

Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Draft Report



Aerial photo of Walgett - where the Ngamaay (Namoi River) joins the Baawan (Barwon-Darling River).

**Submission from Dharriwaa Elders Group
Walgett 6 October 2023**

We thank you for the opportunity to contribute information to the Draft Report and provide our perspective and experience as a long-standing Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation in Walgett, NSW. We see this as a critically important opportunity to have our voices heard at on the Commonwealth and NSW State Governments' implementation and delivery of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group ("DEG") is an Aboriginal cultural organisation which works to support Elders wellbeing, protect Aboriginal cultural heritage and knowledge and promote Aboriginal cultural values. The organisation also works for community development and promoting relationships between Aboriginal Elders and other generations of the Walgett Aboriginal community.

DEG works closely with the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS) and other organisations in Walgett to improve wellbeing and outcomes for Aboriginal people in Walgett.

Walgett is a remote town in north-west NSW. It has a large, mostly young, Aboriginal population and is a geographically diverse place with three Aboriginal language groups. The DEG has a close knowledge of the Walgett Aboriginal community; it is in touch via its directors, members and staff with community in the town of Walgett and the nearby Gingie and Namoi villages who can identify what works and what doesn't work for them.

Since 2016, DEG has been working in a community-led partnership with UNSW, Yuwaya Ngarra-li, the goals of which are:

1. Greater Aboriginal community control and capacity
2. Increased numbers of Aboriginal young people in education, training, and employment
3. Reduced numbers of Aboriginal people in contact with the criminal justice system
4. Improved social determinants of health and wellbeing amongst Aboriginal people
5. Increased sustainable management of water and country
6. Redirection of funding towards strengths-based, holistic, community-led initiatives

We refer you to our list of publications produced with UNSW and other colleagues that are of relevance to this submission: <https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/index.php/reports>

In particular, we wish to draw your attention to:

[Yuwaya Ngarra-li Policy Paper: Creating better futures with contracts](#) (2022)

A long running concern of the DEG around the ability to advance effective community control and capacity, has been frustrations with government approaches to contracting and an inability to access data about what is being spent in Walgett, on which priorities. A consistent demand at community meetings is to know about the contracts and grants coming into Walgett, so that community can understand what services are meant to be available, and can track if they are being delivered and suppliers have fulfilled their contractual obligations. Past approaches to access information have included searching government websites and reports, engaging with Ministers, bureaucrats of multiple government agencies, the NSW Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs), and local agencies. Despite many years of searching, this has resulted in little to no access to useful data.

We are not seeing that change in meaningful ways in Walgett, despite concerted efforts and engagement with multiple government agencies over many years. We have identified recommendations to improve government contract information at a state and federal level that we would like to draw your attention to outlined in our [Yuwaya Ngarra-li Policy Paper: Creating better futures with contracts](#).

Responses to your information requests and draft recommendations

Below we provide our responses to your requests for further information on specific questions from our perspective as an ACCO in Walgett and through our Yuwaya Ngarra-li Partnership:

Information request 1: Effectiveness of policy partnerships

Peta MacGillivray is a member of our Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership team and a long-term collaborator of the Dharriwaa Elders Group. Peta is an independent representative on the Justice Policy Partnership (the JPP) and has been involved since its commencement in 2021. The benefit Peta describes in being involved in both the Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership and the JPP, is being able to see the local priorities and place-based needs on the ground, the systemic issues from the level of the JPP, and the role of governments in each. This 'bottom to top' perspective provides insights shared at each level, particularly as we try to advocate for community-driven approaches for both service provision on the ground, and systemic changes that will achieve meaningful and effective relationships with government where they are critical partners. Resourcing of independent representatives such as Peta to consult and report back to community stakeholders would be highly useful, especially where we can capacity-build our community stakeholders to participate in such mechanisms in an ongoing way.

Information request 2: Shifting service delivery to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs)

Governments at the Federal and state level have recognised that traditional Government-led approaches haven't worked to meaningfully Close the Gap and deliver positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Both governments have pointed to the need for ["genuine partnership with First Nations people for better outcomes"](#) or that the approach ["needs to be done hand-in-hand with Aboriginal communities, who know best what changes need to be made to help communities thrive"](#).

