

Submission to Productivity Commission

Indigenous Evaluation Strategy

Aug, 2020

Introduction

The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union (QNMU) thanks the Productivity Commission for the opportunity to make a submission about the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

Nursing and midwifery is the largest occupational group in Queensland Health (QH) and one of the largest across the Queensland (QLD) government. The QNMU is the principal health union in Queensland covering all classifications of workers that make up the nursing and midwifery workforce including registered nurses (RN), midwives (RM), nurse practitioners (NP) enrolled nurses (EN) and assistants in nursing (AIN) who are employed in the public, private and not-for-profit health sectors including aged care.

Our 63,000 members work across a variety of settings from single person operations to large health and non-health institutions, and in a full range of classifications from entry level trainees to senior management. The vast majority of nurses in Queensland are members of the QNMU.

This year 2020 is dedicated to celebrating the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, in celebration of the 200th year anniversary of the birth of the founder of contemporary nursing, Florence Nightingale. The World Health Organisation (WHO) nominated Nurses and Midwives for their invaluable contribution to health care and to highlight the need for a strengthened Nursing and Midwifery workforce to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and universal health coverage. The QNMU is proud to embrace this opportunity to invest in the Nursing and Midwifery professions, particularly the investment into minimum safe staffing ratios and skill mix across all health sectors.

Our submission will provide general comments regarding the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

General considerations

The QNMU welcomes the overarching objectives of the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy in providing a whole-of-government framework to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

There continues to be a gap in the availability of evidence-based data to evaluate the performance and outcomes of policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As such, the QNMU supports the efforts made to strengthen evaluation processes through the framework to achieve the shared goals of reducing Indigenous inequalities. We recommend that evaluation strategies are built into all program designs, coupled with appropriate funding to support evaluation processes and data collection capacity. In our view, thorough and appropriately resourced evaluation is as integral as the policy or program design itself and is necessary to determine whether the outcomes justify further investment in the policy or project.

We commend the efforts of the Productivity Commission to provide a framework that places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's perspectives, priorities and knowledge at the forefront of this strategy. If required, leadership development and capacity building must be provided to develop the skills and capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is crucial in achieving this strategy.

However, it is important to acknowledge that constructive engagement with Indigenous peoples is only as valuable as the capacity for communities and individuals to engage and participate in the development and evaluation of the framework and decision-making processes. In our view, this framework requires further investment into Indigenous governance capacity and related resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's participation and engagement at every opportunity.

We express resounding support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples leading any evaluation strategy but express the need for these positions to be selected by First Nations people.

The QNMU believes that limiting the evaluation framework to initiatives that only relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is reductive. In our view, the evaluation strategy should extend to all public policy initiatives. A good example is in public health where the nurse-to-patient ratios have been implemented after significant research, evidence and evaluation showed that the number of nurses on a shift played an important role in patient safety and quality of care outcomes.

In our view, the review period of five years is excessive, and does not reflect the need for timely and effective evaluation of Indigenous strategies to monitor performance and ensure outcomes are achieved. The QNMU asks that an interim review is implemented to assess the performance of the strategy on a more frequent basis.

The QNMU also expresses the need for stronger involvement in the evaluation of policies and programs that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, from all stakeholders. For instance, page 7 of the framework stipulates that “peak bodies and community representatives who may contribute to evaluation planning and design” should be engaged. As such, we suggest that stronger language is used to capture all stakeholders and relevant parties involved in evaluation processes. We believe that broadening the scope of involvement, is a necessary step to improving the resources and capacity available to appropriately evaluate policies and programs that will influence outcomes for Indigenous populations. We also ask that there is clarity about who is responsible, consequences for good and poor performance, transparency and capturing of information to ensure accountability (Institute for Government, 2018).

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