

Hon Warren Entsch MP,
Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia
warren.entsch.mp@aph.gov.au
Committee Secretariat
02 6277 4162

jscna@aph.gov.au

01 March 2020

KALACC Submission Inquiry into the Opportunities and Challenges of the Engagement of Traditional Owners in the Economic Development of Northern Australia

Dear Mr Entsch

Please find attached KALACC's submission to the Inquiry into the Opportunities and Challenges of the Engagement of Traditional Owners in the Economic Development of Northern Australia. The task of this committee cannot be undertaken in isolation from the broader suite of policy development that States and the Commonwealth are currently undertaking in regards to Aboriginal Affairs. KALACC immediately notes the disappointingly narrow scope of the Terms of Reference to this current inquiry. Right at the outset it is difficult to see how an inquiry with such limited terms of reference can in fact align its work with the important suite of Aboriginal Affairs policy changes currently being developed in this nation.

KALACC notes the following words from Mr Peter Yu, talking about the Northern Australian Development White Paper:

"Well it's predictable from an Aboriginal perspective and what it really represents is a kind of 19th century think-tank," he said.

"I think having a White Paper is a good thing to do, but I don't think it's expansive or inclusive enough in terms of understanding the north in its contemporary setting, particularly in regards to the demographic of the traditional owner community right across northern Australia."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2016-06-21/developing-northern-australia-plans-ignore-indigenous-owners/7528516>

Yes those words were spoken back in June 2016. But we can skip forward to 2019 and Mr Yu had the following to say in delivering the keynote address at the 2019 Lowitja Conference in Darwin:

We know that our culture, that our languages and systems and practices are protective of our physical and mental health. Not as an add-on, or after thought.

Not as a policy of ‘cultural safety’ pop-riveted onto existing programs.

And as we come forward to the present moment, we note the following words spoken in recent weeks by Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar as she spoke of her vision for the year 2020:

As First Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a remarkable living history. For 60,000 years plus we have sustained a cohesive and resilient society. We have the most extensive kinship network in the world and through a system of law, ceremony and song we have transferred a huge body of knowledge, including important principles of collective and common humanity, from generation to generation. There is much to celebrate but it is not celebrated – it is not even recognised.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/31/june-oscar-2020s-vision-reaching-our-potential-as-a-nation-begins-with-truth-telling>

KALACC takes this opportunity today to share with you our thoughts about how Aboriginal culture can contribute towards the economic development of Northern Australia. To echo Mr Yu’s words, we are not interested in economic strategies that are ‘pop – riveted’ on or which are afterthoughts to the main agenda of Aboriginal advancement and wellbeing in the north.

Again to echo Mr Yu’s words, there is more than a hint of ‘19th century think tank’ about the extremely narrow scope of the Committee’s Terms of Reference to this current inquiry.

KALACC hopes that our submission, across the following pages, will assist to significantly broaden out the Committee’s interests in the economic, social and wellbeing development of the first nations peoples of Australia’s north.



Wes Morris KALACC Coordinator

[Redacted signature]

“To assist and promote the ceremonies, songs and dance of Kimberley Aboriginal people, to encourage and strengthen their social, cultural and legal values and ensure their traditions a place in Australian society.”

June Oscar – Foreword to the *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Plan*

Culture underpins all of who we are. It is both what we learn, and the framework for how we live and engage with each other and our surrounds. Culture constructs our society and identities, our strength, self-worth and resilience, and in times of great sadness – of trauma, loss and grief – culture heals us. The Kimberley region is home to 30 distinct Aboriginal groups that practices culture in diverse and vibrant ways. Our traditions and languages that connect us to Country and each other come from a deep lineage of ancestral knowledge and strength.

The *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Plan* captures this remarkable heritage. It reflects the powerful leadership that has always been present in the Kimberley in keeping our culture alive and protected. In 1984, our people from diverse traditions across the Kimberley gathered at Ngumpan. At this historic bush meeting, we recognised that alongside our rights to our land we must protect and practice our Law and culture. We stood for our rights to be on Country, to speak our languages, and to be in control of our knowledge and resources. As a result, we established the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre, the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, and Magabala Books, the first and now longest running Aboriginal publishing house in Australia.

Since then, we have been a part of achieving the extraordinary legal milestone of Native Title which destroyed the myth of Terra Nullius, and we have established and strengthened our many community-controlled organisations. The *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Plan* reminds us of these achievements and the ways in which we continue to thread culture into every aspect of our lives.

The *Initial Consultation Report* provides an overview of over 60 Kimberley community-controlled organisations that work across every sector from health, justice and education to arts, enterprise, women's supports, childcare, land management and aged care, amongst many others. These organisations, led by our people and built on our cultural values and principles, deliver vital culturally-based services and programs designed to maintain, strengthen and revitalise our culture.

The *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Plan* is not for the shelf. It will sit alongside other major reports and recommendations which acknowledge that our people on the ground and our community organisations have the solutions. Central to our solutions is caring for our culture.

It is time that Governments and policy-makers work with us. We have to respond to these reports and this plan so we can invest in community-led solutions over the long-term. In being supported to practice and care for our culture in everything we do our distinct rights as Indigenous Peoples are realised. When our culture is strong, we are strong. We can maintain the transference of knowledge to all our children, and revitalise generational success, health and wellbeing.

Our culture, practiced in our homes, families and communities and supported by our organisations, brings about the future we all want – a future self-determined by our people.

Yaninyja.

Thank you.

June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

[The *Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Plan* was launched and was presented to the Hon Ken Wyatt in Broome on 21 January 2020]

KALACC Recommendations Regarding the Inquiry into the Opportunities and Challenges of the Engagement of Traditional Owners in the Economic Development of Northern Australia

1. **Cultural Infrastructure and Social Infrastructure in the Kimberley:** In line with the **2020 Infrastructure Priority List** developed by Infrastructure Australia, and the emphasis therein on the need for Social Infrastructure, and in particular the development of Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Centres in Northern Australia, the Commonwealth Government should support the development of a Kimberley Aboriginal Cultural Centre, located in Fitzroy Crossing.

