Cairns regional office, Queensland

The Cairns regional office has been operating since 2012 and covers a diverse area extending as far north as the Torres Strait and as far south as Sarina. In 2015 the geographical scope of the office was extended to the west to include Mount Isa, Normanton, Doomadgee and Mornington Island. The demand for ORIC's support services has continued to increase over the year with local corporations requesting corporation-specific training and requiring help with rule book changes. There has also been a high number of inquiries from organisations wishing to transfer to the CATSI Act.
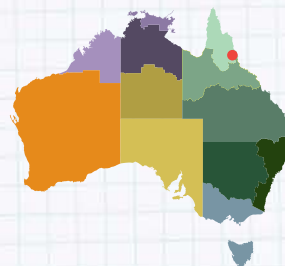
> " My main focus is on simplifying government jargon and helping participants of our training to better understand new concepts. I find that using real-life examples helps people implement what they've learnt at their corporations. "

Jennifer Reuben on delivering corporation-specific training

Alice Springs regional office, Northern Territory

The Alice Springs regional office was established in 2011 and is an integral part of ORIC's growing regional network. It serves the lower half of the Northern Territory, taking in the Barkly region, Central Australia and the whole of South Australia.

The office in Alice Springs delivers a wide range of services including training to individual corporations, assistance with rule book changes, complaints handling, transfer of registration to the CATSI Act, and the registering of new corporations.
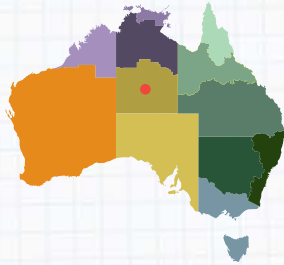
Dayna Lister,
Regional manager,
Alice Springs

George Donaldson,
Regional officer,
Alice Springs

"It's great helping people who want to help others—like setting up a corporation to provide a healthy sporting outlet for the young people of Yuendumu. I talked with community about an appropriate name for the new corporation; how to go about drafting a rule book and some of the pre-registration process."
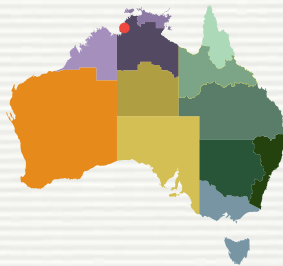
George Donaldson on the registration of Wanta Aboriginal Corporation

Hannah Roe,
Regional manager,
Darwin

Margetta Avlonitis,
Regional officer,
Darwin

Darwin regional office, Northern Territory

Open since October 2013 the Darwin regional office is now a familiar presence in the Top End and provides hands-on support to many local corporations. Services range from helping with governance difficulties to assisting with reporting obligations. Supporting organisations wanting to transfer to the CATSI Act has been a particularly active area. Another busy area has been working with the ORIC recruitment assistance (ORA) service which helps corporations recruit senior managers.
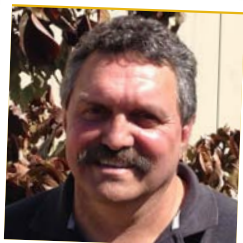
In February 2015, Margetta Avlonitis joined the office.

> "We were able to help the Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation with the recruitment of a new CEO. It's very important to get the right person for the job. The corporation's directors and selection panel also really wanted to be sure that they were following the recruitment process properly. An applicant was successfully appointed and the corporation has asked for further ORIC recruitment assistance with another senior management position."

Hannah Roe on ORIC recruitment assistance (ORA) for the Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation

Broome regional office, Western Australia

The Broome regional office, which opened its doors for the first time in October 2013, provides services to the Kimberley. The word has spread and people are now well aware of ORIC's presence in north-western Australia. As a result the demand for ORIC services in this region has steadily grown.

Sid Michels, Regional officer, Broome

The Broome regional officer has delivered governance training to local corporations and has assisted many more with their reporting obligations.
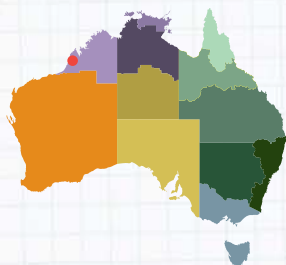
> "All the group members were keen to learn about governance right from the start. We went through all the steps involved in a registration process."

Sid Michels on providing ongoing assistance to the Halls Creek Stolen Generation Group

Perth regional office, Western Australia

The Perth regional office has been operating since April 2012 and is a familiar and welcome presence in the region. It's used not only by local corporations but also by stakeholders, such as government agencies, non-government organisations and the business community. In 2014–15 the Perth regional office expanded its scope to the Pilbara and now supports local Aboriginal corporations in that area.

In January 2015 Clinton Dann joined the office for a few months to provide administrative support and to help with the delivery of services.

Arthur Hyde,
Regional manager, Perth

Clinton Dann,
Regional officer, Perth
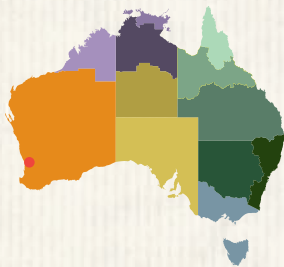
> " It is not always plain sailing when an organisation transfers from state legislation to the CATSI Act. In May 2015 I helped the Noongar Institute of Western Australia Aboriginal Corporation. The transfer involved assisting to draft the new rule book and obtaining approval from the elders, as well as working with lawyers on the legal aspects. The corporation has been offered post-registration training which the directors plan to undertake in the new year. "

Arthur Hyde about transferring an existing organisation to the CATSI Act

Case study:
Building relationships

The Sister Kates Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation in Armadale, Western Australia, was set up to provide healing, empowerment and leadership to lost generation peoples.