To allow Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to take the lead, be appropriately resourced, and be able to deliver the better outcomes for their communities, things need to be done differently. This requires new avenues of funding and fundamental changes in government contracting practices, information sharing, data access and quality, and the creation of information systems designed to meet community needs.

In our paper on [Yuwaya Ngarra-li Policy Paper: Creating better futures with contracts](#), we identified that shifting government practice to align with commitments to greater community control, place-based and shared decision-making needs to include:

1. Recognition of the authority and role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in facilitating community-led and grounded work being matched by long-term and adequate resourcing and infrastructure for this role.
2. Enabling ACCOs to lead meaningful engagement with communities to design and lead policy, program, and service decision making and delivery, ensuring genuine and ongoing respectful relationships.
3. Instead of contracting short term fly-in, fly-out consultants to do consultation or design, government should be investing in ACCOs to lead this important work at a community level or supporting local leadership groups to create holistic place-based plans and this work to be adequately resourced.
4. Redesign of government contracting processes in line with social procurement and Closing the Gap priorities so that local organisations can contribute meaningfully to developing community-led approaches to a range of areas such as water management, waste management, youth justice, education and training, health, and wellbeing.
5. A real commitment and demonstration of respect for Indigenous data sovereignty and the right of communities to access and contribute to data about them and their community. This should include access to useable information that connects data about government plans and priorities, budgets, contracts and grants, spending and results, including evaluations. This can be done with safeguards for privacy and anonymity.

6. Ensuring communities receive feedback, opportunities to respond and validate as well as access to information from any government consultations, engagement, and research, particularly where community members have contributed.

7. Providing one repository of government reports including consultations, research, submissions, and evaluation by place.

8. Making sure that government staff have skills and capability to engage in respectful and ongoing relationship with ACCOs.

The Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS) and its daughter organisation Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) are Walgett's current and enduring Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) of 37 years and 23 years standing respectively. They are incorporated non-profit businesses with their own constitutions, local members and local directors. Their Walgett Aboriginal founders established these non-profit services to further the wellbeing of the Walgett Aboriginal community and today they are the content experts in their domains for Walgett. They have the attributes needed to work with their community to determine community priorities and lead projects that build community wellbeing and capability. They are the enduring service providers in Walgett because they were established by locals and share the knowledge, experience and cultural values of the families they serve. They are the economic drivers and champions of Walgett community and know the needs of their community better than anyone.

Walgett ACCOs have developed their own supports and networks which are now the Coalition of Peak Organisations (CAPO) that work closely with the NSW and Commonwealth governments to Close the Gap.

Right now, Walgett ACCOs are time-poor and workforce-thin. They are resourceful and accountable to preserve and steward their hard-won resources. They are also very advanced and reformist compared to most in their operating environment. Walgett ACCOs have the vision for a better future and have developed solutions that require them to advocate for change often amid defensive responses from local stakeholders who operate in workplaces where innovation is feared, little professional development is available, and most are comfortable to continue current work patterns that support systemic conditions that do not deliver satisfactory outcomes for the community.

This gap of content knowledge and approach between the Walgett ACCOs and other services and agencies preserves the status quo including the consistent lack of respect shown by government to ACCOs in Walgett. Policy and decision makers considering Walgett must be informed by Walgett ACCOs, otherwise they ignore the key assets of the Walgett Aboriginal community and risk duplicating rare and valuable investments made in our work.

