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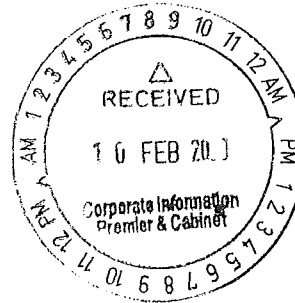
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10 February 2020

Director
Aboriginal Policy and Coordination Unit
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Dumas House
2 Havelock Street West Perth WA 6005



Director,

RE: Developing an Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Submission to the Western Australian Government

The Water Corporation (the Corporation) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment into the State Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy discussion paper, 'A Path Forward'. The Corporation believes that A Path Forward captures the key elements and concepts required to progress a whole of Government Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. We support a strategy that establishes a coherent framework that is inclusive of Aboriginal community dialogue and investment.

In the process of our review, it was a useful exercise to frame the discussion paper against the Aboriginal engagement initiatives that the Corporation is currently progressing. In a practical sense this allowed us to align the key elements of the discussion paper and the Government's strategic vision against our tangible activities that are currently operating, or in development stage.

Internally, the discussion paper was reviewed by a broad cross section of Corporation employees who have worked in the space of Aboriginal engagement at state, regional and remote community level. This included the involvement of Aboriginal employees with substantial experience working at the interface of Aboriginal Affairs across the State.

Some of the current initiatives and activities the Corporation is undertaking as they align with the key elements of the Strategy include, but are not limited to:

Putting culture at the centre

- *Reconciliation Action Plan*
- *Cultural Awareness*
- *Events – NAIDOC/Reconciliation*
- *Art work/Signage/Branding*



Building cultural understanding and respect

- *Cultural Competency*
- *Welcome to Country*
- *Aboriginal Engagement Protocol*

Boosting economic opportunities across all areas of Government activity

- *Aboriginal Employment Plan*
- *Trade Shows*
- *Aboriginal Service Contracts*
- *Aboriginal Artwork*

Enabling Aboriginal-led solutions through better service commissioning

- *Community engagement through Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO).*
- *Aboriginal Contractor due diligence, engagement and commissioning practices.*

Bringing decisions closer to communities through empowered engagement and agreement making

- *Indigenous Land Use Agreements*
- *Heritage Agreements*
- *Protocol Agreements and MOU's*

Investing more in preventative initiatives

- *Customer engagement and education*
- *Remote Aboriginal Communities Program*
- *Regional engagement visits*

An additional observation for consideration is a recognition that Aboriginal people live their daily lives in a society of community and family obligations, and expectations with little or no way of considering 'self' as an individual. Aboriginal mental health and trauma issues can be compounded by Aboriginal societal structures which for some become impossible to navigate, escape or achieve some respite.

This is a real issue for Aboriginal people as employees and also more generally in the community. There are very real constraints as they relate to family and community. For an Aboriginal person to ignore this can create a destabilising environment and in some cases may result in being ostracised from both family and community.

The Corporation is introducing initiatives that will assist in surfacing and addressing a range of issues that exist in this space. As part of our Pastoral Care Program which includes:

- *Healing Initiative – Creating opportunity for our Aboriginal employees to seek support for issues as outlined above regarding the pressures of obligation and responsibility.*