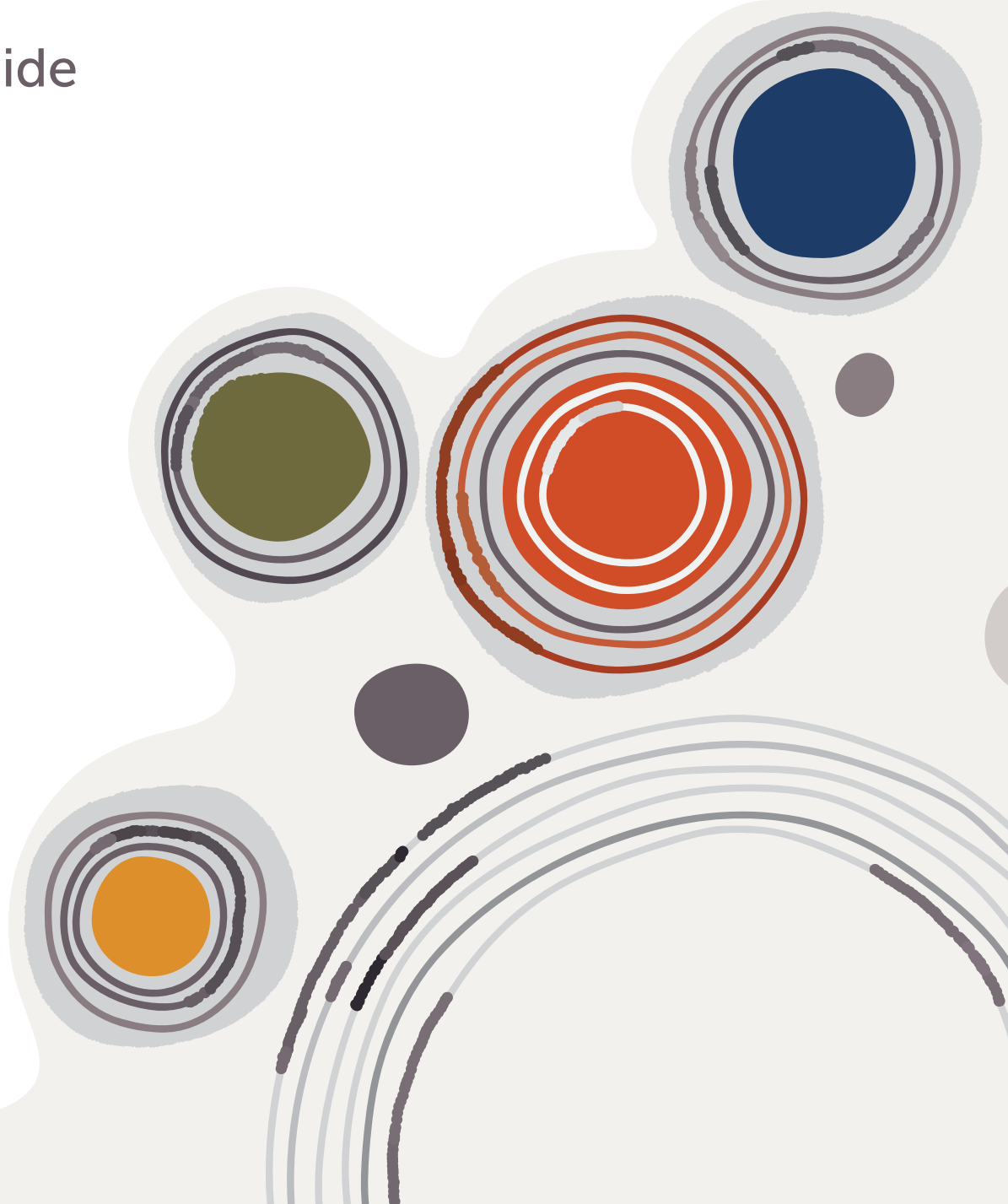




The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

Western Australia 2021-2029

Policy Guide



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A note about language

In this document, the term Aboriginal people is used in preference to “Indigenous” or “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” people, in recognition that Aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants of Western Australia.

Together, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders make up the First Nations of Australia; however, Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia have unique cultures, identities and histories, distinct from those of Aboriginal people. On average, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders have different socioeconomic profiles and face different challenges, despite sharing a number of common experiences, including a history of racial discrimination. Some families have both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, and this rich diversity is acknowledged and celebrated.

This document is primarily about Aboriginal people in Western Australia (including Aboriginal people who also identify as Torres Strait Islanders). We respectfully recognise the valuable contributions of Torres Strait Islanders to Western Australia’s society, economy, and communities. We acknowledge that some of the principles and strategic directions outlined in this document may also apply to Torres Strait Islanders.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of Western Australia’s Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

Dalja bungoni
naliwa ngadi

Garndim-banjelng
ngoondeb yarrowoo joodoog

Ngarag bernamha daam
yoorriyangem nyigoowagirli

Lenggalm-banyen
ngoondeb yarra joodoog

Wanangarri
yirr manyja ngurra gabu

Nyangan-gu yangganungu yanangu
gambarriyaarra

Ngany jurrukura nugurra tukujana, mapu maru,
mapu Karajarri muwarr, mapu ngarlu wakajku

Jukurpa, warrimpa

Goan goodwai lu fyootju blakbulu wai,
brobuwai, too maikembud stronwun an goodwun for orlod

Nganyjurrulu warlilamanyi
tarntarn ngarrakan

Yaninpalaju ngayunkujanu nantirra parnajanu
yaninpa wulu yiwarra kutu palyangka.

Garda, burlura

Jukurpa, ngunjinpa

Yurlu nyulyungkamu, murrini

Palalyi, yarrwa

Jukurpa, murru

Yurlu Nyulyuwirri purrpakalayi

Yurlu nyulyungkamu, burra

Thugurra, burrbalayi

Parnaku margukaja kamu yungunku
yungunpa palya kurranyu

Manta puru kurranyu nyaku

Maa yamarr kanyira tirtu
kangaralpi kuwarri yampa ngula

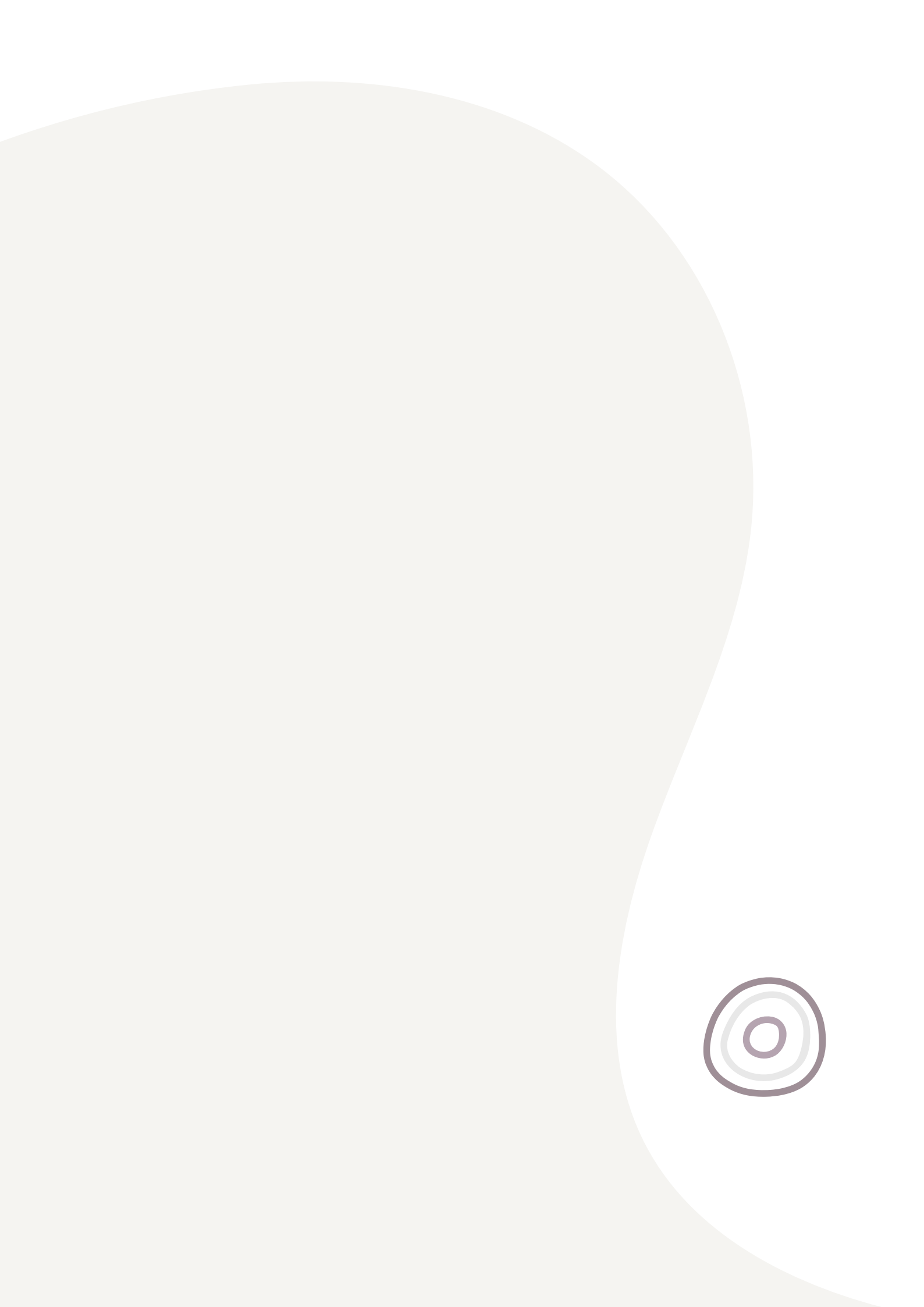
Kalyakool Moordit jabiny
Boodjak

...And whereas the Parliament resolves to acknowledge the Aboriginal people as the First People of Western Australia and traditional custodians of the land, the said Parliament seeks to effect a reconciliation with the Aboriginal people of Western Australia...

