



Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection; Indigenous Affairs;
Minister Assisting the Minister for Public Sector Management;
Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly

Our Ref: 0318271

Mr Peter Hallahan
Secretary
Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Hallahan

INQUIRY INTO THE PROGRESS TOWARDS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

In my capacity as Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Premier has asked me to respond directly to the Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee (SLCRC) on behalf of the Western Australian Government concerning Senator Nick Bolkus' request for additional information relating to the Inquiry into the Progress Towards National Reconciliation (the Inquiry).

I note the SLCRC's particular interest on information regarding Term of Reference 2 (c) that relates to the adequacy and effectiveness of any targets, benchmarks, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; specifically, what benchmarks or targets have been established, and whether evaluation mechanisms are in place to assess whether programs are working and inform future policy making.

Realistic targets and benchmarks and effective indicators, including coordinated planning, performance monitoring and evaluation frameworks and mechanisms are indeed vital, not only to government accountability but also to the Nation's pursuit of a progressive realisation of equitable outcomes for, and reconciliation with, its Aboriginal citizens. Targets, benchmarks and indicators need to be linked to planning, budget, performance management and evaluation frameworks and processes across government in all jurisdictions.

Jointly agreed National targets, benchmarks and indicators enable progress at the National and jurisdictional levels to be measured. This approach facilitates a linking of Commonwealth and State government activities around a common purpose that leads to a reduction of duplications and gaps in program development and service delivery. It also allows identification of the resource implications of the extent of progress that is required, which the Commonwealth Government needs to recognise. This is an area of concern for State governments because of the issue of vertical fiscal imbalance.

The subject of Indigenous targets, benchmarks and performance measures is a key focus area of the November 2000 Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Framework to Advance Reconciliation.

Western Australia believes that each State must also have its own targets and benchmarks to enable effective cross-referencing on progress being made and on directions that other jurisdictions are taking. This leads to coordination and Commonwealth involvement and leadership that is critical for Indigenous affairs.

National Indigenous benchmarking must provide the accountability framework within which the public sector and Indigenous funding bodies can delegate to local managers and allow flexibility. Empowering managers to manage requires holding them accountable for what they spend and accomplish.

Targets and Benchmarks: Western Australia

The Western Australian Government's Indigenous Affairs Policy is outcomes focussed and declares '*recognition of citizenship rights*' for its Aboriginal citizens as the State's overarching goal. This goal recognises both citizenship equality and the unique citizenship status as 'the original inhabitants' of the State.

The Premier has set the three strategic outcome areas of prevention of child abuse and family violence; improved environmental health and living conditions; and increased social and economic sustainability as the targets for achieving the goal of '*recognition of citizenship equality*' for the State's Indigenous citizens, following the December 2002 Roundtable Discussions with Aboriginal leaders.

The three key outcome areas for achieving the goal of '*recognition of unique citizenship status*' of the State's Indigenous people are an 'agreement not argument' approach to resolving native title issues; the handing back of the Aboriginal Lands Trust estate; and the protection and promotion of Aboriginal heritage and culture.

In my view these are appropriate, adequate, clear, measurable and effective targets towards achieving the State's overarching goal of *rights recognition* for its Indigenous citizens. They are consistent with, and appropriate responses to, the recommendations articulated in the National reconciliation documents, and have been agreed between the Government of Western Australia and Aboriginal Western Australians. They are also consistent with the priority outcome areas of the COAG *Draft Framework for Reporting on Indigenous Disadvantage* (the COAG framework).

The development of further targets, benchmarks and indicators that will relate to lower level outcomes to support the abovementioned higher order outcomes is envisaged.

Western Australian Responses and Progress Towards National Reconciliation

The Western Australian Government has a focus on building State and National level partnerships and working relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and Commonwealth agencies.

The Government's initiatives represent our commitment to public sector reform to bring about systemic changes through collaboration, not only across Western Australian Government agencies, but also across levels of government and their agencies.

In May 2001 State Cabinet endorsed the use of relative measures of equity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Western Australians (the Closing the Gap model) as a key indicator of its objectives in Indigenous affairs. It also authorised the establishment of the Indigenous Affairs Advisory Committee (IAAC) which was required to negotiate detailed targets and benchmarks with Indigenous representatives, to recommend these back to Cabinet and to link them to planning, public sector budget, performance and evaluation frameworks and processes.

Statement of Commitment to a New and Just Relationship

On 10 October 2001 the Premier and the State Chair of ATSIC signed a *Statement of Commitment* to build a new and just relationship between Government and Aboriginal Western Australians.

