



Creativity • Harmony • Richness • Freedom • Spirituality



11 September 2018

Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
West Perth
Western Australia 6005

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the discussion paper for “An office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia.” On behalf of Koya and Pindi, I would like to introduce you to both organisations and then provide our responses provided in a table for your easy reference. If you require further clarification or more information about Koya or Pindi Pindi or the information in our response, then please do not hesitate to contact our office admin@koya.org.au or 64249210.

We look forward to the journey ahead.

Regards

Professor Cheryl Kickett-Tucker
Director
Community Thriving and Research

**ngan kaditj-djinang koora-koora, yey, kidji mila boola norerl, ngalak nyin yey moorditj kadjan wadjuk boodja djinang-iny.*
I pay respect to all of the past, present and future elders. I acknowledge their power, passion and good spirit that allow us to be on Wadjuk Boodja.*

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Introduction to Koya Aboriginal Corporation and Pindi Pindi Ltd

Vision: 'Touching lives in a positive way by providing inspiration to Aboriginal people'

Koya Aboriginal Corporation brings together the practical approach of industry matching the issues on cutting-edge research, expertise and practical knowledge that binds the key disciplines of biophysical and social dimensions, health, business management and economics into one operational framework.

Koya Aboriginal Corporation has an established 14-year track record of delivering quality outcomes in community projects to more than 50 clients ranging from small businesses and community groups, to, local and state government agencies throughout Australia. Our reputation as a widely respected, highly flexible, and inclusive organization stems from the capabilities, qualifications and experience of our expert team. Our expertise is founded on outstanding, specialist cultural, community, research planning, development, analysis and auditing. Koya as a corporation has a strong sense of community and does not discriminate on race colour or creed rather aims to highlight a collaborative approach for the empowerment of Aboriginal people by understanding:

- Aboriginal people are assets who expertise, knowledge and skills are precious.
- A community development model of policy and practice is necessary to make holistic impact on the wellbeing of Aboriginal people.
- Active inclusion of Aboriginal people is a necessity to sustain community empowerment and development at the local level.
- True and active partnerships with partners at local, state and national levels are essential to make sustainable gains in the Aboriginal community.
- Prevention and early years intervention are a priority to sustainable change.
- Aboriginal people and communities are diverse and each require the respect and acknowledgment of the diversification in all aspects of Koya's activities.
- All research and development conducted must apply culturally safe and secure practices in all activities.

Koya Aboriginal Corporation will continue to focus on the social wellbeing of youth and community as it has done in the past, it is now evolving to combined both its research expertise and business acumen to enhance the lifestyle and careers and all over wellbeing of Aboriginal people within Australia.

By offering professional academic research based on tools renowned and respected by both the academic and other reporting bodies Pindi Pindi is able to highlight its premier space of being the first Aboriginal research facility in WA. Marketing to Government and industry on the importance of researching Aboriginal culture heritage current barriers including education health wellbeing and economic opportunities Pindi Pindi has the ability to stand out above other research facilities within this space.

Pindi Pindi's research projects are based on the principles of sustainability empowerment and cultural security for all Aboriginal people. It holds the belief that a culturally secure footprint needs to be firmly and respectfully embedded into the conceptualisation, articulation, implementation and evaluation of research services to Aboriginal people. Pindi Pindi has developed extensive and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal people from Across Australia and is committed to empowering and educating children families and communities.



Response to Discussion Paper

Reference	Challenge	Solution
Page 8	AAPA membership: There seems to be no Aboriginal people but only CEOs of government who are in most cases non-Aboriginal on the AAPA Board.	A consensus of Aboriginal people should represent this board and where the government CEOs report and are questioned accordingly and held accountable. But where will this group be situated and how will they be part of the new office(s)?
Page 9	Aboriginal non-government organisations “reluctant” to criticise the hand that feeds them	Recommend that the new office(s) provide the advocacy role for Aboriginal non-government organisations to prepare and submit grievances/challenges working with government and ideas for future opportunities without any consequence to the organisation’s future funding.
Page 10	Role of the office	<p>Once the office monitors, identifies, assesses, reviews, helps and promotes, then how will it engage with the Aboriginal community in the regions and how will it action what it finds? What and who will evaluate and monitor the office(s)?</p> <p>A culturally appropriate framework for working with Aboriginal people is needed such as Koya Aboriginal Corporation and Pindi Pindi’s Cultural Security Model of the 4 R’s: respect, responsibility, relationships and reciprocity (Koya Aboriginal Corporation, 2008).</p> <p>Regular cultural security audits need to be conducted of the systems that govern Aboriginal people so that together the community and the government can build the people, place and policies that embrace and strengthen Aboriginal people whilst at the same time provide authentic, valid, accountable and reliable government services that are regularly monitored.</p> <p>The office(s) must have a RAP, Aboriginal Employment policy combined with training, leadership and career development opportunities for its staff.</p>
	Research	There seems to be a lot of research that the office(s) will draw from. So what mechanisms or people will be put in place to draw from research that provides authentic results from the world view of Aboriginal people? How will you know what is ethical, culturally secure, authentic research? i.e., inspired by Aboriginal people, driven by Aboriginal people and completed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people? These are important questions because Aboriginal people have a significantly lower life expectancy than other Australians (ABS, 2014). All Australian governments in the last two decades have acknowledged that Aboriginal Australians are the most disadvantaged citizens across all socio-economic indicators including primary health indicators (ABS, 2014). In

