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Sent: Thursday, 2 March 2017 5:43 PM
To: Committee, JCPAA (REPS)
Subject: KALACC Submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit inquiry in the Indigenous Advancement Strategy

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02 March 2017

KALACC Submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit inquiry in the Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Dear Secretary

We understand that the Committee is currently undertaking the following inquiry:

Commonwealth Grants Administration - Inquiry based on Auditor-General's reports 25 (2015-16), 4 (2016-17), 12 (2016-17) and 35 (2016-17)

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit is conducting an inquiry based on any items, matters or circumstances connected with the following Auditor-General reports:

- No. 25 (2015-16) Delivery and Evaluation of Grants Programs
- No. 4 (2016-17) Award of Funding under the 20 Million Trees Program
- No. 12 (2016-17) The Design of, and Award of Funding Under, the Living Safe Together Grants Program
- No. 35 (2016-17) Indigenous Advancement Strategy

On Monday of this week I had the opportunity of meeting with senior officers of the Department of Social Services, in the context of that department developing a new program entitled Strong and Resilient Communities [SARC]. This is not an Indigenous – specific program but a number of Indigenous organisations across the nation are supported under existing DSS funding arrangements and, come 01 January 2018, will be supported by DSS under this new SARC program. As part of the public input in to the development of this new SARC program, we were invited to comment on what contributes towards a socially cohesive and fully participating community.

In my meeting on Monday, I spoke of the concept of Lateral Violence and I said that it represented the exact opposite of a socially cohesive and fully participating community.

Documents I referred to in that discussion were:

- Prime Minister's 2017 ***Closing the Gap Report – Introductory Speech***;
- 2007 DSS ***Evaluation of the 2005 Communities in Crisis Strategy***;
- 2011 HREOC ***Social Justice Report***.

In the context of your current Inquiry, which incorporates investigation of matters pertaining to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, I share with you now the following attachments:

- ***KALACC Submission to the Australian National Audit Office***, 19 April 2016;
- Prime Minister's 2017 ***Closing the Gap Report – Introductory Speech***.

Sadly, the realities of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy are that in effect its priorities and its processes are in very large part totally inconsistent with the key points of the Prime Minister's 2017 Closing the Gap Report introductory speech.

The WA Department of Culture and the Arts states that 0.74% of investment in to Aboriginal expenditure is allocated towards Aboriginal culture and arts programs. In other words, culture is 99.26% irrelevant to Government.

Yet the Department of Social Services, across 2005 – 2007 identified Beagle Bay as one of the three worst ie most dysfunctional communities in the nation. Why would that be? Stolen Generation Community – physically dislocated in the 1920s and 1930s and whatever culture wasn't lost in that process was then literally beaten out of the people by the Catholic Priests and Nuns.

KALACC has this week provided to the Department of Social Services the ***2011 Social Justice Report***. We have urged the Department to read over Commissioner Gooda's extensive analysis of the phenomenon of lateral violence. And how can lateral violence be ameliorated and turned around? Cultural development and cultural governance are critical factors in community success.

The Productivity Commission tells us that as a nation we spend around \$33 billion on Aboriginal Expenditure – and that Gap never closes. Why is that? Again, if culture is 99.26 irrelevant, that gap will never close.

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy perpetuates the status quo and contributes towards the Gap never closing.

In the attached 19 April 2016 **KALACC Submission to the Australian National Audit Office** we wrote as follows on page 15:

“We understand that the Indigenous Advancement Strategy has an annual allocation in the order of \$1.0 billion. Out of that total allocation, a sum of around \$50 million is provided to the Culture and Capability Stream. However, the bulk of those funds are allocated towards existing large investments in to broadcasting and in to support for the Healing Foundation. That leaves a remainder of \$9.0 million available for applicants to apply under the Culture and Capability Stream. In that context, it is hard to imagine how culture could be any more peripheral.”

There are some real signs of progress:

- **2016 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report** – we must invest in Aboriginal strengths and not approach this thing from a deficit perspective. The number one strength is Aboriginal culture ;
- **WA Parliament Report on Aboriginal Youth Suicide November 2016** – nothing works better than culture
- **WA DAA and DCA Discussion Paper on Aboriginal Culture and how it can add value to Government outcomes.**

And in addition to the above, there is the Prime Minister’s 2017 **Closing the Gap Report – Introductory Speech:**

- We are building a new way of working together with Indigenous leaders and their communities to create local solutions—putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the centre of decision-making in their regions. ... The Empowered Communities model is now in eight regions across the country, in addition to other local decision-making models such as the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly in western New South Wales. Over the coming year we will continue to build the capacity and capability of communities and government to truly engage with each other and to jointly make informed decisions.
- As Aboriginal and Torres Strait leaders have said for a long time, it is not all about what you seek to achieve, it is equally about how you achieve it. The ends we seek from our efforts are non-negotiable; the means by which we achieve them can differ but must always be in concert with the wishes of Indigenous people.
- We must also recognise culture as paramount to finding solutions that respect, acknowledge and support identity.

Closing the Gap has been a spectacular 10 year public policy failure, supported by both sides of politics, and it has devoured huge financial and other resources along the way. Hopefully we are starting as a nation to embark on a more enlightened, and effective, public policy path now.

It was refreshing to have the opportunity of providing input this week in to the Department of Social Services' design of its new SARC Program and to provide a comment on the characteristics of a socially cohesive and fully participating community.

We pointed out to the Department of Social Services that KALACC will run a major cultural festival in Beagle Bay in September this year. Cultural maintenance, cultural reclamation and cultural governance – these are the keys to a socially cohesive and fully participating community.

Sadly, the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, with its peripheral attention to Aboriginal strengths and assets, particularly Aboriginal culture, makes very little contribution towards the emerging positive dynamic described by the Prime Minister in his 2017 ***Closing the Gap Report – Introductory Speech.***

Kind regards

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"To assist and promote the ceremonies, songs and dance of Kimberley Aboriginal people, to encourage and strengthen their social, cultural and legal values and ensure their traditions a place in Australian society."



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19 April 2016

KALACC Response to ANAO Audit of the PMC Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Dear Sarah

Thanks for your email of 02 March inviting KALACC to share with the Audit office our views in relation to the audit objective and criteria. We note your advice as follows:

The objective of the audit is to assess whether PM&C has effectively established and implemented the IAS to achieve the outcomes desired by government. The audit criteria are:

1. PM&C has designed the IAS to improve results for Indigenous Australians in the Australian Government's identified priority areas.
2. PM&C's implementation of the IAS supports a flexible program approach focused on prioritising the needs of Indigenous communities.
3. PM&C's administration of grants complies with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines, supports the selection of the best projects to achieve the outcomes desired by the Australian Government and reduces red tape for providers.
4. PM&C has established a performance framework that supports ongoing assessment of program performance and progress towards outcomes.

KALACC is also interested in your advice that:

Performance audits involve the independent and objective assessment of the administration of an entity's programs, policies, projects or activities.

As a nation we expend upwards of \$30 billion annually on Indigenous – related expenditure and we then collectively marvel at the utter intractability of the Closing the Gap indicators.

We know that Commonwealth Minister Scullion is of the view that the Indigenous Advancement Strategy will fix this situation. In holding that view, KALACC believes that he is profoundly misguided and mistaken.

If any of the Commonwealth's strategies are likely to lead to a better set of outcomes for Aboriginal people, then the most likely strategy will be Empowered Communities, not the IAS. And the reason that Empowered Communities may succeed is that EC is predicated upon a rewriting of the architecture of Government.

I often find myself using this baseball analogy:

- First base – culture and identity
- Second base – leadership, governance, representation and engagement
- Third base – Aboriginal empowerment to deliver services
- Fourth base – Government's holy trinity of jobs, schooling and safe communities.

The rules of baseball state that one must, with no exceptions, go to first base, then second, then third and only then on to fourth. Yet government consistently tries to go to fourth base first – and then wonders where \$30 billion went and why things never get better.

Yes, the Audit Office can tick off on the IAS and you can dutifully report to Government that the IAS seeks to address the Government's priority areas ie the holy trinity of jobs, schooling and safe communities. Yes, PM and C has pumped all of its funds IAS funds in to those areas. But will we see any outcomes from that? We highly doubt it. Because the IAS has been designed to break all the rules of baseball.

KALACC is aware that a significant meeting was held in Sydney last week between senior officers of PM and C and representatives from each of the participating regions in the Empowered Communities strategy. Outcomes from that meeting include a PM and C commitment to fund the 'backbone' organisations in each of the regions. As above, Empowered Communities stands a much better chance of producing positive outcomes than the IAS does, because Empowered Communities does follow the rules of baseball.

KALACC poses up front the fundamental question as to what the relationship is between this present audit of the IAS and the work which the Productivity Commission does in relation to the ***Indigenous Expenditure Reports*** and the ***Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Reports***.

We also pose up front the question as to the relationship between this Audit report and the annual Closing the Gap reports.

