



# INDIGENOUS EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Mr Ray Griggs AO, CSC  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Indigenous Australians Agency  
Charles Perkins House  
Woden ACT 2606

## INDIGENOUS EVALUATION COMMITTEE 2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Mr Griggs

I am pleased to present the Indigenous Evaluation Committee's (the Committee's) Annual Report for 2019-20 in accordance with the Committee's [Terms of Reference](#).

This report reflects the matters dealt with, and key areas of advice provided to the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), by the Committee to end June 2020.

### **Our role**

It is two years since the Committee's establishment in June 2018. Over that time, members have become familiar with the programs and evaluation activities of the Agency. The Committee has endeavored to provide considered advice in response to a range of evaluation activities it has been asked to review. We trust this advice has contributed to strengthening the quality of evaluation of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being undertaken by the Agency, and helped strengthen the emerging culture of evaluation across the Agency.

### **Our members**

This past year saw the departure of Professor Ian Anderson as the ex-officio member of the Committee. His experience and contribution to the Committee was greatly appreciated. We have welcomed Mr Blair Exell as the new Agency representative on the Committee.

Due to the increased volume of work the Committee is being asked to consider, the Terms of Reference were amended to allow the appointment of an additional external member to the Committee. We were pleased to be joined by Dr Fiona Cram from New Zealand in March this year. She brings a wealth of experience in evaluation and complements the knowledge and skills of existing members.

Contracts for all members were also extended this year.

### **The Committee's work**

The Committee convened its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting on 13 September 2019. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the Committee's 6<sup>th</sup> meeting was convened via videoconference over three separate dates: 24 March, 15 April and 27 May 2020.

Committee members received advice and updates on key areas of policy including:

- the Data Strategy
- the Evaluation Handbook
- the Evaluation Prioritisation Tool
- the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) Investment Strategy, and subsequent Whole of Government Policy and Investment Framework
- Closing the Gap and the development of the new National Partnership Agreement



- progress with the three Australian National Audit Office recommendations flowing from the Evaluating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs report, noting that all three have now been implemented
- impact of COVID-19 on some evaluations and the proposed review of the Agency's response to COVID-19.

Over the past year, members provided feedback, either at meetings or out-of-session, on seven evaluation activities and six documents designed to improve the Agency's evaluation processes and learning.

The specific evaluation activities included:

- Evaluation approaches: lessons from Randomised Control Trials projects
- Indigenous Early Childhood Strategy
- Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Employment Programs evaluation
- Evaluation Strategy for the Employment Parity Initiative
- Strengthening Organisational Governance - Project Plan and Evaluation Strategy
- IAS Scholarships Interim Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy.

The Evaluation Governance documents included:

- the Evaluation Handbook; provides a high-level overview of key issues to consider in undertaking an evaluation
- the Evaluation Gaps Analysis; identifies program areas where future evaluation activity could be prioritised
- the Annual Synthesis Report; an internal report highlighting themes emerging across evaluations
- Indigenous leadership in evaluation; how the NIAA can best prioritise action to strengthen Indigenous leadership in evaluation
- Annual Report on the Quality of Evaluations; a proposed approach to reviewing the quality of agency evaluations and the issues affecting quality
- the Prioritisation Tool; developed to inform decisions about which programs and activities should be prioritised for evaluation.

#### *2020-21 IAS Annual Evaluation Work Plan*

The Committee considered the draft 2020-21 IAS Annual Evaluation Work Plan in August 2020 and appreciated that feedback provided previously on the structure of the Plan had been taken into account. We feel it is a useful document that reflects the breadth of evaluation activities across the Agency. The Plan indicates there are 24 evaluation activities currently being progressed, with 14 activities having been completed over the past year. It also reflects a number of data and capability activities designed to support evaluations. As noted above, the Committee has provided feedback to program areas on a number of these activities at key points in the evaluation lifecycle.

#### *Other*

The release of the Productivity Commission's draft whole-of-government Indigenous Evaluation Strategy was welcomed by the Committee. We felt the strategy was very straightforward, set out a comprehensive and ambitious vision for evaluation across the public sector and emphasised the idea of genuine partnership, engagement and putting Indigenous people at the centre of evaluation. The Committee also noted that there will be a number of challenges including how to ensure independence and influence of the proposed Office for Indigenous Policy Evaluation, and how to get agencies to effect change, build capability and implement governance structures to oversight evaluation. While we feel the NIAA is well placed in this regard, we look forward to seeing the final Strategy which will be released after this report.



### **Key priorities for 2020-21**

In 2020-21 the Committee will continue to:

- support the Agency to build its evaluation capability as it beds down new processes and guidelines for undertaking evaluation activities, noting that this includes increasing Indigenous leadership of evaluations
- provide focused feedback to the Agency on the design of strategic and other evaluations
- support the application of the IAS Evaluation Framework principles to evaluation activities.

In all of these activities our focus will be on helping increase the value and use NIAA gets from its evaluation function, and supporting the participation of Aboriginal program clients, communities, businesses and organisations in NIAA evaluations.

I have attached for your information a copy of the Committee's program of work for 2020-21.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Agency over the coming year.

Yours sincerely

Distinguished Prof. Maggie Walter  
Chair