

Service delivery principles for programs and services for Indigenous Australians

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

PRINCIPLES

Purpose

- D1 These principles draw upon the National Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians agreed to by COAG in 2004. These principles are to guide COAG in the:
- (a) design and delivery of Indigenous specific and mainstream government programs and services provided to Indigenous people; and
 - (b) development and negotiation of National Partnership agreements, National Agreements and reform proposals.

Principles

- D2 *Priority principle:* Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.
- D3 *Indigenous engagement principle:* Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.
- D4 *Sustainability principle:* Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets.
- D5 *Access Principle:* Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.
- D6 *Integration principle:* There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively coordinate programs and services.
- D7 *Accountability principle:* Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

Principles in Detail

- D8 *Priority principle:* Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs. The COAG targets are:
- (a) close the 17 year life expectancy gap within a generation;
 - (b) halve the gap in mortality rates for children under five within a decade;
 - (c) halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;
 - (d) halve the gap in employment outcomes and opportunities within a decade;
 - (e) at least halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
 - (f) within five years provide access to a quality early childhood education program to all Indigenous four year olds in remote Indigenous communities.
- D9 *Indigenous engagement principle:* Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services. In particular, attention is to be given to:
- (a) recognising that strong relationships/partnerships between government, community and service providers increase the capacity to achieve identified outcomes and work towards building these relationships;
 - (b) engaging and empowering Indigenous people who use Government services, and the broader Indigenous community in the design and delivery of programs and services as appropriate;
 - (c) recognising local circumstances;
 - (d) ensuring Indigenous representation is appropriate, having regard to local representation as required;
 - (e) being transparent regarding the role and level of Indigenous engagement along a continuum from information sharing to decision-making; and
 - (f) recognising Indigenous culture, language and identity.
- D10 *Sustainability principle:* Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets. In particular, attention is to be given to:
- (a) service system orientation, particularly:
 - (i) using evidence to develop and redesign programs, services and set priorities;
 - (ii) recognising the importance of early intervention; and
 - (iii) including strategies that increase independence, empowerment and self management;
 - (b) ensuring adequate and appropriate resources, particularly:

- (i) setting time-frames for meeting short, medium and longer-term targets and outcomes;
 - (ii) considering flexibility in program design to meet local needs;
 - (iii) considering workforce supply and future planning;
 - (iv) considering sustaining or redesigning services to best use existing resources, as well as the need for programs and services to meet the COAG targets;
 - (v) minimising administrative red tape to enable greater integration of program and service delivery;
 - (vi) ensuring that programs and services are efficient and fiscally sustainable; and
 - (vii) ensuring that infrastructure is appropriate and adequately maintained;
- (c) building the capacity of both Indigenous people and of services to meet the needs of Indigenous people, particularly:
- (i) developing the skills, knowledge and competencies, including independence and empowerment of Indigenous people, communities and organisations;
 - (ii) supporting Indigenous communities to harness the engagement of corporate, non-government and philanthropic sectors;
 - (iii) building governments' and service delivery organisations' capacity to develop and implement policies, procedures, and protocols that recognise Indigenous people's culture, needs and aspirations;
 - (iv) ensuring that programs and services foster and do not erode capacity or capability of clients; and
 - (v) recognising when Indigenous delivery is an important contributor to outcomes (direct and indirect), and in those instances fostering opportunities for Indigenous service delivery.

D11 *Access Principle:* Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs. In particular, attention is to be given to:

- (a) considering appropriate and adequate infrastructure and placement of services (including transport, IT, telecommunications and use of interpreter services);
- (b) minimising administrative red tape that may be a barrier to access; and
- (c) providing adequate information regarding available programs and services.

D12 *Integration principle:* There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels, their agencies and funded service providers to effectively coordinate programs and services. In particular attention is to be given to:

- (a) articulating responsibilities between all levels of government;
- (b) identifying and addressing gaps and overlaps in the continuum of service delivery;

- (c) ensuring services and programs are provided in an integrated and collaborative manner both between all levels of governments and between services;
- (d) ensuring services and programs do not set incentives that negatively affect outcomes of other programs and services; and
- (e) recognising that a centrally agreed strategic focus should not inhibit service delivery responses that are sensitive to local contexts.

D13 *Accountability principle:* Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation. In particular, attention is to be given to:

- (a) choosing performance measures based on contribution to the COAG targets and report them publicly;
- (b) ensuring mainstream service delivery agencies have strategies in place to achieve Indigenous outcomes and meet Indigenous needs;
- (c) clearly articulating the service level to be delivered;
- (d) ensuring accountability of organisations for the government funds that they administer on behalf of Indigenous people;
- (e) periodically measuring/reviewing to assess the contribution of programs and services to the above, and adapting programs and services as appropriate;
- (f) clearly defining and agreeing responsibilities of government and communities;
- (g) supporting the capacity of the Indigenous service sector and communities to play a role in delivering services and influencing service delivery systems/organisations to ensure their responsiveness, access and appropriateness to Indigenous people; and
- (h) evaluating programs and services from multiple perspectives including from the client, Indigenous communities and government perspectives and incorporating lessons into future program and services design.