

Email Submission from: Denise Shillinglaw and Stephanie Armstrong

Date: 26 February 2020

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Dear Aboriginal Policy and Coordination Unit,

Please find below our contribution to the consultation process on the WA Empowerment Strategy.

If you have any questions, please respond to the included email addresses.

Question 1:

Agree with goals, principles and framework in general, but would like to give feedback about the Strategic Elements. In education, there is work underway in deconstructing institutional racism and white privilege whilst enabling some of the objectives in Our Priorities from the Sharing Prosperity document (Aboriginal Wellbeing is one). We would like to suggest that an additional Strategic Element is included called **Reshaping Institutions to be Culturally Responsive**. In this area, the organisation would be responsible for disassembling structures, policies and procedures (modus operandi) as currently exclusive to the dominant culture of white, English-speaking citizens; to be reassembled in partnership with local Aboriginal people. This would have implications for recognition, employment, cultural involvement and sustainability of each organisation. To adhere to the “Culture at the Centre” philosophy, cultural inclusion would be an important part of an institution’s evaluation methods as an audit for change.

To assist with this, we recommend the document: CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS AND SCHOOL EDUCATION With particular focus on Australia’s First Peoples, Dr Thelma Perso

Published by the Menzies School of Health Research– attached.

Agree strongly with the Voice to Parliament

Further:

- A) ADD- The first statement should be in Language, just a few words then have a statement in SAE, the idea that Language and the concepts behind it needs to be about being First Nations and that with humility others will listen and to respectfully understand that for empowerment it has to be on our terms.
- B) Page 9- The paragraph – “RESPECT THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY“, Doesn’t go far enough, there needs to be clear statement of the effect of racism and clearly organisational white privilege needs to be dealt with (see previous point above). Both of the words **respect** and **equality** need to be defined in our terms as Aboriginal people. This then clearly needs to stipulate that employment and people who lead the changes need to be Aboriginal people, not more employment of non-Aboriginal people. If

racism isn't dealt with and white fragility is not clearly stated so that government/institutions understand their place in this space, it will make little change.

- C) **Empowerment :Foundation and futures (TREE)** The respect and inclusion in broader society- doesn't fit at the base of the tree, rather may be spiritual, emotional wellbeing, lore, and land.
- D) Services- to clearly frame that Aboriginal people would be primarily employed and that there would be targeted Aboriginal leadership in all systems of change.
- E) Evidence- Again when data is collected and when evaluations occur, it is best to be informed and carried out with Aboriginal reviewers.
- F) The first point ---**1. Putting culture at the centre-** this needs to be worded stronger and with an Aboriginal perspective, with the understanding that governments would address their cultural bias, privileges and the uncomfortable discussion around racism (see previous point above)

#### Question 2:

- a) the terminology of Aboriginal people or First Nations people needs to be decided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working group. Please consider the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in WA when the term is finalised.
- b) The term "co-design" needs to be clearly defined for, and by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so as to be clear that genuine (and expected) "collaboration" between Aboriginal and other stakeholders is not tokenistic consultation to ratify something created by non-Aboriginal people.

#### Question 3

- a) Implementation - It is very important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved from the very top of leadership of this Strategy. As it is about empowerment, the implementation should be setting up leadership teams in institutions where genuine collaboration is expected and encouraged; complimented by a pay scale for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that recognises cultural expertise.
- b) Listen to what Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people want to see for this implementation and ensure that the responsibility for its success does not lie with them, but with methods of accountability in institutions to the state government. Further, that the financial investment is not in creating more jobs for non-Aboriginal people.
- c) Research what is working well in organisations like schools, health, justice, etc. and invest in models involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which work.
- d) Ensure that systems and sectors are working together on this strategy in line with the Our Priorities targets in ways that they have previously not been able (i.e. establish teams whose role it is to coordinate organisations in communities)
- e) Include investigation of large scale processes and procedures (methodology) from experienced institutions in culturally responsive work such as the Telethon Institute for the WA Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) for advice

<https://www.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/aboriginal-health/waachs/>

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback as a collaborative Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team.

Denise Shillinglaw and Stephanie Armstrong