

INFORMATION SHEET

This sheet has been prepared solely to assist discussions during the Local Government/Aboriginal Service Agreement Project and to be used only as a guide (updated March 2006)

OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS POLICY COORDINATION

Following the changes announced by the Prime Minister on 24 January 2006, the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) became part of the new Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) portfolio, formally the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) is responsible for:

- coordinating whole-of-government innovative policy development and service delivery across the Australian Government;
- developing new ways of engaging directly with Indigenous Australians at the regional and local level;
- brokering relations with State/Territory governments;
- reporting on the performance of government programs and services for Indigenous people to inform policy review and development;
- managing and servicing a network of Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) across Australia;
- advising the Minister and Government on Indigenous Issues.

Background

On 1 July 2004 the Australian Government made important changes to the administration of Indigenous affairs.

The changes are based on:

- coordinating government programs and services
- governments listening directly to local Indigenous people
- making it simpler for Indigenous people to deal with government agencies and programs
- sharing responsibility for outcomes between governments and Indigenous people.

A Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs is providing leadership and strategic direction at the highest level, supported by the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs and advised by the National Indigenous Council.

There is no longer a dedicated Australian Government agency administering Indigenous programs. Programs formerly the responsibility of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) are now with the agencies that look after similar programs for all Australians. The programs remain together under a 'whole-of-government' approach.

Most of these programs and services are funded through the network of Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) in urban, regional and rural Australia. ICCs are managed by the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC)

The reforms are about more than structures, however. They are transforming the way governments work with Indigenous people. The Australian Government wants to ensure that funding for Indigenous people from all sources is coordinated and effective, and that Indigenous communities at the local and regional level have a say in how it is spent. To achieve coordination, the Australian Government is working to integrate its own programs and pursuing cooperative approaches with State and Territory Governments and local government, given these governments important role in servicing Indigenous Australians.

To achieve Indigenous input, the Government is committed to real engagement with Indigenous people in the areas where they live. The Indigenous affairs arrangements combine a bottom-up and a top-down approach. Leadership, strategy and accountability are provided at the top of the structure, and these same qualities are emphasised at the regional and local level.

Because of the extent and depth of Indigenous disadvantage, achieving real improvements for Indigenous people will take time and require sustained cooperative efforts by Indigenous people and governments at all levels. The Australian Government is committed to this goal, working with Indigenous people and through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Important terms and concepts

- Shared responsibility—Both governments and Indigenous people have rights and obligations and all must share responsibility, because governments alone cannot fix Indigenous problems.
- Partnership—Shared responsibility requires real partnerships involving governments and communities, and also, where appropriate, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the private sector.
- Whole-of-government—All government policies and funds must be coordinated and used efficiently and strategically.
- Regional focus—Service strategies must be shaped by the needs of particular regions and communities, not dictated nationally.
- Flexibility—Services and programs must become more flexible, so they can be adapted to local needs.
- Outcomes—The operation of policies, programs, agreements and service-delivery organisations will be judged on the results they produce for local Indigenous people.

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