

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: CDP activities and programs – performance measures

Senator: Susan McDonald

Question reference number: 0001

Type of question: Hansard page 28, 31 March 2023

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Senator McDONALD: When I was in Doomadgee most recently, I was asking participants whether they engaged in the CDP classes. This was prior to the removal of the mutual obligation part, so I understand that my views might be slightly out of date, but the feedback that I had from participants is that they didn't attend because they were boring. What sort of oversight do you have of what is offered and the number of people who are attending? Do you have a review mechanism to say, 'Are the programs appropriate? Are they being attended?' and some trigger mechanisms to say, 'We need to intervene and do something else'? [...]

Senator McDONALD: Are the reporting of attendance and the performance measures that you look at available online?

Ms Elliott: The performance measures are not publicly released, but—

Senator McDONALD: Why is that, do you think? Do you know why? Was that a decision of government?

Ms Elliott: I think it has been part of the program practice. I would have to take on notice to go back to the history on that.

Answer:

It has been practice under the program not to publish provider performance information or activity attendance data. However, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) will explore what information could be made available under the new program, informed by privacy considerations.

Some measures are captured in the publicly released Community Development Program Quarterly Compliance Data (which includes appointment attendance) and the annual Community Development Program Regional Data Report (which includes employment placements and outcomes). These reports are available on NIAA's website.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: NIAA national staffing footprint breakdown

Senator: Susan McDonald

Question reference number: 0002

Type of question: Hansard page 29, 31 March 2023

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator McDONALD: The subset of that is: could you provide on notice where all of those people are located, where their employment is and where they're housed?

Mr Binning: Certainly. I will just make a very general comment, and then we'll provide the numbers on notice. Our organisational structure has a policy and program arm which is essentially based here in Canberra, and that does the policy work, the program design et cetera. But then we have an equally large dispersed network across Australia, which is operations and delivery. So we have both a central function, if you like, and a distributed network across Australia.

CHAIR: It would be great to get that information and that snapshot provided to the committee if that's okay.

Mr Binning: We are very happy to do that on notice.

Answer:

- The below data is as at 31 March 2023.
- Table 1 and 2 below outline where National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) employees are located, by state.
- The work location of NIAA employees fluctuates on a day to day basis as NIAA offers flexible working arrangements which include out posting and working from home arrangements.

Table 1 – Portfolio headcount by State

Portfolio/Function	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Other Functions	278	9	30	16	5		4	6	348
Operations and Delivery	132	71	157	97	43	6	25	78	609
Policy and Programs	479	3	11	8	10		6	2	519
NIAA Total	889	83	198	121	58	6	35	86	1,476

Table 2 – Portfolio proportion of headcount by state

Portfolio/Function	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Other Functions	80%	3%	9%	5%	1%		1%	2%
Operations and Delivery	22%	12%	26%	16%	7%	1%	4%	13%
Policy and Programs	92%	1%	2%	2%	2%		1%	0.4%
NIAA Total	60%	6%	13%	8%	4%	0.4%	2%	6%

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Vocational pathways – supported programs

Senator: Penny Allman-Payne

Question reference number: 0003

Type of question: Hansard page 31, 31 March 2023

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator ALLMAN-PAYNE: I'm conscious that, with secondary schools generally, more students than not are not looking to go to university pathways. I'm particularly interested in what's available and what you're doing in the space of young people who don't want to go to university. We heard earlier today that trying to find appropriate trades and vocational type training in place is quite difficult. I'm interested in what's happening in that space.

Mr Binning: My colleague Mr Ben Burdon, who oversights our education initiatives, is not with us today. I'm happy, on notice, to provide a list of the programs that we support in this space.

Answer:

The Australian Government provides \$1.6 billion annually as a contribution to states and territories for each jurisdiction's Vocational Education and Training (VET) delivery.

Responsibility for VET delivery rests with the states and territories through the National Agreement on Skills and Workforce Development (NASWD).

The rates at which First Nations students are completing qualifications in higher education and vocational education and training are low. For higher education, First Nations students make up around 1.4 per cent of the students completing degrees. For vocational education and training, while First Nations students make up around 4 per cent of students completing qualifications, First Nations students completing a Certificate IV or higher qualification make up around 1.9 per cent of the students completing those qualifications.

First Nations young people's engagement with education is impacted by a range of factors, including racism, discrimination and intergenerational trauma – creating barriers to completing school or accessing higher education pathways.

Access to education alone is not sufficient; a culturally appropriate, holistic, community supported, strengths-based approach will provide the best foundation for young First Nations people to prosper and succeed in higher education. There is a need for initiatives that engage First Nations people through culturally appropriate support to address barriers and the creation of pathways to enable education and meaningful employment outcomes.

Academic self-concept, cultural connectedness, relationship networks, educational culture and teachers, and regionality influence Indigenous student aspiration and motivation (Howard et al., 2020). Briggs (2017) demonstrated a need to provide alternative pathways such as TAFE to disengaged students. First Nations young people can favour the TAFE pathway for its perceived work opportunities and its practical training pathway (Gore et al., 2017a). Better pathways between the VET and higher education systems will be important for lifting the educational attainment of First Nations students, including to support lifelong learning.

For those First Nations students who aspire to and accept a place at university, the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) provides around \$75 million to 40 universities to assist First Nations students succeed at university. The support allows to the universities to provide scholarships, tutorial support, mentoring and other culturally appropriate assistance.

Within the VET sector there are more than 40 First Nations Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

RTOs supporting First Nations students can access the Away from Base (AFB) Program. AFB assists higher education and training providers with the costs of meals, accommodation and travel to support First Nations students who study via mixed-mode or distance education who need to travel away from home for short periods to undertake their studies. This funding can be accessed either through Services Australia or the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). In 2023, around \$19.6 million has been allocated from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to 19 education institutions (both universities and First Nations RTOs around Australia), to assist around 2,700 First Nations students.

The NIAA also funds the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to deliver a project to identify workforce and training gaps for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services and opportunities to build the capacity and capability of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Registered Training Organisations (ACCHRTO) to deliver training services nationally, including workforce requirements. This project includes co-design with the sector and engagement with state and territory governments.

First Nations students are more successful when taught by local trainers on country and in language¹. Expansion of the ACCHRTO sector and other Indigenous training and support services, will provide tools and settings to improve learning outcomes for First Nations students.

¹ Guenther, J, Bat, M, Stephens, A, Skewes, J, Boughton, B, Williamson, F, Woollorton, S, Marshall, M & Dwyer, A 2017, Enhancing training advantage for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, NCVER, Adelaide.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Staffing numbers in Alice Springs

Member: Ms Marion Scrymgour MP

Question reference number: 0004

Type of question: Hansard page 32-33, 31 March 2023

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 2

Question:

CHAIR: Thank you for response. How many staff from NIAA do you have in Alice Springs that service the Central Australia region?

Ms Hill: I would need to check on those figures for you. We have additional staff there at the moment.

CHAIR: Can you take that on notice?

Ms Hill: Absolutely.

CHAIR: So you have additional staff. We want to know what staff you've got servicing the Central Australia region and how many of those staff are local Aboriginal staff delivering those programs. If you could take that on notice and provided it to the committee, that would be good.

