



Mr Romlie Mokak  
Commissioner  
Indigenous Evaluation Strategy  
Productivity Commission  
LB2, Collins Street East  
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

indigenous.evaluation@pc.gov.au

*Rom*  
Dear Mr Mokak

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) welcomes the opportunity to provide the attached submission on the draft Indigenous Evaluation Strategy (**Attachment A**). The key points of our submission are as follows.

#### What to evaluate

- We suggest that the revised national health plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also be considered to inform the interim evaluation priorities.

#### The housing of the Indigenous Evaluation Clearinghouse

- The AIHW would be very interested in housing the Indigenous Evaluation Clearinghouse. The breadth of AIHW's work, which covers both health and welfare, and its depth of understanding across a broad range of subject areas of relevance to the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy would mean the clearinghouse would fit well within AIHW and would benefit from the expertise of AIHW staff. In addition, the AIHW has a strong track record in establishing and successfully managing various clearinghouses. It also has expertise in coordinating the synthesis of evaluation evidence and translating knowledge into formats that are accessible to a wide range of audiences.

#### Data for evaluation

- The AIHW proposes that a new recommendation be added to the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy, giving the AIHW a formal role in supporting the evaluation work undertaken by others. This role would involve the provision of data, analyses and staff expertise in relevant areas. In addition, the AIHW can add value to existing data by linking data sets relevant to particular evaluations.
- The draft Indigenous Evaluation Strategy proposes that the AIHW work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop and validate a data dictionary containing a set of indicators of Indigenous Australians' wellbeing that could be used for evaluations. The AIHW welcomes the opportunity to undertake this work. It sees this partnership as an opportunity to work collaboratively with Indigenous Australians,



organisations and communities in the development of indicators and data standards, as well as an opportunity to build capabilities, when relevant.

- We note in the submission that the development of a data dictionary would involve 3 activities. To better describe the breadth of work required under this action, the AIHW recommends that the description of Action 6 be changed from 'Develop a data dictionary' to 'Develop indicators and associated standards (including an online data dictionary)'.

Should you have any queries about the information we have provided, or wish to seek additional information, please contact our Parliamentary section on (02) 6249 5212 or [parliamentary@aihw.gov.au](mailto:parliamentary@aihw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Barry Sandison  
Chief Executive Officer

31 July 2020

# Attachment A: AIHW submission to the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy

## Chapter 6: What to evaluate

### *INFORMATION REQUEST 6.1: Basis for interim evaluation priorities*

The AIHW agrees that it would be appropriate for the interim evaluation priorities to be based on the Council of Australian Governments and the Joint Council on Closing the Gap draft policy priorities.

We also suggest that the revised national health plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be considered to inform the interim evaluation priorities.

## Chapter 7: Developing a culture of evaluation and learning

### *INFORMATION REQUEST 7.1: Housing the Indigenous Evaluation Clearinghouse*

The Indigenous Evaluation Strategy recommends that an existing independent statutory authority be responsible for establishing and maintaining the clearinghouse for evaluation reports, with the AIHW listed as one such potential statutory authority.

The AIHW, as an existing independent statutory authority, would be very interested in housing the Indigenous Evaluation Clearinghouse. The breadth of AIHW's work covering both health and welfare, and its depth of understanding across a broad range of subject areas of relevance to the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy, would mean this clearinghouse would fit well within AIHW and would benefit from the expertise of AIHW staff. The AIHW has a strong track record in establishing and successfully managing clearinghouses. It also has expertise in coordinating the synthesis of evaluation evidence and translating knowledge into formats that are accessible to a wide range of audiences.

The AIHW managed the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, from 2009 to 2014. This national clearinghouse included an online list of research and evaluation projects relevant to improving Indigenous outcomes across the 7 COAG building blocks—health, early childhood, schooling, economic participation, housing, safe communities, and governance and leadership.

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse was governed by a Board that provided strategic direction and oversight of the operations of the clearinghouse to ensure it addressed COAG priorities on closing the gap. The Chair of the Board, as well as some of the Board members, were appointed by the then Minister for Indigenous Affairs.

The work undertaken by the AIHW for this clearinghouse included a variety of products to translate the knowledge into different forms that were accessible to a range of audiences.

This work included:

- the development of an template for assessing the strength of the evaluation evidence for programs relating to the 7 COAG building blocks
- issues papers that were comprehensive reviews of both national and international evaluation evidence relating to particular topics within the building blocks
- resource sheets which focused on evaluation evidence relating to specific topics of similar programs (e.g. What works to prevent ear disease in Indigenous children)
- the creation of an annual report that highlighted what worked, what did not work and the gaps in evidence across the topics considered ([What works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage: key learnings and gaps in the evidence 2011-12](#)).

In addition, workshops and seminars were held in various places throughout Australia to further disseminate the findings.

Currently, the AIHW is managing the Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Clearinghouse. For this clearinghouse, the AIHW:

- seeks direction from the AIHW Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Steering Committee (chaired by Professor Pat Dudgeon), and consults with Indigenous experts on specific subject matter topics, as relevant
- commissions review papers on programs that work to address suicide prevention and mental health related issues
- is establishing a publicly-accessible research and evaluation register that will hold relevant commissioned governments' research and evaluation reports to enhance collaboration and reduce duplication
- will run public seminars to disseminate the findings from the clearinghouse.

