

5 June 2017

Professor Bronwyn Fredericks
Commissioner
Queensland Productivity Commission
PO Box 12112
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4003
Email: Christine.tozer@qpc.qld.gov.au

Dear Commissioner Fredericks,

Re: Submission to the Queensland Productivity Commission Service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities: Consultation paper

The Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) is a state-wide peak body for individuals and organisations working in the social and community service sector whose vision is for a Queensland free of poverty and disadvantage. While QCOSS does not deliver services directly to people in remote and discrete Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Communities, we support and advocate for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities across Queensland. Further, QCOSS believe that without a commitment to reconciliation there can be no end to poverty and disadvantage for individuals and families in our communities.

QCOSS welcomes the opportunity to provide a brief comment on the Queensland Productivity Commission Consultation Paper *Service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*.

Culturally competent (and aware) and effective service delivery is a fundamental aspect of supporting families and communities to flourish in line with their aspirations. QCOSS, however, also recognises that service delivery is rarely a stand-alone activity. Rather, it is embedded within wider social, political, economic, cultural, and institutional contexts. It is within these wider contexts, that the lives of individuals, families and communities are produced, and that engagement with services is experienced.

With this understanding, QCOSS cautions the commission not to rely primarily on an economic analysis of service delivery in remote and indigenous communities. While economic frameworks certainly can offer important insight into the questions raised by the Consultation paper, they can also miss out on issues fundamental to the *intent* of the inquiry, which is to improve well-being for individuals, families, and communities in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

In particular, QCOSS notes that an assessment of service delivery necessarily requires reflection and analysis of the relevance of particular **frameworks of governance**. Governing practices must have meaning for, and be valued by, the people for whom services are intended. They must relate to local aspirations, and to local ways of knowing, being, and doing; this is because governance practices structure the services that are offered (the substantive content of services) and how they are delivered, for whom, and for what purposes. They must resonate *culturally*.

QCOSS supports **citizen-led, collaborative, place-based approaches** to develop tailored responses to the challenges faced by local communities. Such approaches contribute to social connectedness by bringing together local people, community organisations, businesses, government, and universal service providers. They enable joined up and integrated engagement over complex social problems, and contribute to the development and provision of services which are reflective of and responsive to community needs, strengths, opportunities, and cultural sensitivities. Such a holistic approach to service delivery is crucial to producing better social outcomes.

In its fullest sense, a place based approach to service delivery would see an integrated approach to investment in which funding was allocated according to community need. Under such an approach, funding is provided for the achievement of community led outcomes, and is to be used by the local community to enhance local opportunities and address local issues. Short term, output focused funding does not support the achievement of long term outcomes or the empowerment of local communities.

Importantly, while supporting place-based approaches which aim to empower local populations, QCOSS is clear that challenges faced by discrete and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities rarely originate in those communities. They often can be the product of long (and ongoing) histories of trauma and subjugation, which can also be (perhaps unwittingly) reproduced through misplaced governance frameworks, poorly conceived social analysis and policy, and culturally insensitive engagement and policy implementation. These constitute just some of the underlying challenges for service delivery and improved social well-being in discrete and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

This also speaks to the importance of developing the capacity of mainstream organisations to deliver services in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. **Capacity building** in this context entails ensuring systems are in place to develop the skills, knowledge, behaviours, and understanding required to deliver services in culturally appropriate ways. This is consistent with the Queensland Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework, which aims to increase cultural capabilities of Queensland Public Sector staff.

Likewise, recognising and harnessing existing community capacity and leadership, and properly resourcing and supporting remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in planning, designing, delivering and evaluating service delivery is integral to developing a service system shaped by, and oriented towards, the aspirations and needs of local communities. Prioritising the procurement and contracting of genuine local Indigenous organisations and service providers, and employment of Indigenous workers to deliver services in remote and discrete communities, rather than external parties, is important to these ends. Local Indigenous organisations have greater understanding of local factors, expectations, and culture, which is important for effective and efficient service delivery. Additionally, knowledge, resources and skills gained by local Indigenous organisations will be retained in the community. This is also the basis for building capacity to provide services in place.

QCOSS would like to note that despite numerous attempts to engage our membership (over 550 organisations and individuals) on the questions raised in the Consultation Paper, we received only limited feedback. Of the limited feedback, we received, there have been varying responses, ranging from comments about the possibilities for influencing change in funding models to concerns over problematic representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Consultation Paper itself. The relative lack of response, however, does raise some concern regarding how well the questions in the paper resonated with our stakeholders. We understand however, that this is the first stage in the inquiry process and that further consultation will occur following the release of your draft paper. We are keen to support engagement across the sector and will continue to engage members during the second round of consultation, and we look forward to further participating and supporting the QPC in the inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Mark Henley
Chief Executive Officer