2. **Trial a Cultural Investment Strategy:** In May 2016 the WA Department of Culture and the Arts published a Discussion Paper - ***Investing in Aboriginal Culture: The role of culture in gaining more effective outcomes from WA State Government services***. That Discussion Paper recommended that a *Cultural Investment Strategy* be trialled in one region. That region clearly needs to be the Kimberley and governments need to commit to such a trial in the Kimberley.

3. **Aboriginal Festivals As Key Economic Drivers in Northern Australia:** The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources advises that the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia “is examining the tourism potential of the north.” In that context, the Committee urgently needs to be holding discussions with KALACC and with the Australia Council for the Arts about the potential for Indigenous Festivals in the north of Australia to provide critical economic, social and cultural outcomes for the first nations peoples of Australia’s north. There is a pressing need for Government to support and to get behind the Stomp Em Ground Festival in the West Kimberley.

A Watershed Moment in Aboriginal Affairs in Australia

We stand somewhat at a watershed moment in Aboriginal Affairs in Australia and in Western Australia. At the Commonwealth level on 12 February 2020 the Prime Minister delivered the **2020 Close the Gap Report** and in his address to Federal Parliament he said that as a nation we were closing the book on 'Mainstreaming' and that we were now opening a new book called 'Shared Decision Making'. The Prime Minister's speech writer was keen to maximize the use of the words: 'together' and 'partnership.' The nub of his address to Parliament on 12 February is as follows:

Despite the best of intentions; investments in new programs; and bi-partisan goodwill, Closing the Gap has never really been a partnership with Indigenous people.

We perpetuated an ingrained way of thinking, passed down over two centuries and more, and it was the belief that we knew better than our Indigenous peoples.

We don't.

We also thought we understood their problems better than they did. We don't. They live them.

We must see the gap we wish to close, not from our viewpoint, but from the viewpoint of indigenous Australians before we can hope to close it, and make a real difference....

Mr Speaker, today I make the final report on an old approach, as well as the first report of a new era. <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/address-closing-gap-statement-parliament>

KALACC met on 21 January 2020 with the Hon Ken Wyatt, Minister for Indigenous Australians, and we discussed the Minister's August 2019 invitation for KALACC to provide to him a proposal for a major research project to build the evidence based around the connection between Aboriginal culture and wellbeing. In December 2019 KALACC and the ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy and Research [CAEPR] provided a draft proposal to the Minister. In that draft proposal CAEPR writes as follows:

In recent years, the centrality and inclusion of First Nations' peoples and cultures into national policy design and frameworks have been gaining momentum, representing a significant shift in policies and thinking which previously framed culture as both a barrier and a problem to improving outcomes for First Nations. There should be no dispute that culture matters, the question that remains is how does culture matter in the Kimberley where revitalisation and maintenance of culture is central to the healing of the First Peoples against the backdrop of intergenerational trauma from colonisation?

KALACC is deeply encouraged by the broad strategic directions that are being outlined across the following processes:

- **Close the Gap Refresh**, and the change from the deficits based mainstreaming ideology of the last decade to a new strengths based philosophy and a practice based around shared decision making;
- **2013 – 2023 Aboriginal Health Plan, Revised Implementation Plan**, and in particular the **Partnering Framework**, which places Culture at the centre of health and wellbeing, and embeds the social determinants of health and the cultural determinants of health as central elements of the **Implementation Plan**;
- **WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Discussion Paper**, and in particular Strategic Element # One: Putting Culture at the Centre.

Aboriginal Affairs Policy in 2020 - Putting culture at the centre

The WA **Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Discussion Paper** of December 2019 states as follows:

Key ideas:

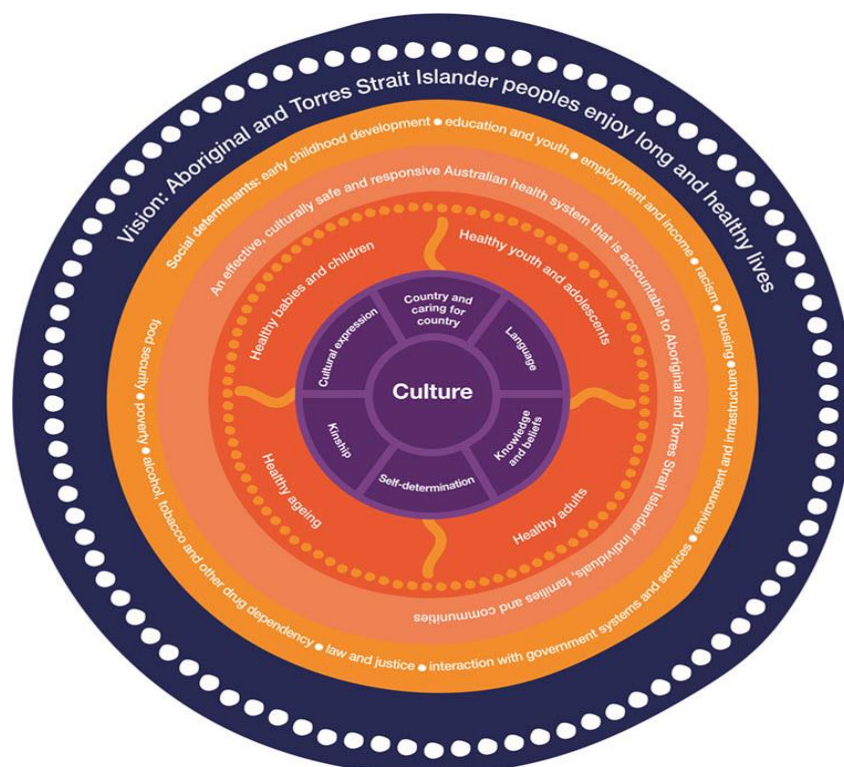
- a) Valuing, celebrating and promoting Aboriginal peoples' cultures, languages, relationships to country, knowledge, and heritage.
- b) Recognising the importance of culture to people's wellbeing and resilience, and the impacts of past government actions on Aboriginal people's connection to culture and country.
- c) Using agreements between the Government and traditional owner groups to recognise and support Aboriginal people's cultural identity, cultural continuity, and connection to country and heritage.
- d) Improving the public sector workforces cultural competence and responsiveness, and ensuring Aboriginal people are well represented and supported at all levels of the public sector, including management and executive.
- e) Reviewing and making necessary changes to systems and services to ensure they build on Aboriginal people's cultural strengths to improve outcomes.
- f) Investing in initiatives that support cultural identity, continuity and authority – including through native title and land settlements, language and heritage.

