



Committee recommends stronger leadership for government Indigenous programs

A parliamentary committee has recommended a high level review of leadership in Indigenous Affairs in a report tabled today.

The report, by parliament's joint Public Accounts and Audit Committee, supports recommendations from the Auditor-General for a 'refresh' of the lead agency role for Indigenous affairs, and calls for particular attention to be given to strengthening the authority of the agency to better drive changes across government departments.

Committee chair Rob Oakeshott MP said the need for more effective leadership across government to tackle critical issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs was clear.

"The Government needs a lead agency with authority and a clear mandate to oversee expenditure, monitor outcomes, define priorities and drive actions at whole-of-government level," Mr Oakeshott said.

"We live in a time where the want to reconcile is high", he added. "FaHCSIA has made commendable progress in improving coordination between government agencies, but the committee was not convinced that the current arrangements provide FaHCSIA with the authority needed to drive outcomes as effectively as possible."

The committee's report also recommended:

- the development of an explicit whole-of-government strategy for capacity development—both within government and for not-for-profit Indigenous organisations;
- improvements to the availability of location-based data on Indigenous expenditure and outcomes;
- an update to be provided on efforts to measure outcomes in 'priority' remote service delivery communities; and
- options to be examined for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and involvement in decision-making processes.

The committee came to its conclusions upon reviewing three reports published by the Auditor-General in 2012 focusing on government coordination arrangements for Indigenous programs.

The committee held three public hearings related to its review of the reports, and received written submissions from the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and the Social Justice Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

An electronic copy of the report can be downloaded from the Committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa> under 'Review of Auditor-General's Reports'.

For media comment: please contact Committee Chair, Rob Oakeshott MP, on (02) 6584 2911.

For information about the hearing: please contact the committee secretariat by telephone (02) 6277 4615, e-mail jcpaa@aph.gov.au, or visit the committee website <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa>.