

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee held its fourteenth meeting on 20 November 2020.

Evaluation of OCHRE - Local Decision Making

The Committee noted that the evaluation had been largely paused since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated advice from Aboriginal Health and Medical Council, the Australian National University (ANU), and local communities not to travel to Aboriginal communities.

With the improvement in the pandemic situation planning has re-commenced to develop local evaluation plans with local communities. This planning is occurring based on the advice and consent of participating Aboriginal Regional Alliances and in line with the ANU COVID-19 field work policy. The Committee also noted that approval for the evaluation from the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee is pending. This includes approval to develop the instrument to measure change in the relationship between Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government.

Activities of the NSW Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Affairs)

The Committee welcomed the presentation by the NSW Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs) on his activities and notes the NSW Deputy Ombudsman's ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations in the OCHRE Review Report October 2019. The Committee noted the Ombudsman's current review of the governance of Local Decision Making, Solution Brokerage and Opportunity Hubs. The Committee looks forward to continuing updates and discussions with the Deputy Ombudsman.

OCHRE and new National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Committee noted the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap (June 2020) and work led by the Commonwealth to co-design an Indigenous voice. The Committee welcomed the strong alignment between the Priority Reforms and target areas of the new Agreement and their underpinning beliefs, and those contained in OCHRE which were identified through the thousands of conversations with Aboriginal peoples and communities initially led by the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal affairs in 2011-2013, and subsequently by Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

Given this close alignment, it is the Committee's view that implementing the Aboriginal community's recommendations captured through the first three years of the independent evaluation will not only be an important part of continuing to build trust with the Aboriginal people of NSW but will also help deliver the NSW Closing the Gap jurisdictional plan and ensure a consistency of purpose, ambition and principles across Government reforms at all levels.

This is my last communique as the Chair of the Steering Committee. It has been a privilege to lead the Committee from its beginning days in 2016 and I thank the Committee members and Aboriginal Affairs NSW for their support during this time. The work has been incredibly interesting, complex and rewarding. I am thankful for the opportunity to be part of this award winning, nationally recognised and ground breaking evaluation that sets the benchmark for Aboriginal community owned evaluations of government programs in Australia.



Dr Wendy Jarvie, Independent Chair