

Regional Authorities Forum

Key Issues

- The existing functions and powers of ATSIC Regional Council (as prescribed under the ATSIC Act) could provide input to the establishing of a Regional Development Authority.
- An agreement to develop a Regionalised form of Indigenous governance would require involvement by all levels of government and traditional authority.
- Traditional Law is the basic building block for an agreement and for governance.
- Cross-Government involvement is required in developing new or amended Legislation to enable Regional Authorities.
- Regional Authorities must have an advocacy role in addition to being a service provider coordinator.
- A Cross-Government agreement should include single-line, 'one bucket' of funding direct from Commonwealth to Regional Authorities.
- Government will be fearful about making funding changes, but this is important basis for governance and needs to be negotiated - meaningful indicators of outcomes for all
- A Regional Authority could be funded to provide services on the basis of out-sourcing until sufficient capacity exists to control all funds flow.
- Regional jurisdiction could initially centre on Policy and Decision-Making capability – but needs to be fully considered and negotiated.

- **The newly appointed Regional Development Boards have a separate function to a Regional Authority. They exist to stimulate economic and social development of a region; they should not do governance.**
- **Consideration was given to dropping the word “local” from Local Government. Is local govt the best farmework for regional governance? A 3rd or 4th tier of govt?**
- **The structures of Regional Authorities are likely to be different (Not one size fits all), but there will be shared common problems to be solved and common principles that can guide people in thinking through the options.**
- **Other stakeholders ie. pastoralists needs to be considered in areas where regional governance is being developed.**

Recommendations

- **Develop information packages about regional initiatives already being established (eg manuals, workshops, briefings, individuals who can pass on lessons to others) - not waste time reinventing the wheel; learn from other peoples solutions**
- **Regional Authorities should recognise and build upon traditional law and relationships.**
- **Common pool funding should be negotiated**
- **Collaborative approach between key agencies and organisations (eg ATSIC, Land Councils, Govt depts) to support Indigenous governance processes.**