

## Foundations for a Stronger Tomorrow: State Infrastructure Strategy

### Frequently Asked Questions specific to Aboriginal cultural heritage, wellbeing and enterprise

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#### Acknowledgement of Country

Infrastructure WA 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 the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

#### Terminology

Within WA, the term 'Aboriginal' is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of WA. The term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' may be used in the national context. The term 'Indigenous' is only used if referencing other bodies of work.

#### Alternative formats

This document can be made available in alternative formats and languages on request. Please call Infrastructure WA on 08 6552 5229 or email [enquiries@infrastructure.wa.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@infrastructure.wa.gov.au)

## Background

This document provides information on Aboriginal cultural heritage, wellbeing and enterprise matters within the State Infrastructure Strategy (Strategy). Aboriginal cultural heritage and enterprise is one of 6 strategic opportunity areas for infrastructure strategy and development.

### What is Infrastructure WA?

Infrastructure WA (IWA) is a statutory body, which means it is established under law. Operating under the [Infrastructure Western Australia Act 2019](#) (IWA Act), IWA provides expert advice and assistance to the WA Government on matters relating to infrastructure.

IWA's work supports the WA Government in its infrastructure decision making to grow the economy and create jobs by building the right projects, in the right place, at the right time.

### What is the State Infrastructure Strategy?

The State Infrastructure Strategy (Strategy) provides a statewide perspective of Western Australia's infrastructure needs and priorities over the next 20 years.

Under the [Infrastructure Western Australia Act 2019](#) (IWA Act), Infrastructure WA (IWA) is tasked with preparing the Strategy and updating it at least every 5 years.

The Strategy considers economic, social and environmental objectives – commonly referred to as the triple bottom line – to make recommendations relating to infrastructure planning, delivery and operation. The Strategy's recommendations include a focus on both new projects and programs as well as non-build solutions (for example, planning, policy, regulation, pricing, technology, procurement, skills and governance reforms).

For more information, please click here for the [State Infrastructure Strategy FAQs](#).

### Why does WA need a State Infrastructure Strategy?

Infrastructure shapes and influences every aspect of our society – from where we live, to how we work, our social interactions, our economic structures and our environmental footprint.

Each year, the WA Government invests billions of dollars in infrastructure to meet the needs of the community, economy and environment. This investment is made in new and existing infrastructure that will serve us for decades to come, even when society may look and operate quite differently to how it does today. That's why government infrastructure investment needs to be considered as part of a strategic plan, with a long-term outlook.

The Strategy provides this foundation. It is based on sound evidence and highlights the needs and priorities where funding is best placed to maximise economic, social and environmental value for Western Australians. The experience of other jurisdictions also indicates that having such a strategy will also help WA better position itself to attract federal infrastructure funding.

### What does the Strategy identify in relation to Aboriginal matters?

Despite efforts, a significant gap still exists between the life outcomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It will take significant engagement, effort and time to bring about real change and achieve better outcomes.

One of the key challenges the Strategy recognises is that WA is not on track to meet the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* targets. WA has recorded the largest gap of all jurisdictions for life expectancy of males, at 13.4 years. In 2018, the child mortality rate for Indigenous children was 141 per 100,000 which is twice the rate of non-Indigenous children. The employment rate for Indigenous Australians was around 49%, compared to 79% for non-Indigenous Australians.

The Strategy recognises that Aboriginal people are strong and resilient, with an enduring culture, deep knowledge, history and connection to country, and acknowledges that existing systems are

not serving Aboriginal people as well as they could. WA's infrastructure planning and delivery approach has been shaped around western ideals and standards and has not always included early, genuine and culturally appropriate engagement with Aboriginal people. This has resulted in infrastructure and assets that Aboriginal people do not connect with.

While some progress is being made, more needs to be done through infrastructure development to build cultural understanding and respect, boost economic opportunities and improve participation, and enable fit for purpose community-led infrastructure solutions. It will take some time to embed and normalise new processes and realise improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.

A new approach is needed to deliver improved life outcomes; one that places culture at the centre, embraces inclusive and genuine partnerships, and structurally changes the way government works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Giving Aboriginal people a greater say over decisions that impact them will result in real changes and greater success.

Infrastructure planning, design, delivery, operation and maintenance offers a range of opportunities for Aboriginal empowerment and self-determination, and to improve outcomes.

