

# Indigenous Leadership in a Changing Public Sector

**ANZSOG Senior Indigenous Public Servant Forum**  
Summary Report 2019



## Forum Summary

On 14 and 15 November 2019, 23 senior Indigenous public servants from nine jurisdictions across Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand came together on Ngunnawal Country in Canberra for the third annual ANZSOG Senior Indigenous Public Servant Forum.

The Forum, supported by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, focused on *Indigenous leadership in a changing public sector*. It was smaller than previous years to allow for more strategic discussions among the most senior decision makers across both nations.

The group agreed three priorities to action in the next twelve months, with the assistance of ANZSOG:

1. Establish a cross-jurisdictional community of practice to focus on best practice and cross-jurisdictional learning among Indigenous public servants.
2. Workshop ways to create a shift in the cultural mindset of non-Indigenous public servants.
3. Examine ways to support Indigenous staff to succeed in the public sector while staying on Country.

Wiradjuri woman Katrina Fanning, 2020 ACT Australian of the Year, and Forum facilitator, led the group through three sessions over the two half-day workshops.



Delegates from across jurisdictions at the Forum networking reception.

## Session Outlines

### Session 1: What capabilities do public servants need in order to succeed in a changing public sector?

This session explored the changing role of the public servant and the capabilities required to succeed in the public service of the future. It focused on reform across the public sector, but with a view to how broader changes could impact Indigenous Affairs, and Indigenous public servants.

Professor Rod Glover, Director of the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI), presented on his recent report commissioned by ANZSOG and co-authored with Professor Beth Noveck, Director of the NYU Governance Lab, titled [\*Today's Problems, Yesterday's Toolkit\*](#). In his presentation, Professor Glover suggested three things were necessary to encourage innovation in the public sector:

- a 21st century toolkit for public problem solving
- more relevant and effective training programs, and
- institutional experimentation supported by senior leadership

Warren Fraser, Deputy Chief Executive, the Office for Maori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, presented on proposals to create a new Public Service Act in New Zealand which, amongst other things, would address the role of the public service in supporting the Crown in its relationships with Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi.

He explained how the reforms were expected to lead to a systems approach to public sector leadership. Under the proposed legislation Public Service Chief Executives would be responsible for developing and maintaining the capability of the public service to engage with Maori and to understand Maori perspectives.



*Katrina Fanning (ACT), Antoinette Gentile (VIC) and Wendy Ah Chin (CTH).*



## Session 2: What are the top Indigenous policy priorities in each jurisdiction?

In this session representatives from the Commonwealth, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and New Zealand led a yarning circle around policy priorities across jurisdictions. These discussions centred on themes of Closing the Gap, Treaty, community partnerships, and truth-telling.

David Samuels, Chief Executive, *Te Puni Kōkiri*, advised Australian jurisdictions considering a treaty, that, “Treaty has to be about the future, not the past. Yes, it needs to include restitution, but it really *has to be* focused on the future”.

Jason Ardler, Deputy Secretary and Head of Aboriginal Affairs in NSW, described his jurisdiction’s approach to working with community, emphasising self-determination through the Opportunity Choice Healing Responsibility Empowerment (OCHRE) program that commits the NSW government to a different way of working with, and in support of, Aboriginal communities.

Ray Griggs, Chief Executive of the Commonwealth’s National Indigenous Australians Agency spoke on his vision for Indigenous leadership development in the public sector, and the ability to succeed in mainstream as well as identified roles: “Success means we invest in the people in Indigenous Affairs, so they are able move out into other Departments and succeed in that environment outside Indigenous Affairs”.

Elly Patira, Executive Director of Treaty in Victoria’s Department of Premier and Cabinet, said that the Treaty process in Victoria was not an endpoint, it was the start of a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Victorians, and part of her role was to determine how to transform the Victorian Government into a good Treaty partner. “The Victorian public service was developed without an Aboriginal voice,” she said.



