



# Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group (Advisory Group)

## Terms of Reference

**The Department of Communities proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Western Australia and recognises their continuing connection to their lands, families, and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures, and to Elders past and present.**

### **A note about language:**

In this document, the term Aboriginal people is respectively used in preference to “Indigenous” or “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” people, in recognition that Aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants of Western Australia.

March 2026

## Document control

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<b>Custodian</b>	Assistant Director General, Aboriginal Outcomes

## Amendments

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Description</b>
0.1	Dec 2021		Draft approved by the Director General
0.2	Jul 2022	Sector Partnerships	Formatting and minor terminology edits
1.0	Jul 2022		Final version released
1.1	February 2023	Sector Partnerships	Minor amendment – composition and membership. Reference to Premier’s Circular updated
2	March 2026	Closing the Gap Program Office	Three-year review

This document can be available in different formats on request.

## Table of contents

<b>Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Document control</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1 Background</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2 Purpose</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1 Strategic Priorities</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3 Roles and responsibilities</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3.1 Co-chairs</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3.2 Members</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3.3 Secretariat</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3.4 Department of Communities</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>4 Confidentiality and communication</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5 Composition and membership</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5.1 Eligibility</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5.2 Terms of appointment</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>5.3 Ex-officio members</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>5.4 Co-chairs and Deputy Co-Chairs</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>5.5 Subcommittees</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>6 Conduct and Conflicts of Interest</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>6.1 Code of Conduct</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>6.2 Conflicts of interest</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>7 Remuneration and allowances</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>7.1 Advisory Group Meetings</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>7.2 Subcommittees</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>7.3 Travel Expenditure</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>8 Meetings and administrative matters</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>9 Queries</b> .....	<b>11</b>

# 1 Background

In June 2022, the Minister for Child Protection (the Minister) established the Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group (Advisory Group) under section 27 of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (the Act). The Advisory Group amplifies the voices and views of the Aboriginal community, through the provision of high-level strategic advice to the Director General of the Department of Communities (Communities).

# 2 Purpose

The Advisory Group was established to foster stronger understanding, cooperation, and partnerships between Aboriginal people and Communities, with the aim of improving economic, social, and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal people living in Western Australia. This initiative aligns with Communities' responsibilities under the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).

The Advisory Group provides advice to the Director General of Communities relating to the development and implementation of policies and strategies or matters that impact Aboriginal communities in Western Australia (WA).

- The Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group will work collaboratively to:
- Help the voices and views of the Western Australian Aboriginal community to be heard, and appropriately actioned by Communities
- Provide advice to the Director General
- Provide advice to Communities on matters that the Director General refers to the Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group for advice, and
- Assist Communities staff to gain a deeper understanding of issues affecting Aboriginal people and build cultural capabilities in attitudes, behaviours, skills, and knowledge.

Their purpose aligns with the overarching principles of:

- Truth-telling
- Healing and social and emotional wellbeing
- Culture at the heart

## 2.1 Strategic Priorities

The Advisory Group's strategic priorities align with the Priority Reforms of the National Agreement and Communities' Strategic Priorities. Strategic Priorities are reviewed annually and are set in partnership with the Director General.

See **Appendix A** for current Advisory Group strategic priorities.

## 3 Roles and responsibilities

The Advisory Group reports to the Director General of Communities and together they determine the strategic priorities of the Group.

The strategic priorities of the Advisory Group are determined annually and include measures and actions intended to address Communities' responsibilities under the National Agreement.

The Advisory Group may propose other priorities, issues or matters to the Director General to consider, provided these matters are consistent with these terms of reference and the strategic priorities, and that priority is given to the matters referred to the Advisory Group by the Director General.

Board members need:

- An understanding of the public sector environment
- Integrity and ethical behaviour
- An ability to think strategically
- Sound judgement
- Commitment
- Communications skills
- Team intelligence –able to focus on common goals, priorities and problems and establish trusting relationships.

### 3.1 Co-chairs

The co-chairs are responsible for the effective functioning of the Advisory Group. The co-chairs' role includes:

- Attendance and Chairing of the Advisory Group meetings.
- Attendance at out of session meetings to discuss matters related to the Advisory Group's Strategic Priorities as requested by the Secretariat.
- Participation in meetings and meeting preparation including pre-reading of materials, appropriate research and provision of out of session advice.
- Development of meeting agendas including collating input from members on potential agenda items and attendance at meetings with the Secretariat to discuss agenda items and finalise agendas.
- Facilitation and encouragement of respectful, constructive, innovative, and participative discussion between members during meetings and consultation.
- Managing conflicts of interest in Advisory Group meetings and outside meetings in accordance with the **Code of Conduct**.
- Notifying the Secretariat (as soon as practicable) if members advise they will not be attending a scheduled meeting

- Providing leadership and insight to members regarding Communities' priorities and ensuring the delivery of the Advisory Group's purpose, through engagement with all members.
- Motivating members and addressing performance issues.
- Regular consultation with the Director General regarding the expectations of their role and assessment of their performance in the context of their role, to identify areas for improvement.

