



Supporting Aboriginal-led solutions

The over representation of Aboriginal children in all indicators of disadvantage continues to highlight the need for more effective ways of working to address the underpinning issues and improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people across the state.

The Commissioner's Aboriginal forum was held in August 2018 to provide an opportunity to actively involve Aboriginal leaders in workshop discussions about Aboriginal-led solutions to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people in WA.

Seventy-two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people participated in the closed-session, one-day forum and provided the following recommendations.

Key recommendations for action

- Transfer **power and responsibility** to Aboriginal people and communities to lead the solutions to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal children, young people and families.
- **Resource Aboriginal community controlled organisations** to deliver services and build community capacity.
- Build policies to drive **Aboriginal economic participation** and development.
- Advocate for an **Aboriginal Commissioner for Children and Young People**.
- Programs and services working in the Aboriginal community must be:

Aboriginal-led - the right of self-determination

Rights-based - rights of the child as well as Aboriginal rights

Client centred - place child at the centre

Place-based - locally identified issues with local solutions

Evaluated and appropriately **resourced**.

"The time of other people speaking for us is over, we want to speak for ourselves."

"Government and the sector need to be willing to unlearn the current ways of doing and re-learn better ways together with the community; we can't keep trying to adapt broken systems."

Further recommendations

Other recommendations from the forum have been grouped into the following four themes.

Aboriginal leadership and self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow through on the implementation of the Uluru Statement and treaty discussions at a state and federal level to transfer power/control and responsibility to the community.• Aboriginal communities need recognised representative groups working across the state to identify issues and solutions at a local level, and to ensure policies and programs recognise the differences in urban, regional and remote contexts.• In addition to having access to decision makers and decision making power/influence, Aboriginal communities need access to localised data and resources to support the issues being prioritised and the solutions being identified.
Cultural context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services and programs must address children and young people's needs in the context of their family, community and culture. Include families in discussions and intervene early to support families and provide them with the skills and assistance they need.• Aboriginal people must have access to culture. Connection to culture supports the strength and resilience of "our young people, who are our future".• Be strengths based. Children and young people need the resources and supports around them to see the positives in being Aboriginal. Current practices reinforce negative stereotypes, low expectations and negative relationships.• Education needs to be available to assist all Australians to understand the trauma that has affected and continues to affect Aboriginal people. Appropriate supports to heal the trauma need to be implemented.
Roles of Aboriginal community, government and not-for-profits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal community members must collaborate with government and the not-for-profit sector on 'What's next?' Resource Aboriginal people to lead the design, planning, development, funding, implementation and evaluation processes for programs and services in communities.• Increase opportunities for networking, training and capacity building that bring together non-government organisations, government and Aboriginal community to support better outcomes.• Provide independent monitoring and oversight to ensure organisations are held accountable for performing their roles and work seamlessly with other organisations.
Systems and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop long-term social policies and programs with targets set across election cycles, to more effectively address the magnitude of the trauma and the complexity of the issues.• Funding should be proportionate to the needs of children and young people and their families. Complex issues require resources and multi-layered solutions, with a focus on trauma informed practice and positive outcomes for the service user and their family.• Funding should reflect the service user. Where there is high representation of Aboriginal people, funding and resources need to be put into Aboriginal organisations, programs and services.• Simplify compliance processes and focus on transparency and measurable outcomes. The need to spend public monies appropriately is acknowledged; there needs to be a balance between necessary compliance and allowing organisations to carry out their work.