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Our ref: DWERDG23/20
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Mr Greg Italiano
A/Director General
Department of the Premier and Cabinet

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Dear Mr Italiano

***DEVELOPING THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S
ABORIGINAL EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY***

I refer to your email dated 16 January 2020 seeking feedback from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation on the discussion paper titled 'A Path Forward: Developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy'.

In supporting the development and implementation of the strategy, the following comments are provided for consideration.

Bespoke solutions – Traditionally Government agencies tend to work independently of each other in the delivery of services. Furthermore, agencies develop systems and processes that seek to deliver services that are universal and uniform.

Given the overall goal of the strategy of Aboriginal people seeking to be empowered to choose their own futures under their own terms, consideration needs to be given to the delivery of services that are bespoke and outcome focussed. The delivery of services need to be shaped to suit Aboriginal people and communities, rather than a generic service delivery model. Furthermore, a holistic across agencies delivery of complementary services has to be developed to get best value.

Local empowerment – In the provision of bespoke services, governance mechanisms will need to be adopted that allow for direct input from affected Aboriginal people and communities. To support the delivery of services, it will also require Government to empower public servants to make localised and outcome-focussed decisions.

Substantive equality – The discussion paper does not flag if there is an intent to achieve substantive equality for Aboriginal people and communities, or whether there are other measures that need to be adopted to meet the goals of the strategy.

State and Commonwealth interactions – Recognising that there will be competing philosophies in the delivery of services between the various tiers of government, strategies will need to be developed (with supporting resources) to ensure that the strategy for local empowerment does not get hampered by institutional arrangements that are imposed, particularly by the Commonwealth Government.

Aboriginal customs and practices – The discussion paper refers to Aboriginal people ‘walking in two worlds’. Such a statement infers that there is a universal Aboriginal world and the (other) world since European settlement. However, there is a need to be cautious about assuming that there is a universal Aboriginal world, as there are numerous Aboriginal communities / cultures that have very different needs and expectations. The risk of assuming a universal Aboriginal world is that localised and bespoke solutions may not be readily developed and implemented.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Rowe', with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Mike Rowe
DIRECTOR GENERAL

05 February 2020