

**A Resource Guide for Councils in South Australia
for the
November 2006 elections**

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

2006

*“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)*

An initiative of

Local Government Association of SA (LGA) and the (then) SA Government Office of Local Government Relations with the support of the SA Government and Commonwealth Government (former Local Government Incentives Program) for the 2003 Local Government Elections in South Australia. The publication was updated in 2006 by the LGA and SA Government Office of State/Local Government Relations for the November 2006 elections.

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FOREWORD

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 the case that few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been elected to State and Federal parliaments, although overall a significant number of MPs have previously served as Local Government Councillors. Anecdotal information indicates that enrolment and voter turn out amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities 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 Local Government Association of SA (LGA) and the then Office of Local Government, prepared a resource guide to support Local Government Councils in preparing community awareness campaigns leading up to the 2003 Local Government periodic elections. With the support of the SA Government and the LGA, the guide has been updated for councils for the Local Government periodic elections in November 2006.

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

This project built on the relationships already established between Councils and Aboriginal communities, and Local, State and Commonwealth Governments. It was initially developed in 2003 with support from the Government of South Australia Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, the Office of Local Government, and the State Electoral Office, 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.

Council's continued contribution and efforts aimed at increasing the involvement of Aboriginal people in Local Government business is welcomed.

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 and the then SA Office of Local Government.

CONTENTS

1.	Welcome to the Resource Guide	1
2.	Mapping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in SA	2
3.	Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	4
4.	Some Practical Steps to Enhancing Relationships	7
5.	The Key Messages - Encouraging Involvement	9
6.	The Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA)	11
7.	Developing a Community Awareness Strategy – A Checklist	13
8.	Promotional Material and Publications	17
	• <i>Local Government Elections 2006: Get Involved - Why Be a Councillor?</i>	18
	• Newsletter article/media release example	21
9.	Resources and Contacts	
	• Checklist of Information for Potential Candidates	22
	• Agency Contacts	23
	• Aboriginal Community Councils	24
	• Media - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific	24
10.	References	25

Appendices

• Appendix A:	Population Data by Local Government Council Area	26
• Appendix B:	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Cultural Characteristics	28

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 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; and
- 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.

In general, the focus of the recommendations is on creating a more welcoming Local Government environment, one which values and respects the richness of cultural diversity and fosters good working relations and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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

- **gain a better understanding about Aboriginal culture; and**
- **target community awareness strategies aimed at increasing the participation of Aboriginal people 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.

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*”,
- State Electoral Office publications, such as “*Local Government Elections – Candidate 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 download from www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/indigenous

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.

2.1 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 in the City of Onkaparinga. In addition, it is noted that meeting and gathering places in the City of Adelaide are popular 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 local government council areas, there are five sizeable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and these communities reside on Aboriginal Lands Trust land, as follows.

Communities	Local Government Council
Goreta/Point Pearce	District Council of Yorke Peninsula
Raukkan	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”.

2.2 Out of Local Government Council areas

20% of South Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in remote and rural parts of South Australia. Statistically, the most populated area is the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, with smaller populated communities residing in 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

2.3 ABS Census and Racial Identity

It is important to note that nominating racial identity in the ABS census is by 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, this 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 which 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 Aboriginal people continue to experience.

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

3.1 ELECTIONS AND VOTING – Relevant Issues

Voting in the November 2006 Local Government elections is voluntary by postal voting. Anyone over the age of 18 years has the right to vote, but must be on the State or Council Electoral Roll by Friday 11th August 2006 to be eligible to vote.

Ballot packs with voting papers will be sent out by mail towards the end of October 2006.

From our research findings and conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, some consistent general views and perceptions emerged which are relevant to thinking about elections in general, and Local Government in particular.

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 was also a requirement for ATSIC elections in the past)

Involving Aboriginal People in Local Government Elections and Voting

- ATSIC elections were seen to be more relevant than Local Government elections, particularly in regional areas where ATSIC was recognised as the major source of funding for infrastructure, health and some municipal services.
- With the abolition of ATSIC in 2003, some Aboriginal Community Councils have expressed the view that Local Government Councils are now more relevant to their operation, offering a practical conduit to local representation of Aboriginal Community issues.
- There were low numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women involved in former 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 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, located 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.
- Potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates are also likely to be on other high level committees and boards, for example, Aboriginal Lands Trust, Aboriginal Heritage Committees.