These key ideas are very productive in setting the right directions for the future. Culture is the Compass and it shows us the way forward. It is essential towards mapping out a strengths - based Indigenous agenda within what the Prime Minister describes as a new era of Shared Decision Making.

In November 2017 the WA Parliament published the ***Message Stick Report in to Aboriginal Youth Suicide***, which told us that nothing worked better than culture and that Governments had a strong aversion to funding culturally based programs. And in February 2019 WA Coroner Ros Fogliana brought down her ***Coronial Inquest Report*** in which she states as follows on page 56:

There is a wide and respected body of research that establishes the relevance of cultural continuity to the formation of a person's identity and their own drive for self-continuity. In other words, it can help to prevent suicide. It is a uniquely protective factor that can assist in counterbalancing the social and economic factors giving rise to the vulnerability of young Aboriginal persons in the presence of adversity.

These extrinsic and instrumental values placed upon culture, largely through the relationship between culture and wellbeing, have now become integrated as core elements of Commonwealth Government Health Policy:



The ***Partnering Framework*** to the ***Revision of the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013- 2023***

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/natsi-implementation-health-plan-revised>

KALACC notes as follows at the centre of the diagram:

- Culture
- Country and caring for Country
- Language
- Knowledge and beliefs
- Self determination
- Kinship
- Cultural Expression.

And the narrative on the Commonwealth Department of Health website states as follows:

“A partnering framework has also been developed to represent the relevance of the policy framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, underscoring that culture is at the centre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ lives and must be considered across all policies and programs.”

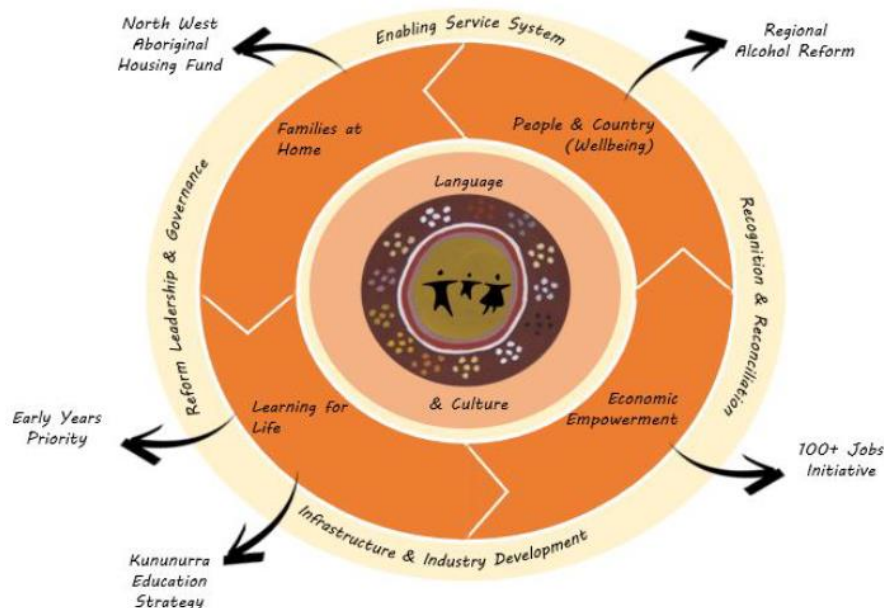
The WA Government’s ***Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Discussion Paper*** contains the following key ideas:

- a) Valuing, celebrating and promoting Aboriginal peoples’ cultures, languages, relationships to country, knowledge, and heritage.
- f) Investing in initiatives that support cultural identity, continuity and authority – including through native title and land settlements, language and heritage.

Implementing these key ideas will in no way be easy. But this is not a blank slate and there exists both within Government and within the Aboriginal community sector clear plans and strategies of how these key ideas can be implemented. The seminal ***Crocodile Hole Report*** was published some 30 years ago and it outlined the vision, and the strategies for developing culturally – based solutions for the Kimberley region. Many Aboriginal advocacy documents have been published in those intervening 30 years, also outlining strategies for developing culturally – based solutions for the Kimberley region. And if we fast forward to the present moment the ***East Kimberley Regional Development Agenda*** is described as follows:

Regional Development Agenda: our first priorities

We have identified priorities in the Regional Development Agenda and have started working with partners to co-design and deliver aligned initiatives.



7

[BBY: *East Kimberley Regional Development Agenda*, September 2019, page 7]

The *East Kimberley Regional Development Agenda* is illustrative of the fact that within Aboriginal communities there are advanced planning processes in regards to collaborative community planning. It is also illustrative of the centrality of culture to these planning processes. There are clear pathways which Governments can follow in regards to implementing key ideas around valuing and investing in initiatives that support cultural identity, continuity and authority.

This vision and these pathways need to lie at the centre of the Economic development of northern Australia. To echo Mr Peter Yu's words, we don't need bolt-ons, pop rivets or added extras. Culture lies at the centre of the Aboriginal Development Agenda for the north.

Recommendation #One: Cultural Infrastructure and Social Infrastructure in the Kimberley - Fitzroy Crossing Culture Centre


In line with the **2020 Infrastructure Priority List** developed by Infrastructure Australia, and the emphasis therein on the need for Social Infrastructure, and in particular the development of Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Centres in Northern Australia, the Commonwealth Government should support the development of a Kimberley Aboriginal Cultural Centre, located in Fitzroy Crossing.

KALACC notes the Infrastructure Australia 2020 **Infrastructure Priority List** <https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/publications/infrastructure-priority-list-2020> We note in particular the contents of page 102:

Priority Initiatives

Indigenous art and cultural facilities program

Location	National
Geography	National
Category	Social Infrastructure
Problem timeframe	Near term (0–5 years)
Proponent	Infrastructure Australia Identified Initiative
Date added to the IPL	February 2020



Opportunity

The 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit recognised that arts and cultural infrastructure plays a key role in the social and economic empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Audit notes that many of the current facilities are no longer fit-for-purpose and suffer from poor maintenance.