Ms Hill: To clarify: that's staff working specifically on grants administration, or does it include—

CHAIR: It is staff across the department. If you've got staff doing policy or doing consultation and communication with Aboriginal communities, it would be good to know what those numbers are and what tasks they are undertaking across—I'm saying Central Australia, but could NIAA nationally let us know what those are? It goes to Senator McDonald's question about regionalisation and how many staff are in the region.

Answer:

The data below is as at 31 March 2023.

The Central Australia Group had:

- 133 employees
- 49 Identified Indigenous employees
 - This represented 37% of the Central Australia Group

The Alice Springs office had:

- 31 employees
- 12 Identified Indigenous employees
 - This represented 39% of the Alice Springs office

Across NIAA nationally the following employees were working in regional areas (non-capital cities):

- 288 employees
 - This represented 20% of the total NIAA headcount (1,476 employees)
- 128 Identified Indigenous employees
 - This represented 44% of the total regional headcount

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: CDP providers from the Northern Territory

Member: Ms Marion Scrymgour MP

Question reference number: 0005

Type of question: Hansard page 33, 31 March 2023

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 4

Question:

CHAIR: Can you answer the second part of that question? How many providers are actually from the local area—or are they all external providers? If I just look at the Northern Territory, can you give me an answer, or provide an answer on notice: how many of those providers are actually from the Northern Territory, and how many are external to the Northern Territory and fly-in fly-out?

Ms Elliott: I'm aware that you have asked that question previously, and I think a response is being prepared, but I will also take that on notice specifically on the Northern Territory.

Answer:

The most recent CDP provider selection process in 2018/19 gave preference to local Indigenous organisations. Around 85% of CDP regions have a local Indigenous organisation or local council leading CDP service delivery, or participating through a partnership arrangement. All CDP providers are required to have a permanent presence in one or more full-time sites in each region and must provide services across all communities.

Further details on CDP providers for each region in the Northern Territory is below.

CDP Region	Organisation Name	Notes
20 - South East Alice Region NT	CatholicCare NT with Atyenhenge-atherre Aboriginal Corporation	Shared control with material subcontractor and local Aboriginal Corporation, Atyenhenge-atherre Aboriginal Corporation.
21 - South West Alice Region NT	RN Employment Services (RISE-Ngurratjuta Pty Ltd)	Joint venture with local Aboriginal Corporation Ngurratjuta / Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation and Jobfind Centres Australia (trading as RISE Ventures)
22 - West Alice Region NT	Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation	Local Aboriginal Corporation
23 - Alice Springs District NT	Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation	Local Aboriginal Corporation with material subcontractor CatholicCare NT.
24 - North East Alice Region NT	Rainbow Gateway Limited	Based in Mt Isa QLD. Part of MYUMA Group, which is owned by Indjalandji-Dhidhanu peoples.
25 - North West Alice Region NT	Central Desert Regional Council	Local Council
26 - South East Barkly Region NT	RN Employment Services (RISE-Ngurratjuta Pty Ltd)	Joint venture with Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation and Jobfind Centres Australia (trading as RISE Ventures)
27 - Far West Alice Region NT	Ngurratjuta-Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation	Local Aboriginal Corporation
28 - North Barkly Region NT	RN Employment Services (RISE-Ngurratjuta Pty Ltd)	Joint venture with Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation and Jobfind Centres Australia (trading as RISE Ventures)
29 - Gulf Region NT	Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation	Local Aboriginal Corporation

CDP Region	Organisation Name	Notes
29 - Gulf Region NT	Roper Gulf Regional Council	Local Council
30 - Ngukurr / Numbulwar Region NT	My CDP Ngukurr Numbulwar Pty Ltd	Joint venture with local Aboriginal Corporation Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation, as well as Indigenous Empowerment Network and ITEC Employment
30 - Ngukurr / Numbulwar Region NT	Roper Gulf Regional Council	Local Council
31 - Katherine Region NT	Kalano Community Association Incorporated	Local Aboriginal Corporation with material subcontractor Jobfind Centres Australia (trading as RISE Ventures)
32 - Victoria River Region NT	Victoria Daly Regional Council	Local Council
33 - Central Arnhem Region NT	Nyirrunggulung-RISE Pty Ltd	Joint venture with local Aboriginal Corporation Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation and Jobfind Centres Australia (trading as RISE Ventures)
34 - Wadeye Region NT	Thamarrurr Development Corporation Ltd	Local Aboriginal organisation with material subcontractor and local Aboriginal Corporation Deewin Kirim Aboriginal Corporation
35 - Darwin Daly Region NT	Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation	Local Aboriginal Corporation
36 - Tiwi Region NT	Tiwi Islands Training & Employment Board	Local Aboriginal organisation
37 - West Arnhem Region NT	The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)	Local/Regional level Aboriginal Corporation
37 - West Arnhem Region NT	Yagbani Aboriginal Corporation	Local Aboriginal Corporation

CDP Region	Organisation Name	Notes
38 - Maningrida Region NT	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation	Local Aboriginal Corporation
39 - Milingimbi / Ramingining Region NT	The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)	Local/Regional level Aboriginal Corporation
40 - Galiwin'ku Region NT	The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)	Local/Regional level Aboriginal Corporation
41 - Gapuwiyak-Yirrkala Region NT	The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)	Local/Regional level Aboriginal Corporation
42 - Groote Region NT	Groote Eylandt & Bickerton Island Enterprises Aboriginal Corporation (GEBIE)	Local Aboriginal Corporation

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: List of policies and programs addressing issues in Northern Australia

Member: Ms Marion Scrymgour MP

Question reference number: 0006

Type of question: Hansard page 34, 31 March 2023

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 6

Question:

CHAIR: I have one more question and then I'll see if other members of the committee have any. What are the main issues the Australian government or the department is focused on addressing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in northern Australia? You can take this on notice if it's longwinded: what initiatives and policies does the government or the department have in place or intend to implement? That's where, if your new CDP framework hasn't been implemented yet, it'd be good to get some further information to address these issues.

Mr Binning: I'll invite my regional colleagues to speak first on their priorities, but I think it's also best that we take it on notice because you're also looking for a listing of those policies and programs that we've got moving forward. I'm happy to provide that on notice, but I'll pass it to my colleagues.

Answer:

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening First Nations economic and job opportunities, including in Northern Australia.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) has a number of national programs that centre on workforce development, but it is important to view these in the context of the NIAA's continuing practice of place-based operations. The needs and priorities across First Nations communities in metropolitan, regional and remote areas of Northern Australia – as expressed by those communities – vary, and our local operations place requisite emphasis on the programs outlined below along with other areas as identified by communities directly.

In addition to the workforce-specific initiatives outlined below, the agency invests significant funding in education – primarily in early years and schooling initiatives – which also supports stronger engagement in the workforce.

Our programmatic efforts are aligned with the Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord, an intergovernmental agreement focussed on progressing Indigenous economic development. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) works closely with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and other agencies to promote employment and economic development in Northern Australia. The NIAA currently supports the following programs and policies:

1) Community Development Program

The Government is delivering on its commitment to replace the Community Development Program (CDP) with a new program with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions – developed in partnership with First Nations people. The new program will give communities more control to determine local projects and increase economic opportunities and jobs in remote areas. As we progress towards a new program, services will continue through an extension of CDP provider arrangements to October 2024. This will not be business as usual and extensions will be dependent on the providers' ability to build on the current trials, capture learnings and further strengthen community led approaches. This will allow for the generation of further ideas to inform a new jobs program, while also allowing time to deliver on our commitment to work in partnership with First Nations people.

