]* said

“It is important to vote for what happens locally and to influence decisions about what sort of place we want our community to be.

“It is a vote for our now and our future – our community”

Voting in the May 2003 Local Government elections is voluntary. Anyone over the age of 18 years who is an Australian citizen has the right to vote. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are Australian citizens, but must be on the State or Council Electoral Roll by 13th February 2003, or 6th February in the City of Adelaide Council area, to be eligible to vote.

Enrolment forms are available at any Post Office. You can also go into your local Council Office for more information about Local Government elections.

For media interview contact:

9. RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Checklist of information for potential candidates

(Provide a copy or enable access to read the following documents)

√	About the Local Government Council Area
	Map of the Council area – boundaries and wards
	Name and contact details of current Councillors
	Population and Demographic data/profile – breakdown of age, ethnicity, socio-economic status
	Information about the local economy – Council's economic development role, and business and employment opportunities in the area/region.
	Annual Report
	Strategic/Corporate Plan – Council services and programs
	Development Plan
	Council by-laws
	Councillors Allowances and other support
	Council Committees and Membership
	Council Policies - For example, rating, public consultation
	Refer to Deputy Returning Officer for Electoral Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomination Form • Voters roll information
	Information about Briefing Session for Candidates
	Information about candidates election posters – regulations or guidelines.

√	RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS
	<p><i>So you want to be on Council (LGA)</i></p> <p>Available from LGA – hard copy or website www.lga.sa.gov.au</p>
	<p><i>Local Government Elections – Candidate's Handbook for Postal Elections A Guide for Candidates</i></p> <p>Available from the State Electoral Office, South Australia Telephone: 8401 4300</p>
	<p><i>Making the decision to Get involved in local government –Local Government Handbook (ATSIC)</i></p> <p>Available from ATSIC Information Officer, Telephone: 8237 2153</p>

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

SA Local, State and Commonwealth Government Agencies

Local Government Association of SA www.lga.sa.gov.au Mr Chris Russell	16 Hutt Street GPO Box 2693 Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: 8224 2000 Facsimile: 8232 6336
Office of Local Government www.localgovt.sa.gov.au Ms Faye Barrett	Level 1, Riverside Building North Terrace PO Box 8021 Station Arcade Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: 8207 0600 Facsimile: 8207 0679
State Electoral Office www.seo.sa.gov.au	134 Fullarton Road Rose Park 5067 GPO Box 646 Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: 8401 4300 Facsimile: 8401 4333
Department of State Aboriginal Affairs www.dosaa.gov.au Ms Debbie Robb	Level 2 Centrepont Building 22 Pulteney Street GPO Box 3140 Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: 8226 8935 Facsimile: 8226 8999
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission www.atsic.gov.au Ms Tanya Hosch	CPS Building, 44 Waymouth Street GPO Box 1672 Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: 8237 6300 Facsimile: 8237 6321

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission – Regional Contacts

ATSIC Commissioner for SA	CPS Building 44 Waymouth Street GPO Box 1672 Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: (08) 8237 6300 Facsimile: (08) 8237 6312 Email: brian.butler@atsic.gov.au
Nulla Wimila Kutju Regional Council	PO Box 2214 Port Augusta SA 5700 Telephone: (08) 8642 5522
Patpa Warra Yunti Regional Council	GPO Box 1672 Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: (08) 8237 6300
Wangka-Wilurrara Regional Council	P0 Box 396 Ceduna SA 5690 Telephone (08) 86245 2797

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

Council of Aboriginal Elders (relevant to incorporated Local Government Council areas)