Preamble to the Constitution Act 1889 (WA),
as amended in 2015 by a bill introduced by Ms
Josie Farrer, MLA

The figure above shows the phrase "Foundations and Futures" translated into 23 Western Australian languages, spanning the Kimberley, Pilbara, Western Desert, Goldfields and Southwest regions. The intention is to give the document a strong cultural grounding from the very start, while respecting the linguistic diversity of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. The translations were coordinated by Aboriginal Interpreting WA, with input from language centres across the State. We recognise that not all Western Australian languages were able to be included – however, we have sought to cover a representative range of the richly diverse languages throughout the State.

In line with Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property and the wishes of the translators, these translations are not to be reproduced without permission. © 2021 Aboriginal Interpreting WA Aboriginal Corporation.



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About the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

Purpose of the Strategy

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (the Strategy) sets out how the Western Australian Government will direct its efforts towards a future in which all **Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.**

Developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia, the Strategy also sets out the State's approach to meeting its commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Strategy outlines a high-level framework for the immediate and future reforms required to ensure Government policies, plans, initiatives and programs – including support for Aboriginal-led services – are effective in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people across a range of diverse circumstances. These reforms are built around genuine partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal people, strong accountability, and culturally responsive ways of working.

The Strategy also sets out important steps that the Government and the broader community must take to recognise and address the impacts of past and ongoing injustices, while also acknowledging and celebrating the enduring strength, resilience and contribution of Aboriginal people and cultures.

The Strategy's release marks the beginning of a nine-year journey towards Western Australia's 2029 bicentenary, marking 200 years since the establishment of the Swan River Colony. This significant anniversary provides an opportunity for reflection on the history and experiences of Aboriginal people in this State.

A measure of the Strategy's success by 2029 will be that Aboriginal people view their relationships with the Government as genuine, effective and respectful, and that clear progress has been made towards equality and equity of social and economic opportunity.

The actions necessary to reach that point will be set out in a series of shorter-term implementation plans, developed in partnership with Aboriginal people (see below Implementation, Evaluation and Accountability). These plans will address all the elements of the Strategy, as well as the State's commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to institute significant reforms and achieve ambitious socio-economic targets.

In addition to these formal implementation plans, the Strategy will be the key point of reference for developing future State Government policies, plans, initiatives and programs that contribute to better outcomes for Aboriginal people. In some areas of government activity, existing policies and plans already reflect key principles and elements of the Strategy; in other areas, further work will be required to put the Strategy into effect.

About this Policy Guide document

This Policy Guide is designed to be read together with *Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy: Strategy Overview*, which very briefly provides the key information for a general audience.

The Policy Guide, by contrast, gives a more detailed explanation of the Strategy's elements and their rationale. It also includes important information about how these elements might be implemented in practice through policies, programs, reforms, and other initiatives.



Why the Strategy is needed

Aboriginal people have, on average, shorter lives than other people

The life expectancy for Aboriginal people in Western Australia is 69.4 years compared to 82.1 years for the broader population.

Aboriginal people have, on average, less money than other people

The median equivalised household income for Aboriginal people in Western Australia is about half that of non-Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal children are overrepresented in the child protection system

Most Aboriginal parents raise healthy and happy children; however, approximately 6.4% of Aboriginal children in Western Australia are in out-of-home care. Aboriginal children make up just 6.8% of all children in Western Australia but 55% of those in out-of-home care.

Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system


Although most Aboriginal people have never been charged with an offence or been in jail, approximately 3.6% of Aboriginal people in Western Australia are imprisoned. This accounts for about 39% of all prisoners in the State, even though Aboriginal people make up only 4% of the State's population.

An Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy is necessary because the current system is not working as effectively for – or with – Aboriginal people as it should. Evidence for this can be found in a range of indicators showing that, on average, Aboriginal people have lower levels of health, economic security, social and emotional wellbeing, and educational attainment than other Western Australians. (See opposite and below.)

This unacceptable situation shows the enormous impacts that Western Australia's past continues to have on its present and future. From the earliest days of colonisation, a range of Government policies, practices and laws have damaged the foundations of Aboriginal people's independence, prosperity, and wellbeing.

Aboriginal economies, and the ecologies they relied on, were destroyed by the appropriation and clearing of land. Connection to country, and the ability to fulfil obligations to care for country, were disrupted by physical dislocation, the denial of legal control, and the destruction of cultural heritage. Aboriginal languages, spirituality, Law/Lore, and authority structures – the foundations of community life – were systematically undermined. Social and economic inclusion within broader society was blocked by segregation, labour exploitation, racism and discrimination. Families faced significant barriers to their opportunity to build economic independence and prosperity across generations.

Some of the deepest and most lasting impacts came from the policies of child removal that resulted in the Stolen Generations. The children who were taken away from their families experienced great damage – to their sense of self, their connection with family and culture, their trust in others, and later in life, their relationships with their own children and families.



**Aboriginal people
are nearly three times
more likely to die
by suicide than
non-Aboriginal people**

A study from 2018 estimated that approximately one quarter of Aboriginal people over the age of 50 in Western Australia had been removed from their families when they were children.² The same study estimated that approximately one half of all Aboriginal adults in Western Australia are descendants or members of the Stolen Generations.³ Compared to other Aboriginal people, members of the Stolen Generations are significantly more likely to be imprisoned, have poor health, rely on Government payments, feel discriminated against, and have problems accessing services. Many of their descendants also experience similar issues at higher rates than other Aboriginal people.⁴

On 28 May 1997, the Parliament of Western Australia apologised to Aboriginal people “on behalf of all Western Australians for the past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed from their families” and expressed “deep regret at the hurt and distress that this caused”.⁵ The Government of Western Australia remains committed to what was said on that day – we are deeply sorry.

The legacies of the State’s history, from colonisation to the Stolen Generations, continue to affect Aboriginal people today. Past injustices live on through intergenerational trauma and cycles of disadvantage (see the section on *Healing*, below). Racial discrimination, systemic inequality and implicit bias continue to hold back progress, despite considerable improvements in recent years. Reform efforts are hampered by the long-standing marginalisation of Aboriginal people from the political process and other formal structures for decision-making.

The purpose of describing these historical and ongoing dynamics is not to create feelings of guilt or shame, but to build an understanding of how Aboriginal people’s current levels of disadvantage came about, and to use this understanding to work towards future solutions.

The Strategy is premised on the recognition that the foundations of Aboriginal people’s empowerment have been eroded by past policies, and must be restored to achieve better outcomes. The Government’s role is to provide the necessary supports at the individual, family and community levels, and to contribute to the structural, economic, and social changes that are needed. In some cases, this means the Government must **step back** to create space for change. In other cases, the Government must **step up** and drive essential reforms. In all cases, the Government must work in partnership with Aboriginal people.

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations aged 50 and over, online at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/stolen-generation-aged-50-and-over/contents/table-of-contents>

3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants Numbers, demographic characteristics, online at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/a6c077c3-e1af-40de-847f-e8a3e3456c44/aihw-ihw-195.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

4 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants Numbers, demographic characteristics, online at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/a6c077c3-e1af-40de-847f-e8a3e3456c44/aihw-ihw-195.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

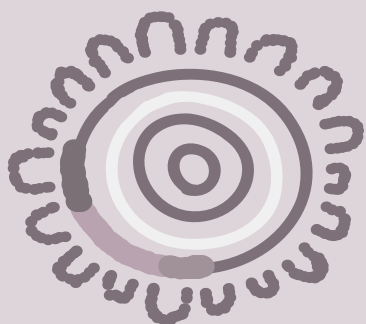
5 Western Australia, Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, 28 May 1997, pp 3332-3343.

Healing

Healing is an essential part of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. Aboriginal people have said very clearly that healing and trauma must be addressed for social and economic outcomes to improve.

Healing is about addressing **trauma**. Trauma can be experienced at the individual level (such as abuse, neglect, or family separation), the household level (for example witnessing violence or self-harm), or the societal level (including dispossession and dislocation, racism, social exclusion, and the experiences of the Stolen Generations).

Without healing, trauma can be passed on to others as **intergenerational trauma**, and new traumas may be created through **cycles of disadvantage**. The healing process allows individuals, families and communities to address the effects of past and ongoing trauma, and reduce its impacts on future generations.



Healing is vital to achieving the Strategy's goal, because of the widespread impacts of previous traumas, particularly from the policies and practices that led to the Stolen Generations and the physical dislocation of people from their traditional country. Many of the Strategy's elements and principles are expected to contribute directly or indirectly to healing and the prevention of new traumas. For example:

- **Principles:** the Strategy's principles emphasise trauma-informed service delivery and guard against the creation of future traumas.
- **Culture at the heart:** supporting cultural continuity and cultural identity contributes to resilience and healing, while more culturally responsive Government agencies with a better understanding of the impacts of trauma can contribute more effectively to healing.
- **Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work:** Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are well positioned to deliver healing programs and contribute to social and emotional wellbeing generally.
- **Investing in foundations and futures:** programs and initiatives that promote healing, build resilience, reduce vulnerability and strengthen family relationships, are captured in the section titled *Investing in building strengths, prevention and earlier intervention*.
- **Walking together:** truth-telling promotes healing, and countering racism reduces the potential for new trauma.

How the Strategy was developed

The Strategy is the result of a collaborative partnership between the Western Australian Government and the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia.

