

Advancing Indigenous opportunity

BCA Indigenous economic statement

August 2023



BCA

Business Council of Australia

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Cover artwork: © Dhalmula #2 Burarrwaja licensed by Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre.

This work is a homage to the Yirritja moiety tree species Casuarina known as Djomula. This is a collagraph that Dhalmula made in early 2020 just after she had made a woodblock out of actual Casuarina.

In February/March 2020 Buku-Larrnggay hosted a workshop with the students of Yirrkala Community Education Centre (the local school). Carly Farugia, the art teacher and her partner Liam - a ranger with Yirrkala Homelands Rangers accepted the art centre's invitation and assisted in sourcing local trees to create woodblocks using this found timber in native species like Gadayka (Stringybark), Lanapu (Cypress Pine), Djomula (Casuarina) and Ganiri (Beauty Leaf). The thinking was that instead of using woodblocks industrially prepared in pre-cut rectangles would we be able to work directly from the land and allow the shape of the tree to reflect in the composition not just the texture? This workshop was facilitated by master printmaker Sean Smith. He arrived just as the worst of the COVID Pandemic struck Australia. Sean chose to stay for the full length of the workshop despite a real question as to whether he would be able to return home to Melbourne.

Dhalmula as a long term printmaker who was facilitating the workshop tried her hand with this piece of Casuarina. Following that she was inspired to create this work which references the long whistling leaves of that tree.

These are known in English as Whistling Trees, She-Oak or Casuarina and in Yolngu matha also as Djomula, Mawurraki, Gaywangi or Warrapangi. She spoke of the calming effect of the whistling sound which comes from the Yirritja songs.

Casuarina are the most typical shade for Yolngu to sit under at the beach as they are able to access the freshwater running down to sea level underground and have a high salt tolerance. The tree itself therefore equates in lived experience with family afternoons eating shellfish and stingray or turtle as the tides come and go.

The tree is also strongly represented in sacred song.

Introduction

The Business Council of Australia has a long standing commitment to enhance economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

BCA members do this through positive and practical on-the-ground initiatives in partnership with Indigenous communities, businesses and employees.

We strongly believe that every single Australian – no matter where they live or their background – should have the opportunity to be their best and realise their full potential.

Economic advancement at an individual, family and community level is one of the best ways to create the type of opportunities that can deliver real, genuine and lasting change.

BCA members are proactively helping to drive economic and cultural empowerment by supporting Indigenous businesses to expand, innovate, hire more workers and create vibrant ecosystems in their communities.

We are delivering real jobs, and real opportunities.

Business acknowledges it doesn't always get it right in working with the Indigenous community, but we all have a responsibility to do better.

Our ambition is to help create, nurture and grow diversified Indigenous businesses and build economic capability in Indigenous communities.

One of the best ways this can be achieved is when large businesses work with Indigenous businesses through supply chains.

Economic development opportunities are vital. To further advance the prospects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the BCA is working to ensure Indigenous Australians can own and run businesses, attract investment, advance in their careers, develop skills and build up their assets.

Business actions on the ground

- Around 12 million of the 14 million Australians who work are employed in a small, medium or large business.
- BCA member companies employ over 20,000 Indigenous Australians across a range of industries:
 - Woolworths employs more than 4,500 Indigenous workers¹
 - Wesfarmers employs around 3,600 Indigenous workers²
 - BHP employs 2,445 Indigenous workers.³
- BCA member companies spend just over \$1 billion with Indigenous businesses each year.⁴
- BCA members have contributed at least \$25 million to Indigenous education and training initiatives.⁵
- More than 90 per cent of BCA members have an Indigenous engagement strategy.⁶
- BCA members have donated the equivalent of around \$30 million worth of pro-bono and in-kind contributions by supplying expertise, advice and employee hours to Indigenous groups, organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs).⁷
- BCA member investment in Indigenous communities is significant. For example, BHP has invested \$441 million of community development in the Pilbara region.⁸

Raising the Bar – supporting Indigenous businesses to prosper

The BCA developed its Raising the Bar initiative in partnership with Supply Nation, Australia's leading database of verified Indigenous businesses.

