



First Peoples to All Peoples

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre,
Meanjin Brisbane

1-3 March 2023

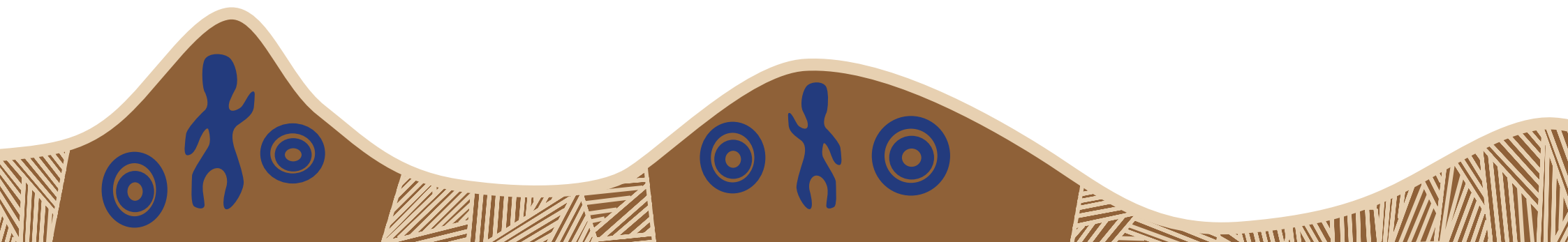
Australia &
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POST CONFERENCE REPORT

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NB: This a 'summary report' of the conference program and provides an overview of all speakers' contribution to the main panel discussions only. More panel discussion details and an opportunity to hear the discussions in the 'yarning sessions' can be viewed in the video recordings in the [conference resources](#).



Welcome to Country



The 2023 First Peoples to All Peoples conference was held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in Meanjin (Brisbane) on the lands of the Turrbal and Jagera peoples. We were privileged to receive an exceptional *Welcome to Country* by Shannon Ruska, Tribal Experiences. Shannon shared his family's stories through song and dance. A stirring reminder of the history and way of life that has existed for generations where sovereignty was never ceded.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Māori delegation acknowledged the welcome in *te reo* (Māori language).

The conference was made possible by our principal partners the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), partnerships with the Coalition of Peaks, the Northern Territory and West Australian Governments; Te Arawhiti/ The Office for Māori Crown Relations; Te Puni Kōkiri / Ministry for Māori Development and Te Kawa Mataaho/ Public Service Commission New Zealand; Indigenous Business Australia and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation. Other governments supported the conference through delegate registrations.



Partners and sponsors



Principal Partner



Partners



Bronze Sponsors



General Sponsors



ANZSOG staff t-shirts were so popular, they were made available post conference for delegates to purchase. All proceeds were donated to the **New Zealand Red Cross** to support families and communities devastated by Cyclone Gabrielle in February 2023.

ANZSOG thanks [Andrea Stanning Design](#) for her continued support, skills, and experience to sensitively contribute to our First Nations work.



Conference host Dan Conifer, Ngemba-Muruwari man and ABC journalist

Acknowledgements

The Australia & New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Owners, Custodians and First Nations of Australia, and Māori as tangata whenua and Treaty of Waitangi partners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We acknowledge the Turrbal and Jagera peoples as Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which the conference was held in Meanjin Brisbane.



ANZSOG acknowledges the two unique artworks by Melbourne-based Wemba Wemba artist Emma Bamblett and Sydney-based Māori artist Aaron McTaggart. Both tell the story of the ANZSOG journey – where we have been and where we are going. Elements of the artworks have been adopted as our ANZSOG First Nations visual identity, used through-out the extensive conference marketing campaign and on the website. [Find out more about the Artists.](#)



Message from ANZSOG Dean and CEO, Adam Fennessy



By ANZSOG Dean and CEO
Adam Fennessy PSM

Like many others in public sector and public purpose organisations in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, I am myself on a journey to improve my understanding of First Nations peoples, and how First Nations' knowledges and cultures can be used to inform the development and delivery of better policy.

ANZSOG's 2023 *First Peoples to All Peoples* conference in Meanjin Brisbane was an opportunity for me to listen directly to the voices of First Nations peoples, including ministers from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, academics, and people with first-hand experience in designing and delivering Indigenous-controlled services to communities.

It was profound and impactful to hear strong First Nations perspectives with an emphasis on power sharing, co-design and co-management, and the need for genuine engagement, not consultation. This was combined with demonstrations of the strengths of First Nations communities, their understanding of their own needs and their capacity to look after themselves.

