**0125**

## Evaluating shared responsibility agreements: Whose responsibility?

R Norris

*Griffith University, Brisbane, Qld, Australia*

The main vehicle for current federal government Indigenous policy in Australia is the 'Shared Responsibility Agreement'. These agreements enable communities to obtain government funding for specific projects which provide specified benefits to the community. At the same time the community is required to provide something in return. A much cited example is the 'no school – no pool' agreement, whereby children will only be allowed to use a public swimming pool if they have attended school. The aim is to improve school attendance. Another example is the provision of a petrol pump to a community provided the children's faces are regularly washed. In this case the aim is to reduce the prevalence of trachoma and other eye diseases.

Much discussion has ensued about the type of agreements entered and their long-term value for communities. In particular questions have been raised about how the success of these agreements will be evaluated. However one crucial question is rarely asked: how will the government, the other partner in each agreement, be evaluated. Already there have been complaints that government has not fulfilled its side of the agreement in a timely way, though expecting the Indigenous community to fulfil its side of the agreement irrespective of this delay. An examination of history shows that this is not a new pattern.

This paper evaluates some previous initiatives where governments and Indigenous communities have reached agreement on programs. The analysis will focus on the extent to which governments have abided by their side of the agreement in particular in relation to timeliness and adequacy of provision of funds and other support and the degree to which governments have acted to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the selected initiatives. From this analysis, some suggestions are made regarding how the government side could be evaluated in relation to SRAs.