Raising the Bar is specifically designed to support BCA members to increase their procurement of goods and services from Indigenous small business suppliers.

Since it began four years ago, the program has more than doubled to include 43 BCA members.

These members operate across the country in a range industries and:

- employ around 600,000 people, including over 15,000 Indigenous Australians⁹
- paid over \$32 billion of company tax¹⁰
- have total revenue over \$400 billion.¹¹

The program requires members to steadily increase their spending with Indigenous businesses to achieve targets set over a number of years.

As part of the Raising the Bar network, signatories share their best practice case studies and report their spend data so that growth can be monitored. It is on track to reach its cumulative target of spending \$3 billion in influenceable spend by 2023-24.

The initiative is effectively a partnership between larger businesses and smaller Indigenous companies that helps them to develop, grow and hire more people.

Through Raising the Bar, BCA members are helping to build the capacity and capability of Indigenous business which is critical to the strength of Indigenous communities.

The program supports the development and expansion of Indigenous businesses that in turn contribute up to \$12 billion to the Australian economy.¹²

- In 2016 BCA members spent \$365 million with Indigenous businesses.¹³
- In 2019 BCA member expenditure reached \$690 million.¹⁴
- In 2023 expenditure reached \$1.045 billion.¹⁵
- Since the start of the program in 2019, spending has reached \$2.17 billion through our partnership with Supply Nation.¹⁶
 - We are on track to reach our target of a cumulative \$3 billion spend with Supply Nation verified Indigenous businesses by 2023-24.
- Total expenditure procuring from Indigenous businesses has reached \$3.1 billion over the past three years. This includes businesses that are registered with Supply Nation, Indigenous Chambers of Commerce and Traditional Owner Groups.

Raising the Bar participating members



BCA Indigenous Engagement Survey

The BCA has conducted an Indigenous Engagement Survey of its members on a biennial basis since 2009.

The survey has enabled the collection of robust and quantifiable evidence over time which demonstrates the progress in achieving a range of objectives regarding Indigenous engagement activities, Indigenous employment and Indigenous procurement strategies.

The survey reveals a common recipe for success and a suite of practices that can be adapted and customised. Almost half of the BCA membership responded to the questionnaire.

The most recent survey was conducted between August and November 2021. Highlights from that report are included below. Findings from the survey are featured in the Indigenous Good Practice Guide.

By identifying and sharing experiences from our members on employment and economic development strategies that work, the Business Council is widely recognised for its leadership role in advocating good practice and policy.

Recent highlights

- 98 per cent of members who responded to the survey have an Indigenous engagement plan or strategy in place around Indigenous engagement.
- 86 per cent of respondents stated that they are making a range of investment contributions to Indigenous education-related programs or partnerships.
- While not all businesses were able to identify the costs associated with this investment, those that did indicated the level of contribution was in the order of \$25.5 million.
- Many businesses reported making pro bono/in-kind contributions in supplying expertise, advice and employee hours to Indigenous groups, organisations and NGOs.
- BCA companies estimated that a total of 38,626 of pro bono hours of time was given to these partnerships with a total dollar value contribution of \$30.7 million and averaging \$1.92 million.
- 92 per cent of BCA members companies that responded to the survey indicated they are collaborating with Indigenous suppliers.

A commitment to Indigenous employment

Coles Group

In 2011, Coles set a target to raise the number of Indigenous team members from just 65 to 3,000 by 2020, bringing its workforce broadly in line with Indigenous representation in the overall Australian population.

Today, Indigenous team members represent 3.5 per cent of Coles' workforce and Coles continues to invest in building its pipeline of Indigenous team members in trade and leadership roles.

Woolworths Group

Woolworths Group currently employs over 4,500 Indigenous team members out of its total Australian workforce of over 185,000 directly employed team members.

The Woolworths Group employment roadmap comprises three work streams across growth, retention and succession. It aims to see many new Indigenous team members join and remain in the Group over the next two years, including leadership roles.