The passion and commitment of 800 in-person delegates and 300 online participants created an atmosphere of excitement about changes happening now and optimism for the future.

The range of speakers from Aotearoa New Zealand was a key feature of the conference. As Australian jurisdictions work towards developing a Treaty framework with First Nations, it is valuable for them to increase their understanding of how a Treaty can be used to recognise First Nations and deliver self-determination.

We are in a time of rapid, and long overdue change in Indigenous policy, with the adoption of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* in Australia and the *New Zealand Public Service Act 2020* putting a new emphasis on genuine partnerships and shifts of power from governments to First Nations people and communities.

ANZSOG wants to be front and centre of this change through events such as the conference, and through including First Nations knowledge and perspectives in our education and research programs. We are also providing direct support to emerging and current First Nations leaders through initiatives like our [ANZSOG First Nations public servant scholarship](#). Applications opened 31 May and close 6 October 2023 for a 2024 ANZSOG executive leadership program.

For those unable to attend the conference, this report captures the mood of this exceptional event. The report highlights the importance of public servants listening to First Nations and taking action to share power and work in strong partnerships with First Nations people, organisations, and communities.





Introduction



Engaging with First Nations and embedding First Nations perspectives in our work is one of the five key priorities in ANZSOG's Strategy. ANZSOG is committed to building public service capability in First Nations public administration and helping public services become more culturally competent. Ways of working with First Nations peoples are undergoing a transformation and public servants working in all areas of public administration must change their thinking and upskill, to engage successfully with First Nations peoples for improved outcomes.

One way we have contributed to this change over the past five years is through our First Nations public administration conferences, which bring together public servants, academics, and not-for-profit community leaders to share, engage and listen to the views of First Nations speakers and their allies. These events deepen public sector understanding of the value of First Nations knowledges and cultures, and their importance to the development and delivery of effective public policy.

These conferences have also provided a valuable opportunity for people working in First Nations public administration to connect and build networks across jurisdictions in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The high level of interest in the conference theme and program resulted in over 55,000 unique hits to the ANZSOG conference webpage, which was the most viewed ANZSOG webpage during the six-month marketing campaign. The resulting 1,000+ registrations necessitated a change of venue to allow us to accommodate 800 in-person delegates and create a greater customer experience.

23 speakers

- 19 First Nations
- 12 Female
- 4 non-Indigenous
- 11 Male

10 jurisdictions

including Aotearoa
New Zealand

800 in-person

from across Australia
and Aotearoa New Zealand

300 online

from across Australia
and Aotearoa New Zealand

Conference theme and focus



The 2023 ANZSOG First Nations Public Administration Conference *First Peoples to All Peoples: partnerships, devolution, transformation and sharing* was held in early March at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Meanjin (Brisbane).

The conference theme built on the success of ANZSOG's three previous First Nations public administration conferences and focused on the National Agreement on *Closing the Gap* Priority Reforms. This unique agreement between all Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks), was signed in July 2020 by every government. Each government is required to publish an annual report and table the report in their parliament. The Productivity Commission then collects data to measure whether the gaps are closing.

To support and inform conference delegates, ANZSOG circulated a [National Agreement Explainer](#) prepared in consultation with the Closing the Gap and Coalition of Peak Secretariats in 2022, to assist public servants to understand the implications for them of the New Approach and the Priority Reforms.

The National Agreement Four Priority Reforms were each reflected in the conference sessions across the three-day program:

1. Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-making:

How can governments share decision-making with First Nations in genuine partnership?

2. Building the Community-Controlled Sector:

How do governments devolve responsibility for service delivery to First Nations?

