

## Comments from the Transport Portfolio

### Discussion Paper - A Path Forward - Developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

- Cover - The Artwork throughout the document needs to ensure it is representative of aboriginal people and developed in conjunction with them.
- Page 4 second sentence ...and consistent "Logic" – not sure if this word is appropriate for the context of the sentence. Change to "a consistent approach".
- Page 4 - Longer term vision is important for "sustainable change" and overcome political cycles at all levels of Government.
- Page 5 - Very important that aboriginal people have had input into the development of the discussion paper and not consultation "after the fact".
- Page 5 – The 3 questions seeking input from Aboriginal people should have been considered upfront when preparing the Discussion Paper. The 3 questions need to be undertaken as part of "yarning" to elicit true responses/input from aboriginal people.
- Page 5 – need to offer different channels for aboriginal people to communicate on the Discussion Paper.
- Page 6 – it is pleasing to see that engagement did occur as part of the refresh of the National Closing the Gap agenda and as part of the WA Closing the Gap with a 13-member group appointed by representative of a broadfield of Aboriginal organisations who are now also appointed by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council (WAAAC).
- Page 6 – paragraph 8 last sentence – change "goal" to "goals" for the strategy as assuming more than one.
- Page 7 – why have a picture of a DPC swag? Surely we can provide a better picture for engagement with people in it.
- Page 7 – Literature review is extensive and engagement meetings needed to be representative of various aboriginal communities across the State.

#### Overall Goal

- Page 8 – absolutely agree on the Overall Goal statement and that aboriginal people need to define and lead the Overall Goal and how to achieve it. Government needs to work on how it can support the Goal by "walking side by side" with aboriginal people.
- Page 9 – diagram to capture the essential idea appears appropriate however would like to see the "walking side by side" with aboriginal people somehow built into the words above.

#### Principles

- Page 10 – first sentence change "engagement" to "engagements".
- 5 principles are appropriate: Empowerment and Self-determination, Diversity of people and places, Culture and Country, Services, Evidence.

## Strategic Elements

- Page 11 – First paragraph - solutions must be developed “side by side” with aboriginal people by aboriginal people, not just “collaboration” so language may need to change.
- 5 strategic elements are important with culture in the “middle”.

## Putting culture at the centre

- Absolutely agree that cultural identity, cultural continuity and cultural authority are essential.
- We as government providing services must be culturally competent to understand aboriginal culture and what it has to offer WA.

## Bringing decisions closer to communities through empowered engagement and agreement-making

- Self determination is important for aboriginal people to be have a formal role in decision making.
- Regional decision making structure improvements at all levels of Government is essential – getting this right may be challenging/complex – concept of a “regional champion” without the need for structural change can work.
- Page 15 – negotiated agreements between Government and TO’s can be extremely important but need to focus on the right outcomes.
- Page 15 – Key ideas are important – structural change and coordinated service delivery is going to be challenging – need champions to drive this.

## Enabling aboriginal-led solutions through improved service commissioning and grant-making

- Concept of aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCO’s). Build business capability and capacity and ongoing viability important.
- Very much support aboriginal people leading solutions (e.g. health check ups, play groups etc.)
- Key ideas are important especially contracts and grant programs and coordination to ensure sustainable for ACCO’s).

## Investing More in Preventative and early-intervention initiatives

- Very much support building preventative and early intervention initiatives.
- Page 19 - Key ideas are extremely important noting that in this area this must be trying to achieve generational improvement for aboriginal people.
- Culture/Education/Housing/Health/Access/Economic Participation are essential investments for aboriginal people.
- Government funding must be coordinated and aligned for these programs!

## Boosting Economic Opportunities Across All Areas of Government Activity

- Essential area for aboriginal people to walk side by side and to have self determination through economic participation.
- Yes agree Government at all levels must coordinate and cooperate.
- Economic participation through culture opportunities are essential for aboriginal people to empower them. Aboriginal people must be at the centre of designing these cultural opportunities.

- Key ideas are important – building skills and capability/capacity, access to capital, coordinating government funding, procurement policies, lowering barriers to opportunities.

#### Building Cultural Understanding and Respect

- Cultural understanding is essential for all of us who live in Australia to recognise the traditional custodians of this land.
- Need opportunities for aboriginal people to showcase their rich culture (and on country where possible) so we can all be proud of 60,000 years of culture – the oldest in the world!

