

Our ref: HP-8741

5 March 2020

Ms Kate Alderton
Director
Aboriginal Policy and Coordination Unit
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005



Via email: AboriginalPolicy@dpc.wa.gov.au

Dear Ms Alderton,

SUBMISSION ON THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S ABORIGINAL EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the discussion paper '*A Path Forward: Developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy*', (the Strategy) received on 16 January 2020.

Horizon Power is deeply connected with our regional and remote service area, and proudly services around 15 per cent of regional Western Australia's population who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. With that, Horizon Power strongly supports the Western Australian Government's efforts towards formalising a way forward in Aboriginal empowerment and advancement.

In response to the Department of Premier and Cabinet's request for comment, Horizon Power supports that an overarching Strategy would capture the broader aspirations and key elements of Aboriginal empowerment to work towards greater social, economic, health and cultural outcomes. However, it is important this Strategy reflects Aboriginal peoples lived experiences of empowerment and that involves a reflection on the past and present narratives. It is also important to share Aboriginal people's understandings of the process of empowerment and capture future aspirations to contextualise the movement towards Aboriginal empowerment.

Horizon Power also considers that acknowledging the role and function Aboriginal cultures play at the core of the Strategy will be crucial to the success of the Strategy. Currently the Strategy acknowledges the notion of Aboriginal people 'walking in two worlds', but this does not provide insights into how intercultural relationships can be nurtured to build positive relationships, for example through the development of cultural competency and cultural safety. An acknowledgement of the importance of developing positive intercultural relationships and providing frameworks to foster this process will ensure everyone plays a role in the process of empowerment across our State.

Over the past 12 months, Horizon Power has developed a Reconciliation Action Plan which was recently approved by Reconciliation Australia and launched by the Hon Bill Johnston, the Minister for Energy, on 4 March 2020. The development process provided an opportunity for Horizon Power to assess how the organisation engages with Aboriginal customers, stakeholders, suppliers and employees. Importantly, it has provided a rigorous framework for how Horizon Power will commit to improving its processes and address gaps within the business over the next two years. Considering our experience and the positive impact it has had on our organisation, even in this early stage, I would encourage that the Strategy recommend all State Government agencies develop their own Reconciliation Action Plan.

Finally, Horizon Power recommends that community level action plans be incorporated to encouraged greater support and capacity for empowerment at the local level. Currently the Strategy outlines action plans for the state and regional bodies but does not provide a tool for success at the local level. The requirement for each level to provide plans will ensure all levels of government and community are actively engaged in the process of empowerment.

I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to provide input to this important strategy for the State. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Ms Roanna Edwards, Reconciliation Manager, on 6310 1017 or Roanna.Edwards@horizonpower.com.au.

Yours sincerely



Stephanie Unwin
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER