

Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Discussion Paper – Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation Comments

Comments on Strategic Elements

Strategic Elements	JTSI Comments
Putting culture at the centre	<p>JTSI supports this element. The major shift that needs to occur is within non-Indigenous public service employees. The lack of awareness/recognition from the public service comes from the lack of training/experience people have with indigenous culture. There is a need for specialist training and a few days of cross-cultural training every year or so to give people the ‘tools’ to deal with Aboriginal people.</p> <p>A solution is for major government departments to have a section dedicated to Aboriginal liaison and cultural education that advises project teams and staff on how to work with Aboriginal people. This section should not be entirely consisting of indigenous or non-indigenous people but a mixture of the two. However, non-indigenous staff should have formal qualifications in Indigenous culture and preferably experience living and working with communities as well. Indigenous staff obviously are important but there needs to be recognition that Aboriginal culture is not homogenous and the possibility that ‘cultural ties’ could lead to conflict of interest situations. Finally, this section should be included in a project, fund etc early, too often these types of teams, where they exist, are included to ‘fix’ an issue that has already occurred.</p> <p>Tourism businesses are critical in educating and passing on cultural awareness to non-Aboriginal people and young community members. JTSI is putting culture at the centre through a range of Aboriginal Tourism activities and initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Two-Year Action Plan for Tourism 2018-2019</i> has outlined the need to meet consumer demand for Aboriginal Tourism experiences through developing Aboriginal Tourism businesses and developing new Camping with Custodian campsites. • The soon to be released <i>Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2020-2024</i> outlines key actions required to meet consumer demand for Aboriginal experiences through the areas of marketing and events; workforce and capacity building; and infrastructure and experiences. • Investment in Aboriginal Tourism is significant, with \$900,000 of funding provided to the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) for administration, marketing and

	<p>business development, \$80,000 for export ready product development and \$440,000 for <i>Camping with Custodians</i> campground development annually. Further investment in Aboriginal tourism will assist with key action plan deliverables across marketing, capacity building and infrastructure and experience building. For example, investment and support to build an Aboriginal Cultural Centre that encompasses a showcase of culture at an internationally recognised level, while providing for Aboriginal business support, training and development should be considered. Centres such as Mossman Gorge in Queensland should be studied as examples.</p>
<p>Bringing decisions closer to communities through empowered engagement and agreement making</p>	<p>JTSI supports this element, however Native title in most instances has led to the formation of Public Body Corporates (PBCs) which should be recognised as the first body to approach when dealing with Aboriginal people in a particular area.</p> <p>What should take priority is better funding, mentoring and training for Aboriginal people to assist them to successfully operate these bodies.</p> <p>JTSI has engaged the Aboriginal tourism sector via WAITOC for more than 15 years, where the Department funds WAITOC to undertake the marketing and business development activities directly. This ensures it is an Aboriginal-led organisation dealing with Aboriginal people on the development of their own culturally driven businesses.</p> <p>The <i>Camping with Custodians</i> program has seen the delivery of five campsites, creating 20 jobs and supporting Aboriginal people and their families in remote locations where tourism is often the only employment option. All design and construction has been undertaken with direct involvement, coordination and management with the local Aboriginal community. Currently, the <i>Camping with Custodians</i> network is only in the Kimberley and Pilbara, however further funding will enable the network to be rolled out across the State in conjunction with Aboriginal Corporations.</p> <p>Further support is required for communities on the Dampier Peninsula to develop product and business opportunities as a result of Federal government funding to seal the Cape Leveque Road. A working group comprising of local Aboriginal groups and relevant government agencies are working to build required infrastructure and assist with business development to ensure local Aboriginal people are ready to</p>