Mr Dennis Goldsmith, Chairperson PO Box 1227 PO North Sheilds SA 5607	Eyre Peninsula Region
Mrs Agnes Rigney, Deputy Chairperson 9 Joyce Street Barmera SA 5345	Riverland Region
Mr Fred Graham 42 Marshall Road Pt Victoria SA 5573	Yorke Peninsula Region
Mrs Isobel Norvill 4 Knight Street Murray Bridge SA 5253	Murray/Mid Mallee Region
Ms Roma Taylor 363 McBryde Tce Whyalla SA 5608	Whyalla Region
Mr Hector Rigney 14 Hogg Street Morphett Vale SA 5162	Southern Metropolitan/Kangaroo Island Region
Mr Douglas Hodgson 24/4 Burleigh Ave Pennington SA 5013	Western Metropolitan Region
Mrs Athanasia Blessios Box 637 Post Office Mt Gambier SA 5290	South East Region
Mrs Phoebe Wanganeen 18 Osborne Ave Salisbury Plain SA 5109	Northern Metropolitan Region
Mr Stanley Wilton C/- Umoona Aged Care Services PO Box 300 Coober Pedy SA 5723	Far East Loop Region
Mrs Joan Burgoyne C/- Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Mr Dean Miller PO Box 314 Ceduna SA 5690	Ceduna Koonibba Westcoast Homelands
Mrs Clara Coulthard PO Box 155 Quorn SA 5433	Port Augusta Region

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

Aboriginal Community Councils (relevant to incorporated Local Government Council areas)

Point McLeay Community Council Inc	1 Seymour Street, Raukkan SA 5259
Davenport Community Council Inc	PO Box 240, Port Augusta SA 5700
Gerard Community Council Inc	Via Winkie SA 5343
Goreta Aboriginal Corporation	PO Box 244, Maitland SA 5573
Koonibba Aboriginal Community Council	Koonibba Post Office via Ceduna SA 5690
Umoona Community Council Inc	PO Box 300, Coober Pedy SA 5723

Media - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific

<i>Koori Mail</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fortnightly National Indigenous Newspaper• www.koorimail.com	Telephone: (0266) 222 666 Fax: (0266) 222 600 Email: admin@koorimail.com
<i>National Indigenous Times</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fortnightly National Indigenous Newspaper	PO Box 789 Batemans Bay NSW 2536 Telephone (02) 4457 1591 Email: nitimes@bigpond.com
Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association Inc <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5UMA	PO Box 2192 Port Augusta SA 5700 Telephone: (08) 8642 2422 Facsimile: (08) 8642 5720 Email: umeewarra@umeewarra.com.au

10. REFERENCES

ATSIC	<i>Making The Decision to Get Involved in Local Government – Local Government Handbook, 2000</i>
Australian Heritage Commission	<i>Ask First –A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values</i> Canberra, 2002
Brown, Chris	<i>Communication with Aboriginal People</i> (Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, NT)
Coles, D	<i>The Marriage of Traditional Aboriginal and Western Structures in Local Government in the Northern Territory, 1999</i> (Department of Local Government, NT)
Department of Local Government, WA	<i>A candidate’s Guide to Standing for Council</i>
Department of the Premier and Cabinet	<i>Managing Diversity in the SA Public Sector – People Mean Business, January 1998</i>
Gilmour, Susan	<i>Mayatja Manta Nyangaku Kutju: Local Government for Aboriginal Communities, 1994</i>
Gould, J and Heylen, M	<i>Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People 2 – A New Strategy, June 2000</i> (Local Government Association of SA, the SA Office of Local Government, and Department of Aboriginal Affairs SA)
Gould, J and Heylen, M	<i>Framework for Governance Project Report, December 2001</i> (SA Office of Local Government, and Department of Aboriginal Affairs SA)
Gould, J and Heylen, M	<i>Examples of Working Together in South Australia, November 2000</i> (Local Government Association of SA, SA Office of Local Government, and Department of Aboriginal Affairs SA)
LGA	<i>So you want to be on Council – A Guide for anyone considering nominating for election to their local Council.</i>
Morton Consulting Services	<i>Local Councils Belong to Aboriginal People Too – Access and Equity Project, 1994</i> Local Government Association of SA
Parliament of SA	<i>Local Government (Elections) Act 1999</i>
State Electoral Office SA	<i>Local Government Elections – Candidate’s Handbook for Postal Elections, 2000</i>
Umuwa Council – Nganampa	<i>Good Manners in Aboriginal Culture</i>

APPENDIX A

**POPULATION DATA FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS WITH PERCENTAGE
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS (INDIGENOUS)**

