



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
report:

*Revisiting Recognition: Report on the roundtable with
Australian South Sea Islanders*

MARCH 2017

Response to Recommendation

Recommendation 1

‘The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish an interdepartmental working group to liaise with Australian South Sea Islander groups, so as to identify priority areas to address disadvantage, improve coordination with State governments, and address problems in the provision and delivery of culturally aware and appropriate Government services to Australian South Sea Islanders, in accordance with the 1992 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report *A Call for Recognition*. In identifying priority areas, the interdepartmental working group should provide the Parliament with a progress update no later than 30 June 2016, and subsequently every three years.’

Response

Agreed in principle.

Since 1994, the Australian Government has recognised Australian South Sea Islanders as a unique and distinct ethnic group that continues to suffer from social and economic disadvantage as a result of discrimination.

The Government has and will continue to use an existing well established whole-of-government consultative mechanism, the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG), together with bilateral meetings, to discuss issues related to Australian South Sea Islanders.

SOSOG allows senior officials of all three levels of Government to consult and exchange information to improve coordination of service delivery and will provide an opportunity to engage with Australian South Sea Islander representatives in the future. An update on progress will be provided by the Minister for Social Services to the Committee every three years, commencing mid-2019.

Australian South Sea Islander people are eligible to apply for a range of Government mainstream programs/services available for vulnerable Australian people. In addition, those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (having dual or tri-cultural heritage through interrelationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) are also eligible to apply for programs and services specifically targeting Indigenous people.

The Government’s Multicultural Access and Equity Policy (the Policy) is the primary vehicle for ensuring that mainstream programs and services are accessible by all eligible Australians, responsive to their needs and deliver equitable outcomes for them, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In recognition of the unique history and experiences of Australian South Sea Islanders, the Government commits to reinstate Australian South Sea Islanders as a specific target group identified in the Policy. As the lead agency for the Policy, the Department of Social Services will work to increase awareness across the Commonwealth of the needs and barriers of this group.