Last year, the company updated its procurement policy and its ambition is to build and work with its supplier base in a way that contributes to the Australian Indigenous business sector.

BHP

In 2022, BHP reported that it had achieved its national Indigenous employment target of 8 per cent three years ahead of schedule, as reported in its recent half yearly results.

Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto has committed \$50 million over five years to attract, retain and grow Indigenous leaders. This initiative has helped Rio Tinto increase the number of Australian Indigenous leaders in their business fivefold since November 2020.

Wesfarmers

Wesfarmers reached the goal of employment parity in 2021. Wesfarmers currently employs 3,600 Indigenous team members or 3.3 per cent of its total Australian workforce.

The company has also invested in the ground-breaking Wesfarmers Indigenous Leadership Program (WILP) aimed at accelerating management and executive opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders across Wesfarmers.

To date, 103 Indigenous team members have participated in either a Certificate II or Certificate IV of Indigenous leadership, delivered by the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre.

Reconciliation and engagement

More than 90 per cent of BCA members have implemented an Indigenous engagement strategy, with 74 per cent of members having plans in place for more than five years.¹⁷

Key motivators for adopting an Indigenous engagement strategy were to support and assist Indigenous economic and social participation.

For BCA members, engaging with Indigenous Australians and communities in practical ways helps build competitive advantage and creates meaningful change.

Advancing education

BCA members are making significant investments to boost the pipeline of Indigenous talent throughout school years, to higher education and into employment.

Eighty six per cent of BCA members reported making a range of investment contributions to Indigenous education-related programs or partnerships.

Businesses indicated that the level of contribution was in the order of \$25.5 million.¹⁸

Investing in communities

Businesses report making pro bono/in-kind contributions in supplying expertise, advice and employee hours to Indigenous groups, organisations and NGOs. This is an important pathway to building relationships and fostering genuine trust with Indigenous communities.

These contributions are estimated to be in the order of 38,626 of pro bono hours of time given to partnerships with Indigenous organisations with a total dollar value contribution of \$30.7 million.¹⁹

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- ¹ Woolworths Group, Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025, Page 7
- ² Wesfarmers, Reconciliation Action Plan, <https://www.wesfarmers.com.au/sustainability/our-priorities/advancing-reconciliation>
- ³ BHP, Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2027, Page 10
- ⁴ BCA and Supply Nation, Raising the Bar Data, 2021-22
- ⁵ BCA Indigenous Good Practice Guide, Page 12
- ⁶ Ibid, Page 5
- ⁷ Ibid, Page 12
- ⁸ BHP Community Development Report 2022, Page 3
- ⁹ Based on Workplace Gender Equality Agency public reports, Reconciliation Actions Plans and other company reporting
- ¹⁰ Based on Australian Taxation Office, 2020-21 Report of Entity Tax Information
- ¹¹ Ibid
- ¹² <https://www.pwc.com.au/indigenous-consulting/economic-contribution-of-indigenous-business-sector-is-growing.html>
- ¹³ BCA Indigenous Engagement Survey Report 2020
- ¹⁴ Ibid
- ¹⁵ BCA Supply Nation Raising the Bar data 2021-22
- ¹⁶ BCA and Supply Nation, Raising the Bar data
- ¹⁷ BCA Good Practice Guide 2022, Page 5
- ¹⁸ Ibid, Page 12
- ¹⁹ Ibid

Materials in case studies:

Coles Group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement, Incorporating 2023 Commitments

Woolworths Group, Reconciliation Action Plan 2023

BHP, media release and article: <https://nit.com.au/28-03-2022/2839/bhp-reaches-indigenous-employment-goal-early-eyes-new-reconciliation-deal>

Rio Tinto, <https://www.riotinto.com/en/sustainability/indigenous-peoples/creating-opportunities>

Wesfarmers, Reconciliation Action Plan, <https://www.wesfarmers.com.au/sustainability/our-priorities/advancing-reconciliation>.

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