

Senate Estimates 28 May 2021

National Indigenous Australians Agency CEO Opening Statement

Good morning Chair and Senators.

[Ngoonawal language]

Dhawura nguna dhawura Ngoonawal

Yanggu ngalamanyin dhunimanyin

Ngoonawalwari dhawurawari Dindi wanggiralidjinyin

[English translation]

This is Ngoonawal Country

Today we are all meeting together on Ngoonawal Country

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Elders

I also extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Senators and witnesses present this morning.

Chair, thank you for the opportunity to make a brief opening statement.

Since our last appearance before this Committee, the co-design process for the Indigenous Voice has progressed significantly. The public consultation component of the process has now concluded.

In total, more than 9,400 people have had their say on the proposals for an Indigenous Voice.

The Voice co-design members have conducted 115 public consultation sessions in 67 locations, half of which were in remote Australia, 119 stakeholder meetings and 13 webinars.

With close to 3,000 submissions and over 1,000 survey responses, this is one of the most comprehensive consultations undertaken in the Indigenous portfolio in recent years.

The Voice co-design teams are now considering the feedback from the consultations and the content of submissions and are refining their proposals ahead of completing the final report and recommendations and handing these to Government in the middle of the year.

As discussed at last Estimates, over the past eighteen months, the NIAA has been documenting a more strategic, evidence-based and outcomes focused approach to our investments under a new Policy and Investment Framework.

This Framework has been finalised and will better position us to deliver on shared outcomes under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and provide a more consistent line of sight on how the Agency's investment contributes to the Government's commitments.

The Policy and Investment Framework represents a further maturing of the NIAA's approach and will lead to more informed and coordinated decision-making, improvements to cross-agency efforts on complex and intersecting policy outcomes, and clearly delineated responsibilities. We will release some public material in the near future.

If I could turn to the negotiations on the Aboriginal flag. While what I can say remains limited, I can report that we continue to work in good faith with Mr Thomas to resolve this issue. These remain complex and sensitive negotiations, ones which I do not wish to jeopardise. I continue to appreciate the Committee's ongoing patience and understanding on this matter and can assure the Committee that we are working to bring the matter to a close as quickly as possible.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention that this week is of course National Reconciliation Week and acknowledge the three significant anniversaries that surround it. It is an important time in our Agency where the staff are reminded of the practical actions they are involved in that further our national reconciliation journey each day.

I thank the Committee and welcome your questions.