

Advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs

1. What are your views about the outline of the office's basic features on pages 10-12?

As a senior Noongar woman who is passionate, motivated and community minded of any system that improves the social, economic, cultural and human outcomes for Aboriginal people of Western Australia. Sadly, it is well over 70 years now Aboriginal people have been trying to get the governments of the day to value their input and solutions to the day to day challenges of being an Aboriginal person, particularly in a world where we are second class citizens, who are well behind the eight ball particularly regarding fair opportunities to gain economic, personal and community development. Also, not forgetting it was past government policies that disenabled my people to have such opportunities.

Today we are witnessing the shocking outcomes of over 129 government-imposed acts of control, divide and stealth, to ensure it seems that survival was of First Nations people was not a priority. Trans generational trauma or post traumatic stress disorder are a common thread within our community. The Elders and senior leaders for years and years have offered solutions only to fall on deaf ears of bureaucrats and Ministers of the day.

For too long band aide treatments with no real sustainable solutions have been put into play. It is time to stop using the First Nations people as an economic base for mainstream consultants and government departments. So today I welcome any proposed structure that will hold government, their agencies and not for profits being mainstream and our own accountable.

2. Does it miss out anything important?

I guess as an Aboriginal senior woman who has struggled to get sustainable programs in place I would like to see that this opportunity is sustained. I believe it will take more than 5 years to sort the mess out that was created by past polices and acts imposed by governments. If there is a report or challenge that is presented it would be wonderful that the heads of parliament accept the reports and work towards real improvement and outcomes for First Nations people of Western Australia.

3. Is anything included that shouldn't be?

N/A

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

First Nations Advocacy Voice covers the diversity without being political using a specific group's language.

5. How should Aboriginal people and organisations be involved in the appointment process of the office holder?

Possibly having the chairs and CEO's of the major Aboriginal organisations across the state be invited to be involved initially, as they are the executive leadership within communities. The use of the corporation's membership base to inform people would be a good start also.

I do however hope that there is an opportunity for our 'quiet achiever' and 'community grass roots champions' get an opportunity to play a role as they are the people who are at the cold face of our community crisis's. Not so (the past has shown) are the board Chairs or CEO's or others that have been handpicked by governments in the past.

The people chosen should come with skill and be recognised and accepted by their community as they will be the conduit of change to parliament, they should not be the same same, as then we have missed an opportunity for real people change.

I sincerely hope this consultation process is open, fair and equitable to create a truly inspirational new way of working to improved lives of all Aboriginal people in the State.

6. Who should be involved?

I believe all First Nations people of Western Australia should have a choice and a voice and the opportunity to be involved or not to be. This should also include youth as they are our next generation.

Ms Gail Beck OAM

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