

IGNITE - AES 2018

by Dr Kevin J Dolman

Evaluative study to assist a transformation of the Australian Indigenous affairs system



**A ten-year review:
the Closing the
Gap Strategy and
Recommendations
for Reset**

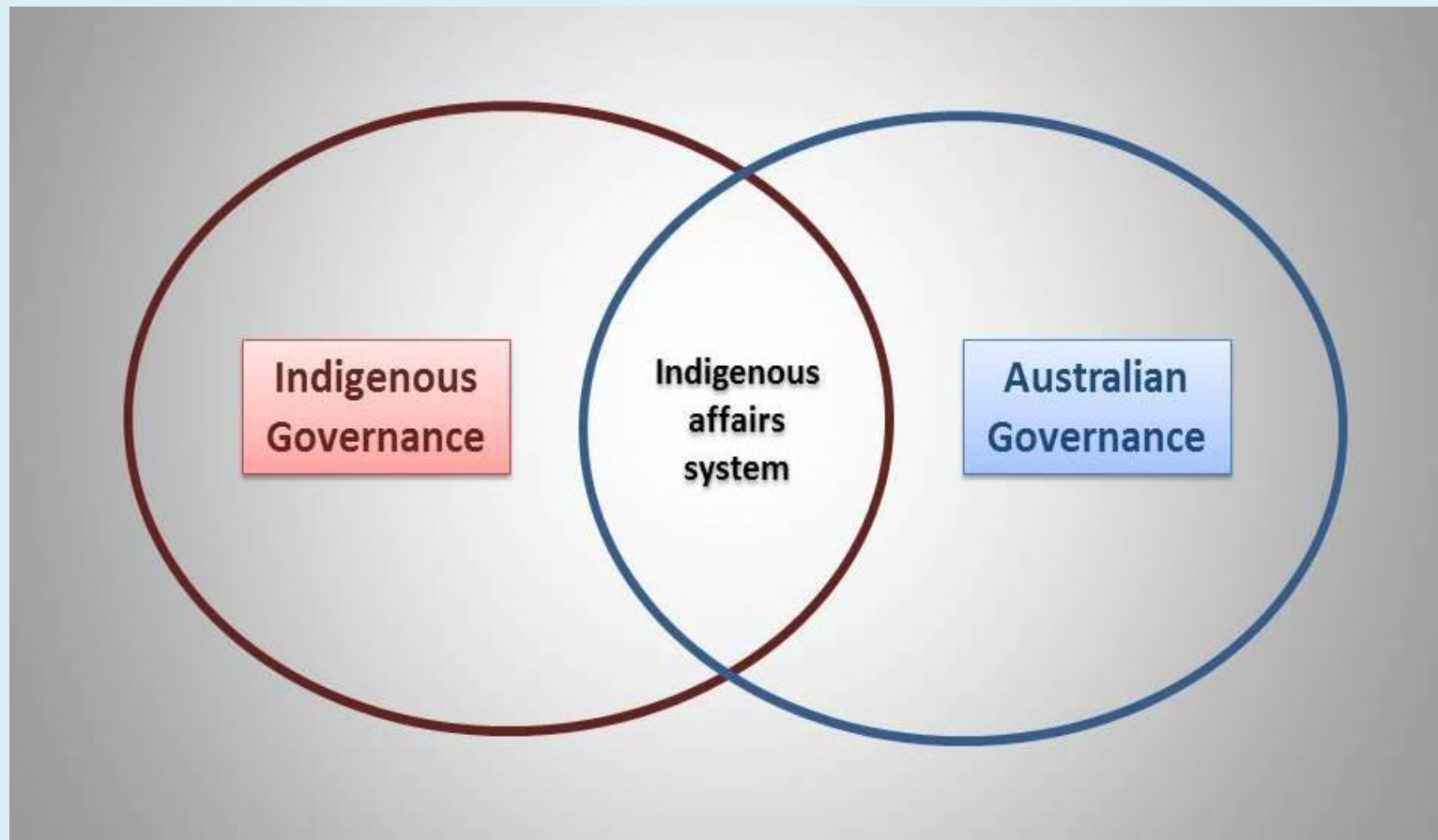
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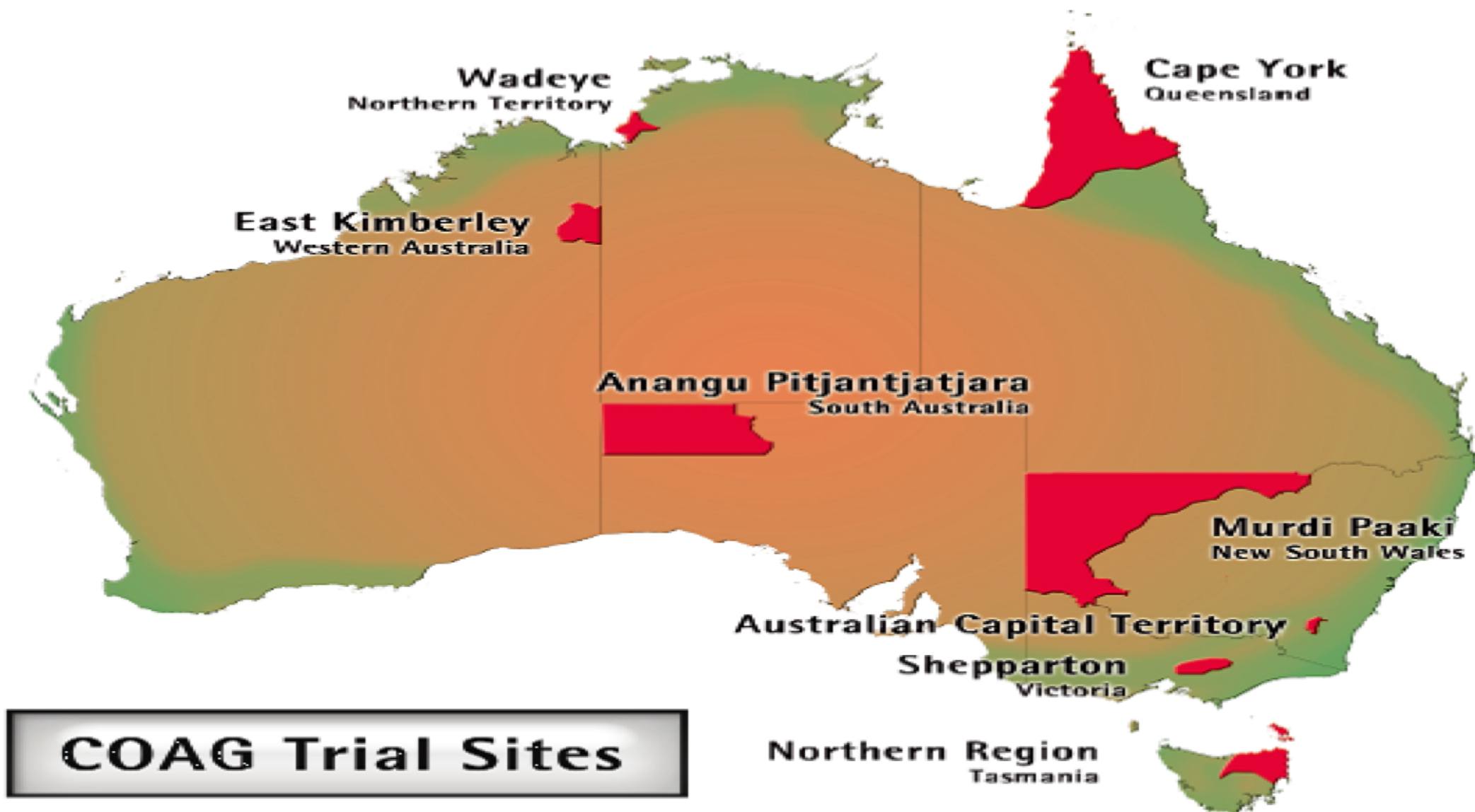