3. Transforming Government Organisations:

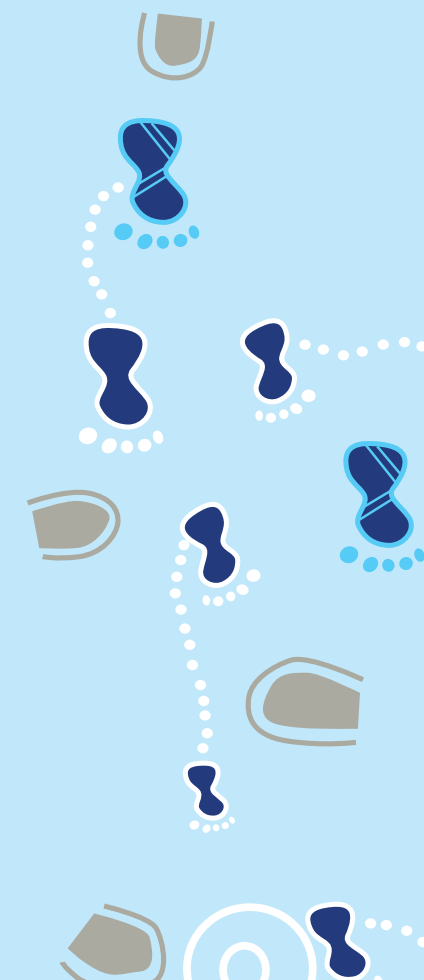
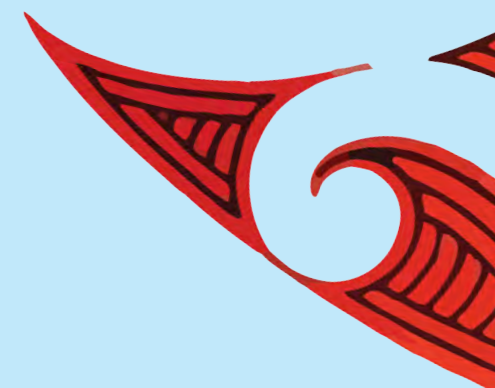
How can governments work with First Nations communities to design public administration that delivers improved outcomes?

4. Shared Access to Data and Information:

How can governments improve data and information-sharing to support First Nations community development?

In a series of plenaries, panels and breakout yarning sessions, the audience of 800 in-person attendees and 300 online, heard 23 speakers share their experiences and learnings of designing, developing, delivering, and reporting on First Nations administration in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Audience attendance exceeded expectations with many acknowledging the theme and the desire to know more about how to do their job differently, a key influence in their decision to participate. The opportunity to network after the disruption of the pandemic over the past three years also contributed to the high level of support from across a variety of sectors in all jurisdictions.

The changes to the [New Zealand Public Service Act 2020](#), which now clearly sets out the responsibility of the public service, particularly its leadership, in supporting the Crown's relationship with Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi, was also a major focus.



Summary of consistent messages that emerged from discussions on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms



Priority Reform 1

- Shared decision-making partnerships are critical to reform.
- This includes policy and place-based partnerships.
- Partnerships are more than funding agreements. The strong partnership elements in the National Agreement must be a feature of all partnerships with First Nations.
- First Nations partners must be properly resourced to partner with government.

Priority Reform 2

- First Nations people know our communities best and we have the solutions.
- First Nations community-controlled organisations are better at delivering services to their communities than government-run or non-Indigenous providers.
- Governments should change their systems to allow a greater proportion of serviced to be delivered by First Nations community-controlled.

Priority Reform 3

- Structural change in mainstream agencies must happen.
- Racism must be eliminated, and unconscious bias must be addressed.
- Agencies and institutions must take action to build the cultural capability of their people – not just cultural awareness, but cultural intelligence and responsiveness is required to be effective.
- Governments should move from programmatic to developmental approaches.

Priority Reform 4

- Governments must identify their data holdings on First Nations people and establish structures for First Nations' ownership and control of the data.
- Data and information are critical to the development of effective policy and community development.
- For First Nations to fully partner with government, data must be readily accessible to and owned by First Nations and First Nations communities should be resourced to collect and use their own data.



Conference program

Day One – Wednesday 1 March 2023



Ministers' Opening Addresses

The **Hon. Linda Burney MP**, Minister for Indigenous Australians opened the conference with some important messages about the importance the Australian Government places on the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement.



"This conference focuses on a critical aspect of government administration ... how First Nations knowledges and values cultures can be incorporated into the work of the public sector and how we can deliver transformative approaches which serve not just our communities but the wider public interest too."

"And while we acknowledge there is still much to be done, I know that together we can make real progress towards Closing the Gap. Many of you will play an important role in helping us on the journey, so I hope that you learn a lot from this conference!"

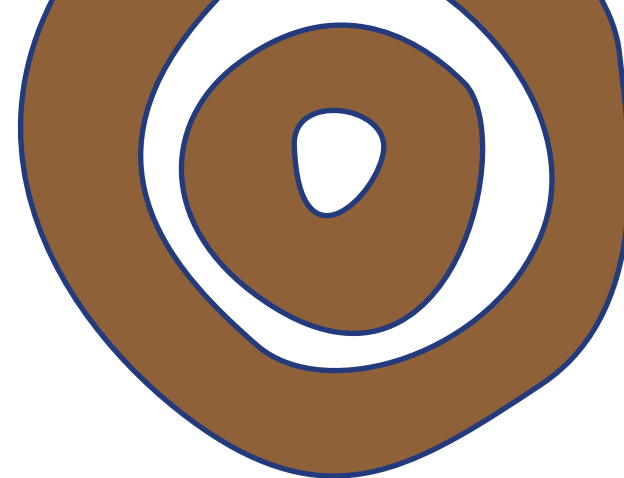
The **Hon. Kelvin Davis MP**, Minister for Māori Crown Relations shared an inspiring story of his personal connection to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) and the current journey across 'the Bridge' between the Crown and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand.



"The relationship between Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori) has to be ongoing ... durable."

"The bridge is Te Tiriti o Waitangi."

"My role as Minister for Māori Crown Relations is to bring our public service – our government agencies, ministries, and departments across that bridge from the Pākehā world ... into the Māori world, so that they get to know us as Māori ... why we think, feel, and behave as we do. So, we don't have to continually justify our worldview to government agencies."





Setting the scene

Jody Broun, CEO National Indigenous Australians Agency, spoke about a fundamental shift in the way governments are working with First Nations in Australia.

Jody emphasised the importance of the National Agreement on *Closing the Gap* and the partnership with the Coalition of Peaks. She noted the focus on outcomes and advised that a new target on inland water would soon join Outcome 15 First Nations interests in land and seas.



"These conferences, and all the tools and practices that you get from ANZSOG play a really important role in building the capability that we need to ensure we have the voices of First Nations in public administration."

"The theme for this conference ... is relevant to what is shaping up to be a really huge and historic year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and also for Australia."

"There is a huge amount of work going on under Closing the Gap and a fundamental shift occurring in the public service. You probably are aware of the Australian Public Service sector reforms ... we are becoming a lot more citizen centric."

"The National Agreement is a partnership agreement, developed in partnership with not only the states and territories, but importantly, most importantly with the Coalition of Peaks and as both a signatory and partner is what makes that agreement so much stronger than previous iterations. All departments are responsible for achieving the outcomes and meeting the targets, whether in disability, health, education or the justice system, housing and employment, we all have to do our bit by taking our time to work in partnership and taking the time to listen and learn ... is critical."

Jody noted the obligation of public servants to work differently.

Glenn Webber, Acting Chief Executive of Te Arawhiti/Office of Māori Crown Relations spoke of the need to change systems to improve outcomes, encouraging public servants to try new approaches.

Glen spoke about his excitement at the positive changes occurring in Australia and said:

"The Statement from the Heart is a call for system change and the National Agreement is a program for system change – to take that intent and turn it into something better."

"Systems thinkers say that a system does what a system is designed to do".

"How do you change a complex adaptive system? The answer is simple – you try stuff. You get in there and you do it. If you like what you see, you do more of it, if you don't like what you see, you do something else".





Day One – Wednesday 1 March 2023

Session One – Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-Making (Priority Reform 1)

How can governments share decision-making with First Nations in genuine partnership?

“The Parties [to the National Agreement] commit to building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against Closing the Gap.”



Fiona Cornforth, CEO of the Healing Foundation noted that governments need to engage with First Nations peoples to build trusting relationships, so conversations about solutions can occur.

“The way governments’ systems ... are set up don’t lend themselves for having conversations for building relationships. There must be space for those conversations to happen before there are conversations for possibility and then conversations for mutual benefit, for agreement, for solution making and designing a program, policy or legislation.”

“How we create that space to envision together where we [wish to] end up and then work back from that using ways we know may work...”



Dr Chris Sarra, Director-General of the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships spoke about building on the strengths of First Nations peoples, acknowledging they know their own circumstances best.

“We are doing some really cool work in the Queensland Government ... about understanding and honouring our ancestors ... and the challenges. That’s at the core of what we do. In order for us in government to share decision-making in a way that’s authentic, we have to own our past, acknowledge it and embrace the humanity of the First Australians.”

“I’m not persuaded that here in Australia we’ve embraced the First Australians with the love that is required. I think we are getting there in terms of understanding that there is a good reason to embrace with a sense of love First Australians and First Queenslanders and that is because if we can do that, our roots run deeper.”

“If governments can embrace, acknowledge and honour our capacity, we’ll all be better for it.”

“We have to be courageous and have the hard conversations. Governments cannot pick the people it’s easier to talk with. We have to get on the ground and have the hard conversations as difficult as they are.”

“Yes, we’ve got some struggles, we’ve got some challenges, but that is not the totality of who we are. We are exceptional people! [Governments] should embrace that gift and appreciate our agility in being able to survive on this land for tens of thousands of years.”

Both speakers shared their personal and professional experiences and emphasised the importance of strong, genuine partnerships between governments and First Nations peoples. They then participated in concurrent yarning sessions elaborating on their earlier messages and answering questions from delegates.

