



2023 'Yamatji On-Country' Meeting
Wednesday, 20 and Thursday, 21 September 2023

Call to Action Statement

On behalf of all First Nations peoples gathered here on Southern Yamatji Country at Bundiyarra for the 2023 'Yamatji On-Country' meeting held on Wednesday, 20 and Thursday, 21 September 2023, we make this **Call to Action** Statement.

Our **Call to Action** seeks genuine commitment and offers an open invitation to work with us to achieve real change in our communities. As First Nations peoples, we seek to be self-determining and take our rightful place in leading decision-making processes that impact us.

Through our discussions held yesterday (20 September), we have identified and co-designed our **Call to Action** Statement, seeking support for self-determined and place-based governance. This can be achieved through:

1. A Yamatji on Country Reference Group
2. Advocacy and System Navigation
3. Supporting and Listening to Young People

We also ask for an update on our 2022 **Call to Action** across the areas of:

1. Racism
2. Housing & Accommodation
3. Police & Justice
4. Education
5. Employment, Training & Economic Development
6. Health & Wellbeing

We seek commitment from government to report annually against our **Call to Action** Statement, so that we can measure our progress and work together to create change.

Our **Calls to Action** align directly with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap priority areas and focus on changing the way governments work with Aboriginal people. They seek to:

- Strengthen and establish formal partnerships and shared decision-making.
- Build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.
- Transform government organisations so they work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Improve and share access to data and information to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make informed decisions.

Yamatji on Country 2023 *Call to Action*

The three ***call to action*** items noted below aim to support strong, place-based, and systemic responses to community issues raised at the 2023 Yamatji on Country meeting.

With a membership of 17 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), the Midwest Aboriginal Organisations Alliance (MAOA) has been identified as an existing group that - with government support - could become a registered corporation and take on the role of a Peak agency for the region.

Supporting future responses through MAOA draws on and strengthens an ACCO membership aimed at strengthening governance. It provides a way to work with government and hold them to account, while at the same time supporting and building local capability. It strengthens capacity to respond to local issues, and importantly, support local peoples across a range of areas aligned with the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

Establish a Yamatji on Country Reference Group

In order to embed local and place-based consultative mechanisms, we call on government to provide funding to the MAOA to engage an Executive Officer that would, among other things, scope the establishment of a Yamatji on Country Reference Group (YRG).

The YRG could provide a local, 'grass-roots' feedback and accountability mechanism on the delivery of local services and advise on appropriate responses – both proactive, and reactive to local community issues. They could be utilised to inform appropriate responses to the 2022 ***call to action*** items, and support responses to the youth priorities, amongst other issues that might present from time to time.

Advocacy and System Navigation

Advocacy and system navigation is at the core of many of the issues raised at Yamatji on Country. Having an Executive Officer employed through MAOA to advocate for and assist our people to work through an often overly complicated service system would help highlight and escalate current system failings.

As per the proposed model, this mechanism could sit within MAOA and work closely with the YRG and respond directly to supporting and listening to young people.

Supporting and Listening to Young People

We support our young people and call on government to work with them to progress their ***call to action*** across the areas of:

- Youth Substance Use
- Loss in Culture
- Intergenerational Trauma
- Home Life
- Racism and Lateral Violence

We request the Department of Education, and the Commissioner for Children and Young People work with our young people and their schools to hold a separate youth forum to explore and develop responses to the risk areas they have raised at Yamatji on Country. The Aboriginal Health Council of WA may also be party to this through their Youth Leadership support.

Provide an update on the 2022 Call to Action items, specifically:

A report on the ***Call to Action*** items detailed below to show progress in the following areas:

Racism:

1. Advise on any culturally specific frameworks or advances in addressing systemic racism undertaken by WA State government agencies.

Housing and Accommodation:

1. Review and reduce housing waitlist timeframes.
2. Review the numbers of available vacant housing stock, and report on any plans to make available.
3. Establishment of a First Nations advisory boards (with equal representatives per language group relevant to Yamatji community) to assist with reviewing waitlists and allocation of housing.
4. Investment in public housing stock since last Yamatji on Country meeting in 2022.
5. Tenancy education programs conducted with new and existing primary tenants on their right and obligations, including rental payments, repairs and maintenance, tenant liability, etc.
6. Number of alternative support programs assisting people to address any outstanding tenancy issues and enabling them to obtain public housing.
7. Individuals supported to access housing as part of a prison release re-entry support plan.
8. Increase short term/crisis accommodation, such as hostel/halfway house, especially for prison release, homeless people.
9. Number of First Nations peoples employed by the Department of Communities (Housing) in key roles.
10. Invest in a Housing Project, that trains and employs local First Nations people to build, renovate and maintain public housing stock.
11. Details of any review undertaken of the Keystart Home Ownership program to support tenants to transition into home ownership.

Police and Justice:

1. Outline of place-based Cultural Awareness training that has occurred for Police officers and Justice staff since the last Yamatji on Country meeting in 2022.
2. Engagement that has occurred with local First Nations peoples, especially Traditional Owners and Elders when people come into adverse contact with the criminal justice system.
3. Status of the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme.

Education:

1. Integrate First Nations culture, heritage, language and history into the curriculum.
2. Any increase in employment of First Nations teaching staff.
3. Details of any culturally responsive re-engagement programs for highly disengaged students re-entering the school system, including children and young people re-entering from the juvenile justice system.
4. Any alternative education programs On-Country.
5. Any support provided to highly disengaged parents/families to integrate them within the school community and/or their child/ren educational needs.
6. Status of any place-based School Safety Strategy that engages family and community members to assist with managing incidence of bullying and violence in the school; and retains engagement of students in a safe and inclusive way.

Employment, Training & Economic Development:

1. Number of permanent positions within government agencies and departments, including traineeships and internships.
2. Number of contracts with First Nations businesses, including progress over the past year.
3. Details of business support for emerging First Nations business owners/operators.

Health and Wellbeing:

1. Progress toward a culturally secure Rehabilitation & Family Healing Centre On-Country.
2. Update on review of the *Mental Health Act*, including to review whether a parent, guardian or primary care giver can have rights to admit an adult child into mental health services and care unit if they are mentally incapacitated due to their mental health condition.