MAJOR GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE FOR PORT AUGUSTA

The State Government has announced a major new approach to governance in Port Augusta in response to the Lew Owens report, which reviewed service delivery in the region.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Grace Portolesi says that under the new governance model the three tiers of Government – State, Commonwealth and Local - will, for the first time, sit around the same table with the community on an ongoing basis to drive service delivery.

“Until now, the Port Augusta community has been frustrated by a merry-go-round of service providers and this is failing to close the gap of Aboriginal disadvantage,” she said.

“Lew Owens told us that money was not the problem; there are some great programs and services in Port Augusta. What he did find was that services delivered by the three levels of government need to be coordinated. Essentially, we need to get our act together.

“Mr Owens other key recommendation was that the Aboriginal community must have a voice in determining priorities. The services need to be accessible and they need to be just what is needed.

“The new model of governance will directly tackle these structural concerns with the very clear coordination of services across the three tiers of Government, with direct input from the Aboriginal community.

“I’m very pleased to announce the appointment of two Community Advocates* for the Port Augusta Initiative, Mr Paul Case, who has worked at senior levels of Government and Ms Kerry Colbung, a respected Aboriginal community leader.

“They will work in a voluntary capacity to independently check on progress of the initiative and hold us all accountable.”

Other key aspects of the initiative include:

- A forum for Aboriginal Community representation. At a workshop held in Port Augusta earlier this week, 21 members of the community from families across the region agreed to become the community representatives of the forum.

- A central project group to drive the initiative. This will comprise existing officers from the Port Augusta City Council, State and Commonwealth Governments;
• A high level Steering Committee to manage the project and work to clear any blockages in local services. This will comprise representatives of the three tiers of Government and the Aboriginal community;
• A Local Action Agreement and Plan. This will consolidate community-agreed priorities within the national 'Closing the Gap' framework and identify specific actions to address areas of concern.

Minister Portolesi visited Port Augusta earlier this week to meet with Mayor Joy Baluch about the initiative and to open the workshop with the Aboriginal community.

“Our most important partner in this work is the Port Augusta community, with this new initiative requiring them to be clear about their priorities,” she said.

“In line with this, it’s vital that the Aboriginal community shape and have ownership of how they take part in the governance and decision-making arrangements,” she said.

The Port Augusta Initiative will form part of the Urban and Regional Strategy, a plan between the Commonwealth and South Australia to Close the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage.

The Northern Adelaide region is the second pilot community for which tailored strategies are also being developed, in conjunction with the local Aboriginal community.

* Background on the two Advocates appointed:

• **Mr Paul Case** is well known to many people in the community. He is an experienced negotiator, having previously held senior positions within the State Government, including as Chief Executive of the Olympic Dam Task Force and as a Public Service Commissioner.

• **Ms Kerry Colbung** is currently a member of the Social Inclusion Board and the Director of the Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service. Ms Colbung was former Director of the SA Aboriginal Sports Training Academy and has held senior positions with Commonwealth and State Government Departments, so she knows a lot about the people who will be doing this work in Port Augusta.