

09 September 2013



**NINTI  
ONE**

Fiona Ward

Director, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

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Dear Ms. Ward,

**Re: Aboriginal Regional Authorities – A regional approach to governance in South Australia-  
Consultation paper**

I thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Consultation Paper *Aboriginal Regional Authorities – A regional approach to governance in South Australia-*.

Ninti One is a not-for-profit, national company that builds opportunities for people in remote Australia through research, innovation and community development. Ninti One manages the research activities and partnerships of CRC for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP) and engages in other activities related to the community development and the delivery and commercialisation of research for the benefit of Australians living in remote areas. We have established a unique collaborative research platform that works with communities, governments, businesses and people in remote regions of Australia to systematically investigate and provide practical responses to the complex issues that drive economic participation.

Ninti One has a long track record in providing advice on matters concerning governance. Indeed, over the years, we have worked on numerous projects looking at how governance can be achieved in regional and remote Australia and bring positive change. We have strong expertise in participative research and have done substantial work around local decision-making in remote communities. We have also been involved in international initiatives such as 'Paraguay Working Together', which focus on decentralisation and regional approaches to improve the delivery of Government social services.

We believe the proposed Regional Authority approach offers Aboriginal people in South Australia a genuine opportunity to participate in decision making to determine the priorities and aspirations of community and partner with government in the design of services and programs. I note that that in developing your proposed Regional Authority model, you examined a number of key publications which look at the benefits of adopting a regional approach to governance. You may find useful to look at a report Ninti One produced for the Indigenous Implementation Board in Western Australia which discusses the development and implementation of regional governance models. I have

attached the report for your information, which can also be accessed through our website at <http://www.nintione.com.au/publication/dkcrc-0892>

The report looks at best practices in this area, recent studies on issues of governance, examples of regional authorities in Australia and overseas and the key ingredients of success of such models. It highlights amongst other things the critical need to strengthen capacity in a way that matches the ambition of the regional governance model, including suitable processes for building confidence, gaining access to specific skills and managing risks. It boils down to the need for people to be equipped with the skills and competencies required to work with and within a chosen governance model. We believe there are diverse ways to achieve stronger capacity of regional boards and staff including individual coaching and mentoring, formal training, specialist advisors and interpreters.

In the context of the testing and implementing the Regional Authority model, it would be useful for your Department to look at ways to assess the needs for governance mentoring and governance training at community levels and then develop appropriate programs with the view to assist the regional authorities to establish and put in practice strong governance arrangements. Ninti One has the expertise and experience through its community-based and participative research approach to evaluate current needs and then, design and deliver appropriate governance training and mentoring programs. We would be happy to discuss further with your Department how Ninti One can assist in this process.

Another critical observation made in the report mentioned above is the need for effective monitoring and evaluation processes. This is critical because it enables performance against strategic and operational objectives to be measured, contributes to accountability and is a key element of engagement with people living in the region. Our work and international case studies demonstrate that the use of action research leads to the establishment of effective monitoring and evaluation processes. I strongly recommend the South Australia Government considers this approach to design a monitoring and evaluation process to support the future regional authorities.

I believe it would be beneficial for your Department to also look at some current international initiatives in Asia and Latin America as they present similarities with the regional authority model and may provide some useful insights to assist with issues of resourcing, implementing, monitoring such initiative.

Should you require further information or further discuss the points raised above, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0401 719 882 or by email [jan.ferguson@nintione.com.au](mailto:jan.ferguson@nintione.com.au)

Yours Sincerely,

JAN FERGUSON

MANAGING DIRECTOR