In its Yuwaya Ngarrali partnership DEG is working to document and contribute to the wider evidence base its locally-developed models of service delivery¹ and the ingredients it has identified to support its capability in order to take on great government investment in Walgett service delivery². It is working with WAMS on food and water security initiatives, and in a collaboration with WAMS and the Aboriginal Legal Service to design and then implement a new Walgett service for the wellbeing of children and young people. It has forged a relationship with a large national NGO based in Walgett to consider the practicalities of changing government procurement of services away from the national NGO model currently relied upon, and has designed new programs to support children and young people and their families (Two River Pathways to Change), and reduce Walgett fines debt (Dealing with Fines program). Most of this work is being done with philanthropic support in order to demonstrate new options for

¹ One example in the field of Aged Care is *Caring for Elders, Community and Culture: A study of the potential impact of changes to the funding of home care on the aged care services provided by Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG)*, by Dr Bob Davidson for the Yuwaya Ngarrali partnership of Dharriwaa Elders Group with University of NSW, June 2022.
https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/Caring_for_Elders_Community_and_Culture_Briefing_Paper.pdf

² A forthcoming Yuwaya Ngarrali Policy Paper: *Design for an ACCO Capability Supports Unit*

service delivery in Walgett by ACCOs. DEG and Yuwaya Ngarrali would be pleased to brief the Commission on our work as it develops.

Information request 3: Transformation of government organisations

At the State government level, we continue to see traditional government approaches to working with communities, such as creating more positions in government departments to achieve greater engagement with Aboriginal communities as if this alone is the cause of government failure to achieve improved outcomes. It appears the primary aim of this approach is stakeholder engagement by government. However, this does nothing to address the structural and systemic changes that are needed to make or improve government accountability to communities.

Taking the example of water policy and management, the new Labor Government in NSW has rushed to create more positions in departments managing water, with a focus on Aboriginal-identified positions to 'speed-up' engagement outcomes. The Dharriwaa Elders Group has invested considerable resources into setting ourselves up a key stakeholder and thought leader in the Northern Murray Darling Basin, and therefore new staff in these agencies want to engage with the DEG. However, these new staff do not have the long-term water policy or ecological knowledge DEG has, nor the relationships and power in government needed to effect change – yet they have been tasked with progressing the new government's priority to engage Aboriginal communities. DEG now has an extra layer of government relations to educate, manage and penetrate to progress DEG's water priorities. Meanwhile, the relevant Minister's Office lacks the staff with the requisite skills, knowledge and experience of the water management and resources sector, nor has experience in how to work with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations in portfolios which are not located in Aboriginal Affairs.

Information request 4: Indigenous data sovereignty and Priority Reform 4

What are the substantive differences between the way Priority Reform 4 is currently described in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and an explicit reference to Indigenous data sovereignty as the objective of Priority Reform 4?

Under Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Australian governments agreed to "share available, disaggregated regional data and information with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities on Closing the Gap, subject to meeting privacy requirements" (Closing the Gap, 2020, clause 72.a, p.14). Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) is about the rights of Indigenous Peoples to control their own data, from what data are collected through to access, data management, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of findings and the reuse of data (Walter & Carrol, 2020; Walter et al, 2018). Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) is about how IDS is put into practice, to ensure that data collection, access and usage reflect the priorities, values, culture, lifeworlds and diversity of Indigenous peoples (Walter et al, 2018).

If the Agreement had Indigenous data sovereignty as the explicit objective of Priority Reform 4, what would governments have to do differently compared to what they have already committed to?

If IDS were the explicit objective of Priority Reform 4 there would be an obligation for governments to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples control of data about their own communities. Currently there is a misunderstanding within government regarding the difference between data custodianship and data ownership. Data custodians are responsible for managing data, but custodianship is not synonymous with ownership (NSW Government, June 2013, p.5).

Recommendation: We contend that data collected by government agencies belongs to the people represented by the data, it does not belong to the government. This should be made explicit in Priority Reform 4 to shift the power imbalance and hold government responsible for making data accessible, meaningful and useful to the communities to whom it belongs.

Information request 5: Legislative and policy change to support Priority Reform 4

What, if any, legislative or policy barriers are preventing governments from sharing data with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, or giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people more control over how data about them is governed?

The agreement under Priority Reform 4 to share data, in theory, enables Aboriginal communities to access data about their own community and use it for their own purposes. However, in practice it is very difficult for Aboriginal community organisations to access data at the community level. For our community in Walgett, for example, data are often only available at the LGA or SA2 levels, which have a larger population size and include areas such as Lightning Ridge that are not representative of our community. Even where data are technically available access is also very difficult to obtain as data custodians have different application processes which are complex and resource intensive.

