Introduction

- Thanks Andrea and thanks for the opportunity to speak today
- I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Elders of the land on which we meet today
- And to say I have the distinction of being the last speaker in a full program of presentations
- As you know, I represent the Office for ATSI Partnerships in the Dept Communities which provides leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, engagement, service delivery coordination and innovation
- ‘I’d reiterate Andrea’s comments which question an understanding of the ‘good life’ - what it represents to people in differing contexts – as some population groups are so socially excluded and disadvantaged, a more realistic objective, at least in the very short term might be to contribute to an ‘improved life’
- Also want to highlight, as other have done, the influence the current economic conditions will have on our collective ability to make gains in social and economic outcomes and to address the specific Indigenous reform objectives I’ll outline in a moment

So why Indigenous reform?

- Simply put, because of the significant and continuing differences in life experiences, opportunity and outcomes between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians – reform is primarily a matter of equity and human rights
And what do we mean by Indigenous reform?

- The central driver of current, high profile activity is the Council of Australian Governments or COAG – a collaborative Governmental forum which coordinates cross jurisdictional effort in multi faceted and complex issues, such as Indigenous reform.
- COAG’s Indigenous reform targets provide the necessary, high-level structure to our efforts to close the gaps in social and economic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – now, you may be familiar with the targets which relate to the ‘building block’ areas of health, education and employment – they differ in distance to the goal and the timeframe provided: the 6 targets are to:
  - close the life expectancy gap within a generation (2030)
  - halve the gap in infant mortality rates for Indigenous children under 5 within a decade (2017)
  - halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements within a decade
  - halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade
  - to have every Indigenous four-year-old in a remote Aboriginal community enrolled in and attending a proper early childhood education centre over the next five years; and to
  - at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.
- These may appear as stand alone goals but in reality, complex relationships exist between and amongst the targets – understanding and quantifying these relationships is an important step in developing broad strategies to achieve the targets in the specified timeframe.

- So if we know where we want to be; decisions are needed on how to get there.
• in the time remaining, I'll briefly overview two major initiatives, related to my evidence role in OATSIP, designed to support the COAG Indigenous reform work and through this, improve social and economic wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland and Australia:

1. improvement of the evidence base or to work towards an integrated body of knowledge that tells us what works, what doesn’t work and, importantly, what we don’t know anything about

• a comprehensive evidence base constitutes data (including census, administrative and survey data), research findings and program or project evaluation outcomes – we need to continue work towards a coordinated and integrated evidence framework where all relevant information and knowledge, including Indigenous knowledge, is brought together to guide future policy and service responses

Some examples of current Qld evidence strategies

  o Data improvement – being done in collaboration with the Office for Economic and Statistical Research – a program of improvements to address the gaps and limitations in the current Indigenous data collection (don’t say eg deaths)

  o Centre of Excellence – a mechanism to coordinate and more effectively apply Indigenous research and knowledge within Government policy processes
Evaluating the outcomes of current strategic interventions – including alcohol, welfare and service reform initiatives in progress within Queensland’s discrete Indigenous communities

Contributing to the establishment of a National Indigenous Clearinghouse (COAG initiative) — the exact role and scope of which, in relation to existing clearinghouse mechanisms, is being determined

Second initiative to touch on:

2. the development in Queensland of performance trajectories towards the COAG targets

• the objective is to track individual agencies’, and the Queensland Government’s position generally, in relation to the COAG targets - to assess current progress and the possible progress if additional services, responses and resources were available

• Complex analysis task currently underway – likely for simplicity and timeliness sake to adopt a ‘straight line’ trajectory towards the targets rather than develop a trajectory for each target that accounts for the multiple variables and influences, many of which can’t be reliably quantified

So in conclusion:

• I’d comment that addressing the social and economic disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is fundamental to creating a ‘good life’ for all
• To me, it seems the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of Indigenous reform are clear – the challenge is in agreeing the ‘how’ within the known time and resource constraints

Thank you