2) New Jobs Program Trial

To support the Commonwealth's commitment to replace CDP and trial new approaches to real jobs, \$9.4 million has been committed for an additional pilot to fund 200 real jobs in remote communities. A New Jobs Program Trial will allow a broader range of organisations to test approaches to inform the new program that will replace CDP. The new program will be informed by outcomes from comprehensive consultation, engagement across multiple Commonwealth agencies and a number of trials that are underway.

3) Time to Work Employment Service

The Time to Work Employment Service (TWES) is a national voluntary in-prison employment service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The program assists adult, sentenced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners to access the support they need to better prepare them to find employment and reintegrate into the community upon their release from prison.

4) 1,000 Jobs Package

The 1,000 Jobs Package aims to increase employment opportunities in remote Australia for CDP participants. Eligible employers can receive financial support of up to \$61,058.36 (GST exclusive) over two years, including retention bonuses, to help them hire a CDP participant in a new, ongoing job located in a CDP region. The 1,000 Jobs Package is a demand driven, eligibility-based grant opportunity and includes a Youth Engagement Jobs stream that aims to support young people to strengthen their engagement with their culture and community and promote social wellbeing. The 1,000 Jobs Package closes to new applications on 30 June 2023.

5) Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP)

The Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) is about connecting First Nations people to jobs, career advancement opportunities, and to new training and job-ready activities. In supporting organisations to design activities with community before implementing them, ISEP leverages the distinct strengths and interests of local First Nations communities and employers. Complementing (but not duplicating) mainstream employment services, ISEP-funded activities will reflect regional priorities that have been identified by the NIAA but guided by local knowledge. In this way, activities funded through ISEP will make an impact where it is most needed.

The NIAA is currently conducting a grant assessment process, after having provided support to 64 organisations (28 in Northern Australia) to develop their ISEP proposals with communities and key stakeholders.

6) Indigenous Business and Employment Hubs

The Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network has been contracted to deliver the Northern Territory (NT) Business and Employment Hub (the Hub). The Hub has been co-designed with community to be a culturally safe and inclusive place for First Nations entrepreneurs, business owners and job seekers, especially women and youth. Officially launched in April 2023, the Hub will improve connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to government business support services as well as employment and procurement opportunities across the NT. The Hub is also a place where business owners can access business training and support as well as network, meet with clients and work. The Hub is located in the Darwin CBD with satellite offices now open in Alice Springs and Katherine. A third satellite office will be opened in Tennant Creek in mid to late 2023.

7) Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP)

The primary purpose of the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) is to stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing Indigenous Australians with more opportunities to participate in the economy. The IPP requires:

- a) Annual targets to be set for the volume and value of contracts to be awarded to Indigenous enterprises by the Commonwealth and each Portfolio.
- b) A Mandatory Set Aside to be applied to procurements to be delivered in remote Australia and for procurements wholly delivered in Australia valued between \$80,000-\$200,000 (GST inclusive). This ensures Indigenous businesses are given an opportunity to demonstrate value for money before a general approach to market occurs.
- c) Indigenous employment and business participation targets to be included in contracts wholly delivered in Australia valued at \$7.5 million or more in 19 industries, known as the Mandatory Minimum Indigenous Participation Requirements.

8) Many Rivers business development support

Many Rivers is funded to deliver microbusiness and community economic development support through their Microenterprise Development (MED) and Community Economic Development (CED) programs. The MED program provides business support and microenterprise loans to microbusinesses. The CED program provides support to regional and remote First Nations communities to identify opportunities to strengthen planning, leadership and organisational capacity and capability, enabling communities to independently govern and manage their chosen activities.

9) Indigenous Business Australia

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) is funded to provide the Business Solutions Program (BSP) and deliver a Performance Bond facility. The BSP provides business finance products, business support services and business skills workshops to First Nations entrepreneurs in urban, regional and remote Australia. The Performance Bond facility delivers a bond product for First Nations businesses looking to secure larger contracts, particularly in construction and infrastructure. Separately to NIAA funding, IBA also deliver a program for First Nations women in business called Strong Women Strong Business. This is a support network that provides First Nations women entrepreneurs with access to tailored advice and support from other First Nations business women.

10) Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC)

The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) assists Indigenous people with the acquisition and management of land and water resources so they can achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits. The ILSC provides services including brokering and developing partnerships and funding assistance.

11) Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF)

The Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), which finances infrastructure projects in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. NAIF's mission is to be an innovative financing partner in the growth of Northern Australia.

12) First Nations Tourism

The Government is working with First Nations businesses to grow and expand their tourism activities through grants, mentoring and a co-investment in tourism projects with state and territory governments. The Government has identified a key priority to grow unique and high-quality products, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences in its long-term tourism strategy, THRIVE 2030. This recognises the importance of increasing First Nations participation in Australia's visitor economy.

13) Indigenous Employment and Supplier-Use Infrastructure Framework

As part of the National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects, the Indigenous Employment and Supplier-use Infrastructure Framework applies to new road and rail construction projects. The Framework sets out a whole-of-government approach to increase opportunities for Indigenous job-seekers and businesses' participation in the delivery of Australian Government-funded land transport infrastructure projects.

Under the Framework, funding recipients are required to develop an Indigenous Participation Plan for all road and rail construction projects receiving \$7.5 million or more of Australian Government funding, projects funded under the Roads of Strategic Importance Northern Australia, and where there is high potential to support Indigenous outcomes. This Framework is implemented by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

14) Developing East Arnhem Land

Developing East Arnhem Land (DEAL) delivers business support activities for Economic Development in East Arnhem Land. These activities aim to address a growing need in the region for dedicated support for governance, administration, logistics, strategy, fundraising, financial management, leadership and mentorship, which are constraints to small scale First Nations corporations and entrepreneurs growing and expanding. DEAL also works to mitigate economic impacts when mining activities wind down, such as Rio Tinto's exit from Nhulunbuy by 2026.

15) Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment

The Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) is an agreement between the Australian and Northern Territory (NT) governments to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal peoples in remote areas of the NT. The original agreement concluded on 30 June 2022, but was extended for two years to 30 June 2024 to support the continuity of around 400 jobs and services, such as women's safe houses, remote child and family services, early childhood services, schooling and remote policing. The NTRAI extension is an additional \$174.23 million, including \$7.27 million to non-government schools.

The two-year extension provides time for the Australian Government to design the future investment in remote areas of the Northern Territory in partnership with the NT Government and Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT). To support this work, the Australian Government has also provided \$3 million to APO NT to support their participation in the partnership.

16) Indigenous Rangers Program

This program assists First Nations people to manage Country in accordance with Traditional Owners' objectives, delivering environmental, cultural, economic and social outcomes. Currently over \$748 million is approved for 80 provider organisations across Australia to employ 894 full time equivalent positions through 128 ranger groups.

The 2022-23 Budget committed \$636.4 million through the Indigenous Rangers Capacity Building measure to expand the Indigenous Rangers Program, fund junior ranger initiatives and expand the sector. This funding will help to meet the Government's commitment to double the number of Indigenous rangers by the end of the decade and work towards gender equity in ranger positions.

17) Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Program (IBMP)

The Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Program (IBMP) supports 46 providers to deliver or support First Nations broadcasting services across Australia. First Nations broadcasters provide a primary and essential service for the communities they serve. The IBMP provides meaningful employment to First Nations people, particularly in regional and remote areas.

