

Communique - Meeting No. 006/2020

22 & 23 July 2020

The Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia (AACWA) held Meeting No. 006 on Wednesday 22 July and Thursday 23 July 2020 at Dumas House in West Perth.

Due to the COVID-19 travel and social distancing restrictions, some members joined the meeting via videoconference. The Co-Chairs, Ms Gail Beck and Mr Martin (Marty) Sibosado, chaired the meeting.

Key items discussed and considered by the Council included the following:

Aboriginal Advisory Council Communications Strategy

The AACWA is continuing preparation of a Communication Strategy to enable effective dissemination of information about Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia.

Presentations by Agencies

A number of presentations were made during the meeting, either providing information or seeking advice in relation to consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders. The presentations were as follows:

Complex Task Team for Remote Aboriginal Communities

In April 2020, the State Emergency Coordinator established a Complex Task Team (CTT) for Remote Aboriginal Communities within the State Pandemic Coordination Centre to provide a cross-agency mechanism for addressing the immediate risks and needs of remote Aboriginal communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CTT continues to provide regular updates to AACWA as a standing agenda item.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet - National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet provided an update to AACWA on progress of the National Agreement for Closing the Gap.

Mental Health Commission – Western Australian Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy

The Mental Health Commission (MHC) is proposing to develop a Western Australian Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy (the Strategy) with Regional Plans. MHC sought input and endorsement from AACWA for the proposed approach to the development of the Strategy and attendant Regional Plans.

Members acknowledged MHC's engagement with AACWA early in the process and encouraged further engagement with Aboriginal health services and community more broadly. Members also recommended capacity building for smaller Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations as part of the Strategy.

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage – Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill

The WA Government is committed to introducing the new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill (the Bill) to replace the current *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*. Consultation on the draft Bill was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, development of the Bill continued in the interim.

Members noted the importance of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage sites and expressed concern regarding the level of protection provided afforded under the proposed Bill. AACWA advised that the proposed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council should be Co-Chaired by a male and female representative to ensure cultural appropriateness.

AACWA nominated two members to be on the 'Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2020 Working Group', facilitated by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.

Infrastructure WA – Aboriginal Engagement

Infrastructure WA (IWA) is developing a State Infrastructure Strategy with completion expected by the end of 2021. As part of this process, IWA is developing a strategy for engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders, to understand the infrastructure issues and opportunities pertaining to their communities

Members noted the release of the Discussion Paper for the State Infrastructure Strategy and the invitation to circulate the paper to their wider networks and submit feedback if desired by 21 August 2020.

Supporting Communities Forum

The Supporting Communities Forum (SCF) is a Government commitment to work with the community services sector to improve delivery of community services and make a difference to vulnerable Western Australians.

The Co-Chairs of the SCF sought feedback from AACWA on issues within the regions and learned experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Co-Chairs also extended an invite for a member of AACWA to attend a future meeting of the SCF.

AACWA acknowledged the success in the quick response to mobilising transport for Aboriginal people to return to community during the pandemic. Members also noted difficulties regarding community self-isolating, and issues relating to income earning, early access to superannuation, and jobseeker reliance.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet – Digital Inclusion in WA

The Office of Digital Government (DGov) within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet presented to AACWA on a draft blueprint – *Digital Inclusion in WA: A Blueprint for a Digitally-Inclusive State* (Blueprint).

The Blueprint outlines a strategy for government, community, and industry to work together to build on existing initiatives and develop new ways to improve digital inclusion for Western Australians. The four key priority areas focus on digital connectivity, affordability, digital skills, and online government services design.

Members were supportive of initiatives within the draft blueprint and recommended the strategy focus on training for Aboriginal people to deliver services, infrastructure in regional and remote communities, and affordability, accessibility and digital poverty in the regions.

Members requested DGov provide a simple, infographic flyer on the project to disseminate within the community for feedback.

Department of Communities – Aboriginal Cultural Council

The Department of Communities' Aboriginal Cultural Council was established in 2019 to provide advice and support the Department of Communities' operations within a culturally secure framework. Whilst the Aboriginal Cultural Council continues to operate, the Department of Communities' has commenced a review of its Terms of Reference. The Department of Communities met with the AACWA to seek feedback on the review process.

Members noted the importance of Aboriginal representatives to be chosen by the community for appointment to Aboriginal advisory groups. AACWA recommended that the review clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Aboriginal Cultural Council, including its relationship to other Aboriginal advisory groups, and reconsideration of the word 'cultural' in the advisory group name.

The next meeting of the AACWA is scheduled for Thursday 27 August 2020.



Ms Gail Beck
Co-Chairperson
Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia



Mr Martin (Marty) Sibosado
Co-Chairperson
Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia