

An office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia-
Submission

To Mr Ben Wyatt- Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treasurer for Western Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your idea 'for making government work better for Aboriginal people'. I feel honoured to have a small voice in this process and acknowledge that this form of community reciprocity is a step forward in increasing advocacy and accountability for our government in Aboriginal affairs.

My name is Stephen Johnson and I am a current Master of School Leadership student of the University of Western Australia completing my final unit in Indigenous Policy and Practice. I am also the Level 3 Administrator for the School of Special Education Needs: Behaviour & Engagement in the Great Southern of Western Australia on Noongar- Menang Boodja. My current role is to coordinate Behaviour and Engagement services in the South West Education Region and I have previously overseen this support within the Kimberley and Midwest Education Regions. I have experience working across both Government and Non-Government Organisations in wraparound approaches for our most at-risk students and I also hold a seat on the Positive Behaviour in Schools Australia Network which is a collaboration between the Department of Education, Health, Disability and Universities in PBS implementation. I am a Stronger Smarter Leadership Program Facilitator and acknowledge the old people's way of doing business on country as an important step in creating organisations that are culturally responsive.

The following submission seeks to address your idea of 'An office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia' by overlaying the concepts of the function, business, structure, name and appointment processes of the new office with the 'Blueprint for Reform'- Service Priority Review, Data-Systems-Practice approach (Positive Behaviour Support) and Stronger Smarter Leadership and Workplace Practice. I believe that by adopting frameworks that honour aboriginal knowledges and overlaying them within organisational structures we can;

- Better coordinate services across agencies and levels of government
- Improve policy implementation and more customer-focused service delivery
- Encourage stronger, more systematic engagement with Aboriginal people and,
- Become more responsive and effective by coordinating data driven decision making and evaluation.

A. Function of the new office

The office's job would be to hold the Government accountable, and provide system level advocacy, across government activities affecting Aboriginal people. It would also work to ensure that the Government understands and responds to the views and interests of Aboriginal people.

A Positive Behaviour Approach can be adopted as a framework for providing this system level advocacy across organisations and agencies as it utilises a Data-Systems-Practices approach which can be used to respond to the views and interest of Aboriginal people and improve outcomes for all people.

Outcomes, Data, Practices and Systems (see figure 1.1)

Accurate and sustained implementation of any approach can often be hindered by the demands of competing initiatives; the use of traditional practices that are contrary to the underlying philosophy of any approach or the tendency to adopt new strategies for a short period of time. The PBS approach differs from others as it emphasises sustained use of effective practices from a systems perspective.

(Greenwood, Delquadri, & Bulgren, 1993; Latham, 1988)

This systems perspective focuses on the collective actions of individuals within an organisation and how they contribute to the way the organisation as a whole operates.

Four elements guide the systematic implementation of PBS – ***Outcomes, Data, Practices and Systems***. Positive Behaviour Support is not a curriculum, a program or an intervention. It differs from any program currently in place in that it is an **approach to organisational improvement** that requires development of these four integrated elements:

- Identifying **outcomes** in the form of agreed expectations for every person's behaviour.
Monitoring and reviewing these outcomes.
"What do we want to see?"
- Using **data** for decision-making. PBS organisations' collect data about their communities and organisation's effectiveness
"What do we currently see and know?"
- Adopting **practices** with evidence that desired outcomes are achievable.
"What practices could effectively, efficiently, and relevantly achieve what we want to see?"

