

Communique - Meeting No. 26/2023

3 and 4 October 2023

The Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia (the Council) held Meeting No.26 on 3 – 4 October 2023 at Hale House in West Perth.

The meeting was led by Co-Chairs, Ms Gail Beck, and Mr Martin Sibosado, and included engagements with Ms Meredith Hammat MLA, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and other Western Australian (WA) Government agencies. The agenda involved a range of presentations, discussions, workshopping, and opportunities for the Council to provide advice and feedback to the government.

The key items discussed and considered by the Council included:

Ministerial Engagement

Ms Meredith Hammat MLA representing the Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA

The Council welcomed Ms Meredith Hammat MLA representing Hon Dr Tony Buti, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Education, Citizenship and Multicultural Interest, who updated the Council on Minister Buti's portfolios. Ms Hammat provided an overview of several priority areas on behalf of Minister Buti including an update on the [Department of Education's Aboriginal Advisory body](#), and the Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment & Repeal Bill 2023.

External Presentations

Department Planning, Lands, and Heritage – Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment & Repeal Bill 2023

The Department of Planning, Lands, and Heritage (DLPH) was welcomed to the meeting providing members with an update on the [Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment & Repeal Bill 2023](#) (the Bill). The Department provided an overview of the Bill and the amendment process. The discussion allowed members to gain a more in-depth understanding of the Bill and the proposed policy measures to protect Aboriginal heritage.

Department of Local Government, Sports, and Cultural Industries – Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Strategic Plan

The Council met with the Department of Local Government, Sports, and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) who provided an update on the second phase of the [Aboriginal Cultural Centre Project](#). Members congratulated DLGSC on moving into the next phase of the project, emphasising the value of giving all WA Aboriginal groups opportunities to provide input into the project. DLGSC provided an overview of the process for developing a departmental Strategic Plan 2024-2029. The strategic plan will articulate the DLGSC vision, mission, values, purpose, and strategic intent. Members reinforced the importance of strengthening local governments' relationships with Aboriginal communities across the State.

Department of Justice – Justice Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy

The Department of Justice (Justice) met with the Council to discuss the Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy (Justice AFSS). Members highlighted the importance of this strategy and agreed that all people deserve to feel safe. Urgent action is needed to address the impacts of violence on Aboriginal families, women, children, and men. The Council encouraged a whole-of-government approach to addressing this complex social issue.

Department of Communities – Remote Communities Housing Fund

The Council welcomed the Department of Communities (Communities), who provided an update on the [Remote Communities Housing Fund](#) (the Fund). Members acknowledged the team's efforts in Stage One of the project and reinforced that all Western Australian residents, including remote residents, have a right to adequate housing, housing services and living conditions. The Council is looking forward to having further discussions with the Communities team on the matter.

Horizon Power – Energy in Remote Communities

The Council welcomed Horizon Power who provided an overview of the recent transfer [of essential service provision](#) in remote Aboriginal communities from July 1. Members acknowledged Horizon Power's genuine engagement following the recent transition and reiterated the same sentiment conveyed to Communities surrounding adequate housing, service provision and living conditions for remote residents, informed through local engagement.

State Emergency Management Committee

The Council welcomed back Mr Rick , Executive Officer of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC). Members raised concerns for regional and remote residents ahead of what is expected to be a severe bushfire season. North-west members also provided feedback on how to improve engagements with Aboriginal communities to assist in preparation for the 2023-24 wet season. Previous SEMC communiques are available [here](#).

Department of Communities – Commercial and Contract Model Review

Communities provided an update on the [Commercial and Contract Model Review \(CCMR\) for the Housing Maintenance Contract and Service Delivery Review Program](#). The Communities team was invited to the meeting following the submission of their noting paper to the August 2023 meeting. Members were eager to discuss the upcoming review of the program and provided significant insight and feedback to the Communities team.

Jobs, Tourism, Science, and Innovation – Aboriginal Economic Development Board and Advisory Function

The Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science, and Innovation (JTSI) were welcomed back to their second Council meeting of the year to further discuss the establishment of an Aboriginal Economic Advisory Body. The proposed Advisory body will support the overall endeavours of JTSI.

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation – Climate Action Plan

The Council welcomed the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) to discuss the Climate Action Plan. DWER sought the Council's advice on how to build an immediate and enduring partnership with Aboriginal people, with a view that government climate actions can embed the aspirations, rights and interests of Aboriginal people and their communities. Members were provided with feedback from DWER's own Aboriginal advisory group, the [Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group](#), regarding climate matters for consideration and discussion.

Internal Presentations

Public Sector Commission Professional Development – Code of Ethics

The Public Sector Commission (PSC) was welcomed by members who were enthusiastic to discuss boards and governance matters with the agency. PSC provided members with an overview of the [Commissioner's Instruction 40: Ethical Foundations](#), which came into effect earlier in the month and includes the new Public Sector Code of Ethics.

Aboriginal Engagement Directorate – Priorities Update

The Council welcomed DPC to discuss planning, priorities, and initiatives for 2024, including the whole-of-government Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Strategy. Members provided feedback on the ACCO Strategy, highlighting the opportunity this whole-of-government initiative has to further empower Aboriginal communities and support improved outcomes. The Council expressed a desire for the WA Government to continue its commitment to implementing the [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#) (AES) in full and prioritising place-based engagement to support decisions being made at a regional and/or local level. Members reinforced the essential role healing has within the AES, in reducing the impacts of intergenerational trauma and cycles of disadvantage on future generations of Aboriginal West Australians.

The Council's next meeting is scheduled for 5 and 6 December 2023.



Ms Gail Beck
Co-Chairperson
Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA



Mr Martin (Marty) Sibosado
Co-Chairperson
Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA

* Confidential agenda items were not included in this Communique.