The Aboriginal Advisory Council, established under the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972*, is a peer-nominated Aboriginal leadership body whose members are representative of a diversity of regions, organisation types, areas of expertise and genders.

The development of the Strategy began with a review of what has been said in previous years and decades. Central to this review were documents in which Aboriginal people had clearly set out their views on what needed to change to achieve better outcomes. The review also took into account the views expressed by Aboriginal people at a range of forums, workshops and meetings between 2017 and 2019 (see Appendix).

Members of the Interim Aboriginal Working Group established under the Closing the Gap process (later formally appointed to the Aboriginal Advisory Council), considered an outline of the key concepts from this review. They provided high-level direction to the Government about how to shape the future Strategy. Senior officers from a range of Government agencies, including senior Aboriginal staff, provided input in workshops and small meetings. Early feedback was also sought from approximately 100 key Aboriginal organisations across the State.

A discussion paper reflecting all of these inputs was released in December 2019: *A Path Forward: Developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy*.⁶ The paper was publicised and sent to a broad range of Aboriginal people and organisations, members of the public, and Government and non-government entities. A total of 80 written or verbal submissions were received. All of the written submissions are published online (except those for which permission was not given).⁷ Of the submissions received, 28 (35%) were from Aboriginal people or organisations.

An additional influence on the development of the Strategy was the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, in relation to both its strategic direction and the framework for its implementation, evaluation, and accountability.

The Aboriginal Advisory Council and the Government worked together to review and incorporate the feedback from Aboriginal people and others, and developed the finalised Strategy as a consolidation of their partnership.

⁶ Online at: <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/developing-aboriginal-empowerment-strategy>

⁷ Online at: <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/feedback-discussion-paper>

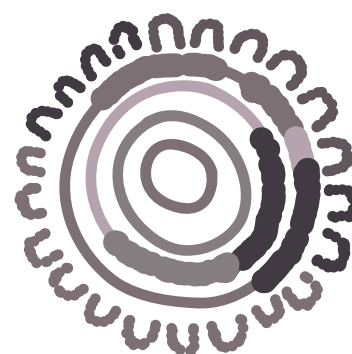
Closing the Gap

The Western Australian Government is a partner in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. In July 2020 the Agreement was signed by the Australian Government, all State and Territory Governments, the Australian Local Government Association, and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations.

Under the agreement, Western Australia has committed to the following four key priority reform areas, as well as a suite of socio-economic outcome targets:

1. Formal partnerships and shared decision-making;
2. Building the community-controlled sector;
3. Transforming Government organisations; and
4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level.

These priority reform areas and the socio-economic targets correspond closely with a number of important actions under the Strategy. The Western Australian Government intends to address both Closing the Gap and the Strategy in an integrated and streamlined process for implementation planning and reporting.



Implementation, evaluation and accountability

Implementation

The Strategy sets the high-level direction for future Government actions over the next eight years. The concrete actions to put the Strategy into effect will be set out in a series of whole-of-government implementation plans over the life of the Strategy. These plans will outline investments, reforms and initiatives that address the Strategy and the State's commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The first plan will be published during 2021 and incorporate community feedback received during both the development of the Strategy and the negotiation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Aboriginal Advisory Council will be the strategic partner in the cross-government development of implementation plans. Implementation planning will also be informed by broader engagement with Aboriginal people and organisations. The processes for engagement are likely to change over the life of the Strategy, as structural reforms relating to Aboriginal representation come into effect.

Evaluation and accountability

The Government and its agencies are accountable for putting the Strategy into effect. The central agencies – the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Department of Treasury, Department of Finance, and the Public Sector Commission – have additional responsibilities for leadership, stewardship and coordination.

An accountability framework will be developed to provide the basis for transparent measurement and reporting on progress under both the Strategy and Closing the Gap. The accountability framework will address:

- the changes the Government makes in the way it works with Aboriginal people; and
- the life outcomes that Aboriginal people experience.

The framework will be refined over time, including by incorporating regional-level data and performance measurement as it becomes available.

Reporting under the accountability framework will show where progress is being made, and where more work is required.

The evaluation of individual programs will remain the responsibility of each agency, informed by the principles outlined in the Strategy. The Strategy itself will also be reviewed periodically, according to how successfully it is being implemented and to ensure it reflects changing circumstances.

Goal

What we want to achieve

Aboriginal people, families and communities empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation

Strategy

What we will do

Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy
Closing the Gap commitments

Implementation

How we will do it

Implementation plans
Other policies, programs, strategies and initiatives

Accountability

How to make sure our efforts are working

Accountability framework

Goal of the Strategy

All actions taken under the Strategy should aim to achieve or support this goal:

Aboriginal people, families and communities empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation

Critically, Aboriginal people – rather than the Government or anyone else – decide what makes a ‘good life’ and how to achieve it.

During the development of the Strategy, Aboriginal people shared additional ways of thinking about this goal, including:

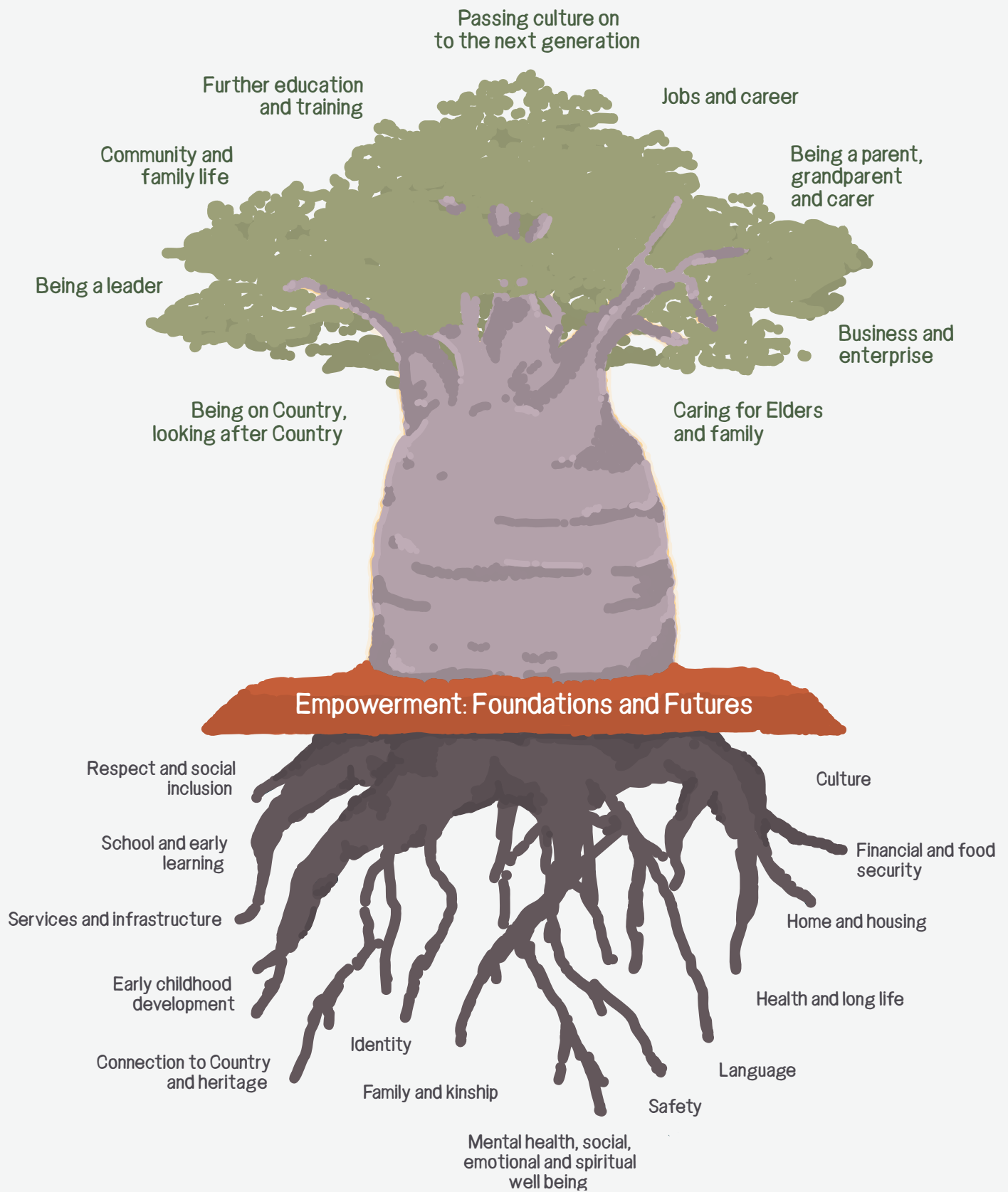
- Self-determination, freedom
- Taking back care, control and responsibility for our communities
- Walking in two worlds
- A culturally rich way of life
- Flourishing, wellbeing, prosperity
- Aboriginal people being guardians of our own futures
- Safe families, clever families, working families, healthy families

The picture on the opposite page shows one of the key ideas underlying the Strategy’s goal: that every person needs both a secure foundation to **grow from, and** positive futures to **grow into**.

The Government’s efforts to support empowerment must address the fundamentals of individual, family and community wellbeing such as health and mental health, housing, education and culture. Yet as vital as these things are, flourishing lives also need hopes and aspirations – a vision for the future to strive towards, to enable future social and economic inclusion and wellbeing.

Equally, we cannot focus solely on future aspirations like jobs, businesses and community leadership. These things all depend on a safe and solid foundation, and the Government and Aboriginal people need to work together to make sure that strong foundations are in place.

Over time, foundations and futures can reinforce each other to achieve generational change towards the Strategy’s goal.