Day Two – Thursday 2 March 2023



Session Two – Building the Community-Controlled Sector (Priority Reform 2)

How do governments devolve responsibility for service delivery to First Nations?

“The Parties commit to building formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors to deliver services to support Closing the Gap.”

The opening plenary and panel focused on the value of First Nations controlled organisations developing policy and services for their communities. Speakers highlighted the need for change in government mindset and outlined practical work needed to shift power and control to First Nations controlled organisations.



Donnella Mills, Chair of National Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation, the Peak body for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector in Australia said governments need to recognise that they do not have the answers, and that Indigenous people would work harder than anyone else to take care of our people. She said that structural reform was needed to change the way that power was distributed, and that the National Agreement on Closing the Gap was part of this.

“If the National Agreement isn’t on your desk, if you can’t rattle off these key priority reforms, if your department doesn’t have resources for it – you need to lean in, and quickly! We are now in a new way of operating and we expect you to meet the obligations under the National Agreement.”

“In order to achieve the targets in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, it requires us to work holistically [not in silos].”



Rahui Papa, National Iwi Leaders Group- Pou Tangata, Co-Chair, Aotearoa New Zealand – shared his experience and perspectives grounded in Te Ao Māori (a Māori worldview). Rahui reminded us that Iwi (Māori tribes) had been there from time immemorial.

“We’ve always had the power, they just need to acknowledge it. In pre-colonised Aotearoa, Māori had their own justice systems and ways of looking after families”.

“Government has to remember they are residents in our Country [Aotearoa] because of Te Tiriti o Waitangi [Treaty of Waitangi, which has been in place for 183 years].”

“Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be the foundation of any relationship and if it’s good for Māori, it’s good for everyone – even better.”



Marama Edwards, Deputy Chief Executive, Communities and Partnerships, Ministry Social Development, Aotearoa New Zealand said there were clearly some positive shifts in Aotearoa, and that political will and agency leadership were key to building relationships with Māori communities that led to positive change. She forewarned that it was not enough for government to use the right words and just agree in principle when the mechanics need to be set up correctly.

“There are many examples of agencies devoting shoestring budgets to change, and relying on very few people to make big things happen”.

“With the pandemic, we had to stand shoulder to shoulder – we had to partner with Māori – a community-led approach.”

“Political will and agency leadership are key to ensuring we get to where we need to...”



The **2nd panel** included **Robert Skeen**, Co-Chair of the New South Wales, Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations. Robert spoke about the work the NSW Government senior leadership including the Premier is undertaking, to listen to Aboriginal organisations. This has resulted in crucial conversations with ministers about what was needed and why government systems were not working.

“Indigenous people are the experts at designing, delivering and evaluating services for mob, so governments need to listen to them”.

Lorraine Toki, National Iwi Leaders Group- Pou Tangata Lead Advisor, Aotearoa New Zealand said that Māori wanted to be part of developing systems that deliver success.

“The window dressing times are over and we had to start looking at the practicalities and call things out if they were not going to benefit Māori communities”.

“Iwi are no longer about ‘consulting’ but ‘engaging’. Under the Treaty of Waitangi, they are partners not advisors to government, and have a right to have a seat at the decision-making table”.

Donnella Mills Chair of National Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation, an earlier panel speaker graciously stood in for John Paterson who was unable to attend on the day. Donnella commented that:

“Tinkering is no longer an option. Structural reform in accordance with the Priority Reforms are needed.”

“Community-controlled First Nations organisations need support and resourcing – Board members aren’t being paid must cease; CEOs require professional development to learn to rise above the day-to-day grind; cultural systems must be valued; and funding transferred.”

Concurrent, breakout, and yarning sessions of informal discussion with panel members gave delegates the opportunity to further explore topics shared earlier and ask questions. These sessions can be viewed in the [conference video recordings](#) on the ANZSOG website.

Delegates who attended Yarning Session 3 with Lorraine Toki were privileged to hear an impassioned speech from Dame Naida Glavish supporting the Māori speakers, about Māori pride and culture.



Day Two – Thursday 2 March Lunchtime Seminar – The Devolution Dilemma

What are the obstacles and what can be done?

ANZSOG commissioned **Assoc Professor Pascal Tremblay**, Charles Darwin University and **Anthony Cowley**, a First Nations doctoral scholar to develop the Devolution Dilemma discussion paper for the Conference as a conversation starter to outline the issue of devolving authority, decision-making and responsibility for service delivery to First Nations peoples in Australia. The paper synthesised some of the literature around Devolution and the thoughts of selected senior practitioners working in this critical area of public administration and was available as a pre-conference resource for delegates.



