



TE TAI ŌHANGA
THE TREASURY

Wellbeing Virtual Seminar Series:

Romlie Mokak – Australian Productivity Commission’s first Indigenous Policy Evaluation Commissioner

“Wellbeing and public policy: sharing insights from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective”

The session will begin at 3.00 pm.

Please mute your microphones and turn off cameras when you arrive in the meeting.

Technical help:

Please email Treasury.AcademicLinkages@treasury.govt.nz or send a chat message to the team.

19 October 2022



Australian Government
Productivity Commission

Wellbeing and public policy: sharing insights from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective

New Zealand Treasury, 19 October 2022

Romlie Mokak, Commissioner

Country and people



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



Over 250 nations, even more clans

Prior to 1788, estimated over 250 languages spoken

In 2016, estimated 120 languages still spoken

The Australian federal system

1889 – The federation period starts

1901 – Australian colonies become a federation

1967 – Referendum 91% yes vote to changes in Constitution in respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The power of the state

Dispossession of land (Terra nullius)

From 1860 'Aborigines Acts' - protection

In the 1900s - assimilation

From 1960s – self-management/self-determination

Current – shared decision-making/partnership

Key inquiries/reports/statements



1987: Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

1997: 'Bringing them Home' Report

2007: *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle* 'Little Children are Sacred' Report

2008: National Apology

Various reports on Constitutional recognition/reform

Reframing the deficit discourse

Information *about* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
(the 5Ds)

Nuanced narrative

Data *for* or *by* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The power of numbers

23.2 per 10 000 young people in detention in 2020-21

Context to understand the data

Majority never incarcerated

Structural and systemic factors

Culturally appropriate law and services can mitigate risks

34.3% of children developmentally on track (AEDC) in 2021

Cultural differences not to be confused with deficit

Primary language is invisible

Cultural learnings not valued (e.g. ceremony)

Other strengths from child-rearing practices invisible

Background in policy

State and Commonwealth Governments

CEO, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association

CEO, the Lowitja Institute

Commissioner, Australian Productivity Commission

Australian Productivity Commission



Independent research and advice to Government



Inquiries, reviews
and regular reporting



Economic, social
and environmental
issues



Community-wide
perspective

Better policies in the long-term interest of the Australian
community

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work

Productivity Commission Act amended in 2018

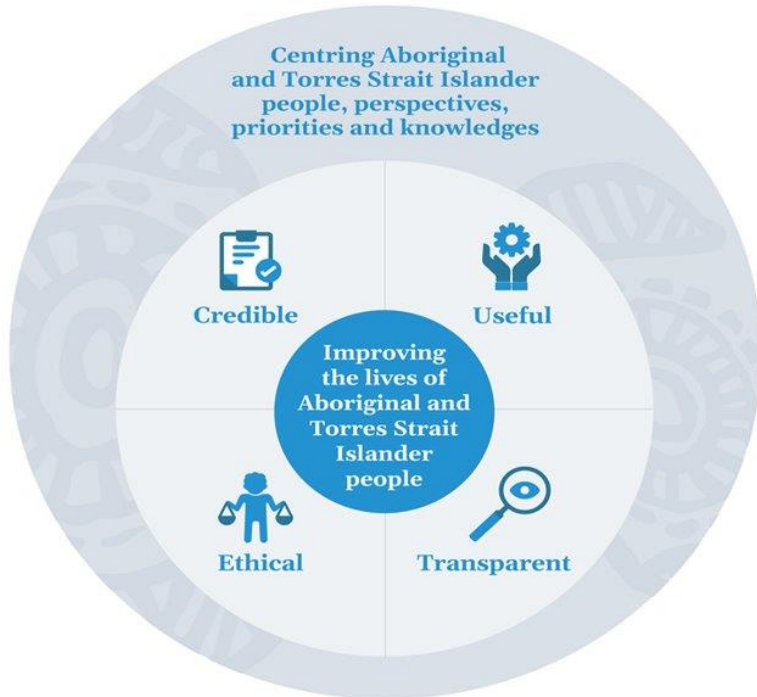
Indigenous-specific work

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts and Crafts Study
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
- Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report
- Indigenous Expenditure Report

Other work across the Commission e.g..NT Children, Mental Health, Prisons, School Reform

Indigenous Evaluation Strategy

Principles



Key recommendations



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts and crafts

Labelling of inauthentic products

New cultural rights legislation

Strengthening the Indigenous arts sector

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Actions

Priority Reform 1

Shared decision-making

Priority Reform 2

Building the community-controlled sector

Priority Reform 3

Transforming government organisations

Priority Reform 4

Shared access to regional level data

Outcomes



Education



Employment



Health and wellbeing



Justice



Access to land and waters



Strength of cultures and languages



Housing

Indigenous wellbeing



**‘State of harmony or balance
between physical, mental,
spiritual, cultural, community
and ecological dimensions,
extended through time’**

(Gee et al., 2014)



**‘When all dimensions are in
balance,... we can truly
dance through life’**

(Milroy, 2006)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches to measurement

Mayi Kuwayu

Understand wellbeing and culture

- Ranger employment positively contributes to wellbeing
- Discrimination associated with poor wellbeing

Yawuru Wellbeing study

Concept and measurement

- Based on narratives and expressions of wellbeing
- Reflects what is valued

'If you are successful in catching fish, then you share it with your family and friends. Give both sides of your family...'

Source: Yap, 2017

Indigenous perspectives in wellbeing policy

“You could be well off, without being well. You could be well, without being able to lead the life you wanted. You could have got the life you wanted, without being happy. You could be happy, without having much freedom. You could have a good deal of freedom without achieving. We can go on...” (Sen 1987, p 3)

Do measures of wellbeing reflect:

- the collective sense and relational aspects of wellbeing?
- Indigenous visions of a life lived well?

Excluding fundamental dimensions can result in policies that do not improve the wellbeing of Indigenous people

What makes a difference

Shared decision-making

Government investment, collaboration and coordination

Addressing detrimental laws, policies, and practices

Timely access to effective culturally safe services

Addressing racism and discrimination

Uluru Statement from the Heart

“When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between Governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard.



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