Arts and cultural facilities support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists by creating more employment opportunities, improving wellbeing, educating people on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and potentially improving national identity. Further, there is high demand for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and art in Australia from both domestic and international visitors. Currently, there are few dedicated art and cultural centres catering to this demand.

Proposed initiative

The opportunity is for a national program of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultural centres and galleries.

Many jurisdictions have taken steps towards developing these facilities:

- Infrastructure New South Wales recommended a flagship Indigenous Cultural Centre in 2014 that would be a hub to connect to other facilities.
- A similar proposal was made for Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and an Aboriginal Art and Cultural Gallery/Centre in the Perth Metropolitan Area in Western Australia.
- The South Australian Government is including an Australian National Aboriginal Art and Cultural Gallery in its renewal of the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site (now known as 'Lot Fourteen').

While there will be some competition between proposed facilities across multiple states and territories, there will be national benefit to providing dedicated facilities for the exhibition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture.

The program requires a coordinated response to ensure that facilities are sufficiently diverse to be complementary, encouraging visitation at multiple locations.

Next steps

Proponent(s) to be identified.

That same information set out in straight text format is as follows:

The 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit recognised that arts and cultural infrastructure plays a key role in the social and economic empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Audit notes that many of the current facilities are no longer fit-for-purpose and suffer from poor maintenance. Arts and cultural facilities support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists by creating more employment opportunities, improving wellbeing, educating people on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and potentially improving national identity. Further, there is high demand for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and art in Australia from both domestic and international visitors. Currently, there are few dedicated art and cultural centres catering to this demand.

Proposed initiative

The opportunity is for a national program of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultural centres and galleries. Many jurisdictions have taken steps towards developing these facilities:

- Infrastructure New South Wales recommended a flagship Indigenous Cultural Centre in 2014 that would be a hub to connect to other facilities.
- A similar proposal was made for Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and an Aboriginal Art and Cultural Gallery/Centre in the Perth Metropolitan Area in Western Australia.
- The South Australian Government is including an Australian National Aboriginal Art and Cultural Gallery in its renewal of the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site (now known as 'Lot Fourteen').

KALACC notes the references from Infrastructure Australia to the South Australian Government, including an Australian National Aboriginal Art and Cultural Gallery. KALACC has formal Memoranda of Understanding with the following institutions:

- South Australian Museum and the emerging Australian National Aboriginal Art and Cultural Gallery
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
- Western Australian Museum.

KALACC also has a close working relationship with the Australian National Museum.

KALACC is currently implementing a major Trade Routes Project, in which we are working with the very most senior cultural bosses, knowledge holders and elders from three states ie Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia. But KALACC is completely hampered in its implementation of this nationally significant agenda by the totally inadequate nature of its current facilities.

KALACC notes the short email of 14 February from Mr Duncan Ord, Director General of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries:

Yes it is evident that SA is becoming the National hub City for Aboriginal cultural institutions and is forming significant relationships with WA based communities and artists.

Mr Ord wrote that short email to KALACC in the context of a discussion about the role of the South Australian Museum in KALACC's major Trade Routes Project. Apart from the private and restricted dimensions to this nationally – significant project, there are also very public outcomes including a major exhibition to be held at the South Australian museum, possibly as soon as the end of 2021. KALACC has participated in a major Trade Routes Project Planning Meeting in Canberra across 24 – 28 February 2020. Partners, collaborators and interested parties to the project include:

- KALACC
- ANU – Arts and Culture
- ANU – Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy and Research
- AIATSIS [under discussion, but we have no fewer than 4 meetings with AIATSIS in that week]
- Justice Anthony North [retired], Federal Court Native Title Judge
- South Australian Museum, led by Professor John Carty, Head of Humanities at the SA Museum
- Anthropologists Kim Akerman and Nick Peterson are being consulted and use will be made of the work on trade undertaken by Scott Cane
- Central Australian Aboriginal Media Alliance
- Funders include the Australia Council and the Commonwealth Arts Department, with discussions currently occurring with the National Indigenous Australians Agency
- 21 January 2020 – KALACC discussed this project in considerable detail with the Hon Ken Wyatt.

In 2015 with the assistance of the WA Government, KALACC completed a ***Fitzroy Crossing Cultural Centre Scoping Study***. In 2017 with the assistance of the WA Government KALACC completed the ***Fitzroy Crossing Cultural Centre Design Study***. And in August 2019 with the assistance of the WA Government KALACC completed the ***Fitzroy Crossing Cultural Centre Feasibility Study***.

If the Fitzroy Crossing Cultural Centre was built, then KALACC would be able to virtually link in with AIATSIS, National Museum of Australia, South Australian Museum and this new SA Australian National Aboriginal Art and Cultural Gallery and of course the WA Museum.

In regards to Infrastructure Australia calling for Proponents to be identified for building Arts and Cultural Facilities, one can hardly imagine any more pressing need than for the development of a Kimberley Cultural Centre as the base for KALACC, the region's peak Aboriginal cultural organisation.

The current KALACC office in Fitzroy Crossing is completely unfit for purpose. The July 2019 ***Business Case for KALACC Cultural Centre***, produced by KPMG, lists the following classes of constraints with the current facility:

- Operational Constraints
- Enabling Service Constraints
- Unmet Stakeholder Needs.

KALACC is providing to the Committee a copy of the ***Business Case for KALACC Cultural Centre*** as a supporting document. There is huge potential of arts and culturally based economic, social and wellbeing outcomes in the Kimberley but the economic, social and wellbeing outcomes are not different agendas. They are all inter – related.

