Perth 2029 Bicentenary Project: Preliminary Engagement Report

OVERVIEW

2029 marks 200 years since the establishment of the Swan River Colony and the foundation of modern Western Australia. As the historic capital of the colony, the City of Perth is developing a significant project and/or program to commemorate the milestone in a respectful, inclusive and future-focused way.

WHY IT MATTERS

A City-led bicentenary initiative could:

- Advance reconciliation and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal communities.
- Deliver lasting public infrastructure and strategic city improvements.
- Acknowledge Perth's diverse histories and cultures.
- Increase visitation and tourism.
- Strengthen Perth's identity and storytelling through coordinated communications and programming.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A Perth 2029 project/program should be:

1. Inclusive and Respectful – embracing multiple truths and perspectives, particularly Aboriginal stories.
2. Place-Specific – reflecting Perth's unique role as both the capital of WA and the historic capital of the Swan River Colony.
3. Future-Focused – creating a meaningful legacy beyond 2029.
4. Collaborative – delivered through strong partnerships across community, government, arts and cultural sectors.

KEY THEMES

- Reconciliation and truth-telling.
- Multiple place-based stories: Aboriginal, colonial and multicultural.
- Celebration of Perth's natural environment, Swan River and biodiversity.
- Future-focused engagement that considers what Perth should become over the next 200 years.

Guiding Principles and Key Themes emerged from the consultation process detailed below

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Stage 1: Internal Consultation (Completed)

July – December 2025

Engagement included:

- 5 sessions with Advisory Groups.
- 15 meetings/workshops with 10 internal City teams.
- 26 meetings with external stakeholders.

Next Stages

- **Stage 2 (September - December 2026):** Aboriginal stakeholder consultation (aligned with RAP engagement).
- **Stage 3 (October 2026 – January 2027):** Broader community, sector and public consultation.

PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

Legacy Projects

- Revitalisation of Heirisson Island.
- Improved connections between the Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Perth Concert Hall and surrounding public spaces.
- Creative heritage wayfinding across key city precincts.
- Permanent lighting installations on significant civic buildings, including Perth Town Hall.
- Improved accessibility and activation of the City's cultural collections.

Programming

- Ongoing truth-telling initiatives before, during and after 2029.
- Expansion of Lotterywest Boorloo Heritage Festival as a community-led platform.
- Intergenerational storytelling and oral history projects.
- Major exhibitions with galleries, libraries and museums.
- River-focused experiences and cultural programming.
- Immersive light-based installations and visitor experiences.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Aboriginal and Advisory Group Feedback

- Prioritise truth-telling and reconciliation.
- Focus on the future rather than celebrating colonisation.
- Engage broadly across Aboriginal communities, not only traditional owner organisations.
- Highlight places of Aboriginal significance, particularly East Perth, the Swan River and Heirisson Island.
- Use careful and inclusive language.

Internal City Feedback

- Legacy projects should leverage existing plans and masterplans where possible.
- Creative wayfinding, public art and storytelling have strong support.
- City assets such as Perth Town Hall, the Library and public open spaces offer significant opportunities.
- Programming should complement infrastructure outcomes rather than compete with them.

External Stakeholder Feedback

- Strong emphasis on collaboration with state agencies, cultural institutions and local governments.
- Broad support for Aboriginal-led engagement and truth-telling.
- Interest in exhibitions, storytelling, collections activation and river-based projects.
- Potential partnership opportunities with State Library WA, WA Museum, heritage organisations and neighbouring local governments.

Key Challenges

- Broad consensus that a successful approach should include both a legacy project and a program of activities.
- Three years is a tight timeframe for delivering major infrastructure.
- Additional funding or sponsorship is required.
- Important to connect with State Government planning for WA 2029 to maximise resources and achieve shared outcomes.

Recommended Direction Emerging from Stage 1

The strongest emerging approach is a balanced model that:

- Creates a visible and enduring city legacy.
- Supports reconciliation and ongoing truth-telling.
- Strengthens connections to the Swan River and significant places.
- Uses storytelling, public art, heritage interpretation and cultural collections.
- Delivers collaborative community programming that extends before and beyond 2029.