(Australian Bureau of Statistics - 2001 Census of Population and Housing)

	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous (a)	Total Persons	Indigenous Population as % of Total
Adelaide (C)	14599	224	14823	1.5
Adelaide Hills (DC)	35536	139	35675	0.4
Alexandrina (DC)	16635	163	16798	1.0
Barossa (DC)	18256	101	18357	0.6
Barunga West (DC)	2407	16	2423	0.7
Berri and Barmera (DC)	10543	325	10868	3.0
Burnside (C)	39360	103	39463	0.3
Campbelltown (C)	43285	219	43504	0.5
Ceduna (DC)	2781	825	3606	22.9
Charles Sturt (C)	95072	1144	96216	1.2
Clare and Gilbert Valleys (DC)	7806	79	7885	1.0
Cleve (DC)	1797	5	1802	0.3
Cooper Pedy (DC)	2133	339	2472	13.7
Copper Coast (DC)	9984	147	10131	1.5
Elliston (DC)	1148	13	1161	1.1
Flinders Ranges (DC)	1638	153	1791	8.5
Franklin Harbor (DC)	1174	4	1178	0.3
Gawler (M)	17122	177	17299	1.0
Goyder (DC)	4034	32	4066	0.8
Grant (DC)	7190	46	7236	0.6
Holdfast Bay (C)	30752	146	30898	0.5
Kangaroo Island (DC)	4068	39	4107	0.9
Karoonda East Murray (DC)	1186	9	1195	0.8
Kimba (DC)	1167	3	1170	0.3
Lacepede (DC)	2131	46	2177	2.1
Le Hunte (DC)	1398	9	1407	0.6
Light (DC)	9853	86	9939	0.9
Lower Eyre Peninsula (DC)	3881	63	3944	1.6
Loxton Waikerie (DC)	11427	138	11565	1.2
Mallala (DC)	6855	62	6917	0.9
Marion (C)	73045	565	73610	0.8
Mid Murray (DC)	7912	116	8028	1.4
Mitcham (C)	58216	204	58420	0.3
Mount Barker (DC)	21972	139	22111	0.6
Mount Gambier (C)	21439	296	21735	1.4
Mount Remarkable (DC)	2689	60	2749	2.2
Murray Bridge (RC)	15333	695	16028	4.3
Naracoorte and Lucindale (DC)	7636	103	7739	1.3
Northern Areas (DC)	4379	50	4429	1.1
Norwood Payneham St Peters (C)	30987	127	31114	0.4

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	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous (a)	Total Persons	Indigenous Population as % of Total
Onkaparinga (C)	139887	1274	141161	0.9
Orroroo/Carrieton (DC)	913	0	913	0.0
Peterborough (DC)	1825	69	1894	3.6
Playford (C)	63433	1532	64965	2.4
Port Adelaide Enfield (C)	91910	2162	94072	2.3
Port Augusta (C)	10879	2041	12920	15.8
Port Lincoln (C)	12014	622	12636	4.9
Port Pirie City and Dists (M)	16275	363	16638	2.2
Prospect (C)	17709	132	17841	0.7
Renmark Paringa (DC)	9166	209	9375	2.2
Robe (DC)	1338	9	1347	0.7
Roxby Downs (M)	3634	73	3707	2.0
Salisbury (C)	106285	1752	108037	1.6
Southern Mallee (DC)	2161	11	2172	0.5
Streaky Bay (DC)	1906	17	1923	0.9
Tatiara (DC)	6504	45	6549	0.7
Tea Tree Gully (C)	92676	630	93306	0.7
The Coorong (DC)	5204	282	5486	5.1
Tumby Bay (DC)	2387	26	2413	1.1
Unley (C)	33469	119	33588	0.4
Victor Harbor (DC)	10159	86	10245	0.8
Wakefield (DC)	6015	45	6060	0.7
Walkerville (M)	6469	24	6493	0.4
Wattle Range (DC)	11242	122	11364	1.1
West Torrens (C)	48123	436	48559	0.9
Whyalla (C)	20206	630	20836	3.0
Yankalilla (DC)	3519	20	3539	0.6
Yorke Peninsula (DC)	10450	328	10778	3.0
Unincorporated SA	6461	3156	9617	32.8
Total South Australia	1391045	23,425	1414470	1.7

Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data.

(a) Comprises persons of Aboriginal origin, Torres Strait Islander origin, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin

Excludes persons who did not state their Indigenous status and overseas visitors

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ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS⁷

To begin to understand cultural values and differences we need to inform ourselves about the characteristic ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders differ from non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the relative importance that is attached to particular behavioural patterns, and to observe important protocols.

Cultural Traditions and Governance

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and western cultures are fundamentally different as they relate to cultural beliefs, systems of authority and governance, and ways of doing business.

“..in traditional Aboriginal law Tjukurpa is legitimate authority. This is the law from which certain individuals derive authority to make decisions with regard to the ownership of material objects, action to be taken in the instance of conflict or transgression, and any questions related to the use, ownership, and knowledge about land. (Gilmore)”⁸

This cultural difference therefore has the potential for western style local governing authorities to lack legitimacy in the eyes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, because the right people may not be making the decisions.

Some commentators suggest that Local Government could become legitimate in the eyes of their Aboriginal constituents if Councils incorporated greater elements of Aboriginal culture into their structures and propose the concept of “bi-cameralism” as an alternative option. That is, one house of “democratically elected representatives: empowered to make decisions on the delivery of services and another of “elders deliberating and making decisions on “land and cultural matters”.⁹

Whilst exploration of this debate is not pursued further in this resource guide, the topic and references cited may be of interest to some Councils who seek to explore alternative options for involving traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and decision makers in consultative forums and advisory committee structures.

Some of the key considerations are highlighted as follows.

Identity and Diversity

The following are broad statements only, and it is important to note and respect the fact that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would choose to categorise themselves differently – or not at all.

- There is a great deal of **diversity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**, and it is therefore important to avoid making assumptions, and thereby causing offence, about a person’s cultural heritage based on how one may look. This is no different to acknowledging diversity within any cultural group and avoiding generalisations and stereotyping.

⁷ Information in this section is a compilation based on a range of publications and documents extracts sourced through DOSAA and ATSIC, and conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These have been acknowledged in the References section of the resource guide.

⁸ Gilmore, Susan *Mayatja Manta Nyangaku Kutju: Local Government for Aboriginal Communities 1994*

⁹ Gould J and Heylen M – Framework for Governance Project Report, December 2001, references to Gilmore 1994, and Coles 1999.

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- The way in which people define themselves is subjective but **some terms which are very inappropriate and cause offence** include such terms as “part-Aboriginal”, “half caste”, “full-blood”, and “quarter caste”.
- **Traditional** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people generally live in remote areas. They practice cultural ceremonies and living practices more consistently than many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in remote or rural areas are necessarily traditional, particularly where people regularly access non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems and services.
- Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in **urban** areas of South Australia, including those living near main centres or outside of townships, still strongly identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Consulting Aboriginal an Torres Strait Islander Communities

- It is clear from past experience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have often been consulted by governments in inappropriate ways, or without any follow through. Being open, responsive and doing what you say you will do in a timely manner will assist in building rapport, respect and credibility.

Respectful Communication – Observe what is the norm

- It is common for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders not to feel obliged to look at the person speaking to them, and a lack of eye contact should not be perceived as not listening or being inattentive. **Direct eye contact can be culturally inappropriate**, and therefore it is better to follow the lead of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. However, it is likely that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who do not operate in a traditional context will engage in a way that reflects the style and behaviour of the person they are taking with.
- In some places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders expect to **shake hands**. In other places they don't. Look for the cue if the person you are meeting seems prepared to shake hands, or watch what others do.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural **traditions are essentially based on oral communication**, with ritual stories, songs and ceremonies being passed on verbally from one generation to the next. It is suggested that you engage in quiet, friendly conversation to start off with, offer friendship, and establish rapport – talk about family and children, use humour and relax.
- Forms, paperwork, and being from a Local Government authority may represent a barrier immediately, so **take time for discussions and don't overwhelm** with information. It is better to talk about the basic purpose of your visit to start off with.
- Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may feel **uncomfortable when asked a question** and take a long time to answer. It is better to talk about a situation and wait for a response. Avoid abstract conversation, and use diagrams or pictures to demonstrate what you are saying.
- It is best not hurry a conversation, or demand immediate answers. A “yes” answer may be provided simply out of politeness. Rather, give the options that are available, **allow time for the topic to be considered** by the group, or thought about by the individual. Let them know you will come back to talk again – this could be in an hour, the next day or the next week, whatever is appropriate. Do not hurry an issue and do not demand
- **Clarify that you understand** what you are being told correctly, to make sure that you have not placed your own interpretation on what is said. Honesty and openness will be respected, and it is important to be patient and thorough when discussing the subject matter.

Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Local Government Elections and Voting

- There are **clear distinctions between what types of personal information can and cannot be shared** by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, which can sometimes be connected with gender. For example, traditional ceremonies and practices are not usually discussed openly and it can be uncomfortable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be asked about these matters or have them discussed in their presence.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's observe **kinship protocols**, for example, for example some relatives can not be present in a space at the same time as another family member. This could mean that a person may leave a meeting when another arrives, for no apparent reason.

Language

- Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people **speak English fluently**, particularly non-traditional people, but may also use words in their clan language and/or from a variety of dialects. This is not intended to exclude others who do not understand the words, but rather to maintain their traditional language. Questioning the meaning of words that are not understood is quite acceptable.
- Brief response to questions is valued, and very concise and **brief replies are common**.

Respect Privacy

- It is important to ask prior **permission to visit** an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, or home. Let people know you are coming, and learn what areas of the surrounding country or community spaces are off limits for you, for example, living and gathering spaces around houses, and areas which are "men's country" or "women's country".
- Ask for **permission before taking photographs** of people or places. It is considered rude not to ask permission of those who have local authority in the community and for the land. It is generally taboo to show a picture of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person after his or her death, including photos in publications. Recordings of the voice of the deceased are also taboo in many communities.
- **Note:** Council's attention is drawn to a publication titled "*Ask First – A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values*". This is an excellent practical guide for Councils dealing with cultural and heritage matters. It has been produced by the Australian Heritage Commission - contact telephone (02) 6274 2111, or www.ahc.gov.au

Use of Names

- Names are regarded by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a private possession, and therefore it is not necessarily polite to ask a person directly for their name. Wait for the person to tell you, or perhaps find out by quietly asking someone else, preferably someone you already know.
- It is common for first names to be passed down through the family. Under some traditional laws, once someone is deceased it is inappropriate for namesakes to continue to carry that name so their name may change.
- Birth certificates may not be easy for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to produce, due to historical reasons outside of their control. It may also be that the given name on official documents is not the name used.

Family Relationships

- **Family relationships within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture extend beyond the nuclear family concept** of a western culture, and carry a great deal of responsibility. For example, children may be cared for by a variety of family members throughout their lives.
- Eating and meal times are not necessarily the social or family occasions that many non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often make them. Meals may not be at a set time and family members are more likely to eat when they feel like it.
- The death of a relative will cause the type of grief those in a western culture nuclear family unit may only experience through the death of a parent or sibling.
- Attending funerals and related ceremonies is a necessary expression of grief, along with the cultural obligations attached to a death or other circumstances. Often these ceremonies last a few days and will take place in the area where the clan originates. This may mean that urban-based people need to travel long distances to fulfil the need to be with their family.

It is all about understanding and respecting differences.

Additional Resource

A publication recently released by the Australian Heritage Commission (2002) provides a practical guide for those who may have an impact on Indigenous Heritage. This publication, which provides a useful insight into respecting Indigenous values, is titled:

Ask First – A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values

Enquiries about this publication and other Aboriginal Heritage matters may be directed to the Department for Environment and Heritage, telephone 8204 1910, or www.environment.sa.gov.au.