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ABORIGINAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Executive Summary
Why have an Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy?

Global tourism is estimated to grow by an average of 4.1% per year to 2020, with an estimated average annual growth rate over this time in international visitors to WA of 5.7%. The growing interest, awareness and desire to experience Aboriginal culture, art and lifestyle particularly by international visitors provides significant, exciting opportunities for Aboriginal people to further develop viable and sustainable tourism ventures and to be more actively involved in the mainstream tourism industry.

Unique characteristics of Aboriginal history, culture, links to the land and art, present opportunities for establishing niche tourism services to yield substantial economic and social returns that help to maintain the Aboriginal history and culture and also enable Aboriginal people to achieve greater self determination and increased engagement with the broader tourism industry.

This Strategy promotes principles, objectives and actions to support such initiatives in a planned and sustainable way. It has resulted from consultation with Aboriginal groups and individuals, the tourism industry and numerous Government agencies that are committed to supporting further development and implementation of sustainable outcomes in this area.

Aboriginal Tourism in Western Australia

The Current Scene

An important feature in Western Australia is the industry structure in place. The Western Australian Tourism Operators Committee Association Inc. (WAITOC), incorporated in May 2002, is the only group of its type in Australia. It is acknowledged as the peak industry representative body for Indigenous operators in Western Australia and has already achieved considerable success in the industry promoting Aboriginal tourism.

Tourism WA and the Department of Industry and Resources’ Office of Aboriginal Economic Development also provide strong support for the Aboriginal tourism industry. Formal collaboration between these two organisations has, since late 2002, assisted WAITOC through the secondment (and joint funding) of a government officer to manage the agreed aims of the collaboration, including performing the role of Executive Officer of WAITOC.

Mainstream tourism industry has shown a preparedness to engage with Aboriginal tourism ventures, eg AAT Kings and Australian Pacific Tours are major tour companies that are packaging and selling Aboriginal product in WA locations.

Western Australia currently has a critical mass (more than 100 businesses) of diverse, authentic, tourism Indigenous product ranging from start-up, part-time and seasonal to successful international market ready businesses. There is considerable variation in the industry with some businesses enjoying annual turnovers of some hundreds of thousands of dollars and employing large numbers of people, while many others are one or two person operations.

Business models range from owner operators, close family, extended family, family community, joint (2 language groups) communities, joint management partnerships, joint ventures between Indigenous Business Australia and private enterprise, etc. Businesses entail multiple or individual products including accommodation, touring, cultural activities such as traditional hunting, collecting and survival skills, storytelling, fishing, bush walks etc that help to communicate the lifestyle and beliefs of traditional Aboriginal people. A high proportion of these businesses are members of WAITOC.

Vision, Goal and Scope

Vision: Sustainable Aboriginal participation in the tourism industry.

Goal: Aboriginal people having ongoing opportunities to add cultural and commercial value to the WA tourism industry, for mutual benefit.

Scope: Development and maintenance of a diverse range of both generic and culturally sensitive strategies designed to:

• assist Aboriginal people to enter and pursue careers in mainstream tourism; and
• encourage and assist Aboriginal people to conceive, establish and grow commercially viable and sustainable tourism ventures that showcase authentic Aboriginal culture, art, spiritual heritage and unique wilderness experiences.
Issues
Major issues that impact on the future growth of Aboriginal tourism need to be taken into account in working towards the Vision and Goal.

Sensitivity to culture
Recognise the need to be sensitive to Aboriginal cultural, lifestyle and heritage considerations when promoting, developing and maintaining tourism initiatives and employment opportunities.

Awareness of and engagement with Aboriginal tourism
Recognise that, in some instances, Aboriginal groups and individuals may not perceive, or may have limited awareness of, the potential for viable involvement in tourism initiatives or being employed in the tourism industry.

Recognise that mainstream tourism needs to be well and properly informed about dealing with the Aboriginal community (particularly on cultural matters) in advancing, collaborating and working jointly on Indigenous tourism initiatives.

Recognise that some mainstream tourism operators will not realise the value of employing Aboriginal people or of working with them on complementary tourism ventures.

Recognise the need for Aboriginal communities and individuals to be actively engaged and providing leadership from the outset, in the promotion and development of Aboriginal tourism initiatives, awareness and employment opportunities advanced from outside the Aboriginal community.

Training
Recognise that a number of Aboriginal tourism training/education courses are not always targeting the correct group that is those who seriously want to enter and remain in the tourism industry and that school-to-employment links need to be better programmed and targeted.

Sustained support
Acknowledge the time and effort that may well be required to establish and sustain viable Aboriginal tourism initiatives.

Recognise the need for sustained and properly targeted support and assistance to enable Aboriginal tourism initiatives or employment opportunities to achieve reality.

Recognise the need for legislation, administration or conservation action, as appropriate, to contribute to sustainable maintenance of Aboriginal heritage, natural locations and culture that are, or could be, an integral part of Aboriginal tourism initiatives.

