Transcript of excerpts from *Iti witiwiti Aboriginal Liaison Officer* video

Excerpt 1

**Eleanor Bourke:** The Department of Social Security has a network of Aboriginal Liaison Officers working throughout Australia. They are supported by a unit in each mainland capital. These Aboriginal Liaison Units are headed by a senior person called an Aboriginal Coordinator. In Canberra, in the department’s central office, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit links the work of Aboriginal Liaison Officers with management and policy aspects of the department. This film is about Andrew Thomas, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Port Augusta. It shows an Aboriginal Liaison Officer’s work over 3 days.

Excerpt 2

**Andrew:** With this job, more and more people are coming to know me as ‘the bloke from Social Security’. People sometimes just say they are coming to see Andrew, they don’t mention Social Security at all.

Excerpt 3

**Andrew:** Between Womikata and Port Augusta is a community called Bangala. I had to talk to a client there, a young single woman, who needed to give more information about a claim for Unemployment Benefits. Her family follows many of the traditional ways, so I couldn’t talk to her directly. Instead, I addressed questions through her mother and she replied through her mother. On the way back to the office, I did a quick calculation. I had completed work on 3 jobs, made progress on 2, and collected 2 more to follow up.

**[conversing with coworkers]** I wonder if you could get this file for me? …

**[on the phone]** Good morning Mr Thomas … Yes

Can you come into the office and maybe lodge that appeal … Okay, thanks very much.

**[talking to a colleague]** Oh, Dennis. I was just on the phone with somebody who’s been rejected for a pension.

**Dennis:** Yeah, what, rejected on medical grounds?

**Andrew:** Yeah on medical grounds. So, maybe if we could sit and have a chat, about, I think you know the person [name redacted].

He’s a got a – you know, he’s a tribal person and the doctor … I don’t think he really understands what … he can’t speak English properly, and plus he doesn’t understand what the doctor’s talking about.

**Dennis:** Well, it would have to be a medical appeal… I would have to arrange another medical for him. Probably, it’s gonna be best if you take someone along. Take an interpreter?

**Andrew:** I was thinking of packing it in for the day when Tim Aguis arrived.

**[conversing with Tim]** Not bad, what about yourself? Where’ve you been?

**Tim Aguis:** Ah, just come from Port Lincoln.

**Andrew:** Tim is one of the department’s most experienced Aboriginal Liaison Officers, dropped in on his way back from Port Lincoln.

Excerpt 4

**Andrew:** I’ve been given a lot of support by the people of the department. We have a really great staff in Port Augusta. From the time I arrived, they’ve given me a lot of support and helped me out with work problems. They’ve really made me feel at home. They say I’ve helped them too, both in dealing with Aboriginal clients, and in helping them understand the needs, the cultures, and in some cases, the languages of Aboriginal people.

I find my job as Aboriginal Liaison Officer for Social Security very interesting, challenging and satisfying. I like the people I work with, both inside and outside the office. I have a big area to cover, from Whyalla in the west to Leigh Creek, Coober Pedy, and Oodnadatta up in the north.