Principles

These are the principles upon which the strategic elements of the Strategy are founded. Applying them is essential to achieving the Strategy's goal.

Empowerment and self-determination

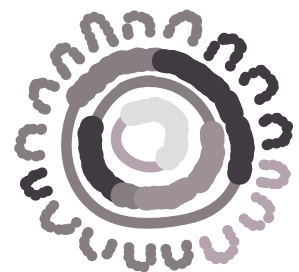
- Aboriginal peoples are the first peoples of Western Australia. The Government has obligations to Aboriginal people both as citizens and as the Traditional Owners of Western Australia.
- Empowerment and self-determination are essential for Aboriginal people's wellbeing.
- Policy decisions about Aboriginal people cannot be made without Aboriginal people.
 - For decisions with high potential impact or opportunity for Aboriginal people, this means **partnership** and/or **shared decision-making**.
 - For other decisions, it means **genuine engagement** with affected Aboriginal people at a level **proportional** to the potential impact or opportunity.
- Aboriginal people must have the opportunity to engage from an informed perspective, with clarity about process, expectations and responsibilities.

Culture, country and family

- Culture, country, heritage, language, family and kinship are central to Aboriginal people's wellbeing. Aboriginal cultures across the State have differences as well as similarities.
- Aboriginal cultures are living, vibrant, and diverse; however, many Aboriginal people have been disconnected from their country and culture by past Government policies and actions.
- Relationships to country are a fundamental source of cultural and economic value to Aboriginal people.

Diversity of people and places

- The opportunities and challenges for Aboriginal people can vary between urban, regional and remote locations, and between different communities.
- Policies and programs should be developed and implemented as close to the local or regional level as possible, with the involvement of those most affected.



Integrated, culturally responsive and secure services

- Service delivery by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations can increase the effectiveness and reach of services, improve Aboriginal employment opportunities, and help develop and retain skills within communities.
- Services to Aboriginal people are to be:
 - culturally responsive and secure, and informed by Aboriginal concepts of wellbeing;
 - integrated, holistic, flexible and easy to navigate;
 - accessible, taking into account geographic location, cultural and language diversity, access to technology, and financial circumstances;
 - place-based and responsive to local need and circumstances;
 - family-focused, trauma-informed and directed to building strengths and reducing vulnerability;
 - responsive to gender, age, disability and sexual orientation; and
 - equitable.
- Policy development should be informed by the experiences of service users and providers.
- The integration of policy and services across policy portfolios, working to shared outcomes, allows effort and investment to be better targeted in priority areas, and allows more effective service delivery.
- The Government as a whole is responsible for delivering results through coordination between State agencies, Commonwealth and local governments, the private sector and the broader community. Flexibility should be applied to address issues that do not fit within traditional agency responsibilities.

Accountability and evaluation

- The Government is accountable for its actions under this Strategy, and must be transparent about these actions and their outcomes.
- Policies are to be informed by relevant evidence, including evaluations, research, and Aboriginal people's own lived experiences.
- Relevant data is to be made available to all participants in decision-making.
- Initiatives must be evaluated over realistic time frames; investment and services need time to show whether they are working.
- The accurate interpretation of data about Aboriginal people requires an Aboriginal cultural context and is best done in partnership with Aboriginal people.
- Innovation and flexibility are essential; evidence-informed policy does not mean doing only what has been previously proven to work.

Equity and Equality

- The Government must ensure equality of opportunity and equitable outcomes (substantive equality).
- Racism – in all its forms – is unacceptable.
- Government decisions affecting the broader community must account for impacts on and opportunities for Aboriginal people.
- The Western Australian public sector must be a culturally secure workplace, offering attractive and meaningful career paths for Aboriginal employees.

Land and negotiated agreements

Land, waters, cultural heritage, and negotiated agreements have an important place in the Strategy.

Aboriginal people have consistently emphasised the crucial connection between land and wellbeing. For this reason, it is important to understand the concept of **country**. Palyku woman Ambelin Kwaymullina explains country as follows:

*"For Aboriginal peoples, country is much more than a place. Rock, tree, river, hill, animal, human – all were formed of the same substance by the Ancestors who continue to live in land, water, sky. Country is filled with relations speaking language and following Law, no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, rock, crow, wattle. Country is loved, needed, and cared for, and country loves, needs, and cares for her peoples in turn. Country is family, culture, identity. Country is self."*¹

This rich and interconnected relationship between Aboriginal people and country was directly disrupted by colonisation, through dispossession, displacement and conflict over land.

Native title goes some way to restoring the recognition of Aboriginal peoples' connection to country, even if only imperfectly, and even though formal legal recognition is not possible in all cases. Some 74% of the State's area is covered by registered determinations of native title; the finalisation of the South West Settlement would raise this to approximately 82%.

The formal recognition of native title brings the prospect of significant compensation liabilities owed by the Government to native title holders, for past and future impacts on rights and interests. This means a strategic and coordinated whole-of-Government approach to negotiating agreements is necessary to address outstanding native title claims and compensation liabilities.

Further, nearly 230,000 km² of land is held within the Aboriginal Lands Trust estate, representing a significant source of potential economic and cultural value for Aboriginal people.

Against this backdrop, there is immense potential for land and agreement-making to contribute to the Strategy – right across Government, not just for those agencies with direct portfolio responsibility.

Land tenure, native title, cultural heritage, land management, natural resources, and the regulation of land uses such as pastoral or mining, all have important implications for social policy and economic development. Rather than treating land-related activities in isolation or as a purely technical or legal matter, Government agencies are encouraged to see the connections between their land-related activities and the broader goal and elements of the Strategy.

In many parts of the State, negotiated agreements can be a powerful way for Traditional Owner groups to engage with a broad range of Government agencies and develop creative and collaborative approaches to supporting greater social and economic independence. Depending on the situation, this approach can complement other place-based partnerships between the Government and Aboriginal people.

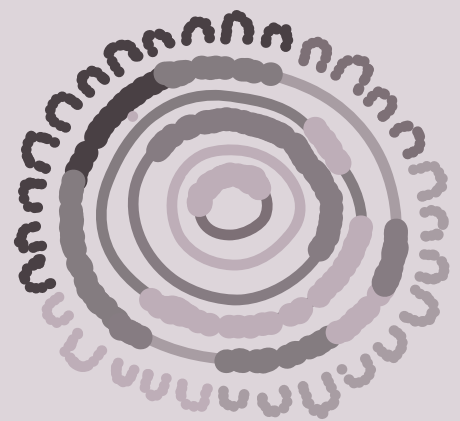
¹ Kwaymullina, A, "Seeing the Light: Aboriginal Law, Learning and Sustainable Living in Country", Indigenous Law Bulletin (2005):6-11

The Government acknowledges that many Aboriginal people in Western Australia live outside their traditional country. In some cases, this is a result of past policies that led to Aboriginal people being displaced, or relocated to other areas. In other cases, it simply reflects Aboriginal people's ongoing right as citizens to move freely within the State.

In the context of land and agreement-making, this situation raises complex issues requiring sensitivity and an understanding of the circumstances of all Aboriginal people involved. The Government's approach to land and agreement-making respects both the special position of Traditional Owners and the rights that all Aboriginal people have as citizens.

Where appropriate, agreement-making processes will explore ways in which Aboriginal people who live in the agreement area – but who are not Traditional Owners – can also benefit.

Where Aboriginal people, communities or organisations seek land tenure in areas for which they are not Traditional Owners, the Government will engage constructively with all parties about the most appropriate way forward.



There are potential benefits from land and negotiated agreements across all elements of the Strategy:

Culture at the heart

- Government agencies that are directly involved in using land or regulating land use, can make significant impacts – positive and negative – on Aboriginal people’s cultural identity and cultural continuity. The protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is a key consideration for agencies in this regard.
- Agreements can provide a range of ways to recognise and support Aboriginal people’s cultural identity, cultural continuity, and connection to country and heritage.
- Appropriate land tenure can facilitate culturally important land use.

Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work

- Agreement-making processes can recognise Traditional Owners’ status as empowered negotiators.
- Agreements can support capacity-development for Aboriginal corporations, provide funding for Aboriginal-led initiatives, and create a structure for ongoing partnership and engagement.

Investing in foundations and futures

- There are enormous possibilities for Government to support Aboriginal economic development, including:
 - divesting land, and flexible approaches to land tenure that are capable of meeting Aboriginal people’s commercial aspirations and cultural priorities;
 - supporting Aboriginal people to use natural resources commercially;
 - facilitating cultural tourism experiences and Aboriginal involvement in land management, heritage management and environmental services; and
 - investing in the capability of Traditional Owner corporations as vehicles for economic development.
- Resolving land tenure issues is also crucial to providing essential and municipal services and infrastructure in remote communities and town-based reserves.