Its related trust, Sister Kate's Home Kids Foundation, was established to benefit Aboriginal people who were residents of Sister Kates Home, in particular those from 1954 onwards, their families and descendants. The trust holds land that was transferred from the Uniting Church for the purpose of building a healing centre for the 'home kids'.

In the early stages of its life the corporation was unable to attract funding but eventually formed an arrangement with the charity Communicare to auspice its funding and to provide office space. Most importantly the relationship allowed Sister Kates to provide a range of support services to its 'home kid' clients.

The corporation's success in establishing a strong working relationship with Communicare and its efficiency in delivering services demonstrates hard work and resourcefulness. By forging this relationship has also made Sister Kates a more attractive proposition for funding bodies.

'It's a credit to the dedicated staff of the corporation what they have achieved and the support they provide to their clients,' said ORIC's Perth regional manager, Arthur Hyde.

Neither success nor relationships are built overnight.

Arthur has also made it his business to work closely and steadily with the Sister Kates Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation. Over the years he has assisted it with general governance matters, meeting its reporting obligations, and applying for free legal assistance through ORIC's LawHelp service.

Thanks to this investment and the corporation's own hard work Sister Kates is well on its way to becoming self-reliant and ready to expand its support services to its members and clients. All this can be put down to building strong relationships.

For a number of years Ngoonjuwah Council Aboriginal Corporation was funded by the Australian Government to deliver the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program to Aboriginal people in the Halls Creek region of Western Australia. In 2007 the corporation was placed into liquidation. Between 2007 and 2013 its liquidators (Meertens) tried to locate 232 former CDEP participants who were owed money by the corporation. They were successful in finding only five as many had incomplete addresses or had moved.

In May and July 2013 the liquidators transferred $189,093.23 to the Registrar under the CATSI Act as unclaimed money. Funds owed to individuals ranged from $11 to $3682.

Over the next 18 months the Registrar initiated a project to locate the former CDEP participants and to assist in claiming the amounts owed to them.

The remote location of many of the former CDEP participants as well as provisions in the *Privacy Act 1988* presented several challenges—the Privacy Act prevents the publication of the names of the former CDEP participants.

Trying a direct approach, the Registrar on two separate occasions placed a dedicated ORIC officer in Halls Creek to search for rightful claimants. The Registrar also placed general notices in the local newspaper, was interviewed on radio programs and posted notices throughout the local community to encourage people to come forward. However, even with these efforts, only about half of the 227 former CDEP participants were successfully located:

⇨ 93 people (41 per cent) made a successful claim and have been paid. The total value of these payments is $129,269.50.

⇨ five people (2.2 per cent) have lodged a claim but require further documentation for their claim to be processed. The total value of these claims is $1910.65.

Unfortunately, 129 people (56.8 per cent) to date have not been located (a total of $57,913.07 is owed to them).

Although every effort continues to be made to contact the remaining 129 people the chances of finding them are diminishing.

This is the first time that unclaimed money has been transferred to the Registrar's office by a liquidator.

ORA: ORIC recruitment assistance—helping corporations to recruit staff

In 2014–15 a total of 11 job assistance requests for senior management positions were received through ORA and nine senior staff positions were filled.

The Registrar started the ORIC recruitment assistance (ORA) service in 2010 to help corporations fill senior positions. The service encourages best practice and builds capacity by supporting corporations to recruit, appoint and retain suitable senior staff.

ORA supports corporations through each step in the recruitment process, including:

⇨ developing a job description package

⇨ advertising the position

⇨ evaluating applicants

⇨ setting up an interview process

⇨ preparing the selection report.

ORA is free of charge to eligible corporations, although corporations meet their own advertising costs. Corporations remain responsible for all decisions in the recruitment process, including the final selection of the successful candidate and negotiating a salary package.

Figure 9: Number of job assistance requests received through ORA and senior positions filled from 2010–11 to 2014–15

Note: Not all recruitment activities end with filling of the position.

Corporation jobs

In 2014–15 there were 47 jobs advertised on the ORIC website.

Since 2009 ORIC has provided corporations with the ability to advertise their employment opportunities free of charge on the ORIC website. This is an important service, particularly for those corporations that can't afford to advertise online or don't have their own website.

Over the past six years 331 jobs have been advertised including 47 that were advertised during 2014–15.

