



Australian Government

**Office of the Coordinator General
for Remote Indigenous Services**

Policy goes bush – implementing reforms to service delivery in Indigenous remote communities

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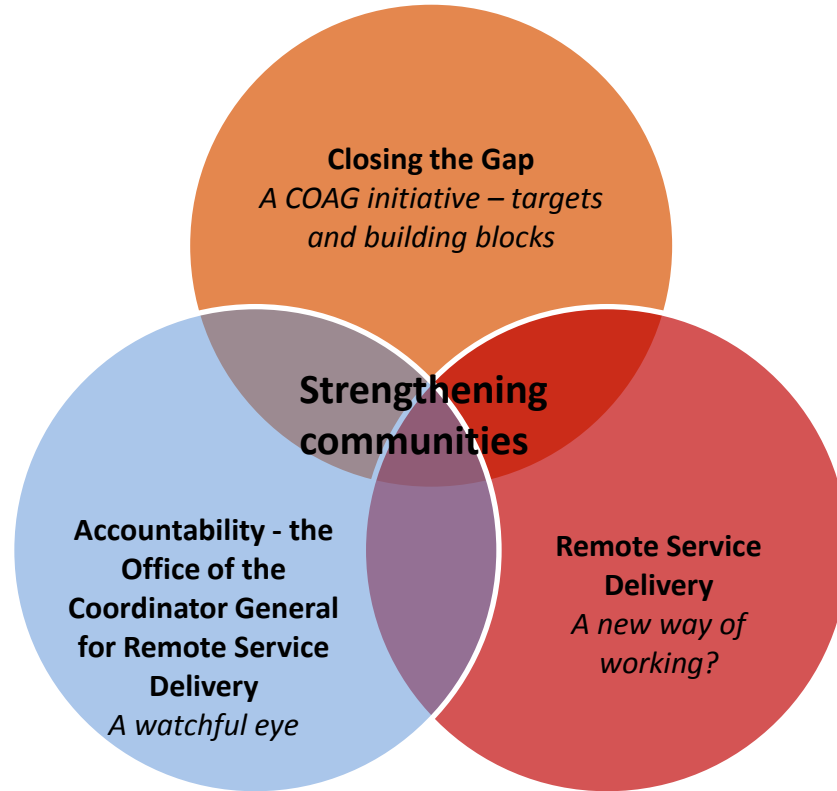
Australian Implementation Conference – “Making change happen”

The question should not be, ‘why do women not accept the service that we offer?’

BUT

‘Why do we not offer a service that women will accept?’

World Health Organization 2005



RSD Priority Communities



RSD National Partnership Objectives

- Improve the **access** of Indigenous families to a full range of suitable and culturally inclusive services.
- Raise the **standard and range** of services delivered to Indigenous families to be broadly **consistent** with those provided to other Australians in similar sized and located communities.
- Improve the level of **governance and leadership** within Indigenous communities and Indigenous community organisations.
- Provide simpler access and **better coordinated** government services for Indigenous people in identified communities.
- Increase **economic and social participation** wherever possible, and promote personal responsibility, engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms.

- solid policy framework incorporating high level commitment through formalised **partnerships across all governments**, funding, strong principles and parameters and a long term commitment
- explicitly **place based approach** with government staff located within each community and Local Implementation Plans allowing for holistic and integrated approaches to address the multiple challenges facing the communities
- greater recognition that new ways of working are required, including **enhanced engagement and ownership by communities** in developing the agenda of change and hence recognition of the need to support community capacity development

The Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services

Statutory officer established under the
Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services Act 2009

- Key element of the new model
- Independent
- Drive reform
- Accountability and reporting



“ we need to convince communities that this is a new way of working and not just a new way of describing what we have always done”

CGRIS second six monthly report

- **Oversee the implementation** of the RSD partnership.
- Formally **report twice a year on progress**, and ensure that all government agencies are held accountable for their implementation responsibilities.
- Have the **authority to work across agencies** to cut through red tape and bureaucratic blockages and to make sure services are delivered effectively.
- **Work with the whole of government Regional Operations Centres** established to coordinate services in communities and the single government contact points located within the priority communities.

- 2002-2006– COAG trials
- 2002 – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report commissioned to “help measure the impact of changes to policy settings and service delivery
- 2003-2005 – Communities in Crisis policy
- 2004 – COAG agreement to new National Framework Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians
- 2004-now – Shared Responsibility Agreements
- 2004-now – Indigenous Coordination Centres
- 2006 – COAG commits to “long-term generational commitment” to overcome Indigenous disadvantage
- 2008 – Cape York Welfare Reform Trials
- 2008 – COAG announces the Closing the Gap targets, the National Indigenous Reform Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery

Consistent messages emerged

- Relationships – build effective, respectful relationships with communities and organisations and within governments
- Shared understandings – across and within governments and with communities – includes focus on long term and sustainable benefits, overarching plans with KPIs, coordination (whether central or localised)
- Enabling environment – including flexibility to reflect and respond to local priorities and subsidiarity
- Capacity building – of staff, communities and organisations and local leadership
- Understanding and learning from experience – sharing best practice, ongoing formative evaluation, better alignment between qualitative and quantitative evidence base

Largely yes (at least at policy level)

- importance of relationship building (single govt interface);
- formalised coordination mechanisms (BoMs)
- need for a shared community plan of local priorities (LIPs);
- building capacity of local leaders and organisations;
- building cross cultural competency of govt officers; and
- collecting baseline and building in evaluation.

A different story at implementation:

- building the capacity of staff on the ground;
- delegation of decision making closer to the ground and flexible funding;
- incorporation of KPIs in plans;
- understanding cultural maps to ensure right community decision makers are at the table; and
- learning from experience – formative evaluation opportunities have been missed.

Implications for effective implementation

- ensure summative evaluations are early enough so that they can influence the next iteration of the policy and program frameworks;
- embed formative evaluations so that they can be responsive to the lessons being learnt – which would then prove to officers that it is worthwhile to change the way they work in response to circumstances;
- provide meaningful feedback on evaluation findings to Indigenous communities and other stakeholders;
- respond directly and quickly to findings that suggest both structural change to policy and/or institutional and implementation arrangements is needed;
- embed evaluation findings in policy frameworks and budget decision making;
- equip officers with the capability to implement the policy framework (including an enabling environment).

Questions?

Here is Edward Bear, coming down the stairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.

(from A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*)

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