

An office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs – Submission

Submission from: Ron Gidgup

Date Received: 05/09/2018

To : The Director Aboriginal Policy Unit

Firstly I would like to say how impressed and excited I was to see and read these documents regarding a possible Office of Aboriginal Advocacy and the opportunities that would be developed for our communities if this was all to come to fruition. It has been a long time coming to have something of this nature being presented to the Aboriginal Communities throughout the State of WA as a possible remedy to ongoing systematic GAPS that are constantly there for all of us as Service Providers to our mob, whether it be Health, Education, Justice, Child Protection and so on.

I work at Fiona Stanley Hospital and have so for the past 3 + years and have found this new Hospital driving and leading the way in Cultural Competency and Cultural Awareness when working with our mob who come to FSH from all over the state. Throughout the development and planning for FSH it has been very obvious that the Consultation process that took place over the Site and the Aboriginal Components such as the Aboriginal Liaison Service has been done with the utmost respect. Now there is an Aboriginal Champions Program in place which allows non – Aboriginal Health Staff to become champions within the area's that they service with the aim that they would undergo training to become a Champions and assist other non – Aboriginal staff with Cultural Competency; this was developed and driven by the Aboriginal Planning and Development team here at FSH, with executive support and approval.

When I started here I was told by one of the FSH Directors that I had a blank canvas to create whatever picture I wanted, and of course this was said with the view that this would be done in a very professional manner. I have always held onto that statement as a Permit, Validation, and Licence to finally do some of the things that I have always wanted to do to help our mob without feeling undervalued, dismissed and powerless with frustration.

I am happy to say that almost four years into my position here as the Coordinator of the Aboriginal Liaison Office it has been an absolute privilege to work for and represent our people as they travel on their Health Journeys across the Health spectrum and Fiona Stanley Hospital. It has been very challenging and rewarding at the same time but throughout it all we have made inroads to building better relationships between our mob and the clinical professionals that look after our mob.

So in response to the discussion paper and what you would like the Functions of the office to be, I would like to draw on my past and present experience to put forward my response. I would also like to give a short list on some of the fields I have worked in so that will also show I guess the level of engagement I have had with my mob over the decades to try and contribute to change.

Some of the area's I have worked in are as follows:

- Commonwealth Employment Service – Senior Aboriginal Liaison officer Advocating for Aboriginal Communities and Family across the South west of Nyoongar Country
- Department Social Security – Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer supporting unemployed Aboriginal and Torres Strait across the Perth Metropolitan area.
- Managed my own business – Art and Design as well as the Coordination of Youth Programs across the State as a part of the business –“Gidge Design Studio”
- Department of Child Protection/Sue Gordon Enquiry Recruitment Drive – where I started as a Aboriginal Support Worker to a senior Officer of Aboriginal Service, and then to the Senior Aboriginal Placement Officer. This involved advocating on many different levels around the Placement, Displacement, Removal, Reunification, Breakdown, Cultural Advocacy and much more for WA Families who found themselves in the Welfare System and stuck. I left this very important area of work as I felt the input from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff at this time – across the board was not valued and the statistics of Children in Care was not

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dropping and the mechanisms that were put in place at the time did not work, and I feel to this day there is still very big GAPS.

- Children's Telethon Institute – I worked with a Team of Aboriginal Staff to roll out a Parenting program for young Aboriginal Mother's and Father's to assist them with developing good parenting skills to empower them to raise their children in an alternative way that reduce the risks of Family issues in the future.
- I have coordinated and managed a Aboriginal Youth Substance Abuse program where we try to address the issue of Sniffing with our youth in the Upper Swan region. This consisted of introducing these young people to programs to try and side track them from their Substance Abuse using Education, Art, Bush Walking, Sport, Team Building, and much more.
- Working for the Department of Health has been the icing on the cake so to speak, where we have all had the opportunity to make some inroads and changes to how Aboriginal Health has delivered its service in the past. I am really proud to of been a part of the South Metro Population Aboriginal Health Team led by an Aboriginal Director with Aboriginal Staff who worked fantastically with Non Aboriginal service providers. I have witnessed great change and development throughout the duration of the Aboriginal Health Team in SMAHS which has seen community members who were cultural advisors/ Community Committee members, who have become employed within the Health arena and doing exceptionally well. The Development of Moorditj Koort - Kwinana, and Nigalla Waangan Mia - Mandurah are great examples of this movement that has lifted the profile of Aboriginal Health Services in the Southern corridor.
- As stated above I am now the Coordinator of the Aboriginal Liaison Unit @ FSH and I have learnt so much more about what we require as a people to better improve our health as well as our relationship with the Health Service Providers on ALL levels for our Communities Health and well Being to improve at a greater rate.

I am hoping that I have been able to give you an insight into how someone in my position see's things in the current and past field that I have worked. I work with a great team of ATSI people who have delivered great work and service to our mob and the non – Aboriginal workforce; they have made huge inroads into creating better relationships with all walks of life in the health field that we service, cultural education happens on a daily basis and the movement here with Cultural Competency is awesome.

I am excited to know that there may be something coming that could assist the Aboriginal on the horizon, that is more than what we currently have. We need to have something in place that can move things a little quicker than what they have currently and in the past

Good luck with your discussion paper and the feedback, I hope to hear some feedback from your office in the near future.

Kind regards

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