	<p>capitalise on the opportunities that will arise The Dampier Peninsula example of providing additional support to Aboriginal groups where new infrastructure is being built, should be across the board to ensure the long term benefits of infrastructure projects are identified and the support to build operations begins in advance of delivery. Upcoming examples include Murujuga, and the sealing of the Tom Price – Karratha access road.</p>
<p>Enabling Aboriginal-led solutions through improved service commissioning and grant-making</p>	<p>This is a subset of the previous element, ‘Bringing decisions closer to communities through empowered engagement and agreement-making’, that requires the same solution.</p> <p>The <i>Camping with Custodians</i> program is supporting Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to develop a secure foundation and assist in diversifying their operations.</p> <p>The Western Australia Tourism and Hospitality Skills Needs survey undertaken by the Department of Training and Workforce Development, identified that 73 per cent of surveyed Aboriginal tourism businesses have an average of one to three full time equivalents each. This shows the small business nature of the sector. Support by way of administration, finance and booking services are required to allow these small businesses to function while the key personnel deliver the tours and activities. Incubation hubs and business support centres are critical to this.</p>
<p>Investing more in preventative and early intervention initiatives</p>	<p>JTSI supports this element. This is a multi-generational aspiration that requires dedicated programs over several years, even decades.</p> <p>Capacity to develop Aboriginal-led programs may be available through existing Aboriginal tourism businesses which see significant downtime due to the seasonality of their product. By utilising these on-country role models and community leaders in identified early intervention/youth engagement programs may provide a two-prong solution. Currently, Aboriginal tourism businesses in seasonal locations such as the Kimberley struggle for long-term sustainability of their business due to a lack of diversification.</p>
<p>Boosting economic opportunities across all areas of Government activity</p>	<p>This element is a subset of all the other elements.</p> <p>The LNG Jobs Taskforce is an example of a relevant project within JTSI that relates to this element.</p>

The section on this element could also include a range of additional opportunities that may be considered to boost economic participation including:

- Opportunities to participate in agriculture and aquaculture, resources development (including mining, oil and gas), and providing supporting services for other sectors including in engineering and land development services, supporting logistics supply services, cultural training, environmental and land management, catering and cleaning services. There are also opportunities to develop the education and training sectors to support local Aboriginal participation through appropriate education, training, apprenticeships, scholarships and internships both in the direct industries, and in associated support industries.

In supporting and developing these industries, policies should also be mindful of the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal communities, including requirements for cultural leave, and the impacts of criminal history on opportunities for workforce participation.

This section could also be more clearly linked to the DPIRD Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy which is later cited on page 24.

JTSI highlights the need to assist seasonally-affected tourism businesses in diversifying their business models to ensure sustainability and ultimately independence. Consideration could be given to the following:

- Developing programs that showcase tourism careers in both traditional Aboriginal tourism businesses, as well as mainstream tourism businesses looking to deliver Aboriginal culture.
- An Aboriginal Jobs and Skills Placement Program, similar to the one that has been developed for the Mining and Resources Sector by the Wirrpanda Foundation could be run with tourism operators, which may have a significant direct impact in identified areas of skill shortages.
- Developing a register of cultural performers and advisers who are able to provide 'Welcome to Country' and other cultural greetings. Such a register can be used by the wider community as well as access the register for contacts to assist in planning involving Aboriginal people.

Building cultural understanding and respect

JTSI supports this element, however this element will arise through solutions to element 1, 'Putting culture at the centre'. If public sector employees develop an understanding of Aboriginal culture then respect follows.

JTSI suggests that the following will be critical in building cultural understanding and respect:

- Renaming or dual naming of tourism assets and key places throughout WA will greatly assist with cultural understanding.
- Use of appropriate Aboriginal language throughout ministerial speeches, not just in a welcome.
- A program of identification of Aboriginal lands (signage/acknowledgement) around the State will assist with understanding but also aide in Aboriginal pride for country.
- Programs to educate and train public sector employees on Aboriginal culture.

Other Comments

About This Discussion Paper

- Page 4, paragraph 2 refers to “All parts of our society, and not just the State Government, have a role in improving these outcomes. It is nevertheless important for State agencies to have a clear common direction and consistent logic”.
- JTSI suggests that this could be worded more positively, eg: “The State Government plays an important role in improving outcomes for Aboriginal people by ensuring State agencies have a clear, common direction and consistent objectives...”