KALACC wrote to the Hon Alistair Hope, WA Coroner, in February 2007, thus instigating a major Coronial Inquest process. We were prompted to do so by the 11 deaths by suicide in Fitzroy Crossing across the 12 months of 2006. Let us look at the statistics that apply to Fitzroy Crossing at the present time:

- **School Attendance** – Currently 50% attendance rates. This is the same rate as when Ms Margaret Collins of the Dept of Education provided testimony to Coroner Hope in 2008 ie the attendance rate has not improved one bit over the intervening 12 years
- **Self Harm and Suicide** – Thankfully, the suicide rate in Fitzroy Crossing today is not as horrific as it was back in 2006. However, that headline rate masks a truly disturbing and horrific rate of self - harm which is far and away the worst of any area in the Kimberley. We refer to the February 2020 Report prepared by UWA: ***A Profile of Suicide and Self-Harm in the Kimberley 2013-2018 - a region at risk***. "For 2017/2018 Fitzroy Crossing had an event rate of [deleted] per 1,000, the highest District rate in the Kimberley. Fitzroy Crossing also had the highest hospital attendance rate (Table 8) and the highest death/population rate." KALACC has deleted the event rate as the UWA report had not yet been publicly released at time of writing this present document.

- **Youth Crime** – the December 2019 *draft Kimberley Juvenile Justice Business Case* lists the following as being services required in Fitzroy Crossing: Legal support for young people, representation of elders on JJTs, on country alternatives for detention, FASD support, youth intervention programs, alternate education programs and employment pathways. KALACC notes that the community is alarmed by the rate of youth crime in the town and has recently held a town meeting to discuss the issue - Fitzroy Crossing leads the way against mounting social problems in Kimberley towns

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-07/fitzroy-crossing-leads-way-in-battle-against-grog-and-gambling/11940382>

Collectively across the domains of school attendance, self - harm and suicide, and youth crime, the community of Fitzroy Crossing has an extremely high level of social need. This has been known ever since KALACC wrote to Coroner Alistair Hope in February 2007. There is huge potential of arts and culturally based economic, social and wellbeing outcomes in the Kimberley but the economic, social and wellbeing outcomes are not different agendas. They are all inter – related. This can be visually represented as follows:



KALACC draws particular attention to the fact that the sub – domain of cultural enterprise and economy sits in the second middle ring to this concentric circle diagram. Sitting in that same second ring out from the centre are: Health and Wellbeing, Country and Family and Community. In other words, cultural enterprise and economy are integral to the development and wellbeing agenda, but in no way do they sit in isolation as a silo on their own. If KALACC is going to respond to the huge service needs relating to the cultural economy, if KALACC is going to meet the social infrastructure needs as identified by Infrastructure Australia, then there are clear up front capital needs that need to be addressed. KPMG summarise the situation as follows:

There is clear evidence of the growing demands placed on KALACC as the best placed organisation to deliver culturally focused programs in the Kimberley. A need that is currently being put at risk of not being addressed because of the inadequacy of KALACC's premises. Growth of the program simply cannot be supported without larger and more suitable office space.

Business Case for KALACC Cultural Centre page four

Recommendation # Two: Trial a Cultural Investment Strategy

In May 2016 the WA Department of Culture and the Arts published a Discussion Paper - ***Investing in Aboriginal Culture: The role of culture in gaining more effective outcomes from WA State Government services***. That Discussion Paper recommended that a *Cultural Investment Strategy* be trialled in one region. That region clearly needs to be the Kimberley and governments need to commit to such a trial in the Kimberley.

This State Government Discussion Paper states as follows:

- In terms of broad socio-economic outcomes, there is a substantial and growing body of academic and case evidence that Government programs or services targeted towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal people on a range of social and economic issues will be more effective if delivered within an environment where Aboriginal culture is recognised, valued and resilient. [page 4];
- The Combined Federal and State Government funding on direct Aboriginal cultural activity in Western Australia was reported by the Productivity Commission at \$36.40 million. This represents 0.74 per cent of the combined total Federal and State Government expenditure on Aboriginal services in 2012-13 in the state. [page 19].

The key ideas contained in the WA Government's December 2019 **Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Discussion Paper** are very worthwhile ideas, but for as long as the investment in Aboriginal arts and culture in WA represents less than one percent of the combined total Federal and State Government expenditure on Aboriginal services in the state then we won't see real change and we won't see meaningful improvement in outcomes for Aboriginal people. This business of real structural and systemic change is very challenging. There are now many reports calling for culture to be prioritised. But how can Government achieve this? The WA Department of Culture and the Arts Discussion Paper recommends as follows:

- **A. Culture Investment Strategy.** The development of a trial program in geographically targeted areas of high social dysfunction incorporating general Aboriginal cultural engagement and new culturally based programs that specifically target areas of consistent poor outcomes.
- **B. Targeted and coordinated arts actions** linked to outcomes sought in health, education, youth justice and Aboriginal employment services in areas governed by the Regional Services Reform Program. This could be supported through Royalties for Regions in partnership with Native Title Trusts.

There is considerable existing policy development and thinking in regards to the role of Aboriginal culture in driving economic development, including following:

- ***Investing in Aboriginal Culture: The role of culture in gaining more effective outcomes from WA State Government services***
- ***First Nations arts engage international tourists*** <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/research/first-nations-engage-international-tourists/>
- ***Integrating art production and economic development in the Kimberley*** http://www.dca.wa.gov.au/Documents/New%20Research%20Hub/Research%20Documents/Kimberley%20Research/Kimberley_Survey_Report_Macquarie_University.pdf
- ***2019-20 Budget Offers Slim Pickings for Arts and Culture*** - <https://www.cacwa.org.au/documents/item/930>
- ***DOMESTIC ARTS TOURISM: CONNECTING THE COUNTRY*** <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/domestic-arts-tourism-connecting-the-country/>

First Nations arts tourism is increasing, reflecting Australians' strong and growing interest in engaging with First Nations arts for their beauty, strength and power, and to understand who we are as a nation. The regions where tourists are most likely to engage with First Nations arts and craft are in regional Australia, and particularly regional areas of the Northern Territory where First Nations arts and craft are driving arts engagement by tourists.

KALACC notes the following short email of 14 February from Mr Duncan Ord, Director General of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries:

Yes it is evident that SA is becoming the National hub City for Aboriginal cultural institutions and is forming significant relationships with WA based communities and artists.