Figure 10: Corporation jobs advertised on the ORIC website by state/territory 2014–15
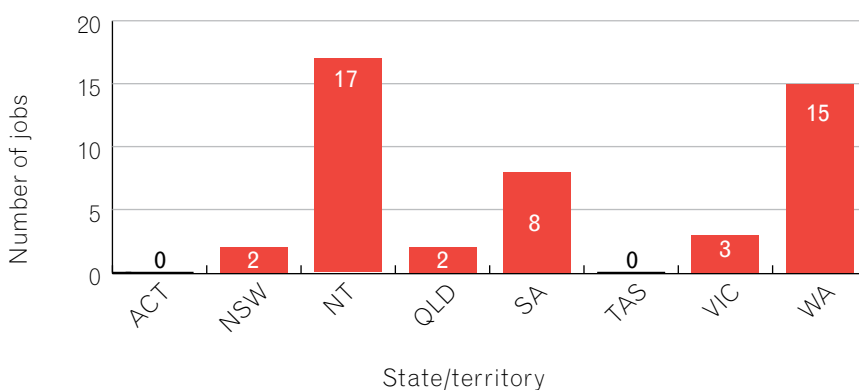
Handy recruitment guides

ORIC has produced a series of short, handy guides about recruitment. Topics include:

⇨ recruitment process

⇨ how to draft a successful job ad

⇨ how to draft selection criteria

⇨ checklist for selecting suitable applicants

⇨ sample interview questions.

There are also a number of employment guides:

⇨ managing performance

⇨ grievance and dispute resolution

⇨ termination of employment—small business employers

⇨ termination of employment—larger employers.

Template employment contracts grouped by state and territory as well as summaries of employment conditions and information on relevant industry awards are also available. These documents were developed in 2010 in partnership with the Australian Government Solicitor and can be found on the ORIC website under 'Corporation jobs'.

LawHelp

In 2014–15 ORIC received 41 LawHelp applications, a significant increase from the 19 received last year. Twenty-four of these were approved by the LawHelp assessment panel and successfully referred to some of Australia's top law firms (compared to 13 last year).

LawHelp was started by the Registrar and a handful of volunteer lawyers in 2010 to give not-for-profit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the CATSI Act access to pro bono legal assistance.

The scheme provides assistance on a range of legal matters, from basic tax issues to drafting employment contracts to interpreting the law. It cannot, however, help with matters already funded by government, such as native title, legal action in any court or tribunal or with matters that could conflict with the interests of the Australian Government.

LawHelp can only help corporations not individuals.

During the year, the pro bono legal scheme was extended to entities seeking assistance to transfer their registration to the CATSI Act. The Registrar decided to make the change in response to requests for this type of assistance as a result of new funding conditions under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Previously, only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the CATSI Act were eligible to apply for LawHelp. The changes enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations not registered under the CATSI Act to obtain advice about transferring registration.

As at 30 June 2015 there were 12 participating law firms on the LawHelp panel:

- ⇨ Allens
- ⇨ Ashurst
- ⇨ Australian Government Solicitor (AGS)
- ⇨ Bradley Allen Love Lawyers
- ⇨ Castledine Gregory Law & Mediation
- ⇨ Clayton Utz
- ⇨ DLA Piper Australia
- ⇨ HWL Ebsworth Lawyers
- ⇨ Jackson McDonald Lawyers
- ⇨ Lipman Karas
- ⇨ Minter Ellison
- ⇨ Tress Cox Lawyers.

Eligible corporations or transferring organisations send their applications for legal assistance to ORIC's LawHelp secretariat which provides administrative support for the scheme. Applications are then forwarded to the independent LawHelp assessment panel for action.

Three independent lawyers sit on the LawHelp assessment panel— the manager of pro bono services from the Australian Government Solicitor, Ms Geetha Nair; a Victorian lawyer from the community services sector, Mr David Tennant; and an Aboriginal lawyer with the Department of Health, Mr Benjamin Murray.

The Registrar is grateful for the ongoing support provided by the panel members. Without their involvement this important service could not be provided by the Registrar.

Figure 11: Number of LawHelp applications by state/territory 2014–15
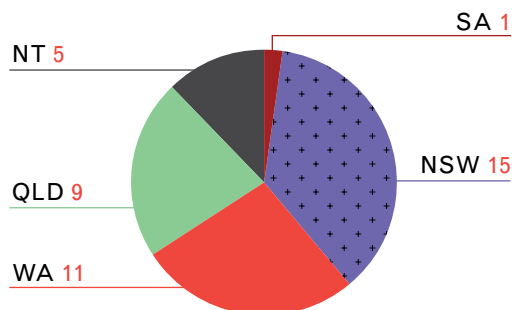
Note: There were no applications from Tasmania or the Australian Capital Territory.

Figure 12: Number of LawHelp applications by subject 2014–15
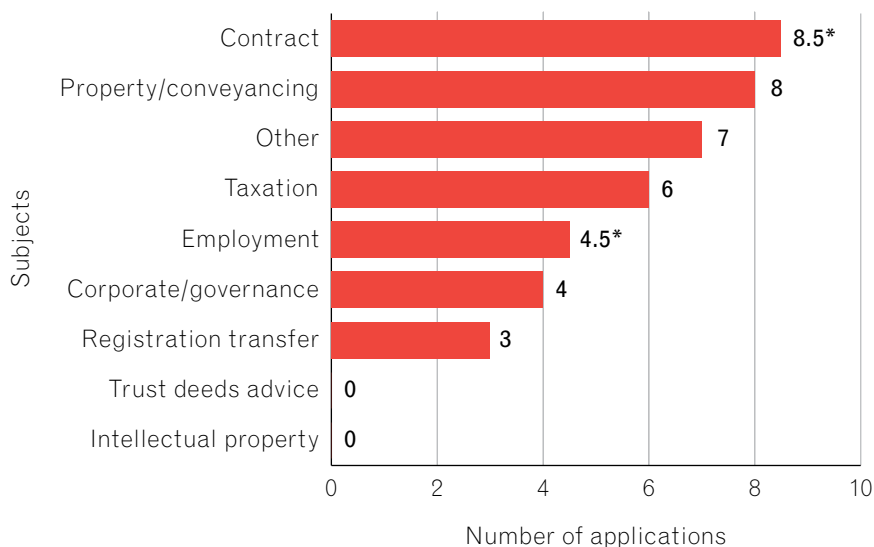
Note: *One application was half employment law and half contract law.

In 2014–15 ORIC provided corporate governance training to 886 people from 169 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations, organisations and new groups.

The Registrar also developed a new corporate governance workshop designed specifically for corporations in the native title sector. The workshop was trialled by 22 people from one native title body on Badu Island in the Torres Strait.

Ninety per cent of people who attended reported a significant or very significant increase in corporate governance knowledge after completing the training.

The Registrar's training programs are designed to increase corporate governance knowledge, skills, efficiency and accountability within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations.

Facilitator Benny Hodges explaining the water tank activity to Sammy Lyons and Thomas Holder, Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media (Aboriginal Corporation).

Training calendar

In May each year the Registrar publishes an online calendar of Introduction to Corporate Governance (ICG) workshops and accredited training courses for the following financial year. It includes proposed dates and locations for courses. The calendar is updated regularly in case of changes.

Training courses for 2014–15 on the ORIC website.

Types of training courses and workshops

Eligible applicants can apply to ORIC for corporate governance training through residential courses (part of ORIC's Managing in Two Worlds program) and/or through workshops delivered in the community through ORIC's corporation-specific programs.

The Managing in Two Worlds program includes:

⇨ ICG workshops held over three days

⇨ Certificate IV in Business (Governance) delivered in four one-week blocks

⇨ Diploma of Business (Governance) delivered in five one-week blocks.

Corporation-specific training (CST) is delivered to individual corporations that have requested training especially tailored to their particular needs and circumstances.

CST workshops are usually held at a corporation's premises or within the community. The training is delivered over one or two days. The range of CST workshops includes:

⇨ pre-incorporation doorway (including transfers and amalgamations): provides information on the CATSI Act requirements and processes for an organisation to become incorporated under the CATSI Act

⇨ rule book design and re-design: helps corporations and new groups looking to register to develop a rule book under the CATSI Act

⇨ support and mentoring: provides support and practical information in running a corporation, including post-special administration training to prevent the problems that led to the special administration in the first place

⇨ Building Strong Stores (BSS): is a two-day program designed specifically for corporations that manage a community store

⇨ native title: corporations in the native title sector face particular challenges and complex issues. During the year ORIC developed a new corporation-specific training workshop designed specifically for native title corporations. A trial was held in September 2014 with 22 participants. From the trial ORIC made a number of changes and refinements to the workshop.

Overall training delivered

In 2014–15 ORIC exceeded its training targets for both the number of participants and corporations.

Table 13: Overall training delivered 2014–15

	Estimate	Actual
Number of participants	750	886
Number of corporations	120	169
Participants that reported a significant or very significant increase in corporate governance knowledge	90%	90%

Note: Overall statistics are based on single counts of participants and corporations.

Figure 13: Training workshops and courses by state/territory 2014–15

ACT 1, 1%
NSW 19, 22%
NT 11, 13%
QLD 17, 20%
SA 3, 4%
TAS 2, 2%
VIC 3, 3%
WA 30, 35%
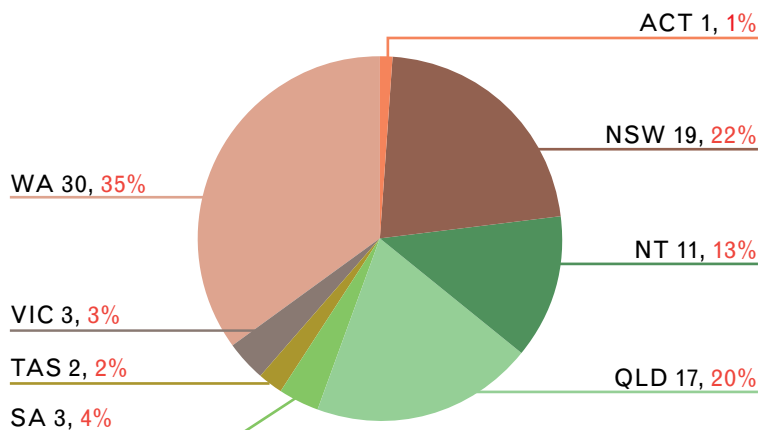
Case study: Coming together for training

In April 2015 directors and staff from the following three different corporations came together for two days of corporate governance training:

⇨ Gangalidda and Garawa Native Title Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

⇨ Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

⇨ Gulf Region Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

The 22 participants travelled to Cairns from Doomadgee, Burketown, Mornington Island and the Northern Territory.

There was a high level of participation and the workshop was modified to meet the varying skill levels, experience and age of the participants.

There were lots of questions about PBC issues, but the use of practical and real-life examples helped participants to feel confident about implementing their new knowledge and understanding back at their corporations.

The participants have now set their sights on the ICG workshop for more training.

'The workshop went really well. All participants were keen to contribute ideas and get involved in discussions,'

said Jennifer Reuben, ORIC's Cairns regional officer.

