



8 November 2017

Chief Executive Officer

Professor Bronwyn Fredericks
Commissioner
Queensland Productivity Commission
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Dear Commissioner,

RE: Response to the draft report on service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Churches of Christ in Queensland welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the draft report of the Commission's inquiry regarding service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Churches of Christ in Queensland is one of Australia's largest and most diverse not-for-profit organisations, operating services throughout Queensland and Victoria. We are active in the areas of children, youth and family services; community housing; retirement living; home and community care; and residential aged care services. We deliver out-of-home care services in the Townsville, Mount Isa and Gulf regions, and regularly work with children, young people and families coming from remote communities such as Palm Island, Doomadgee, Normanton and Mornington Island. We are also actively building relationships with community in the Cherbourg region.

Churches of Christ in Queensland supports the findings and recommendations of the Commission, which we believe recognise the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culture. We acknowledge the history of dis-empowerment and cultural trauma experienced by communities and understand that local community capacity for positive outcomes, sustainability, ownership and management are realised when people are engaged and empowered to determine their own futures.

We are providing the following submission with a focus on factors necessary for successful implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

Moving to implementation – streamlining funding

Implementing the Commission's recommendations will require strong political leadership and clear ownership and accountability.

The pooling of funding and resources to be directed by communities is of critical importance, yet this will be very challenging for government to achieve. Streamlining funding and programs across departments to deliver a truly community-driven response will require strong leadership and clear lines of accountability within government and the community.

Funding for services and programs also needs to remain at an appropriate level to ensure people in remote communities receive services at a consistent quality of those delivered in larger regional centres and towns. Funding also needs to meet the process requirements for transition and account for the high travel costs and longer delivery times associated with remote service delivery.

We were pleased to see the Commission recommend that responsibility for this reform be led through centralised responsibility, and would like to add our support to this approach.

Taking a community development approach

Transferring decision-making and accountability to communities needs to be done in a way that incorporates community development principles. Churches of Christ in Queensland has experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities using a community development approach. This approach has resulted in community led responses to significant social issues and has followed a process of:

- Community engagement with community Elders and leaders over a sufficient period of time to develop meaningful relationships and trust
- Listening to community leaders and gaining an understanding of community concerns as voiced by local community members
- Identifying community strengths and aspirations as provided by the community and allowing self-determination in the community
- Welcoming service collaboration following a collective impact model
- Developing governance structures that recognise community leaders are the drivers of change
- Building local level capacity and knowledge to be able to respond to need.
- Continuing to work collaboratively in partnership with the service sector and community

By participating in community development activities with local community leaders, as outlined above, we are confident that meaningful change can take place within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The benefits for the community include: community stability, empowerment, feeling supported, and an ability to better respond to needs locally in a culturally safe and inclusive way that enables children and young people to be safe and protected in the care of family.

Developing a strong transition plan

To implement the Commission's recommendations, the Queensland Government will need a strong transition plan to ensure skills, knowledge and experience are effectively transferred when decision-making and accountability is placed with communities. We also note communities will need continued and sustained support from government during and post transition processes.

There is also an opportunity for mainstream not-for-profit organisations who currently hold strong relationships with communities to play a supportive role during and post transition. Stable, state-wide organisations can support the transfer of skills to communities and play a role in supporting community-based agencies through coaching, mentoring and other backbone support.

While we support the Commission's recommendation to implement the reforms across two regions to begin with, we also recommend beginning longer-term community development and capacity building with all remote communities with this goal in mind. This way, appropriate community engagement and development can happen over time so communities are built up to take over decision-making and control as they become ready and government processes to support this mature.

Overall, Churches of Christ in Queensland welcomes and supports the recommendations of the Queensland Productivity Commission. If you have any further questions regarding our submission, you can contact me on 3327 1600 or paul.scully@cofcqld.com.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Paul Scully
Chief Executive Officer