

2020-01-20 Meeting to discuss: ***A Path Forward: developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy***

*This submission is intended for the Heads of Agencies Forum, Kalgoorlie Boulder, and can be used to inform and guide a response and submission from the HAM members.*

*The submission was developed by the following individuals:*

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**Consultation Questions:**

**1. Are the main ideas right?**

*Do you agree with the description of the overall goal, principles, strategic elements and framework? Would you change or add anything?*

**2. Are we using the right words?**

*You might broadly agree with the main ideas but want to see them expressed using different language. We welcome your recommendations. In particular we are interested in whether the term 'Aboriginal people' should be used or whether other terms such as 'First Nations' would be more appropriate.*

The Aboriginal Advisory Group would prefer the use of the term: 'Aboriginal people' when referring to Indigenous Australians.

**3. What else should we be thinking about?**

*You may have a view on how the strategy should be implemented in a particular region or subject area, or examples of current good practice. Your ideas are valuable to us.*

**Strategic elements (page 11)**

The group discussed and agreed that rather than having the phrase, "Putting culture at the centre" this should read: "Putting family at the centre". The rationale for this change is that family are at the centre of Aboriginal living and lives, and that it is within this context, that culture is taught. That is, culture does not exist independently from the family and extended family unit.

**Bringing decisions closer to communities through empowered engagement and agreement-making (page 14)**

The group discussed this section and provided feedback for the Key Ideas section (page 15).

Taking on board the impacts and harms caused to children and families as a result of the Stolen Generation, and reviewing the current context of disproportionately high numbers of Aboriginal

children in out of home care, it is important to emphasize the benefits of keeping Aboriginal children with their family and extended families.

“Making sure that families are at the centre” will privilege those families and children who find themselves engaging with Child Protection Services and other government agencies, that services will be oriented to keep children with their families wherever possible.

Public sector workforces should not only be required to demonstrate their ability to deliver culturally competent and responsive practices, they should be accountable to the local and regional community of Aboriginal families, and that they have made every effort to keep Aboriginal families together.

Service delivery and service outcomes for government agencies should be consistently parent and child-supportive, reflecting the values that Aboriginal families and communities place, on keeping their children in their homes and communities.

Communication between Aboriginal families and public sector workforces should reflect ongoing consultation and collaboration in keeping Aboriginal families together. Local Aboriginal Advisory Groups should meet regularly with key stakeholders and resources should be freed up to ensure that these representatives have regular access to local leadership and decision makers within the community, with regard to the public sector.

Consultation with local Aboriginal traditional owners, will be required before establishing interventions and initiatives.

Advice offered by Aboriginal representatives should be fed to relevant local and regional bodies e.g. Kalgoorlie-Boulder Heads of Agencies, Northern Goldfields Interagency Forum, Goldfields Regional Health Planning Forum, Goldfields District Leadership Group to influence at the local level.

### **Investing more in preventative and early-intervention initiatives (page 18-19)**

In seeking to establish early intervention initiatives, attention and care should be given to design and introduce localised approaches, incorporating feedback from Aboriginal families and communities in a process of collaborative discussions and consultation.

As well, implementation models should reflect and support the body of evidence and well-established research.

Within the Goldfields, there is a need for up to date demographic, economic and social indicator research, that highlights the specific needs of the region and the communities, and which would inform the allocation of resources consistent with those identified as gaps, opportunities or requirements.

Procurement processes, wherever services and programs are to be established, must include the input, guidance and direction of traditional owners. These representatives should also be consulted prior to decisions being made within tendering processes as well.

### **Accountability, Measurement and Evaluation**

The group agreed that with regard to Child Protection Services and Aboriginal families, there was a need to design systems and adapt existing processes in ways that privilege Aboriginal families and

that allow children to remain attached to parents, grandparents and extended family members. The need for ongoing connection to country and culture is sustainable and dynamic within the context of the family and extended family relationships and these are vitally important in sustaining culture, tradition and languages.