

Office for Advocacy and Accountability in Aboriginal Affairs in Western Australia
Discussion paper Feedback – Anglicare WA

1. What are the views about the outline of the Office's basic features? Does it miss anything important? Is anything included that shouldn't be?

- We identify that the key of the office is noted as holding the "Government" accountable and outlines the various way of doing this. Whilst this is generally in the right direction and supported, we suggest that it will need to be embedded and operationalized using Key Performance Indicators of the organizations and Director General performance agreements, including executives and middle management within the organizations. Further, any contractor ie: government contracted services will also need to have these KPI's included within any funding agreement.
- The Office itself will need to be staffed by "expertise" and understanding of key systematic issues and general workings of government. The office has to be more than merely the advocate and "stone thrower", but be a part of the "solution" or broker of progress otherwise its effectiveness may be compromised.
- This Office's way of working must be in partnership with agencies and with Aboriginal communities. Both will make a difference to communities.
- Lesson learnt from current Oversight bodies and their effectiveness in monitoring the overall system. How can this office adapt the best of each of the existing oversight functions?
- Based on this paper, there will be high expectation on this office; it will need to be well resourced to undertake such robust functions. ie: investigations of systems can often distract from the strategic approach of the office. The key would be to work with other agencies ie EEO and or others to undertake some of the work, of which the office can partner.

Business of the new office:

- We are supportive of the business of the new office and believe that establishing key focus with Aboriginal communities is essential. However, support with resources, political profile and organizational agenda must also be supporting this. Previous efforts have also been reasonable, but the lack of interest, understanding and resources has been the issue.

Structure and powers of the new office

- There must be real tangible mechanisms for this office to call the government to account and to require responses, otherwise the office will run the risk of impotence
- Further details on this will demonstrate real commitment from government, eg. the size of the office, budget and expectations.

Powers:

- We support this, however, previous reviews and bodies have had this in the past. Lessons learnt from the past need to be noted as this has not made a difference previously.

2. What should be the formal name of the office?

Our position would be to ensure that this is inclusive of not only Aboriginal people, but a mechanism to improve government's ways of working. The 'Commissioner' provides a professional, formal and important name to the office. As stressed above, the role has to

been seen as having some legitimate power and credibility; being more than just an advocate.

3. How should Aboriginal people and organizations be involved in the appointment process of the office-holder. Who should be involved?

- Aboriginal people should definitely be involved with the Strategic approach of the office and have constant participation within the outcomes.
- Aboriginal representation is critical to any selection of government decision making, not just this with position.
- It is likely unfeasible for this office to have representation from every group of Aboriginal people across the state, but it should be developed in partnerships with Aboriginal communities. Obtaining the right members of the panel, whether the majority are Aboriginal or not, should be the critical factor of selection.