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 at times not widely understood by Council staff and Councillors. Others recognised Local Government’s increasing leadership in reconciliation aimed at fostering inclusive directions and nurturing harmonious community relations locally.

3.2 LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP

The objectives of Local Government (Local Government Act 1999) 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:

Involving Aboriginal People in Local Government Elections and Voting

- *“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 TO ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS

This section, highlights and suggests some practical steps to help foster a more culturally inclusive and welcoming environment, and to minimise the perceived barriers inhibiting 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.

4.1 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 are built over time.

4.2 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. 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*

4.3 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, or reimburse travel expenses.
- 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 appreciating cultural differences, 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 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 area of a 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 made on behalf of the community. Voting for local representation on Council is about an area's future.

5.1 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 all of the community and are positioned to hear of wider issues facing councils.** 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, and land management matters, and enhancing awareness about environmental sustainability to the benefit of all.

Supporting Community Development

- Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors say they have been able to achieve a higher Council priority for cultural activities and culturally appropriate 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 cultural initiatives such as preparing family histories through libraries, and joint naming of public places which support local tourism ventures.

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.

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

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

5.2 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 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.

5.3 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 wider local community concerns 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” experienced by a recently, first time elected Aboriginal Councillor. Examples of strategies which have been adopted by some Councils, and have proved to be successful, are:

- mentoring arrangements between newly elected Councillors and experienced Councillors; and
- cultural awareness and familiarisation sessions with Councillors and 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.

6.1 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.

6.2 ENROLMENT and VOTING

Voting in Local Government elections in South Australia is not compulsory. Elections are conducted entirely by postal voting.

- Australian citizens over the age of 18 years of age living in the council area who are on the State electoral roll will automatically be on the voters roll (provided their details are up to date)
- Residential occupiers who are not eligible to be on the State electoral roll (eg. Non Australian citizens) must complete the prescribed form and lodge it with the council should they wish to be eligible to vote
- Property owners and occupiers (who are not residents), including bodies corporate and groups of persons, who are listed in the councils assessment records, are also entitled to be on the voters roll.

6.3 KEY DATES ON THE 2006 ELECTION TIMETABLE

Voters Roll closes	Friday 11 August 2006
Candidate Nominations Open	Tuesday 5 September 2006
Candidate Nominations Close	Tuesday 19 September 2006 at 12 noon
Mail of ballot packs	Monday 23 to Friday 27 October 2006
Close of Voting	Friday 10 November 2006 at 5.00 pm

The Returning Officer for all Local Government elections in South Australia is the State Electoral Commissioner (SEC) who is able to appoint Deputy Returning Officers and Electoral Officers. For the 2003 LG elections some councils nominated a member of staff to be the Deputy Returning Officer (approved by the SEC) while in other cases the SEC 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.

6.4 PROVIDING ASSISTANCE

Research findings and consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people indicates 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.

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

Involving Aboriginal People in Local Government Elections and Voting

- *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

Approval to assist a person wishing to vote at an election must first be obtained from the Returning Officer. 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.

Councils may choose to find out more about these options from the State Electoral Office, refer contact details in Section 9 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 2006 elections, specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The strategy will need to be developed in a timely manner taking account of the key dates on the 2006 election timetable referred to in Section 6. It will also need to be integrated with Council's general election awareness strategy leading up to the 2006 elections, and other initiatives such as Candidates' Information Sessions scheduled by LGA (if relevant), the Council, and/or the State Electoral Office.

For example, you may choose to consider the suggested timing below for a Council elections awareness campaign

May- June 2006	Message: If you are considering being a Candidate for Council then you must be on the electoral roll.
11 August 2006	Message: Close of roll
August – September 2006	Publicize and promote Candidate Information Sessions
5 September	Message: Nominations open, and close on 19 September
11 November	Message: Close of voting

Keep an eye out for further information about the State wide Local Government election awareness campaign provided through the Local Government Association Circulars. Enquiries can be made direct to the LGA.

