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# Productivity Commission workshop

**Time:** 11am

**Date:** Wednesday, 19 June 2019

**Location:** The Lowitja Institute *International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2019* (Auditorium Room)

The workshop discussed the request by the Australian Government for the Productivity Commission to develop a whole-of-government evaluation strategy for policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Commission thanks all those who participated in the workshop.

Below is a summary of some of the views expressed by workshop participants.

- Incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, priorities and values into policy and program design is crucial.
  - Appropriate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decision-making bodies, and learning from the past, can drive the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, priorities and values into policy and program design.
  - Structured approaches to incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views are necessary, and these structures need to be able to continue even when governments change.
  - Evaluation should be conducted according to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and priorities. Approaches in existing strategies, guidelines or frameworks may be useful for the Commission to consider as it develops the Evaluation Strategy.
  - Evaluations should listen to and utilise ground level knowledge.
  - The value of qualitative approaches when undertaking evaluation should be respected.
- It is important to recognise and highlight the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in evaluation.
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be given the opportunity to lead across all stages of evaluation.
  - Outcomes of evaluation need to be fed back to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and be used to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
  - Evaluations should draw on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and utilise Indigenous methodologies.
- Data sovereignty needs to be respected by the Evaluation Strategy.
  - Key aspects of data sovereignty include: obtaining permission to use data; maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control on how data is used,

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- managed and interpreted; and allowing ongoing access to (and use of) the data by communities.
- Data sovereignty principles should apply to data collected through mainstream programs as well as programs specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
  - There are a number of bases on which evaluation priorities can be determined.
    - Policies and programs that have the greatest direct impact, or respond to important needs, might be priority areas for evaluation to take place.
    - Policies and programs that are known to be failures should also be a high-priority for evaluation.
    - Priorities need to consider the extent to which mainstream services meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
    - In setting priorities, there is a need to be flexible. Evaluating processes, impacts and outcomes are all important.
  - There is scope for evaluation results to be better used in policy and program design and implementation.
    - Too much of what is learned is forgotten. There needs to be a way of affirming and recognising what works.
    - Transparency is paramount — it increases government accountability and allows other organisations to utilise findings from evaluations.
    - It is important that the information and findings from evaluations are translated into digestible pieces.
    - While government policy is siloed, wellbeing is not. In designing and redesigning programs, governments need to think about how programs interface and interact with each other to ensure that coherent services are delivered.
    - Research and evaluation needs to go beyond determining just what works, but also needs to identify what does not work. It also needs to determine why something does or does not work.
    - There is a need for cultural capacity building in the policy-making sector in order to avoid assumptions and biases about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.