



Australian Government  
Department of Industry, Science,  
Energy and Resources



# Supporting Indigenous Business Project

Phase Two Report



# Acknowledgments

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this nation.

We recognise the ongoing traditional and modern cultural practices and connection to Country held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging as the Traditional Custodians and Lore Keepers of the world's oldest living culture.

## Project team

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The project team would like thank the following departments for releasing staff to participate in the project:

- The former Department of Environment and Energy
- Various divisions from across the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

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### Artwork attribution

#### Amy Huggins, yuyang

The yuyang (glossy black cockatoo) is a very spiritual bird. For many people, these birds represent a connection to the spirits of their ancestors. For some people, a sighting of the yuyang can also mean that times of change are on the horizon, whether this be through coming rains or otherwise.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, their inherent ability to adapt to change whilst staying connected to, and drawing upon the strength of those who have walked before them, is one of their greatest strengths.

### Further information

For more information on other department initiatives please visit the department's website at: [www.industry.gov.au](http://www.industry.gov.au)

For all enquiries relating to the department's *Supporting Indigenous Business Project: Phase Two* Report, please contact:

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## Introduction

Indigenous businesses contribute significantly to the Australian economy and the improved circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their families and communities. Yet existing government business support services do not always meet the needs of Indigenous businesses or contribute to business sector growth.

**Phase One** of the Supporting Indigenous Business Project identified opportunities for government to address the challenges Indigenous businesses face and improve Indigenous business owners' access to government support.

Many of these opportunities require cross agency collaboration, however there were opportunities for the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER) to progress work on its own.

**Phase Two** of the Supporting Indigenous Business Project developed solutions to address the opportunities the DISER could progress on its own and explored what the cross agency collaborative projects might look like.

### Next steps

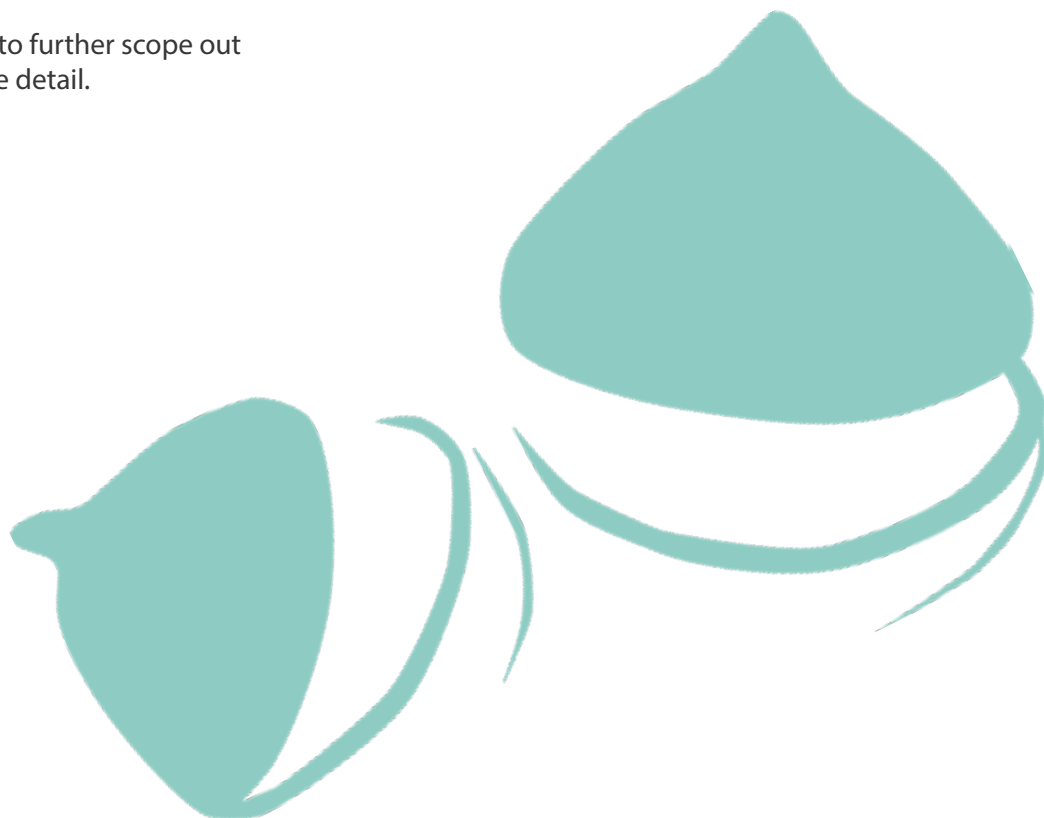
Follow-up conversations to further scope out potential projects in more detail.

