



Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group

Communique 09/2025

26 March 2025 – Planning Day

27-28 March 2025 – Meeting

On 26, 27 and 28 March 2025, the Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its Planning Day and ninth meeting on the land of the Noongar people in Walyalup (Fremantle), with a Welcome to Country by Elder Vivienne Hansen. Prior to the meeting, the Advisory Group held a planning day in which they formulated a Cultural Protocol/Commitment, discussed their Roles and Responsibilities and formulated their Strategic Priorities for the next 2 years (to be reviewed after 12 months).

The Strategic Priorities 2025-26 are:

- Child Protection and Family Support
- Cultural Framework and Engagement Framework
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)/ Aboriginal Economic Reform
- Housing and Homelessness
- Family and Domestic Violence

These are underpinned by the guiding principles of:

- Truth Telling
- Healing and Social and Emotional Wellbeing
- Culture at the Heart

And are aligned to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap's (National Agreement) Priority Reforms:

1. Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making
2. Building the Community-Controlled Sector
3. Transforming Government Organisations
4. Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

Key presentations at the 27-28 March 2025 meeting included:

Background Information on the New Ministry

The Aboriginal Outcomes Division provided a presentation on the new Ministry, including confirmation of:

- The Hon. Rita Saffioti as the new Treasurer and Deputy Premier.
- The Hon. Michael Barnes remaining the Under Treasurer at the Department of Treasury.
- The Hon. Don Punch as the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Communities Data

The Chief Data Officer provided an update on the Communities Data Office including:

- The *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act (2024)* coming into practice in 2026; however, the Communities Data Office is updating their processes to be in-line with the new laws already.
- Suggestions of working with the Data Office to give the Advisory Group line of sight on the identified priority of receiving data relevant to inform their strategic priorities.
- Aims to share appropriate social impact data at upcoming meetings with the Advisory Group.

Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.

Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group Communique 08/2024

- The Data Office is working with the Aboriginal Economic Reform team in Aboriginal Outcomes after the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Partnership Working Group workshop to collect data about ACCOs and overlay information with known demand to complement outcomes that the ACCO Commissioning Framework is seeking to achieve.

Closing the Gap – National Agreement

The Closing the Gap Program Office (Program Office) in Aboriginal Outcomes provided a presentation on the National Agreement and the national and state Closing the Gap governance structures.

- The 2020 National Agreement represents a major shift from previous approaches and is a landmark commitment made in genuine partnership between governments and the Coalition of Peaks (representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations).
- The National Agreement is built around four Priority Reforms which focus upon transforming the way governments work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve outcomes. These include formal partnerships and shared decision-making, building the community-controlled sector, transforming government institutions, and improving data and transparency. Clause 80 of the National Agreement emphasises that full implementation of the Priority Reforms will support an accelerated achievement of the Socio-economic outcomes. This message continues to be strongly emphasised by the Program Office through awareness raising presentations, consultation and eLearning mediums.
- The National Agreement outlines 17 Socio-economic Outcomes with 19 specific Socio-economic Targets. These Socio-economic Outcomes identify where 'gaps' of disparity presently exist and have an impact on life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Under the current WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-25, the Department of Communities (Communities) is responsible for leading/co-leading 5 of the 17 Socio-economic Outcomes, being Housing, Child protection, Family and Household Safety and Early Years. Communities also supports an additional 3 Socio-economic Outcomes that are led by the Department of Justice and the Mental Health Commission.

A strong focus is placed on monitoring, data collection, and public reporting to ensure accountability, transparency and ongoing improvements. Systems of governance exist at National, State and at a Departmental level within Communities via the Closing the Gap Implementation Oversight Committee as part of the ongoing commitment to the National Agreement.

The Advisory Group noted the importance of nurturing a strong relationship between it and Communities' Ministers and relevant peak bodies and acknowledged the opportunities in connecting with the Council of Aboriginal Services WA and the Aboriginal Health Council of WA to discuss overlapping priorities, given their close work with Ministers.

Director General Update

The Director General provided an update on the New Ministry, which includes six ministers across eleven portfolios, and advised that Parliament resumes in early April 2025.

The Director General will be talking to all six ministers about the Advisory Group and confirmed with members that they would be happy to have Ministers attend any Advisory Group meetings.

Advisory Group Members explained their Strategic Priorities to the Director General, with mutual agreement that the identified Priorities make sense for the group, noting that these Priorities do not have

Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.

Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group Communique 08/2024

quick fixes. Members discussed the importance of Truth Telling with the Director General and what that looks like as a Group.

Aboriginal Engagement Framework

The Best Practice Partnerships team in Aboriginal Outcomes gave a presentation on Aboriginal Engagement Strategies, Place Based Engagement and Engagement Practices in Community.

The purpose of the Aboriginal Engagement Framework is to build the cultural competency of Communities employees in the development and facilitation of culturally responsive engagement approaches for building relationships, understanding and collaboration with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.

Following the presentation and deliberations, the Advisory Group discussed the challenges associated with Aboriginal stakeholders being able to provide feedback, especially those in remote areas.

The Advisory Group will provide formal advice on the Aboriginal Engagement Framework to the Director General.

Child Protection and Family Support

The Child Protection and Family Support Division and the Office of Family and Domestic Violence presented on Children in Care, Home Stretch, Foster Carers and Referral Processes, and cultural protocols in place for victims of family and domestic violence (FDV) entering safehouses for cultural safety.

Children in Care data was presented to the Advisory Group, noting:

- Armadale and Midland have the largest number of children in care in WA.
- Armadale and Midland also have the largest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care.
- The regional North and Eastern districts of the Goldfields, Mid-West Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley have very large proportions of their children in care who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Home Stretch

- In total, Home Stretch WA is delivered by 11 ACCO's and 4 Community Service Organisations (CSO's). Communities has commissioned 10 ACCO's and 3 CSO's across WA to deliver Home Stretch, with one CSO subcontracting an ACCO to deliver the service to Aboriginal young people in the South West and another CSO in Great Southern; and one ACCO delivering services to both metropolitan Perth and the Wheatbelt.
- Each Child Protection District has a Home Stretch District Champion who is part of a working group that informs their district on all things Home Stretch. They engage the local service providers, support working together and manage the referral lists to ensure all eligible young people have the opportunity to choose Home Stretch.

Foster Carers & Referral Processes

Foster carers are able to provide a range of different options:

- Family or Significant Other Carers.
- Community foster carers - Community Foster Care refers to planned out-of-home care living arrangements for children unable to live with their own families for a period of time. These carers used to be referred to as 'General Carers'. Community Foster Carers are volunteers who provide a home, family life and care to children in the CEO's care and support the child's connection to family,

Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.

Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group Communique 08/2024

community and culture wherever possible. Community Foster Care can either be temporary or long term.

- Short break care - Temporary, short-term care for a child in the CEO's care with an approved carer. Short break care is designed to provide respite for a short period to the primary carer to support the sustainability of the care arrangement. Communities are always looking for Aboriginal people from metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations across Western Australia who may be interested in becoming foster carers.

Cultural protocols in place for victims of FDV entering safe houses for cultural safety:

- On 26 April 2024 *Strengthening Responses to Family and Domestic Violence: System Reform Plan 2024 to 2029 (the System Reform Plan)* was announced by State Government.

The Advisory Group appreciated the presentation and transparency on data and engagement. The Advisory Group has requested continued engagement with the Child Protection portfolio given alignment to their Strategic Priorities and requested further presentations at upcoming Advisory Group meetings.

Aboriginal Workforce Strategy

The Aboriginal Outcomes Division's Aboriginal Workforce Support team gave a presentation on the Draft Aboriginal Workforce Strategy and Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan.

The Aboriginal Workforce Strategy (Strategy) is a partnership between People and Aboriginal Outcomes divisions and will provide a framework for culturally responsive and place-based retention, development and recruitment strategies to increase and maintain a strong and supported Aboriginal workforce.

The Strategy has been co-designed by Aboriginal staff and reflects Aboriginal perspectives, priorities, and ways of working, and responds to key insights from engagement with Aboriginal employees, the Aboriginal Employee Network, regional and divisional senior leadership.

The draft was also informed by research via an intra- and inter-jurisdictional desktop scan of Aboriginal and Indigenous Workforce strategies.

The Strategy's Focus Areas have been informed by key insights from engagement and collaboration with Aboriginal staff and are underpinned by objectives of the Department's Workforce and Diversification and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2027. These include:

- Culturally Safe and Responsive Workplaces
- Career Development
- Culturally Responsive attraction, recruitment and retention approaches
- Leadership and Accountability
- Partnership with Aboriginal People Community and Organisations

The Advisory Group gave in principle support to the Draft Aboriginal Workforce Strategy and look forward to seeing it launched mid 2025.

Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group

The next Advisory Group meeting will be held in Newman on 16 and 17 June 2025.

The current Advisory Group membership list is available [here](#).

Email: advisorygroupsecretariat@communities.wa.gov.au

Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.