



2nd^{NSW} Aboriginal ^{BUSINESS} Roundtable



Aboriginal
Affairs



Report

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Acknowledgement OF Country

"I am honoured to be here today to continue the modern Australian custom of respectful acknowledgement of the traditional owners of this land.

As we gather on this sacred land, the land of the Dharug Nation, Let us acknowledge that we are standing on country for which the members and elders of the Dharug Nation, and their ancestors, who have been custodians for thousands of years. Here they have performed age old ceremonies, celebrations, initiations and renewals. We acknowledge their living culture and unique role in the life of this country

Aboriginal law was to sustain and nurture all that have been created. Ancestors have danced and sung the creation stories which proclaim sacredness of the gift, as caretakers of the land and all that had been created.

Aboriginal people used fire as a way of rejuvenating the country, of bringing new life for the animals and the inheritance of a rich, fertile land for our future generations.

We acknowledge the elders past and present, and their ancestors, who have had a deep relationship with country.

While there has been a great change to this land over the generations, we know in our hearts that the story and spirit of Aboriginal people will always be written in this landscape. Thank you." - **Aunty Margaret Farrell**



**Aunty
Margaret
Farrell**

Introduction

In NSW, we recognise a thriving Aboriginal business sector is key to Closing the Gap.

In recognition, the first NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap captured a NSW-only Priority Reform Five on Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity.

As its first action to drive Priority Reform Five, the NSW Government committed to convening roundtables to hear directly from Aboriginal businesses on what challenges they are facing to enter, grow and thrive in the NSW business sector.

Following the first Roundtable for the NSW Closing the Gap Implementation plan, the Hon. Ben Franklin MLC, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs invited Aboriginal businesses in NSW to continue discussions on the importance of economic opportunity at the 2nd NSW Aboriginal Business Roundtable.

The Second Aboriginal Business Roundtable built on the challenges and opportunities identified in the first Roundtable and provided a platform for Aboriginal Businesses to:

1. Tell Government what's needed to establish, grow and diversify in NSW
2. And hear directly from senior government decision makers on actions taken since October 2021

The Roundtable will inform what actions will be highlighted for the 2022 NSW Implementation Plan and beyond.

The event was hosted by Wiradjuri man and award-winning journalist and author, Stan Grant, who facilitated an informative panel discussion with Aboriginal businesses and sector leaders, and delved into a number of significant topics relevant to the Aboriginal business sector.

Topics included what it means for Aboriginal business to grow and flourish, available opportunities, barriers to entry, transparency and accountability, black-cladding, transparent government on Aboriginal procurement outcomes and business expansion.



Roundtable

Attendees

The in-person event had 41 participants from 31 businesses. These businesses represented various sectors including construction, consultancy services, cleaning services, the Legal field, Information Technology, Food and Product services, Marketing and more.

Participants were given an opportunity to have their say via a roving microphone. They also had the option to remain anonymous through an online poll that they had access to by scanning QR Codes that were placed throughout the room and on their name tags. Questions and polls were streamed live on a screen, where the MC could pose these questions to the panel.

Participants

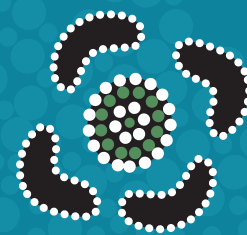
Scott Franks, Tocomwall Pty Limited
Candace Dalton, Dream Tag
Neal McGarrity, Bullroarers
Steven Fordham, Blackrock Industries
Sharif Deen, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
Nyunggai Warren Stephen Mundine, Nyungga Black
Patricia Frail, Thulii Ngemba
Anne Dennis, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
Amy Hill, Dewrang Art
Anne-Marie Elias, David Liddiard
David Liddiard, David Liddiard
Kain Gooding, David Liddiard
Jasmine Ryan, Yarpa NSW Indigenous Business and Employment Hub
Keahne Dotti, Dotbuild Constructions
Corey Dotti, Dotbuild Constructions
Jo Angri, Chocolate On Purpose
Fiona Harrison, Chocolate On Purpose
Wendy French, Kurranulla
Anne Cribb, Kurranulla
Troy Thorne