18) Local Investments Funding (LIF)

The Local Investments Funding Grant Opportunity enables strategic and rapid responses to address local issues to benefit First Nations people and facilitate improved community and government engagement. The objective of the LIF is to deliver outcomes, aligned to community needs, government priorities and Closing the Gap targets. LIF provides funding of no more than \$100,000 (GST exclusive) for:

- a) generally small scale, short-term, one-off proposals to address immediate local need and which have community support;
- b) a variety of activities, ranging from small scale infrastructure and cultural activities, through to a co-contribution to larger projects; and
- c) activities that leverage other government funding and may include co-contributions for larger projects with other governments, local councils or organisations.

19) Agency Collaborates

The Agency Collaborates Grant Opportunity permits the NIAA to consider grant proposals that deliver an activity or service that responds to an unmet need for First Nations people. Proposals should be developed with the target community or group who will be impacted by the activity, and may be initiated by community proponents, or through a direct approach from the NIAA.

20) Native Title and Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs)

The NIAA funds a national system of 14 Native Title Representative Bodies/Service Providers (NTRB/SPs) to provide assistance to native title claimants and holders under the Native Title Act 1993. NTRBs/SPs are funded to provide quality legal and research services to native title claimants and holders, including establishment and support for PBCs. Around \$120 million is provided to the NTRB/SPs nationally each year. This includes funding for Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers and PBCs, a significant number of which are located in Northern Australia.

In addition the NIAA supports PBCs in two main ways:

- a) PBCs Basic Support: provided through NTRB/SP to help PBCs meet basic compliance obligations. In 2021-22 NIAA provided \$10.8 million in Basic Support. In 2022-23 funding allocation has increased to \$12.14 million nationally.
- b) The PBC Capacity Building grant program, supporting PBCs realise the social, cultural and economic benefits of their native title. Over 90 PBC capacity building projects have been funded to date (over \$50 million). Of these, around two thirds of project supported are in Northern Australia.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: NTRAI

Member: Ms Marion Scrymgour MP

Question reference number: 0007

Type of question: Hansard page 34, 31 March 2023

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Number of pages: 2

Question:

CHAIR: Before you do that, I'll ask a supplementary question to that. Mr Dyer or Fleur, as you're from the Northern Territory, can I ask for further information on the NTRAI that was recently signed off with the Northern Territory government in terms of schools, child protection and transition support. As I understand it, there's also a big component in there for remote policing.

Mr Binning: Yes, thank you.

Mr Dyer: Would you like a response now, or do you want us to take it on notice?

CHAIR: If it helps us with time efficiency, you can take it on notice and provide it to the committee. That would be helpful.

Mr Dyer: Certainly, I'm happy to.

Answer:

The National Partnership on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment Extension (NTRAI) is an agreement between the Australian Government and Northern Territory (NT) Government under the *Federal Financial Relations Act 2009*. The NTRAI provides funding to the Northern Territory Government for a range of services specified under the agreement. The NTRAI also references a payment to the NT Block Grant Authority to provide supplementary funding for non-government schools that operate in remote and very remote areas of the NT.

The NTRAI includes four Implementation Plans, with some plans containing multiple Schedules. The Implementations Plans are publicly available and can be found on the Federal Financial Relations website, <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/agreements/northern-territory-remote-aboriginal-investment-ntrai-extension>.

The 2022-24 NTRAI provides \$174.2 million for health, education, community safety and Aboriginal interpreter services in remote NT communities, and ensures continuity for around 400 jobs. NTRAI funded activities and services contribute to the following outcomes for Aboriginal people living in remote areas of the NT:

- improved school readiness, attendance, educational achievement, and attainment of students in and from remote and very remote areas;
- improved safety and wellbeing of individuals, children and families, and communities
- improved hearing and oral health of children;
- improved housing in remote communities;
- improved access to services through support from Aboriginal interpreters.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: IAS spend across Northern Australia

Member: Ms Marion Scrymgour MP

Question reference number: 0008

Type of question: Hansard page 34, 31 March 2023

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Question:

CHAIR: If either you or Mr Binning can provide a breakdown of how much of the IAS is spent across northern Australia, that would be good.

Mr Binning: I can do that.

Answer:

The portion of Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding allocated to Northern Australia, (the Northern Territory and those parts of Queensland and Western Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn), in the 2022-23 financial year is \$736 million. The total IAS funding allocation across all locations in the 2022-2023 financial year is \$1.35 billion.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: PBC funding across Northern Australia

Member: Ms Marion Scrymgour MP

Question reference number: 0009

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Number of pages: Two (2)

Question:

CHAIR: We could probably have a separate conversation in terms of PBCs and the funding, because there was some evidence earlier about the lack of funding that is provided to PBCs. I might just add that to the list for NIAA as to what level of funding and support is given to PBCs across northern Australia. We don't need to know the eastern seaboard, but just across northern Australia would be good.

Mr Binning: Ms Rachel Kerrigan to provide a couple of comments on that.

Ms Kerrigan: Across the native title sector there's around \$125 million in this year to support both the rep bodies and service providers, who are also funded. Their legislative functions under the Native Title Act include supporting the establishment of PBCs and then post determination. Then, through the rep bodies there is basic support funding. I understand that was part of the conversation earlier today as well. In addition to that, there is PBC capacity building funding, which is focused on supporting PBCs to identify economic or social cultural opportunities, build their governance and take forward aspirations that can be pursued following having rights and interests in land.

CHAIR: Is that \$125 million just for northern Australia or is that the totality for the whole of Australia?

Ms Kerrigan: That's the figure for Australia as a whole. I don't have the specific breakdown. A large proportion of the PBCs are in northern Australia, so a lot of that investment does go into the north. We can take that on notice. [...]

Answer: Across the native title sector, approximately \$57.4 million is funded to date this financial year to support native title and PBCs in Northern Australia. This comprises:

- \$39.1 million Native Title Representative Body and Service Provider (NTRB/SP) operational funding. Note, this is an estimate as NTRB/SP representative regions do not align exactly with the Northern Australia definition. Approximately half of Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's funding has been included (representing the Pilbara region, though not the Geraldton region) and all of the Central Land Council, Northern Land Council, Carpentaria Land Council, Cape York Land Council, Kimberley Land Council and North Queensland Land Council regions. Neither of the

Central Desert Native Title Services or Queensland South Native Title Services regions have been included in calculations, although noting that a small proportion of the land mass within each of these regions is classified as northern Australia.

- \$6.8 million PBC basic support funding through the NTRB/SPs to support the basic operational and statutory compliance requirements of the PBCs in the NTRB/SPs' representative regions.
- \$7.1 million PBC Capacity Building Funding.
- \$2.7 million to the National Native Title Council for a number of Australia-wide projects to support and develop the PBC sector.
- \$1.5 million to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to undertake research and support to the native title and PBC sector Australia-wide.
- \$0.2 million for PBC governance and leadership training Australia-wide.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Key issues for Committee's focus

Question reference number: 0010

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Which key issues related to workforce development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Northern Australia would you suggest the committee focus on as a matter of priority?