A barrier to ACCOs having or receiving more control over how their data is governed is their current resourcing, knowledge and skills re data collection, management and analysis.

What changes are needed to overcome these barriers, and what would be the costs and benefits of these changes?

Data that are already publicly available should be accessible at community levels (for example by postcode or suburb) and not constrained by population size. Ways of protecting privacy already exist; the ABS Census and Revenue NSW fines dashboards are available at postcode levels and small counts are adjusted or omitted to protect privacy.

Recommendation: All data held by government should be able to be disaggregated and shared at a local level, to reflect what is happening within communities.

Partnerships between ACCOs and Universities, such as the Yuwaya Ngarra-li community-led partnership between DEG and UNSW, provide even greater opportunities for data sharing, including de-identified linked unit record data to enable holistic community-led research and evaluation. Community-led research protocols, ethics agreements, secure data storage, restricting access to approved investigators, and only publishing aggregated outputs are established mechanisms that already exist to ensure that privacy is maintained. However, the different governance and application processes between data custodians renders this process extremely inefficient.

Recommendation: Streamlining the application process across agencies would be a major improvement in removing barriers to data access.

Giving control of data to communities will require communities being resourced over long term to develop their own data governance and protocols and practical data management processes. ACCOs will need resourcing for staff, ongoing training and professional development. Government agencies will need to be resourced to interact with ACCOs and implement innovation and recommendations received from ACCOs to colleagues in government departments. This interaction must not be the normal “engagement” practiced currently, but serious collaboration to achieve agreed outcomes.

Recommendation: Resource ACCO data capability and effective interaction with state and Commonwealth data custodians.

The benefits of removing barriers to data access would far outweigh the negligible costs/risks which can be managed as explained above. Communities have a wealth of local knowledge that governments do not have. Communities know their own priorities and the specific issues and context relevant to appropriate collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Access to government data enables ACCOs to ask questions of the data that are meaningful to the community (within the limits of the data and informed by community knowledge). The data can be used to build evidence, develop deeper understanding and insights at the community level, inform locally-led responses to issues that are a priority to the community, and in doing so achieve better outcomes for the community (and as a consequence cost savings to government).

Information request 6: Characteristics of the organisation to lead data development under the Agreement

Priority Reform 4 requires the most collaboration between government and non-government actors to deliver outcomes, due to the knowledge and technical expertise that currently exists outside of government on how to use government data differently or more innovated way, for example, based on the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and administrative data-linkage projects. However, not all non-government expertise on data for evidence-based solutions understands how to be accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in this data work. For instance, much of the research and consultation practices we see from academic and research consultants used by governments is based on methodologies which are not ACCO-led but are based in traditional 'drive-in drive out' methods of information collecting. A new data organisation therefore would need to be Indigenous-led in its entirety (to demonstrate long-term commitment to communities' self-determination) or be established as a joint decision-making organisation between governments and peak Community-Controlled Organisations.

Furthermore, although Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) has become a popular turn of phrase, there is very little engagement in or understanding of what it is, especially by long established researchers and practitioners that governments are influenced or led by, and even by governments themselves. For example, IDS is often used to describe long-used methods of consultation with Aboriginal Communities on matters of research or data collection by government agencies, as opposed to the framework of principles to shift practices away from 'insights' based in deficit narratives of Aboriginal communities, and towards Indigenous-led solutions based in self-determination.

Recommendations:

The scope of any data capacity and capability unit should be clear and focused on developing opportunities, processes, and mechanisms to educate governments on their own roles and responsibilities as data custodians.

It should not be too ambitious or over claim what can be achieved through making data available to communities, and therefore have a clear priority on increasing data literacy for all stakeholders, government, and non-government.

The unit's work should be transparent and have clear deliverables to community-controlled organisations to ensure the capacity in the ACCO sector is invested in properly, to shift power from governments and lay the ground for equal negotiations on matters of data access.