## 3.2 Members

Advisory Group members have an individual and collective responsibility to operate with high levels of accountability and to:

- Provide timely responses to communications from the Secretariat and the Director General.
- Effectively prepare for meetings including ensuring required pre-reading or research has been undertaken and required data/input has been collated prior to the meeting.
- Fulfil the functions of their position in good faith, with due care and diligence.
- Have reasonable regard for Communities' best interests.
- Not improperly use information obtained through their role with the Advisory Group.
- Perform effectively in the role, including active participation during meetings, pre-reading of relevant materials, input into out of session advice (as required) and attendance at all meetings (Note: a member may be removed from the Advisory Group for irregular attendance).
- Provide the Secretariat with reasonable notice when advising non-attendance at scheduled meetings.
- Display a positive attitude, engage in positive behaviours with other members and Department of Communities' staff.
- Comply with the Advisory Group's **Code of Conduct**.

## 3.3 Secretariat

Secretariat support to the Advisory Group is provided by Communities. The Secretariat is responsible for:

- Meeting logistics and scheduling.
- Agenda development with Co-Chairs and Director General.
- Timely distribution of meeting papers (7 days prior to each meeting).
- Keeping minutes and action lists (draft meeting minutes and actions will be provided to members within 21 days of an advisory group meeting).
- Providing relevant data and updates to support informed advice.
- The Secretariat can assist the Co-Chairs in managing conflicts of interest for each meeting through formal processes via inclusion of a meeting Agenda item for Conflict-of-Interest Declarations.

### 3.4 Department of Communities

- Consulting with the Advisory Group on relevant strategic matters.
- Providing feedback on how the Advisory Group's advice has informed decision-making.
- Communicating where advice cannot be progressed and providing the rationale.

## 4 Confidentiality and communication

Members are bound by the Advisory Group's **Code of Conduct** regarding confidentiality and communication.

### Communication Protocols

- Co-chairs and members are not required, or authorised to, make public comment concerning the Advisory Group, Communities or the State Government. This is the role of the Minister, and/or the Director General of Communities.
- Public comment includes comments made in situations where it is reasonable to expect the comments to reach the wider community. This may include comments made on the internet, in speeches, on the radio, or in the press.
- Members who receive requests or queries from the media, or external parties are to advise the Secretariat of the request, who will then discuss the request with the Director General before any decision is made as to making public comment and by whom.

## 5 Composition and membership

The Advisory Group can comprise up to 16 members at a time as appointed by the Minister for Child Protection under section 27 of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

An expression of interest process will be called to fill vacancies. A selection panel including Aboriginal people will consider applications and present recommendations to the Minister.

The selection panel will, as far as practicable, consider an appropriate mix of lived experience and subject matter expertise, and optimise regional, gender and all other forms of diversity, having regard to the Advisory Group's purpose and role. Members are not expected to represent a particular region or language group.

### 5.1 Eligibility

A person may be eligible for appointment to the Advisory Group if that person:

- Is an Aboriginal person living in Western Australia.
- Is not an employee of Communities.
- Consents to background checks (criminal, client and child protection), the outcome of which is considered acceptable to the Minister having regard to the work undertaken by Communities.
- Does not have conflicting commitments.

A person who is considered a public sector employee under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (WA) must have the prior permission of their employing authority before being appointed as a member of the Advisory Group.

## 5.2 Terms of appointment

Members are appointed for an initial term of up to two years unless an alternative term is determined by the Minister and specified in the Instrument of Appointment.

Members may be re-appointed for a further term of up to two years, as determined by the Minister, but cannot be appointed for more than two terms whether consecutive or not.

A member will cease to be a member of the Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group if they:

- Resign or retire from the group.
- Pass away.
- Are convicted of an offence under a written law of the State, or a law of the Commonwealth, another State or Territory, the maximum penalty for which is or includes imprisonment, or are convicted of an offence which, in the opinion of the Minister, is incompatible with the work undertaken by Communities.
- Have failed to attend at least 75% of Advisory Group meetings in a calendar year without reasonable notice and a reasonable explanation for the absence (this is subject to review by the Director General).
- Have breached the Code of Conduct and in the opinion of the Minister, the breach warrants removal.
- Have failed to undertake reasonable requests from the Co-Chairs in the performance of their role.
- It is no longer in the public interest for the person to remain a member of the Advisory Group as determined by the Minister.

