



Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

Dear Commissioner

Tauondi Submission – Indigenous Evaluation Strategy

Tauondi Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Tauondi Aboriginal College) supports the Productivity Commission to develop an Indigenous evaluation framework for the actions of Australian Government agencies in undertaking and commissioning evaluations on policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We strongly agree that the evaluation strategy is co-designed and co-developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We apologise for our late submission however, we only became aware of the Productivity Commission Inquiry in relation to the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy by chance due to an article in the media on Sunday 3 September 2019.

The urgency did not allow time for a submission to be prepared to respond to all of the issues that the Productivity Commission has raised. We would like to be included in the consultation process outlined in the Issues Paper when the Productivity Commission is in Adelaide.

ABOUT TAUONDI

Tauondi Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Tauondi Aboriginal College) is an independent college governed by the Aboriginal Community, and proud of our leadership in Aboriginal Vocational Education and Training since 1973. Tauondi provides education and training for the whole person, upholding Aboriginal cultures and identities in ways that respect Aboriginal lore and custom, and the diversity of students' experiences and ambitions. Tauondi also provides a diverse and wide range of services to meet the ever-changing needs of the Aboriginal Communities in South Australia and Tauondi is increasingly regarded as the pre-eminent provider of education, training and employment services to Aboriginal people in South Australia.

Tauondi embraces Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal authority as one of its core values. Aboriginalisation is about the constant pursuit of a distinct and appropriate College culture, in our protocols, our practices and observances, our curriculum and methodology. It is this constant attention that makes Tauondi unique as an Aboriginal community organisation.



These important principles, established at our inception over 45 years ago, are fundamental to who we are, how we operate and what makes Tauondi Aboriginal College a special place for Aboriginal people to come together to grow and learn.

Tauondi Aboriginal College is located in Port Adelaide, South Australia. Tauondi as a nationally registered training organisation (RTO), offers nationally recognised qualifications, skill set and non-accredited personal and professional development initiatives to Aboriginal people in South Australia in a unique, culturally supportive learning environment.

Courses at Tauondi have changed over time in response to the government, industries, local labour market, and above all, South Australian Aboriginal Community and people.

The funding situation for Aboriginal owned registered training organisations including Tauondi has deteriorated over the last few years resulting in the closure of a number of organisations, most recently the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs. Tauondi has resolved that it is crucial to its survival to be more actively involved in engaging with Government in policy that impacts on Aboriginal owned and operated vocational education providers. Tauondi is the lead organisation which formed the Alliance of First Nations Independent Education and Training Providers (the Alliance).

In what ways are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations contributing to policy and program evaluation? – page 22

Tauondi is the third oldest Aboriginal owned and community-controlled registered training organisation nationally and the oldest in South Australia, having the 46 years of history in the area of adult education for Aboriginal people in South Australia.

Tauondi is concerned that at no stage it was asked to determine and develop priorities and strategies to exercise its rights to development and be actively involved in developing, determining and administering policies and programs at the Commonwealth nor the State levels.

Significant amount of budget allocated to skills and employment area for Aboriginal people. Tauondi is concerned that no-one in the Commonwealth government currently assumes responsibility for the Aboriginal VET sector, but everyone expresses concerns about the increasingly poor Aboriginal VET outcomes including employment.

Tauondi is genuinely concerned that the lack of input from Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations will result in many educational programs and priorities being mainstreamed by the Government. This will negatively impact learning outcomes from Aboriginal adults nationally.

Most recently the Prime Minister and Cabinet commissioned a Report into the Vocational Education and Training System: Strengthening Skills: Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System by the Honourable Steven Joyce, delivered in March 2019 (the Joyce Report). Chapter 6 is entitled "*Improving Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres*



Strait Islanders Peoples and Disadvantaged Australians”. The Joyce Report acknowledged at page 109 the current system of mainstream VET funding recognises little or no allowance for specific problems faced by Indigenous students.

To our knowledge, none of the Alliance members (Aboriginal owned and operated registered training organisations) including Tauondi were asked to be a part of this critical Review which would impact on the areas of vocational training and employment for Aboriginal people.

We would like to highlight the following in response to these issues:

1. The evaluation process needs to involve Aboriginal organisations within the area/sector – more specifically, Aboriginal organisations delivering services directly to Aboriginal people and community (For example, the evaluation of vocational training and employment services to Aboriginal people needs to involve Aboriginal owned and operated Registered Training Organisations);
2. Aboriginal organisation’s need to be appropriately and separately funded to build their capacity in evaluation and data collection. This will:
 - 2.1. Enable them to be an effective contributor of the evaluation for quality data to the evaluation;
 - 2.2. Enable them to be an effective participant in the evaluation;
 - 2.3. Enable them to effectively reflect on the outcomes of the evaluation of future programs and projects to improve the quality of service and its delivery, to meet the needs of Indigenous students.

How do we better enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to lead evaluation and strengthen their evaluation capability? – page 22

Government grants are highly competitive and Tauondi is often competing with large, well-funded non-Aboriginal organisations for grants to offer its services to Aboriginal people in South Australia.

We have noted that the Joyce Report recommendation 8.5 pointed out more Commonwealth support for quality Aboriginal owned RTOs. However, the complexity and time-consuming nature of the existing funding model makes this recommendation unlikely to succeed without crucial changes and dedicated core funding to support Tauondi and the other Alliance members.

Each grant and funding program requires different qualitative and quantitative data. A wide range of forms are dealt with by Tauondi. The forms then need to be entered in different Government or private systems in order to compile the necessary reports. The enrolment process for students is getting more complex, complicated, and time-consuming. The requirements for administration staff are getting higher. However, there is limited funding for administration and project management.



On average, in the last 5 years, Tauondi has had 8 to 10 Commonwealth and State-funded projects annually. Different funding mechanisms overlap, leave gaps and are extremely difficult to manage for compliance and reporting purposes. Multiple funding programs lead to high administration costs to meet grant funding compliance, and administration obligations, time spent satisfying regulators that Tauondi is not 'double-dipping' or time spent trying to fill funding gaps.

With these circumstances, it is difficult to allocate sufficient financial and HR resources to the evaluation of the programs and projects undertaken. Consequently, it is virtually impossible to build the capacity for the high-quality internal evaluation, let alone "to lead evaluation".

We would like to stress the following in response to this Issue:

3. A Single Core Funding source to cover budget fundamentals needs to be developed. A single set of Commonwealth compliance and reporting obligations also needs to be developed. It will:
 - 3.1. Reduce the compliance and reporting burdens
 - 3.2. Reduce the internal administration costs and allocates more budget to the service quality
4. The capacity of Aboriginal organisations needs to be built with appropriate and separate funding. It will:
 - 4.1. Produce effective and efficient evaluation processes for quality outcomes
 - 4.2. Enable us to build the capacity and capability to lead evaluation (otherwise, to become a contributor to evaluation).

We thank you for giving us the opportunity to make this submission. Please do not hesitate to contact me, if further information and/or any clarification is required.

Yours faithfully

~~Doug~~ Milera
Chief Executive Officer