



# AUSTRALIA



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## PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

17 May 2006

## MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

**Statement by Dr Sue Gordon  
Australian Delegation**

(Check against delivery)

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Madame Chair, distinguished delegates, when seeking to assess the achievement of the millennium development goals (MDG's) for indigenous peoples the focus needs to be on those strategies which will work best to deliver justice and equality.

Some of those strategies discussed at this forum relate to the role of cultural diversity, traditional knowledge and human rights.

While there have been achievements in Australia during the last twenty to thirty years through the development of dedicated indigenous agencies and government programs, there are other elements additional to those of cultural diversity, traditional knowledge

and human rights that I would like to briefly discuss as important to overcoming indigenous disadvantage.

The first of these elements is to ensure that there is good governance at all levels, including in indigenous communities, indigenous community run organisations and in service delivery agencies.

Good governance is fundamental to the achievement of all eight MDG's:

- good governance ensures effective participation by all members of the community in decisions that affect them;
- good governance ensures that resources aimed at improving the lives of indigenous people are effectively and transparently expended to achieve their desired outcomes

The second of these elements is to ensure that addressing indigenous disadvantage is pursued at all levels of government and through all relevant programs. This is a matter of particular concern to the National Indigenous Council which I chair.

- Dedicated expenditure plays an important role, but it cannot be at the expense of marginalising indigenous people from access to other programs

I would reiterate that good governance is fundamental in order to ensure that indigenous people enjoy an environment in which they can exercise all their rights and responsibilities:

- For example:

- In well-governed communities efficient essential services such as power and water are guaranteed;
- Education is available and the community takes responsibility for maintaining those services, contributing financially for those services; and ensuring their children attend school.

Effective indigenous engagement in the design and delivery of services is clearly important, and that design and delivery must ensure that it does not diminish indigenous people's active engagement.

- Active engagement in turn demands good governance.

Madame Chairperson, I have sought to outline these elements, in the hope that Australia's experience in developing strategies crucial for overcoming indigenous disadvantage may be of some benefit to the discussions of the Permanent Forum in considering the realisation of the MDG's for indigenous peoples.