It is somewhat ironic that WA based communities and artists are increasingly viewing Canberra and South Australia as being the natural points of interface with major Aboriginal cultural institutions. The WA Chamber of Arts and Culture has noted as follows in a 19 July 2019 article entitled ***After the Goldrush – a new cultural conversation in the West:***

Recently, the WA Premier launched an Economic Development Framework – Diversify WA with one of the key focus areas being the Creative Industries. The Chamber for Arts and Culture has long argued for the sector to be included in a broader economic framework and our presentation of REMIX Perth over the last three years has promoted this thinking. The hope now is for a meaningful commitment to a long term-strategy that grows the potential of our cultural sector.

The same article goes on to highlight the negative economic and employment outcomes that come from WA neglecting investments in to the arts and cultural sector of the economy:

From 2011-2016, creative employment in Australia grew at nearly twice the rate of the Australian workforce and it is highly likely to continue to grow into the future. Creative employment in Australia grew by 2.3%, compared to a 1.2% annual average growth rate for the total workforce.

However, the rate of creative industry employment growth in WA has tracked below the Australian average. In WA, the average annual growth of total creative employment for the same period was 1.1 % – less than half the rate of the national average. WA also had a lower share of creative employment (3.8%) in 2016, than the Australian average (5.6%).

<https://www.cacwa.org.au/chamber-news/after-the-goldrush-a-new-cultural-conversation-in-the-west>

The decline in the arts and cultural sector of the WA Economy is clearly directly related to chronic underfunding by successive State Governments. The Chamber of Arts and Culture also notes that:

Unfortunately, this budget [2019-20 State Budget] offers little relief to the arts and culture sector which has seen chronic underfunding by successive governments. Arts funding as a percentage of the State budget continues its 17-year decline to the current low point of 0.64%. The cumulative effect of this is a cultural infrastructure urgently in need of maintenance and upgrade to make it fit for purpose, and a sector struggling to keep up with global trends that have seen creative economies become a dynamic source of growth and innovation elsewhere.

Global and national trends recognise the creative sector as a major growth area and see creative skills as a priority area in the future of work. However, Western Australia continues to underperform with the 2016 census showing that the State achieved a 0.7% annual growth in employment in the creative industries over the five years from 2011 - 2016 – far short of the national average of 2.2%. <https://www.cacwa.org.au/documents/item/930>

It is difficult to see how Aboriginal cultural economies can be built when Governments continue the chronic under- funding of the arts and cultural sectors of the economy. The opportunities are there, and KALACC and other organisations have promoted them for a long time, but Government needs to invest in those opportunities.

The December 2019 WA **Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy** states as follows:

Key ideas

a) Supply – Support Aboriginal people’s employment and business aspirations.

- Opening horizons – eg showcasing career options and role models for young people; school-to-work transitions; student mentoring.
- Lowering barriers – eg land tenure system and land-use approvals; streamlining regulatory approvals; commercial use of natural resources; addressing infrastructure gaps; residential support for study away from home; ensuring means-tested benefits and services do not penalise or discourage participation.
- Building capacity – eg skills, training, formal education, apprenticeships, scholarships, prison-based initiatives; business assistance and support; enterprise development; corporate capacity building; governance of PBCs and community corporations.

- Facilitating access to capital – eg leveraging native title settlements; incentives for private investment; divesting land assets; direct public investment; assistance in developing finance applications; supporting corporate and philanthropic opportunities.

b) Demand – Expand markets for Aboriginal employees and businesses.

- Direct government demand –
 - Government employment policies and practices (including recruiting, retaining, supporting and promoting Aboriginal employees; work experience and training pathways into the public sector; workforce management policy and industrial relations; providing supportive workplaces and monitoring agency performance, including the number of Aboriginal people in management, executive, and entry-level roles, retention rates, and the reasons people give for leaving their position).
 - Reviewing the scope of certain public sector functions in regional and remote areas, to identify opportunities for “unbundling” work that can be done by local people on country.
 - Government procurement policies and practices, including procurement targets for Aboriginal businesses, both annually and in relation to key projects; and engagement of local contractors or subcontractors for infrastructure and services in remote communities.
 - Expanding opportunities for culturally driven on-country work including environmental services, land management, heritage management, and visitor management.
- Indirect and third party demand – incentives and information for the private sector to increase Aboriginal employment and procurement.
- Broader market stimulation – eg promoting industries with strong potential for Aboriginal participation; regional infrastructure and tourism investment.

c) Connect – Connect Aboriginal people with employers and markets.

- Championing, promoting – eg promoting Aboriginal peoples’ unique cultural heritage on the national and international stage; helping businesses recruit, retain and promote Aboriginal workers; helping customers find Aboriginal businesses and vice versa.
- Coordinating – eg strategic infrastructure investment; regional economic planning; work pipelines across projects and agencies; joined-up tourism experiences; providing guidance to corporate/philanthropic funders.

- Brokering or facilitating alternative forms of Aboriginal economic participation and partnerships – eg supporting new alternative business models, partnerships and diversified activities that provide work and income opportunities aligned to community capacity and aspirations.

If indeed culture sits at the centre of the ***State Aboriginal Affairs Strategy for Western Australia*** then this also needs to apply to the economic domain as well. We note these following words within the December 2019 WA Government ***Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Discussion Paper***:

Across remote, regional and urban areas, there are opportunities to build and expand cultural economies. This includes creative artistic outputs (eg visual arts, performance, storytelling, multimedia), cultural maintenance (eg environmental services, language interpreting, cross-cultural consulting), and applied cultural activities (eg producing medicine or cosmetics) – all of which can be further enhanced by tourism. The State Government has a role to play in supporting cultural economies, using the full range of approaches outlined below.

The State Government is of course perfectly correct. But an earlier iteration of the WA Government in May 2016 released a different Discussion Paper and that that earlier document recommended as follows:

- **A. Culture Investment Strategy.** The development of a trial program in geographically targeted areas of high social dysfunction incorporating general Aboriginal cultural engagement and new culturally based programs that specifically target areas of consistent poor outcomes.
- **B. Targeted and coordinated arts actions** linked to outcomes sought in health, education, youth justice and Aboriginal employment services in areas governed by the Regional Services Reform Program. This could be supported through Royalties for Regions in partnership with Native Title Trusts.

Culture and economy and wellbeing are completely inter – related. It is now time to implement these recommendations from May 2016.