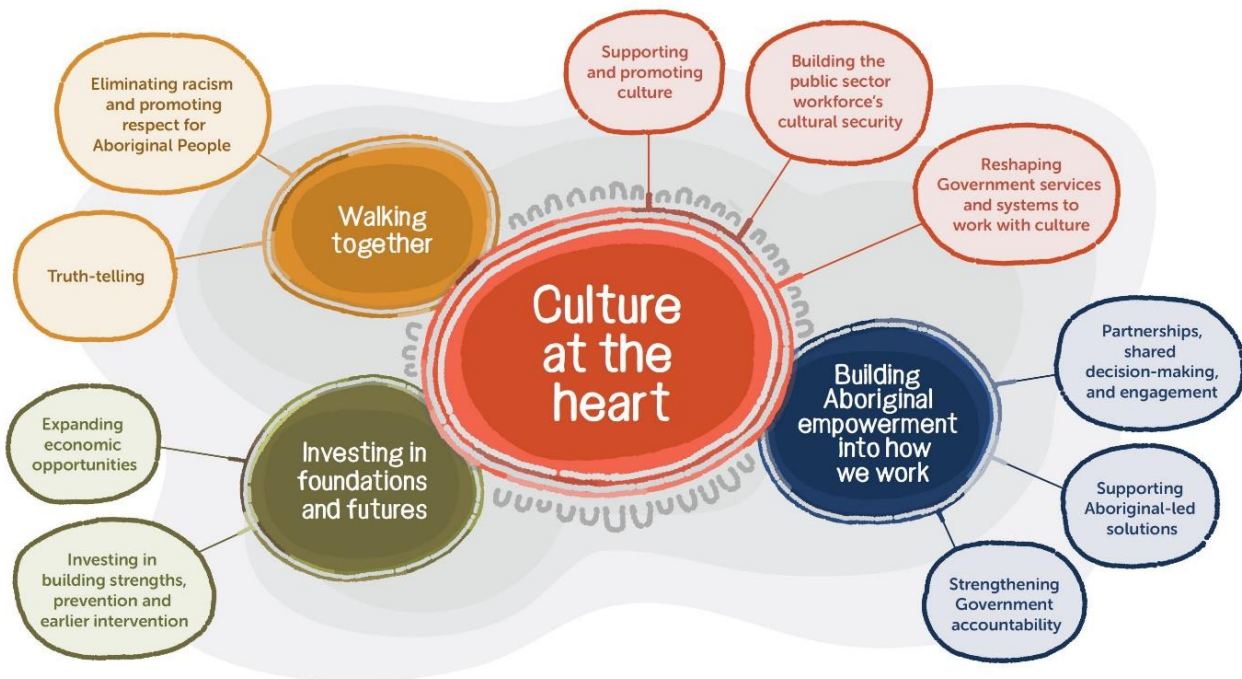
### How does the Strategy address Aboriginal empowerment?

The State Infrastructure Strategy has developed key themes and recommendations to specifically address cultural heritage, wellbeing and enterprise matters for Aboriginal people.

There are 3 key themes identified:

1. **Aboriginal engagement and co-design for Infrastructure:** Infrastructure should be planned and delivered in a co-designed process that embraces self-determination and empowerment of Traditional Owners and Custodians and their communities.
2. **Procurement and business development:** There are opportunities – which should be Aboriginal-led and informed – to increase Aboriginal employment and procurement, and support the establishment, growth and sustainability of Aboriginal businesses.
3. **Infrastructure for remote Aboriginal communities and town-based reserves:** Poor living conditions and environmental health in some communities contribute to higher rates of infection, injury and chronic disease, and low community amenity and perceptions, impacting on wellbeing and participation. There is an urgent need to improve infrastructure in many of these communities.

The Strategy also acknowledges the WA Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy which provides a vision and framework for government to work more closely with Aboriginal people, families and communities.



Source: Department of the Premier and Cabinet, [Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy](#), WA Government, 2019, accessed 25 May 2022.

Aboriginal empowerment is not simply about more or better services. It means a shift that empowers people and communities to actively identify solutions. Infrastructure presents a range of opportunities to contribute to Aboriginal empowerment.

## What is in the State Infrastructure Strategy?

### What does the Strategy recommend in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage, wellbeing and enterprise?