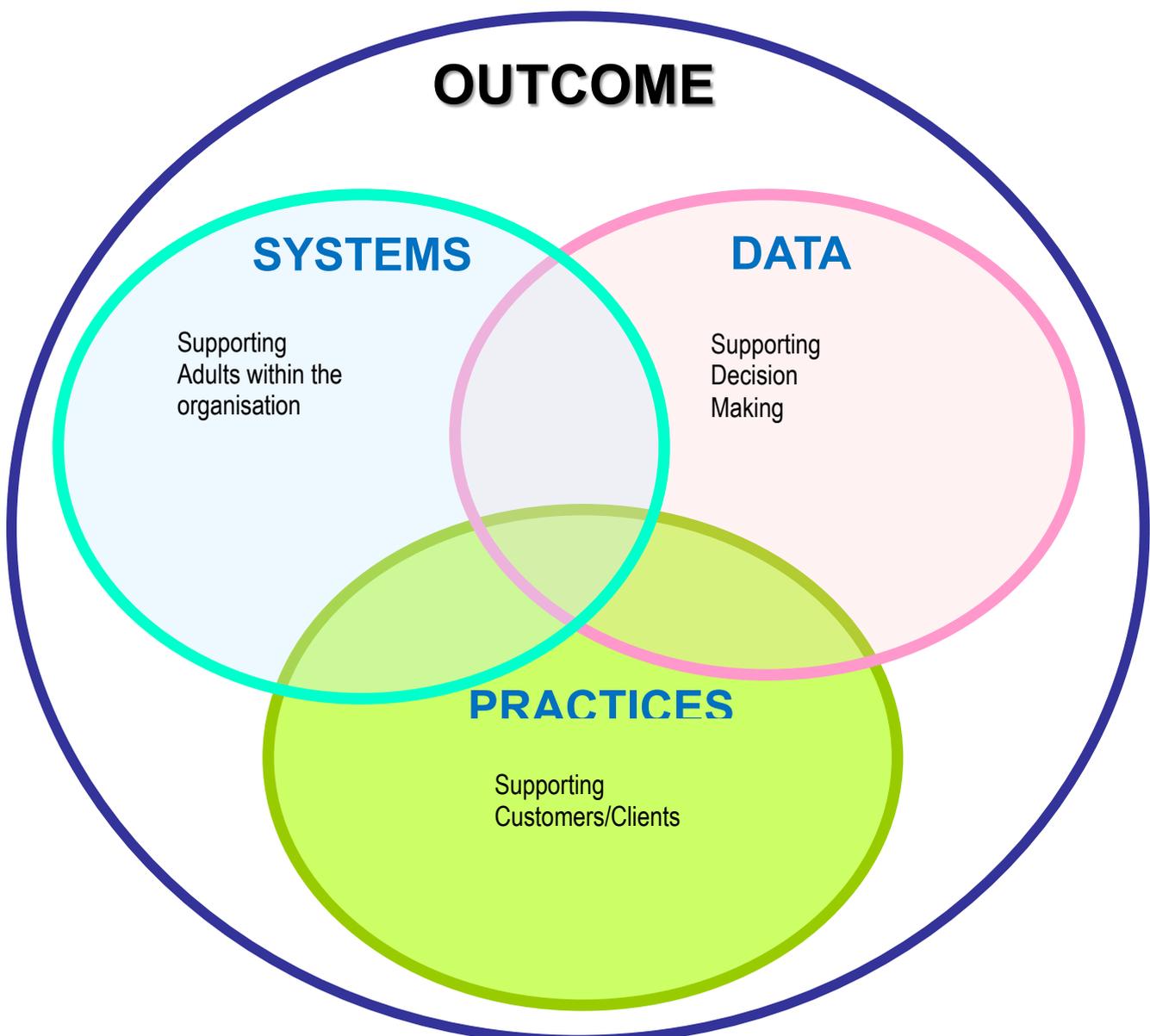
- Putting in place **systems** that efficiently and effectively support organisation's to implement these practices. The Office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs should mobilise a team that is identified to lead PBS in relevant organisations; data management systems, training arrangements and technical supports for staff.

"What needs to be in place to support?"

'The Office' would mobilise a team to provide the technical assistance to organisations to implement this framework across their organisation, this would *enable*;

1. The informed adoption of practices and
2. Full implementation that is contextualised, accurate, and sustainable?

Figure 1



The recently released 'Service Priority Review' – Blueprint for Reform (Western Australian Government, 2017) identified 17 recommendations that are interlinked and interdependent for improving better *outcomes* for the community. The implementation of a Statewide Data-Systems-Practice approach would meet the needs of this blueprint for reform through;

1. Enabling the public sector to do its job better by; strengthening data sharing. Adopting the above framework will encourage organisations to collect and analyse relevant data sets available to them which will inform development of systems and practices that meets needs.
2. Improve governance, accountability and transparency for public sector entities, and;
3. Introduce a regular cycle of agency capability reviews to drive ongoing improvement across the sector.

I believe that adopting this framework meets the needs of the function of the new office through the regular monitoring, assessing and engaging cycles that you mention in your discussion paper.

B. Business of the new office

We think the office should be responsive to the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people. Instead of being limited to a particular subject matter (such as health, land, culture, or services), the office should be free to determine which issues relevant to the interests and well-being of Aboriginal Western Australians to focus on...

By adopting the Data- Systems-Practice framework the office will become responsive to data which will support transparent processes to determine which issues are relevant to the interest and well-being of Aboriginal people.

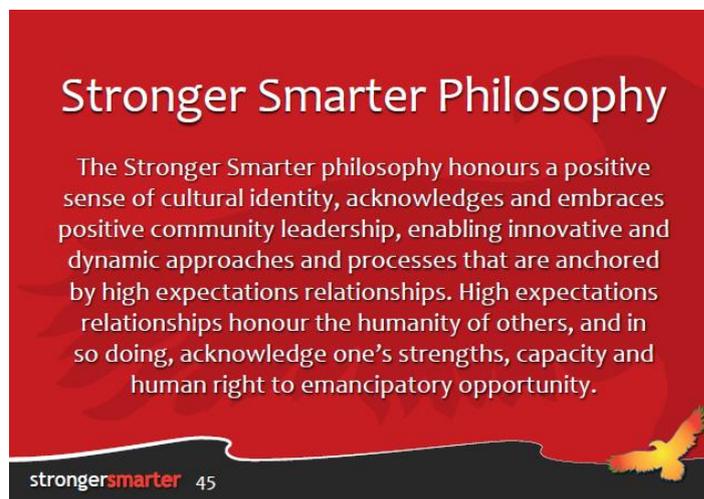
Increasingly we are becoming aware of best practice Community Development. We can look across many different demonstration sites at varying levels of successful Community Development, however common threads are linked closely to the notion of being responsive to the needs and priorities of Aboriginal people. I believe that the office could create an evaluation tool that incorporates the below common elements of successful community development to build responsiveness;

