



**Productivity Commission
Draft Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
Comments**

August 2020

About the NHLF

The National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF) was established in 2011. The NHLF is a collective partnership of 13 national organisations who represent a united voice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing with expertise across service delivery, workforce, research, healing and mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.

The NHLF was instrumental in the formation of the Close the Gap Campaign and continues to lead the Campaign as the senior collective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leadership. Committed to achieving health equality, we draw strength from cultural integrity, the evidence base and community.

The NHLF provides advice and direction to the Australian Government on the development and implementation of informed policy and program objectives that contribute to improved and equitable health and life outcomes, and the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Health is a noted human right, it is an underpinning to everyday life, and key factor in economic (and environmental) sustainability. Our vision is for the Australian health system to be free of racism and inequality and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to health services that are effective, high quality, appropriate and affordable.

The NHLF Membership

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation
- Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
- Australian Indigenous Psychologists' Association
- Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia
- Indigenous Dentists' Association of Australia
- The Lowitja Institute
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers' Association
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physiotherapists
- Torres Strait Regional Authority

Introduction

The NHLF formally supports the Productivity Commission for establishing the role of Indigenous Policy Evaluation Commissioner. This role is critical to establishing the true investment and benefit of Australian Government funding to and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The NHLF welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Productivity Commission's Draft Indigenous Evaluation Strategy and accompanying Guide.

In summary the NHLF supports the work of the Productivity Commission to develop an agency wide Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

Comments

The NHLF reaffirms its supports for an agency wide evaluation model for Commonwealth expenditure. The Indigenous Evaluation Strategy and supporting documents answers this call as it provides a comprehensive system of evaluation across all government agencies on all policy and programs that purport to delivery to or have an impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is essential. A genuine approach to evaluations will provide the Australian public with an accurate presentation of expenditure and its efficacy in future Indigenous Expenditure Reports and enhance public accountability of government expenditure.

Genuine evaluation can only inform future policy and program development and benefit local communities. We especially affirm the need for Indigenous evaluation approaches to be placed over evaluations as articulated in the underpinning principle of centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, perspectives, priorities and knoweldges into the process. This principle aligns with the intent of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan.

The NHLF supports the proposal for an oversighting role of the IES across Commonwealth agencies, however it is not fixed on the OIEP/CIE structure, but rather whatever the structural form, it must be Indigenous led. Assessing the impact of expenditure on people is central to policy design and program implementation and to understand impact, monitoring and evaluation must be embedded in the policy cycle to ensure a continuous quality improvement process. Agencies must be held accountable, and for evaluation findings to be used to improve services and outcomes.

We call upon the Australian Government to make the implementation and adherence of the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy mandatory across all government agencies. The NHLF acknowledges that for this to occur agencies will require investment and support to develop their technical and cultural skills and capability, which is in addition to having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved throughout the process. We believe that this type of investment will bring better results and outcomes in the future, which are likely to create savings in the long term.

Finally, the NHLF member organisations each have unique and specific experience and views regarding an evaluation strategy and some organisations will provide submissions directly to the Commission to cover their viewpoint.