Introduction to Corporate Governance (ICG)

ICG workshops explain key concepts and principles of good corporate governance to members and staff of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations. Participants need to complete an ICG workshop before they can gain entry to the accredited Certificate IV in Business (Governance).

ORIC delivered nine ICG workshops across Australia in 2014–15. A total of 237 people, representing 93 corporations, participated.

Table 14: ICG workshops 2014–15

Date	Location	Number of participants	Number of corporations
Jul 2014	Coober Pedy, SA	23	6
Aug 2014	Yulara, NT	24	11
Sept 2014	Bundaberg, Qld	19	12
Oct 2014	Kununurra, WA	19	8
Dec 2014	Tamworth, NSW	28	9
Feb 2015	Carnarvon, WA	21	8
Apr 2015	Katherine, NT	50	15
May 2015	Kalgoorlie, WA	33	10
Jun 2015	Gladstone, Qld	20	14
Total		**237**	**93**

Participants at an ICG workshop in Yulara.

Certificate IV in Business (Governance)

The Certificate IV in Business (Governance) is part of a national accredited training package developed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who wish to improve their corporate governance and management skills. The objective is for potential and existing directors to attain key competencies and accreditation.

ORIC ran one Certificate IV in Business (Governance) course in 2014–15 which was held in Brisbane. The course drew participants from Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Fourteen students started the course and all graduated.

Table 15: Certificate IV in Business (Governance) 2014–15

Date	Location	Number of students graduated	Number of corporations
Block 1: 20–24 Oct 2014	Brisbane, Qld	14	13
Block 2: 1–6 Dec 2014			
Block 3: 9–13 Feb 2015			
Block 4: 16–20 Mar 2015			

Participants during an ICG workshop in Yulara (*insert*) Andrew Spencer.

Certificate IV in Business (Governance)

In October 2014, students who had enrolled in ORIC's business governance course arrived in Brisbane for the first of four one-week residential study blocks. Drawn from different corporations from across Australia the students might have been a little nervous but they were also motivated. Some had travelled long distances—for example, from the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

The students responded well to the face-to-face tuition which was conducted over 20 days. In between study blocks they returned home to work on set assignments and assessments.

All 14 students who started the course finished it. On 20 March 2015 a graduation ceremony was hosted by the Registrar at the Novotel Brisbane with a number of guests, including the federal member for Brisbane, the Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP, and the Hon. Shayne Neumann, Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and federal member for Blair.

Certificate IV in Business (Governance) graduation in Brisbane.

Diploma of Business (Governance)

The Diploma of Business (Governance) builds on competencies already acquired in the Certificate IV in Business (Governance).

A diploma course commenced in June 2015 with 14 students. It will be run over five one-week blocks and completed in November 2015.

Corporation-specific training (CST)

In 2014–15 ORIC delivered 75 separate CST workshops for 92 different corporations and groups. Altogether 629 participants attended the workshops. The governance topic most often requested and consequently delivered at the workshops was 'the roles, responsibilities and legal duties of directors'.

The most workshops (36 per cent) were conducted in Western Australia, followed by New South Wales (24 per cent) and Queensland (19 per cent).

Table 16: Corporation-specific training workshops delivered 2014–15

Date	Location	State	Number of participants	Number of corporations
Jul 2014	Latrobe	Tas	4	1
Jul 2014	Halls Creek	WA	10	2
Jul 2014	Bunbury	WA	6	1
Jul 2014	Newman	WA	6	1
Jul 2014	Alice Springs	NT	8	1
Jul 2014	Derby	WA	6	1
Jul 2014	Gin Gin	Qld	8	1
Jul 2014	Eisvold	Qld	6	1
Jul 2014	Purga	Qld	8	1
Jul 2014	Maningrida	NT	6	1
Jul 2014	Mount Barnett	WA	4	1
Jul 2014	Derby	WA	10	1
Jul 2014	Narrabri	NSW	6	1
Aug 2014	Geraldton	WA	10	1
Aug 2014	Watanobbi	NSW	7	1
Aug 2014	Katherine	NT	8	1
Aug 2014	Narromine	NSW	8	1
Aug 2014	Newman	WA	9	1
Aug 2014	Darwin	NT	4	1
Aug 2014	Mildura	Vic	6	1
Aug 2014	Roebourne	WA	8	2
Aug 2014	Warmun	WA	6	1
Aug 2014	Normanton	Qld	18	2
Sept 2014	Charters Towers	Qld	6	1
Sept 2014	Badu Island	Qld	22	1
Sept 2014	Bickerton Island	NT	11	1
Oct 2014	Albany	WA	10	1
Oct 2014	Byron Bay	NSW	12	1
Oct 2014	Gunnedah	NSW	15	1
Nov 2014	Melbourne	Vic	4	1
Feb 2015	Canberra	ACT	7	1
Feb 2015	South Hedland*	WA	5	1
Feb2015	Broome	WA	9	1
Feb 2015	Launceston	Tas	8	1
Feb 2015	Yamba	NSW	5	1
Feb 2015	Coraki	NSW	5	1
Mar 2015	Tennant Creek	NT	9	1
Mar 2015	Katoomba	NSW	14	1
Mar 2015	Coolangatta	Qld	8	1
Mar 2015	Ali Curung	NT	16	1

