

Communique - Meeting No. 35/2025

29 April and 30 April 2025

The Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia (the Council) held Meeting No.35 on Tuesday 29 April and Wednesday 30 April 2025 at Dumas House.

Members in attendance were Rani Randall, Marty Sibosado, Anthony Hansen, Jenny Bedford, Maureen (MK) Kelly, Irene Stainton, Damien Parriman, Rowena Leslie and Gail Beck.

The meeting was led by Co-Chairs, Martin Sibosado and Rani Randall, and included engagements with newly elected Minister Hon Don Punch, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Water; Climate Resilience; South West, Binarri Binyja Yarrowoo (BBY), Rottnest Island Authority, Council of Aboriginal Services of WA (CASWA) and the Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA), and Department of Communities. The agenda involved a range of presentations and discussions which provided the Council with opportunities to offer advice and feedback to the government.

The key items discussed and considered by the Council included:

Ministerial Engagement

The Hon Mr Don Punch; Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Water; Climate Resilience; Southwest

The Council welcomed Hon Don Punch Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Water; Climate Resilience; Southwest. Minister Punch conveyed his privilege in serving as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. He reaffirmed the need to expand the scope of Aboriginal Affairs to all ministers and emphasised the importance of exploring socio-economic models that respectfully align with Aboriginal people's cultural connections. The Council discussed the importance of inclusive and meaningful engagement with Aboriginal peoples in water and climate resilience planning.

Internal Presentations

Culture at the Heart (CATH) Forum

The Council reviewed and endorsed the draft program for the upcoming *Culture at the Heart* Forum, scheduled for 26–27 June 2025. The Forum will serve as a valuable platform for Aboriginal Advisory Groups to collaborate on key initiatives aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029.

Governance Review

The Council received an update on the comprehensive Governance Review currently underway, which aims to strengthen the Council's governance foundations and establish a model of best practice for other Aboriginal Advisory Groups across the state.

Members were provided with the draft *Charter of Governance* and *Code of Conduct* for final feedback, ahead of formal endorsement. The Secretariat also presented an overview of a professional development program designed to support the ongoing growth of Council members and ensure alignment with governance best practices. Additionally, the Council was briefed on the upcoming recruitment process to appoint new members.

External Presentations

Binarri Binyja Yarrawoo

Binarri Binyja Yarrawoo (BBY) and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet provided a joint overview of the work relating to the East Kimberley Place Based Partnership, an initiative that aims to drive close the gap outcomes at a local level, with local community partners.

Council of Aboriginal Services of WA (CASWA) and the Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA)

CASWA and AHCWA shared their current priorities and expressed interest in forming a stronger partnership with the Council to enhance collective influence with government. The discussion included short-term actions and long-term goals aligned across all parties. The first priority will be to collaborate on the development of the next Closing the Gap Implementation Plan for 2026-2028.

Rottnest Island Authority

Representatives from the Rottnest Island Authority and the Wadjemup Project Steering Group provided an overview of Stages 1 and 2 of the Wadjemup Project. They acknowledged the importance of upholding the project's truth-telling purpose and noted a positive shift toward tourism that is inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives, such as cultural and yarning tours.

Department of Communities

The District Leadership Group (DLG) Project Team presented an overview of the DLG's purpose, functions, and the current review of the DLG's that is underway. The Council provided feedback about representation, responsibilities, membership, and challenges with the overall function of the DLG's in the regions.

Ms Rani Randall
Co-Chairperson
Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA

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

* Confidential agenda items were not included in this Communique.