



Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation

233. Aboriginal police aides in Western Australia

That the question of Aboriginal police aides in Western Australia be given urgent consideration in light of recent developments, including the Police Aides Review (1987), the development of programs for police aides in other jurisdictions and the investigations into the work of police aides reported in the report of Commissioner Dodson and in this National Report and the recommendations of this report. In the consideration of Aboriginal police aides special attention should be given to the wisdom of police aides being engaged to work in communities other than those from which they were recruited.¹

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| Background² | At the time of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) Western Australia had had Aboriginal police aides for years. The scheme was criticised for being ineffective in improving community relations and poorly regarded by the Aboriginal community, partly because aides were often placed outside their own communities and performed traditional policing roles rather than liaison work. |
| Intent | Urgently consider the roles and status of police aides in Western Australia and the placement of aides within their own communities to improve effectiveness and acceptance. |
| Responsibility | Western Australian Government. |
| Key action taken | |
| 2005 Review³ | Victoria Police advised a feasibility study conducted in 2003 indicated that the police aides program in Western Australia was not suitable for use in Victoria, a much smaller state with remoteness less of an issue. Victoria Police commenced their Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Program during the period of the 2005 Review. |
| 2018 Review⁴ | Deloitte concluded that the Western Australian Government had fully implemented Recommendation 233 through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy. The Western Australia Police Force actively recruited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as police officers, Community Relations Officers and Police Cadets. There was no provision that Aboriginal people be used only in their own communities. |
| Since then | Recommendation 233 is solely the responsibility of the Western Australian Government. |

¹ Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Final Report, 1991) vol 4, 161 ('RCIADIC').

² Ibid vol 4, [29.7.18]-[29.7.25].

³ Aboriginal Justice Forum (Vic), Department of Justice (Vic), *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Review Report, October 2005) vol 1, 396 ('2005 Review').

⁴ Deloitte Access Economics, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Report, August 2018) 467-8 ('2018 Review').

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Evidence of impact

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| Authorising documents | None identified. |
| Outputs | None identified. |
| Outcomes | None identified. |
| Community views | None identified. |

Related recommendations

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| | None identified. |
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Assessment summary⁵

Recommendation 233 is not relevant to Victoria.

Bibliography

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, In Person, 20 September 2023)

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, In Person, 2 August 2023)

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, In Person, 4 November 2022)

Aboriginal Justice Forum (Vic), Department of Justice (Vic), *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Review Report, October 2005)

Deloitte Access Economics, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Report, August 2018)

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Final Report, 1991)

⁵ Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, In Person, 4 November 2022) ('*Working Group Meeting (4 November 2022)*'); Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, In Person, 2 August 2023) ('*Working Group Meeting (2 August 2023)*'); Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, In Person, 20 September 2023) ('*Aboriginal Justice Caucus Meeting (20 September 2023)*').