



WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH
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Mr Romlie Mokak
Productivity Commissioner
Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East
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Dear Commissioner Mokak

INDIGENOUS EVALUATION STRATEGY

The Productivity Commission is to be congratulated for its decision to seek to develop an evaluation strategy for Australian Government policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal community controlled organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples directly involved in working with Aboriginal people are confronted on a regular if not daily basis with the lack of progress in addressing the poor outcomes being achieved across the board by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The annual Closing the Gap reports confirm the lack of progress in improving outcomes in a range of areas included within the Closing the Gap framework.

I note that the evaluation strategy you propose to develop is for Australian Government policies and programs. As an Aboriginal community controlled organisation based in Canberra many of the government policies and programs directly affecting the local Aboriginal community are, of course, either funded or administered by the ACT Government. The issues raised by the Commission in its Issues Paper are, nevertheless, as relevant to State and Territory policies and programs as to those of the Commonwealth and I would hope that the evaluation strategy you are developing is able to be adopted by the ACT Government.

While I agree fully that the work you are proposing to do in developing an evaluation strategy is of fundamental importance in ensuring the policies and programs in place and relied on by governments seeking to address Indigenous disadvantage are appropriate and effective there are two threshold issues that should be considered in tandem and I urge you to seek to address these in developing the strategy.

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These are that Aboriginal community involvement in policy and program design is assured and that implementation is vested to the greatest degree possible in Aboriginal community controlled and led. It is my experience and observation in the ACT that the distressingly poor outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT in areas such as child protection and contact with the justice system, including imprisonment, which are the worst in Australia, are in some measure a consequence of a lack of Aboriginal community involvement or a formal role, either of these areas.

Aboriginal community involvement and control over the development of Indigenous specific policies and programs is similarly of central importance to their success. Again there are a range of issues of central importance to the well-being of the Aboriginal community of Canberra in relation to which there is no Indigenous specific policy. There is not, for example, in Canberra an Indigenous housing policy; an Indigenous justice centre or policy; an Indigenous specific drug and alcohol policy or rehabilitation facility; an Indigenous child care and protection policy or Aboriginal community involvement with child protection.

As a consequence of the gap in appropriate Indigenous specific policies in the ACT evaluation is rendered more difficult.

I believe it is important, therefore, that you take these issues into account. I believe for example that it would be appropriate for you to consider what mechanisms should be put in place in cases where the Commonwealth provides funding to a State or Territory to implement a particular Indigenous policy or program to ensure that the relevant State or Territory Government has a policy in place that was developed in concert with the Aboriginal community and that an Aboriginal community controlled organisation is engaged to implement or manage the particular program.

I look forward to being kept informed of progress with the development of the evaluation strategy and would be pleased to assist the Commission in any way that I am able.

Yours sincerely

Julie Tongs OAM
Chief Executive Officer

23 August 2019