- Communities have ownership and control over decision making
- Culture is central to programs(s)
- Local Aboriginal staff work within the organisation and implement the program

- Good corporate governance that honours aboriginal knowledge's and frameworks
- Existing community capacity and strengths are harnessed
- Trust culture
- Flexibility in implementation timelines

If this office could create an evaluation tool for organisations to measure their responsiveness and improve this it would be a step forward in the development of a high-performing and collaborative public sector that delivers better service to the Western Australian community.

So how can the office meet this need whilst implementing a framework that transcends particular subject matter such as health, land or culture? The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program <http://strongersmarter.com.au/> originally implemented by Dr Chris Sarra in Queensland is an approach that meets the need of culturally responsive organisations across many contexts. I believe that the office would benefit from laying it's foundations on a program that offers the opportunity to mobilise staff to embrace their diverse strengths and use Stronger Smarter strategies and processes to co-create the way forward. Stronger Smarter Workplaces will complement your local cultural awareness programs and support each organisation's Reconciliation Action Plan and improve staff cultural competencies. If the office was built on this, team members could engage as facilitators with all organisations and agencies in a way that honours local knowledge and expertise and exudes cultural responsiveness.



The Kimberley Education Region is already trialling a Stronger Smarter Positive Behaviour Support approach with promising outcomes across the entire region. Implementation of this with the office will meet the 'Blueprint for reform' recommendation(s) by;

1. Building a public sector focussed on community needs; An integrated approach between the abovementioned Data-Systems-Practice and Stronger Smarter Approach will improve the

quality of engagement with the community to enable a sharper focus on its needs and improve the coordination of service delivery in the regions.

2. Strengthening leadership across government; Establish system-wide leadership to drive performance across common functions.

C. Structure and powers of the new office



We believe the following elements will best support the office's objectives:

Structure

- *The office should be a new entity rather than adapting an existing one.*
- *The office's powers and functions should be set out in legislations.*
- *The holder of the office should be an Aboriginal person.*
- *The office should be accountable to Parliament and independent of any Minister. Accountability to Parliament may be through a mechanism such as a Standing Committee.*
- *The term of office should be five years with the possibility of reappointment, and removal from office should require Parliamentary approval.*
- *The office should not be subject to Ministerial directions, but the Minister should have limited power to refer to specific matters to the office.*

What resonates with me most with this is the vehicle to self-determination and I echo the sentiments of Summer May Finlay, April 10 2017. "Nothing about us, without us". From an Epistemological Equality perspective western thought occupies a central position in many areas of organisations both government and non-government alike. Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing need to compete for space in an already crowded organisational culture. The vertical and horizontal integration of Aboriginal knowledge's across these

organisations needs to be led by Aboriginal people within their communities and the office can provide the framework to enable this. An example of such a framework could be the use of Ernie Grant's Teaching Framework;

Land	Language	Culture
Time	Place	Relationships

This holistic view can be placed over any context at any time and honours Aboriginal knowledges.

Re-shaping and strengthening the public sector workforce through the co-creation of a new organisational culture will mean more about possibility and less about change management. The Stronger Smarter Leadership approach enables transformational leadership that will increase innovation and thinking around our communities co-creating this new culture. I see this as a way to develop a shared public sector workforce identity to support purposeful collaboration and strengthen employee capability through better workforce planning and talent management inline with the 'Blueprint for Reform'.

D. The name of the new office

We believe the name of the new office should be determined in consultation with Aboriginal people. The Government wants to adopt a name that works best for Aboriginal people and reflects the role and structure of the office.

Being a non-Aboriginal man myself, but a passionate advocate for Aboriginal voice and choice I agree that this process needs to be collaborative with language groups across our vast state.

E. Appointment process

We believe Aboriginal people and organisations should have a role in the appointment process for the new office. This is important to encourage appointees to be responsive to the interests and priorities of Aboriginal people.

A selection panel should be created from a cross-section of prominent Aboriginal organisations within Western Australia. Coming from a Statewide Service myself the office should give consideration to enabling regional roles within the office rather than central location to Perth

CBD. This would enable the office to employ a team that is already mobilised within regions and has the cultural context.

This submission presents a wonderful opportunity and instils a sense of hopefulness. The complexities that the new office will face will be nothing short of challenging but nevertheless this is exactly the type of reform required for the co-creation of new ways of doing business. With consideration given to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the more recent Uluru Statement from the Heart there is a new wave of truth telling and authenticity that can be embarked upon with the Western Australian Government in Aboriginal Affairs.

I invite any feedback or further contact if required and once again appreciate the opportunity that you, Mr Wyatt have provided to us in opening this up for public consideration and thought.

My contact details if required are;

Mr Stephen Johnson

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Kind regards,

Stephen Johnson

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