



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Affairs report:

Inquiry into economic self-determination and
opportunities for First Nations Australians

March 2026

Recommendation Key

Support	Government supports the recommendation/action in full.
Support in principle	Government supports the recommendation in principle, and commits to an alternative action or exploring options, including in consultation with states and territories.
Support in part	Government supports part of the recommendation.
Note	Government notes the recommendation, but does not agree to additional related activity at this time.

Preamble

The Australian Government thanks and acknowledges the work of the Committee and secretariat in producing this report and its recommendations, and would further like to acknowledge the work of First Nations partners and organisations that are advancing the economic empowerment agenda.

The First Nations economy has a rich and enduring tradition, and today's policy settings should be viewed in their proper context. First Nations people have exercised economic self-determination through the trading of goods, services and information, both domestically and internationally, for tens of thousands of years. The strength and resilience of the modern First Nations economy derives from the strength, resilience, creativity and resourcefulness of First Nations people.

These strengths are obvious when one considers the numbers. First Nations businesses are thriving – they contribute over \$16 billion to Australia's economy and pay out more than \$4.2 billion in wages to 116,000 people across 13,000 businesses¹ every year. The community-controlled sector is also a significant employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, all the while providing vital support to over 500,000 First Nations Australians in all states and territories. Furthermore, the First Nations Estate equates to a legal right and interest to around 60 per cent of the Australian land massⁱ and approximately 43 per cent of clean energy projects required to meet Australia's net zero commitments will need to be situated on the First Nations estate.

The Government recognises these strengths as a solid foundation with which to work towards greater economic empowerment of First Nations Australians. Increased economic opportunity can play a major role in reducing outcomes gaps across all aspects of policy, in all walks of life. As agreed in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, economic policy – like all policy, is done best in Partnership.

To this end the Government, working in partnership with First Nations representatives has established a First Nations Economic Partnership. The Government, guided by the Partnership, will develop a First Nations Economic Framework that will draw together the fundamentals needed to drive Government action across portfolios.²

The Australian Government is pleased to provide the responses that follow.

Recommendation 1

2.38 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government and the Department of Treasury develop a supplementary measurement framework that incorporates the principles of Australia's Measuring What Matters Framework. This must include profiling and tracking to illustrate gaps and the mapping of variations of socio-economic wellbeing of First Nations communities. This will create a systematic way to track the socio-economic wellbeing of communities over time.

Response: Noted

The Australian Government **notes this recommendation.**

In signing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap the Australian Government has committed to collecting and sharing data that is most useful to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities (clauses 70–74 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap) on a range of metrics surrounding the 19 socio-economic targets. The Data Policy Partnership will bring together all Australian governments with First Nations representatives to progress work that will strengthen data related activities under the National Agreement. The Data Policy Partnership is co-chaired by a representative from the New South Wales Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations and a representative from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Recommendation 2

3.95 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government fund a national longitudinal Indigenous economic and business dataset to understand the composition and economic contribution of First Nations business to the Australian economy.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle.** The Australian Bureau of Statistics' existing Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE) and emerging Business Characteristics Asset (BCA) provide a foundation for the potential development of a national longitudinal Indigenous economic and business dataset. While these data assets do not currently support nationally consistent identification of First Nations businesses, the existing BLADE allows for the longitudinal analysis of business composition and economic contribution.

Work is underway by the Indigenous Economic Power Project, led by the University of Melbourne and supported by Government funding, to integrate data on First Nations businesses, from various business registers, into BLADE. While the data and research outputs are informative, they do not represent all businesses of this type. The University of Melbourne is also working to expand its list of registries, including for community-controlled organisations whose ownership cannot be identified through administrative sources.

Recommendation 3

3.101 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in its review of the Indigenous Procurement Policy, consider:

- an increase to the procurement target
- the definition of an Indigenous business, and mechanisms to identify and recognise businesses who exceed the targets (e.g. through tiered criteria).

Response: Support

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation**. The Australian Government is committed to empowering and improving economic outcomes for First Nations people through leveraging its significant purchasing power to create more opportunities for First Nations businesses.

The Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) aims to increase the rate of Australian Government purchasing from First Nations businesses by setting targets for Commonwealth Portfolios. Since it began in 2015, more than \$11 billion in Australian Government contracts have been awarded to First Nations businesses. The IPP has supported a high rate of growth for the First Nations business sector, and has significantly increased the Australian Government's purchasing from First Nations businesses.

The Government heard calls for changes to the IPP to increase the ambition of the policy and ensure that the economic benefits of the IPP are genuinely flowing to First Nations people as intended. In February 2025, the Australian Government announced changes to strengthen the IPP eligibility criteria and be more ambitious with the Commonwealth and Portfolio procurement targets that are set under the policy. These changes include:

- The eligibility criteria for the IPP will be strengthened to require that Indigenous businesses are 51 percent or more First Nations owned and controlled (or registered with ORIC) to access the IPP. Transition to the new criteria will begin from 1 July 2026, with further details of the transitional arrangements yet to be determined.
- From 1 July 2025, the value of Commonwealth procurement with First Nations businesses increased to 3 percent to align with the target for the number of contracts awarded to First Nations businesses. Both targets will increase by 0.25 percent each year until they reach 4 percent by 2030.
- The Government will also review the methodology for the target calculation and measurement and explore the feasibility of increasing the transparency of suppliers' performance against Indigenous participation targets contained in high value contracts (Mandatory Minimum Indigenous Participation Requirements).

Recommendation 4

3.102 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate the practice of black-cladding and policies to combat it.