Shane Hoffman, ANZSOG First Nations Senior Advisor facilitated a conversation with Anthony and **Geoff Richardson PSM**, Director, First Nations Development Services

“There is a need for fundamental changes to the way governments engage with First Nations peoples, critically this means removing silos and working with First Nations holistically, recognising the interconnectedness and interrelationships that occur in communities. Governments must move from a programmatic response to a developmental approach”.

Anthony reflected on the discussion paper and said:

“The interviews brought up a lot of solutions. Co-chairing arrangements [as a means of bringing First Nations organisations into the shared decision-making] leads to cultural change.”

“As public servants, we are incentivised to mimic the values of our leaders. If you overcome the insecurity about bringing in cultural leadership in our agencies, just by their culture transfer and leadership devolution, you can change an agency and effect new ways of working.”



Key messages from the Devolution Dilemma paper:

- There are barriers that confront public servants when they seek to partner and share decision making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their organisations.
- Some challenges highlight structural issues which require profound changes in the ways bureaucracies engage with community.
- Other barriers reflect the day-to-day experiences of public servants attempting to address the devolution agenda, and the efforts, initiatives and experiments they have engaged with, which enables them to often be in a better position to inform the research.

Ways forward could include:

- Systemic reforms including increasing funding flexibility in line with changing needs, whilst pivoting performance monitoring to link to outcomes rather than siloed ‘programmatic milestones’, [and]
- Institutional reforms ... allowing regions, key organisations and community representatives to seek and share [greater authority to share decision-making with] public servants.

The full Devolution Dilemma paper can be found in the [conference resources](#) section of the ANZSOG website.



Day Two – Thursday 2 March

Session 3 – Transforming Mainstream Government Organisations (Priority Reform 3)

How can governments work with communities to design public administration that delivers improved outcomes?

“The Parties commit to systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”



Letitia Hope, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Policy and Programs, National Indigenous Australians Agency, spoke about the challenges of changing systems built on racism, to ones that could work with First Nations as equals, to transform government organisations. This challenge was considered to be the business of all public servants in all agencies, not to be left to First Nations. Under-representation of First Nations in key positions was part of the problem, but responsibility had to be shared by all senior leaders.

“I want to play this short video clip for you ... The systems in the Commonwealth Government acknowledge there needs to be change, but they don’t know how to change”. She stated that “change through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap was an ‘every decision, every day’ responsibility of every public servant.”

“Public servants need to be disruptors who create space for innovation – it’s not enough to just pull one lever’, you have to understand how to transform the entire system that you are.”

Letitia reminded everyone to **“celebrate black excellence. We must show it and demonstrate it, leverage it, and build on it.”**



Kararaina Calcott-Cribb, Deputy Chief Executive, Māori Housing, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, NZ, shared the journey of the evolution of the program Maihi (Māori and Iwi Housing Innovation). Maihi went from a small underfunded program to now receiving substantial funds which allows Maihi to do real business now. Using past successful Maori governance approaches and not entirely led by the agency but the leadership of Māori, ensures the partnership between the Crown and Iwi (tribes) is safe, with dual reporting processes in place.

“Public service leaders play a huge role in transforming organisations, and that the long-term for Aotearoa needed to be a world where government did not have to lead everything, but there was true partnership between Iwi (tribes) and the Crown”.

“You can be a disruptor and I encourage you to disrupt every day. You do not leave who you are and your indigeneity at the door – you need to bring it front and centre”.

“Understanding how each part of the organisation works is critical for everybody to be informed and taking them on the journey is part of making sure the whole organisation is connected”.



In the **2nd panel session** Janine Mohamed, Chief Executive Officer of Lowitja Foundation, said that transforming was needed because policies were having the same outcomes:

"When I think of that idea of 'transformation' I wonder whether we should be talking about 'restoration'. Restoration of our ways of knowing, being and doing."

"Unfortunately, we are having the same outcomes. We are going to have some hard and brave conversations ... but they can't just be conversations ... there must be action. It's in the hard work and conversations that magic happens."

"[Change will] only ever travel at the speed of trust."

"The National Agreement Priority Reform Three talks to racism – eliminating racism. Does the system understand racism? What it feels like, looks like, what it produces, and who decides if racism exists and most importantly how to measure it."

"The system must reflect the people that it serves – all people."