#### Framework

- Page 24 – understand that it is fluid at present in terms of implementation, accountability, measurement and evaluation and it will evolve over time.
- Also understand we need to use the best of strategies that have been developed alongside aboriginal people.

#### Governance

- Page 25 New Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council (WAAAC) appointed with 13 Aboriginal leaders chosen by their peers rather than through a standard selection process is extremely important as representatives and a voice for engagement (diversity in terms of region, gender, age and subject-matter expertise).
- The new WAAAC will lead a process to co-design a new model for aboriginal people to engage with government at regional and State levels. This is extremely important around co-design.
- Also national level reforms with COAG committed to a formal partnership with ATSI people to refresh the Closing the Gap agenda, underpinned by an agreement signed on behalf of COAG members and the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations. Good to see all levels of Government trying to align.
- Australian Government has committed \$7.3m to the ‘co-design of options for a Voice to Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and a ‘model to improve local and regional decision making’. This is extremely important around co-design.

#### Implementation

- Implementing the strategy will be the responsibility of the State Government as a whole – all agencies working together with Central agencies providing additional responsibilities for leadership, stewardship and coordination – \*\*\*\*The new WAAAC is important that they have a voice for the Implementation. Aligning Agencies is imperative and having an agile approach to this to cut through regulation and red tape\*\*\*\*.
- Page 26 – during 2020, the Government will partner with Aboriginal people to develop a State action plan and regional action plans under the strategy.
- New closing the gap framework and targets to be finalised by the end of 2019 (which is only 6 weeks away so assume progress is being made).
- The State Government Our Priorities Program which has 12 targets, one of the targets specifically relates to aboriginal people, seeking at least a 23% reduction in the number of Aboriginal adults in prison by 2028-29. The broader outcomes of other targets are also aligned with the proposed elements of the strategy, in particular

targets to: create jobs, deliver stronger regional communities, improve the health and wellbeing of children in the early years, increase conservation for future generations, reduce youth reoffending and illicit drug use – cross-agency Outcome Activity Groups responsible for delivery of targets have been established – yes important to monitor and evaluate to proactively see what is working and what is not in order to achieve the outcomes. Including the voices of the WAAAC in evaluation of activities is essential.

#### Accountability, Measurement and Evaluation

- State Government proposing to establish a Statutory Office of accountability and advocacy in Aboriginal Affairs.
- A potential function of the proposed Statutory Office is to promote accountability for the implementation of the whole-of-government strategy and to track the Government's Performance. We are supportive of this new Statutory Office.
- The evaluation of individual programs will remain the responsibility of each agency with guidance and support provided by the Department of Treasury.
- Strategy will be periodically reviewed to assess how successful and determine whether requires adjusting. This review will be aboriginal-led and independent from the government of the day – policies and frameworks will need to have bi-partisan support.

#### Framework Summary

- Page 28 - The Framework Summary Goal, Strategy, Implementation, Accountability and Governance looks simple to understand.

#### Next steps in Developing the Strategy

Page 29 – seeking feedback by 28 February 2020 so as to finalise a Government endorsed strategy in early 2020.

- 1) Are the main ideas right? **Response** - Overall yes please see commentary on earlier pages with page numbers to align to the report. A “values” framework designed and led by Aboriginal people is fundamental as to Aboriginal people want as outcomes.
- 2) Are we using the right words? **Response** - Please see some suggested changes earlier in this response with page numbers aligned to the report. We have tested the terminology of ‘Aboriginal people’ in the Main Roads-Nudge Strategic Business Case and this was accepted by Aboriginal people. Also we don't seem to refer to ‘Elders’ as the ‘leaders’, yet when we pay respects to the indigenous people before meetings we always highlight respect to “Elders” past and present as leaders and future leaders that will become ‘Elders’. So I am not sure why in the engagement process we don't have them more clearly referred to in the document.
- 3) What else should we be thinking about? **Response** - Implementation and alignment of Agencies is going to be the key to the success beyond Political cycles so bi-partisan support is essential at a Government level. How to align different Government Agencies at the operational and regional level to achieve the outcomes will require “Strategy Champions” working with WAAAC representatives to overcome red tape, regulation, administrative effort etc.

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