Recommendation #3: Aboriginal Festivals As Key Economic Drivers in Northern Australia

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources advises that the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia “is examining the tourism potential of the north.” In that context, the Committee urgently needs to be holding discussions with KALACC and with the Australia Council for the Arts about the potential for Indigenous Festivals in the north of Australia to provide critical economic, social and cultural outcomes for the first nations peoples of Australia’s north. There is a pressing need for Government to support and to get behind the Stomp Em Ground Festival in the West Kimberley.

KALACC notes the recent signing of the ***Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord*** and we note within the Accord the proposal to create a Northern Australian Enterprise and Employment Hub System

<https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/northern-australia-indigenous-development-accord.pdf>

The Accord reflects its deeply conservative regional [rail and road] roots and the lack of references to culture and even to tourism are deeply disappointing, but there may be opportunities to use the Accord framework to develop cultural economy outcomes.

Beyond the Northern Development Taskforce and Infrastructure Australia, KALACC also notes the National Indigenous Australian’s ***NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper***. KALACC responded to that ***Discussion Paper*** in November 2019 and in our submission we noted as follows:

The ***NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper*** discusses the importance of regional tourism, but the paper doesn’t refer to geography and travel costs as being challenges. As such, it is hard to read the Discussion Paper as being anything other than a document which was written in Canberra because the Discussion Paper shows little awareness of Western Australia and very little awareness at of places like the Kimberley. The Discussion Paper shows little awareness of some basic truths and realities of tourist economics in places like Western Australia:

“WA's size and the tyranny of distance have long been seen as negatives when marketing the state as a tourist destination, but Mr Papalia is hoping to turn that around.”

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-27/fears-of-fatal-risk-in-wa-push-as-the-road-trip-state/10433482>

KALACC also notes the contents of the Kimberley Development Commission's ***Kimberley Regional Investment Blueprint***. In particular:

Remoteness increases reliance on transport-related infrastructure, services and pricing.

Most Indigenous tourism in WA and in the Kimberley operates at a very small scale. These small scale operations have their own merits and their own benefits. But if the NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund is principally about growing the Indigenous Tourism sector, then there has to be a discussion had about Scale. And how do we achieve Scale without having a magnet or a drawcard to bring people to the Kimberley region? This is where iconic, large scale events such as Stomp Em Ground Festival can come in to play. If there are drawcards to bring visitors to the Kimberley, then once they are here they will look to explore the range of opportunities and experiences available to them once they are here.

KALACC provided the ***Stomp Em Ground Festival Business Plan*** to the WA Government in April 2019 but we have not as yet received any response or feedback from the State Government.

The Australia Council for the Arts also lodged with NIAA a submission in response to the ***NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper***. That submission states as follows on page 16:

Large scale arts events and festivals can attract tourists across vast distances to remote areas, as the Stompem Ground Festival did, drawing thousands of revellers to Broome during NAIDOC week in 1992, 1998, 2000 and 2002. The festival featured artists such as Warumpi Band, Midnight Oil, Yothu Yindi, Archie Roach and the Pigram Brothers. First Nations owned and led, the festival made the remote coastal town feel like 'the centre of the Australian music industry'.³⁸ An event such as this provides a drawcard to bring visitors to remote regions such as the Kimberley. Once there, visitors will look to explore the range of opportunities and experiences available to them, providing tourism opportunities for First Nations arts and culture organisations in the region such as the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre (KALACC).

KALACC also notes this recent body of research work from the Australia Council for the Arts: **DOMESTIC ARTS TOURISM: CONNECTING THE COUNTRY** <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/domestic-arts-tourism-connecting-the-country/> :

First Nations arts tourism is increasing, reflecting Australians’ strong and growing interest in engaging with First Nations arts for their beauty, strength and power, and to understand who we are as a nation. The regions where tourists are most likely to engage with First Nations arts and craft are in regional Australia, and particularly regional areas of the Northern Territory where First Nations arts and craft are driving arts engagement by tourists.

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources advises that the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia “is examining the tourism potential of the north.” In that context, the Committee urgently needs to be holding discussions with KALACC and with the Australia Council for the Arts about the potential for Indigenous Festivals in the north of Australia to provide critical economic, social and cultural outcomes for the first nations peoples of Australia’s north. In particular, there is a pressing need for Government to support and to get behind the Stomp Em Ground Festival in the West Kimberley.

Appendix: KALACC Submission to the NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper.

From: Wes Morris

Sent: Thursday, 21 November 2019 10:30 AM

To: tourism@niaa.gov.au

Subject: KALACC Re Cultural Events and Tourism and the NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper

NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Consultation

21 November 2019

KALACC Re Cultural Events and Tourism and the NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper.

KALACC notes the *NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper* and that we have until 22 November 2019 to respond ie submissions are due in tomorrow. KALACC drafted this response some weeks ago but we have held off on lodging this submission with you in the hope that the WA Government would by now have released its *draft WA Aboriginal Affairs Framework*. That hope seems to have been in vain, so we lodge this submission with you now and when the *draft WA Aboriginal Affairs Framework* does enter the public realm we will draw your attention to that in follow up correspondence.

KALACC also notes the recent web page from the Australia Council -

<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/arts-in-daily-life/artist-stories/cultural-strength-and-ethical-art-supporting-regional-tourism-and-employment/>

Given the contents of that web page KALACC assumes that the Australia Council will lodge a submission with NIAA on or prior to 22 November. That said, the *NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper* contains a list of organisations consulted to date and that list nearly without exception is a list of tourism bodies. Sure, that is fine. But we would regard that as being the barest minimum in terms of sector consultation. In that list we don't at present see Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations. Nor do we see any arts and cultural organisations. NIAA should be proactively contacting the Australia Council for the Arts. NIAA should be proactively contacting the 13 Empowered Communities backbone organisations. NIAA should be proactively contacting a range of arts and cultural organisations across Australia.

