

Wrong Way Go Back: A New Approach to Normalisation in Aboriginal Affairs Policy

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POLICY AND DIALOGUE

What is policy post-ATSIC ?

2004 – 2008

Mainstream Commonwealth departments take charge of ATSIC programmes – don't fit

COAG developing own approach – Overcoming Disadvantage, Closing the Gap,
Whole-of-Government

Shake-up of Federal Financial Relations

COAG Closing the Gap = shift responsibility to states/territories = Normalisation

COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement 2008

National Partnership Agreements
transfer service functions to states and territories

National Service Delivery Principles
reduced role for community-controlled service delivery organisations

Service delivery principles for programs and services for Indigenous Australians:

- *Priority Principle*
- *Indigenous Engagement Principle*
- *Sustainability Principle*
- *Access Principle*
- *Integration Principle*
- *Accountability Principle*

‘engagement with Indigenous, men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services’

Indigenous people are to be ‘engaged and empowered’ under this principle ‘as appropriate’

‘strong relationships/partnerships between government, community and service providers increase the capacity to achieve identified outcomes’

but ... governments only committed to ‘being transparent regarding the role and level of Indigenous engagement along a continuum from information sharing to decision-making’

and

‘recognising when Indigenous delivery is an important contributor to outcomes (direct and indirect), and in those instances fostering opportunities for Indigenous service delivery’

Survey of Kimberley Community-Controlled Service Organisations mid 2010

Aboriginal organisations under the CATSI Act in the Kimberley

Broome 111

Derby 65

Fitzroy Crossing 34

Halls Creek 42

Kununurra 84

Wyndham 20

Total: 356

But ... not all functional, others not under CATSI Act, not all involved in service delivery.

About 20 organisations visited
CEOs and Chair/directors interviewed
All Kimberley towns
Wide variety of service sectors

Medical services
Night patrol/drying out facility
Women's/child service groups
Housing maintenance
Road construction/mechanical
Welfare and administrative support
Native title ILUA organisations
Youth programmes/diversion programmes
Cultural and language support

Emerging issues:

Removal of CDEP – staff reductions

Housing crisis

Fragmented programmes, too many agencies, high govt staff turnover, unrealistic service agreements, high reporting costs

Competitive market in the service sector:

- organisational rivalry

- non-Indigenous commercial service organisations

- non-Indigenous NGOs

- capture of community organisations by government

 - outsourcing, loss of community voice, loss of local perspective

Organisations 'lack capacity'

- fails to recognise alternative capacity, experience, priorities, cultural expression

Positive trends:

Local alliances, local networks

Increasing cooperation with local long-term non-Indigenous interests

Conclusion:

Commonwealth 'remote control' of development services through state agencies
adds complexity/bureaucracy
siphons off funds into state agencies
gives responsibility to agencies with no track record, no demonstrated competence
undermines local networks

Aboriginal organisations can provide:

employment
on-the-job training
fair distribution of the benefits of economic progress
appropriate controls on development programmes
regional cooperation
civil society engagement with national society
support and recognition of traditional values and practices
the vehicle for adaptation to contemporary circumstances

Wrong Way Go Back

quarantine funding to the states and territories

divert to regional alliances involving local government and Indigenous organisations