Answer:

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) suggests the Committee focus on the following key issues related to workforce development for First Nations people in Northern Australia:

- Strengthened engagement and governance mechanisms for working in partnership with communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
- Building the social and economic infrastructure required to support and establish a permanent workforce and population base in Northern Australia. This endeavour involves addressing limited supply chains; costly and limited transport infrastructure and service delivery; a smaller, less diversified economic base; and intense competition for skilled labour.
- Supporting the ongoing development of Indigenous businesses with business mentoring and support, and opening pathways for capital investment including through Prescribed Bodies Corporate and the recently established Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation.
- Identifying opportunities to leverage Indigenous owned and controlled land and sea assets for business and employment.
- Strengthened partnerships across all governments to support local place based employment in communities for the delivery of services.
- Opportunities in key sectors in Northern Australia to boost employment of First Nations people, particularly those in remote communities, including primary industries, mining, services (including Government services of education, health care and municipal services), renewable energy and tourism.
- Addressing skills shortages among First Nations people in Northern Australia, including through reviewing available education and vocational training opportunities.

- The role of all governments in job creation and providing employment support services, noting the Commonwealth Government is progressing its commitment to replace the Community Development Program (CDP) in remote Australia with a new program with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions – developed in partnership with First Nations people.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Australian Government's collaborative arrangements

Question reference number: 0011

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 3

Question:

Please outline for the committee collaborative arrangements the Australian Government has in place to work with states and territories on matters concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Northern Australia.

- How can collaboration and coordination between levels of government be improved?
- How are you working with remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on matters related to workforce development?

Answer:

Collaborative arrangements

The Commonwealth Government works on employment and economic development issues with State and Territory Governments through a range of collaborative arrangements, including:

- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which involves all Australian governments working with First Nations people, their communities, organisations and businesses at the national, state and territory, and local levels. In particular, under the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, the Commonwealth has committed to progress Outcome 7: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education* and Outcome 8: *Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities*.
- The Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord, which is an intergovernmental agreement focussed on progressing Indigenous economic development in Northern Australia.
- Ad-hoc and issues-based processes, such as joint consultations between the Commonwealth Government and Northern Territory Government with remote communities and other stakeholders in Central Australia, as part of the Commonwealth Government's implementation of the *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia* package announced by the Prime Minister on 6 February 2023.

Improving collaboration and coordination between levels of government

The Commonwealth Government is committed to improving collaboration and working in genuine partnership with First Nations people, in line with the four Priority Reforms in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The National Agreement is also a key framework through which the Commonwealth Government and Governments of States and Territories, are looking to improve coordination of efforts to improve the lives of First Nations people.

The Commonwealth Government and States and Territories are also looking to improve working level collaboration and coordination as opportunities arise. For example, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and Northern Territory Government are exchanging regularly on workforce development issues in the context of the Commonwealth Government's investment in the *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia* plan, announced by the Prime Minister on 6 February 2023.

The Commonwealth Government has also committed to work with members of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to examine a Closing the Gap policy partnership on economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as an outcome of the Jobs and Skills Summit on 1-2 September 2022. Should this progress and include workforce development as a focus area, this would be a new mechanism to coordinate Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments alongside First Nations experts and stakeholders on employment and economic development issues.

Working with remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on workforce development

The NIAA works with First Nations communities on employment and economic development, including remote communities, through a range of programs across Northern Australia. These programs, as with all NIAA activities, adopt a place-based approach where appropriate that prioritises the needs of First Nations communities. A list of these programs follows, for details refer to NIAA response to Question 6.

- Community Development Program (CDP)
- New Jobs Program Trial
- Time to Work Employment Service (TWES)
- 1,000 Jobs Package'
- Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP)
- Indigenous Business and Employment Hubs
- Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP)
- Many Rivers business development support
- Indigenous Business Australia
- First Nations Tourism
- Indigenous Employment and Supplier-Use Infrastructure Framework
- Developing East Arnhem Land
- Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment
- Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Program (IMBP)
- Local Investments Funding (LIF)
- Agency Collaborates.

The NIAA is also supporting the National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance – a grouping of First Nations employment and training organisations – which has as one of its objectives the formation of a peak body of employment and training organisations. The NIAA is providing funding for the Alliance to hold a forum in May 2023 to facilitate dialogue and debate on employment and training approaches for First Nations people. It is possible that this Forum and future work of the Alliance will focus on issues impacting workforce development in Northern Australia.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Factors to leave or stay in Northern Australia

Question reference number: 0012

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What factors encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to stay in Northern Australia, or to leave?

Answer:

- The Northern Territory Government (NTG) is best placed to answer this question.
- The NTG Department of Treasury and Finance publish information on the NT population, including population characteristics and key components of population growth such as natural increase, net interstate migration and net overseas migration.
- The report is found at <https://nteconomy.nt.gov.au/population>
- The latest report states net interstate migration is highly volatile and tends to detract from NT population growth. The report states that arrivals and departures to and from the NT are influenced by a range of factors including economic and labour market conditions, lifestyle, housing prices and location of family. Unfortunately, the report does not break-down the migration data by demographics so we are unable to directly answer this question.
- The NTG Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet has released a 2018- 2028 Population Growth Strategy. This strategy is aimed at attracting people to the NT and encouraging those already in the NT to stay for the longer term. The strategy identifies the need for research to better understand the drivers of interstate migration.
- The strategy is found at https://population.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/559384/Population-Strategy.pdf

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Industry work with organisations

Question reference number: 0013

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How can industry work better with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to employ more Indigenous Australians?

Answer:

There are numerous opportunities for industry to connect with First Nations organisations to employ more Indigenous Australians, including through engagement with various Indigenous-led chambers of commerce, such as the recently established National Indigenous Business Chambers Alliance, and Indigenous business advocates, such as Supply Nation, which provides Australia's leading database of verified Indigenous businesses.

Employers can also build links with employment and skills organisations, such as those implementing Workforce Australia employment services and the Community Development Program (CDP). A new opportunity to collaborate with First Nations employment and skills organisations is the upcoming Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP). Through connecting First Nations people to jobs, career advancement pathways, and to new training and job-ready activities, ISEP projects respond to local needs, and present opportunities to engage with industry to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers.

By prioritising First Nations organisations as suppliers and partners, industry can create and expand authentic partnerships with First Nations organisations, and develop more culturally aware and inclusive workplaces. There are also several First Nations organisations across Northern Australia that are in a position to offer a range of cultural competency training and advice to industry, which is essential for attracting and retaining First Nations employees.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Industries employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Northern Australia

Question reference number: 0014

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1 page and 1 attachment (3 pages)

Question:

Which industries predominantly employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Northern Australia?

- Please provide data on the industries that most employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- What initiatives do these industries have in place that other industries could learn from?

Answer:

The NIAA's analysis of data collected through the 2021 Australian Census indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Northern Australia are predominantly employed in the following industries:

- Health Care and Social Assistance (16 per cent of total);
- Public Administration and Safety (14 per cent of total); and
- Education and Training (10 per cent of total).

Further detail is provided at Attachment A: *First Nations employees living in Northern Australia – by industry of employment (Chart 1)* and *First Nations employees living in Northern Australia – by industry of employment (Chart 2)*.

In general, employers with genuine relationships with community, endorsed Reconciliation Action Plans, commitment to developing cultural competency among staff and a culturally safe environment in the workplace are more likely to attract and retain First Nations people.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Data used to track employment outcomes

Question reference number: 0015

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 2

Question:

What data do you use to track employment outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Northern Australia?

