Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group

(Advisory Group)

Communiqué 14 – September 2026 Meeting



Advisory Group at Roelands Village (L-R): Ron Villaflor (proxy co-chair), Leanne Lockyer, Tracey Brand, Patricia Bennell (co-chair), Cheryle James-Wallace. Absent – Tony Hansen (co-chair), Leanne Kickett, Jodie Clarke

The Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group (Advisory Group) held its third meeting of 2026 at Roelands Village (previously Roelands Mission), just outside Goomburrup (Bunbury) on beautiful Wardandi Noongar Country on 17 and 18 September 2026. Advisory Group Members and meeting attendees were warmly welcomed by Noongar man, Troy Bennell. Troy's Welcome and Smoking Ceremony balanced truth and generosity, delivered with gentle and engaging honesty, that included reflections on his time at the mission.

The Welcome and Smoking Ceremony was followed by a Truth Telling session and Site Tour, delivered by Uncle Les Wallam, who also spent time at Roelands as a young child. The talk and tour created a space for reflection and learning, helping attendees appreciate the impacts of the past while recognising the strength of those who endured it. The overall experience was thoughtful and deeply moving, combining truth-telling with hope and connection while maintaining dignity.



"No day is too late to make change" – Uncle Les Wallam

The meeting focussed on prevention of family and domestic violence, healing and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). These topics align with the Advisory Group's strategic priorities and guiding principles decided at the March 2025 meeting. This September meeting generated five pieces of formal advice for the Director General.

Various teams from the Department of Communities provided updates and held discussions with the members related to their business area.

Recurring themes

In relation to matters discussed over the two days, members advocated strongly across the following recurring themes, which are critical to improving outcomes for Aboriginal communities across the state:

- Aboriginal leadership, self-determination and community-led approaches, ensuring Aboriginal voices, including Elders, inform policy development, implementation and reform.
- Enhanced engagement with, and stronger roles for ACCOs, expanding opportunities for them to play a leading role in service provision.
- Regional and community-informed decision making - increasing regional engagement and addressing service inequities outside metropolitan areas.
- Cultural safety and responsiveness – embedding cultural knowledge, protocols and governance structures in decision-making, across policies, programs and services.
- Empowerment and recognition of capacity and importance of family, kinship and cultural connection.
- Elders, families and communities – supporting their wellbeing and recognising the central role they play; maintaining connection.
- Ensuring policy responses reflect the lived experiences, cultural strengths and priorities of community, including Aboriginal Elders and older people.
- Greater investment in prevention, healing and early intervention while building on community strengths, cultural knowledge and existing Aboriginal-led initiatives.
- Improved awareness, access, inclusion and service quality – including addressing service gaps and improving coordination between services and systems.
- Accountability, evidence and outcomes – including building trust through transparent and accountable use of information and ensuring Aboriginal people have a meaningful role in decisions about how data is collected, accessed and used.
- Addressing barriers to housing and practical supports to aid long-term recovery, stability and community connection beyond crisis responses.

Day 1: South West Region, Child Protection and Aboriginal Outcomes Division

Member reports

Members provided written updates relevant to the Department's remit, within the context of their current professional or personal experiences.

Profile of the South West Region

The Communities South-West team provided an overview of the region's Closing the Gap Plan in practice, emphasising this as their strategic focus. Key themes included Aboriginal workforce, child protection, family support, and ACCO engagement and representation in the region. They also provided an update on cultural immersion activities and learning opportunities provided to staff, which has involved engagement with local elders, truth telling education (Roelands Mission and Wonnerup Massacre) and collaboration with local Aboriginal organisations to strengthen cultural learning.

Proposal from Specialist Child Protection Unit (SCPU)

The SCPU team sought advice from the Advisory Group in relation to community perspectives, experience and concerns that should inform future legislative design and reform. Key issues discussed related to child protection pathways designed to support Aboriginal children to remain safely with family. Discussion covered the recurring themes outlined above, particularly when considering assessment processes, identifying safe care arrangements, family rehabilitation supports and re-unification approaches. The SCPU will continue to engage with the Advisory Group in relation to this issue.

Aboriginal Outcomes (AO) Division Update

This update was delivered in relation to the Division's future direction, in the context of organisational changes. Members agreed that AO's ongoing focus should be on delivering strategic leadership and driving organisational transformation, recognising AO's significant contribution to shaping policy, cultural capability, reform initiatives and partnerships. Discussion to continue at upcoming meetings.

Day 2: Disability, Family and Domestic Violence, Older People and Data

Disability

Following on from their presentation and discussions at the June meeting, the Disability Division provided updates on reform initiatives. Members welcomed efforts to increase regional engagement and improve understanding of community experiences with disability services, while also discussing the potential impacts of proposed NDIS reforms, workforce shortages, and service gaps, particularly in regional areas. The update also highlighted opportunities to build Aboriginal sector capacity, strengthen service partnerships, and support more inclusive and culturally responsive disability services across the State.

Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence (FDV)

The Office for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence provided an update on the development of the first Action Plan under Our Ways, Strong Ways, Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036. Members welcomed the focus on Aboriginal-led solutions, self-determination, healing and community safety, and emphasised the importance of ensuring national policy reflects the realities of communities across Western Australia, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Commissioning of FDV Supported Accommodation

Members received an update on the recommissioning of FDV Supported Accommodation Services, which is the first in a decade. Members highlighted the need to ensure future models better reflect the needs of Aboriginal people and also address regional service gaps, housing shortages and barriers to accessing support, and advocated for more coordinated, family-centred approaches that recognise the needs of children, men, extended families and carers.

Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People

Members received an update on national and state initiatives aimed at preventing the abuse and mistreatment of older people, including the implementation of the National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2026–2036 and the development of the State Seniors Strategy. Concerns raised included the impacts of financial abuse, social and economic pressures, and members advocated, across the recurring themes outlined above.

Aboriginal data sharing and governance

Members received an update on the Department's Aboriginal data governance, data sharing and Priority Reform Four initiatives, which aim to strengthen the collection, use and sharing of data to support better outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. Discussions highlighted the importance of Aboriginal data sovereignty, and there was particular interest in strengthening visibility of ACCO partnerships, improving information about child protection and cultural connection outcomes.

The next Advisory Group meeting will be held in Walyalup (Fremantle) and focus on Child Protection and Family Support, Homelessness and Cultural Frameworks and ACCOs.
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