The parties agreed to develop negotiated regional and local partnerships based on realistic and measurable outcomes supported by agreed targets, benchmarks and performance measures.

Indigenous Affairs Advisory Committee

Formally established in December 2001, the IAAC is a forum comprised of heads of key WA Government agencies, State managers of relevant Commonwealth agencies and the AWASC. It serves as both the consultative mechanism between the Government and the Aboriginal community for jointly addressing Indigenous issues, and the mechanism for whole-of-government management of Indigenous affairs in Western Australia.

The IAAC undertakes its central role of progressing issues and developing agreed policy through cross-portfolio working group processes. It meets twice a year to consider high level, strategic policy advice developed and agreed amongst various Government and Aboriginal community stakeholders through these processes.

The development of agreed Indigenous benchmarks and the process for linking these to the drivers of Government business was agreed at the inaugural meeting.

Communiqué

The communiqué signed on 7 June 2002 between myself, the Hon Phillip Ruddock MP, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and the Chairperson of AWASC laid the platform for the development of formal processes for strategic coordination of planning and program delivery across all levels and sectors of government, linking Commonwealth and State agencies' service delivery, and involving Aboriginal communities in a collaborative approach.

Consolidation Work

Through the *Statement of Commitment*, the *Communiqué*, and the COAG priority projects in Tjurabalan and Northbridge, a sound State level framework has been laid, and approaches to working together in other priority locations are being tested.

Consolidation work involving the translation and application of the agreements reached at the State and National levels over the last two and a half years is now underway, albeit in early stages. Attachment 1 provides an overview of the current status of consolidation work being undertaken in Western Australia.

Details of State Programs

A summary of programs funded by the Department of Indigenous Affairs aimed at progressing reconciliation in the State is provided at Attachment 2. For further details on these, please contact Ms Sharon Jamieson, Project Officer (Funding and Support), Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), on telephone (08) 9235 8061.

Across Government Collaboration To Promote National Reconciliation

Further Work: National and Western Australian Scenario

In addition I wish to reiterate that more work needs to be undertaken in advancing policy development towards enabling systemic cross-portfolio, cross-government collaborative action. This needs to be underpinned by an environment of genuine partnership, shared responsibility and joint decision making.

- The COAG priority community trials provide a potentially significant springboard from which systemic collaboration can be progressively embedded in government and Indigenous governance and administrative structures.
- Significant opportunities for systemic embedding of collaboration also exist on future work relating to the three key areas of gaps identified for joint and cross-portfolio, cross-government action in the MCATSIA review of Ministerial Council Action Plans. These gaps are identified in areas of economic independence; environmental health; and child protection and youth suicide. MCATSIA's advice to the Prime Minister on the three key areas of gaps identified for joint and cross-

portfolio, cross-government action in the review of completed Ministerial Council Action Plans will soon be dispatched for formal consideration and endorsement by COAG.

- Western Australia, particularly DIA, has been leading the process for moving forward the work of systemic embedding of joint cross-portfolio, cross-government collaborative action through MCATSIA. This commenced with the initial development of a National framework for measuring, driving change and reporting on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. The framework was further developed and refined under the auspices of COAG. Now in its final form, its formal out-of-session endorsement by COAG is expected soon.

Furthermore, I see the need for more work in terms of:

- fleshing out technical details so that performance data collection against the COAG framework can be disaggregated to a level that enables provision of meaningful and realistic results as a guide to policy review and formulation;
- developing a systemic whole of Commonwealth Government linking of planning and Indigenous affairs portfolio budget outcome statements with the COAG framework;
- developing and establishing distinct Commonwealth Government, State/Territory, bilateral and multilateral frameworks and mechanisms for monitoring, performance management and evaluation for the COAG priority community trials, consistent with the COAG framework;
- using the strategic areas for action (developed under the COAG framework) in planning and performance management and evaluation frameworks and processes across government to measure, drive changes to policy settings and inform future policy making;
- developing a Commonwealth and State/Territory whole-of-government strategy for using the collective successful and good practice experience of the COAG priority community trials across communities around Australia with the long-term aim of transforming the new 'working together' relationships towards greater efficiency and effectiveness in program and service delivery;
- developing effective indicators to measure progress against a human rights dimension is potentially an area that the Productivity Commission could look into in terms of their future work in improving the COAG framework;
- developing a State-wide Indigenous governance and capacity building strategy for Western Australia, and building these into National and State benchmarking;

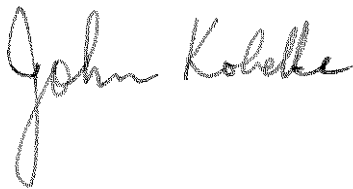
- developing a systemic and integrated whole-of-government State strategy in Western Australia that links: the implementation mechanisms of the State Response to the Gordon Inquiry Report; State commitments in relation to Ministerial Council Action Plans (and future cross Ministerial Council agreements where work is yet to be progressed); and the State's planning and budget processes, with the COAG framework.