In the list of arts and cultural organisations which should be contacted is the WA Chamber of Arts and Culture - <https://www.cacwa.org.au/> KALACC notes that WA DLGSC Director General Mr Duncan Ord addressed the Chamber's October meeting and the minutes from that meeting include the following words: "Duncan acknowledged the disconnect between the sector's priorities and ambitions re: cultural tourism and the remit of Tourism WA which measures success on hotel room rate occupancy. Duncan identified the need for a new structure within government that has a mandate to develop the cultural vibrancy of WA and Perth and in that develop the ecology of the offering to visitors." This is of great significance to the current consideration of the NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund because KALACC strongly suggests to NIAA that the goal posts are in the wrong place at the present time when it comes to Indigenous tourism development.

KALACC met yesterday with Mr Bill Hauritz, Director Woodford Folk Festival. Woodford is Australia's largest Folk Festival and for a number of years ran and supported a significant Indigenous Festival called the Dreaming Festival. Bill said to us yesterday that he still felt completely gutted by decisions of the then State and Commonwealth Governments to cease funding and support for the Dreaming Festival. It is hard to imagine anything more short sighted than this decision. The quantum involved was in the order of \$120,000 per annum. Completely short- sighted given the suite of hard and soft infrastructure support which Woodford was providing to the Dreaming Festival. Bill told us yesterday that Woodford would start up the Dreaming Festival again, but only on the condition that State and Commonwealth both commit to a 5 year funding program with an annual review. That way, if State and Commonwealth Governments ever did in the future decide to once again withdraw their financial support, there would at least be four years notice that this would come in to effect. There is a wonderful opportunity there for the NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund to explore.

KALACC further notes the following additional Australia Council research web pages:

- <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/first-nations-engage-international-tourists/>
- <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/regional-arts-summary/>
- <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/showcasing-creativity-programming-and-presenting-first-nations-performing-arts/>

There is a wealth of information available in regards to the connection between Aboriginal culture and arts and economic development, including tourism. We urge NIAA to acquaint itself with this wealth of material. When KALACC reads the **NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper** there is little evidence at present that NIAA is aware of the connection between Aboriginal culture and arts and economic development, including tourism.

Turning now to the Kimberley region in which KALACC operates, one of KALACC's key goals in the Kimberley is to bring back the Stomp Em Ground Festival. The **NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper** lists a number of challenges to the development of Indigenous Tourism but fails to list those challenges which KALACC considers to be the greatest barriers and obstacles to the advancement of Indigenous tourism, especially in places like the Kimberley. The Discussion Paper lists the following challenges:

“lack of specialised business experience, lack of infrastructure, complex or lengthy application process for grants, difficulty of operating in a seasonal environment and difficulty finding trained staff.”

The **NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper** fails to focus on the challenging issues of geography, distance and associated costs.

The **NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund Discussion Paper** discusses the importance of regional tourism, but the paper doesn't refer to geography and travel costs as being challenges. As such, it is hard to read the Discussion Paper as being anything other than a document which was written in Canberra because the Discussion Paper shows little awareness of Western Australia and very little awareness at of places like the Kimberley. The Discussion Paper shows little awareness of some basic truths and realities of tourist economics in places like Western Australia:

“WA's size and the tyranny of distance have long been seen as negatives when marketing the state as a tourist destination, but Mr Papalia is hoping to turn that around.”

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-27/fears-of-fatal-risk-in-wa-push-as-the-road-trip-state/10433482>

KALACC also notes the contents of the Kimberley Development Commission's **Kimberley Regional Investment Blueprint**. In particular:

Remoteness increases reliance on transport-related infrastructure, services and pricing.

Most Indigenous tourism in WA and in the Kimberley operates at a very small scale. These small scale operations have their own merits and their own benefits. But if the NIAA Indigenous Tourism Fund is principally about growing the Indigenous Tourism sector, then there has to be a discussion had about Scale. And how do we achieve Scale without having a magnet or a drawcard to bring people to the Kimberley region? This is where iconic, large scale events such as Stomp Em Ground Festival can come in to play. If there are drawcards to bring visitors to the Kimberley, then once they are here they will look to explore the range of opportunities and experiences available to them once they are here.

If NIAA sees merit in the logic contained in this submission, then we would be very happy to share with you a copy of the Business Plan for the Stomp Em Ground Festival.

For three months KALACC has had access to a confidential copy of the forthcoming WA Government **draft Aboriginal Affairs Framework**. That document states that land and culture will be the drivers of economic development for Aboriginal people. The document was originally slated for release in August, but may now not be released until December. As above, when the **draft WA Aboriginal Affairs Framework** does enter the public realm we will draw your attention to that in follow up correspondence.

Finally, the WA Government has an Asian Engagement Strategy and KALACC has met recently with senior officers of the WA Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation. DLGSC has for over a year had in place plans around developing an Indian Ocean Rim Festivals network but it seems that there is a lack of financial commitment from WA Treasury towards developing culturally – based tourism. This is a great pity because it runs completely contrary to the sentiments contained in the State's own forthcoming **draft WA Aboriginal Affairs Framework** ie that land and culture will be the drivers of Aboriginal economic development. KALACC certainly believes that culture has great potential to be a driver of Aboriginal economic development, including through Tourism, and if NIAA would like us to share with them more details around the role of culture in driving tourism then we would be happy to engage in a further discussion with NIAA around that. Kind regards



KALACC Wes Morris KALACC Coordinator

Phone: 0437809103 Email: coordinator@kalacc.org.au

Kimberley Regional Investment Blueprint

Challenges for the growth of tourism

There are a number of challenges the tourism industry will need to overcome to maximise its potential. These are:

- Meeting the demand for the substantial direct and indirect employment growth that would be generated by a transformed tourism sector.
- Increasing access to land for tourism-related development.
- The need to open up new aviation routes and build regional tourism infrastructure and amenities.
- Developing appropriate management regimes that opening up access to, and manage or maintain iconic attractions within, wilderness and conservation areas.
- Building the skills of Traditional Owners to take advantage of and to manage opportunities on Native Title land.
- High median rents that impact on attraction and retention of staff.
- Growth in WA tourism is expected to be underpinned by increased activity from the Chinese market (State Government Strategy for Tourism in Western Australia 2020', Tourism WA 2013) - the Kimberley's industries need to consider these global developments.
- Remoteness increases reliance on transport-related infrastructure, services and pricing.