



CLOSE THE GAP

Indigenous Evaluation Strategy Submission to the Productivity Commission

August 2020

The Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee (the Campaign)¹ welcomes the opportunity to provide a further submission to the Productivity Commission’s Draft Indigenous Evaluation Strategy (IES). The Campaign comprises 52 of Australia's peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health bodies, NGOs and human rights organisations and are working together to achieve equality in health and life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Close the Gap Campaign is led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and the National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF) and we put forward the following points for consideration;

- (1) The Campaign fully endorses the submission of the NHLF to this process.
- (2) The Background Paper to the draft IES states that;

“The evidence also shows that what works is engagement through partnerships within a framework of self-determination and strategies that address power inequalities and genuine efforts to share power (Hunt 2013).”

Of note is that the multiple references to self-determination and the power imbalances between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the background paper are not reflected clearly, or at all, in the draft IES.

We note that placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people “at the centre” is a priority throughout the draft and we expect that this will eventuate in genuine partnerships and shared decision making that would contribute to addressing power imbalances.

- (3) The Campaign welcomes “an evaluation culture”, and if functional, the structures suggested, including an Office of Indigenous Policy Evaluation (OIEP) and Indigenous Evaluation Council (IEC). Less layers of administration and cost are

¹ Appendix 1 list of current members of the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee as of August 2020

preferred and the proposal in the background paper to establish a third body, a Centre for Evaluation Excellence perhaps could come at the beginning rather than the end of the process of creating an “evaluation culture”.

- (4) The cross-system priorities of “*racism, discrimination and social inclusion, healing and trauma, and the promotion of culture and language for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*” were not prioritised over the past 12 years of Closing the Gap policy. These along with the four priority reforms as outlined in the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap require adequate resourcing if real progress on the new targets are to be achieved. Evaluation of these four reforms and the cross-system priorities above is necessary. Further, identification of, and the commitment of adequate resources required to reach all targets is imperative.
- (5) We agree with the draft that “*Evaluations that do not provide useful results are a waste of resources.*”. Further, useful results that are not used or incorporated into a process of continuous process and quality improvement and embedded into a policy cycle are an additional waste of resources and undermine confidence in the entire process of evaluation. We support the view in the draft that evaluations should be embedded in the policy cycle and recommend that the evaluation costs are separated from the funding required to run programs.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this vital work on behalf of the Close the Gap Campaign.

June Oscar AO

Co-Chair, Close the Gap Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality; and Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice.

Karl Briscoe

Co-Chair, Close the Gap Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality; and CEO of NATSIHWA

Appendix 1 – Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee Members

1. Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of New South Wales
2. Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association
3. Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
4. Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
5. Australian College of Midwives
6. Australian College of Nursing
7. Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
8. Australian Human Rights Commission
9. Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
10. Australian Indigenous Psychologists' Association
11. Australian Medical Association
12. Australian Physiotherapy Association
13. Australian Student and Novice Nurse Association
14. Beyond Blue
15. Community Mental Health Australia
16. Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
17. CRANaplus
18. Expert Adviser – Alcohol and Other Drugs, Professor Pat Dudgeon
19. Expert Adviser – Epidemiology and Public Health, Professor Ian Ring
20. First Peoples Disability Network
21. Heart Foundation Australia
22. Indigenous Allied Health Australia
23. Indigenous Dentists' Association of Australia
24. Indigenous Eye Health Unit, University of Melbourne
25. Kidney Health Australia
26. Menzies School of Health Research
27. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers' Association
28. National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
29. National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physiotherapists

30. National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
31. National Coordinator: Tackling Indigenous Smoking - Dr Tom Calma AO, Campaign founder and former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner
32. National Rural Health Alliance
33. NSW Aboriginal Land Council
34. Oxfam Australia
35. Palliative Care Australia
36. PHILE Network
37. Public Health Association of Australia
38. Reconciliation Australia
39. Royal Australasian College of Physicians
40. Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
41. SBS, National Indigenous Television (NITV)
42. The Fred Hollows Foundation
43. The Healing Foundation
44. The Lowitja Institute
45. The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
46. Torres Strait Regional Authority
47. Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
48. Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and Community Services
49. Family Violence Prevention Legal Services
50. Cancer Council of Australia
51. Australian College of Emergency Medicine
52. Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)