Answer:

Demographic, economic and employment data on Northern Australia and the First Nations population in the North remains patchy. Existing Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data is a key resource to track high level First Nations employment trends over time, but is often not adequate to construct a detailed picture of employment trends in Northern Australia. Other resources include the Productivity Commission's Annual Data Compilation Report on Closing the Gap, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Indigenous Employment Snapshot.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) receives employment outcomes data from Community Development Program (CDP) providers when participants in the program start work and when they remain in a job for 13 and 26 weeks, and tracks these through the CDP IT System. This data is published annually at a CDP-regional level on the NIAA website. The broader CDP data set also enables an understanding of caseload characteristics that contextualise the levels of employment outcomes under the program, facilitating a deeper understanding of the impacts of factors such as participants' age, degree of remoteness, education levels, access to transport, and English language proficiency.

Employment and CDP data informs the NIAA's engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, the operational settings of the CDP, and also the policy and program settings being considered in the replacement of the CDP with a new program focussed on real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions – developed in partnership with First Nations people. The NIAA is exploring integrating CDP data with other data sources to help inform policy development.

The NIAA has also been provided with employment related outcome data from the approximately 116 Indigenous Employment Program service providers (who have received support through the Tailored Assistance Employment Grant (TAEG), Vocational Training and Education Centre (VTEC) or Employment Parity Initiative (EPI) programs) which have operated in Northern Australia at some point since 2014. This data informed a comprehensive evaluation of the Indigenous Employment Programs published on the NIAA website in 2021, which has in turn informed the design of a new initiative, the Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP). ISEP will support projects designed with local communities that focus on connecting First Nations people to jobs, career advancement opportunities, and to new training and job-ready activities.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Evaluation regarding effectiveness of government policy

Question reference number: 0016

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1

Question:

How do you evaluate the effectiveness of government policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Northern Australia and whether it is fit-for-purpose?

Answer:

The evaluation of the effectiveness of Australian Government policy, including Commonwealth Government policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Northern Australia, is guided by the Commonwealth Evaluation Framework (CEF).

The CEF is principle-based and guides entities to use evaluation in program design and build evaluation into the ongoing governance of programs to ensure government policy is fit-for-purpose. The CEF requires evaluation to be conducted to a standard that is credible and evidence-based. Data collection and evaluation practices must address relevant ethical, cultural and privacy considerations.

Evaluation of programs funded through the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA's) Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), is also guided by the NIAA's Indigenous Advancement Strategy Evaluation Framework. This requires evaluations to be relevant, robust, credible and appropriate.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Workforce issues – differences in regions in Northern Australia

Question reference number: 0017

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 6

Question:

Please outline the key differences in workforce issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders between regions in Northern Australia.

Answer:

Many of the opportunities and challenges relating to First Nations workforce development in Northern Australia are similar. These include skills shortages, remoteness and thin labour markets, undercapitalisation of the First Nations business sector, lack of access to services including education, health and child care, and lack of data to inform policy and program responses.

Opportunities for work also vary across the region depending on the economic opportunities presented. For example primary industries and mining are major drivers of private investment and opportunities are emerging through the activities associated with the investment of mining royalties through Prescribed Bodies Corporates.

In August-September 2021 the NIAA conducted thorough consultations with communities across Australia to determine priorities for each NIAA region – “Regional Priorities” – for the new Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP). These Regional Priorities provide insight into what First Nations employment and skills investments are perceived as the most important by First Nations stakeholders in each region. A summary follows of Regional Priorities in six NIAA regions covering Northern Australia. The full list of Regional Priorities in Northern Australia regions with additional detail is at [Attachment A](#)¹

Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt

- Supported youth pathways
- Workforce development
- Training

¹ A report of the ISEP consultations is available on the NIAA website (www.niaa.gov.au/resource-centre/indigenous-affairs/isep-consultations-and-discussion-paper-findings-report). The full list of Regional Priorities was made publicly available for the duration of the call for grant applications on GrantConnect.

- Culturally safe workplaces
- Care sector (aged & disability/allied health & health)

Top End and Tiwi Islands

- Supporting pathways to employment in the care industry
- Provide and support access to mentoring services
- Culturally safe workplaces

Central Australia

- Work Readiness Investments – Foundation Skills
- Work Readiness Investments – Employment Skills
- Health Sectors
- Mining Sectors
- Governance and administration skills for Culturally Safe Workplaces

North Queensland

- Supported youth pathways
- Workforce development
- Training
- Culturally safe workplaces
- Priority Sectors – see Attachment A for details

Greater Western Australia

- First Nations job seekers aged 15-24 and 25-64 with a priority given to First Nations women to enable more women into workforce.
- Transition from school to employment
- Focus on long term unemployed and job seekers with disability
- Transition from prison to work
- Priority industries for First Nations employment are: Health care and Social Sector, Construction Retail and Hospitality and Education and Training

Kimberley

- Training and Workforce Development
- Pathways for youth
- Economic development
- Culturally appropriate and safe workplaces

Attachment A: Indigenous Skills and Employment Program Regional Priorities *(Northern Australia regions only)*

Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt

- **Supported youth pathways** - Community development projects that provide a well-supported pathway for Youth (15-24) to transition into further schooling/education or employment, and that builds local, sustained capability through the employment and formal upskilling of First Nations youth mentors and youth workers.
- **Workforce development** - Projects which directly build the capability of the existing First Nations workforce of employers and emerging industries through training (accredited and non-accredited), mentoring and wrap-around support; and/or provide a supported pathway for career progression or the transition to different sectors to meet the growing needs of the region or community, including labour hire/labour pool models.
- **Training** - Provision of locally tailored and delivered, and adequately resourced, accredited and non-accredited training to meet the needs of employers, industries, and supported adult education needs, including tailored delivery of numeracy and literacy training.
- **Culturally safe workplaces** - Provision of cross-cultural training, mentoring and support services for workplaces/employers to sustainably build their capability to provide an ongoing culturally safe workplace tailored to the local community and workforce needs.
- **Care sector (aged & disability/allied health & health)** - Projects which directly build the capability and capacity of the local care sector First Nations workforces through training (accredited and non-accredited), mentoring, and wrap-around support to meet the growing needs of the region or community.

Top End and Tiwi Islands

- **Supporting pathways to employment in the care industry** – specifically disability and aged care
- **Provide and support access to mentoring services** to keep First Nations Australians in employment and training
- **Culturally safe workplaces** - provision of cross-cultural training, mentoring and support services for workplaces/employers to sustainably build their capability to provide an ongoing culturally safe workplace tailored to the local community and workforce needs

Central Australia

- **Work Readiness Investments – Foundation Skills:** These cover a range of investment opportunities including strengthening foundation employment skills in the 15 – 19 years old age cohort, particularly been identified in the Barkly Region.
- **Work Readiness Investments – Employment Skills:** Specific training relevant to local employment opportunities is required to realise the opportunities in the region, such as highway upgrades, NDIS investment and the mining sector.
- **Health Sectors:** Including health, aged care and NDIS, with focus on training and support for local residents.
- **Mining Sectors:** With a focus on economic development in the Tanami region.
- **Governance and administration skills for Culturally Safe Workplaces:** Governance and administrative skills development and embedding of culturally appropriate decision making and delivery arrangements also provides a real employment opportunity.

