



AIATSIS – CDU Joint Seminar Series – Series 2 2008

Indigenous Public Policy: Responses From the Ground

Canberra: 12.30pm-2.00pm (EST)

Darwin: 12.00pm – 1.30pm (CST)

This seminar series is concerned with Indigenous affairs policy during the period of the Howard coalition government. In particular, it focuses on the major changes to Indigenous affairs administration with the abolition of ATSIC in 2004/5. The changes can be summarised as: delivery of programmes by mainstream government departments; creation of a top-down structure for whole-of-government service delivery; increased attention to the role of the states and territories; Shared Responsibility Agreements as a way of encouraging behavioural change among Indigenous groups, and Regional Partnership Agreements as a way of refining the delivery of policy objectives in defined regions. At the end of the Howard government's term these policy developments were swept aside with a radical intervention into Northern Territory communities. The seminar series addresses a range of questions raised by these changes. The first of these is whether they were well-conceived and how much weight can be given to them as innovative public policy reforms as against ideological attempts at social engineering? Secondly, how effective have they been? Thirdly, what has been the impact at the local and regional levels on Indigenous controlled service providers and governance arrangements? Fourthly, what are the indications of the current government's commitment to these changes and how much of them should this government retain? The series opens with an overview paper, then continues with papers on national representation, natural resource management, health and wellbeing, housing, education, gambling and substance abuse, and governance issues. The presentations, which take place at lunchtime on Mondays, will be given alternately in Canberra at AIATSIS and in Darwin at Charles Darwin University. The two venues will be linked with large-screen video conferencing and the audience may ask questions from either location at the end of each paper.