

PIONEERS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

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THE VINES WA 6069

Director

Aboriginal Policy Unit

Department of Premier and Cabinet

2 Havelock Street

West Perth WA 6005

RE: SUBMISSION ON THE OFFICE FOR ADVOCACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The Pioneers Aboriginal Corporation (PAC) is an emerging Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that aims to use sport, as opposed to the failed welfare system, to assist Aboriginal young people to overcome their social, emotional, cultural and economic poverty. More information on PAC can be provided on request.

Quite simply, the Aboriginal Affairs system is ineffective and requires significant reform. The Directors of PAC consider that the Office for Advocacy and Accountability is an essential part of this reform. So many programs and activities are being delivered to Aboriginal people that are not based on Aboriginal ways of working, good research, best practice, and are often counter-productive by agencies that are ill equipped to deal with the 'wicked' problems facing the Aboriginal community. The Office needs to be empowered by legislation, adequate staffing and funding to weed out the ineffective, dangerous, damaging and racist programs being delivered to Aboriginal people.

The review agencies in Western Australia whether it is the Children's Commissioner, the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, the Public Sector Commission, the Corruption and Crime Commission, and the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services have all been ineffective in identifying the need for change and then forcing change in the way Aboriginal people in Western Australia are assisted. They are either disinterested, too lazy, or not empowered to make the necessary changes to the Aboriginal Affairs system.

The need for immediate reform is well established as can be seen by the high number of Aboriginal children in care of the welfare, the high rates of Aboriginal youth and adult incarceration, poor levels of education attainment, over-crowding in housing, and chronic ill health within the Aboriginal Community. These and other issues were identified very clearly by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1992 and there has been little or no improvement since. There are many areas of extreme need within the Aboriginal community that are not identified as government agencies simply deal with the Aboriginal problem as a state wide issue by bundling together all their doubtful data into a single erroneous package.

June Oscar, the Human Rights Commissioner (Guardian on Line 28 August 2018 in “The 147 Dead:...”) comments that governments have failed to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The abysmal way the recommendations associated with monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Royal Commission have been carried out are clear evidence of the need for the Office for Advocacy and Accountability.

In the interests of brevity and the fact that the need for reform has been well documented the Directors of PAC submit that the Office for Advocacy and Accountability should:

- Be established by legislation similar to the Act that establishes the Corruption and Crime Commission.
- Have the powers of a Royal Commission and be able to compel witnesses to answer and supply information.
- Be headed by a Commissioner who is a senior Aboriginal member of the legal profession or Bar with the status of District Court Judge of Western Australia.
- Assisted by a panel of three members of the Aboriginal community appointed as part time assistant Commissioners.
- Be adequately funded to avoid the trap of being a powerful body with no means to do anything.
- Report to Parliament and publically on issues of concern.
- Receive and report on submissions from the Aboriginal community seeking reform.
- Visit and meet with Aboriginal people in all parts of the State on a regular basis.
- Have the means to conduct research and investigations into the operations of the Aboriginal Affairs system in much the same way as the Inspector for Custodial Services operates.
- Pay special attention to the accuracy and quality of data collected by government agencies and their contractors on services delivered to the Aboriginal community.
- Compel government agencies to collect data on the outcomes for Aboriginal people in their system in a way that reflects the needs and organisation of the Aboriginal community rather than the colonialist divisions of the State. That is, according to Aboriginal cultural blocs rather than the current meaningless regional structure.
- Force government agencies to carry out reform in the way they work with Aboriginal people.

Failure to do anything less than this will simply be a waste of time.

Yours sincerely

DONNA NELSON

CEO

PIONEERS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

