

# Fab Abs

## Recent Research Abstracts

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### INDIGENOUS POLICY

McCausland, R and Levy, M. (2006). Indigenous Policy and Mutual Obligation: Shared or Shifting Responsibility Agreements? *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, (Spring 2006) 41 (3), 277-294.

Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs), 121 of which had been announced as at 30 June 2006, are a key instrument of the Australian Government's new arrangements for the administration of Indigenous affairs. SRAs require Indigenous communities to commit to behavioural changes or other actions in order to access 'discretionary funding' for infrastructure or services. In this article, the authors contend that despite the language of mutuality, flexibility and choice, the approach could more aptly be characterised as representing a subtle shifting of responsibility from Government to the Indigenous communities themselves. Furthermore, those communities with the greatest capacity to negotiate and with proposals and processes most suited to the Government's framework, rather than the communities with the greatest need, are more likely to receive funding. The article explores the concepts of mutual obligation and reciprocity and the structural biases that favour the state and its agencies in the SRA negotiation process. Finally, the authors, in acknowledging that SRAs can be a means for Indigenous communities to access greater funding, suggest various strategies and measures to make the SRA framework more equitable.

Poroch, N. (2006). Welfare reform and Indigenous empowerment. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol 1, 3-11.

Recent Indigenous welfare reform has included Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs) for Indigenous communities, the restructuring of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme, and the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). The author contends that these reforms tend to categorise Indigenous Australians as marginal, non-institutionalised and illegitimate political minorities. She also argues that the Government has muted the Indigenous voice from a perspective of blaming the victim, as opposed to looking at the issue from the viewpoint of inequality in the distribution of power and resources. It is argued that the push to 'mainstream' Indigenous policy is in direct contrast to the United States and Canada where the degree of self-government that Indigenous nations exercise determines the change in rates of disadvantage.

Cheers, B; Binell, M; Coleman, H; Gentle, I; Miller, G; Taylor, J; Weetra, C. (2006). Family violence: An Australian Indigenous community tells its story. *International Social Work*, 49 (1), 51-63.

This article attempts to understand family violence through a study of an Indigenous community in Australia. The authors argue that analysing the social issues experienced by Indigenous Australians from the perspective of colonisation, oppression and dispossession is necessary for sound social policy. The study was commissioned in 2001 by Weena Mooga Gu Gudba Inc., an Indigenous women's organisation in Ceduna, SA. At least two of the research team, including at least one Aborigine, conducted each interview and focus group discussion. Most interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, with detailed notes being taken of the others, the workshop and the forums. Participants experienced family violence as incorporating and embedded in many forms of violence. The study found that forms of violence include physical, emotional and material violence towards women and children.