

Information and resources

To help new groups starting corporations under the CATSI Act and to support existing clients, the Registrar produces a variety of helpful publications and resources.

Website

The first stop for most clients is the Registrar's website www.oric.gov.au. It's the face of ORIC.

There are a number of resources and services available on the ORIC website designed to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations and groups, and to provide a free platform for sharing information and good news stories.

At its most fundamental level, the website is a central repository supporting the regulatory framework of the CATSI Act. It contains a wealth of information and houses essential tools, such as 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 and forms electronically.

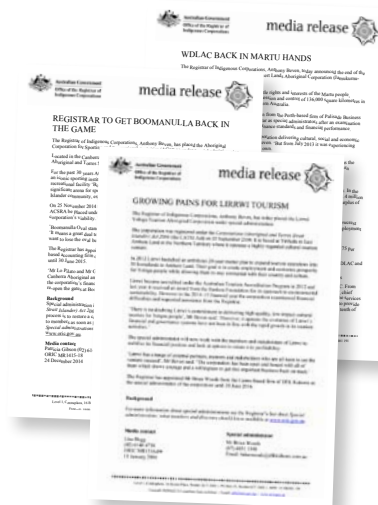
Over 2015–16 every effort was made to improve the visual appeal and easy use of the website in keeping with Commonwealth standards for accessibility. As most corporations, particularly those in remote locations, rely on ORIC's website for up-to-date information and resources, maintaining the website to a high standard was a priority.

This year the Registrar added to the range of 'free services' accessible through the ORIC website, the *Independent directory*. This new online service, devised by the Registrar's office, puts corporations in touch with qualified independent candidates to serve on their boards. The service went live on 6 July 2015 and was officially launched on 21 October 2015 (see pages 51 and 68).

Media releases

The Registrar's practice is to issue regular media releases on significant developments or events affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations. These media releases are sent to journalists, stakeholders and interested parties.

Over 2015–16 the Registrar issued 25 media releases which are available on the ORIC website.



The *Independent directory* which encourages direct engagement between corporations and potential candidates.

Fact sheets

The Registrar also produces a range of popular fact sheets which are updated as required. Each gives a quick overview of a particular topic but shouldn't be regarded as a substitute for legal advice. Clients who are after more detail are advised to look at the CATSI Act or consult a lawyer. Current titles are:

- Amalgamation—information for existing corporations
- A corporation's rule book: what you need to know (updated October 2015)
- Becoming a corporation member
- Complaints involving corporations
- Contact person and secretaries
- Corporation size and reporting
- Dispute resolution
- Disqualification from managing corporations under the CATSI Act (updated October 2015)
- Duties of directors and other officers
- Information sheet for PBCs
- Lodge online
- Meetings for directors (new title published June 2016)
- Minutes of meetings (new title published June 2016)
- Meetings for members (new title published June 2016)
- Members' rights
- Register of members and former members
- Related party financial benefits (updated March 2016)
- Special administrations: what funding agencies, creditors and employees should know (updated June 2016)
- Special administrations: what members and directors should know (updated June 2016)
- The CATSI Act and the Corporations Act—some differences (updated May 2016)
- What the CATSI Act means for funding bodies

In the Registrar's effort to ensure that corporations have the right skills and knowledge to operate effectively and efficiently, three new fact sheets were produced during the year and six existing fact sheets were updated, as indicated above.



Spotlight on

Over the years 'spotlight on' has become a familiar colourful feature on the Registrar's homepage. Its purpose is to draw attention to the various activities and achievements of corporations registered under the CATSI Act. A new 'spotlight on' is published on the first working day of each month. While the Registrar actively encourages corporations to send in their own ideas and stories, ORIC staff also assist with writing articles and gathering photographs.



July 2015

Weaving grass into gold
Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation



August 2015

Driving on
Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation



September 2015

More than a helping hand
Aboriginal Associations Management Centre



October 2015

Looking back to go forward
Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages



November 2015

Practical help puts lives back on track
Nguumambiny Indigenous Corporation



December 2015

Where accreditation is due
Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service Aboriginal Corporation



January 2016

Commercially engaged

Ingkerreke Commercial Pty Ltd (a division of Ingkerreke Outstations Resources Services Aboriginal Corporation)



February 2016

Living legacy in watercolours

Ngurratjuta Iltja Ntjarra—Many Hands art centre (operated by Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation)



March 2016

Switch from grid to solar

Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Corporation



April 2016

Innovative natural resource management

Arafura Swamp Rangers Aboriginal Corporation



May 2016

The Sunrise Way

Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation



June 2016

Minimbah school back better than ever

Minimbah Pre-school, Primary School Aboriginal Corporation

ORIC Oracle newsletter

The *ORIC Oracle* newsletter is for all registered corporations, stakeholders and interested people (general subscribers).

It's published four times a year (in August, November, February and May), and is distributed both electronically and by post, as preferred by recipients.

Each edition adopts a different theme. Over 2015–16 these were: 'Does your rule book need a spring clean?' (August 2015), 'Complaints and how to manage them' (November 2015), 'Independent directors: can add a skill set' (February 2016) and 'Selecting senior staff' (May 2016).

The *ORIC Oracle* newsletter communicates practical information to corporations (its target audience) in a pictorially attractive, easy-to-read magazine style. It also includes important compliance prompts, such as reminding corporations about key dates to hold their annual general meetings and to lodge their annual general reports.

Over 2015–16 the number of subscribers rose slightly and a few more corporations chose to receive the *ORIC Oracle* by electronic means.

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

Statistics and analysis

One of the Registrar's core activities is the regular compilation and distribution of statistical information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations—for example:

- 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 seventh report in the top 500 series, *The top 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations 2013–14*, was released in December 2015.

Like its predecessors, the seventh top 500 report collates and compares data provided by corporations as part of their annual reporting.

Key findings were:

- The combined income of the top 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations for 2013–14 was \$1.74 billion (compared to \$1.71 billion in 2012–13, an increase of 1.9 per cent—behind nominal growth in GDP of 2.5 per cent in 2013–14).
- The average annual growth rate of corporation income over the last decade was 9.5 per cent.
- In comparison to 2012–13 the average income of the top 500 corporations in 2013–14 increased from \$3.42 million to \$3.48 million.

The featured case study was Ingkerreke Outstations Resource Services Aboriginal Corporation, based in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. This corporation looks after 50 outstations and homelands across central Australia, providing housing, and municipal and essential services. In 2004 it set up Ingkerreke Commercial mainly to make money. The aim was to generate an income in order to allow for better services to be provided for the people on the homelands. It was a bold idea but one that worked. Today Ingkerreke Commercial is a well-established construction, metal fabrication and maintenance enterprise offering training and employment opportunities to local Aboriginal men and women. This corporation is one of 201 in the top 500 that improved its ranking (based on income) in 2013–14.





Professor Marcia Langton AM and Mr Russell Taylor, keynote speakers at the inaugural conference. Photo courtesy of Simon Fox, Deakin University.



ORIC's Christian Lugnan with panel member Ellery Blackman. Photo courtesy of Simon Fox, Deakin University.

Events

The Registrar and his staff also presented at various forums and events throughout the year, most notably:

- Indigenous Accounting and Business Conference at the RACV City Club in Melbourne on 2–3 September 2015
- Independent*directory* launch at the EY Centre in Sydney on 21 October 2015
- NSW Prescribed Body Corporate and Traditional Owner corporation workshop on 22 May 2016
- National Native Title Conference at the Darwin Convention Centre on 1–3 June 2016

Indigenous Accounting and Business Conference

On 2–3 September 2015 the Deakin Business School held the inaugural Indigenous Accounting and Business Conference in Melbourne. The theme was 'accounting as a tool of empowerment for Indigenous success' and its purpose was to encourage accountancy as a first choice profession. The number of trained accountants among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has always been low due to historical, cultural and social barriers.

