

9 June 2017

Indigenous Business Policy
Community and Economic Development Division
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Scullion

**RE: CONSULTATION PAPER: INDIGENOUS BUSINESS SECTOR STRATEGY – SUPERCHARGING
INDIGENOUS BUSINESS START-UP AND GROWTH**

Charles Sturt University (CSU) appreciates the opportunity to provide input to this important discussion and have provided below our comments structured according to the invitational prompts to comment. Our response has been prepared by an expert in this area, Dr Michelle Evans who is Associate Professor in Leadership (Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences) at CSU and also the driving force behind Australia's first Indigenous entrepreneurship Pop Up Hub program, WALAN MAYINYGU.

CSU suggests that the role Universities can play in the capacity and capability development of Indigenous entrepreneurs and their associated enterprises has been overlooked in this consultation paper. As a regional University committed to our associated Indigenous communities, CSU wishes to extend our hand to the Federal Government in support of the development of an Indigenous Business Sector strategy. Importantly, as an educational institution we hold value for the significance individual level knowledge and capability advancement has in our economy. Even more so for Indigenous Australians whom hold the dreams and aspirations of their families, communities and ancestors.

Indigenous business people and entrepreneurs must be individually equipped with the business acumen to support, grow and excel their ideas and aspirations for self-employment. Focus on capital remedies alone will distort the growth of the Indigenous business sector leading it to become vulnerable to predatory investors and joint venture alliances. That being said, we strongly suggest that the Federal government consider entrepreneurial and business education as an important addition to this draft strategy.

How can we build better connectivity between Indigenous businesses, Supply Nation, the Indigenous chambers of commerce, IBA, all governments and the private sector?

The development of an intra-governmental taskforce committed to guiding the implementation of the Indigenous Business Sector Strategy would be able to provide a governance structure that:

- works within government departments (federal/state/territory) providing a foundation for critical stakeholder ownership across government
- has a remit to bring in important non-government stakeholders including chambers of commerce, private sector, Supply Nation and other important stakeholders in the Indigenous business ecosystem
- ensures out of this taskforce can come yearly reports on progress that can be presented at the annual/biannual Indigenous business summit

How do we ensure that this system supports the interests of Indigenous entrepreneurs based in remote Australia?

An intra-governmental taskforce could meet regionally across Australia including in key remote and regional locations to discuss the business of the Indigenous business sector strategy. Due to the ever-encompassing remit of the sector strategy to engage and promote Indigenous business across all industries and all geographic areas, it would make sense to travel the taskforce as the focus for meetings shifts from industry focused dialogues to regional focused dialogues (for example).

Is an annual Indigenous Business Summit a useful forum?

An annual or biannual Indigenous Business Summit would provide a national platform for reporting, showcasing and projecting forward for the next 12-24 months. It would be most optimal to hold the Summit in October (Indigenous Business Month) in different locations each time to engage and showcase with diverse Indigenous business people across the nation.

In addition to tracking progress of the Strategy, are there other uses for this kind of forum?

- Showcasing the diversity and excellence of Indigenous business
- Develop Indigenous entrepreneurial knowledge
- Build networks for the sector by inviting all stakeholders of the broader Indigenous business sector (private firms, government departments, universities, incubator/accelerators, international corporations and connections etc.)

Are there any other forums that already exist that could be used?

As mentioned above Indigenous Business Month is a showcase of Indigenous business across the month of October made up of breakfast, lunch and networking events. Using this time of the year, separate to both Supply Nation's Connect conference and NAIDOC week/Reconciliation week celebrations and events, makes sense. The Indigenous Business, Enterprise and Corporations Conference hosted by UWAs Centre for Social Impact is another forum that operates biannually and has become a meeting point for the sector.

What other types of support are needed for start-ups in remote locations?

Charles Sturt University in partnership with the NSW Department of Industry and Indigenous Business Australia have launched Australia's first Indigenous entrepreneurship Pop Up Hub program, **WALAN MAYINYGU**¹, aimed at engaging regional Indigenous individuals and communities through a one week program of workshops, masterclasses, mentoring opportunities and panel discussions. Aimed to engage four important target groups (pre-start up individuals, emerging and established regional/remote business people, Indigenous community based/not for profit organisations and young people), the program has been developed to ignite entrepreneurial spirit in Indigenous communities in regional Australia.

The WALAN MAYINYGU offering is an important contribution to the growth of the Indigenous business sector for four important reasons:

- it aims to engage with those interested in self-employment but not yet committed
- it highlights that location is not an inhibitor to entrepreneurial success

¹ <http://innovate.csu.edu.au/indigenouppopup>

- its aims to engage across age groups, industry silos and provides a space for those Indigenous individuals interested in business to engage with one another in their regional location
- and it aims to engage with Indigenous community controlled organisations interested in diversifying their income and wishing to engage in professional development for their Indigenous staff

Rolling this Pop Up Hub program across the nation in efforts to engage with diverse regionally located Indigenous individuals and communities offers potential to ensure support and inspiration for start-ups, organisations and businesses in remote locations.

Is the target to double the number of Indigenous businesses by 2027 realistic and/or achievable?

Independent ethical research is required to provide the development of the broader Indigenous business sector with rigorous evidence such as a biannual survey of the Indigenous business sector. Further, quality qualitative research is also required to investigate emergent phenomenon over the life of the Indigenous business sector strategy. The dynamic nature of change will create innumerable questions that require independent ethical research engagement to document, analyse and theoretically present responses that may lead to new business models and ways of engaging.

Dr Michelle Evans and I would welcome the opportunity to explore this strategy further at the invitation of your Office. Please do not hesitate to contact us at CSU to ensure we can support the delivery of a sustainable and high achieving strategy.

Yours sincerely



Professor Mary T Kelly

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Development & Industry)