CLOSETHEGAP



The Indigenous affairs system is an overlap of two governance systems

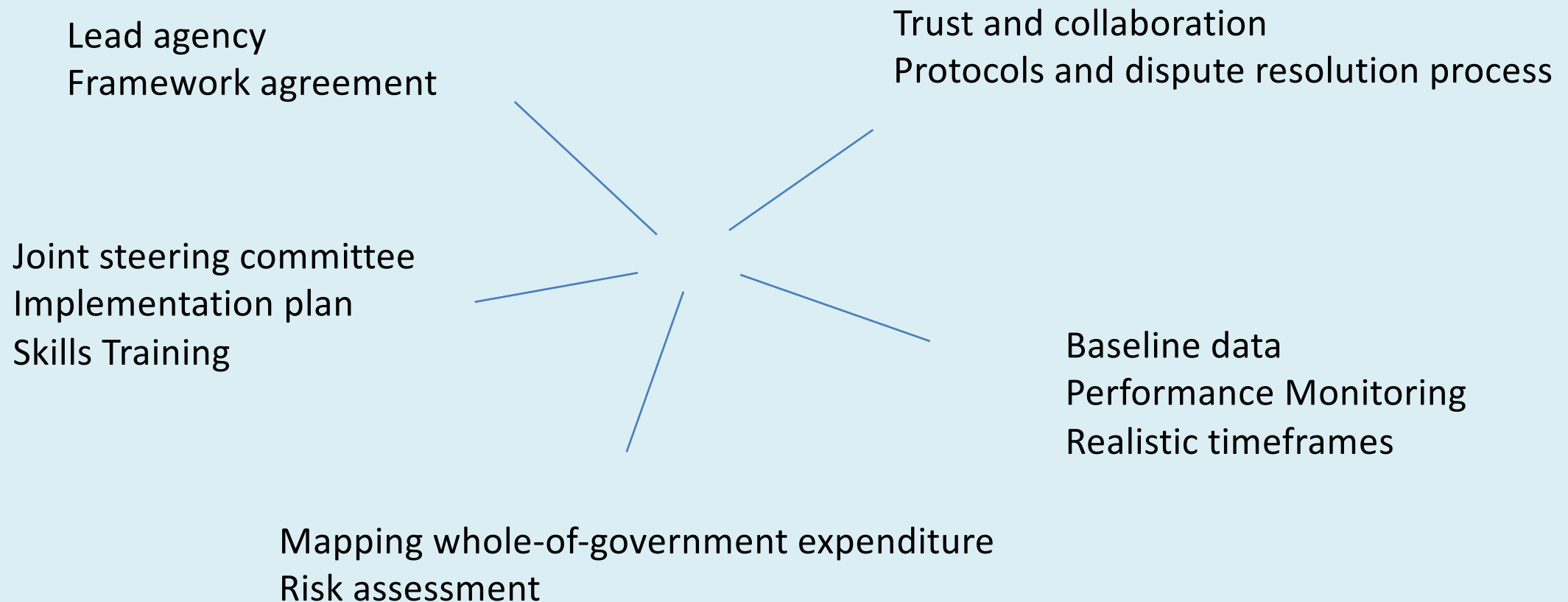




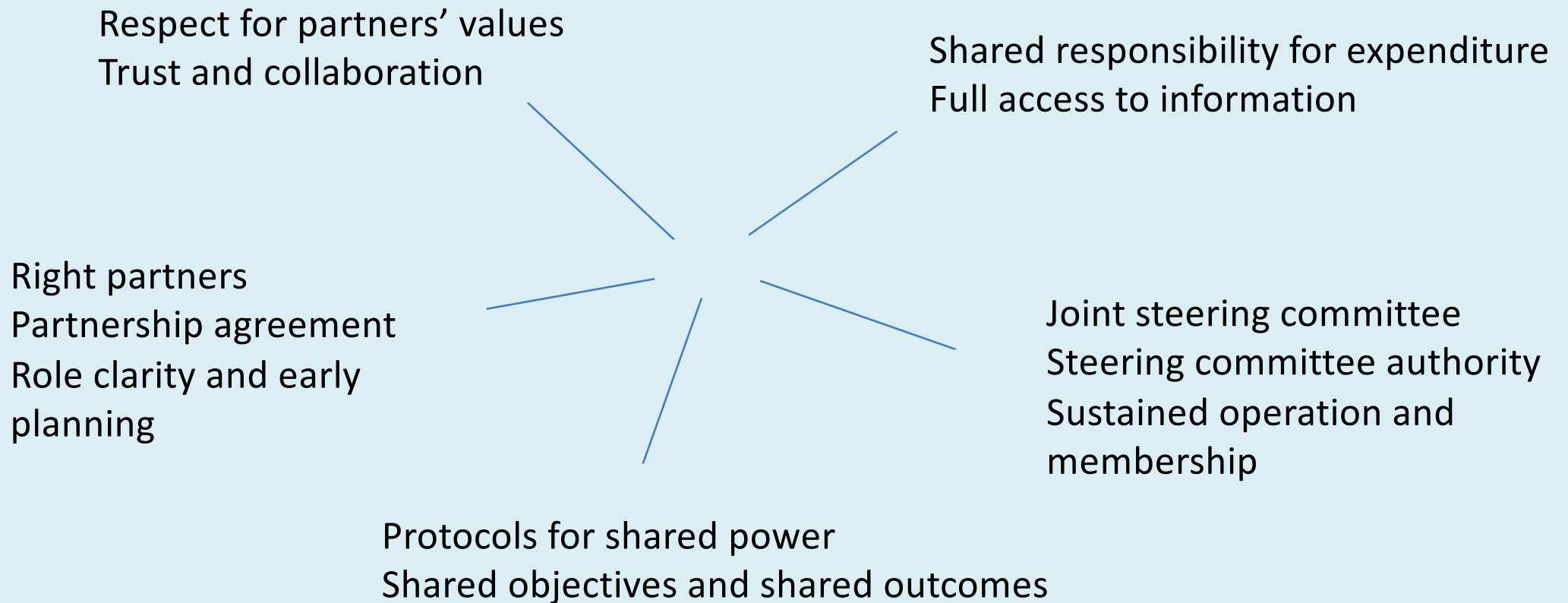
Two key aims to improve the quality of public administration

1. Whole-of-government coordination
2. Government and community partnerships

12 key characteristics of Whole-of-Government Coordination (WOGC)



12 key characteristics of Government-Community Partnerships (GCP)



Quality of implementation – Best sites

Northern Territory	WOGC	P	S	S	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
	GCP	S	G	P	P	S	S	P	S	S	P	P	P

Victoria	WOGC	S	S	P	S	P	P	S	P	P	P	P	P
	GCP	S	G	S	P	P	P	P	P	P	S	P	P

Good	Satisfactory	Poor
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Quality of implementation – Worst sites

South Australia	WOGC	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
	GCP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

Queensland	WOGC	P	P	S	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
	GCP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

Tasmania	WOGC	S	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
	GCP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

Good	Satisfactory	Poor
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Quality of implementation- Summary table

[illegible]

Government's official conclusion

“The trials have helped build important relationships between government agencies and communities. However, too much bureaucracy, too many plans and too many committees have often resulted in limited outcomes.”

[Hon M Brough, 22 February 2007]

Quality of the policy development

The Australian Policy Cycle

Althaus, Bridgman and Davis (2013)