There were a number of keynote speakers, including Professor Marcia Langton, one of Australia's leading Aboriginal scholars and Foundation Chair in Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, and Russell Taylor, Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

ORIC regional manager and certified practising accountant (CPA), Christian Lugnan, also addressed the conference. Christian spoke about his own personal experience as an Aboriginal man with extensive experience in accountancy and business.

'The conference was a fantastic opportunity to meet with like-minded people who have an interest in accounting and want to see more people get involved,' said Christian. 'It was a great opportunity to discuss ways to increase access and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a level of interest in the profession and want to take the next step.'

Over 100 delegates attended, including many Indigenous people or their representatives from New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

Official launch of the Independent *directory*

The Independent *directory* is the result of a joint initiative between the Registrar and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) to boost the governance and effectiveness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations (see page 51).

The Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, officially launched the new service with Michael Rose, Managing Partner, Allens and Chairman of the BCA Indigenous Engagement Taskforce. The function was held at the EY Centre in Sydney on 21 October 2015 and was well attended by representatives from corporations, individuals currently serving as independent directors, stakeholders in the Indigenous sector, and many representatives from BCA member companies looking to support their staff take on independent director roles.

In collaboration with the BCA, the Registrar's office devised the online matching system which allows corporations looking for suitably qualified independent directors to connect with possible candidates.



Uncle Chicka Dixon performed the welcome to country.



The official launch of the Independent *directory* was held at the EY Centre in Sydney on 21 October 2015.



After introductions Donna Ah Chee, Bernie Yates, Graham Paterson and Bill Gray AM spoke about their experiences as an independent director and a CEO reporting to an independent director.



The Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, officially launched the Independent *directory*, which is a response to the need for corporations to have a simple way to find suitably qualified independent directors to serve on their boards.



Senior managers from EY discuss the directory with the Registrar. 'Independent directors can bring a range of benefits to corporations, such as filling a specific skills gap on a board, helping to build capacity, developing stronger external relationships, and assisting in matters where other directors may be conflicted,' said the Registrar.

NSW Prescribed Body Corporate and Traditional Owner corporation workshop

In May 2016 the Registrar was invited by NTSCORP to present at the NSW Prescribed Body Corporation and Traditional Owner Corporation Workshop held in Tweed Heads, NSW.

Held over two days, the workshop was very well attended by corporation directors. The workshop focused on governance training, corporate administration procedures, management of native title benefits, compliance with the CATSI Act, financial administration and structuring entities.

The Registrar provided a range of statistical information about the native title sector gathered through corporation reports to ORIC.

National Native Title Conference

The Registrar attended the annual National Native Title Conference which this year was held at the Darwin Convention Centre on 1–3 June 2016. The theme was 'strong culture, strong country, strong future'.

The conference was co-convened by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Northern Land Council (NLC). The hosts were the Larrakia people, Darwin's traditional owners.

Building on last year's presentation (independence in the boardroom) the Registrar spoke about the importance of linking skilled people from the private sector with corporations looking for suitably qualified independent directors, not only to improve their governance standards but also to drive innovation and to help harness business opportunities.

Following his address the Registrar turned to a panel of four currently serving independent directors who he had invited to accompany him on the stage. As well as taking questions from the audience they discussed their first-hand experiences. Questions ranged from skills needed for the role, benefits for corporations, and lessons learnt on the way. The session was positively received by everyone who came.

By regularly attending the native title conference the Registrar capitalises on sharing information and also benefits from the networking opportunities that the event affords.



The Registrar addressing the native title conference at the Darwin Convention Centre backed by a panel of current independent directors, comprising (left to right) Bernie Yates, Graham Paterson, Rick Callaghan and Priscilla Collins.