We have witnessed the publication and the presentation of the **2016 Closing the Gap Report**. That report, like all Closing the Gap reports before it, has demonstrated some glimmers of hope and some positive progress across some specific indicators. But these glimmers of hope are like diamonds in the coal sack. In other words, they are outweighed by the general view that overall Closing the Gap has not worked.

One illustration of this pervading view is the following statement from Patrick Dodson:

"Without Indigenous participation it's going to be doomed to fail and all we'll see is another record of some achievements in some minor areas, but we're basically just changing the tablecloth on a table without really realising that the white ants are eating the legs out of the table, and we have to restructure the whole nature of our relationship."

[Source Reference – See Appendix Two]

The IAS is very much an exercise in changing the tablecloth. Whereas Empowered Communities does actually seek to restructure the whole nature of the relationship.

Other significant contributions following the presentation of the **2016 Closing the Gap Report** came from:

- Dr Tom Calma – highlighting the lack of progress in regards to Indigenous suicide prevention [Source Reference – See Appendix Two]’;
- Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda – stating ‘We hear you say that you want to engage with us, but we have the right to be a little cynical.’ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-10/close-the-gap:-mick-gooda-'entitled-to-be-a-little'/7155486>

KALACC notes the four terms of reference for the ANAO Audit of the IAS. We are essentially uninterested in issues pertaining to administrative processes, and thus we don’t seek herein to make comment on Terms of Reference 2, 3 and 4. So, we limit ourselves herein to a range of comments in relation to the first Term:

1. PM&C has designed the IAS to improve results for Indigenous Australians in the Australian Government's identified priority areas.

There is a total dissonance between the views of the Aboriginal community and the views of our political leaders, on both sides of politics, in regards to the Closing the Gap agenda.

Whilst the Aboriginal leadership has clearly stated that there can be no progress for Aboriginal people without the involvement of Aboriginal people, politicians have stated variations on the theme of ‘Closing the Gap is a long term agenda and it just needs more time.’ For instance, we note the following ABC news story ***Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion stands by Closing the Gap targets:***

“The Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion is standing by the Closing the Gap targets despite strong criticism from Indigenous leader Pat Dodson earlier this week.”

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-10/indigenous-affairs-minister-nigel-scullion-stands/7157656>

Minister Scullion believes that by collapsing 150 discrete programs in to 5 broad program areas and that by focusing on schools, employment and safe communities he is doing something radically different from all Indigenous Affairs Ministers who have come before him. He believes that the IAS will succeed where all else has previously failed.

KALACC believes that he is profoundly mistaken and that, at best, the IAS will produce a few more sparkles amongst the sack of coal. KALACC believes that what is needed for Indigenous advancement is a total rewriting of the architecture of Indigenous affairs, along the lines of the Empowered Communities proposal:

Empowered Communities is a reform proposal that aims to empower communities by empowering people. It is led by Indigenous people, as it is Indigenous people themselves, those whose lives are directly affected, that should be empowered to have greater influence and control over the decisions that impact on their lives. <http://empoweredcommunities.org.au/>

KALACC would be most interested in learning of how the Audit Office intends to undertake an “independent and objective assessment of the administration of an entity’s programs, policies, projects or activities” and what role, if any, the Productivity Commission will have in that process.

Regards



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An Independent and Objective Assessment of Improving Results for Indigenous Australians in the Australian Government's Identified Priority Areas.

In its *2014 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report*, the Productivity Commission articulates its criteria for identifying case studies of 'Things that Work', as follows:

Box 2.1.3 'Things that work' criteria

Things that work' case studies highlight programs or services that are successfully acting to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes. Case studies must:

- be relevant to a report indicator
- have measurable, up to date outcomes
- have a reasonable track record of success
- be supported by local Indigenous people who use or are affected by the case study
- be agreed for inclusion by all jurisdictions.

Those criteria for the case studies of success sit within a broader assessment framework. In articulating that framework in section 2.2. the Productivity Commission explains the importance of:

- 2.2.1 Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement;
- 2.2.2 Strengths-based reporting and wellbeing – including Culture and wellbeing

When one examines the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, it is almost impossible to see that same underlying rationale and that same underlying evaluation framework.

KALACC participated in a community meeting held in Fitzroy Crossing on 22 January 2016 and at that meeting Minister Scullion stated the view that he would fund anything that works to Close the Gap. The point he was making in that comment was that he did not particularly mind if the service delivered was delivered by an Aboriginal organization or by a non – Aboriginal organization, as long as the service was delivered.

KALACC believes that that kind of logic reveals a profound misunderstanding of what Aboriginal advancement looks like and that it reveals many of the reasons why the Closing the Gap Reports year in and year out have shown such little tangible progress.

Intractability in Closing the Gap is utterly and inherently linked with both empowerment and cultural continuity. Major General Dave Chalmers, the man in charge of the Northern Territory Intervention, stated as follows:

There's nothing worse than going to a community where the level of apathy is profound, (where) people see no point in engaging with government because government continually changes its mind, government is confusing and, anyway, I've got no job and I've got no prospects.

Attached as Appendix # 3 to this current document is a copy of an article from the Australian newspaper, in which Major General Dave Chalmers reflected on this time in charge of the Northern Territory Intervention. Chalmers also had the following to say:

The truth is, people find themselves in those circumstances for reasons that 200 years of history have created, and for reasons of failed government policy of years and years.

the most important thing Aborigines can do to find their future is to maintain their culture.

"Over time, we as a society have undervalued indigenous culture and in many places it's been lost," he says. "And where it's been lost, people have lost their compass, they've lost their framework of life. It's not being replaced by a mainstream Australian framework, and people are in limbo. We need to be paying a lot more attention to traditional healers and traditional lawmakers, the role they played, and play, in people's lives."

There are massive social challenges in places like the Kimberley. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project, commissioned by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, has in January 2016 tabled a report which shows that the suicide rate in the Kimberley had doubled over a 5 - year period. But these massive social challenges will never be met by Governments seeking to deliver services to Aboriginal people. In response to the release of the **2016 Closing the Gap Report**, Indigenous leaders from across the nation clearly said that Closing the Gap was close to failing and that it would only work if Governments sought to work with Indigenous people.

As Major General Chalmers quite rightly noted, Culture is the compass, the framework and the motivating factor in peoples' lives. It is truly a pity that these revelations, these 'road to Damascus moments' come at the end of the period of tenure for Government officers charged with important responsibilities in regards to Aboriginal advancement.

We note that the Government's priority areas are:

- getting children to school,
- adults into work and
- building safe communities.

KALACC asks of the Australian National Audit Office, are those three priority areas significantly different from the priorities for the Northern Territory Intervention?

If the goals and priorities for Government today are not very different to the goals and priorities back in 2007 – 2010, then why doesn't the Government listen to the conclusions and advice from the man [Major General Dave Chalmers] who they placed in charge of the Intervention? Why doesn't government recognize that progress cannot be made without strong culture and strong communities? School, work and safety might be the end goals, but Government must recognize that you cannot get to home base unless you first go to first base, followed by second, followed by third. The game of baseball is such a simple game to understand, but the concept is so foreign and alien to the Government's approach to Indigenous Affairs. Which is why Empowered Communities has the potential to bring about transformational change, whereas the IAS does not.

It is KALACC's hope that when the Australian National Audit Office undertakes its 'independent and objective assessment' of the IAS, that the audit office looks beyond the IAS itself as the measurement framework and is, instead, deeply informed by the excellent work of the Productivity Commission.

KALACC 14 November 2015 Feedback on the Review of the IAS Guidelines

KALACC has participated in the Australian Senate's Inquiry into the IAS. And KALACC has participated in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's own review of the IAS. Attached as an appendix to this current document is the 14 November 2015 KALACC Feedback on the Review of the IAS Guidelines. The main points we have made in that document are as follows:

- Indigenous Funding Should Predominantly Go to Indigenous Organisations
- Culture is Invisible
- Fund 'Things That Work'
- Fund Indigenous Organisations With Indigenous Money
- Make Culture Visible and Valuable
- Critical Aboriginal Investments Must All Be Upstream Investments

The *2014 Indigenous Expenditure Review* states that the national annual total expenditure on Indigenous Affairs is over \$30 billion. Attached as an appendix to this present document is an IAS Expenditure Diagram – Tabled in Senate Estimates Hearings <http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=ab896804-623e-4185-b071-2c097fec4b08>. That document shows an annual IAS expenditure of roughly \$2.0 billion. This means that as a nation we expend [roughly] \$28 billion annually on Indigenous Affairs – outside of the IAS. If there is \$28 billion spent on Indigenous Affairs outside of the IAS, surely it is self-evident that if empowerment and culture are important factors towards Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage [as the Productivity Commission tells us] that as a nation we would want to be quarantining the \$2.0 billion IAS predominantly, if not exclusively, for expenditure on and for and by Aboriginal organisations.

IAS Expenditure Diagram – Tabled in Senate Estimates Hearings shows that in relation to the 2014 IAS Grant Funding Round:

- 46% of funded organisations were Indigenous organisations;
- 55% of the amount funded was provided to Indigenous Organisations.

Sadly, in its *Review of the IAS Guidelines*, this most fundamental and important of issues was not even canvassed by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. We believe that this fundamentally goes back to Minister Scullion's mindset that he will happily fund anything as long as it works.

In our submission to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, we have also emphasized the invisibility of culture and the fact that culture is a gap in the policy space. As mentioned above, even if the Government has a narrowly – conceived Indigenous Agenda of schools, jobs and safe communities, we strongly contend that it will not even achieve that narrow agenda if it continues to marginalize culture and fails to follow the Productivity Commission's advice based around a Strengths assessment.

Essentially, the IAS is a deficit model of social policy, whereas the Productivity Commission – and all of the Aboriginal leadership across the nation – is calling for an empowerment and a strengths based approach.

Government Priority: Safe Communities

The **2011 Social Justice Report** published by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission is integrated around the theme of lateral violence. In that same year Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda delivered the Eddie Koiki Mabo Lecture at James Cook University and he spoke on the same theme.

We draw your attention to the following words in the **2011 Social Justice Report**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples culture is a source of strength and should instill pride in our communities. However, lateral violence breeds unhealthy cultural norms that undermine the strength we can draw from our cultural identities. [page 10];
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been living together on our lands and with the environment for over 70 000 years. We have strong social structures, rich culture and complex ways of managing a harsh landscape. This included strong sophisticated systems of law. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had mechanisms to govern not only interpersonal relationships, but trade and territorial agreements between different nations, clans and groups. Men's and women's business, elders councils and ceremonies regulated all aspects of life and were used to remedy conflict. [page 58];
- Addressing lateral violence will require significant courage, goodwill and determination but I think the gains will be immense. While we continue to harm each other with lateral violence and while governments and industry operate in a way that fosters lateral violence, there will be little progress in improving the indicators that measure the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community. As I have consistently argued since becoming Social Justice Commissioner, real progress will only come from a basis of strong, respectful relationships. [page 53]

What Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda is saying is that the Government is not going to achieve its goals of Employment, Education and Safe Communities because Government does what Government always does and seeks to go to third or fourth base first. What Mr Gooda says is:

“While we continue to harm each other with lateral violence and while governments and industry operate in a way that fosters lateral violence, there will be little progress in improving the indicators that measure the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community”

KALACC suggests to the Australian National Audit Office that an investment in to culture is absolutely, irrevocably a necessary investment in to first base and that if you don't get to first base, you won't get to second, third or fourth base.

We again note that the Productivity Commission in its **2014 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report**, is highlighting the crucial roles of:

- Indigenous Engagement and Empowerment, including the critical role of leadership and governance;
- Strengths based approaches, with a focus on culture as an enabler of social and emotional wellbeing.

In the Prime Minister's **2013 Closing the Gap Report**, under the previous Labor Government, on page 144 we read the following words:

National Indigenous Governance and Leadership Framework

The Government is leading the development of a National Indigenous Governance and Leadership Framework in partnership with state and territory governments. The framework will provide strategic direction for governments and recognise and promote best practice across urban, regional and remote locations. The National Indigenous Reform Agreement states that strong leadership is needed to champion and demonstrate ownership of reform. Effective governance arrangements in communities

and organisations as well as strong engagement by governments at all levels are essential to long-term sustainable outcomes.

Consultation has been undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, governance and leadership experts and academics, Australian Government agencies and state and territory governments. The Framework is being undertaken in conjunction with the Council of Australian Government's Select Council on Women's Issues project on developing a national approach to promoting the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Islander women in governance and decision-making within communities.

Under the current government all such measures have been abandoned in pursuit of 'practical' strategies. In other words, skip out first, second and third base and go straight to fourth base. This is regarded as being 'practical'.

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy Guidelines on pages 14 and 15 state as follows in regards to the stream of Safety and Wellbeing:

Description

This programme supports the enhancement of Indigenous wellbeing and community safety. This includes grant funding for strategies known to enhance community safety, including the prevention of family violence, combatting alcohol and other substance misuse, reduce offending and supporting victims of crime. Activities that support wellbeing, that have broader implications for health policy and complement (not duplicate) those health services delivered by the Department of Health will also be considered under this programme.

Outcome Page 14 of 27

Increased levels of community safety and wellbeing, and less alcohol and substance misuse and associated harm.

Objectives

To ensure the ordinary rule of law applies in Indigenous communities, and to ensure Indigenous people enjoy similar levels of physical, emotional and social wellbeing enjoyed by other Australians by fostering the ability of Indigenous Australians to engage in education, employment and other opportunities.

What this programme will fund

This programme will support activity that will achieve outcomes such as, but not limited to the following:

- Improved health, social and emotional wellbeing.
- Improved drug, alcohol and substance misuse prevention and treatment.
- A reduction of offending, violence and victimisation in communities.

http://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/ias_guidelines.pdf

KALACC met on 02 February 2016 in Canberra with two senior officers of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet:

- Brendan Gibson, Assistant Secretary, Health Branch, Community Safety and Policy Division;
- Anthony Heiser, Adviser, Community Safety Programme Management.

Mr Gibson advised that he remained unconvinced of the efficacy of culturally based approaches to suicide prevention.

Mr Heiser advised that funding was tight and that the limited resources allocated to the justice section of the Community Safety stream within the Indigenous Advancement strategy was nearly fully expended and that funding priorities were for programs which dealt directly with the higher – end of the offending spectrum ie directly targeting a clientele who are close to incarceration or who are being released from incarceration.

In relation to juvenile justice issues, KALACC pointed out to Mr Heiser that the Government of Western Australia had expended an ADDITIONAL \$42 million on an expansion of its Regional Youth Justice Services program across the Kimberley and the Pilbara over a four - year period. That \$42 million was sourced from Royalties for Regions and was over and above the normal Treasury allocation to the Department of Corrective Services. At the end of the four years, the offending rate had RISEN by 10%.

It comes as no surprise at all to KALACC that \$42 million of additional expenditure can coincide with a 10% increase in juvenile offending. This is just another classic case of governments providing services to Aboriginal people, and not engaging with Aboriginal people. In September 2006 the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia called on the WA Government to invest in Aboriginal – owned and controlled juvenile justice programs. To this day, this recommendation has not been heeded and has not been acted on.

Indigenous Justice issues are a national disgrace. The Closing the Gap campaign, led by the National Congress of Indigenous People and by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, is calling for the establishment of Aboriginal justice targets within the Closing the Gap Framework. This is a position supported by the Labor Party and by the Greens, but not by the Coalition Government. KALACC notes with interest the 02 March 2015 ABC News story - ***Pat Dodson: Labor's new Senate nominee calls for action on 'scandalous' Indigenous incarceration rate:***

Newly nominated Labor senator Pat Dodson has called Australia's Indigenous incarceration rate "scandalous" and says it is one of the many areas in which he hopes to make a difference if he is endorsed in the casual senate vacancy left by the resignation of Joe Bullock.

"It's a national indictment and a range of authorities have got to collaborate to work out how best to deal with the matter, but in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous leaders," Mr Dodson told 7.30.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-02/pat-dodson-calls-for-action-on-indigenous-incarceration/7215374>

In relation to suicide, KALACC notes the January 2016 release of the ***ATSISPEP Kimberley Suicide Prevention Roundtable Report***. We understand that this report will in the very near future be uploaded on to the ATSISPEP web site at <http://www.atsispep.sis.uwa.edu.au/community-consultations-and-roundtables>

ATSISPEP is a major national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project which is funded by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

KALACC notes the following findings in that report:

“Self-harm and suicide numbers and rates have increased in the Kimberley. In ten years from 2000, there were approximately 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides, but in the last five years the rate has doubled and there have been more than 100 suicides. In general, Western Australia constitutes about one quarter of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national suicides despite that Western Australia forms just 14% of the nation’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Between 1999 and 2006, there were 96 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide deaths in the Kimberley. The suicide rate during this period was disturbingly four times that of non-Indigenous people in the region (Department of Health Western Australia, 2009). However, with more than 100 Aboriginal suicide deaths in the last five years the rate has widened to eight times that of non-Indigenous people.”

This doubling of the suicide rates in the Kimberley has roughly coincided with a period of large Government investments in to clinical therapeutic programs. This phenomenon is in no way unique to Western Australia. KALACC notes the Suicide Prevention Australia Newsletter of December 2015 – “Suicide prevention has been identified as core to much needed health reform. However, having heard the Government’s response to the National Mental Health Commission Review, it is much lighter on suicide prevention than I expected.”

http://suicidepreventionaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/December-2015-E_Newsletter1.htm In January SPA then issued a detailed Members Briefing which emphasised that investments in to Mental Health were in no way the same thing as investments in to Suicide Prevention.

Professor Chandler states that nowhere in the world is there any good evidence that any of these Western European clinical therapeutic approaches have ever served to prevent one Indigenous suicide. He characterizes these massive government investments as 'Fishing in the Wrong Pond.'

Clearly, a very different approach is needed. Professor Chandler states that Cultural Wounds Require Cultural Healing. And KALACC notes that the *ATSISPEP Kimberley Suicide Prevention Roundtable Report* concludes with these words:

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants strongly supported existing programs that work such as on-country programs, mentoring and youth leadership, should be adequately invested in and “rolled-out wherever possible”. Participants expressed the need for Governments to invest in Aboriginal-led social and emotional wellbeing approaches in programs.”

Safe Communities are not communities in which there are world record rates of juvenile incarceration and youth suicide. \$42 million of additional expenditure on government – owned and controlled youth justice programs coincided with a 10% RISE in juvenile offending. \$52 million of expenditure on clinical, therapeutic, government – owned and controlled processes has coincided with a doubling of the suicide rate in the Kimberley.

When will this logic implode? When will Governments recognize the merit in what Pat Dodson, Mick Gooda and Tom Calma, along with many other Indigenous leaders across the nation are saying? Government must work with Aboriginal communities to empower Aboriginal communities.

Indigenous communities are post – Colonial communities. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission through its Social Justice Reports has identified widespread lateral violence in Indigenous communities. The Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda, has stated that Closing the Gap targets will not be reached unless and until fundamental issues such as lateral violence are addressed – through strengths based strategies focusing on culture, leadership and governance.

However, the Indigenous Advancement Strategy is at its core a deficit model of social development. It fails to address the core, fundamental issues within Aboriginal communities and as such it will make little tangible contribution towards the safety of communities or the wellbeing of those living in the communities.

Appendix One: 14 November 2015 KALACC Feedback on the Review of the IAS Guidelines

Brenda Campe,

First Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Engagement

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

CC: Mr Geoffrey Richardson, Assistant Secretary

14 November 2015

KALACC Feedback on the Review of the IAS Guidelines

Dear Brenda and Geoff

Many thanks for the opportunity on Tuesday of participating in one of the community consultation sessions as part of the current review of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Can I commend you on the fact that six hours of time was allocated to this session and that this allowed for considerable community input in to these discussions. This is greatly appreciated.

I note that before lunch Geoff at several points alluded to an intent and a desire to use this IAS review as part of a contribution towards a fundamental re- setting of the nation's Indigenous agenda. However, after lunch, it was all very much about discussion of the ***Post Implementation Review including revised IAS Guidelines*** – as attached – and of 5 key questions for discussion.

And therein lies the shortcomings of this current review process. With all due respect, KALACC strongly holds and we strongly suggest to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet that the challenges and the difficulties relating to the Indigenous Advancement Strategy ARE NOT principally related to improving the application process or the selection criteria. Sure, improvements in the process will be welcomed by all.

However, we strongly contend that the fundamental shortcomings of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy are **STRUCTURAL ISSUES, NOT PROCESS ISSUES**. Geoff Richardson is to be congratulated for raising the big picture issues, but the structures for this IAS review process do not encourage any serious discussion of those issues. The structural problems with the IAS are as follows:

- **Indigenous Funding Should Predominantly Go to Indigenous Organisations**

The review of the guidelines fails to identify or respond to the single most important issue which Government has been told about the IAS ie only 50% of the funding available from the IAS actually went to Aboriginal service providers. How can you have a credible review process if you leave out any structured consideration of the single most important issue?;

- **Culture is Invisible**

The IAS maintains the Government's priorities of Education, Employment and Safe Communities. Once big ticket items such as Broadcasting and funding for the Healing Centre are removed, there was only \$9.0 million out of a \$1.0 billion funding pool available for the support of the Culture and Capability Stream. No meaningful advancement in Aboriginal Affairs will be made until Culture is shifted from the margins and the periphery of government policy and planning to somewhere closer to the centre of Government planning.

The IAS guideline review document provided to us states as follows:

- Performance against most indicators still lags way behind mainstream;
- Lack of outcomes has entrenched dependency and contributed to social ills in families and communities
- Countless reports have dealt with the underlying causes
- The *2010 Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure* found that past approaches had failed and new approaches were needed to address Indigenous 'disadvantage'

This is all very true. However, the solution to this intractability of Indigenous outcomes does not of itself lie in the collapsing of 150 discrete programs in to 5 macro programs.

The structural issues which absolutely need to be the priority for any meaningful advancement in outcomes for Aboriginal people are:

- **Fund 'Things That Work'** - Seek out, accept and take the advice of the Productivity Commission;
- **Fund Indigenous Organisations With Indigenous Money** - DO NOT seek to ignore the single largest criticism of the IAS ie the fact that half of the funding does not go to Aboriginal organisations, but instead actively work to redress this most fundamental issue;
- **Make Culture Visible and Valuable** - The government can persist with its emphasis on Education, Employment and Safe Communities, but as long as the IAS is a program with a \$1.0 billion annual allocation and allocates a sum of \$9.0 million to the Safe and Supportive Communities Stream, no real and meaningful advancement in Aboriginal outcomes will in fact occur;
- **Critical Aboriginal Investments Must All Be Upstream Investments** – As a nation we expend over \$30 billion annually on expenditure related to Aboriginal people. Mainstream agencies make truly massive investments in to downstream expenditures on prisons, social security, dialysis units, psychiatrists and counsellors. Indigenous expenditures must not replicate that model but must instead be entirely focused on upstream and preventative programs which are primarily provided by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. Within that, culturally based programs will be critical in delivering positive outcomes

These themes are explored in more depth in the attached document from KALACC.

Regards



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1. Make Culture Visible and Valuable

On page 40 of the *2011 Social Justice Report*, Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda writes as follows:

(ii) Culture: a gap in the policy space

I have an ongoing concern that recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and cultural differences is too frequently confined to the margins of the policy development and implementation process.

Within the scope of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the government persists with its emphasis on Education, Employment and Safe Communities. KALACC understands and accepts that this is a political reality and that nothing will change that reality any time soon.

But at present, this reality, through the IAS, replicates and perpetuates the same reality that Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda referred to in 2011. If anything, culture has become even more peripheral and invisible, if that is possible. We understand that the Indigenous Advancement Strategy has an annual allocation in the order of \$1.0 billion. Out of that total allocation, a sum of around \$50 million is provided to the Culture and Capability Stream. However, the bulk of those funds are allocated towards existing large investments in to broadcasting and in to support for the Healing Foundation. That leaves a remainder of \$9.0 million available for applicants to apply under the Culture and Capability Stream. In that context, it is hard to imagine how culture could be any more peripheral.

Outside of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, we note as follows:

- The previous Arts Minister, Senator Brandis, instituted major cuts to the Australia Council for the Arts;
- The previous Arts Minister, Senator Brandis, terminated the Indigenous Culture support program.

The outcome of these two decisions is that:

- From 01 July 2016, no Government agency has policy or funding responsibility for the support of the traditional cultural practices of the world's oldest living culture;
- From 01 July 2016, no Government agency has policy or funding responsibility for the support of the core operational costs of Aboriginal cultural centres;
- Minister Brandis mandated that none of the funding cuts to the Australia Council come from the \$100 million per annum provided to the 28 Major Performing Arts Companies. Only one of these companies is Indigenous – Bangarra. Thus, all of the funding cuts to the Australia Council come from the \$100 million per annum allocated to the Small to Medium Arts Sector, which is where all but one Aboriginal cultural organize exist.

As long as culture remains invisible, progress in Indigenous outcomes will not be made.

This is not just a KALACC article of faith. It is a view shared by the Productivity Commission of Australia. [See next page]

2. Fund 'Things That Work'

Fund Indigenous Organisations With Indigenous Money

Critical Aboriginal Investments Must All Be Upstream Investments

Seek Out and then Listen to Advice from the Productivity Commission

The IAS guideline review document state as follows:

- Performance against most indicators still lags way behind mainstream;
- Lack of outcomes has entrenched dependency and contributed to social ills in families and communities
- Countless reports have dealt with the underlying causes
- The **2010 Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure** found that past approaches had failed and new approaches were needed to address Indigenous 'disadvantage'

It is the Productivity Commission of Australia which publishes the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Reports and the COAG Indigenous Expenditure Review Reports. In this context, one might have expected the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to contact the Productivity Commission for advice on the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Seemingly, this did not occur:

Hi Wes

I was not involved in providing any input to PMC on the IAS guidelines and am not aware of anyone else from the Productivity Commission being involved.

Regards

Peter

Peter Daniel | Research Manager | Secretariat, Review of Government Service Provision

Productivity Commission

The IAS annual expenditure is in the order of \$1.0 billion. Mr Geoff Richardson said on Tuesday that Indigenous – specific expenditure [sourced from PMC] represented only about 8% of total Government expenditure on Aboriginal affairs. And if one widens again to the scope of the total national expenditure, we spend \$30 billion annually on expenditure related to Aboriginal people. In this context, it is obvious that the expenditure of the \$1.0 billion of IAS funds has to be carefully targeted so as to maximize outcomes for the broader Commonwealth Government investment and for the broader national investment.

Section 2.2 of the **2014 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report** states as follows:

Culture and wellbeing

Two clear messages from consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are that:

- no single indicator can adequately reflect the importance of culture in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- culture underpins many of the outcomes across the framework, and the links across the strategic areas for action, and between these areas and the COAG targets and headline indicators, are particularly strong.

However, as we can see from page 3 of this present document, far from culture underpinning outcomes across the OID framework, when it comes to policy development and to funding, culture is at best peripheral, if not entirely invisible.

Section 3.6 of the **2014 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report** states as follows:

Virtually all the case studies in this report rely on government support to some extent — although many organisations are seeking greater financial diversity, to provide the independence to run programs as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians want them to be run.

Resources is one of the key determinants of good governance (see section 5.4), and ongoing government support is closely related to this. Many programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are funded as short-term pilots with no guaranteed continuity. Several successful programs included as ‘Things That Work’ in previous editions of this report no longer exist, because government support has been withdrawn.

In addition, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including successful organisations with long track records, are funded through multiple, short term government contracts that increase red tape and uncertainty, and place pressure on capacity and sustainability.

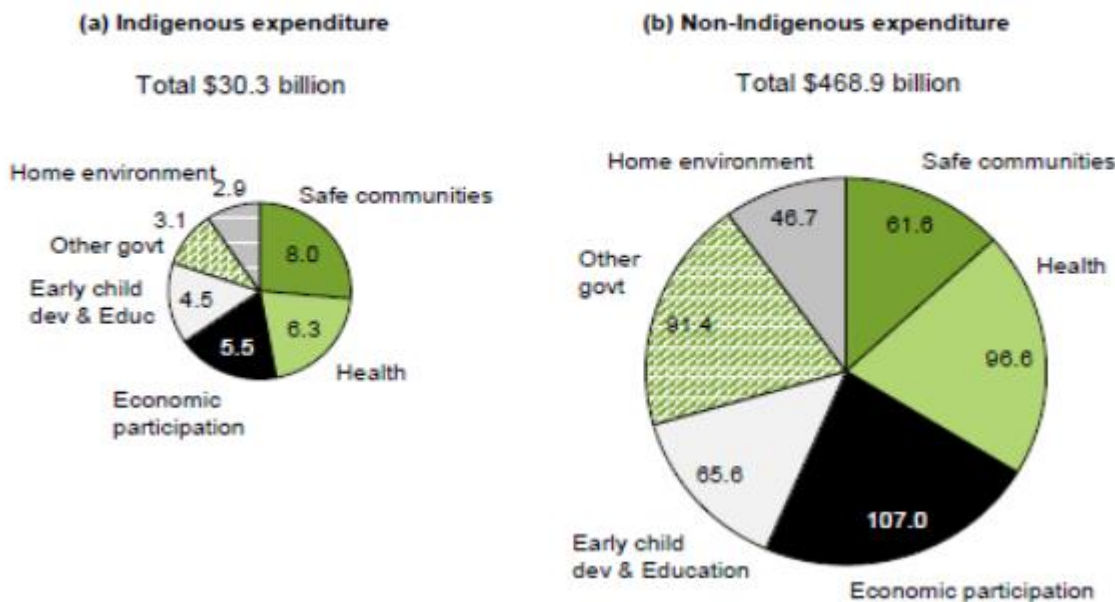
KALACC notes in particular as follows:

Several successful programs included as ‘Things That Work’ in previous editions of this report no longer exist, because government support has been withdrawn

What we see here is that the Productivity Commission states that a deficit model of social investment needs to be replaced by a strengths based approach towards Indigenous Advancement and that culture needs to be fundamental and central to such an agenda. But the current reality is that culture is entirely peripheral to Government planning, policy development and funding. The Productivity Commission provides us with exemplars of national best practice through its ‘Things That Work’ case studies, but several such programs no longer exist because government funding has been withdrawn. And we note that on the basis of correspondence received from the Productivity Commission, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet did not contact the Productivity Commission to seek its view on the restructuring of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

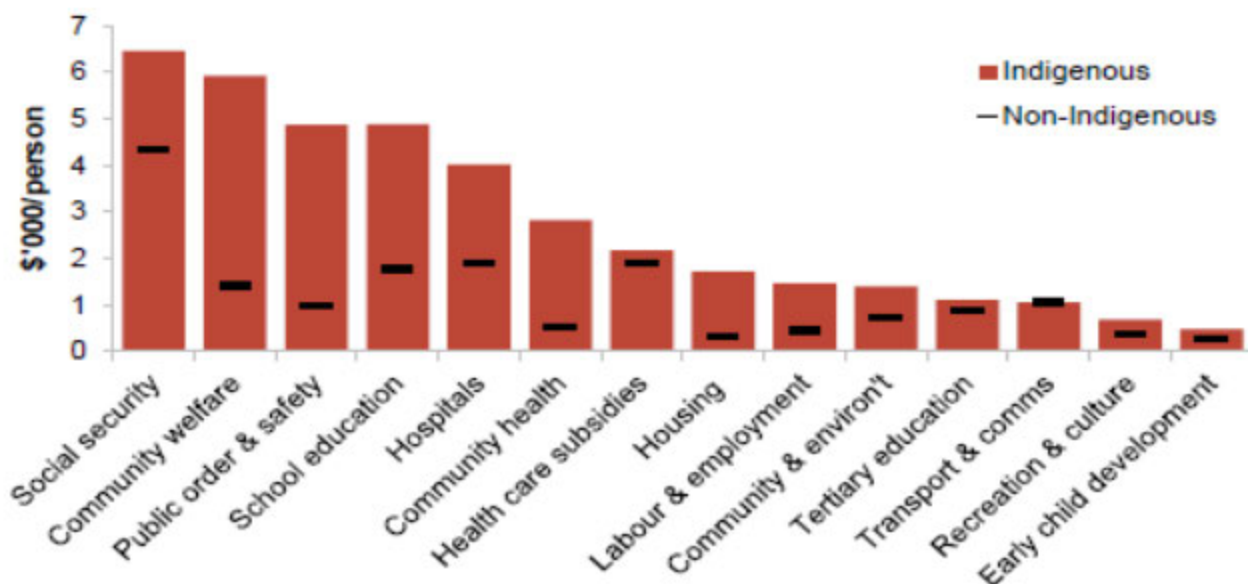
On page 12 of the **2014 COAG Indigenous Expenditure Report** one can find the following diagram [Figure 2]. This diagram shows that \$8.0 billion of \$30.3 billion is spent on Safe and Supportive Communities. But, as we know, that mainly means police, prisons and courts – not arts and culture

Figure 2 Australian Government plus State and Territory Government direct expenditure, 2012-13 (\$ billion)^{a,b}



If we want to look more specifically at Arts and Culture, then there is a further diagram [Figure 3] contained on page 15 of the **2014 COAG Indigenous Expenditure Report**:

Figure 3 Australian Government *plus* State and Territory Government direct expenditure on selected service areas, 2012-13^{a,b}



What one notices immediately from Figure 3 are three things:

- The graph is presented in the form of '000s/ per person, and not as national gross expenditures;
- That culture is not a stand – alone item ie it is lumped in with Recreation [and presumably sport];
- Recreation and Culture comes in second last [ahead of Early child Development] and a figure is provided for \$'000/ per person.

To interrogate the data more fully, one must access Table 3 within the Productivity Commission **2014 Indigenous Expenditure Report** online database

<http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/indigenous-expenditure-report/indigenous-expenditure-report-2014#data-tables>

There is a degree to which the data on cultural expenditure is inscrutable [for the reasons outlined above] but it is a reasonable estimation that [excluding broadcasting and film services] as a nation we expend up to \$214 million as a total aggregate on Aboriginal arts and culture [out of a total national Indigenous expenditure of \$30 Billion plus]. 214 million goes in to 30 billion some 140 times so this would represent an investment of 0.7 percent ie less than one percent of our national Indigenous investment is in to Indigenous arts and culture. And that figure even includes capital works expenditures and it includes some recreational figures which cannot be disaggregated from arts and cultural expenditures. So the national expenditure on Aboriginal culture [excluding broadcasting, film services and capital works] sits somewhere between – \$52.4 million [Ministry for Arts and Australia Council for the Arts expenditures on Aboriginal culture and the arts] and this higher figure of \$214 million [based on Table 3 in the online database].

The great majority of the \$8.0 billion national indigenous expenditure on the Safe and Supportive Communities Building Block is expended on the Justice system and provides the outcome of incarcerating Aboriginal people at ever more alarming rates.

Good outcomes for Aboriginal people will not be achieved until programs like the Indigenous Advancement Strategy are used to reverse this pattern of national expenditure and to prioritise investments in to culturally based, upstream, preventative, community owned and controlled programs.

This is KALACC's view. And our views align closely with what the Productivity Commission tells us in its **2014 *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report***. To improve outcomes, what should be done is:

- Seek Out and then Listen to Advice from the Productivity Commission
- Fund 'Things That Work' – exemplars of national best practice, as identified by the Productivity Commission;
- Fund Indigenous Organisations With Indigenous Money – thereby empowering Aboriginal people to respond to Aboriginal issues;
- Critical Aboriginal Investments Must All Be Upstream Investments – we already spend most of the \$30 billion annually on downstream programs and we don't need to spend any more in that direction. [This is also a major theme of the National Mental Health Commission in its November 2014 ***Review of Mental Health Services in Australia***]

3. IAS Future Collaboration

IAS Selection Criteria

IAS Eight Key Principles

As it stands, the current IAS Guidelines review process fails to address the key structural shortcomings of the IAS, and instead focuses on second order and less important process issues such as improving the funding application process.

This was noted by a number of participants at the community consultation session held on Tuesday 10 November. The response from the community participants was to endeavor to address these structural issues through the framework of the consultation processes.

KALACC notes as follows from the IAS Guidelines Review document provided by PMC:

Government established eight key principles to guide the new approach:

- Communities and people must be at the centre of design and delivery
- 2014-15 was a transition year to a new approach to engagement and new funding arrangements
- Government investments and effort will focus on three government priorities
- A greater focus on outcomes, impact and sustainability
- Greater flexibility to support locally appropriate initiatives and long term strategies
- A commitment to minimise bureaucracy and reduce red tape
- Funding will respond to need and ensure it is provided for outcomes government should fund
- Higher levels of accountability for Government and providers

KALACC also notes as follows from the slideshow which PMC used on Tuesday 10 November:

Future Collaboration:

- Place based approaches
- Moving to the outcomes/ impact model
- Harnessing the mainstream

In order for the community to seek to address its concerns about the structural problems with the IAS whilst working within the consultation framework provided to us, part of the community feedback to Government on Tuesday 10 November was as follows:

Revising the IAS Selection Criteria

- Ensure the 8 key principles espoused by Government are actualized within the IAS processes by ensuring that these principles are actively built in to the guidelines and the selection criteria upon which funding decisions are made;
- The Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory umbrella group has a set of 8 principles by which non – Indigenous organisations can work effectively with Aboriginal communities. Principles such as these should also be actively built in to the IAS guidelines and criteria;
- If Government abandoned the concept of funding core operational costs of Aboriginal organisations many years ago, then a core objective of the IAS should be to build the capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal organisations;
- ‘Quality’ – there was considerable unease about the concept of community consultation. [The Law Reform Commission of Western Australia in its September 2006 report suggested 9 principles for working with Aboriginal communities. ‘Consultation’ was just one of those. Others included ‘Community Empowerment’ and ‘Community Ownership of Service Delivery’. See attachment to this present document] ;
- ‘Effectiveness’ – there was unease in regards to the words ‘commitment to employ’. Community members thought that it would be better to refer to recruiting, retaining and developing Indigenous staff. Similarly, in terms of the concept of ‘sustainable’ it was felt that there needed to be a stronger affirmation of an intent to increase the capacity of Aboriginal organisations;
- ‘Need’ – Community members felt that the ‘need’ had to be understood, but so too there had to be an understanding of how to respond to the need.

In summary, for the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to actually assist in the advancement of Aboriginal people, then the Strategy needs to empower Aboriginal people. This can never be achieved whilst only 50% of Indigenous funding is allocated to Indigenous organisations or whilst culture remains so entirely peripheral to, if not entirely invisible within, both the IAS and the Government’s broader Indigenous policy framework. It is possible to overcome these structural challenges and it is possible to do so by actualizing principles which the Government says that it is committed to, such as:

- Communities and people must be at the centre of design and delivery
- Greater flexibility to support locally appropriate initiatives and long term strategies
- Place based approaches

If the government does in fact enact these principles which it is committed to, then we will see:

- Indigenous expenditure being used to support Indigenous organisations;
- Empowerment of local people to come up with local solutions;
- A strengths based approach to social development, with culture at the heart of identity, well- being and empowerment;
- An end to the intractability of social indicators that never show any improvements and the start of some genuine, deep rooted, tangible and measurable improvements in Aboriginal advancement and wellbeing.

Appendix Two: ABC News Story on Closing the Gap, 09 February 2016

Closing the Gap 'doomed to fail' without more Indigenous input, activist Patrick Dodson says

By the National Reporting Team's [Natasha Robinson](#) and [Anna Henderson](#)
Updated 49 minutes ago Tue 9 Feb 2016, 6:29am

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-09/closing-the-gap-doomed-to-fail-without-more-indigenous-input/7149442>



Photo: Patrick Dodson says there is currently a vacuum in Indigenous policy

(AAP: Mick Tsikas)

Related Story: Greens urge Turnbull to consider treaty with Indigenous people

Related Story: NT Government unveils own version of Closing the Gap strategy

Related Story: Closing the gap targets a waste of time without inclusion in 'real economy': Mundine

Map: Australia

Aboriginal leaders are calling for a new compact with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull amid warnings the Government's signature Closing the Gap policy has slipped seriously off track.

KEY POINTS:

- Activist Patrick Dodson says it is probably time to scrap the Closing the Gap policy
- He says it will not work unless Indigenous groups have more involvement
- The eighth Closing the Gap report comes out on Wednesday

Yawuru leader Patrick Dodson has questioned whether the policy aimed at dispelling Indigenous disadvantage should continue, a day ahead of the release of the Prime Minister's eighth report on progress under Closing the Gap.

"Closing the Gap hasn't got a buy-in from Indigenous communities," Mr Dodson said.

"There's a lot of aspiration and maybe good intention, but unless you get participation from Indigenous entities at a local level and community level, it's not going to work.

"Without Indigenous participation it's going to be doomed to fail and all we'll see is another record of some achievements in some minor areas, but we're basically just changing the tablecloth on a table without really realising that the white ants are eating the legs out of the table, and we have to restructure the whole nature of our relationship."

Asked whether it was time to scrap the policy, Mr Dodson said: "I think it probably is."

The Yawuru leader said Aboriginal people wanted substantive recognition as part of a settlement process or treaty, rather than a government accounting exercise on reducing disadvantage.

But Mr Dodson said there was currently a vacuum in Indigenous policy, with Mr Turnbull affording the area a relatively low profile.

"I think it's a problem if the leader of the country is not paying attention to these significant issues that are affecting Indigenous peoples in this country," Mr Dodson said.

"So unless Mr Turnbull and his Government has some other methodology, they need to put it on the table so that Indigenous participation can take place. Without that, the ideas around improving the quality of life for Indigenous peoples are going to be fraught with difficulty.

"We haven't had a political expression around treaty since Bob Hawke made the announcement back at Barunga back in the '80s.

"There's been no political leader prepared to come out and say 'we want to enter into a treaty with the Indigenous people'.

"But the Indigenous people are now saying 'we want some kind of settlement, some kind of treaty with you', but where's the political will about that? That doesn't exist at the moment, or it seems to be very tentative."

PROGRESS ON SOME AREAS OF CLOSING THE GAP 'STALLING'

Mr Dodson has been joined by fellow Aboriginal leaders who have called for greater engagement between the Government and Aboriginal communities.

Former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma was one of the original architects of the Close the Gap campaign, which aimed to eliminate the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

That movement is an Aboriginal-led campaign, as distinct from the Government's Closing the Gap policy.

The Aboriginal Close the Gap campaign is celebrating its 10th year.

"Ten years we've been going, and we've only increased our work, some of the same people that joined me in 2006 are still with us today," Mr Calma said.

"We will still go on, we know it's a generational target we need to look at."

But Mr Calma said goodwill between Aboriginal people and governments had suffered damaging blows over the past decade.

Whilst politicians procrastinate, people still die.

Tom Calma, former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

"Governments have waxed and waned over time, there's been inconsistent policy application, funding for programs has stopped and started and that is not good," Mr Calma said.

"When there's changes in policy directions, it might be the stroke of a pen in Canberra, but that has a massive effect out in communities, and they've got to go and cope with that change.

"We need to get them to sign up again to the statement of intent and say they are going to work together on these policies and programs, and they are going to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

Mr Calma said there had some good progress under the Closing the Gap policy, especially in infant mortality and Year 12 completion. But progress in other areas had stalled.

"It's stalling in some regards and in other regards it's very positive," Mr Calma said.

"The gains that we were seeing have in the past six or so months maybe stalled because of changes of government policy and funding.

"That's why I urge government, as we do in the Close the Gap campaign, to have a steady keel, and let the programs come out."

Mr Calma singled out a national policy on suicide prevention — proposed and funded with \$17.8 million by the Gillard government and now on hold — as one example of stalled progress.

"We don't have an implementation of the suicide prevention strategy," Mr Calma said.

"Whilst politicians procrastinate, people still die."

Aboriginal former magistrate Sue Gordon headed the Northern Territory intervention into remote Indigenous communities in 2007.

She is now president of the board of the Polly (Graham) Farmer Foundation, and believes Closing the Gap does not take account of grassroots progress.

"I think the community get a bit tired of hearing closing the gap this or closing the gap there But people in the community don't really understand what it's about. It's really aimed at those people who work in the Aboriginal industry for want a better word," she said.

'ALL MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE OUT LISTENING'

A spokesman for the Prime Minister said Mr Turnbull "has met and spoken to several Indigenous leaders and people, and will continue to seek a diverse range of views as we progress Indigenous policy matters".

"This includes on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians," the spokesman said.

"The Prime Minister has met with and spoken to Mr Dodson several times in the months since becoming Prime Minister.

"We acknowledge that Closing the Gap is a long-term agenda, and we need to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to get the best outcomes.

"All members of the Government are out listening, and responding, to the needs of their communities. This includes Indigenous people."

The Prime Minister's Closing the Gap progress report 2016 will be tabled in Parliament tomorrow.

Topics: aboriginal, community-and-society, indigenous-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander, health, health-policy, federal-government, government-and-politics, australia

The waiting relatives sit in mostly silence, and can't leave the community, or even the grounds, until they have their sons back. They lounge around on mattresses killing time, talk quietly among themselves, pass cigarettes and occasionally snooze in the shade of the blistering sun.

Across at camp, as the boys go through their secret initiations, the parents, sisters, brother, uncles, aunts and grandparents often take part in dancing and singing, mostly after dark. Sometimes they will dance all night, to the point of exhaustion. Everyone is encouraged to take part, especially in the dancing, but if you don't want to you don't have to.

Those young ones who don't are tasked with preparing food for the elders and making sure the camp is clean and being run properly.

Finally, after a week of 40 plus degree-days, word comes that the boys are being painted up at their bush camp and being prepared for their return to their parents. To didgeridoo and clap sticks, the ceremony begins. The young men make their way to the grounds and shuffle in in cover of foliage. From the shuffling bushes they emerge one by one, guided and placed sitting in front of their mothers. Some wailing begins, but mostly its quiet and sombre.

Some walk to their families tall and proud, with shoulders back, while some, mainly the smaller ones look upset and anxious to see their loved ones.

Then after more dancing by some who have travelled from Kununurra more than 600 km away, the young men are then led out onto the grounds in front of the gathering. The air is heavy with smoking eucalypt as they begin the last part of the ceremony that signifies a breaking of their childhood links to their parents.

Firstly, they pick up a stick and break it, then take it to a log, where they use a tomahawk to again splinter it. A few yards away, they are watered down by a senior lawman, and finally they must step over a smoking bush, which finishes the process of separation.

Fathers and mothers are then invited to go through the same process, which they readily do in silence. There is an overwhelming sense of occasion and seriousness, but once the ceremony is over, proud parents and relatives – and relieved young men – embrace and chat and laugh, like a normal white high school graduation in suburban Australia. Some take photos on their Ipads and iPhones.

They are the class of 2016. They have chosen to continue the traditions that go back thousands of years, and although some of them now must return to their homes to prepare for school – from Fitzroy Crossing to the best private schools in the country – they burst with pride and achievement.

Boys have become men and begin the journey and responsibilities of custodians of their tradition.

Appendix Three: News Story from The Australian Newspaper, 22 November 2008, relating to the Northern Territory Intervention

Soldier's sympathy intervenes

Paul Toohey, The Australian, November 22, 2008

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/archive/in-depth/soldiers-sympathy-intervenes/story-e6frgd9f-1111118105916>

MAJOR-GENERAL Dave Chalmers is leaving the Northern Territory a profoundly changed man. For the past 18 months he has headed the NT emergency response, mindful of the potent symbolism-- attracting the scorn of some -- of being a senior soldier storming through the Aboriginal north.

Chalmers has never abused that position. Instead, as he heads back to Defence headquarters in Canberra, he finds himself believing that the most important thing Aborigines can do to find their future is to maintain their culture.

"Over time, we as a society have undervalued indigenous culture and in many places it's been lost," he says. "And where it's been lost, people have lost their compass, they've lost their framework of life. It's not being replaced by a mainstream Australian framework, and people are in limbo. We need to be paying a lot more attention to traditional healers and traditional lawmakers, the role they played, and play, in people's lives."

Most of all, Chalmers says, governments need to offer hope. "There's nothing worse than going to a community where the level of apathy is profound, (where) people see no point in engaging with government because government continually changes its mind, government is confusing and, anyway, I've got no job and I've got no prospects.

"Giving people a sense of purpose and hope is important. None of it is simple, but that doesn't mean that it's not something we shouldn't attempt."

Chalmers was not seconded from the military to talk policy. He's been the Government's policy enforcer. But enforcer seems too strong a word for him. "I wouldn't be human if I hadn't been profoundly affected by the experience," says the fit-looking 50-year-old.

He engages in unerring eye contact and has total confidence that the intervention is doing the right thing by Aborigines.

The stories of Aboriginal fleeing for the sandhills to escape his soldiers were untrue. But there was fear and worry, even though the army detained not one Aboriginal person. The Australian Defence Force's role was logistics, but there can be no denying the intervention was shock and awe. Chalmers thinks it has roused white city folks from a deep sleep.

"The most significant thing that has happened out of the emergency response is that the national conscience has been pricked," he says. "I look at the (news) stories over the last 20 years. Nothing's changed, because mainstream Australia has been able to turn a blind eye to the problems that exist.

"They, for the most part, have not wanted to confront the fact that we have Australians living in Third World conditions in a First World country. The first thing that's been achieved is a much greater willingness among the general Australian population to do something about the problem."

Asked if he could have envisaged that when former indigenous affairs minister Mal Brough appointed him last year, Chalmers says: "I think I have a much deeper understanding of the problems that confront indigenous Australians than I did 18 months ago.

"My past work has mainly involved working in culturally sensitive situations, in Aceh (where he was one of the first Australians on the ground) and Timor, which left me with tremendous sympathy and great respect for the way they go about their lives."

He says he has developed the same level of respect for Aborigines.

"Absolutely. Personally, I've come on a journey. My understanding was superficial and -- I have to say it -- my lack of respect for them was (the same as that of) many Australians."

Chalmers is not leaving with a sense of disgust for slum towns of the north, or for their troubled residents. His strong view is that the atrocious conditions represent the failures of successive governments. While distressed by encountering Aboriginal women with busted eyebrows and lips, and hearing stories of rape and killing, he has avoided settling on a one-dimensional view of Aborigines.

Asked if things had improved in the 73 territory communities seized under the intervention, he says: "I think the evidence says yes, but it's a conditional yes. While we've made tremendous progress in many areas, some of that has just highlighted how deep the social dysfunction, the lack of services, the problems people face are, and how far we have to go to overcome them."

Talking of the classic old bearded Aboriginal bush men, of whom he has photos on his office wall in Darwin, Chalmers says: "They have rich life experience but somehow they're bewildered by what happened. How did

the respect they were held in evaporate? I have by no means a thorough understanding of Aboriginal culture, just glimmerings.

"We as Australians should value it."

We did not quite expect this of Chalmers.

"Possibly not," he agrees. "There's a stereotype around the military, and people use that to evoke a response around the stereotype.

"I'm just like anyone else. You go out to communities and you can't help but be moved by the circumstances people confront in their day-to-day life. To go to a community and see children who exhibit all the symptoms of neglect, whose noses are running, whose hair is discoloured through deficiency, who are undernourished ... To see kids who have no spark. To walk into some communities where the sense of despair is almost palpable."

It's not all bad. Last week Chalmers was in Wallace Rockhole, in central Australia, where he saw bright children, enthusiastic school attendance, concerned parents and functioning government services. It was uplifting.

For the present generation of illiterate and alcoholic parents, he has no answers. No one really does. "There are things we can do, but their lives are a salutary lesson of what happens when we lose culture and the cultural framework that provides meaning to people's lives. And at the same time we don't provide the services that other Australians expect. We've got to offer the next generation hope."

Chalmers thinks the intervention has delivered much. There is income management and he has connected government departments that previously acted "completely independently, with no visibility of what others are doing".

His task was to usher in the intervention, but what he never expected to find -- which soon became one of his priorities -- was community stores with poor food. He talks of the importance of food security.

All stores have been independently assessed on their quality of food and governance. Corrective measures have been applied and there are now 72 licensed stores, which does not mean they sell alcohol but that they offer, typically, 900 product lines compared with at most 100 before. Now they are considered good enough to accept the swipe cards provided under the income management regime.

Chalmers thinks Queensland indigenous educator Chris Sarra may have overstated his position in this newspaper last week about the "white trash" occupying Aboriginal communities, and points diplomatically to hard-working teachers, police and nurses. But he clearly shares some of Sarra's concerns.

"There are also people who have found their way into communities and become self-appointed spokesmen, gatekeepers, often the opinion shapers for communities, and those are the people I find to be extremely frustrating," he says. "They're running the community store or the art centre for their own personal benefit, living off the disadvantage of the community for their own benefit, so they'll work hard to prevent the community from advancing or changing or becoming empowered."

On the subject of child sex abuse, Chalmers is non-sensationalist. "I would say the rate of child sex abuse is higher in indigenous communities than it is in mainstream Australia. I'm not in a position to say how much higher it is.

"The emergency response is a holistic attempt to address these problems. Looking at housing, health education and employment, taken together, if we can make progress in building sufficient, quality housing, we will have gone a long way."

Chalmers is going back to Canberra to a new job: commander, joint capability management division. He leaves believing governments are genuine in their desire to effect change.

"I think the evidence is on the public record of real, genuine commitment to doing something about the circumstances indigenous people find themselves in."