Date	Location	State	Number of participants	Number of corporations
Mar 2015	Port Macquarie	NSW	6	1
Mar 2015	Mareeba	Qld	3	1
Mar 2015	Raymond Terrace	NSW	5	1
Mar 2015	Hervey Bay	Qld	5	1
Mar 2015	Mutitjulu	NT	6	1
Mar 2015	Kalumburu	WA	21	4
Apr 2015	Mulan	WA	14	3
Apr 2015	Badu Island	Qld	13	1
Apr 2015	Ringer Soak	WA	26	4
Apr 2015	Kempsey**	NSW	3	1
Apr 2015	Cairns	Qld	21	3
Apr 2015	Inverell**	NSW	6	1
Apr 2015	Dubbo	NSW	2	1
Apr 2015	Kununurra	WA	5	1
Apr 2015	Doon Doon Community	WA	5	2
Apr 2015	Halls Creek	WA	8	4
Apr 2015	Glen Hill Station	WA	6	1
Apr 2015	Kununurra	WA	6	1
Apr 2015	Dubbo	NSW	4	1
Apr 2015	Townsville	Qld	6	1
Apr 2015	Townsville	Qld	5	1
Apr 2015	Port Macquarie	NSW	7	1
Apr 2015	Dubbo	NSW	4	1
May 2015	Healesville*	Vic	7	1
May 2015	Brisbane	Qld	7	1
May 2015	Ceduna	SA	6	1
May 2015	Albany*	WA	7	1
May 2015	Ceduna	SA	7	1
May 2015	Kalgoorlie*	WA	10	1
May 2015	Beagle Bay	WA	7	1
May 2015	Derby	WA	7	1
May 2015	Port Macquarie	NSW	8	1
May 2015	Ballina	NSW	9	1
Jun 2015	Wingellina	WA	14	1
Jun 2015	Karratha*	WA	15	1
Total			629	92

Notes: * Pre-incorporation doorway workshops for a group looking to register a new corporation.

            ** Doorway workshop for an existing organisation looking to transfer registration.

Case study:
CSTs—when ORIC comes to you

ORIC finds it a challenge each year to respond to the hundreds of requests from corporations for corporate governance training.

To reach as many corporation directors and officers as possible, and to maximise its coverage across Australia, ORIC has adjusted its training model. The Registrar was particularly concerned to assist corporations in remote areas—to build strong corporations, strong people and strong communities.

ORIC's adaptable approach was exemplified in a training visit in April 2015 to the East Kimberley. Corporation specific training (CST) workshops were coordinated over a 10-day period and at the same time it was arranged that the following corporations received customised governance assistance:

Joseph Martin from Woolah Aboriginal Corporation commented that,
'Since we've had this training we can do a lot more for our corporation and our community.'

• Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation
• Woolah Aboriginal Corporation
• Doon Doon Pastoral Aboriginal Corporation
• Mirima Council Aboriginal Corporation
• Balaburr Aboriginal Corporation
• Glen Hill Pastoral Aboriginal Corporation
• Mandangala Aboriginal Corporation

• French Family Aboriginal Corporation
• Kalumburu Aboriginal Corporation
• Maraltadj Family Aboriginal Corporation
• Wunambah Gaamber Aboriginal Corporation

Kalumburu

Kununurra

Northern Territory

Halls Creek

Ringer Soak

• Halls Creek Healing Task Force Aboriginal Corporation
• Lundja Aboriginal Corporation
• Thalngarr Ngarriny Aboriginal Corporation
• Yarliyil Art Centre Aboriginal Corporation

• Kundat Djaru Aboriginal Corporation
• Tanami Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation
• Yaruman Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation

Mulan

• Lake Gregory Pastoral Aboriginal Corporation
• Mulan Aboriginal Corporation
• Pinanyi Store Aboriginal Corporation
• Tjurabalan Native Title Land Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
• Warruyanta Indigenous Corporation
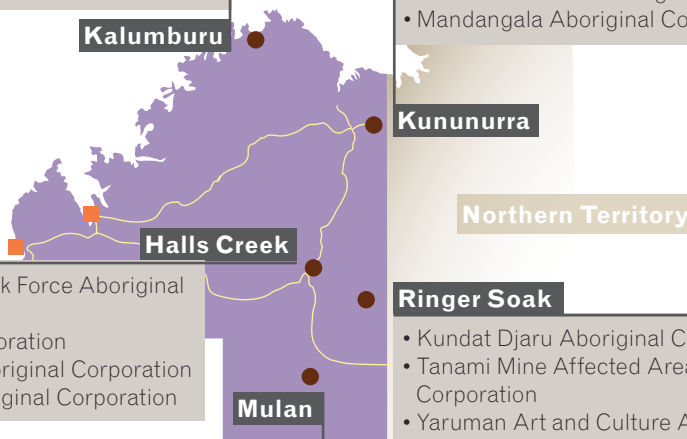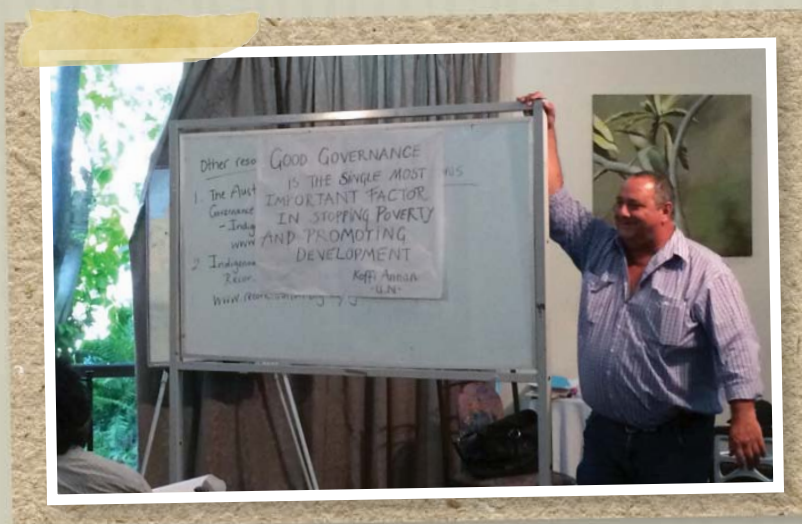
ORIC's Russell Styche delivering a CST workshop in Katherine, Northern Territory.

