

PORTFOLIO: TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO

**ISSUE: A PATH FORWARD: DEVELOPING THE WA GOVERNMENT'S
ABORIGINAL EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

The Transport Portfolio agencies comprising the Department of Transport, the Public Transport Authority, Main Roads Western Australia, METRONET and the WA Port Authorities support the Strategy and the State Government's commitment to working with Aboriginal people for improved outcomes. Our feedback and suggestions are outlined below:

What else should be thought about

1. Regional Diversity – through the development and implementation of METRONET's Gnarla Biddi Strategy it was observed that, when working across multiple regions, agreement on processes and decision-making for country must be well defined, respectful and mutually agreed to. Further information on the various areas and key stakeholders to be engaged will be needed for agencies that operate in multiple locations.
2. Advisory Group Representation and Community Feedback – the reporting structures of the Strategy are currently unclear, as well as how the Working Group/WAAAC will disseminate information back to the community and provide their communities' feedback and input back into the Working Group/WAAAC.
3. Subject Area/Discipline Diversity – to ensure the Strategy's success, the different disciplines will require adequate and targeted resourcing and support structures across the relevant subject areas at the strategic, agency and project levels.
4. Include Examples – the METRONET Aboriginal Engagement Strategy - Gnarla Biddi (Our Pathways) may be included as an example within the Strategy of current best practice. Similarly, Main Roads' Aboriginal Advisory Group may also be referenced.
5. Action Plans – how will Action Plans will be developed, i.e. will this be a requirement for each agency?
6. Strategy Implementation – will support and/or toolkits of implementation will be available for State agencies to ensure a successful transition to Strategy implementation?
7. Reconciliation Action Plans - consideration should be given to aligning the Strategy with examples in individual agency RAPs.
8. Marine Reserves and Parks - the Strategy should think about the economic opportunities which exist through the creation of new marine reserves and parks. The creation of a coastal marine park presents economic opportunities for Aboriginal organisations, as seen when the State Government created new parks in the Kimberley region. Marine reserves and parks present dual economic and environmental opportunities, through conserving and leveraging natural and cultural values whilst encouraging Aboriginal involvement and employment in land and sea management.

9. Case Studies - it may be worth considering incorporating case studies of innovative ways of boosting Aboriginal people's participation and success in employment and business.
10. Contributions Policy - while fundraising and sponsorship assists Aboriginal communities in the short-term, it would be a timely opportunity for the Strategy to consider the merit of developing a preferred contributions policy:
 - What direct financial assistance provides the best outcomes for Aboriginal communities?
 - Do Aboriginal communities prefer in-kind support, support through charities, educational scholarships or training programs?
11. Leave - the Strategy recognises the principle of kinship in Aboriginal culture, including caring for elders. However, it does not address the importance of cultural, bereavement or carer's leave in supporting Aboriginal employment.
12. Positive Discrimination - the Strategy raises the adverse effects of discrimination; however, providing a balanced argument that explains the role positive discrimination can play to reduce disparities in employment and service appointment (such as the Aboriginal Procurement Policy) should be considered.
13. Empowerment and self-determination - further information will need to be provided on what government systems, structures, policies and programs should contribute to Aboriginal people's empowerment and self-determination. In addition, further detail and guidelines will be needed to outline how state government agencies will support Aboriginal people, families and communities to solve their own problems i.e. what defines a problem?

General Feedback

1. The Portfolio would appreciate feedback on whether the METRONET Aboriginal Engagement Strategy – Gnarla Bidji (Our Pathways) and its requirements will still be applicable under this Strategy and how the Strategy will support the Gnarla Bidji outcomes.
2. The graph 'Demand for tertiary services by Aboriginal people (WA)' on page 18 requires simplification to suit all readers, especially to improve its legibility. It is unclear if the third dataset, blue line 'State population', refers to 'State Aboriginal Population' or the indexed demand for tertiary services by all population groups.
3. Regarding the summary of research material, documents, meetings and reports, it is recommended to make clear the document scopes and the regions covered by this input.
4. The international references on page 6 from Canada, New Zealand and the United States that refer to page 7, cannot be easily identified.
5. In relation to d) Using negotiated agreements between the Government and traditional owner groups as a collaborative platform for linking Aboriginal people's priorities to resourcing and other cross-government actions – what types of agreements this is referring to?

6. In relation to b) Supporting the development of Aboriginal providers' organisational capacity - what does development of Aboriginal providers entail and what would be used to measure success?

Challenges

The following operational challenges could be faced by state government agencies in the Strategy's implementation:

- Potential structures and strategies that may need to be in place to facilitate outcomes and ideas as outlined in the Strategy:
 - Integrated systems and processes across each agency's individual divisions/business units to easily coordinate Aboriginal engagement and participation effort and to capture performance information.
 - Corporate frameworks to drive Aboriginal participation opportunities and outcomes.
 - Aboriginal Advisory Working Groups or any other mechanisms to bring agency decisions closer to communities.
 - An Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
 - An adopted RAP including any necessary Working Group(s) and Executive-Corporate engagement and participation.
- The central element of 'Putting culture at the centre' may create challenges and opportunities including:
 - An acknowledgement that recognition and truth telling activities are not currently common practice, and further definition and work would be required here against other drivers such as agency RAP's and other Strategies; for example, through Gnarla Biddi there are examples of truth telling information being acknowledged and recognised on the various METRONET projects.
 - Budgetary allocations and resourcing for initiatives that support cultural identity, continuity and authority activities will be required including allocated budget to deliver on RAP activities and potential Cultural Awareness Training.
- In respect to 'investing more in preventative initiatives,' agencies will need to consider how they include Aboriginal engagement and participation into project management and risk management frameworks.
- Under the potential goals and principles heading, the Portfolio supports the overall goal of 'Aboriginal people, families and communities being empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.' The challenges for meeting this goal are noteworthy. Drawing emphasis to: 'Even today, systems and policies that attempt to respect the principle of equality may have unintended discriminatory effects. Racial discrimination and implicit racial bias continue to hold back progress within government and the broader society, despite considerable improvements in recent years.' This will be a challenge for state government agencies to address.

CURRENT AS: 28 February 2020