

**A Path Forward .**  
**Developing the Western Australian Government's**  
**Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy**

**Response to 'Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy'.**

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**Are the main ideas, right? Do you agree with the description of the overall goal, principles, strategic elements and framework? Would you change or add anything?**

**Response:**

- My response probably focuses on consideration for 'The How'
- The Paper outlines what the Govt proposes – 'The What!'...I'd like to see words that describe 'The How?'
- How will Govt genuinely engage with Indigenous People? It appears it has the usual Top/Down approach again.
- I'd like to see a section suggesting, how and what approaches will be the guiding principle for Indigenous People to take the lead on their issues.
- The Top/Down approach is seen as an imposition. Let the People set the Agenda for what is relevant in their area or region.
- There has to be assurance of a real and full-shared process for implementation. Govt staff do not have ability to interpret Indigenous-ways of '*doing things*'.
- Listening must be translated in a manner of approach that is conducive to '*Indigenous Community business*'
- Past gov't practices of delivering programs is that these programs are from Gov't Agendas and policies.
- Agencies are concerned that it is '*difficult to get Indigenous Peoples engaged*'...This because it is a Gov't driven agenda...not Indigenous driven agenda.
- This paper is all about what the Gov't proposes...Maybe, an 'Academic Response Paper' from Indigenous Unit of a University will provide some assurance to Indigenous People about a true partnership or rather a true Revolutionary approach to partnerships and '*the how*'
- Indigenous Peoples can lead the way to resolutions. Encourage the Indigenous brand...'*We are Open for Business*'.
- It may be useful to examine fully the approach proposed by the Single Noongar Land Claim Settlement, where the Noongar-lead Community and Gov't worked within the principles of three Domains.
  1. Noongars to initially identify the issue.
  2. Gov't response with allocation of resources and staff.
  3. Partnership of Collaboration to co-design resolution.

## 2.

**Are we using the right words? You might broadly agree with the main ideas but want to see them expressed using different language. We welcome your recommendations. In particular, we are interested in whether the term “Aboriginal people” should be used or whether other terms such as “First Nations” would be more appropriate.**

### **Response.**

- When World Businesses or Corporate Australia changes their marketing strategy, they change their name or Logo to bring about a better and new understanding of their business and to attract a better response and a fruitful financial return.
- We need to seriously think about a Revolutionary marketing strategy for Indigenous Australia and I think the term ‘First *Nation*’ provides the prestige and value for Indigenous Australia.

## 3.

**What else should we be thinking about? You may have a view on how the strategy should be implemented in a particular region or subject area, or examples of current good practice. Your ideas are valuable to us.**

### **Response.**

Re Economic Development (*‘Reaching Beyond Welfare’*)

- Need examination of entrenched negative language being used...Examine historical language used in Aboriginal Affairs, that portrays Aboriginal Peoples as incompetence, undervalued and incapable of any community development independent planning.
- Definition of ‘Culture’ need to be discussed. Do agencies define ‘Culture as a behavioural activity’? Noongars define Culture as spiritual connectiveness of all realms of our environments. Noongar Culture is a set of beliefs held by the People and is seen in the context of Religion. It is often not tangible.
- Urban-based Noongars need the family-based approach to business development, rather than ACCO’s, as there are more and better commercial opportunities within Cities and larger towns to provide a more reasonable customer base to run a business by family -based entities.
- Opportunities must also focus on support to purchase mainstream business and not just indigenous products. This eliminates the possibilities on commercial competitiveness that may lead to failure or risk of management.
- Need to stream Indigenous Businesses into the global language, especially opportunities under the Carbon issue.
- ACCO’s are essentially an Indigenous community-based membership, and their agendas are at various levels and layers of issues, mainly of Social and Justice concerns.
- These ACCO may be able to develop business through a Social Enterprise approach, but again there must be structured share-holding entities for dividends or financial returns for Community.
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- It may be viewed that family-run business will only engage with family members and is seen as *'Nepotism'*. If ***'Putting culture at the centre'*** is to be the ethos for a pathway forward, then it must be appreciated that 'looking after family first in these instances is not *'Nepotism'*, but *'Cultural Responsibility and Cultural Obligations'*. We are taught to always protect, provide and care for our families first and foremost, then you can care for Community. Strategies to build 'safe-guards' against risk of 'Nepotism' will disempower the development of the project.
- It can be argued positively that Indigenous-run Businesses will readily employ indigenous workers, thus providing a better income stream for those families and provide security for homeownership
- In the real world of commerce, we don't see a business that involves community without a proper 'share-holding' dividend returns. These people are 'share-holders' and we must ensure that provisions of these same facilities are available for Indigenous Peoples.
- The Mining Resources Industry are exposing their Indigenous Employees to 'share-holding' principles and values and it is my understanding that Employees are also provided with financial literacy training by the Company.
- Aboriginal people need to have real dividend returns for their efforts and to be able to build a franchise platform for their products.
- There is a need to undertake a real demographic and asset mapping of Indigenous Communities, to ascertain and to understand the governance of ACCO's and the NFP governance structure of unreal and unrealised asset, which in turn is unusable for business development.
- Relevant data must be made at community level to provide updated information that is available at the Community level, as Communities cannot make resolution if they are not fully informed.
- The 'Machinery-of Govt' is invisible and the decision making is imposed by Govt through Govt held information that are not shared with Aboriginal Communities to co-design.
- Relevant community profile data must be available for community consumer usage to seek resolution to community identified issues
- ACCO models do not provide the assets for collateral to raise funds to develop business that provide a financial return.
- If promoting the ACCO approach, then a model needs to be developed that will provide financial returns, utilising NFP assets. Such a model could be to allow individual business trading under the name of the NFP.
- There are many good examples of individual or family based innovative business, and this was on display in 2018 at the Noongar Trade Fair held at the Optus Stadium.
- This listing can be examined by the Indigenous Business Directory and further examine region by region. Without breaching commercial-in confidence, communities can showcase their efforts.
- There needs to be consideration given to the potential conflict of Govt Agencies 'already established policies' agendas and that of Indigenous Peoples identified priorities. This is outlined in the Paper, but the logistics of dismantling a public service cultural policies, may have industrial issues.
- There is also a need for consideration of staff resources of high levels of substituted positions...will agencies have the required resources?
- The public service system is not in the best position to make these changes and to work with Communities, because of the very cemented nature and culture of the system.

- Govt staff are bound by time, roles and substantiated delegations. My views, we will need contractors to work at local level, on Aboriginal Agenda ToR and basically act as a conduit between Govt and Agencies. This also provided consultancy work for many Aboriginal- lead Business.
- These Consultants need to be assessed and endorsed by the Communities, to ensure a risk management strategy can be applied and executed.
- There is a lot happening out in Aboriginal land and communities can get confused *about 'who-is who-and who-is-doing-what?'* and have difficulties understanding the different agencies roles within both State and Federal agencies.
- I fully support *'the formal recognition of, and where necessary establishment of, regional structures that represent Aboriginal people'* and I have spoken to DG Michelle Andrews about a past successful model of Consultative Engagement model that we establish in the Great Southern and Wheatbelt, Southwest Regions and which was chaired by the Great Southern Development Commission and resourced by the then WA DAA.
- I also spoke to Ms Andrews about the 'Family Futures' Program, . A local initiative Health program
- No doubt, Aboriginal-based Controlled Consultative Group will lend some insights into their successful models.

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