



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**



Africa
Research &
Engagement
Centre

Africa Research & Engagement Centre (AfREC)
The University of Western Australia
112 Arts Building
CRAWLEY, WA 6009
W: www.afrec.uwa.edu.au

31 July 2020

**Re: Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
inquiry into *Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia***

The Africa Research & Engagement Centre (AfREC) at the University of Western Australia, established in 2018, is a nationally leading initiative to promote greater 'Australia-Africa literacy' by serving as a platform to engage universities, government, industry, African communities and the wider Australian public on issues of interest to: (1) the African continent; (2) Australia-Africa relations; and (3) African-Australian diaspora communities.

AfREC works closely with a range of prominent African diaspora organisations across Australia, including the Organisation of African Communities in Western Australia (OACWA), the African Think Tank (ATT), the Pan-African Australasian Diaspora Network (PAADN) and the Federation of African Communities Councils in Australia (FACCA). AfREC's engagement with the African diaspora in Australia includes co-convening the flagship African Women's Leadership, Empowerment & Development (A-LEAD) program and the African Students in Western Australia (ASIWA) initiative, and hosting regular roundtable consultations in Perth between visiting Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Africa Branch officials, Australian Heads of Mission posted in Africa, relevant African community organisations, and expert researchers.

AfREC's deep engagement with African communities has been cited by the Melbourne-based African Think Tank as 'national best practice' within the Australian university sector, while DFAT has also cited AfREC's positive role in engaging diaspora communities in its response to Recommendation 14 of the *Strategy for Australia's Engagement with Africa* produced by the Foreign Minister's Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations (AGAAR). The Commonwealth, in its response to the Senate Standing Committee Report of the *Inquiry into Australia's trade and investment relationship with the countries of Africa* (2018), cited AfREC's significant role in promoting Australia-Africa literacy (Recommendation 11, 2019). In

addition, the AfREC Director was awarded the Community Pillar–Excellence in Innovation Award at the WA African Community Awards 2018 for the Centre’s work in engaging the African community in WA.

On 30-31 August 2019, AfREC and its university and African community partners co-convened the inaugural National African-Australian Diaspora Engagement Conference (NAADEC). The purpose of NAADEC was to explore opportunities, obstacles and mechanisms for deepening links between African-Australian communities, governments (State and Commonwealth), universities and the African Union. The national conference built upon a related conference on ‘African-Australian Settlement & Integration 2030: Opportunities & Challenges’ convened by ATT and the University of Melbourne on 12-13 Nov 2018. One of the key points of discussion there was the need to move beyond state-based discussions to convene a ‘national, Pan-Australian, Pan-African’ conversation on deepening stakeholder engagement. It also engages the work of PAADN, set up as a bridge between the African Union and the African-Australian diaspora, and a range of other organisations including peak body FACCA. Funding for the conference was provided by the University of Western Australia, the University of Melbourne, the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The conference formed one element of an AfREC project entitled ‘Development, Diplomacy and the Diaspora: Deepening Engagement between African-Australians, the Diplomatic Corps and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.’

The full NAADEC Conference Report can be accessed at www.afrec.uwa.edu.au This submission presents the NAADEC Conference Recommendations to the Committee.

National African-Australian Diaspora Engagement Conference (NAADEC) **The University of Western Australia, Perth** **30-31 August 2019**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Federation of African Communities Councils in Australia (FACCA) should be revitalised as the national peak body representing African community organisations across Australia. This would enhance ‘national pan-Australian, pan-African’ consultations, strategic planning, advocacy and communication.
2. There should be structured, regular and meaningful consultations between the national peak body and State and Commonwealth Governments on issues concerning African communities in Australia.
3. State and Territory Governments should create specific African Community Engagement Strategies, in partnership with African community organisations and drawing on universities, following the example of the Victorian African Communities Action Plan (VACAP).

4. African communities should be provided with at least one funded physical space in each State and Territory, such as an 'Africa House', for the development and delivery of community activities.
5. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should develop a national strategy for directly engaging the African diaspora in aspects of Australian foreign policy towards Africa. The Foreign Minister's Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations (AGAAR), universities and African community organisations should contribute to the development of that strategy.
6. Australian universities through the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) and with AGAAR should develop a 'one-stop shop' online portal for research, data and other relevant information on Australia-Africa relations and the African diaspora in Australia. This should include essential and culturally-appropriate information on Australia for new African migrants.
7. Australian universities, individually and via AAUN, should create practical strategies for deepening engaging with the African continent, African communities and African students in Australia.
8. The work of the Pan-African Australasian Diaspora Network (PAADN), as the formal link between the African Union and the African diaspora in Australia, should be better supported and promoted by all stakeholders.
9. NAADEC, working with FACCA and other stakeholders, should become an annual diaspora engagement conference, either during the annual national Australia Africa Week in Perth or on a rotational basis in a different State or Territory.

I would be happy to elaborate on this submission and the NAADEC Recommendations through invitation to speak as a witness at the Committee's public hearings for this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Dr David Mickler

Director, Africa Research & Engagement Centre (AfREC)
The University of Western Australia, Perth