Partnerships

Over the year ORIC maintained training partnerships with:

⇨ State Government of Victoria

⇨ State Government of New South Wales

⇨ State Government of Western Australia

⇨ Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre (AILC).

Communications

The Registrar produces a variety of publications and resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations and groups.

Website

The Registrar's website, www.oric.gov.au, supports the regulatory framework of the CATSI Act. It includes the public Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations, the Register of Disqualified Officers and a link to a secure companion site that allows corporations to lodge reports electronically.

Efforts to improve the Registrar's website have continued over the year to ensure it is easy to use and meets Commonwealth standards for accessibility. Bearing in mind the remote locations of many corporations and their reliance on the website as a source of relevant and up-to-date information, this is particularly important. Over the year the Registrar added to the range of 'free services' offered online.

Skill meets need—new online service

More and more corporations are looking to appoint independent directors to their boards. This is especially true for those corporations that run a range of activities, generate a high income and have a strong asset base. Independent directors can bring specialist experience, knowledge and skills to a board.

The Registrar entered into a partnership with the Business Council of Australia to address the challenge of finding suitably qualified cadidates. The new online matching service, the Independent*director*y was developed to encourage direct engagement between corporations and potential candidates.

After several months in the planning and design stage, the service went into its final phase of production and testing in June 2015. It officially went live on 6 July 2015.

The Independent*director*y is a free online service that gives:

⇨ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations the chance to register their requirements for an independent director—for example, the particular skills they are seeking

⇨ individuals the chance to register their interest in becoming an independent director, and to upload their qualifications, experience and skills.

Both corporations and candidates can choose how much information about themselves they wish to make public and at any time can edit what they post. When a potential match is found both the corporation and the candidate is automatically alerted and invited to initiate contact.

Spotlight on

'Spotlight on' is a regular feature on the homepage of the ORIC website that promotes the activities and many achievements of corporations registered under the CATSI Act. On the first day of each month a new 'spotlight on' article is published. While the Registrar actively encourages corporations to send in their own stories ORIC staff also research and write stories.

July 2014

Returning to the homelands
Paupiyala Tjarutja Aboriginal Corporation

August 2014

Joining the dots
Mudth-Niyleta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation

September 2014

Keeping language alive
Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation

October 2014

Serving the community
Yulu-Burri-Ba Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health

November 2014

It's happening at Hodgson Downs
Alawa Aboriginal Corporation

December 2014

Townsville health service grows bigger and better
Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health Services

January 2015

30 years growth
Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation

February 2015

Traditional knowledge builds viable future
Olkola Aboriginal Corporation

March 2015

Flourishing future for remote tourism
Lirrwi Yolngu Tourism Aboriginal Corporation

April 2015

Paradise regained
Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

May 2015

Better services, better future
Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation

June 2015

Healthy food healthy families
Mai Wiru Regional Stores Council Aboriginal Corporation

Information and resources helping with compliance

The Registrar produces a range of guides, booklets and brochures to help corporations interpret the CATSI Act, comply with their reporting requirements and to understand their corporate governance obligations. Some examples:

⇨ *Get in on the Act* is a small booklet that provides a quick overview of the CATSI Act

⇨ the *Corporation reporting guide* is designed to help auditors and accountants prepare reports for corporations—updated during the year to include guidance on the recognition of unexpended grants in financial statements and to advise on who may audit a corporation's financial statements in line with changes to the CATSI Regulations

⇨ the *Healthy corporation checklist* is an online checklist (also available as a booklet) that allows corporations to check their compliance standards with their rule book and the law. It also contains useful templates and forms.