If the AIHW were to house the Indigenous Evaluation Clearinghouse, this clearinghouse would complement other indicator and data-focused AIHW websites about issues important to Indigenous Australians, including:

- the AIHW Regional Insights for Indigenous Communities—this website will provide regional data on a range of topics including language and culture, health, use of health services, etc.
- the AIHW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework (HPF)—this website provides accessible information on progress against the 68 measures of the HPF, which cover 3 tiers: Health status and outcomes, Determinants of health, and Health system performance.

Both of these websites will be launched in late 2020. The complementary nature of the AIHW websites with the Indigenous Evaluation Clearinghouse could enable a more comprehensive drawing together of evaluation evidence with monitoring and other data, at regional levels where possible, to highlight areas of need and priorities for future investments.

## **Chapter 9: Data for Evaluation**

### *Key points in chapter*

The key points in Chapter 9 of the Draft Background Paper note that better use of existing data is needed to reduce reporting burden on service providers and service users, and to improve data quality and comparability.

Depending on the aims of the evaluation, data for evaluation can come from existing sources, such as administrative data (e.g. hospitalisations and aged care service use), monitoring data and survey data. In addition, quantitative and qualitative data and the linking of data from different sources may be needed to complement existing data.

In its 2019 submission regarding the Productivity Commission's review into the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy, the AIHW indicated that its data and expertise could support the evaluation work done by others. We reiterate this point here. While the AIHW does not undertake evaluation work, it could play a more formal key role in supporting the evaluation work done by others by providing data and expertise. Currently, requests for AIHW's expertise and data in relation to evaluation work is ad hoc and random. This is not ideal.

Thus, the AIHW proposes that a new recommendation be added to the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy, giving the AIHW a formal role in supporting the evaluation work undertaken by others. This role would involve the provision of data, analyses and staff expertise in relevant areas. In addition, as an accredited Integrating Authority, the AIHW can add value to existing data by linking relevant data sets.

### *ACTION 6: Develop a data dictionary*

The draft Indigenous Evaluation Strategy proposes the AIHW partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop and validate a data dictionary containing a set of core indicators of Indigenous Australians' wellbeing that could be used for evaluations.

The AIHW would welcome the opportunity to undertake this work.

In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this task would involve 3 activities:

- a review of existing indicators and developing new indicators, as required, that can be used when collecting data for monitoring and evaluation
- developing an online data dictionary that outlines definitions and technical specifications for new and existing indicators, using national and international standards where available
- developing data collection guidelines that outline ethical and cultural good practice.

The AIHW sees this partnership as an opportunity to work collaboratively with Indigenous Australians, organisations and communities in the development of indicators and data standards, as well as an opportunity to build capabilities, when relevant.

The AIHW has significant expertise in areas of direct relevance to these activities, including consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governance arrangements that work towards developing a national approach to standardisation. In particular:

- consultation about what is important to measure: the AIHW consults widely to gain input from relevant stakeholders in its work. It has its own overarching Indigenous statistical advisory group, as well as a range of steering committees with strong Indigenous representation to gain advice on specific subject matters (e.g. mental health and suicide prevention, rheumatic heart disease, eye health).
- development of indicators: the AIHW has developed many indicator sets, with examples being the development of:
  - indicators for the [Indigenous specific primary healthcare data collections](#)
  - indicators about [Indigenous eye health measures](#)
  - an indicator for capturing the [Indigenous status of the baby](#) (not just babies born to Indigenous mothers) on the perinatal data collection.
- Metadata Online Registry (data dictionaries): the AIHW develops data standards, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, and houses them on the Metadata Online Registry ([METeOR](#)), which is a repository for Australia's national data standards in the health, community services, housing assistance, homelessness and early childhood sectors. These data standards improve the quality, relevance, consistency and comparability of national information about the health and welfare of Australians.

AIHW's work in developing [measures of cultural safety](#) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in healthcare will be relevant to this work. The cultural safety monitoring framework was developed after extensive consultation and literature review. The framework includes measures in 3 domains: culturally respectful health care services, Indigenous patient experience of health care and access to health care services.

As noted above, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this task would involve 3 activities. To better describe the breadth of work required under this action, the AIHW recommends the description of Action 6 be changed from 'Develop a data dictionary' to 'Develop indicators and associated standards (including an online data dictionary)'.

## **Final comment**

Page 283 of the Draft Background Paper states: “A recent review of Indigenous-specific Primary Health Network (PHN) datasets also found that reporting requirements outside of the PHN datasets add to the burden on service providers. The review noted that some organisations are required to complete 50 reports a year and concluded that better coordination and negotiation within and across departments, as well as inclusive data governance, are needed to reduce reporting burdens (AIHW 2020).”

This should be corrected to say: “A recent review of Indigenous-specific primary health care data sets noted that that some organisations are required to complete 50 reports a year, and concluded that better coordination and negotiation within and across departments, as well as inclusive data governance, are needed to reduce reporting burdens (AIHW 2020).”