fact, Aboriginal Australians are one of the most disadvantaged Indigenous populations in the world (e.g., Cooke et al., 2007). Unfortunately, a 'one dimensional system' is continually being developed which contain policies and practices used by governments to tackle the range and diversity of challenges faced by the 'multi living generations' of Australia's Indigenous people. The current research space in Australia is standing still in 'silos.' What this means is that current research conducted in Australia and indeed in Western Australia tend to explore challenges with a single lens that creates a tunnel vision. If research has a narrow focus, then it will provide narrow results. To support this claim, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) indicators across all categories including health, justice, education, housing, children in care etc, have not progressed but have fallen into a downward trend. It is a common practice of governments to continue to use deficit modelling to understand and make changes to the wellbeing of Australia's Indigenous communities. Our people continue to suffer at the hands of such modelling and one-dimensional answers retrieved from 'silo research.' To combat this condition, what is needed is a holistic approach which can only be achieved by considering and acknowledging the broader social, historical and cultural determinants of wellbeing.

The non-Aboriginal researcher and western methodology will not be able to access the meaning(s) in the same way as an Aboriginal person, because "too often, the non-Aboriginal researcher appropriates the cultural knowledge and experiences of their Aboriginal participants, and then, using the theoretical frameworks of Western knowledge, reinterprets those experiences and presents it as their own" (Wright, 2011). Hence, the expectations and constraints for community development are influenced and guided by "the other's" worldview. So when exploring Aboriginal community thriving, the office must benefit by taking into account Aboriginal worldviews to utilize Aboriginal ways of thinking in order to gain "authentic" and culturally appropriate knowledge of an Aboriginal reality. Hence, a strengths-based approach combined with Indigenous research designs (i.e. Community Participatory Action Research) and methodologies (decolonising research methodologies i.e. qualitative data collection such as yarning circles) to extrapolate and understand the strengths of our people and how we can best utilise what is working in and for our communities rather than what is not. Hence, research must be determined, led and actioned by Aboriginal people.

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Business of the new office:
States the office will be responsive to the needs and priorities of the people

Please ensure the grass roots people are partners in the establishment of the office(s), its core business and evaluations of the government. This must be the core of the office as the grass roots community hold the answers to challenges and whom also are committed despite the change of government. They will always be present. They have the expertise that the government need. Hence, regional "offices" should be co-located with Regional Development Commissions. Currently, there are 9, but a new office for Perth regional area needs to be developed, thus making 10 offices. It is vital that the Perth region is included because 51% of the Aboriginal population live in south-west of WA including Perth and of this 39% live in Perth with the most in the City of Swan region. More specifically, City of Swan has the highest growing population of



		<p>Aboriginal children and young people as respectively these account for >50% being under 25 years of age and, approximately 30% being aged 12 and under (City of Swan, 2011).</p> <p>Government and non-Aboriginal-agencies are the second platform for information about Aboriginal livelihood and wellbeing and should be treated as such. It is all too easy to retrieve information (i.e., statistics) from other government agencies to populate reports. This information is developed with a single, western lens which will only provide one piece of the puzzle to the challenges faced by a community. Concerted and sustained effort is needed to locate vulnerable Aboriginal families and their kin, develop rapport, gain trust, respect, relationships even before we understand their story and struggles. Will this office go the extra miles and truly connect with poor, vulnerable, socially isolated Aboriginal kin as these families are truly suffering and only they know it.</p> <p>The disconnect of government and heavily funded non-Aboriginal agencies (whom almost never employment local Aboriginal people) is a reality unless our people are afforded the time to be truly engaged, listened too and then skilled and empowered to make sustainable changes in their own lives with their family, kin and local communities. These families are often missed by government and non-Aboriginal agencies because it is all too easy to give credit to the elevated voices in our community and they may not necessarily reflect the worlds in which vulnerable and social isolated individuals and families live.</p> <p>What are the values of the office(s)? How will it work with isolated, vulnerable and poor individuals, families, kinships, language groups, skin groups, local Aboriginal communities and the wider communities? How will this office(s) provide the platform for these families to have a say in accountability of the government to them?</p> <p>The business of the office must enact Human Rights from the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). For example, in terms of Aboriginal education the CRC Article 29, 1997, p. 1. states that a child's education should ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential... • The development of respect for the child's own cultural identity, language and values...
<p>Page 11</p>	<p>Structure and powers of the new office: States that an Aboriginal person be the holder of the office</p>	<p>The powers of the office(s) must rest on an Aboriginal worldview as it provides ancient yet relevant Aboriginal ontology (perspectives of reality) and Aboriginal epistemology (Aboriginal ways of thinking about or knowing reality). Aboriginal worldview and knowledges must be privileged in the powers of the office(s) because it provides the lens in which to view our reality and then provide us with how to think and act according to that reality. We must not ignore or undervalue Aboriginal worldview.</p>