North Queensland

- **Supported youth pathways** - Community development projects that provide a well-supported pathway for Youth (15-24) to transition into further schooling/education or employment, and that builds local, sustained capability through the employment and formal upskilling of First Nations youth mentors and youth workers.
- **Workforce development** - Projects which directly build the capability of the existing First Nations workforce of employers and emerging industries through training (accredited and non-accredited), mentoring and wrap-around support; and/or provide a supported pathway for career progression or the transition to different sectors to meet the growing needs of the region or community, including labour hire/labour pool models.
- **Training** - Provision of locally tailored and delivered, and adequately resourced, accredited and non-accredited training to meet the needs of employers, industries, and supported adult education needs, including tailored delivery of numeracy and literacy training.
- **Culturally safe workplaces** - Provision of cross-cultural training, mentoring and support services for workplaces/employers to sustainably build their capability to provide an ongoing culturally safe workplace tailored to the local community and workforce needs.
- **Priority Sectors** - Projects which directly build the capability and capacity of the local sectors First Nations workforces through training (accredited and non-accredited), mentoring, and wrap-around support to meet the growing needs of the region or community. Sectors include agriculture, mining, care (aged & disability/allied health & health) and tourism.

South Queensland

Overarching priorities:

- **Supported pathways in to employment** – that focus on local employment pathways including training (accredited and non-accredited, including tailored delivery of numeracy and literacy training), mentoring and wrap-around support, and/or provide a supported pathway for career progression.
- **Supported pathways for youth in to employment** - support young jobseekers to undertake apprenticeships and traineeships, including community development projects that provide a well-supported pathway for Youth (15-24) to transition into further schooling/education or employment, and that builds local, sustained capability through the employment and formal upskilling of First Nations youth mentors and youth workers
- **Cultural safety** - Improve employer attitudes and inclusive recruitment, career development and retention strategies to provide an ongoing culturally safe workplace, tailored to the local community and workforce needs. Cultural safety to be embedded, including consideration of a diverse range of participants (age, gender and disability).and workforce needs.

South West Queensland region:

- **Enable and support the capability of the existing First Nations workforce** - through training (accredited and non-accredited), mentoring and wrap-around support; and/or provide a supported pathway for career progression.
- **Growth Industries** - Industries across the region with a growing demand for a suitably skilled workforce including: agricultural, construction, forestry and pastoral areas, resource (including renewables and gas) and mining sites, rural tourism, health, social services and education

- **Career transition** - Increased efforts are required to improve education outcomes, including supporting more, higher education opportunities and developing skills in areas of need. Increased efforts are required to support more higher education, improving education outcomes and developing skills in areas of skills need.
- **Engagement and retention of First Nations apprenticeships** - through intensive mentorship and traineeships to align with projected skills shortages and areas of future demand in the region and connect jobseekers to these opportunities.

South East Queensland region:

- **Engagement and retention of First Nations apprenticeships** - through intensive mentorship and traineeships, align projected skills shortages and areas of future demand and connect jobseekers to these opportunities (in particular, construction, manufacturing and hospitality).
- **Growth Industries** - Specific initiatives are required to address opportunities for mature aged job seekers, youth and women and how to overcome barriers and maintain employment. Employment opportunities are to be identified and pathways and Community Design strategies to mobilise the local labour force to meet demand, including appropriate upskilling and reskilling strategies. Occupations in demand include civil construction, health and social services, transport and warehousing, security, food processing and call centres.

Gladstone and Gladstone region; and/or aligned to Port Curtis Coral Coast Trust Limited (PCCC) sub-region of Gladstone:

- **Projects that build the capability** - Utilising existing projects, build the capability of the existing First Nations workforce of employers and emerging industries, such as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).
- **Priority sectors** - Create, promote and enhance training and development pathways for suitable job seekers to gain employment the high demand sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining, health care and social assistance, manufacturing, and construction.

Woorabinda and surrounds including Central Highlands region:

- **Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations** - Support programs and training/mentoring pathways to employment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations within and close to Woorabinda.
- **Priority sectors** - Create, promote and enhance training and development pathways for suitable job seekers to gain employment in the high demand sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing, health care and community services, manufacturing, and construction.

Central West regions including: Barcaldine, Blackall, Diamantina, Winton and Longreach:

- **Priority sectors** - Create, promote and enhance training and development pathways for suitable job seekers to gain employment the high demand sectors of tourism, agriculture (sheep and cattle), forestry, fishing, retail, construction, health and education.

Rockhampton/Yeppoon region - Stanage Bay (Capricorn Coast)/the Keppel Islands:

- **Priority sectors** - Create, promote and enhance training and development pathways for suitable job seekers to gain employment in the high demand sectors of agriculture (beef), fishing, tourism, construction, retail, health and social services.

Greater Western Australia

- **First Nations job seekers** aged 15-24 and 25-64 with a priority given to First Nations women to enable more women into workforce.
- **Transition from school to employment** through traineeships and apprenticeships with particular focus on regional and remote areas. Explore opportunities through Local government in regional and remote communities.
- **Focus on long term unemployed and job seekers with disability** to link them back to vocational and non-vocational training to address barriers
- **Transition from prison to work** to avoid recidivism with focus on Roebourne Regional Prison, Albany Regional Prison, Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison and Greenough Regional Prison.
- **Priority industries** for First Nations employment are: Health care and Social Sector, Construction Retail and Hospitality and Education and Training

Kimberley

- **Training and Workforce Development** – education, training and employment opportunities that support Aboriginal individuals and businesses, in growth sectors within the regional economy.
- **Pathways for youth** – innovative education, training, employment and ancillary supports to maximise school to work transitions, post-school literacy and numeracy and youth engagement in education, employment, training and business.
- **Economic development** – with a focus on local and place-specific training, employment, and career opportunities.
- **Culturally appropriate and safe workplaces** – services to build cultural competencies, provide **support** and embed mentoring for all cohorts including youth, employees, and employers.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Data – employment outcomes

Member/Senator: Marion Scrymgour

Question reference number: 0018

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 2

Question:

How does historical data on employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in Northern Australia compare with current data?

- Which issues remain unaddressed and/or unchanged?

Answer:

Overall, the Indigenous labour force participation rate (the percentage of Indigenous Australians either in a job or actively looking for a job) in Northern Australia has remained relatively constant over the past decade. This rate was at 48 per cent in 2021 compared to 49 per cent in 2011. The employment rate of Indigenous Australians in Northern Australia has been similarly constant, at 40 per cent in 2021 compared to an almost identical figure in 2011.¹

Data on the employment-focussed Closing the Gap Target 8 is available from the Productivity Commission Closing the Gap Dashboard. It indicates that while overall employment rates for First Nations Australians are trending upward, there is still a lot of work to be done in Northern Australia (for example, employment rates for people aged 25-64 in the Northern Territory decreased 1.1 percentage points to 34.3 per cent in 2021 from 35.4 per cent in 2016).²

The barriers to First Nations people gaining employment are complex, well known and widely documented, but these issues do not lend themselves to rapid or straightforward solutions. Endemic issues such as racism and unconscious bias, fewer educational or training qualifications, poorer health, residence in remote areas with thin labour markets, and multiple disadvantage (e.g. Indigenous women who are also carers are more likely to experience ‘triple jeopardy’ of discrimination in the workplace) require whole-of-government and whole-of-community efforts to address.

