

Communique - Meeting No. 27/2023

5 December 2023

The Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia (the Council) held Meeting No.27 on Tuesday, 5 December 2023, via MS Teams.

The meeting was chaired by Ms Gail Beck, and included engagements with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Department of Treasury, the Department of Planning, Lands, and Heritage, and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The agenda involved a range of presentations and discussions with the opportunity for Council to provide advice to the WA Government.

The key items considered by the Council included:

Ministerial Engagement

Hon Tony Buti: Minister for Education; Aboriginal Affairs; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests

The Council welcomed Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA, Minister for Education, Aboriginal Affairs, Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. The Minister acknowledged the challenges faced by Aboriginal people across the State in the wake of the National Voice Referendum and recognised the dedication, resilience, and continued leadership of Council members. The Council discussed regional representative structures, and further prioritising of Closing the Gap Priority Reforms. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs confirmed that the WA Government will not progress a state-based model of the voice in 2024.

Members raised concerns regarding increased racism and deficit-based dialogues following the referendum, acknowledging the negative impacts on all Aboriginal people and particularly the well-being of younger generations. Members highlighted the need for WA Government to call out racism and support truth-telling in community and education settings.

External Presentations

Department of Treasury – Aboriginal Expenditure Review and Budget Process Update

The Council welcomed the Department of Treasury, who provided an update on the second iteration of the Aboriginal Expenditure Review, and an overview of the 2024-25 budget process. The Council made a significant contribution to the [Aboriginal Expenditure Review 2022-23](#), and was keen to discuss further opportunities to review State Government spending on Aboriginal programs and services to enable reprioritisation to Aboriginal organisations. The Council thanked the Department of Treasury for their open and frank discussions and strong working relationship in 2023.

Department of Planning, Lands, and Heritage – Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

The Department of Planning, Lands, and Heritage (DPLH) gave an update on the amendments to the [Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972](#) which was restored in November 2023. DPLH had previously engaged with the Council in October to discuss the [Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment & Repeal Bill 2023](#). DPLH highlighted the improved right of review in the amended act, the increased support to Aboriginal organisations in responding to the approvals process, and resourcing to assist Aboriginal organisations in the management of sites. DPLH staff were accompanied by members of the [Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Committee \(ACHC\)](#).

Office of Digital Government – Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Legislation

The Office of Digital Government from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (the Department) sought advice from the Council on the proposed [Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing](#) (PRIS) legislation. The PRIS Bill includes a mechanism which supports Aboriginal data sovereignty and governance in WA, by requiring that Aboriginal people and communities are involved or consulted when data about Aboriginal people is shared. The Council endorsed the framework proposed in the draft PRIS Bill and noted the ongoing relationship with DGov.

Aboriginal Engagement Directorate – Priorities Update

The Council welcomed staff from the Aboriginal Engagement Directorate at the Department, who acknowledged the difficulties experienced by many Aboriginal people and their communities after the National Referendum. The Council discussed priorities and key initiatives for 2024, including hosting a 'Culture at the Heart' forum. This forum will bring together members of Aboriginal advisory bodies aligned to the [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#), to support better coordination of the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and increasing the connectivity of advisory groups.

Council shared experiences and observations, emphasising the need for truth-telling and anti-racism approaches moving forward. Members reiterated the need to elevate the principles of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy across government, and discussed opportunities to strengthen the relationship between Council and the [Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee](#) in 2024. Members endorsed the 2024 meeting schedule, which can be found [online](#).

The next meeting is scheduled for 23 January 2024.



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.