

Peter Achterstraat AM  
Commissioner  
NSW Productivity Commission

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**New South Wales  
Aboriginal Land Council**  
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Dear Mr Achterstraat AM,

### **Productivity Commission Green Paper “Continuing the productivity conversation”**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Productivity Commission’s Green Paper “Continuing the productivity conversation.” The NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) would like to take this opportunity to reiterate and add to the comments previously provided in response to the NSW Productivity Commission’s discussion paper “Kickstarting the Productivity Conversation” in 2019.

We note that the Green Paper identifies the importance of Indigenous cultural values in the development of a water strategy and commends the Victorian Government strategic state-wide plan, Water for Victoria and its inclusivity of the Aboriginal community’s traditional relationship with water.

Unfortunately, the rest of the Green Paper is noticeably silent on the role that Aboriginal people could play in NSW’s economy. This is a significant omission, which, as previously suggested, needs to be addressed. As noted in our submission, the NSW Government must work with us as part of its commitment to supporting the continued growth in the State’s living standards. Recent research found that the economic benefits of closing the gap in Indigenous employment outcomes is largest in NSW (\$7.4 billion or 31% of the national total).<sup>1</sup>

The NSW Government must be prepared to move into an enabling and innovative space to support Aboriginal self-determination, and long-term partnerships. The new National Agreement on Closing the Gap includes four new priority reforms, which aim to fundamentally change the way in which governments work with Aboriginal peoples. These are:

1. Shared decision making
2. Building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector
3. Transforming mainstream institutions
4. Data sharing

As part of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, NSWALC as a member of the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO) is working with the NSW Government to develop the state’s Jurisdictional Implementation Plan. The Jurisdictional Implementation Plans require governments to set out how existing policies and programs will be aligned to the National Agreement. The Commission’s productivity

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte (2017) Economic benefits of closing the gap in Indigenous employment outcomes  
<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Economic-benefits-of-closing-the-gap-in-Indigenous-employment-outcomes.pdf>

**ALWAYS WAS ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND**



reform agenda should align with relevant Closing the Gap targets, specifically, education, employment, economic participation, land and water.

Chapter 2 of the discussion paper is dedicated to improving education. In this regard, we recommend the Productivity Commission note the work underway on the Aboriginal education and culture Premier's priority, developed in partnership with CAPO, and seek engagement with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group to further explore opportunities to lift school results.

There are significant opportunities for government to partner with NSWALC and Local Aboriginal Land Councils to improve economic outcomes for Aboriginal people and the people of NSW more broadly. The NSW Government should support NSWALC and Local Aboriginal Land Councils to activate lands acquired via the compensatory mechanisms in the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*, including by:

- actively supporting the Aboriginal Land Agreement mechanism in the ALRA to deliver social cultural and economic outcomes
- reviewing land claims in a timely manner and transferring land to LALCs without it being subject to 'limited title' to reduce the financial burden on LALCs,
- Reforming the planning system to unlock economic development on Aboriginal owned lands – recent positive reforms in this regard include the Aboriginal Lands State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) – government needs work with us to build on these initiatives.

NSWALC is focused on building a better future for Aboriginal people by unlocking the full potential of our three greatest assets; the land we have reacquired, our culture and heritage, and our people. We want to change the narrative from welfare to self-sufficiency by securing our fair share of the NSW economy.

For example, there are opportunities for the NSW Government to better support NSWALC's including in housing, employment, and training. This includes the Yarpa Indigenous Business and Employment Hub in Western Sydney. The Hub is working to build the capacity of Aboriginal businesses to participate in the NSW economy, particularly in infrastructure.

Additionally, under our Enterprises and Employment initiatives we are partnering with employment and labour hire services to improve job placements and outcomes for Aboriginal people. Another way we are improving employment outcomes is through direct employment of Aboriginal people in our new NSWALC enterprises: NSWALC Employment and Training (NET) and NSWALC Housing Limited (NHL) and NSWALC Construction and Land Development. These projects are designed to fill current service gaps and leverage existing initiatives to take full advantage of infrastructure investment in Western Sydney. NSWALC Employment is also intending to support Aboriginal employment in other areas of jobs growth, such as the health care and aged and disability sector, which are expected to grow by 16% and 47% nationally over the next five years.

NSWALC provides the NSW Government with a stronger partner to work with to achieve economic outcomes. We would welcome further engagement to support the development of initiatives to ensure a prosperous future for all. Please contact [REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely,

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CEO  
NSW Aboriginal Land Council  
Date: 15 September 2020