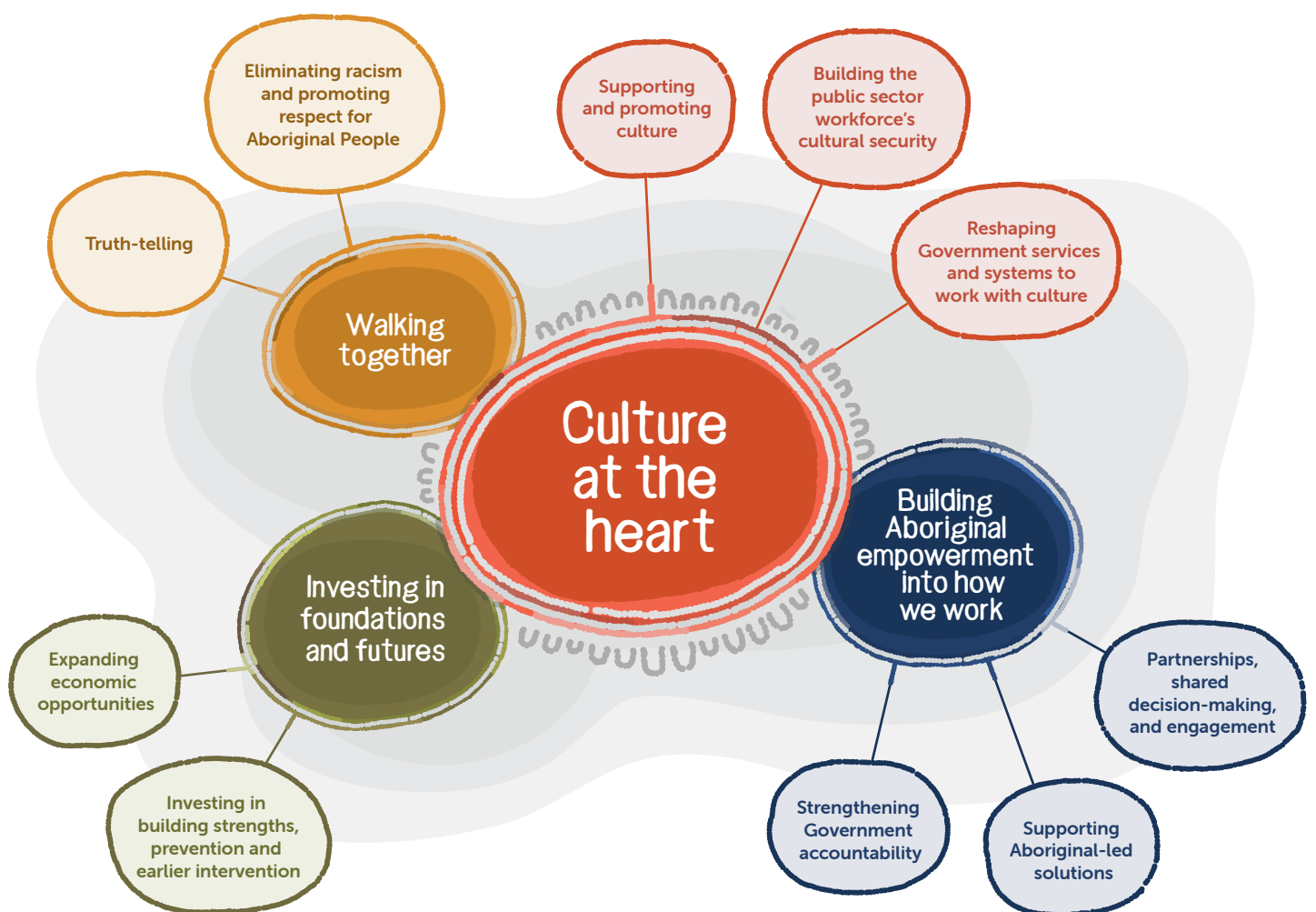
Walking together

Agreement-making can contribute to truth-telling and healing by:

- recognising the identity and status of Traditional Owners groups; and
- acknowledging, and seeking to make amends for, past wrongs.

Strategic Elements

The key elements of the Strategy are shown below and outlined in more detail on the following pages. Taken together, they set the high-level direction for the Government, its agencies and their employees to work towards the Strategy's goal.



Culture at the heart



Culture is at the heart of a secure foundation for life, and provides the landscape in which futures are imagined, chosen and pursued.

Culture is a person or group's entire way of life, including their values, beliefs, language, concepts, behaviours, and – crucially – identity. It shapes the way people understand the world and their place in it, how they interact with others, and their aspirations for the future. Culture is passed down between generations, with some things changing while others staying constant over time. People can also exist within multiple cultures – “walking in two worlds” – or in hybrid cultures combining diverse cultural elements.

Central aspects of culture emphasised by Aboriginal people include:

- family (including kinship, marriage and parenting);
- connection to country, caring for country, and cultural heritage;
- community leadership and cultural authority (people who hold cultural authority are often referred to as Elders and/or Law Bosses);
- language; and
- values, spirituality and cultural practices (including Law/Lore).

The history of colonisation and subsequent Government policies in Western Australia produced significant, and in many cases deliberate, barriers to the continuity of Aboriginal cultures. All of the central aspects of culture listed above were, at different times, either disrupted, controlled, devalued or prohibited.

This has had profound and lasting negative impacts, evident across a range of social, health, educational and economic outcomes. Recent reports on suicide by young Aboriginal people have identified cultural continuity and identity as critical protective factors that contribute to resilience and wellbeing.

“When young people know where they belong and who they belong to, they have the ability to understand their cultural ties, they can be whole and have the strength to move forward with sound mental, physical and spiritual belonging.”⁸

⁸ Mark Bin Bakar, Kimberley Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation

Because of this history and its ongoing effects, the Government has an important role to play in supporting Aboriginal people's **cultural identities, cultural continuity, community leadership and cultural authority**. Evidence also shows that services and initiatives that work from an informed cultural perspective, in both design and implementation, are generally more effective for Aboriginal people. Further, Aboriginal cultures are a vital asset that can provide sustainable economic development opportunities for Aboriginal people, and can be a significant driver in the State's broader tourism and arts sectors.

The **cultural responsiveness** of Government agencies is fundamental to all of the elements of the Strategy. Different agencies will have different terminology and frameworks for these concepts (for example, cultural security, capability, or proficiency). This is appropriate, as agencies should be guided by their Aboriginal partners and staff and by the particular context of their work. The core idea, however, focuses on cultivating the knowledge, attitudes and actions that respect and respond to Aboriginal people's cultures, experiences and values. Culturally responsive staff, services, systems, and workplaces are accessible, effective, welcoming, trusted and safe – in short, they work well for Aboriginal people.

Land, native title and agreement-making are also potentially important vehicles for supporting cultural identity, cultural continuity, and connection to country and heritage.

A. Supporting and promoting culture

This element of the Strategy requires Government agencies to:

- i) **Value, recognise and celebrate Aboriginal peoples' cultures, languages, relationships to country, knowledge, and heritage;**
- ii) **Invest in initiatives that support Aboriginal cultural identity, cultural continuity and community leadership; and**
- iii) **Use agreements with Traditional Owner groups to recognise and support Aboriginal peoples' connection to culture, country and heritage.**

B. Building the public sector workforce's cultural responsiveness

This element of the Strategy requires Government agencies to:

- i) **Improve the cultural responsiveness of the public sector workforce, through strong leadership, high-quality training, and place-based inductions; and**
- ii) **Ensure Aboriginal people are well-represented and supported at all levels of the public sector – including management and executive – by recruiting, retaining and advancing Aboriginal employees and ensuring agencies are attractive places for Aboriginal people to work.**

C. Reshaping Government services and systems to work with culture

This element of the Strategy requires Government agencies to improve their day-to-day work practices to:

- i) **Work in a way that recognises the importance of culture to Aboriginal people's wellbeing and resilience, and the impacts of past Government actions on Aboriginal people's connection to culture and country;**
- ii) **Review and change Government systems and services to ensure they build on – and do not undermine – Aboriginal people's cultural strengths, cultural identities, community leadership, and ways of working; and**
- iii) **Make services inclusive and accessible to Aboriginal people, taking cultural considerations into account.**

Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work



Aboriginal people have been saying for a long time that better outcomes will not come from Government-led solutions **provided for**, or **imposed on** Aboriginal people. Governments have repeatedly acknowledged this, but have not consistently adopted structures or ways of working that effectively incorporate Aboriginal empowerment. Even though new ways of **thinking** are required, this is not enough – new **systems, processes** and **behaviours** are also essential.

To support the other elements of the Strategy, changes are needed in three key areas:

- the structures and processes for making decisions
- the role of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations
- the systems of Government accountability

D. Partnerships, shared decision-making, and engagement

This element of the Strategy requires Government agencies to:

- (i) **Ensure Aboriginal people have a defined and systematic role in decision-making, proportional to the potential impacts or opportunities for Aboriginal people;**
- (ii) **Support Aboriginal representation in decision-making, and build the engagement capacity of both Aboriginal and Government participants; and**
- (iii) **Enable more decisions within Government agencies to be made at the regional or local level, enabling greater place-based engagement.**

Achieving the Strategy's goal requires more than just better services – it needs a fundamental change in the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Government.

This means shifting away from structures that falsely position Aboriginal people as passive, individual consumers of services, to those that empower Aboriginal people and communities to take an active role in building strong foundations and futures. Self-determination, while meaning different things to different people, captures the essence of this idea.

For a long time, Aboriginal people have worked to gain a greater say in the design, delivery and evaluation of programs and services. The message has been clear: lasting improvements in outcomes will only come from approaches that draw on Aboriginal people's perspectives, priorities, knowledge, experience, and ways of working.

Greater Aboriginal involvement and influence leads to more effective outcomes for a number of reasons, including:

- the people affected by a decision are likely to have valuable information, expertise and lived experience not otherwise available to the Government;
- people who have a personal stake in the outcome of a decision or initiative are likely to be more aware of key risks and opportunities not apparent to others;
- where an initiative or service is seen as legitimate and community-owned, there is likely to be greater buy-in, participation or – in the case of laws or regulations – compliance; and
- through active participation, people can gain a sense of personal empowerment that builds their confidence to make a positive difference in other areas. By contrast, feeling disempowered by a process can have negative impacts on a person's sense of control in other areas of their lives.

Systematic role proportional to impact or opportunity

A core principle of the Strategy is that policy decisions about Aboriginal people cannot be made without Aboriginal people. For decisions with high potential impact or opportunity for Aboriginal people, this means **partnership** and/or **shared decision-making**. For other decisions, it means genuine engagement with affected Aboriginal people at a level **proportional** to the potential impact or opportunity.