Overall Goal

- Page 8, paragraph 5 refers to “While this goal may appear modest”.
- JTSI suggests avoiding this wording as it seems to undermine this objective.
- JTSI has been working towards the overall goal of the strategy, particularly in regards to the *Camping with Custodians* program. This program has worked hand-in-hand with identified communities to help build infrastructure and tourism products to contribute to the ongoing sustainability of the communities and diversification of their skills, knowledge and abilities, enabling Aboriginal people to remain on-country if they so choose.

Structure of the Paper

- JTSI suggests moving some of the key objectives, principles and elements to the top of the document, before the background. An executive summary may be useful in this instance.

Strategic Elements

- JTSI suggests that:
 - Government procurement staff need to have a better understanding of Aboriginal culture, business practice and how this impacts business and the wider community;
 - Public service employees need to understand the impact that a lack of Aboriginal business capability can have on the local economy; and
 - Government needs to provide support to the Aboriginal community as a whole not just businesses.

Government Procurement

- JTSI suggests that Government procurement processes and contracts need to be made simpler and understandable. For lower dollar value work this should be further simplified. For example, tenders could be subdivided into smaller packages making them more palatable for smaller Aboriginal businesses.
- JTSI encourages the use of procurement mechanisms that continue to provide better procurement outcomes for Aboriginal businesses, including price preferences, direct sourcing and higher qualitative scores for Aboriginal involvement. Embargoing quotes/tenders to just Aboriginal business are also likely to be beneficial and should be considered.

- JTSI suggests that Government procurement preferences need to take into account the specific benefits that the traditional owners of that group are seeking to achieve. A blanket State-wide Aboriginal procurement preference can cause local friction within the community if it appears to favour an Aboriginal business that does not have any cultural attachment to the area where the procurement is being undertaken.

Support Services and Training

- JTSI suggests that support services on the ground are required, with Aboriginal businesses needing to be involved in the development of these services, through providing input into the support that is required for their business and how this is to be delivered.
- JTSI suggests that services and training for Aboriginal businesses need to be tailored to suit their needs. This may include one-on-one support with follow up programs. For example, the Regional Aboriginal Capability Grant provides an excellent mechanism for improving capability of the Aboriginal businesses, through encouraging self-determination and allowing businesses to concentrate on what they are good at.
- JTSI suggests that initial intensive support is required when an Aboriginal business is first formed, particularly when branching out into new areas.
- JTSI notes the importance of Government engaging with Aboriginal trainers and mentors to generate greater employment outcomes.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled organisations (ACCOS)

- JTSI emphasises the importance of empowering ACCOS as a means of self-determination. Negotiated agreements between Government and traditional owners need to be linked to outcomes that are specific to the region. Regionally specific initiatives and regional action plans should consider traditional Aboriginal regions rather than government prescribed boundaries that may not be appropriate for the community.

Partnerships

- JTSI emphasises that while the partnership between Non-indigenous and Indigenous business can fast track capability and capacity, it also needs to be equal and must provide a transition mechanism whereby indigenous businesses can grow their capability and capacity independently.

Relationship to other strategies, frameworks and policies

- JTSI emphasises that the soon to be released *Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2020-2024* will align and complement the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. The Action Plan will set out a range of measures undertaken by eight partner government agencies (of which the Aboriginal Policy Unit of the Department of Premier and Cabinet is one), which will contribute to the delivery of this overarching Strategy document.
- Reporting on the *Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2020-2024* will take place on a regular basis and can be provided to any Statutory Office that is established to ensure accountability in the area of Aboriginal empowerment.

Accountability, Measurement and Evaluation

- On page 27, the photo showing a rock on top of Community Information Materials, casting a shadow over the Hon. Ben Wyatt may not send best message.