Catherine Liddle, Chief Executive Officer of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children said:

"We have long understood through Grandmothers' lore that no one will fight harder for you than your family, that no one will die for you like your family. That is how I want to think about today's discussion."

"There are no other People in Australia who are impacted on by government where every single system, policy, law, program was designed to disenfranchise us from our own economic base, from our ways of knowing, being and doing."

"This system is not broken; it was designed to do that! And that is why we talk about structural reform. Government can't save us. The Coalition of Peaks designed the structural changes in the National Agreement."

"When we go back to the importance of our Priority reforms, they're all about acknowledging that our People actually know the solutions."

Catherine spoke of progress through the National Agreement and a slow shift toward giving power to community-controlled organisations in Early Childhood. She strongly believes

"the Priority Reforms are about acknowledging First Nations have solutions and need to have barriers removed, so their voices can be heard."

Paul James, Secretary for Internal Affairs and Chief Executive for Te Tari Taiwhenua, Department of Internal Affairs, Aotearoa New Zealand, said that regarding dealing with structural racism:

"In NZ what you will find is that you must lead it [the transformation] yourself in your own organisation."

"One of the things we really grapple with re institutional racism inside the NZ public sector, is you can see the end point where we want to get to and lots of people have talked very knowledgeably about all the things, we need to do to get us there. But it's not a simple, linear journey. It's going to be really complicated, lots of barriers and roadblocks and you have to be active on so many things in so many ways"

Paul spoke about how transformation can cause a dilemma that requires careful navigating, as in his organisation Māori were frustrated that the pace of change was too slow, but at the same time non-Māori are concerned that things were moving too fast.

Paul reiterated that building trust was vital, but it would dissipate without an outcomes-focus and the delivery of real change.

Concurrent breakout yarning sessions with Janine, Catherine, and Paul further explored issues raised earlier and delegates had an opportunity to ask questions. For more information review the yarning session videos in the conference resources. All video recordings can be viewed in the [conference resources](#).

Day Three – Friday 3 March



Session 4 – Shared access to data and information (Priority Reform 4)

How can governments improve data and information-sharing to support community development?

"The Parties agree that disaggregated data and information is most useful to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to obtain a comprehensive picture of what is happening in their communities and make decisions about their futures."



Paul James, Secretary for Internal Affairs and Chief Executive for Te Tari Taiwhenua/Department of Internal Affairs, said the last Aotearoa New Zealand Census did not accurately capture data around Māori and because the Census data is the basis for much government activity, this ate into trust around resource allocation.

"What had come from these issues was a much closer relationship with Māori iwi around data collection."

"There was room for innovation around data but warned that governments might struggle to pay for the data infrastructure provided in the current fiscal and economic environment."

Romlie Mokak Commissioner, Australian Productivity Commission, said that issues around data were less around the technical issues and more about who frames the questions and how? He said that current systems measured First Nations in ways they did not want to be measured.

"There are fundamental questions around how data is used to support and perpetuate the deficit discourse and problematise us as a people, and to continuously create programs that don't meet our needs".

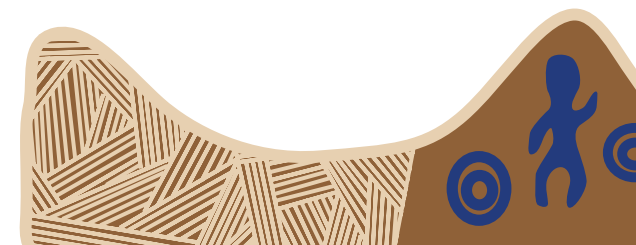
"If we don't get access to this data, and the use of this data to service our priorities, then we will continue to be at the mercy of the government to make decisions for us."

"Data underpinned many aspects of the National Agreement including evaluation, shared decision-making and building the community-controlled sector. Questions around what indicators sit beneath targets, and are they the right ones, were important not just for data-design issues, but important questions of public policy".

Romlie reminded us all that First Nations needs to be:

"centred in policy, which means First Nations-led, and government supported, and that governments do not just wait for a crisis, to call on Indigenous people".

"This work has to happen in all agencies, not just those dealing directly with First Nations policy. Organisations such as Treasury departments have huge resources and huge influence over policy".





The **2nd panel** shared their knowledge and experience of how data is used or should be used in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, including the role of government systems in providing it.



Kirikowhai Mikaere, Lead Technical Advisor National Iwi (Tribal) Chairs Forum – Data Leadership Group, said that Aotearoa New Zealand had various ways of defining the Māori population which meant there was no agreed-on figure, and that state-determination of identity was different to self-identity.