In any given situation, the right level of Aboriginal involvement in decision-making depends on the size of the potential impact or opportunity – on whether the decision, initiative, or program:

- relates specifically to Aboriginal people, culture, or country;
- relates to a group of people or a geographic area in which Aboriginal people make up a significant proportion of the population; or
- could have impacts or opportunities specific to Aboriginal people.

The level of Aboriginal involvement may also be influenced by legal considerations. In some situations, a minimum standard is specified by law (for example, negotiations for native title future acts). In others, the law does not allow for shared decision-making.

At all levels of involvement, genuine engagement depends on Aboriginal people having a defined and systematic role in decision-making, including:

- clear identification of who should be involved and why (including due consideration to conflicts of interest, particularly in decisions relating to funding);
- transparency about how much influence the Aboriginal participants will have, and any constraints that exist – such as budget, timeline, or non-negotiable issues;
- enough time and appropriate ways to participate, including any necessary supports or processes to accommodate language or cultural barriers;
- appropriate roles for community representation and leadership, subject-matter expertise, or cultural authority, tailored to the specific matter for decision; and
- relevant data and information available in an easily accessible format.

Supporting Aboriginal representation and building engagement capacity

New ways of working will require new skills, new thinking, new structures, new processes, and overall greater engagement capacity. This applies to both Government agencies and Aboriginal participants in decision-making. Key areas for development include:

- recognising, supporting and investing in the capacity and governance of Aboriginal structures for leadership, engagement, and partnership, including:
 - **regional Aboriginal representative structures;**
 - **peak bodies** for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations;
 - **remote community councils** (or corporations / associations); and
 - **Traditional Owner** bodies (such as prescribed bodies corporate).
- building the capability of Government agencies and workforce (including through guidelines, advice and training) to effectively involve Aboriginal people in decision-making and the design of policy and services;
- changing administrative structures (such as duty statements, key performance indicators, and procurement guidelines) to give Government agencies the flexibility, mandate and legal power necessary to enable genuine partnership, joint decision-making and co-design; and
- ensuring the resourcing and time constraints for initiatives take into account the necessary level of Aboriginal involvement and any supports needed for effective engagement.



Enabling place-based engagement

Structures that bring decision-making closer to communities allow decisions to be more responsive to realities on the ground, and to incorporate local knowledge about local conditions. Importantly, it also creates space for culturally informed solutions.

Currently, many Government systems are centrally controlled and cover the entire State, which can create challenges in the context of Western Australia's size and diversity. For this reason, administrative processes and structures should be improved so that more decisions can be made at the regional or local level.

Changes to systems for budgeting, finance, delegated authorities and data gathering, will make it possible for Government agencies to develop policy tailored to a particular geographic area, commission services that match local priorities and conditions, and work towards integrating services across different Government agencies.

These improvements will enable Government agencies to engage more effectively with local and regional Aboriginal representatives, and move towards place-based partnerships and coordinated investment. The establishment (or formal recognition) of regional Aboriginal representative structures offers a powerful platform for place-based partnerships. Partnerships may also involve Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, coalitions of service providers, remote community corporations/associations, or informal leadership groups.

In some parts of Western Australia, negotiated agreements between the Government and Traditional Owner groups may also offer a potentially valuable mechanism for place-based partnerships.

E. Supporting Aboriginal-led solutions

This element of the Strategy requires Government agencies to:

- i) Significantly increase the proportion of service delivery by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in relevant sectors (defined below); and**
- ii) Support Aboriginal organisations and the Aboriginal services sector to build capacity.**

To achieve secure foundations and bright futures, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike may need support and assistance from a range of services. For many Aboriginal people, such services are more effective when designed and delivered by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. It is recognised that some Aboriginal people may prefer to use mainstream services, in which case cultural responsiveness and security is critical (see the strategic element *Culture at the heart*).

The service sectors where Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have unique advantages are those where effectiveness relies on the client seeing the service provider as trusted, legitimate, culturally responsive and able to understand the client's perspective. This is clearest for services that depend on voluntary engagement (such as maternal health or early childhood programs) and services that support clients to make personal changes in their lives (such as healthy lifestyles, youth mentoring, or family violence programs). Other relevant sectors include disability services and tenancy management.

The existence of a vibrant Aboriginal services sector also contributes to communities' broader experience of empowerment and self-determination. Further, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are well placed to work with Government and mainstream service providers to improve the capacity of those providers to deliver culturally responsive services to Aboriginal clients.

Currently, many of the services described above are provided by non-Aboriginal organisations through Government contracts or grants. Some providers partner with local Aboriginal organisations, but the level of engagement is not consistently high. Even where services

are delivered by Aboriginal front-line staff, decisions about service design are often made by non-Aboriginal people who do not have direct experience of the local context.

Key types of action to support this element of the Strategy are set out below.

Increased service delivery by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations

- Preferential procurement approaches, including targets, weighted assessments, restricted tenders, or mandatory set-asides
- Where non-Aboriginal organisations tendering for contracts rely on partnership with Aboriginal organisations, ensure this partnership is genuine; where appropriate, structure contracts to position the Aboriginal organisation as the senior partner
- Adjusting contract scope (unbundling), length, geographic coverage, and pre-qualification requirements to maximise opportunities for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations
- Extended lead time and improved advertising for tenders and grant rounds
- Supporting Aboriginal community-controlled organisations during the application phase, during the contract period to identify issues early, and through to acquittal

Capacity building in the Aboriginal services sector

- Investments in organisation-level capacity development, including training and business mentoring
- Broader sectoral capacity development, including Aboriginal workforce, peak body/bodies, consortium approaches
- Brokering structured partnerships with larger mainstream providers, with explicit planning for gradually increasing the capacity and leadership role of the Aboriginal organisation and, where appropriate, full transition to Aboriginal delivery
- Funding models that promote capacity development
- Support for developing social enterprise models for service delivery

F. Strengthening Government accountability

This element of the Strategy will require Government agencies, and the Government as a whole, to incorporate these aspects of stronger accountability into their work:

- i) Commitments: making credible commitments about what the Government will do, including how it will engage with Aboriginal people;**
- ii) Monitoring and evaluation: evaluating the effectiveness of Government actions, and monitoring indicators to understand whether or not outcomes are improving;**
- iii) Transparency: publicly providing clear, honest, and accessible information about the Government's actions and their outcomes; and**
- iv) Being held to account: Ensuring that opportunities exist for outside parties to engage with Government agencies about their actions and the outcomes, to ask for explanations and to seek future commitments.**

Achieving the goal of the Strategy depends on a high level of accountability for the actions of individual Government agencies and the Government as a whole.

Accountability is fundamental because it drives better performance and greater responsiveness, and increases the community's confidence that the Government is delivering on its commitments.

Any person or organisation with a job to do is likely to deliver better outcomes if they know that someone else is taking notice of what they are doing, what the results are, and whether they are doing what they said they would. In practice, accountability can be strengthened in a range of different ways, such as:

- enhancing the responsiveness of existing mechanisms, and developing new arrangements to drive transparency and build trust;

- actively sharing information (including outcomes data, expenditure data for both Aboriginal-specific and mainstream programs, and evaluation results) through reports or user-friendly dashboards;
- promoting accountable and transparent practices and attitudes;
- engaging with Aboriginal representative structures and place-based partnerships; and
- including Aboriginal people in data collection and evaluation processes.

Why is accountability so important for Aboriginal outcomes?

A number of accountability mechanisms exist to make sure the Government delivers the best outcomes for citizens. However, for structural reasons these mechanisms do not work as well for Aboriginal people, because:

- Aboriginal people make up only 4% of Western Australia's eligible voter population;
- Aboriginal people make up more than 20% of eligible voters in just one of the 59 seats in the Legislative Assembly (Kimberley);
- people who are not fluent in English or have low levels of "mainstream" education face barriers to participation;
- some people may be dissuaded from participating in decision-making structures or processes they perceive as unfamiliar or unwelcoming; and
- local issues in regional or remote areas are less visible to decision-makers.

Source for statistics: ABS (2019 Estimates and Projections, ATSI Australians, 2016 Census); WA Electoral Commission (2019 Electoral Enrolment Statistics)

Investing in foundations and futures



G. Investing in building strengths, prevention and earlier intervention

This element of the Strategy requires the Government to:

- i) Invest in initiatives that build strengths, reduce vulnerability through prevention and early intervention, and minimise the later need for crisis responses; and
- ii) Improve the integration of services.

Because of the impacts of Western Australia’s history, significant investment is required to build up the foundations needed to ensure that all Aboriginal people can pursue their own futures.

Government services generally fall into three basic categories, based on how intensive, urgent or reactive they are. Different sectors use different terminology for these categories (and different numbers of categories), but the table below shows the key basic characteristics.

Primary Preventative Universal Resilience	Secondary Restorative / Early intervention Targeted Stabilisation	Tertiary Reactive Mandatory / Statutory Crisis
Support wellbeing, foundational needs and capacities, inclusion, and protective factors, before issues arise	Reduce vulnerability and the risk factors leading to the need for crisis response	Provide safety and protection of self or others from identified risk
EXAMPLES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting and early years • Youth recreation • Cultural programs and healing • Education and skills • Community infrastructure • Public health initiatives • Safe and stable housing 	EXAMPLES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth diversion programs • Tenancy supports • Financial counselling • Rehabilitation facilities • Family counselling 	EXAMPLES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prisons • Hospitals • Children in out-of-home care • Women’s refuges

Currently, State Government expenditure in relation to Aboriginal people is skewed towards the crisis category. These services are more cost-intensive, depend more on involuntary or coercive engagement, and involve higher risks. If current trends continue, demand for these “downstream” services is set to increase significantly in coming years.