Therefore, the office(s) must recognise the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worldviews (Mead, n.d.):

1. Aboriginal people orient in a spiritual society whereas non-Aboriginal people tend to have a more scientific view of society whereby proof is required.
2. In Aboriginal society, “everything and everyone is related” (p. 2) and identity is formed from connections with others and country. Non-Aboriginal society is “compartmentalized” and identity is a result of material objects and one’s employment/title.
3. Aboriginal people are content to make do with what they have and the environment they live in. They are “be-ers.” Whereas, non-Aboriginal people are “do-ers” such that life is about progression and whereby they use the environment to progress further....forward.
4. The nature of time for Aboriginal people is cyclical, whereby time comes and goes. It is non-linear. Non-Aboriginal people’s concept of time however, is linear with structure, a finite end and an alignment towards the future.
5. A small system of authority exists for Aboriginal society and the giving of authority is based on relationships with others, age and cultural wisdom. Non-Aboriginal society tends to have a large system of authority whereby relationships are developed out of roles assigned to individuals in the system.
6. Wellbeing, especially being comfortable, is important for Aboriginal people and this is monitored by the quality of relationships with others. For non-Aboriginal people, feeling comfortable centres on the success experienced as a result of achieving individual goals.

Aboriginal realities are shared by using narratives (stories) and these stories use cultural and archetypal metaphors to “explain the unexplainable.” Thus, there are endless realities and possibilities in Aboriginal worldviews and non-Aboriginal people need to transcend from the rationale and material to ground themselves in the spiritual and relational if they are to fully comprehend Aboriginal realities. Hence, why the office(s) must be placed based in regions across WA.

The Aboriginal worldview encourages kinaesthetic learning from Aboriginal role models. Role modelling is a culturally accepted and preferred way of learning. It is part of the Aboriginal social world of communication and is a common practice among Aboriginal kinship groups. This traditional custom has been proven to be effective in enhancing not only Aboriginal peers understanding of Aboriginal people and self-esteem but also has a significant impact on non-Aboriginal participants’ knowledge as well (Charter, 1996). For Aboriginal young people, the benefits also include they are:

- Less likely to become involved in criminal activity,
- Less likely to become involved in drug taking and alcohol abuse and
- Less likely to leave school early
- More likely to have improved academic performance (Dubois et al., 2002; Tierney & Grossman, 2000).

Our strength is that Aboriginal people in their own communities are advocates in their own right but unfortunately the system around them keeps them out or down.

Decision-making in Aboriginal communities can be very different from conventional white ways of making decisions: formal meetings, debate, resolutions, voting, and so on (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006). In Aboriginal communities in Australia, the process of 'yarning' is the norm; talking over, under, around and through an issue, sharing stories, until a consensus is reached. This can be a most effective form of decision-making, and though it may take longer than a formal vote, it leads to a more satisfactory outcome in that everyone involved will own the decision, and everyone will have contributed to it. It is very important that such decision-making traditions be respected when working with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal decision making is made with a consensus with a group of people and that this should occur on ground at local communities. Aboriginal decision making is therefore placed based and needs to occur at the regional office(s).

Research shows that there is unequivocal evidence that the single most important factor is community ownership and involvement across the whole life cycle of community development, from negotiation to planning and delivery, and through to evaluation. Consequently, the greater a community's input then the better the outcomes that can be expected (Anderson, 2009). For example, to improve Aboriginal economic wellbeing, Hunter, 2010 stressed Aboriginal input is imperative for all activities aimed at increasing Aboriginal participation in employment programs and hence enhancing their effect. This principle holds for schools, university/VET sectors and labour market programs.

Another example in Aboriginal education a common feature of successful educational programs is a creative collaboration, which builds bridges between public agencies and the community, often by engaging parents or community-based organisations (Purdie and Buckley, 2010).

In terms of grass roots community participation, young people must be included because nearly 50% of the Australian Indigenous population are aged 21 years and younger. It is crucial that appropriate effort be directed for their involvement in the advocacy and accountability measures of the government. Furthermore, extensive research has shown that over the past 2 decades, community led, specifically youth led programs have made statistically significant changes to a number of young people's attitudes, knowledge, behavior, health and achievement outcomes (Garfein, Golub, Greenberg, Hagan, Hanson et al, 2007). More specifically, positive impacts have included improvements to school achievement outcomes such as school attendance, grades and graduation rates as well as employment. Other significant, positive changes are evident in young peoples' behaviours towards their health, diet and exercise. These challenges have been observed not only in the peers leading the program but also the participants.

So, to view the world from the lens of Aboriginal people it must occur on ground in the local communities, otherwise the pictures and associated messages are distorted, unreliable and not authentic.

Page 12	Name of the new office:	Unsure of the names provided. Definitely not supportive of First Nations which is a Canadian term. It is best to consult grass roots people across the state so that they have a say in the name whilst conferring ownership in the office(s).
Page 12	Appointment process:	The appointment process should be an election by the people for the people in each of the RDA locations including Perth. This is a fair and equitable process.