“Data has an incredible bias and the lens that writes those questions – that collects, analyses, and disseminates, has a strong bias. Given Māori have a particular value set and our values are the lens through which we see the world - we deserve to have our lens put on that data.”

“The way data was collected by the system that “ails, jails and fails us” showed states of desperation but not success, for example including the role of iwi as job creators.”

“We need to move away from the idea that we are just data providers, and the best we can hope for is to be data consumers. We can be data designers and have a system that lets us measure our aspirations and our contributions.”



Sharif Deen, Head of Secretariat NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, said:

“data needed to be collected in conjunction with the other three priority reforms, and that First Nations were frustrated that they were always presented with problems rather than solutions.”

“If we know that data systems are not set up to share data with us, then get to work.”



Frances Foster-Thorpe, Chief Data Officer in the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, said:

“it’s not just attitudes in government that prevented data-sharing, although they could be part of the problem, but systems as well. For example, a recent NSW government project on people with disability had taken over a year of work, with 30 different documents developed, to share non-identifying data between two departments”!



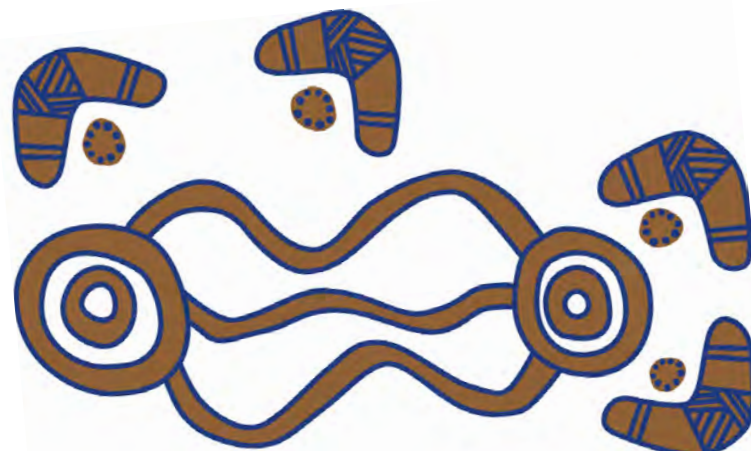
Professor Ray Lovett, Mayi Kuwayu Study Director, said:

“The Mayi Kuwayu Study looked at the contribution of racism exposure to mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – we found that 50% of the contribution to anxiety, depression and mental ill health can be attributed to exposure to racism in this country. That’s a product of settler colonialism and the ongoing settler colonialism”.

“We need to control the data and we need to control the analysis. We need to start expanding our minds in terms of the kind of data we collect. The data our communities really want”.

“It is impossible to separate systems and culture – systems are designed by people, who have culture, and that culture influences the design of systems. Governments need to acknowledge that systems were designed by non-Indigenous people for administrative purposes”.

“Australia, we have a very long way to go, particularly around data and Priority Reform Four”.





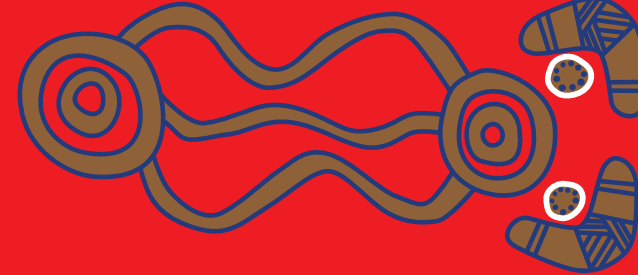
Conference Marketplace



The intense program of speakers, plenaries and yarning sessions was complemented by an engaging marketplace where organisations had the opportunity to share information and network with delegates while local First Nations artists sold products and artworks.

Local artists from 'Meanjin Market' were delighted with the high level of support and amount of purchasing by delegates during the session breaks.





Conference Dinner



Where to from here?



ANZSOG recognises that public service institutions need institutional reform to address outdated structures. They need to prioritise cultural intelligence capability building across the public services, focus on co-design and co-management not consultation; and consciously giving power to First Nations communities as part of partnership building.

Acknowledging the strong interest of conference participants in learning more about the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, ANZSOG will be offering a program: *Working with First Nations: Delivering on the Priority Reforms* in November 2023. This program is aimed at building public servants' capabilities to work effectively with First Nations people, organisations, and communities, to deliver on the New Approach and the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement. Registrations are now open. Subject to demand, the program will be repeated in 2024.

A fifth First Nations Public Administration conference is under consideration with a focus on Treaty noting that many Australian jurisdictions are progressing Treaties with First Nations in their jurisdictions. More details will follow in due course.





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