

NTRB POLICY & Research Forum

A IATSIS AND THE DEPARTMENT of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) co-hosted a Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) Policy and Research Forum in Canberra from 7-8 November 2016. The aim of the forum was to provide an opportunity for engagement between native title organisations and policy makers in policy and program design and delivery. It also provided an opportunity to consider the existing evidence base for policy and identify any gaps and needs.

Over the 2 days, some 50 delegates from Native Title Representative

Bodies and Service Providers (NTRB/SPs) provided input to policy formulation in critical areas of native title, with a particular focus on the recent *PBC Support Strategy - Consultation Paper (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet)*. Discussion covered a wide range of current pressure points and systemic issues including funding models, engagement and communication, formal recognition of NTRB/SPs, and financial accountability.

One of the successes of the forum was to reframe current discussion

on Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) support to include a more informed understanding of the intensity and diversity of NTRB/SPs support to PBCs with a particular emphasis on innovations that address regional and cultural differences in traditional owner aspirations and circumstances.

PBC empowerment and independence remains a shared objective across the sector. Within this context many PBCs are seeking at least some support from NTRB/SPs, while some require a full range of services that may include legal advice, financial management, future act responses and communication as well as managing land and sea ranger programs.

Delegates discussed the substantial commitment required across the system to support growing numbers of new PBCs, yet for many NTRB/SPs, the workload of existing and new claims is not diminishing. A key message from the forum was that NTRB/SPs knowledge and understanding of PBCs was of enormous value, and that these foundational relationships should continue to be acknowledged and respected in an evolving sector.

Delegates were also briefed on a range of commonwealth government programs including Indigenous Business initiatives and the Indigenous procurement policy, constitutional recognition and Empowered Communities as well as from AUSTRADE about engaging Indigenous communities in export industries under recommendations in the Northern Australia White paper.



Above: Delegates attending the meeting.
Credit: Alexandra Andriolo, AIATSIS.