Concluding Remarks

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comments on the progress towards National reconciliation, particularly in relation to issues of benchmarks and indicators. Much of the work being done at present is in the developmental stage so it is too early to comment on adequacy and effectiveness.

However, I am confident that the use of the COAG framework for reporting on Indigenous disadvantage is providing a sound basis for evaluation of a range of State initiatives including the Government's response to the Gordon Inquiry and our Early Years Strategy.

Yours sincerely



**JOHN KOBELKE MLA
MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

14 JUL 2003

ATTACHMENT 1

CURRENT STATUS OF CONSOLIDATION WORK UNDERWAY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- The development of an integrated interpretive framework for Western Australia's targets, benchmarks and indicators, including planning, performance monitoring, reporting and evaluation, to measure, drive changes and report on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage is at an early stage.

This is being undertaken through work that is in its early stages, around the development and implementation of the State's Response to the Gordon Inquiry Report (July 2002).

Western Australia is using the COAG framework at the State, regional and local levels as basis towards arriving at agreed benchmarks and targets that will set a clear strategic direction; drive changes and measure progress of joint action by State, Commonwealth, ATSIC and local government at the local level.

Consistent with the collective approach mapped out in the State's Response to the Gordon Inquiry Report, Western Australia recognises that a broad approach to evaluation is required to enable a full assessment of the impact of the various strategies, initiatives, programs and practices in place currently and in the future.

- There is good progress being made towards the development and formal negotiation of a bilateral partnership agreement between Western Australia and the Commonwealth on child protection and family violence.
- Working relationship development consistent with the State and National levels is now being extended to regional and local levels to complete the building of joined up working relationships in planning, policy development, performance management and evaluation (based on shared responsibility between government and the Indigenous Community).

The State's Regional and Local Engagement Process is underway, with regional forums for 'joined up Government in partnership with ATSIC' now active all regions.

It is envisaged that this would enable the translation and application of State and National level agreements at the local level.

Regional framework agreements, and joint regional and local plans will be developed during 2003/04 in each of the nine ATSIC regions across the State with local partnerships commencing development in priority communities.

- A process is in place to develop and provide an overarching Indigenous Affairs portfolio perspective to discussions with individual agencies regarding their plans and budgets for the 2004/05 financial year. The purpose is to explicitly align public sector resources across the Indigenous Affairs portfolio towards achieving the Government's policy commitments in Indigenous Affairs.

ATTACHMENT 2

SUMMARY OF STATE FUNDED PROGRAMS BROADLY AIMED AT PROGRESSING RECONCILIATION

Grants Offered by the Department of Indigenous Affairs from 1/7/01 to 20/06/03

Grant type	Summary of Grant	No of Grants Offered	Amount offered
Community	General community grants issued to assist with a problem or project.	30	\$453,606.00
Bringing Them Home	To provide support and assistance to reunite Indigenous people who have been removed from their families.	2	\$5,037.60
Heritage	To assist in promoting, protecting and recording Indigenous heritage and culture (maximum of \$5,000). The program is aimed at community-based projects driven by local groups in WA.	22	\$101,230.00
Landcare*	Funding for on ground Landcare and 'caring for country' works for Indigenous people (maximum of \$20,000).	16	\$263,493.25
NAIDOC	Support NAIDOC activities.	4	\$7,400.00
Patrol	Funding is currently provided to existing DIA funded community patrols throughout WA. Patrols provide strategies at the community level to deal with and respond to a range of social problems experienced in Aboriginal communities and to reduce contact between Indigenous people and the criminal justice system. Patrols are operated by the community and are supported by DIA and other agencies.	45	\$2,145,218.00
Reconciliation	Promotion of reconciliation activities (maximum of \$5,000).	58	\$213,882.00
		<u>177</u>	<u>\$3,189,866.85</u>

* Funded under the Commonwealth Natural Heritage Trust