A Cooperative Approach
The success of the Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy will depend on a commitment by all stakeholders, and a clear understanding of the role of the Government agencies, the private sector, education institutions and tourism industry bodies in the planning, marketing and coordination of Aboriginal tourism development. A united approach by all agencies and both the Aboriginal and mainstream tourism industry will support the longer term prosperity of Aboriginal tourism in Western Australia.

Implementation
Implementing the Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy will require a joint effort by a number of government and private sector organisations. The effective implementation of these strategies will involve:

- Ministerial responsibility.
- The formation of a Steering body, comprising representatives of the industry and relevant Government agencies, to guide the implementation of the Strategy.
- The appointment of an Executive Officer to action the recommendations of the Steering body.
- A commitment by all relevant parties and a clarification of their specific roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the strategy.
- Operational Resources - funding avenues; human resources; regional implications.
Objectives and Strategies

OBJECTIVE 1

Aboriginal people appropriately assisted to participate effectively in the tourism industry.

Strategies

1.1 Undertake specific market demand research for use by regional Western Australian Aboriginal tourism product.
1.2 Provide culturally appropriate training and education to Aboriginal people about the tourism industry and Aboriginal tourism opportunities in particular.
1.3 Establish culturally appropriate mechanisms for Aboriginal people to access information and advice about participation in tourism.
1.4 Review and develop assistance programs that support Aboriginal people to participate in the tourism industry.
1.5 Assist the formation of Indigenous tourism networks at regional and national levels to support and increase Aboriginal tourism participation.
1.6 Build and maintain an effective relationship with private and public sector investment capital providers.
1.7 Provide business advice to start-up and existing Aboriginal tourism businesses, advisory and support bodies.
1.8 Create an environment that encourages lateral thinking to add value and support for business to become market ready and viable.
1.9 Promote joint venturing opportunities in targeted areas for
   - Indigenous tourism businesses
   - Appropriate mainstream tourism ventures.
1.10 Aboriginal tourism operators to be offered representation on key industry organisations.
1.11 Aboriginal tourism businesses to adopt industry accreditation where possible.
1.12 Increase accessible cultural content in publications.

OBJECTIVE 2

Ensuring authentic, traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture is reflected appropriately in all Indigenous tourism ventures.

Strategies

2.1 Support Aboriginal people in deciding how to determine public/private cultural issues and therefore what tourism product may be offered and what may not.
2.2 Support mechanisms (such as the Australian Council for the Arts – Indigenous Protocol Guides) to protect authenticity of Aboriginal
   - tourism product
   - cultural intellectual property utilised for tourism purposes.
2.3 Determine and promote best practice models for presenting authentic Indigenous culture as a tourism product.
2.4 Develop high quality Aboriginal cultural interpretive experiences through which Aboriginal guides help visitors to experience Australia from an Aboriginal standpoint.
2.5 Develop Aboriginal cultural events and product that have positive tourism outcomes.
2.6 Develop an Indigenous Centre in Perth as a gateway to understanding and experiencing Western Australian Aboriginal culture.
2.7 Adopt, as appropriate, ‘Welcome to Country’, the use of Aboriginal names and any other initiative that would convey an awareness of Aboriginal culture to the public.
2.8 Illustrate how Government agencies and other stakeholders can integrate the Strategy into their own activities.
2.9 Extend the opportunities for Aboriginal employment and development of tourism services through cross-cultural awareness training to mainstream tourism industry.
**OBJECTIVE 3**

Aboriginal people having diverse employment opportunities in the tourism and related industries.

**Strategies**

3.1 Support initiatives aimed at increasing Aboriginal employment within mainstream tourism enterprises, for example

- increasing capacity (through TAFEWA and others that address the specific need gaps in mainstream tourism)
- linking in with Community Development Employment Projects
- expand school to work pathways
- improve mainstream industry recruitment practices.

3.2 Develop innovative and flexible training programs for Aboriginal people who wish to develop skills in tourism related industries.

3.3 Support mentoring and training opportunities provided by existing Aboriginal and mainstream tourism operators.

3.4 Development of employment stream that will offer on ground protection and maintenance of Aboriginal Heritage Sites.

3.5 Tourism WA to employ Aboriginal people to develop for long term work in the tourism industry.

**OBJECTIVE 4**

Aboriginal people being able to maximise sustainable use of their lands and waters for tourism development.

**Strategies**

4.1 Develop a statutory land title to enable Aboriginal people to achieve ownership or long term leasing of land.

4.2 Foster a negotiation approach (involving relevant Indigenous interests, State & Australian Governments, other land holders and industry) to address Native Title claims.

4.3 Foster capacity building of Indigenous land holding bodies to enhance decision-making with respect to use of Indigenous land for tourism purposes.

4.4 Implement measures to safeguard and preserve the unique and fragile Aboriginal historical features and natural environments that are critical to current and potential Aboriginal tourism developments.

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**Public Consultation**

To obtain a copy of the full document and directions for making comment, please go to
Website: aboriginalstrategy.westernaustralia.com

OR

Email: aboriginalstrategy@westernaustralia.com  
Fax: 08 9262 1944

Post: David Etherton  
Executive Director  
Tourism Western Australia  
GPO Box X2261  
Perth WA 6847

The Public Consultation period is due to close at the end of September 2005.