

NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) Supplementary submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry: Pathways and Participation Opportunities for Indigenous Australians in Employment and Business

This supplement to our original submission focuses on the impact that COVID-19 has had on opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in Employment and Business.

Various reports have highlighted the devastating impact of COVID-19 on many people in Australia and the disproportionate effect that it is having on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In particular, a recent report by the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) found that the economic impact of COVID-19 has compounded the longstanding poverty, marginalisation and high psychosocial stress experienced by many Aboriginal people.[1]

Researchers from ANU estimate that around 340,000 people relying on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance in NSW have avoided or been lifted out of income poverty due to the Commonwealth Government's relief packages. However, when JobKeeper and the additional payments for JobSeeker end on 28th March, poverty and unemployment figures are expected to rise.

NSWALC notes the \$123 million the Commonwealth Government has made available over two years to support Aboriginal businesses and communities in the aftermath of COVID-19.[2] However, in rolling out this support it will be important for the Government to work closely with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to ensure resources are delivered to where they are needed most.

NSWALC, along with other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, was instrumental in providing the rapid health response to assist Aboriginal communities at the outset of the pandemic, and this approach provides a roadmap for future initiatives.

With rising unemployment and associated increases in social, health and economic stress, Aboriginal led governance, backed by dedicated resources to invest in tailored education, employment, training, initiatives will provide Australia with the best chance of recovery that meets the needs of Aboriginal people.