Asked if Aborigines have responded adequately to these changes, Chalmers chooses compassion over blame.

"That's a difficult question and the simplistic answer is no. One of the things we need to work with Aboriginal people on is individual and community responsibility. Why doesn't that sense of responsibility exist now? You could easily get into blaming them for the circumstances they now find themselves in.

"The truth is, people find themselves in those circumstances for reasons that 200 years of history have created, and for reasons of failed government policy of years and years."

IAS Expenditure Diagram – Tabled in Senate Estimates Hearings <http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=ab896804-623e-4185-b071-2c097fec4b08>



INDIGENOUS ADVANCEMENT STRATEGY (IAS) 2014 GRANT FUNDING ROUND SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

IAS Announcement

The IAS commenced in 2014/15 and is to continue until 2017/18. The Government committed to \$4.9b over the 4 year period.

The IAS is designed to manage a more strategic investment in Indigenous affairs that focuses on getting children to school, adults into work and making communities safer.



IAS 2014 Grant Funding Round Opening Announcement

On 6 September 2014, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs announced the first grant round for the IAS would open on 8 September 2014 and close on 17 October 2014.

IAS 2014 Grant Funding Round Announcement – 4 March 2015

\$860m

On 4 March 2015, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs announced that \$860m had been allocated to organisations under the IAS.

964 Organisations and 1,297 projects

IAS 2014 Grant Funding Round Announcement – 27 May 2015

\$1.0b

On 27 May 2015, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs announced that the funding granted under the IAS has increased to \$1b.

996 Organisations and >1,350 projects

IAS 2014 Grant Funding Round – Data Analysis

996 ORGANISATIONS

> 1350 PROJECTS

RECOMMENDED ORGANISATIONS

INDIGENOUS | 46%

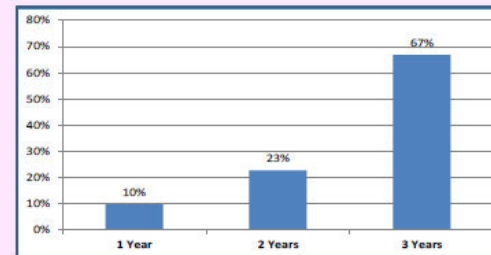
NON-INDIGENOUS | 54%

RECOMMENDED FUNDING

INDIGENOUS | 55%

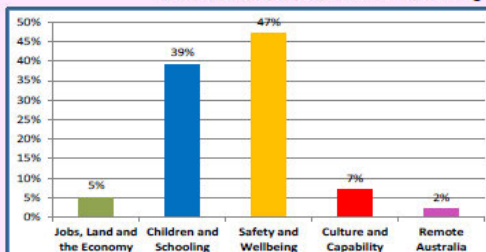
NON-INDIGENOUS | 45%

> 80% of IAS grant recipients have been offered a funding agreement of two or more years

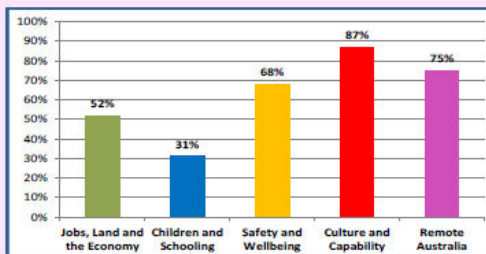


Percentage of Agreements by Duration²

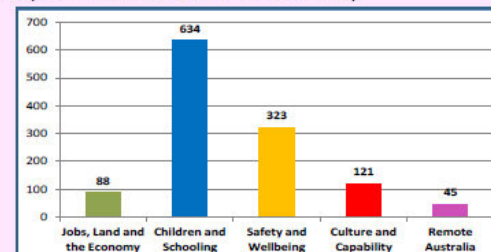
Summary of information apportioned by each of the 5 Programmes for the IAS 2014 Grant Funding Round (for the duration of FY15-FY18)



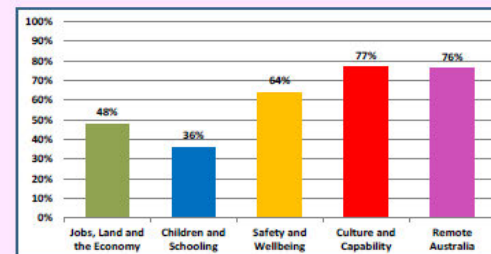
Grant Round Funding Split by Programme



Funding Percentage for Indigenous Organisations by Programme



Number of Organisations by Programme¹



Percentage of Indigenous Organisations by Programme

Note 1: Organisations can be represented in more than 1 Programme.
Note 2: Duration reflects the full agreement period for an organisation.

Prime Minister's Introduction – 2017 CTG Report

<http://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/prime-ministers-introduction>

This year we mark important milestones in the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Australian Government.

It is 50 years since the 1967 Referendum which saw Australians overwhelmingly agree the Commonwealth had a duty to make laws to benefit our First Australians.

The past year saw the 50th anniversary of the Wave Hill Walk Off, in which Gurindji people petitioned the Governor-General for the return of some of their traditional land, and the 40th anniversary of the passage of Aboriginal land rights legislation for the Northern Territory.

In June last year I was honoured to hand the title deeds for some 52,000 hectares of land on the Cox Peninsula near Darwin to the Larrakia people as part of the Kenbi land claim settlement. Theirs is a story that epitomises the survival and resilience of our First Australians, and of the Larrakia people.

This ninth Closing the Gap report showcases real successes being achieved across the country—by individuals, communities, organisations and government.

For example, in response to the Prison to Work Report, we are collaborating nationally to explore ways to support reintegration of Indigenous prisoners into communities, address the barriers to employment and improve the coordination of services across and within all jurisdictions.

We have taken great strides in progressing financial independence for Indigenous Australians through the Commonwealth's Indigenous Procurement Policy. In its first year, 493 Indigenous businesses were awarded \$284.2 million in Commonwealth contracts. State and territory governments have agreed to explore similar policies in their own jurisdictions and the Indigenous business sector will continue to grow.

While we celebrate the successes we cannot shy away from the stark reality that we are not seeing sufficient national progress on the Closing the Gap targets. While many successes are being achieved locally, as a nation, we are only on track to meet one of the seven Closing the Gap targets this year. Although we are not on track to meet the ambitious targets we have set, we must stay the course.

We will continue to focus on key priorities—from preconception and the early years through school, providing a positive start to life, which of course opens opportunities for further study and employment. The high rates of suicide and disproportionately high rates of incarceration among our First Australians are issues that all governments, in partnership with community, need to work tirelessly to resolve.

We have listened to calls from the community. We will not shy away from our goal of supporting equal opportunity for First Australians. This is our national responsibility. Our commitment to the end goal will not waiver, but we must do things differently. We must build on what is working, and change what isn't working.

Twelve months ago, when I tabled my first Closing the Gap report in Parliament, I made a commitment that my Government would do things with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, not do things to them and I am pleased to say we have made some real gains in that regard.

We are building a new way of working together with Indigenous leaders and their communities to create local solutions—putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the centre of decision-making in their regions.

As I have said before, our greatest strides in Closing the Gap will come when we work together—all levels of government, business and the community.

The Empowered Communities model is now in eight regions across the country, in addition to other local decision-making models such as the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly in western New South Wales. Over the coming year we will continue to build the capacity and capability of communities and government to truly engage with each other and to jointly make informed decisions.

As part of the Government's commitment to enable Indigenous leaders to develop local solutions, we have a responsibility to measure the success or otherwise of our policies and programs, and adjust where needed. And sharing this knowledge and evidence with communities enables local decision-making. We need to be patient and acknowledge that these things take time—but we are determined to get it right.

We must also recognise culture as paramount to finding solutions that respect, acknowledge and support identity.

We are on a path of an ambitious reform agenda for Indigenous affairs. Changing the way in which Governments work together, and with communities to deliver better outcomes.

I am heartened that we have bipartisan support to improve the wellbeing of our First Australians, and that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has recently agreed to work together, and with Indigenous Australians, to refresh the Closing the Gap agenda, emphasising collaboration and acknowledging that one size does not fit all.

With the tenth anniversary of Closing the Gap approaching in 2018, it is timely to look at what we have learned. What has worked and where we need to focus efforts to drive greater change. Over the decade there has been greater collaboration and national focus on Indigenous outcomes than ever before. This will continue, this must continue.

Last year, as part of my commitment to bring Indigenous Affairs to the forefront of government, I established the Indigenous Policy Committee of Cabinet. The Committee will support better engagement with Cabinet Ministers, their portfolios and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through collaboration with the Indigenous Advisory Council.

With the term of the inaugural Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council having recently ended, I take this opportunity to thank all Council members for their hard work and dedication to improving the lives of Australia's First Peoples. I look forward to building on that legacy with the new members for the Council's second term.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait leaders have said for a long time, it is not all about what you seek to achieve, it is equally about how you achieve it. The ends we seek from our efforts are non-negotiable; the means by which we achieve them can differ but must always be in concert with the wishes of Indigenous people.

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP

Prime Minister of Australia