## Phase Two Report

This report:

- Builds on the government's Indigenous Business Sector Strategy
- Presents the findings of Phase Two of the Supporting Indigenous Business Project
- Recommends solutions for the areas of opportunity identified in Phase One of the project

This project involved engaging with over 20 Indigenous businesses and 600 government stakeholders and was conducted in partnership with the former Department of the Environment and Energy.



## Procurement and meaningful feedback

The project team ran a survey of DISER staff to understand their attitudes to and experience with procuring Indigenous suppliers. This was followed up by one-on-one interviews with staff and Indigenous businesses who had contracted or tendered to work with DISER.

### Opportunities and insights

The research revealed four opportunities to improve DISER staff's use of Indigenous suppliers and improve businesses' experience with departmental feedback:

- **Building confidence**  
Helping staff to feel confident engaging an Indigenous supplier, outside of a panel process
- **'Leap of faith'**  
Supporting staff to reduce their anxiety in working with inexperienced but capable Indigenous suppliers
- **Social impact**  
Influencing staff to prioritise social impact in the procurement process
- **Meaningful feedback**  
Motivating and equipping staff to provide constructive and meaningful feedback every time

### Recommendations

The project team developed and tested solutions to each of these opportunities with DISER staff. Based on staff feedback, 12 solutions are recommended under four themes along with cross agency collaborative projects to improve the usability of Supply Nation. The four themes are:

#### Make it departmental priority

- Consider Indigenous suppliers for all procurements
- Executive promotion of Indigenous procurement

#### Raising awareness

- Key messages about Indigenous procurement
- Success stories
- Track and share data

#### Growing staff confidence and capability

- Training refresh (online and face to face)
- Procurement toolkit refresh
- 'How to engage Indigenous suppliers' guide
- 'How to provide feedback' guide

#### Fostering connections with Indigenous suppliers

- Indigenous Procurement Engagement Officer
- DISER Supplier Open Day
- Yarning Circle

### Next steps

An internal policy that DISER staff must consider an Indigenous supplier for procurements of any size, where possible, was endorsed by the Executive Board in October 2019 and took effect on 1 July 2020

Other solutions will be released in line with the policy change or piloted by the end of 2020.



## Building the skills of mainstream support providers

To understand how mainstream support services can tailor their support to Indigenous businesses, we focused our attention on the Entrepreneurs Programme as a case study, to identify solutions that could be applied more broadly.

The project team conducted one-on-one interviews with Indigenous businesses and DISER staff involved in the Entrepreneurs' Programme, including business advisors and regional managers.

### Opportunities and insights

The research revealed six opportunities to improve Indigenous businesses' interactions with and access to EP:

- **Relationships**  
Build long term, trusted relationships with Indigenous businesses and the people who connect with them
- **Culture**  
Build a level of cultural awareness and competency of support providers to effectively and comfortably engage with Indigenous businesses
- **Identify**  
Make identifying a business as Indigenous easier for support providers who directly engage with businesses
- **Remote**  
Increase the consideration of specific circumstances faced by remote Indigenous businesses
- **Awareness**  
Increase Indigenous businesses' awareness of EP
- **Eligibility**  
Adapt the EP eligibility and guidelines so that they are more inclusive of EP-ready Indigenous businesses

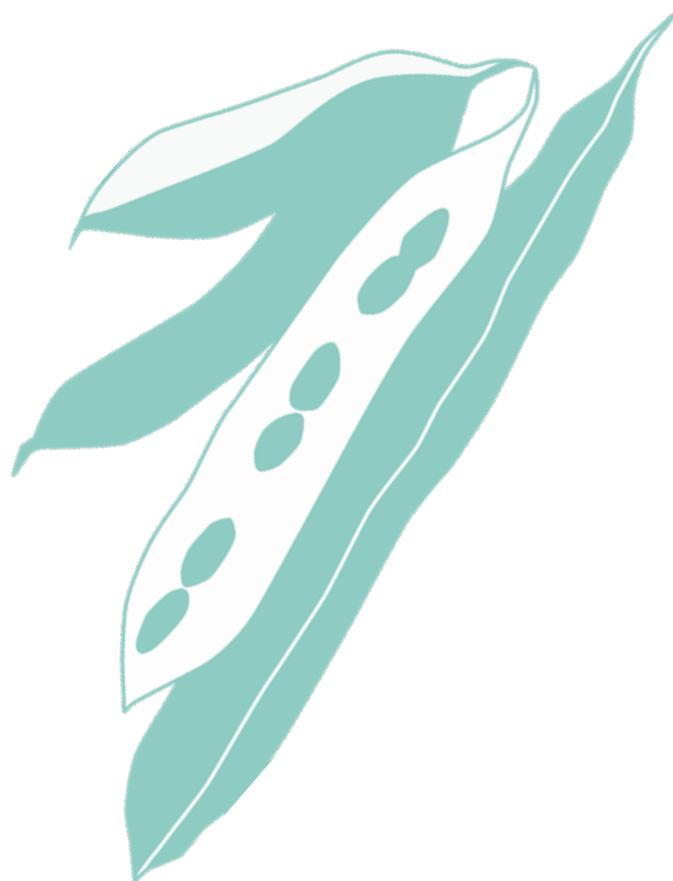
## Recommendations

The project team developed and tested solutions to each of these opportunities with DISER staff. Based on staff feedback, 38 solutions are recommended under four themes:

- EP services and approach
- Support provider capability
- Build awareness of EP
- Improving identification and data

### Next steps

- Prioritise and align potential solutions with the EP forward work plan
- Review eligibility and guidelines to ensure greater inclusion of Indigenous businesses
- Investigate improvements to DISER's Indigenous business data



## Ecosystem mapping

To understand what government support is available to Indigenous Businesses and how it connects together, the project team developed a draft ecosystem map with 133 government programs aimed at supporting businesses (29 Indigenous specific, 104 mainstream) from 21 Federal Government agencies. They then asked Indigenous businesses and government employees to group a sample of these programs.

