



Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee

Communique No. 7 – Quarter 1 2023

Meeting with the Department of Justice – Corporate Executive Committee

The Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (AJAC) kicked off 2023 by welcoming Elders from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Elizabeth Ellis and Daisy Ward, as new AJAC members. Elizabeth is an internationally recognised expert on Aboriginal languages and a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from the Australian National University. She will share the position with her sister Daisy Ward, who was the recipient of the 2020 WA Department of Education Director General's Women of Achievement award.

During our meeting, Elizabeth shared with us some wisdom from her peoples' traditional models of caring and creating accountability for young people. We talked about the ways in which traditional wisdom should closely inform the way we design models of care for young people in the Justice system. Thank you, Lizzie, for sharing your knowledge and insight.

We were very pleased to meet with the Department of Justice Corporate Executive Committee (CEC) for the first time, to discuss the Department's efforts to increase and further develop its Aboriginal workforce, which is one of the AJAC's four strategic priority areas.

The Department is currently working toward an aspirational target of 7.5 percent Aboriginal employment across its total workforce. The current size of the Department's Aboriginal workforce is double that of the public sector average, however, the Director General noted that there is more work to be done to achieve the aspirational target.

We advised the CEC on key initiatives to help achieve this goal, including improved access to staff regional housing, improved education and training opportunities for young Aboriginal people, and access to technology.



From L-R: Daniel English, George Hayden, Dr Adam Tomison, Tony Clark, Joslyn Eades-Tass, Jim August, Geoff Lawn, Pauline Bagdonavicius, Elizabeth Ellis, Joanne Stampalia, Mike Reynolds, Alison Jackson, Ella Smith, John Byrne, Kylie Maj and Patricia Mwiragua

Consultation

Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy

Jill Taylor and Mark Hardwick from Psychological Health Services, within Corrective Services, briefed us on the Department's draft Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy (ASPS), which aligns with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy. We advised Mark and Jill about cultural considerations for the draft ASPS. It is expected that further AJAC consultation on this work will take place in 2023.

Dandjoo Bidi-Ak (Care and Protection) Court

Magistrate Wendy Hughes and her team at the Dandjoo Bidi-Ak (Care and Protection) Court attended our meeting to discuss the court's approach and achievements, and to discuss the establishment of an Aboriginal Reference Group to provide cultural guidance.

We applaud and acknowledge the innovative and culturally responsive work done by Magistrate Hughes and her team in a very challenging and complex environment, and we think there is a lot the Justice system can learn from this team about Aboriginal-led and adaptable court models.

Department of Communities – Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group

We also met with the Department of Communities Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group (ASAG) which was established in late 2022. The AJAC and ASAG members explored opportunities for collaboration between the groups to develop a coordinated approach on issues relevant to both Departments. The AJAC provided ASAG members with a summary of the AJAC's journey so far, and members discussed the role both advisory groups can play to influence positive change within government.

WA – Justice Policy Partnership

AJAC Members were briefed on the progress of the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP), established by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap. The JPP is a national working group that seeks to transform justice systems through genuine partnerships between Aboriginal communities and all levels of government. The JPP is focussed on delivering holistic and long-lasting structural actions to meet Targets under Outcomes 10 and 11 of the *2020 Closing the Gap National Agreement* to reduce Aboriginal overrepresentation in the justice system.