The Strategy recommends supporting Aboriginal cultural heritage, wellbeing and enterprise through recommendations in the following areas:

- Early, inclusive, genuine and culturally appropriate engagement with Traditional Owners and Custodians throughout all stages of the infrastructure lifecycle.
- Progressing reforms to the state government's Aboriginal Procurement Policy to increase participation and growth of Aboriginal businesses.
- Improving the quality of infrastructure and services provided in remote Aboriginal communities and town-based reserves.
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of entities providing infrastructure within remote Aboriginal communities and town-based reserves.
- Supporting Aboriginal empowerment through land management and custodianship in carbon farming initiatives.
- Improving Aboriginal housing outcomes and enabling options for housing infrastructure.
- Increasing action to reduce Aboriginal health inequity and inequality across the state.
- Addressing demand for police, courts, corrective services, and associated infrastructure through measures which have a focus on prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation, and expressly address over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.
- Continuing planning and developing a business case to deliver a flagship Western Australian Aboriginal Cultural Centre in Perth.

During consultation on the draft strategy, there was strong support for the Aboriginal engagement, empowerment, co-design and wellbeing themes and recommendations. Areas of feedback which have been addressed in the final Strategy include:

- Building procurement, capacity and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses, and ensuring this be Aboriginal-led where possible.
- Strengthening and supporting governance arrangements within remote Aboriginal communities and town-based reserves, including clarifying the role of local government.
- Providing a clearer explanation of the native title and cultural heritage links to infrastructure.

### **What is the current status of the Strategy?**

The WA Government response to the Strategy was published on 3 February 2023 following the Strategy's tabling in Parliament on 3 August 2022 by the Premier. The response outlines the extent to which each recommendation is supported (for example, in full, in part or not supported), and reasons why any recommendation is not fully supported.

The WA Government fully or partially supported the majority of recommendations relating to Aboriginal cultural heritage, wellbeing and enterprise. However, the recommendation to strengthen the application of the Aboriginal Procurement Policy was not supported by the WA Government, noting that the current policy is achieving its intended objectives.

### **What happens now the WA Government has responded to the Strategy in Parliament?**

State government agencies and GTEs are now required to align their strategies, plans and policies with, and implement, the Strategy's recommendations to the extent that they are supported in the WA Government's response to the Strategy.

Under the IWA Act, a State Infrastructure Strategy must be prepared at least every 5 years, or earlier if directed by the Premier.

### **Who is responsible for implementing the final recommendations?**

Supported recommendations will transition to delivery and implementation by nominated state government agencies and government trading enterprises.

IWA will provide support as necessary to assist these entities in implementing relevant recommendations.

The following state government agencies are responsible for matters addressed in the Strategy:

- The Department of the Premier and Cabinet leads strategies to build positive relationships between Aboriginal people and the state government.
- The Department of Communities plays a role in the management of remote Aboriginal communities and town-based reserves.
- The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage manages Aboriginal land access, and issues grants to preserve and promote Aboriginal heritage sites.
- The Aboriginal Lands Trust holds the land title for almost all of WA's remote Aboriginal communities.
- The Department of Finance manages and administers the Aboriginal Procurement Policy.
- The Department of Treasury is the principal economic and financial advisor to the WA Government and ensures that projects comply with the requirements of the Strategic Asset Management Framework.

## Further information

### How can I provide feedback?

IWA's door is always open and stakeholders are welcome to contact us through email, phone or LinkedIn.

- Online [www.infrastructure.wa.gov.au/stateinfrastructurestrategy](http://www.infrastructure.wa.gov.au/stateinfrastructurestrategy)
- Email [iwaconsultation@infrastructure.wa.gov.au](mailto:iwaconsultation@infrastructure.wa.gov.au)
- Phone 08 6552 5229
- LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com/company/infrastructurewa](http://www.linkedin.com/company/infrastructurewa)

Further details on the Strategy can be found on IWA's website [www.infrastructure.wa.gov.au/stateinfrastructurestrategy](http://www.infrastructure.wa.gov.au/stateinfrastructurestrategy).

### How can I keep informed of Infrastructure WA's activities?

For the latest news on IWA and to subscribe for updates, please visit [www.infrastructure.wa.gov.au](http://www.infrastructure.wa.gov.au).