¹ 2021 Census data compiled by NIAA based on Local Government Area boundaries within the Northern Australia boundaries set out in the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act 2016*

² Productivity Commission (<https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard>)

Nationally, for those Indigenous Australians with higher levels of education, their employment outcomes improve significantly. In 2018–19, for example, the rate of employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 20–64 who had attained a bachelor degree or higher qualification was 80 per cent compared with 86 per cent.³ Similarly, in 2008, the rate of employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 25–64 who had attained a Certificate III or higher qualification was 80.1 per cent compared with 84.4 per cent.⁴

While there is still much to do in addressing the social, cultural, geographic and economic factors that result in Indigenous Australians falling behind in the labour market, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is learning the lessons of previous national employment programs in its design of future programs. For example, the Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) is designed to leverage the distinct strengths and interests of local First Nations communities and employers, and reflect regional priorities that have been identified by the NIAA but guided by local knowledge. For other examples of how NIAA is supporting First Nations employment and economic development, please refer to Answer 0006 - List of policies and programs addressing issues in Northern Australia.

³ Indigenous Health Performance Framework (<https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures>)

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/4704.0chapter360oct+2010>)

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Problems in workforce development

Question reference number: 0019

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 2

Question:

How do problems in workforce development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Northern Australia reflect Australia-wide issues and how are they unique to Northern Australia?

Answer:

There are challenges to developing the First Nations workforce across Australia. A range of geographical, demographic, social and economic factors pose particular challenges to workforce development in Northern Australia.

Across Australia, skills shortages exist in a wide range of industries and are a key constraint to increasing employment outcomes for First Nations people. Skills shortages are more acute in regional and remote areas due to factors such as lower access to education and training, and difficulty in encouraging people to move and remain in those areas. In the three regions that comprise North Western Australia, labour and skills shortages are acute, with businesses in the Kimberly region noting that a lack of access to skilled labour would act as a major barrier to growing their businesses over the coming year.¹ According to the ABS Census in 2021, in the West Kimberly, 81 per cent of First Nations people age 15-64 either do not have or are not working towards a qualification beyond Year 12. In Cape York, this figure is at 64 per cent, and in the Jabiru-Tiwi area, this figure is at 87 per cent. Current demands for Fly-In, Fly-Out (FIFO) workers in many parts of Northern Australia have also limited the development of a local labour force.

Northern Australia is a vast landmass, where the majority of the area is classified as ‘very remote’. Nationally, across ‘very remote areas’, the employment rate for First Nations people was 49 per cent less than non-Indigenous people.² Remoteness limits the ability of First Nations people to participate in thin labour markets as people often need to travel long distances to access culturally-appropriate job training and employment. There is a lack of

¹ Western Australian Government, Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia, 2022, (<https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=6ae8395d-842d-424b-b08c-b3bc36db615b&subId=732476>)

² Australian Government, Closing the Gap Prime Minister’s Report, 2020 (<https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/employment>)

clear employment and business pathways that are locally available, community-controlled and culturally safe for First Nations jobseekers in Northern Australia.

The First Nations business sector across Australia remains undercapitalised and disconnected with the broader economy when compared to mainstream business sectors. Dispersed populations, the high cost of service delivery and a lack of infrastructure and supply chains to support the operations of larger companies which compounds these issues in many areas of Northern Australia.

Addressing the social barriers to employment will enable First Nations people across Australia to achieve employment parity. For employees, access to essential services like child care and education is necessary for workforce participation. In areas across Northern Australia, such as the Tablelands, Pilbara and East Arnhem Land, there is an acute crisis in the availability of Early Childhood Education.³ Without access to these child care services, First Nations employees, especially women, are limited in their workforce participation as the care of children and extended kin is often their primary responsibility.

To better assess the challenges and opportunities of workforce development in Northern Australia compared to Australia as a whole, there is a need for more comprehensive place-based data on First Nations economic outcomes. The lack of data currently collected on First Nations businesses and economic activities more broadly has inhibited the development of fit-for-purpose policies and for securing private sector investment in First Nations economies, including in Northern Australia.

³ Victoria University and The Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy, Childcare Deserts & Oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia?, 2022 (<https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/early-learning/childcare-deserts-oases-how-accessible-is-childcare-in-australia>)

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Industries & sectors – long term employment & economic benefits

Question reference number: 0020

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Which industries and sectors do you consider have the potential to create lasting employment and long-term, local economic benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the north?

Answer:

There is immense opportunity for First Nations Australians in every industry and sector of the economy in northern Australia, reflecting the large proportion of First Nations Australians living in the region. Industries that particularly lend themselves to providing long term, sustainable employment for First Nations people include:

- Mining, which on Aboriginal land contributes more than 80 per cent of the Northern Territory's total mineral value, making Aboriginal land a significant source of income.
- Services, including government and municipal services, education, health and aged care, public administration and safety, retail trade, and accommodation and food services. Government and municipal services often make up the largest component of remote community economies.
- Agriculture and aquaculture, given the importance of these industries to the Northern Australian economy (Northern Australia produces more than 94 per cent of Australia's bananas and 93 per cent of Australia's mangoes; the beef herd comprises 12.5 million cattle). First Nations people have yet to enjoy significant benefits or establish a leadership/driving role in these sectors, despite significant land ownership and an increasing recognition that traditional knowledge and customary practice of land and water management is important to maintain resilience and productivity.
- Renewable energy, especially as the Northern Territory Government is prioritising clean energy and renewables with its target of 50 per cent renewables for electricity supply by 2030 and an aspirational vision of net-zero emissions by 2050.
- Tourism, as research indicates that the Northern Territory is considered the preferred destination for First Nations cultural tourism experiences in Australia. First Nations cultural tourism has been identified as a key priority in the Northern Territory with 69 per cent of international tourists to the Northern Territory engaging in 'Aboriginal experiences' during their visit to Australia.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Opportunities in CDP

Question reference number: 0021

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1

Question:

What opportunities are there within the CDP to enhance workforce development?

Answer:

The Australian Government is progressing its commitment to replace the Community Development Program with a new program with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions – developed in partnership with First Nations people. Consultations and trials are underway across remote Australia, which will inform the development of a new program, including opportunities for workforce development.

For example, under the current CDP Trialling Pathways to Real Jobs initiative, providers are trialling a number of approaches to workforce development, including addressing unmet demand in the care, retail and hospitality sectors. These approaches include providing tailored mentoring and training to prepare participants for in-demand jobs, working with industry to engage job seekers who have completed this training and supporting the establishment and growth of community and social enterprises where organisations do not currently exist in community to deliver particular services.

Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Workforce Development in Northern Australia

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: JSCATSIA – recommendations update

Question reference number: 0022

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday 21 April 2023

Number of pages: 1

Question:

The Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, in its inquiry into community safety, support services and job opportunities in the Northern Territory, made the following recommendations – please provide the committee with an update on the Government’s response:

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that, as part of the ongoing review and trials of the CDP and its replacement, the Commonwealth Government:

- Require providers to undertake community consultation to identify areas of possible employment in their region and tailor participants work and training opportunities towards filling those future jobs.
- Provide a mechanism for participants to learn from and gain exposure to successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in business.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government investigates potential policies to stimulate economic activity in remote communities, outside of the CDP, and that the Minister report the findings to the Parliament by the 29 February 2024.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that, by 30 June 2024, the Commonwealth Government develops and implements a policy to ensure large businesses operating in remote regions employ local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and managed businesses.

Answer:

The Government is progressing a response to all recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, in its inquiry into community safety, support services and job opportunities in the Northern Territory.