



Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Programme (AACAP)

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Serving our Nation

Background

Members of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation met with the then Prime Minister on 23 October 1996 to raise concerns about the poor primary health of Indigenous Australians. As a consequence, the former Ministers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Defence and the then Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) met with the then Prime Minister on 5 November 1996 and agreed that the Army would assist with infrastructure improvements in a number of communities, identified by the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) for priority assistance.

Senator John Herron, the former Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, announced the initiative known as the ATSIC Army Community Assistance Programme (AACAP) on 14 November 1996. In response to this, ATSIC, Army and DHFS formed a partnership to assist in the delivery of housing and infrastructure capital works to a number of remote Indigenous communities. Around \$11.7 million was expended for the first round of projects over three years.

An initial evaluation of AACAP was completed in 1999. The evaluation found that AACAP had been an effective partnership between ATSIC, Army and the then Department of Health and Aged Care (Health), and that it delivered quality projects and additional benefits to communities and Army. As a result, the Government announced the continuation of AACAP in the 1999 Budget with a \$40 million commitment over three years. A second evaluation of AACAP was completed in 2003 and found that the programme continued to deliver benefits to Indigenous communities.

In recognition, the Federal Government allocated \$20 million for another three years through the 2005 Budget initiative, *Addressing Indigenous Housing Needs – Health Indigenous Housing Continuation*, to fund the programme until 2009.

As a result of the machinery of Government changes, the administration of Indigenous Affairs programmes and responsibility for the Community Housing and Infrastructure Programme (CHIP) were transferred to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) on 1 July 2004.

The National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) formed part of this programme of which AACAP was an element. AACAP was taken over by CHIP and was also brought across under this change. In the past, AACAP objectives were consistent with those of the NAHS Programme. Currently AACAP objectives are aligned with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) targets in line with the 'Closing the Gap' strategy and the National Partnerships Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

In April 2009, the Federal Government agreed to continue AACAP for four years (from July 2009 until 30 June 2013) with an increased funding of \$6 million per year. This funding was allocated through the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Appropriation. The programme scope of AACAP was broadened to include health, training, housing and education initiatives, consistent with the COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

In July 2012, the Federal Government agreed to continue AACAP for a further four years (from July 2014 to 30 June 2018), to a total of \$21 million. Further Machinery of Government changes in December 2013 moved responsibility for Indigenous Affairs programmes and policy to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). As a result, the administration of the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Appropriation and responsibility for the policy and funding of AACAP moved to PM&C.

For more information about AACAP visit <http://www.army.gov.au/Our-people/Army-Indigenous-community/Army-Indigenous-initiatives>.