Quality of the Evaluation

- Of each trial site

Primarily descriptive accounts rather than evaluative and explanatory

Lack of focus on whether the aims were achieved

Quality in Qualitative Evaluations: A framework for assessing research evidence

Spencer et al 2003

Quality of the Evaluation (cont)

- **Of the overall evaluation strategy**

Good evaluative framework for project initially but it was discarded

Substitute evaluative framework directed focus away from original aims

Wider inferences for Transformation

Poor quality public administration is a systemic feature of the Indigenous affairs system

A plausible explanation for the long-term ineffectiveness of the Indigenous affairs system

Whole-of-Government Coordination and Government-Community Partnerships should be front and centre of the reforms

Underlying reasons for poor quality

Structural and cultural administrative barriers to wholistic government coordination and community participation in government

Some ideological obstruction and political manoeuvring in public policy

Underlying reasons (cont)

Institutional configuration not designed for purpose

Institutional configuration born out of the 1967 Referendum

Vague shared responsibility between Commonwealth and States

Potential reforms



Cartoonist's depiction of the Government decision to abolish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 2004

Potential reforms (cont)

Two possible national strategies emerging:

Need to **ensure best practice public administration** through some type of specialised policy commission

Need to pay some attention to the systemic design of the Indigenous affairs system to ensure that it has a purpose-specific configuration.