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Aboriginal Affairs &
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To Whom It May Concern,

Re: 20 Year State Infrastructure Strategy – Discussion Paper

This letter provides a response from Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (AAR) regarding the 20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy Discussion Paper June 2019 (the Discussion Paper). We note that AAR was initially consulted in relation to the development of the Discussion Paper.

It is pleasing to see such an ambitious growth agenda for South Australia and the infrastructure initiatives that will support that growth. The development of this important Strategy has, potentially, a significant impact on Aboriginal people across South Australia.

The Discussion Paper references the First Peoples of Australia (p.14). It is critically important that the processes relating to infrastructure development include respectful collaboration with relevant Aboriginal land-holding bodies, Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organisations and native title groups.

The cross sectorial considerations referred to in the Discussion Paper call for a systematic approach to project and program delivery. This approach should also take into account the involvement of Aboriginal people and communities where possible, especially as it relates to improving project outcomes and facilitating greater opportunities for sustainable and wholistic infrastructure solutions. The current consultation that is occurring with Aboriginal people and organisations in relation to the development of Lot 14 at the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site is a positive example. It would be excellent to see this type of engagement continue across all infrastructure projects that have an impact on Aboriginal people and communities.

The Strategy also has the potential to enhance economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses through both procurement and employment initiatives. The strategy should also consider targets for Aboriginal employment and procurement in the development and construction of all infrastructure projects.

The demographic data in the Discussion Paper around the ageing of the South Australian population does not take into account the countervailing trends of the Aboriginal population. Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that the Aboriginal population of South Australia has a much younger median age profile (23 years) when compared to that of non-Aboriginal Australians (40 years). This younger population cohort will benefit from education and training programs that can lead to employment opportunities, including in infrastructure projects, especially in regional communities in South Australia.

The strategy could also consider the challenges faced by all regional and remote communities, including Aboriginal people, in maintaining a viable way of life in rural and remote South Australia. This includes the ongoing need for appropriate housing, education

and health services as well as the economic opportunities necessary for sustainable communities.

Climate change is a theme in the Discussion Paper. The Strategy ought to also consider the impact of climate change on Aboriginal people and communities. This might necessitate creating appropriate infrastructure to mitigate the impact of current and future climate change. There is also increasing pressure on Aboriginal-owned land regarding access to sites for alternative energy solutions in rural and remote regions. Potential internal migration due to climate change and extreme weather events could also be considered in the Strategy.

The importance of contemporary digital technology is also a theme of the Discussion Paper. A significant number of Aboriginal people reside in regional and remote parts of South Australia where there is limited and/or inconsistent access to digital services. It is necessary to have the right infrastructure to mitigate the digital divide between city and country, and this is especially important particularly for all domains, including health, education, business and employment.

Overall, in considering the Strategy's impact on Aboriginal peoples, we cannot stress too strongly that sound and authentic engagement processes, which reflect the principles of co-design, are absolutely necessary to enable greater Aboriginal ownership of the Strategy.

Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to comment on the Discussion Paper.

Please contact me if you would like our staff to expand on some of the issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely

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Nerida Saunders
Executive Director
Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation