



## Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation

### 63. Establish National Task Force on alcohol

*That having regard to the desirability of Aboriginal people deciding for themselves what courses of action should be pursued to advance their well-being, ATSIC consider, in the light of the implementation of the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, the establishment of a National Task Force to focus on:*

- a) The examination of the social and health problems which Aboriginal people experience as a consequence of alcohol use;*
- b) The assessment of the needs in this area and the means to fulfil these needs; and*
- c) The representation of Aboriginal Health Services and other medical resources in such a project.<sup>1</sup>*

<b>Background<sup>2</sup></b>	The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) recognised disparities in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, particularly regarding social and health problems associated with alcohol use. During the Commission, many Aboriginal people identified alcohol use as a major factor contributing to community disruption, with some communities stating that alcohol consumption dominated their everyday life. In line with the RCIADIC's emphasis on Aboriginal self-determination, the Commissioners noted that Aboriginal people were best able to assess the health needs of their communities and develop appropriate courses of action. Hence, Aboriginal Health Services were to be incorporated into research and other projects in these areas.
<b>Intent</b>	Establish a National Task Force with Aboriginal representation to examine social and health problems associated with alcohol use, and community needs.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Commonwealth Government.
<b>Key action taken</b>	
<b>2005 Review<sup>3</sup></b>	<p>The Victorian Government considered Recommendation 63 to be the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.</p> <p><b>Department of Human Services</b></p> <p>Drugs Policy and Services advised that this recommendation referred to the need for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to consider the establishment of a National Taskforce and was therefore not relevant to Victoria.</p> <p><b>Department of Justice</b></p> <p>Liquor Licensing advised that the Australasian Liquor Licensing Authorities had established a National Indigenous Working Party, comprised of representatives from Western Australia,</p>

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Final Report, 1991) vol 2, 330 ('RCIADIC').

<sup>2</sup> Ibid vol 2, 297-330 [15.1.1]-[15.5.1].

<sup>3</sup> 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, 245, 249, 270 ('2005 Review').

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	<p>South Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria, to investigate issues related to the misuse of alcohol amongst Aboriginal communities. The working party met once a year and reported annually to the Australasian Liquor Licensing Authorities Conference.</p> <p><b>Review Team</b></p> <p>The Review Team agreed that Recommendation 63 was technically not of relevance to Victoria as far as responsibility for implementation was concerned. They believed, however, that the focal concerns specified for such a body – social and health problems consequent upon alcohol abuse, assessment of needs in this area and representation of Aboriginal Health Services in relevant projects – should not be designated as solely Commonwealth concerns.</p>
<p><b>2018 Review<sup>4</sup></b></p>	<p>Deloitte considered Recommendation 63 the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, concluding that they had <b>fully implemented</b> it by continuing to provide a national approach and funding to address alcohol abuse.</p>
<p><b>Since then</b></p>	<p><b>National Drug Strategy 2017-2026</b></p> <p>Provides a national framework for building safe, healthy and resilient Australian communities through preventing and minimising alcohol, tobacco and other drug related health, social and economic harms among individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>The Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs manages the National Drug Strategy, involving senior health and law enforcement officials across Australia and New Zealand.</p> <p><b>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Drug Strategy 2014–2019</b></p> <p>A sub-strategy of the above, which aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by preventing and reducing the harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs on individuals, families and their communities.</p> <p>This strategy acknowledged the need for coordinated, cross-government responses across all levels and sectors—health, justice, housing, employment, and child and family services—and was informed by community consultations in 2013.</p> <p>Four policy principles underpinned this strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community ownership – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must lead the design, implementation, and evaluation of responses.</li> <li>• Culturally safe, holistic approaches—Interventions must reflect Indigenous definitions of health, which encompass physical, spiritual, emotional, and community well-being.</li> <li>• Whole-of-Government and partnerships – Effective solutions require collaboration between government departments and Aboriginal community-controlled and non-government organisations.</li> <li>• Needs-based resourcing – Funding should be equitable, sustainable, and evidence-based, supporting short- and long-term outcomes.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> 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) 131 ('2018 Review').

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This strategy builds on the National Drug Strategy framework and aims to strengthen Aboriginal-led solutions, reduce harms from alcohol and other drugs, and support healthier communities through coordinated, culturally respectful action.

### Evidence of impact

<b>Authorising documents</b>	None identified.
<b>Outputs</b>	None identified.
<b>Outcomes</b>	None identified.
<b>Community views</b>	None identified.

### Related recommendations

<b>2005 Review<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Recommendation 22</b> That the Department of Justice (Liquor Licensing) in partnership with the Department of Justice (Indigenous Issues Unit) and Aboriginal advocacy groups, actively participate in national forums in developing initiatives and policies for dealing with alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities and provide a report to the Aboriginal Justice Forum. That the Victorian Government continue to implement and monitor recommendations 59, 63, through any monitoring process established as a consequence of this Review.
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### Assessment summary<sup>6</sup>

Recommendation 63 was the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.

## Bibliography

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, In Person, 17 May 2023)

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, Online, 4 July 2025)

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)

<sup>5</sup> 2005 Review, vol 1, 39.

<sup>6</sup> 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, Online, 4 July 2025) ('Working Group Meeting (4 July 2025)'); Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, In Person, 17 May 2023) ('AJC Meeting (17 May 2023)').