The Registrar also produces a range of **fact sheets** which are updated as required. They are designed to offer an introductory explanation to particular aspects of the CATSI Act and how to run a corporation. The range of titles includes:

⇨ *Amalgamation—information for existing corporations*

⇨ *Complaints involving corporations*

⇨ *Contact persons and secretaries*

⇨ *Corporation size and reporting*

⇨ *Dispute resolution*

⇨ *Disqualification from managing corporations under the CATSI Act*

⇨ *Duties of directors and other officers*

⇨ *Information sheet for PBCs*

⇨ *Lodge online*

⇨ *Meetings*

⇨ *Members' rights*

⇨ *Related party financial benefits*

⇨ *Special administrations: what funding agencies, creditors and employees should know*

⇨ *Special administrations: what members and directors should know*

⇨ *The CATSI Act and the Corporations Act—some differences*

⇨ *What the CATSI Act means for funding bodies*

⇨ *What's in the corporation's rule book?*

The Registrar strives to ensure that corporations have the right skills and knowledge to help them operate effectively and efficiently. During the year the Registrar identified a need to provide further practical information about managing corporation memberships. In response the following new titles were added to the fact sheet series:

⇨ *Becoming a corporation member* (May 2015)

⇨ *Registers of members and former members* (May 2015).
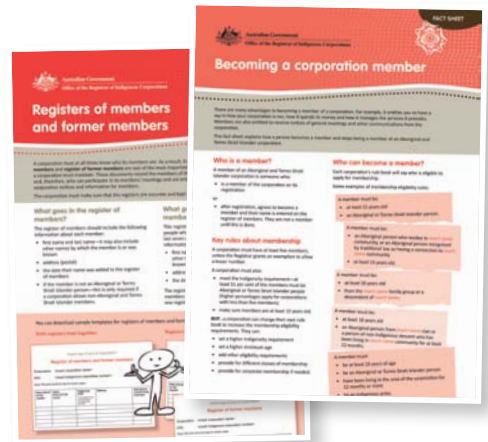
ORIC Oracle newsletter

The *ORIC Oracle* newsletter is published and sent to all corporations, stakeholders and subscribers four times a year (in August, November, February and May). It's distributed electronically or by post, as preferred.

Each edition adopts a different theme. Over 2014–15 the *ORIC Oracle* looked at 'independent directors' (August 2014), 'separation of roles' (November 2014), 'general meetings' (February 2015) and 'choosing your directors' (May 2015).

The main purpose of the newsletter is to communicate practical information to corporations (its target audience) in an easy to read and visually attractive manner. It also includes important reminders for key dates to hold meetings and lodge reports each year.

Over 2014–15 the number of subscribers increased slightly and more corporations chose to receive the newsletter by electronic means.

Both html and pdf versions of each edition are available at www.oric.gov.au under 'News'.

Case study: Exploring Alice Springs

In the first week of June 2015 two members from ORIC's Communications Section in Canberra went to Alice Springs. Their main purpose was to meet as many people as possible who either ran or were employed by corporations to learn first-hand about their activities.

The Registrar supports projects that help staff gain a better understanding of the reality of running Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations, particularly the challenges that many face. Improving staff awareness of these issues directly contributes to the development of better services. The visit was also a valuable opportunity to gather information, to take photographs and to celebrate corporation achievements. The Registrar is strongly committed to uncovering good news stories and making sure that they get the attention they deserve.

As at 30 June 2015, over 280 corporations have registered offices in the Alice Springs area, although the vast majority of their members live in communities outside the town.

With the assistance of the ORIC regional office staff (Dayna Lister and George Donaldson) a full five-day schedule was devised. Among the corporations and groups that generously gave their time to talk about their core business activities were:

⇨ Ingkerreke Outstations Resource Services Aboriginal Corporation

⇨ Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation

⇨ Ngurratjuta Iltja Ntjarra—Many Hands art centre

⇨ Amoonguna Health Service Aboriginal Corporation

⇨ Aboriginal Associations Management Centre (AAMC)—'Associations House'

⇨ Ngaanyatjarra Health Service (Aboriginal Corporation)

⇨ Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC).

Statistics and analysis

The Registrar compiles and distributes statistical information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations:

⇨ complaints involving corporations—issued six-monthly

⇨ corporations entering external administration—issued annually

⇨ top 500 corporations—issued annually.

All reports are available on www.oric.gov.au.

The top 500 report

The sixth report in the top 500 series, *The top 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations 2012–13,* was released in September 2014.

'Indigenous corporations have employed almost a thousand more people in the last year and the income of the top 500 corporations has grown by an impressive average of 10.5 per cent every year for the past nine years,' said the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion, in a media statement about the report.

Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation (ICN 1866) based in Broome, Western Australia, featured as the case study. It is one of 16 corporations in the top 500 that has improved its ranking (based on income) almost every financial year since 2007–08. It was once ranked at 96 but by the end of the 2012–13 financial year it had moved up to number 25.

Events

The Registrar and his staff also presented at various forums and events throughout the year.

Presentations at two key events in 2014–15 were:

⇨ 'The top 500 report' at the 2014 Indigenous Business, Enterprise and Corporations Conference in Perth, Western Australia

⇨ 'Independence in the boardroom' at the National Native Title Conference 2014–15 in Port Douglas, Queensland.

Native title conference

The Registrar attended the National Native Title Conference which this year was held in Port Douglas, Queensland, from 16 to 18 June 2015. The conference was co-convened by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Cape York Land Council (CYLC). The Kuku Yalanji people, who are the traditional owners of the Port Douglas region, were the hosts.

To fit with this year's overall theme 'leadership, legacy and opportunity', the Registrar spoke about 'independence in the boardroom', including:

⇨ the increased focus on board performance and accountability

⇨ the challenges for corporations to find directors with appropriate corporate or business skills

⇨ how corporations can leverage independence to strengthen governance, build capacity and improve board performance

⇨ the impending release of ORIC's online Independent*directory* service which matches qualified candidates (independent directors) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations.

The Registrar presenting at the National Native Title Conference 2015.