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## Chapter 1: Background

Australian governments established the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision (the Review) to provide information on the effectiveness and efficiency of Commonwealth, State and Territory government services (see box 1.1).

Services covered by the Review include:

- Education;
- Health;
- Justice;
- Emergency management;
- Community services; and
- Housing.

The Review is overseen by a Steering Committee of senior officials from central agencies in all jurisdictions. The Steering Committee has overall responsibility for the work of the Review, including its annual publication, the *Report on Government Services*. The work involved in assembling the data and performance indicators is conducted by Working Groups for each of the service areas. These comprise officials from relevant agencies, with a convenor drawn from the Steering Committee.

### Indigenous reporting

In May 1997, the Prime Minister asked the Steering Committee for the Review to give particular attention to the performance of mainstream services in meeting the needs of Indigenous Australians. This was reinforced by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) at its 3 November 2000 meeting, where heads of government agreed that ministerial councils will develop action plans, performance reporting strategies and benchmarks to facilitate review of the progress made in this area.

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**Box 1.1 Terms of reference for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision**

The Review, to be conducted by a joint Commonwealth/State and Territory government working party, is to undertake the following:

- establish the collection and publication of data that will enable ongoing comparisons of the efficiency and effectiveness of Commonwealth and State government services, including intra-government services. This will involve:
  - establishing performance indicators for different services which would assist comparisons of efficiency and effectiveness. The measures should, to the maximum extent possible, focus on the cost effectiveness of service delivery, as distinct from policy considerations that determine the quality and level of services; and
  - collecting and publishing data that are consistent with these measures. The Review should also address the procedures for the ongoing collection and publication of benchmark data; and
- compile and assess service provision reforms that have been implemented or are under consideration by Commonwealth and State Governments.

The Review will cover all major types of reform, including those involving the separation of policy development from service provision. Case studies of particular reforms could be provided where appropriate.

The Review will need to keep abreast of developments in other relevant reviews and working parties, including the Commonwealth/State Government working party (initiated by the Council of Australian Governments), investigating Commonwealth/State government roles and responsibilities.

*Source:* Report on Government Services (ROGS), 2003, p. XXI

## **COAG report on key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage**

In April 2002, COAG commissioned the Steering Committee for the Review to prepare a regular report on key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage as part of the COAG reconciliation commitment. This will be a new report, separate from the *Report on Government Services*.

The Steering Committee for the Review established a working group to develop and advise it on the Indigenous report, comprised of senior officials from each jurisdiction, as well as representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Australian Local Government Association, the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA), the

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The Steering Committee for the Review released a draft framework in October 2002 for consultations with stakeholders, including Indigenous people and their representative organisations. The draft consultation framework was largely based on an earlier framework developed by MCATSIA. After considering suggestions made during the consultation process, the Steering Committee will seek endorsement of the framework by COAG. It is envisaged that the first report will be released in October 2003.

During the consultations on the draft framework, it emerged that it would be useful to bring together the data already reported in the *Report on Government Services* in a single body of work. This compendium is a response to this suggestion.