## Opportunities and insights

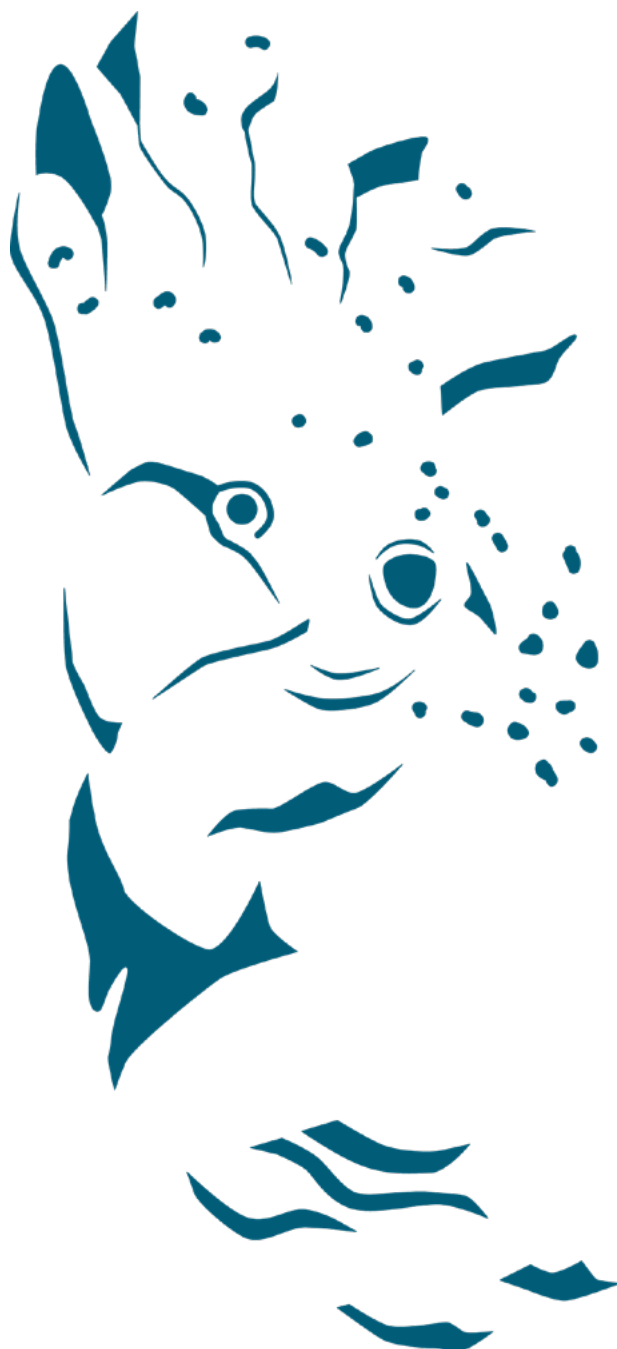
- Finding the right support is difficult for APS staff and rare for Indigenous businesses
- The internet is useful, but networks are vital for APS staff to find relevant information
- Indigenous businesses rely on word of mouth to hear about support
- A significant proportion of businesses don't hear about the available government support for businesses, but would like to access it
- Indigenous businesses said their biggest challenge to finding relevant support is knowing where to look

## Recommendations and next steps

- Explore working with all levels of government to examine how to better develop connections to support Indigenous business.
- Investigate expanding the map to include state and territory government programs aimed at supporting businesses
- Incorporate learnings into cross agency projects to address opportunities identified in Phase One (Navigating mainstream support and Connected government)

## Business support ecosystem map

For a copy of the business support ecosystem map please contact:  
[SupportingIndigenousBusinessProject@industry.gov.au](mailto:SupportingIndigenousBusinessProject@industry.gov.au)



## Cross agency collaborative projects

The project team explored the feasibility of collaborative projects with a number of departments and agencies to address the areas of opportunity across government. This included:

- **Building the business fundamentals**  
Helping business in the early stages to learn the business fundamentals to set up their business well
- **Early access to mentors**  
Helping Indigenous businesses to have more opportunities to connect with potential mentors early in their business journey
- **Navigating mainstream support**  
Helping Indigenous businesses to navigate the general business support that is available
- **Overcoming barriers to employment**  
Helping Indigenous businesses to find the right Indigenous job seekers, and support them to grow their staff's skills once hired
- **Working with government as a supplier**  
Helping Indigenous businesses to engage with government and what to expect when working with government
- **Building better government to government connections**  
Businesses get the support they need and government provides a more joined-up service
- **Supporting role models**  
Better supporting Indigenous business owners to share their story and inspire future business owners
- **Improving the usability of Supply Nation**  
Indigenous business can better present their capabilities and government can more easily find Indigenous businesses with the skills they need

## Recommendations and next steps

- Follow up conversations with relevant agencies to further scope out potential projects in more detail

## Role models

An Indigenous communications specialist was engaged to develop a communications strategy to inspire future business owners using Indigenous business role models. This work was delivered in January 2020 and the department is currently exploring opportunities for pilot implementation.