*Delegates participate in yarning circle.*



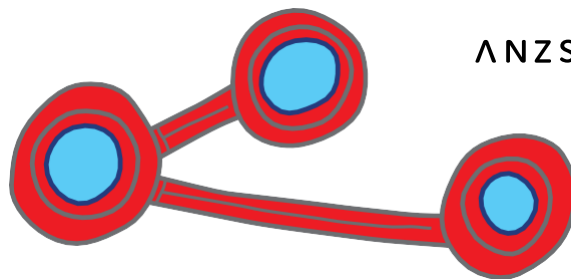
*Professor Ken Smith (ANZSOG), Professor Ian Anderson (CTH), David Samuels (NZ) and ANZSOG Distinguished and Academic Fellow Professor Tom Calma.*

### **Session 3: How can we better invest in Indigenous leadership in the public sector?**

Mr Griggs' comments on Indigenous leadership in the Commonwealth led into the final workshop session examining what levers exist and what investment is required to develop Indigenous leadership across the public sector.

The group emphasised the need to support staff mobility, both in terms of gaining experience across departments and sectors, as well as the ability to work on Country.

Forum delegates discussed the difficulty in making the public service an attractive employer for Indigenous people, particularly when competing with large corporates and well-resourced *iwi* (Māori tribes) in New Zealand. They spoke about the need to invest in cross-jurisdictional networks and the development of staff on the brink of the senior executive.



## Outcomes and next steps

The Forum agreed it was important to continue working together between meetings as a cross-jurisdictional network of senior Indigenous leaders. The group is well-placed to share best practice, solve public sector challenges and drive change to ensure better outcomes for Indigenous people and communities. As Letitia Hope, Group Manager at NIAA, said in closing the Forum: “This is the leadership community of practice. So we need to think about how we make sure we come together between meetings and stay as a community of practice”.

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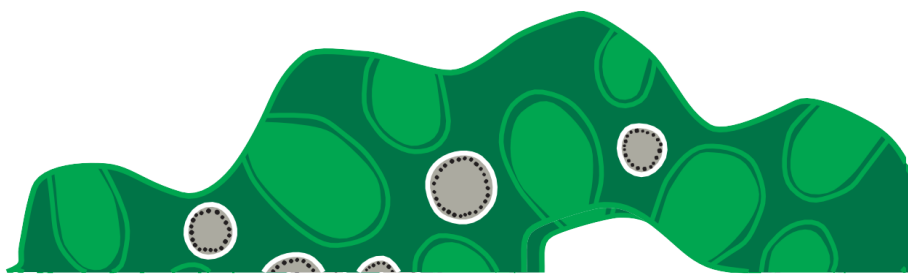
*Warren Fraser (NZ) and Robert McFarlane (NSW)*

### **ANZSOG is committed to supporting these priorities by:**

- Facilitating the establishment of a cross-jurisdictional Indigenous community of practice.
- Facilitating further meetings of the Indigenous leadership group including at the ANZSOG 2020 Public Administration conference.
- Supporting the work of this leadership group through research and compilation of best practice case studies, including research into success factors to enable staff to work on Country.