The leadership of the unit should understand the long-term nature of this work, be pragmatic, and have resilience in working in a quickly changing but frustrating environment that is largely still government-led due to a lack of resources at a community sector level.

Information request 7: Performance reporting tools – dashboard and annual data compilation report

How well do the dashboard and ADCR meet the needs of their intended audiences?

Lessons from our Yuwaya Ngarra-li work includes the foundational need for disaggregation of publicly available data to render it useful and achieve accountability at the community level. For instance, data by location needs to be as fine as possible to reflect the community's identity (by postcode or suburb if not limited to LGA) and subgroups therein where feasible (such as age, gender). While we have minimal experience using dashboards created under CTG implementation and monitoring, we do have experience using dashboards created by Revenue NSW which we have utilised for our Dealing with Fines program of work.

To understand the level of fine debt in Walgett and the impact of the work of the Dealing with Fines team, Yuwaya Ngarra-li's Research and Evaluation team used Revenue NSW dashboards to obtain and analyse data about fines issued to people in the Walgett postcode area (2832). Through analysis of

Revenue NSW data on overdue fines in Walgett from the dashboards, we were able to see the number and value of fines issued has gone up and down over time but was higher in 2021/22 (995 fines issued) than in any of the previous four years, and the number of fines issued increased again to 1,069 in 2022/23. We found that the total value of fines issued in 2021/22 was \$483,577, more than double the already large amount of \$230,206 worth of fines issued in 2020/21 in a small community.

In 2023, the Yuwaya Ngarra-li WDO (Work and Development Order) program is helping people in Walgett to pay off their fines, with our team able to monitor our progress through the data analysis made possible through the dashboards. In the 2022/23 financial year:

- WDO participation is greater than the previous three years, with 39 people participating
- \$57,230 of fine debt has been cleared through WDOs, far exceeding the previous three years
- While the total overdue fine burden in Walgett still exceeds \$1 million dollars, it has reduced compared to the previous year by more than \$40,000
- The proportion of fines being paid off through Centrelink deductions has fallen.

Information request 8: Quality of implementation plans and annual reports

Through our Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership, since 2018 we have been attempting to work with and hold accountable relevant NSW government and non-government agencies that have responsibility for children and young people related policy and services. This includes the Department of Education, Youth Justice, NSW Police, Mission Australia, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Youth Justice NSW. During this time, we have not had any of these agencies communicate or deliver any whole-of-government or agency-specific plans to deliver on the Closing the Gap Agreement.

In 2023, through the Walgett Holistic Working Group, a mechanism the DEG established to communicate and problem-solve locally with government stakeholders on our priorities for children and young people, we requested information from Youth Justice NSW and DCJ NSW manager-level representatives' information relating to the implementation of the Closing the Gap Agreement in their agency. The representatives were not able to tell us anything about their CTG requirements or accountabilities and were not even aware that the NSW government was a signatory to the Agreement.

Information request 9: Independent mechanism in the broader landscape

An independent mechanism must be able to achieve the whole-of-government monitoring solution while also being responsive to diverse models of representation (Community Working Parties) and types of community leadership (ACCOs and Land Councils) and at all jurisdictional levels (local, state and federally). This is where we identify the need for multiple 'modes' of Indigenous participation, for instance, an elected representative that demonstrates capacity to advocate at a national level through an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, and the role of Community Working Parties and ACCOs in identifying community priorities and community-led solutions to systemic problems until greater structural reform is achieved. An independent mechanism must be focussed on bringing long-term consistency and oversight through process, coordination and accountability to Commonwealth and State activity in policy and service portfolios which impact on CTG targets.

From our two decades experience working with NSW government across a range of policy portfolios, mechanisms such as an Indigenous Ombudsman have not delivered the oversight and accountability promised. Rather, these kinds of mechanisms have been preoccupied with making traditional government approaches work, rather than holding governments accountable for their lack of action or follow-through where it has the power and resources to do so.