Jasmine Newman, Killara Services
Jason Douglas, Dalmarri
Corey Carr, Kangaroo Haulage & Sporting
Dean Broadwood, People First Fire
Jason Hardy, People First Fire
Leticia Quince, Leticia-Anne Designs
Kira-Lea Dargin, Kira-Lea Dargin Consultancy
Yatu Hunt, Cox Inall Ridgeway
Cindy Keighran, Keighran Legal & Associates
Leisa Wahlin, Yellow Balloon Marketing
Cass Gibbens
James Russo, NPM Indigenous
Tim Moggridge, NPM Indigenous
Sarah Hubbard, All Pro Plumbing
Tyson Hubbard, All Pro Plumbing
Karli McGrath, All Pro Plumbing
Dylan Frank, Wumara Group
Colin Lethorn, Boomerang Technology
Holly Eather, Boomerang Technology
Sally-ann Eather, Eather Group
Divinia Eather, Eather Group



Roundtable

Speakers & Panellists



Hon. Benjamin Franklin,
Minister for Aboriginal
Affairs, Minister for the
Arts, and Minister for
Regional Youth Affairs



**Stan Grant, Journalist
and Author**



**John McNamara, NSW
Indigenous Chamber of
Commerce**



**Westley Trist, Yarpa
NSW Indigenous
Business and
Employment Hub**



Letitia Hope,
National Indigenous
Australians Agency

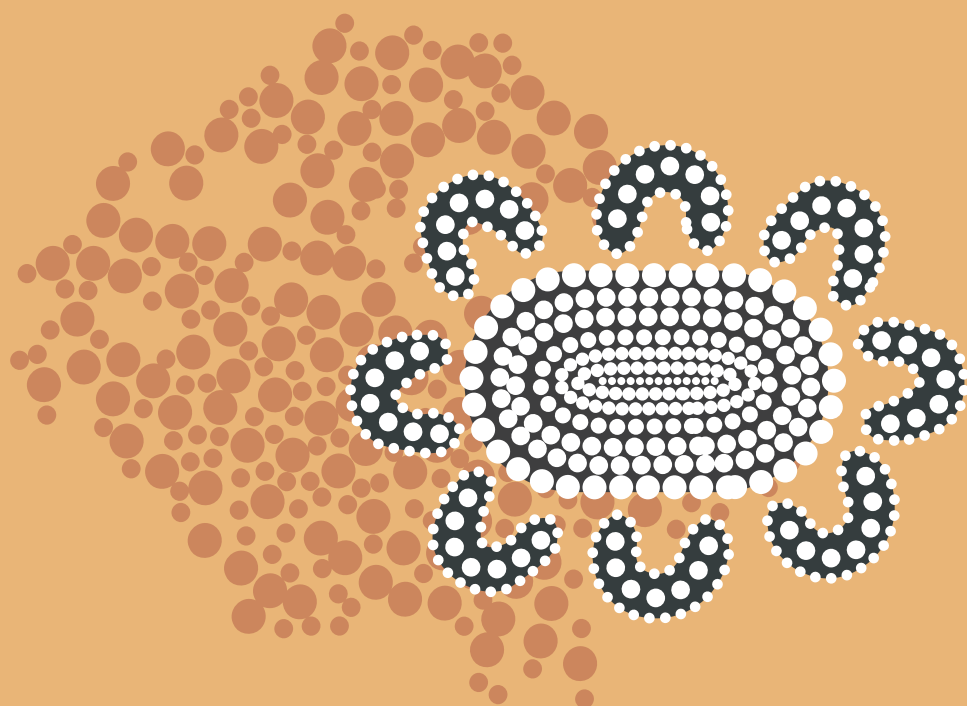


Song Hong,
Treasury NSW



**Chris Lamont, Small
Business NSW**

THE
Roundtable



Opening Questions

The Roundtable opened with two significant questions:

1. What does it mean for Aboriginal business to grow and flourish
2. And how is Aboriginal Business success the same as other ideals/values of business success and how is it different?

Panellists delved into the opportunities, the gaps and the challenges of business growth and what outcomes that growth can have on building economic opportunities for the wider community.

Points raised

- Aboriginal business is a means for Indigenous people to be the decision-makers, and take leadership in their own lives.
- Aboriginal businesses put money back into Aboriginal communities, and support Aboriginal communities, through providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.
- Businesses is an empowerment tool for Aboriginal people to materialise their economic independence.
- Aboriginal business is important in changing the deficit discourse around Indigenous affairs and moving to that strength-based narrative.

“Aboriginal businesses help Aboriginal communities... it's an empowerment tool” for Aboriginal people “to materialise our own economic independence.”

- Westley Trist, Director of Yarpa NSW Indigenous Business & Employment Hub

“Aboriginal business is important in changing the deficit discourse around Indigenous affairs” and “moving to that strength based narrative....Aboriginal business is really one of the most important areas around ensuring that real self-determination and economic participation.”

- Leticia Hope, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Australians Agency

Online Poll Submissions

What does it mean for an Aboriginal business to grow and flourish? How is Aboriginal business success the same as other ideals/values of business success, and how is it different?

"Aboriginal businesses are accountable to community as well as other stakeholders."

"An Aboriginal business that succeeds has a multiplier effect, as Aboriginal businesses are more likely to employ Aboriginal people and contribute to local Community initiatives."

"Breaking the "bad at business" narrative not just within the industry and wider society, but within mob"

"To hold strength in owning our journey to embrace our skills, leadership and self-determination. We continually focus on not only growth within our own businesses but in creating opportunity for other mob in community, sharing our knowledge and having shared economic independence and advancement."

"Self determination."

"The ability to be self determining and self sustaining including the ability to employ other Aboriginal people and contribute to our broader communities prosperity."

"Self empowerment Mob working and helping mob Independence."

"Provides economic independence for our Indigenous communities."

Opening Questions (cont)

How is Aboriginal business success the same as other ideals/values of business success, and how is it different?

"People go into business to make profit, create market share, to have quality of product, to promote a particular product or a particular approach...Indigenous businesses give back to community and create employment opportunity. Our Indigenous businesses in this country make stellar products."

- Leticia Hope, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Australians Agency



"There's absolutely phenomenal growth within Indigenous businesses....Indigenous businesses are growing at above 12% year on year. Aboriginal businesses are first generation and we don't have a great deal of commercial knowledge, and background, and capital support from our aunties, uncles and grandparents to actually start these businesses... most Aboriginal people are extremely entrepreneurial, opportunistic and very incredibly resilient in what they do."

- Westley Trist, Director of Yarpa NSW Indigenous Business & Employment Hub



Roundtable

THEMES

Throughout the discussion several questions were posed under focus areas, and key themes were evident.

Focus Area 1:



- Defining an Aboriginal business
- Discrimination

Focus Area 2:



- Barriers to entry - The size of government contracts
- Accountability of Tier 1s and Primes
- Educating government on Aboriginal business Capabilities
- Government support and accountability - Support for newer and smaller Aboriginal businesses to enter the procurement space
- Simplifying procedures - Complexities of the tendering process Regulations

Focus Area 3:



- Partnerships with Aboriginal businesses - Smaller Aboriginal businesses being overlooked
- Alternative ways to access capital

Focus Area 1:

STRENGTHEN Accountability & Transparency

Key points were raised during the panel discussion at the Roundtable regarding strengthening accountability and transparency.

Points raised

- It was expressed that government is more willing to partner with an Aboriginal business that is owned 51% or more by an Aboriginal person(s) and that is registered with a reputable organisation such as Supply Nation or NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce.
- Concerns were raised around procurement departments getting comfortable with their current partners and not willing to explore the Aboriginal business market.
- Aboriginal businesses face challenges which span even to the very definition of an Aboriginal business.
- Aboriginal businesses experience higher levels of stereotyping

"It is really important for the protection of the Indigenous brand and Indigenous businesses, as well also as is procurement process."

- Leticia Hope, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Australians Agency

"If an Aboriginal business or an Aboriginal business person does something wrong, everybody talks about it and then you hear, Aw, that business they did the wrong thing, so you can't be trusted as an Aboriginal business."

- John McNamara NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce

Focus Area 2:

INCREASE & SIMPLIFY **Arrangements** FOR Aboriginal Businesses to Partner **with** GOVERNMENT

The key points raised around partnerships between Aboriginal business and government was a lively discussion and took up a large part of the conversation.

Key points were raised by various businesses in the room regarding their experience to access opportunities to partner with government.

Points raised

- One of the barriers to entry is the size of government contracts
- Supporting newer and smaller Aboriginal businesses and how they can get their foot in the door
- Government is often concerned with taking a risk on new businesses and won't engage their services
- New businesses are at a disadvantage when it comes to procurement and applying for larger projects
- Several businesses identified experiences with top tier businesses not honouring their agreements with Aboriginal businesses
- Suggestions included breaking down larger projects to drive capacity in Aboriginal businesses
- Tendering process can be hard for Aboriginal businesses to navigate

What we heard

"We spent thousands of dollars pricing it up for them; I think about \$1.2 million worth of products. They won the contract and they used us to prop up their IPP, tick the box. They won the contract, and then 4 weeks later, I'm invited to an event with that company marched in there trying to meet Aboriginal businesses to fill the contract that we just tendered for."

- Audience Member

"We need to get key stakeholders in the room, with the right people, to come up with new ways to fix this."

- Audience Member

"You need to learn our language, and our way, of doing business, because we've learnt. We've gone to uni. We've had the hard yards. We've gone out to the public sector.... We are the solution: we're in this room."

- Audience Member

"How do we educate and encourage senior procurement officers to understand Indigenous business capabilities, understand there may be increased costs?"

- Audience Member via online chat

"If businesses struggle to define their capabilities, Do we consider alternative ways to demonstrate capability?"

- Audience Member

Focus Area 3:

BUILD & Recognise Aboriginal Talent

Aboriginal businesses provided insight in the challenges they face to build and grow their businesses and discussed the barriers they face financially.

Points raised

- Tier 1 and prime companies aren't honouring their contracts and agreements and aren't being held accountable for their failure to do so
- It was also expressed that accessing capital through the existing support services for Aboriginal businesses is difficult
- It was also recommended by the Aboriginal businesses present that government look to departments and industries that have been successful in their engagement and contribution towards building the Aboriginal business sector.

"To scale up and grow, financial support is required... Is there another option to assist in growing?"

- Audience Member

"Section 16s have been awarded to the "Aboriginal" Tier 1 companies, they're not being awarded to the mum and dad companies that need a hand up."

- Audience Member

"the goal for... my company, is to be able to get to that level where it would compete, ... you've got Tier 1 companies that keep getting the same Tier 1 (big Indigenous) companies in there that would probably take up a little bit of our spend."

- Audience Member

Post-Roundtable

Contributions

"What I observed in the discussion is that it mainly centred on the 'bigger end of town' ie. SME's, and it was not possible for me to share the challenges I face as a micro business on the Australian business landscape. There is a HUGE gap between micro business and small business and this is not being recognised at either a State or Federal level because (with the exception of the most recent NSW Aboriginal Affairs Close the Gap Grant) Grants are directed to SME sized business. "

- Audience Member



KEY POINTS & Proposed Actions

- Government enforce the policies that are in place to keep Tier 1 and prime companies accountable
- Educate procurement teams
- Break down work packages into smaller segments for Aboriginal businesses to have that direct partnership with government and to avoid working with the government through Tier 1 and prime companies
- Ensure that people engaging Aboriginal businesses are culturally aware and understand the challenges they face and also the possibility of targeted contracts for Aboriginal businesses.
- Defence is good at working with SMEs and mum and dad companies, breaking down work into compartmentalised contracts
- Gold standard paper like the IPP – example of a good tender
- Service delivery is as important as policy in terms of review

“Why don’t you look at Identified contracts, like identified roles within government; Identified contracts that are specific for Indigenous businesses. Then it breaks away - you don’t have to fight against the hundred other non-Indigenous businesses and have a targeted approach.”

- Audience Member



“There’s a lot of businesses, particularly as we talk about 12% Aboriginal business growth, so we’ve got a lot of mums, dads or smaller businesses; the big missed opportunity is the 250K in the current procurement stuff... Yes, you still have to go through a tender process even for the smaller ones, although you can get the direct approach for up to 250K - it gives all the new Aboriginal businesses that first bite of the cherry, get their skills and help them grow.”

- John McNamara NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce

Summary

To conclude the event, Minister Franklin reiterated the concerns that were presented in the Roundtable, such as keeping Tier 1s and primes accountable to their agreements with government and Aboriginal businesses, revisiting regulations and policy to advance partnerships between Aboriginal businesses and the government, and following-up on the commitment of government departments to honour policy promoting the growth and flourishing of Aboriginal businesses.

“I hear the incredible frustration that there obviously is, in this room, about Tier 1s and primes. I hear the concerns. I hear the fact that everybody thinks that they need to be held accountable, and they need to do what they need to do, in order to deliver for Aboriginal businesses. I hear the concerns about the need, the continuing need, the obvious need, to ensure that Aboriginal businesses are actually Aboriginal businesses.”

MC, Stan Grant concluded the Roundtable with a recap of the concerns and suggestions raised around addressing the current challenges faced by Aboriginal businesses, along with making the following comments.

“Last time we met last October, we saw that some action came out of it. The government responded to that. There’s an audit now. There are processes being put in place.”

“There will be a response to this.”

“You’re all here because you’re passionate about what you do. You’re all here because you’re succeeding at what you do, in the face of all the obstacles. Let’s make it easier for the next generation, and the people coming after as well.”



POLL Results

How important are the following long term goals for your business?

1. Wealth to pass on to future generations



5.14

2. Employing Indigenous people



3. Contributing to your community



4. Profit



5. Being your own boss



6. Other(s) please specify



Summary of the poll taken from Slido (online poll platform)
7 submissions

Word Cloud



Summary of the key words taken from Slido (online poll platform)