## 2019 Forum Delegates

| State | Name               | Title  |
|-------|--------------------|--|
| ACT   | Lisa Charles       | Executive Branch Manager - Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Community Services Directorate  |
| ACT   | Jake Collins       | Director, Public Sector Management, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate  |
| ACT   | Jaime Elton        | Executive Branch Manager - People and Capability, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate  |
| CTH   | Ian Anderson       | Deputy CEO, National Indigenous Australians Agency   |
| CTH   | Letitia Hope       | Group Manager, Reform Unit, National Indigenous Australians Agency   |
| CTH   | Wendy Ah Chin      | Branch Manager, Reform Unit, National Indigenous Australians Agency  |
| CTH   | Damien Miller      | Assistant Secretary, Soft Power, Partnerships and Research Branch, Soft Power, Communications and Scholarships Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| NSW   | Jason Ardler       | Head/Deputy Secretary of Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Premier and Cabinet   |
| NSW   | Robert Macfarlane  | Director - Strategic Support, Department of Planning Industry & Environment  |
| NSW   | Claire Beattie     | Executive Director, Department of Education  |
| NT    | Mischa Cartwright  | Executive Director, Department of the Chief Minister   |
| NT    | Camille Lew Fatt   | Director, Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment   |
| NZ    | David Samuels      | Chief Executive, Te Puni Kokiri (Ministry of Maori Development)  |
| NZ    | Warren Fraser      | Deputy Chief Executive - Strategy and Policy, The Office for Māori Crown Relations – Te Arawhiti   |
| QLD   | Chris Sarra        | Director General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships   |
| QLD   | Haylene Grogan     | Chief Health Officer and Deputy Director-General, Queensland Health  |
| QLD   | Phillip Brooks     | Deputy Director General, Department of Youth Justice   |
| TAS   | Jason Sowell       | Manager Financial Services, Department of Education  |
| VIC   | Tim Kanoa          | Executive Director, Aboriginal Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet   |
| VIC   | Elly Patira        | Executive Director, Treaty, Department of Premier and Cabinet  |
| VIC   | Antoinette Gentile | Director, Koorie Justice Unit, Department of Justice and Community Safety  |
| WA    | Paulina Motlop     | Director, Department of Education  |
| WA    | Cheryl Bridge      | Portfolio Director, Creative Industries  |



## Guest speakers and contributors



*Chris Sarra (QLD)*

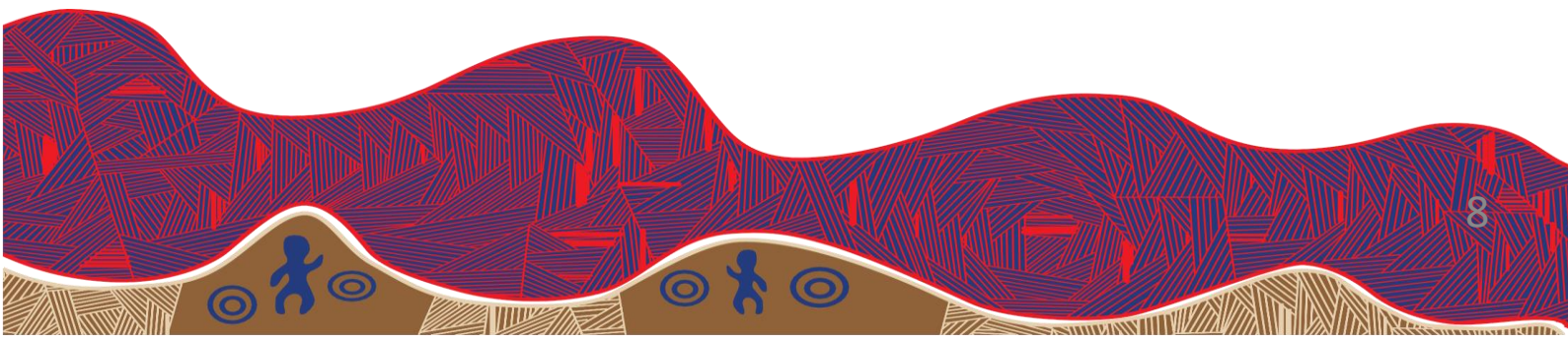
- Katrina Fanning PSM, Forum facilitator
- Aunty Jeanette Phillips, Ngunnawal Elder
- Professor Rod Glover, Director Monash Sustainable Development Institute
- Ray Griggs, Chief Executive, National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Professor Tony Dreise, Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research

## Resources

- [2018 Forum Report](#)
- [2017 Forum Report](#)
- [ANZSOG Indigenous Engagement](#)



*Paulina Motlop (WA)*







**Find out more:**  
**[ANZSOG.EDU.AU](http://ANZSOG.EDU.AU)**

*Artwork: Journey - Where we have been & where we are going*

Artist Emma Bamblett - a Wemba Wemba woman, born and raised in Echuca on the Murray River. The art was commissioned for the 2019 First Peoples Public Administration Conference.