Any independent mechanism will need to be accountable to government stakeholders and most importantly community stakeholders. Achieving this will be the challenge at a systems level due to the diversity of community-based leadership and representation. The independent mechanism will be vulnerable to abolition should it be too critical in its agenda and operation. Similarly, it will not be trusted or perceived as effective if it does not have the capability to build relationships within the sectors which ACCOs and representative entities operate and are networked.

Information request 10: Senior leader or leadership group to drive change in the public sector

Which Senior leader or leadership group should be tasked with promoting and embedding changes to public sector systems and culture, in order to improve cultural capability and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and eliminate institutional racism through the public sector?

Walgett was one of the two NSW Aboriginal communities piloting the implementation of the Indigenous Remote Service Delivery (RSD) Agreement of the COAG National Partnership Agreements to Close the Gap (Council of Australian Governments, 2008). The implementation had failed from DEG's analysis; however, it had an accountability mechanism that we found very useful. The Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services was appointed who reported directly to the Minister and to which the two NSW and Commonwealth lead agencies reported to. He developed a direct relationship and knowledge of the pilot communities, and their Aboriginal leadership had a direct line of communication with him which was very useful to negotiate blockages of implementation with the government departments involved in the policy implementation. The seniority and independence from government departments held by this position gave it the authority needed by community to negotiate progress with the departments.

The Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services role (now defunct) could be used as a model for a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner role.

Each state and territory also had a senior officer to perform functions like the Coordinator General at the state/territory level and these senior office holders worked with the Coordinator General to further the aims of the Strategy.

The Coordinator General's tasks included (as summarised from the Indigenous Remote Service Delivery Agreement, 2008):

- Oversee the implementation of the Remote Service Delivery Partnership in Indigenous Communities.
- Formally report to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs twice a year on progress and ensure that all government service agencies are held accountable for their implementation responsibilities under the Remote Service Delivery Partnership.
- Have the authority to work across agencies to cut through bureaucratic blockages and red tape, and to make sure services are delivered effectively.
- Have a direct line of sight to the whole of government regional Operations Centres established to coordinate services in communities and the single government contact points located within the identified priority communities.

Currently we are informed that Regional NSW is leading a pilot project for the communities of Moree, Bourke, Wilcannia, Walgett and Moree to support improved service delivery which is considered the "RSD v2". Despite DEG's considerable involvement in the RSD v1, a group of NSW Deputy Secretaries is regularly convened to consider Walgett's future without the presence of Dharriwaa Elders Group. This non-transparent approach was established by the previous NSW LNP Government under its Local Decision Making (LDM) policy, and looks to the inconsistent participation and under-resourced members of the non-constituted Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly to provide its local information. It is our assessment that this work will still fail to provide senior leaders in government with the information they need to make informed decisions.

As described above, we identify the need for multiple 'modes' of governments working with Aboriginal communities, for instance, with an elected representative that demonstrates capacity to advocate at a national level through an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, with the role of Community Working Parties and with ACCOs both singly and through their peaks in CAPO, to identify community priorities and community-led solutions to systemic problems until greater structural reform is achieved.

Information request 11 Sector-specific accountability mechanisms

The Commission is seeking further information on how well sector-specific accountability mechanisms (such as sector regulators, complaints commissioners and ombudsmen) are working for Aboriginal and Torres Islander people.

What makes these sector-specific accountability mechanisms effective or ineffective?

Mainstream sector-specific accountability mechanisms do not have sufficient focus/experience/detailed understanding of issues specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Consequently, these existing mechanisms are likely to be underutilised and under-effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

How could they contribute to enhancing accountability for outcomes under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap?

We agree with the Productivity Commission's assessment that the Agreement's reforms have not been prioritised by governments and progress, overall, has been limited, and the need for consequences and an independent mechanism to hold governments to account.

How can dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander accountability mechanisms (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner roles) help to improve accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

We agree that dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander accountability mechanisms, such as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner, would help to improve accountability. Such mechanisms would help to ensure that issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are addressed appropriately and not lost/overlooked within mainstream (largely non-Indigenous) priorities.

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