## 5.3 Ex-officio members

The Minister may appoint the Director General and up to two representatives from the Department of Communities as ex-officio members. Ex officio members do not hold voting rights, and their attendance cannot be considered when determining quorum. Proxies may attend on behalf of ex officio members with prior notice to the Secretariat and Co-Chairs.

## 5.4 Co-chairs and Deputy Co-Chairs

Co-chairs and Deputy Co-Chairs are elected annually for a 12-month period, by majority vote of members and should reflect a gender balance.

Two Deputy Co-Chairs will also be elected annually for a 12-month period by a majority vote of members. A Deputy Co-Chair can perform the functions of a Co-Chair where a Co-Chair is unable to do so by reason of illness, absence or other cause, noting the retention of a gender balance.

Co-Chairs and the Deputy Co-Chairs can renominate each year and be elected via the election process.

Co-Chairs and Deputy Co-Chairs may be removed before the expiration of their term by a resolution of the Advisory Group. Advance notification of the proposed removal must be provided to members, and the resolution can be duly moved, seconded, and passed by a majority vote of members, providing a quorum is present.

## 5.5 Subcommittees and out of session meetings

The Director General may request the Advisory Group establishing subcommittees of appointed members to progress specific work relating to Advisory Group strategic priorities.

Membership of subcommittees may be aligned with the Advisory Group's Skills Matrix and lived experience and knowledge base.

The Secretariat provides administrative support to the subcommittees.

The Advisory Group may at times be requested to participate in out of session meetings on Strategic Priorities as they arise. These meetings may be facilitated either in person or online. Advanced notice will be provided to members.

All members participating in Advisory Group subcommittees or out of sessions meetings remain bound by the Advisory Group's Terms of Reference and **Code of Conduct** in undertaking that role.

## 6 Conduct and Conflicts of Interest

### 6.1 Code of Conduct

The public sector is built on a strong foundation of integrity where employees act ethically, and public sector bodies promote and maintain integrity.

The public sector Code of Ethics applies to boards and committees as well as public sector agencies and staff. To translate the standards of the Code of Ethics, your board must have a code of conduct. This is a mandatory requirement for all government boards and committees.

The code of conduct specifies the behaviour and integrity expected of members. It reflects your legislative and operating conditions and your board's risk profile. You are expected to model these behaviours including in your relationships with other members, the chair, staff, members of the public, media, the minister's office and other stakeholders.

Members must comply with the Advisory Group's **Code of Conduct** relating to their conduct and the Terms of Reference.

## 6.2 Conflicts of interest

Members must comply with the Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group's **Code of Conduct** relating to conflicts of interest.

# 7 Remuneration and allowances

## 7.1 Advisory Group Meetings

Communities pay a sitting fee to all members (other than those who are members of the public service) for full Advisory Group meetings. This fee is calculated at the half-day/full-day rates as determined by the Minister on the recommendation of the Public Sector Commissioner, consistent with [Premier's Circular No. 2025/15 State Government Boards and Committees](#).

## 7.2 Subcommittees

Communities pay a sitting fee to all members (other than those who are members of the public service) for consultation relating to Advisory Group sub-committees and ad-hoc engagements. This fee is calculated at the rate determined by the Minister on the recommendation of the Public Sector Commissioner.

## 7.3 Travel Expenditure

Members of government boards and committees (as defined by [State Government Boards and Committees - Premier's Circular 2025/15](#)) may be entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses either under legislation or a determination from the Public Sector Commissioner or relevant Minister.

Members may be reimbursed for expenses incurred to travel between their residence or usual place of business and the place where a board/committee meeting is being held or where other official business is being performed.

Reimbursement is based on the most economical means of transport available.

Reimbursement for accommodation and meals, reasonably and necessarily incurred on official business, is paid up to Public Service Award rates on production of receipts.

Parking fees necessarily incurred are reimbursed on production of receipts.

Members are not eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses incurred when acting as a representative of another body.

Members are not entitled to payment for travel time.

# 8 Meetings and administrative matters

The Advisory Group members are expected to meet four times per year. Members are required to attend in person unless extenuating circumstances apply and prior notice is

provided to the Secretariat and Co-Chairs. In these instances, members can liaise with the Secretariat regarding attending the meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams.

To constitute a quorum for advice, recommendations, actions or decisions, a majority of members must be present.

Members will endeavour to reach a consensus on matters being considered, dissenting views will be recorded in the minutes if consensus is not achieved.

Formal advice and associated actions will only be provided to the Director General when consensus is reached, and a quorum is held during the meeting.

*\*In the event quorum has not met during a meeting, formal advice may still be developed noting this\**

## 9 Queries

For all queries related to the Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group, please contact [advisorygroupsecretariat@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:advisorygroupsecretariat@communities.wa.gov.au)

## Appendix A – Strategic Priorities