√	Strategy Checklist	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 to prepare and implement 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 Reconciliation Group; • 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 to provide assistance to voters be made, within the terms of the Local Government (Elections) Act? <p>Note: Information and/or approval may be required. Contact the Returning Officer, State Electoral Office</p> <p>□ Make arrangements for these decisions and endorsements.</p> <p>□ Clarify processes, time lines and arrangements for Council's campaign leading up the 2006 Local Government elections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resources available will impact on the scope of the strategy. • Review any steps Council has taken in the past 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? • Review Section 4 – <i>Practical Steps to Enhancing Relationships</i> to assess if any action needs to be taken. • An Aboriginal person could be asked to assist voters to fill in their voting papers but you will need to obtain prior approval from the Returning Officer. For example, an employee of an Aboriginal agency, a CDEP manager, or a respected community leader. For further information, contact the State Electoral Office.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Identify the Key Aboriginal networks in the community/region and Prepare a Mailing list – Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal members of Council Committees, consultation forums, or advisory groups; • previous Aboriginal Local Government or ATSIC Councillors; • Aboriginal Elders and community leaders (include women and young people) • Aboriginal community service providers and support groups; • people who are high profile/role models, well known and respected by local Aboriginal people such as artistic and sporting identities; • Aboriginal Liaison/Contact Officers at TAFE or UniSA campuses; 	<p>If you are not sure who the key people are here are some ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Contacts list in Section 9 as a resource to make enquiries; • contact Aboriginal specific service providers in the region, such as community health centres, housing agencies and other support groups; and <p>Check with Department for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation about any group/agency mailing lists held for your local area.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Talk to key Aboriginal people in the community to encourage their interest and involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek support in promoting involvement of Aboriginal 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 observed • Identify appropriate venues for information sessions, other than Council offices and the Civic Centre. 	<p>Discussions 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 awareness strategy.. <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. • The need for discussions about Local Government and voting requirements (for example, enrol to vote)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Identify information dissemination, and distribution outlets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the information gained through your discussions, above. • 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.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Attend local Aboriginal community gatherings and forums leading up to the closing dates for enrolling to vote, and nominating as a candidate.</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. Check out whether there are any other cultural protocols to observe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voters roll closes 11th August 2006 • Nominations open 5 September 2006 • Nominations close 19 September 2006 • Voting Closes
<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 rate • 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. <p>Provide feedback to key stakeholders about the outcome of the Elections and from the review and evaluation.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Fostering and Maintaining Aboriginal Participation in Local Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work out a plan to support newly elected Aboriginal Councillor/s • Invite nomination of Aboriginal community representatives for Council Committees, Advisory Groups and consultation forums. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Representing Aboriginal issues at Council ○ Foster cultural awareness ○ Role model and conduit between Aboriginal people and community ○ Gaining Council experience increases confidence in nominating as a candidate in future elections. 	<p>Support new elected Aboriginal Councillors through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation Program and briefings • Networking and mentoring support • Training and development program • Cultural awareness program at Council organisation

8. PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL AND PUBLICATIONS

Graphic designed pdf format publications targeting Aboriginal people are available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/indigenous as follows.

- *Why be a Councillor?*
- *A3 Poster – Vote in November 2006*

Other elections promotional material and Information Sheets about Local Government are available via www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/elections

The text used in the brochure titled *Why be a Councillor?*, and an example newsletter article/media release, follow in Word format

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2006 – GET INVOLVED

WHY BE A COUNCILLOR?

Did you know that as a community leader you can influence local decisions about

- **Native Title**
- **Tourism**
- **Sport and recreation**
- **Aged care services**
- **Community transport**
- **Economic Development**
- **NAIDOC Week events**
- **Youth activities?**

Local Government Councillors are elected by 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
- making sure Council resources are used fairly for the benefit of everyone in the community,
- 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. 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. Check with your Council to find out more about Councillor fees and entitlements.

WHAT DOES BEING A LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLOR INVOLVE?

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.

Once successfully elected, your role as Councillor will involve:

- attending and participating in Council meetings, which are run using formal meeting rules
- reading and understanding reports and recommendations, including financial and social research reports
- dealing with issues that sometimes may not seem important to you or Aboriginal people generally
- presenting your arguments, and debating with other Councillors
- public speaking at community events.

You can find out more about what is required. Refer to "Where to go for more information" on the back of this brochure.

Training and support is available 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 Councillors say potential candidates need to understand.

- Once elected, Aboriginal 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 people. This can be difficult, because sometimes the local Aboriginal people think you just represent them.
- Because of the high expectations placed on Aboriginal 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 NOVEMBER 2006 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS?

Local Government Council elections are held every four 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, and
- √ on the Electoral Roll to be able to nominate.

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. You must be on the Electoral Roll to be able to nominate as a candidate.

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 between 5 September 2006 and 12 noon on 19th September 2006** for the November 2006 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 an optional 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?

If there is 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.

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 other Aboriginal 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?

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/goto/elections
- *Local Government Elections - Candidate Handbook for Postal Elections* prepared by the State Electoral Office, South Australia. Telephone 8401 4300 for a copy.
- *Making the decision to get involved in local government – ATSIC Local Government Handbook*. Useful information about making the decision to get involved, planning an election campaign, and marketing and media promotion. A copy is available via a link at www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/indigenous under the **Elections** section.

EXAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE/MEDIA RELEASE

“Aboriginal people urged to stand as candidates and VOTE in Local Government November 2006 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;
- contribute to the decision making processes for the whole council area; 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 November 2006 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 November 2006 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 November 2006 Local Government elections is voluntary by postal voting. Anyone over the age of 18 years has the right to vote, but must be on the State or Council Electoral Roll by Friday 11th August 2006 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.

Ballot packs with voting papers will be sent out by mail towards the end of October 2006.

For media interview contact:

9. RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

9.1 Checklist of information for potential candidates

In addition to the State Electoral Office Local Government Elections Candidate Handbook and Information Kit, provide a copy of the following documents, or enable access for potential candidates to read.

√	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 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 Handbook for Postal Elections</i></p> <p>Available from the State Electoral Office, South Australia Telephone: 8401 4300</p>

9.2 South Australia Local and State 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 State/Local Government Relations www.localgovt.sa.gov.au Ms Faye Barrett	136 North Terrace PO Box 8021 Station Arcade Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: 82048724 Facsimile: 8204 8734
State Electoral Office www.seo.sa.gov.au Ms Leeanne Redpath	134 Fullarton Road Rose Park 5067 GPO Box 646 Adelaide SA 5001 Telephone: 8401 4300 Facsimile: 8401 4333
Department of Premier and Cabinet Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Mr Terry Sparrow	State Administration Centre 200 Victoria Square Adelaide SA 5000 Telephone: 8226 8900 Facsimile: 8226 8999
Aboriginal Lands Trust Mr John Chester	PO Box 21, Ingle Farm, SA Telephone: 8260 0266

9.3 Commonwealth Government

Since the 2003 Local Government Elections, there has been a period of momentous change in National Indigenous Affairs. The abolition of ATSIC by the Commonwealth Government transferred many ATSIC programs to be managed by mainstream departments such as Department of Families and Communities (housing), and Department of Information Technology and the Arts (sport and recreation, cultural language).

A National Indigenous Council was appointed to provide advice to Government and a National Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination commenced in July 2004. Originally established as part of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) was transferred to the Department of Families and Communities in January 2006. The OIPC is coordinating a whole-of-government approach to programs and services for Indigenous Australians. Refer <http://www.oipc.gov.au/tools/contact.asp>

At the local level, across the nation 30 Indigenous Coordinating Centres were established, with different government agencies working together under one roof. South Australian has three centres, contacts are as follows:

- Adelaide "urban office", level 12, CPS Building, 44 Waymouth St, Adelaide 5001 Telephone 8237 6300 or Fax: 8237 6332
- Regional Offices
 - Ceduna, PO Box 396, Ceduna 5690 (22B East Tce, Ceduna), Telephone 8624 4050
 - Port Augusta, PO Box 2214, Port Augusta, SA 5700 (38-40 Stirling Road, Port Augusta) Telephone 8647 1500

9.3 Aboriginal Community Councils relevant to incorporated Local Government Council areas

Raukkan Community Council Inc	1 Seymour Street, Raukkan SA 5259
Davenport Community Council Inc	PO Box 240, Port Augusta SA 5700
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

9.4 Media - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific

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

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>

**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

Involving Aboriginal People in Local Government Elections and Voting

	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.

Involving Aboriginal People in Local Government Elections and Voting

- 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 and 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 Islander people 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 Islander people 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, and information about land 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 the Government” 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 consultation, or expect 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.
- **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 People 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 Islander people, 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 people observe **kinship protocols**, 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.