Preventative and early intervention initiatives can bring about positive changes that reduce the need for crisis responses. Initiatives in this category proactively build up resilience, capability, healing, and independence – in short, self-determination.

In remote communities, the investment needs are broader, encompassing essential, municipal and housing services, land tenure changes, community governance and administration, and enterprise assistance.



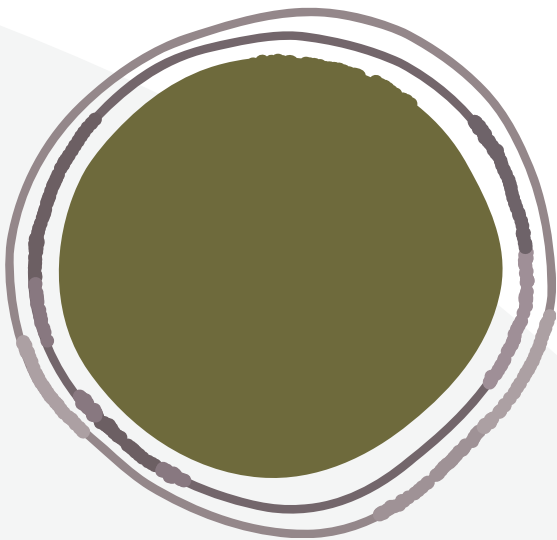
Need for investment

In many policy areas, existing expenditure can be used more effectively, for example through: better place-based program design; better coordination and integration; greater involvement of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations; more rigorous outcomes-based management; and more efficient administrative processes. Data, evidence and evaluation can provide insights into “what works” and guide investment towards the areas of highest need and the initiatives with greatest impact.

However, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of existing investment may not be enough. Intergenerational disadvantage and trauma have a compounding effect over time, leading to a growing population of at-risk people and a higher level of need per person. Addressing this may require an increase in the scale, reach, and variety of preventative or early intervention services.

The term “social reinvestment” is often used to describe the reallocation of funding from expensive crisis interventions to preventative and early intervention services. In practice, however, the funding for these services cannot be taken from existing budgets for tertiary services while the demand for tertiary services remains high. Any additional expenditure on resilience and stabilisation, to reduce the future costs of crisis responses, must be an up-front investment rather than a reallocation from existing tertiary services budgets.

This means that, for a time, the Government will need to bear the costs of both existing tertiary services and any increased investment in prevention and early intervention (see diagram). Funding for any such investment can be thought of as being “borrowed against future savings”.





Clearly, any boost to investment must be matched with robust evaluation to ensure effectiveness. The principles outlined earlier in this Policy Guide apply; in particular, that initiatives must be evaluated over realistic timeframes – long enough to produce measurable results – and that evidence-informed policy does not mean doing only what has been previously proven to work.

Improved integration of services

Increasing the impact of the Government's investment is not just about how much is spent, but also how services are structured, funded, designed, delivered, and evaluated.

Services are generally developed around a single issue or agency portfolio, reflecting the existing structures of Government decision-making. This results in a large number of services (and providers) each having a narrowly defined role. This can produce poor outcomes because:

- people may find it difficult to navigate multiple services and providers, making it less likely they will engage with those services;
- people with complex needs require holistic responses from joined-up services;

- people who are told their needs fall outside the scope of an individual service can lose trust, confidence and momentum;
- without continuity of care, issues and service needs can fall through the gaps; and
- evaluating the impact of services is very difficult without an integrated approach.

These issues can be addressed through a more integrated service experience. Greater integration also puts Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in a better position to deliver services to their communities. Integration can be achieved through systemic and structural changes that enable the consolidation of budget processes, policy making, and efforts towards identified outcomes and priorities.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap provides a framework for better alignment of policies, programs and services to defined targets and outcomes across Government.

H. Expanding economic opportunities

This element of the Strategy requires Government agencies to:

- i) Support Aboriginal people's employment and business aspirations;**
- ii) Connect Aboriginal people with employers and markets; and**
- iii) Expand markets for Aboriginal employees and businesses.**

These requirements are outlined on the next page. Examples are provided in dot points, but agencies should be able to identify additional opportunities within their own business areas.

Economic participation is critical to providing both secure foundations and rewarding futures.

Every Government agency has a role in finding innovative ways to expand the economic opportunities open to Aboriginal people. Agencies have many ways of contributing to change, including as employer, procurer, regulator, land-holder, funder, educator, coordinator, facilitator, or champion. The Government also has a role in influencing policy and practice at the Commonwealth and local Government levels. Coordination and cooperation between all levels of Government, as well as the private and community sectors, are essential for maximising opportunities.

The transformative possibilities of land, native

title and agreement-making are very significant. The South West Native Title Settlement and the Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement are two recent examples of this approach.

Cultural economies offer diverse opportunities for participation, drawing on strengths in areas such as the arts, historical and heritage knowledge management, knowledge about Country, expertise in Aboriginal languages and cross-cultural engagement, and legal rights over land, waters and other resources. Tourism, arts, and land management are growth areas for cultural economies.

In addition to cultural economies, there is a wide range of opportunities for Aboriginal people's skills, creativity, know-how and resources to respond to national and global trends, such as the increasing importance of managing climate change through renewable energy, the shift to digital platforms and doing business remotely, and the increasing significance of the service economy.

In remote areas, the economic challenges and strengths are very different to those in urban or regional areas. Over time, with the right supports and a flexible and imaginative approach, remote areas can achieve greater economic independence.

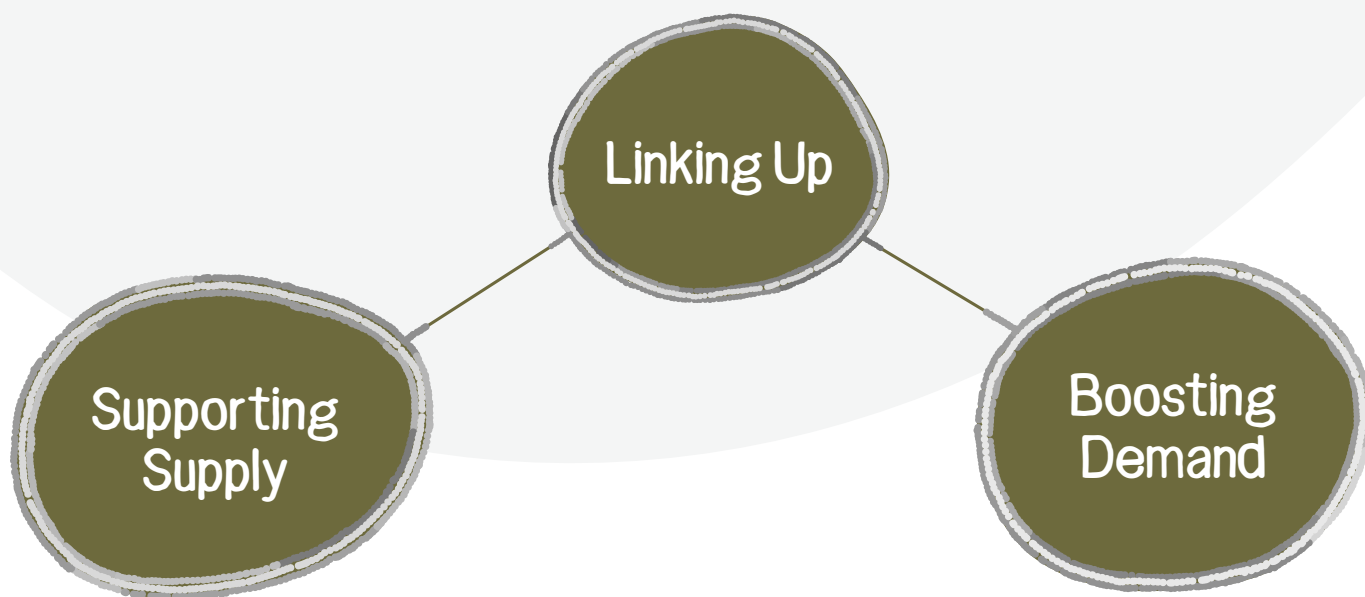
In all areas, a key challenge is how to support Aboriginal people to pursue economic development consistent with cultural values and obligations, and how to ensure workplaces are culturally secure and responsive.

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Supporting Supply

– Supporting Aboriginal people’s employment and business aspirations

Building capacity:

- supporting individuals or organisations to meet the challenges of employment or to build successful and sustainable businesses. This addresses a very broad area, from the formal education and training sector, to apprenticeships and scholarships, to business assistance and support, corporate capacity building and governance support

Reducing barriers to employment and enterprise

- facilitating flexible land tenure, commercial rights to natural resources, and other regulatory approvals
- supporting individuals to meet formal requirements, such as birth registration, driver’s licensing, or other accreditations
- supporting geographic mobility (eg residential support for study)
- minimising disincentives from taxation or means-tested benefits
- addressing infrastructure needs
- promoting cultural responsiveness and security in Government and non-Government workplaces

Opening horizons

- promoting aspirations, possibilities, career options
- facilitating training pathways, school-to-work transitions, mentoring
- information and assistance on starting a business

Facilitating access to capital

- native title agreements
- flexible land tenure
- incentives for private investment and joint venturing
- supporting corporate and philanthropic opportunities
- assistance in obtaining finance
- divesting land assets
- support for home ownership
- direct public investment

Linking up

– Connecting Aboriginal people with employers and markets

Brokering

- facilitating alternative forms of Aboriginal economic participation, such as social enterprises, or remote community employment structures focused on local context and cultural drivers

Championing

- promoting Aboriginal knowledge, innovation, art and cultural heritage on the national and international stages
- providing incentives and assistance to private businesses to increase Aboriginal employment
- helping customers find Aboriginal businesses and vice versa

Coordinating

- strategic infrastructure investment
- embedding Aboriginal economic development into regional economic planning
- work pipelines across projects and agencies
- joined-up tourism experiences
- guidance to corporate/philanthropic funders

Boosting Demand

– Expanding markets for Aboriginal employees and businesses

Government employment

- setting employment targets, including regional targets that reflect regional Aboriginal population levels
- constantly improving approaches to recruiting, retaining, and promoting Aboriginal employees
- ensuring workplaces are supportive, welcoming and culturally responsive and secure
- providing and resourcing appropriate supports, from entry level to executive mentoring
- providing entry-level opportunities, work experience and training pathways
- monitoring employment rates, retention rates, and reasons why Aboriginal employees leave a position
- finding appropriate flexibility in policies relating to employment

Government procurement

- Aboriginal procurement targets (per agency, project, and/or region)
- incentives for contractors to employ and procure from Aboriginal people
- increasing opportunities for small Aboriginal business to tender for projects
- engaging local Aboriginal businesses for services and infrastructure in remote communities

Broader market stimulation

- promoting industries with strong potential for Aboriginal participation; developing regional infrastructure; and investing in tourism.

