



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Indigenous Justice and
Legal Assistance Division

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KATL*

Ms Liz Forman
Acting General Manager
Regional Communications Branch
Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Dear Ms Forman

Response to *Backing Indigenous Ability* Discussion Paper

I am writing in response to the invitation for submissions in response to the discussion paper *Backing Indigenous Ability* issued by your Department in March 2006.

The Attorney-General's Department provides access to a range of law and justice programs for Indigenous Australians. Legal Aid for Indigenous Australians supports the provision of culturally appropriate legal aid services. Family Violence Prevention Legal Services provide specialist services in rural and remote areas to assist Indigenous adults and children who are victims of family violence, or who are at immediate risk of such violence. Law and Justice Advocacy supports the advancement of legal rights to Indigenous Australians by funding groups to pursue advocacy, research and community legal education. The Prevention, Diversion, Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice Program provides funding to a range of community level projects, such as night patrols, intended to help reduce Indigenous people's adverse contact with the criminal justice system. The provision of adequate telecommunications services in remote and regional communities is important to Indigenous Australians. The objectives of the Government's Indigenous law and justice programs will be enhanced through improved telecommunications services in these areas. These objectives include increasing real and perceived safety, reducing crime in communities and improving access to justice services, and reducing imprisonment and juvenile detention.

The provision of shared community phones for communities that do not currently have access would be a high priority in many such communities as would there be benefits in trialling alternative technologies, including mobile communications. The continued roll-out and maintenance of regional hub communities and the provision of PC-based videoconferencing would also be an important means of improving access law and justice services in remote and regional communities. Utilisation of this technology could also contribute toward improving the cost-effectiveness of providing such services.

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Yours sincerely
