



One year on

It has been just over one year since Anthony Beven was appointed Registrar of Indigenous Corporations. Here are some of his thoughts on the achievements of the past year and the challenges that lie ahead.



I celebrated my first anniversary as Registrar of Indigenous Corporations at the beginning of October and wanted to share with you what I believe are some of the important achievements of that period.

A great achievement was the finalisation and launch of ORIC's first Reconciliation Action Plan. We reported on this in great detail in our previous ORIC Oracle.

I am very proud to report that ORIC has managed to increase its Indigenous workforce from 10 per cent to 17 per cent. Other milestones included:

- achieving our highest ever corporation reporting compliance rate of 59 per cent, the first step on the way to our goal of 90 per cent compliance by July next year
- exceeding our target of 200 days of training for Indigenous corporation members
- providing out-posted ORIC officers to Kununurra in Western Australia and Ceduna in South Australia—other sites will follow in the future
- providing online forms lodgment and electronic document processing systems, which will simplify and speed up lodging forms for corporations with internet access
- assisting corporations through ORIC's call centre, improved dispute resolution processes and our new and improved condensed rule book
- 60 formal examinations of Indigenous corporations and overseeing up to 20 corporations under special administration.

One of the challenges I saw when I took on this role was the perception in the broader community

that Indigenous corporations are poorly governed and financially unaccountable. That is not the case.

As I said, the majority are currently compliant with their documentary lodgment requirements and delivering strong governance within their corporations. This has been achieved at a time of significant change for corporations, including changes to funding. ORIC corporations are coming up with some very exciting new business models that show promise for the future.

Of course we can do better and it will be difficult, but I am determined to get as close as possible to our target of 90 per cent compliance by mid-2009.

I see it as a partnership: ORIC provides a great regulatory service, including free registration, no late fees, high levels of support through the call centre, electronic and printed tools, and a wide range of services to help establish and maintain corporations. Corporations have an obligation to run their corporations according to the law and their rule book; keep ORIC informed and provide their reports on time.

Currently we are actively reminding corporations of these obligations. However, further down the track I can see that we may need to start discussing the possibility of deregistration with corporations that aren't compliant.

Looking forward: I am keen to see ORIC build on its very successful relationships with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous Coordination Centres and state government authorities to ensure the best outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Anthony Beven
Registrar

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Participants from an Introduction to Corporate Governance workshop held in Cairns.

Annual general meetings for 2008

If you haven't already done so, now is the time to hold your annual general meeting (AGM). Corporations must hold their AGMs or apply to the Registrar for an extension before the end of November 2008.

What to do before the AGM

✓ Complete your corporation reports for 2007–08:

- general report
- financial report and get it audited (if required)
- directors' report (if required)

✓ Notify members and auditor (if you have one) about the AGM.

The notice should include:

- the date, time and place of the meeting
- the business of the meeting
- any special resolutions that may need to be voted on (for example, if you want to adopt a new rule book, or change your rules)
- whether the meeting will allow proxy voting by members, and the process for nominating a proxy.



Your rule book (constitution) will say how and when the notice should be done. Usually the directors need to give notice at least 21 days before the AGM. Notices can be given to members in person, by mail, fax or email, by using community noticeboards or by advertising in a local newspaper or on the radio.

What to do at the AGM

✓ Make sure you have a quorum according to your rules, and make sure that the quorum is present at all times.

✓ Keep accurate minutes of the meeting.

✓ Make sure that everyone at the meeting understands what is going on and that all resolutions are agreed on and accepted according to your rule book (constitution).

AGM business generally includes:

- confirming the minutes of the previous AGM
- talking about the corporation reports—general, financial and directors' (if required)
- electing directors (according to your rule book)
- choosing an auditor for the next year and agree on the fee
- checking that the register of members is up to date
- asking questions about how the corporation is managed.

What to do after the AGM

✓ Within one month: update the corporation's minute book or folder. The directors need to make sure that the AGM minutes are prepared according to their rules. Once they are happy that it is a good record of the meeting; they should sign and date it.

✓ Send your finalised corporation reports to ORIC.

Get your 2007–08 reports ready

Corporation reports must be lodged with the Registrar before 31 December 2008.

Your reporting can be done in hard copy or on ORIC's new online lodgment website (<https://online.oric.gov.au>).

If you need help with your reports, please call us on 1800 622 431.

First graduates of joint venture

A partnership between ORIC, the South Australian Government's Office of Consumer and Business Affairs and Department of Premier and Cabinet, along with Swinburne University has produced 13 new Indigenous graduates of the Certificate IV in Business (Governance).

The partnership has culminated in a very special graduation ceremony, held at Warriparinga Wetlands in Adelaide.

The setting was particularly appropriate: the local Kurna people have been meeting at Warriparinga for thousands of years to celebrate, take part in ceremonies, and gather food. The name means 'windy place by the river' in the Kurna language.

Right: Neville Abdullah (Mari Yerta Men's and Young Men's Aboriginal Corporation) receiving his certificate from Anthony Beven.



Don't miss out on ORIC workshops

How to change your rules—all corporations must change over to rules under the CATSI Act before 30 June 2009. ORIC is currently running workshops around Australia to help corporations do this.

Introduction to corporate governance—a three-day interactive workshop introducing the basic principles of how to manage and run a healthy corporation. Topics include concepts such as corporate governance, responsibilities of members, directors and other officers, and conflict awareness and management.

Please visit our website, www.oric.gov.au, and follow the link to the training page to see a full list of our upcoming workshops.