ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE SHOULD BE AT THE CENTRE OF EVALUATION

The Productivity Commission today released a proposed Indigenous Evaluation Strategy. The Strategy, which has been delivered to the Government, sets out a new approach to evaluating Australian Government policies and programs.

“Policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not working as well as they need to. Evaluation can play an important role filling this gap, but regrettably it is often an afterthought and of poor quality,” Commissioner Romlie Mokak said.

“Importantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are rarely asked about what, or how to evaluate, or what evaluation results mean,” Mr Mokak said.

The Strategy puts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at its centre. Better outcomes will be achieved if the values, expertise and lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reflected in what is evaluated, how evaluation is undertaken, and the outcomes policies and programs seek to achieve.

“The Commission has for many years advocated for better evaluation to inform decisions about policies and programs,” Chair Michael Brennan said.

“Evaluation is about understanding what is working, what is not working, and what changes could be made to make policies and programs work better. Evaluation can also inform the direction of new policies and programs. This Strategy will improve the quality and usefulness of evaluations and strengthen the evidence base,” Mr Brennan said.

“Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is fundamental to lifting the quality of evaluations, as is planning early so that the right questions are asked and the right data collected,” Commissioner Mokak said.

The Strategy does not endorse particular evaluation approaches or methods, but rather acknowledges that different evaluation questions and contexts will require different approaches. There is also guidance material for Australian Government agencies to use when they are selecting, planning, conducting and using evaluations of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.


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