



Australian Government
National Indigenous Australians Agency

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Reference: EC20-000149

Ms Emily Roper
Acting Director General
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Locked Bag 3001
WEST PERTH WA 6872

Dear Ms Roper

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Emily'.

Thank you for your letter of 16 January 2020 inviting my feedback on the discussion paper *A Path Forward: Developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy* (the paper).

As the paper rightly notes, "*now is a time of unprecedented change in Aboriginal Affairs, both at the state and national levels*". The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is leading delivery of the Australian Government's commitment to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our approach shares the core elements of the paper – supporting Indigenous voices and culture, economic opportunity and place-based and regional solutions.

The goals, principles, strategies and framework set out in the paper are welcomed by the NIAA and will provide a strengthened platform to underpin our cooperative relationship with the Western Australian government. I have attached feedback points for your consideration at Attachment A.

The Commonwealth would not support the characterisation regarding unemployment payments and programs in respect to remote communities on page 20 of the paper. There has been significant reform made by the Commonwealth over the last 12 months. The NIAA is of course committed to continuously improving the effectiveness of its programs.

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The NIAA contact to work with you as you finalise and deliver this important strategy is Mr Kevin Brahim, West and South Group Manager via phone on (02) 6152 3733 or email: kevin.brahim@niaa.gov.au.

Thank you again for extending the opportunity to provide feedback on the discussion paper.

Yours sincerely



LETITIA HOPE
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
28 February 2020

The National Indigenous Australians Agency supports the main ideas set out in the discussion paper *A Path Forward: Developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy* (the paper) including the overall goal, principles, strategic elements and framework.

Comments and information for consideration

	Section	Comment
1	General	While it is understood the vast majority of Indigenous people in WA are Aboriginal it is recommended that Torres Strait Islander people also be included in this paper. It implies that Torres Strait Islander people are precluded from benefitting from the implementation of this empowerment strategy. The paper could use the term Indigenous or alternatively could include an initial statement that Torres Strait Islander people are included but the term Aboriginal is used in the report because it is WA common practice to do so (or similar).
2	Putting culture at the centre (p. 12 -13)	It would be useful to mention or reference the evidence base for “reports on suicide by young Aboriginal people”. This could strengthen the point and provide useful reference documents for those interested.
3	Bringing decisions closer to communities through empowered engagement and agreement-making (p. 13-15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategic theme is underpinned by principles that closely align with the Commonwealth's commitment to working in partnership and making decisions with Indigenous communities. • The Commonwealth is committed to expanding local and regional decision-making. The co-design process for an Indigenous voice, announced by Minister Wyatt on 30 October 2019, includes a strong focus on improving local and regional decision-making. • State and territory governments and ALGA, have been invited to participate in a senior officials group that will engage with and contribute to the co-design. This process provides the opportunity for all levels of government to provide input and consider issues as the co-design process progresses, with a view to improve coordination and put in place a sustainable long-term approach to local and regional decision-making and working in partnership with Indigenous leaders and communities. • The Commonwealth is currently engaging with a range of existing local and regional decision-making and Indigenous regional governance initiatives, and these present existing opportunities for enhanced collaboration and coordination across governments. An example is the Indigenous-designed and led Empowered Communities initiative, which was designed as a long-term transformative agenda to reshape the relationship between Indigenous communities and governments. • Through Empowered Communities, governments, leaders and communities in eight regions around Australia collaborate on regional planning, to align government investment and co-design solutions to address agreed community priorities. The Empowered Communities

		approach aligns with themes highlighted in this proposed strategy, such as a clear intention to shift the relationship between governments and communities away from a transactional approach towards a relationship based on partnership and self-determination, and devolving decision-making 'closer to the ground' to enhance local responsiveness and ownership of solutions.
4	Boosting economic opportunities across all areas of Government activity (p. 20-21)	It would be useful to reference the role of the Western Australian Aboriginal Procurement Policy in supporting the ideas articulated on page 20.