More culturally-driven work

- expanding opportunities for funded, culturally-driven on-country work including environmental services, land management, heritage management, and visitor management.

More local work

- identify opportunities for “unbundling” and coordinating public sector functions in regional and remote areas to enable more work to be done by local Aboriginal people on country

Walking together



I. Truth-telling

This element of the Strategy requires each Government agency to contribute to truth-telling and incorporate it into their business.

Truth-telling is a process used by societies across the world to help come to terms with conflict, upheaval or injustice.

For the Strategy, truth-telling means ensuring the story of Aboriginal people is properly told and understood. This is intended to do two things:

- (a) promote **healing** for Aboriginal people, families and communities (see section above on *Healing*); and
- (b) contribute to efforts within the Government and broader society to eliminate **racism**, **promote understanding**, and avoid repeating the wrongs of the past.

Which truths?

Aboriginal people have identified three key areas for truth-telling:

- the history (and, for some issues, the ongoing reality) of negative interactions between Aboriginal people and the settler society. These include colonisation, dispossession, frontier violence and massacres, the Stolen Generations, institutional abuses, segregation, labour exploitation, racism and discrimination, and the undermining of culture, language, spirituality, family and community life, economic structure, and authority structures;
- stories of Aboriginal people's survival and endurance, and also of cooperation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; and
- the richness, value and diversity of Aboriginal cultures, both before colonisation and into the future.

Who is involved?

Truth-telling can be done by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It can involve Aboriginal people sharing their own stories, and can also involve Government agencies publicly acknowledging past practices and policies.

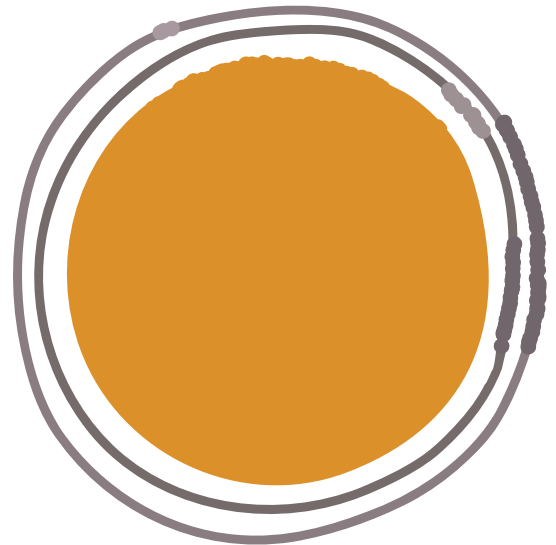
Truth-telling also involves listening. People are better able to heal when they know they have been heard and their experiences affirmed. Similarly, changes in attitudes and behaviours within the Government and broader society come from understanding the truth of the past and Aboriginal people's perspectives about it.

What does truth-telling look like in practice?

Truth-telling can happen in many different ways, including:

- o formal hearings with findings and reports;
- o official apologies;
- o grass-roots initiatives by local community groups, Aboriginal corporations, churches, or libraries;
- o memorial ceremonies, monuments, healing places, public art, plaques and signage, renaming places;
- o school curriculum, content in museums;
- o employee training courses ;
- o Government agency reports, events, employee inductions; and
- o oral history projects, arts and performance.

Each Government agency has a role to play, either directly or as facilitator. Some agencies have greater responsibilities because of the history of their particular portfolio, or because the agency's activities are more directly relevant (eg schools, public sector employee training, museums, place naming, support for local groups).



J. Eliminating racism and promoting respect for Aboriginal people

This element of the Strategy requires the Government to reduce the incidence and negative impacts of racism both within State agencies and the broader public, and to promote greater understanding of the State's history and the cultures of its First Peoples.

Racism can manifest both in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals, and in the way that systems and institutions operate. It can be conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit. Structural or systemic racism can exist even when the individuals who make up the system are actively trying to prevent racially discriminatory outcomes.

Necessary actions include:

Action in the public sector

- Public sector workforce – training and standards for cultural responsiveness
- Aboriginal public sector workforce – recruiting, retaining, supporting, advancing and empowering
- Identifying and remedying laws, procedures and policies that have discriminatory effects
- Countering unconscious bias with training and other mechanisms such as Aboriginal employment and procurement targets
- Monitoring data on the experiences of Aboriginal public servants and users of publicly funded services
- Improving the accessibility and people's awareness of mechanisms for complaints and rights-enforcement

Racism can negatively affect Aboriginal people in a number of ways:

- it can have direct impacts on health, mental health, and wellbeing;
- it may dissuade Aboriginal people from accessing services, or make those services less effective in improving outcomes;
- it can impact Aboriginal people's economic opportunities, through direct discrimination or by discouraging participation due to anticipated racism; and
- overall, it can act as a barrier to Aboriginal people's full inclusion in Western Australian society, undermining trust and social cohesion, with negative consequences for all.

Government action in society

- Strong leadership from the Government, setting a good example and promoting positive stories
- Public campaigns
- Schools embedding Aboriginal histories, cultures and languages into classroom practice, and creating learning environments that build respect for the cultures, experiences and worldviews of Aboriginal people
- Sports, recreation, arts and culture providing opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to interact and build mutual trust and understanding
- Monitoring data on experiences of racism by Aboriginal people
- Accessibility and awareness of mechanisms for complaints and rights-enforcement



Appendix – Research and engagement

Aboriginal advocacy reports included:

- *Crocodile Hole Report* (1991) Kimberley Land Council and Waringarri Resource Centre
- *A New Dreaming: Noongar Dialogue 24-25 February 2010* (2010) South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council
- *Final report of the Indigenous Implementation Board* (2011) Indigenous Implementation Board (WA)
- *WAAAC 2014 Summit Final Report* (2015) Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council
- *Redfern Statement* (2016) National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and 17 other Indigenous Peak Bodies
- *Cultural Solutions: Shared Pathways for Engagement in the Kimberley* (2017)
- *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017)
- *Martu Leadership Program* (2017) Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa and SVA Consulting
- *Pilbara Aboriginal Voice (Kakurrka Muri) Meeting Outcomes Report* (2018) Pilbara Aboriginal Voice
- *Change in wellbeing indicators of Pilbara Aboriginal people: 2001-2016* (2018) John Taylor
- *Reconciliation Australia, Truth telling: Symposium Report*, 5-6 October 2018
- *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Plan* (2019) Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre

Engagement meetings included:

- Yule River Meeting (2018, 2019)
- Kimberley combined AGM (2017, 2018)
- National Native Title Conference (2018)
- North-West Aboriginal Women's Leadership Conference (2018)
- Desert PBC Alliance (2018)
- South West forum on accountability and advocacy in Aboriginal affairs (2018)
- Commissioner for Children and Young People – Aboriginal Forum (2018)
- WA Closing the Gap Partnership Design Forum (2019)
- East Kimberley workshop on pooled funding for Aboriginal development (2019)
- Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing workshops – Broome and Kununurra (2019)

Official reports and reviews included:

- Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991)
- Bringing Them Home (1997) Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- Western Australian Parliament's Apology to the Stolen Generations (1997)
- Gordon Report – Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities (2002)
- Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's report on Aboriginal Customary Laws (2006)
- Casey Review (2007) Department of Indigenous Affairs
- Australian Parliament's Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples (2008)
- Hope Report into the suicides of Kimberley people (2008)
- Holman Review: A Promising Future: WA Aboriginal Health Progress (2014) Department of Health
- Empowered Communities: Design Report (2015)
- Learnings from the Message Stick (2016) Education and Health Standing Committee
- Bringing Them Home: 20 Years On (2017) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017)
- Regional Services Reform Unit (2017) Resilient Families, Strong Communities – consultation report
- Commonwealth Department of Health's My Life My Lead: Report on the national consultations (2017)
- Report on outcomes for Stolen Generations and descendants (2018) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition, Final Report (2018)
- Sustainable Health Review (2019)
- Australian Law Reform Commission, Pathways to Justice (2019)
- Coronial Inquest into the deaths of 13 children and young people in the Kimberley (2019)

Examples of place-based approaches

- Aboriginal Medical Services across the State
- Roebourne 6718 Advantage and West Pilbara Plan
- Dampier Peninsula Family Empowerment Partnership
- South West Native Title Settlement and others currently under negotiation
- family law services and driver licencing in Martu country
- Empowered Communities in East Kimberley, West Kimberley and Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
- Murdi Paaki regional assembly and Bourke Justice Reinvestment in NSW

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