Response: Support

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation.** The Australian Government notes there are various perspectives about what is and is not black-cladding, its prevalence and how to best address the issue. Strengthening the definition is the first step. As outlined at Recommendation 3, the eligibility criteria for the IPP will be strengthened to require that Indigenous businesses are 51 per cent or more First Nations owned and controlled (or registered with ORIC) to access the IPP. This will ensure First Nations business owners accessing the IPP are empowered to run their businesses and exercise their rights as majority owners.

The Government remains committed to exploring options to tackle black cladding in other ways. The Australian Government has introduced a Supplier Code of Conduct outlining the Government's minimum expectations of suppliers and their personnel while under contract with the Government. The code includes explicit requirements to respect the rights of First Nations people, and to ensure that partnerships with First Nations people are entered into with free, prior and informed consent and are fair, equitable and deliver genuine benefits to the First Nations party. In combatting black-cladding, the Government also notes that regulators (such as the ACCC and ASIC) in some instances may have the ability to take action based on their legislative remit and the circumstances raised. The NIAA will work with relevant regulators and support services to identify opportunities to make it easier for First Nations people to report black cladding that might amount to unlawful conduct and provide targeted education, guidance and support for First Nations business owners.

Recommendation 5

3.104 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider support for Indigenous Chambers of Commerce and similar business networks to boost their delivery of financial, commercial, and business capability services.

Response: Support

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation.** The Department of Industry Science and Resources is well-positioned to share learnings with Indigenous Chambers of Commerce and similar networks about the support available for First Nations businesses. AusIndustry Regional Managers, for example are able to share information and enhance awareness of available programs and services, identify opportunities, build connections and networks across the economy, and to access market opportunities.

Recommendation 6

3.107 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government launch an awareness campaign and establish a central resource with information on federal, state, and territory government business advisory services for First Nations businesses.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle.** The Department of Industry Science and Resources, National Indigenous Australians Agency and Indigenous

Business Australia work collaboratively to ensure that information on the business.gov.au website supports positive outcomes for First Nations businesses.

The business.gov.au Adviser finder tool is a central resource that provides all federal, state and territory adviser opportunities for business in one place. There is a specific question and filter to show opportunities for First Nations businesses.

Recommendation 7

3.113 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government pilot an entrepreneurial and business mentorship program for aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and explore how it can improve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait women in business.

Response: Support

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation**. The Australian Government is committed to fostering diversity in entrepreneurship, which will help deliver transformative economic outcomes for local communities and the Australian economy.

On 10 February 2025, the Government tabled its Closing the Gap 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan, which includes a commitment to provide \$3.4 million over three years (to 30 June 2028) to Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to establish a place-based business coaching and mentoring program for First Nations businesswomen. The business coaching and mentoring program will support First Nations women entrepreneurs with greater access to the resources, networks and support they need to launch a viable business, commercialise a viable business idea or grow an existing business.

Through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Australian Government funds a range of programs under the Indigenous Business Sector Strategy (IBSS) which provide entrepreneurial and business support for aspiring, and established, First Nations people in business. The IBSS has a focus on access to services and tailored support for First Nations women.

For example, through its Business Solutions Program IBA established Australia's largest network of First Nations businesswomen and entrepreneurs – 'Strong Women Strong Business'. Created in 2018, the network provides First Nations women and aspiring entrepreneurs access to formal and informal mentoring, capability development resources, business forums, and an online community network of over 2,000 First Nations women.

Recommendation 8

4.100 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government strengthen existing, and develop new, instruments to enhance and fast track Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to finance and capital.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle**. The Australian Government has made a number of commitments to support access to finance and capital. These include boosting Indigenous Business Australia's (IBA) Home Loan Capital Fund by around \$70 million, and amending the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* to enhance IBA's ability to leverage its capital to invest in First Nations communities and businesses.

On 29 September 2025, the Government signed the First Nations Economic Partnership with the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance and the Coalition of Peaks. An immediate action in the Economic Partnership Agreement includes a commitment to 'consider opportunities to improve investment mechanisms and access to capital'.

The Australian Government is also considering ways in which it can further support access to finance and capital, such as through the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy (Strategy). The Strategy includes actions to investigate new models for collaborative finance and broker an investor forum on access to capital and equity ownership. For more information on the Strategy, refer to the response to Recommendation 18.

Recommendation 9

4.101 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider impediments to responsible lending and capital flow from mainstream banks and financial institutions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle**. The Australian Government has a range of programs aimed at supporting access to finance and capital. Indigenous Business Australia has collaborative partnerships with like-minded banks and financial services providers to help First Nations customers access the benefits of commercial finance, such as competitive rates and access to a range of products and services. ASIC's Indigenous Outreach Program is a specialist team that works with industry, service providers and other government agencies to enhance First Nations consumer experiences of banking access and services, and aims to drive positive financial outcomes for First Nations Australians.

In considering ways to support economic empowerment, self-determination and wealth creation, the First Nations Economic Partnership will focus on improving access to markets, affordable capital, tailored investment support and institutional settings.

Recommendation 10

4.107 The Committee recommends that, on completion of the Australian Law Reform Commission Future Acts Regime Review, the Australia Government should consider whether a full review of the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) is required.

Response: Noted

The Australian Government **notes this recommendation**. As noted in the Report, the Attorney-General has requested the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) review the future acts regime in the Native Title Act in partial fulfilment of its ‘agreement in principle’ to recommendation 4 of *A Way Forward: Final report into the destruction of Indigenous heritage sites at Juukan Gorge*.

The future acts review is investigating any inequality, unfairness or weakness in the regime which governs how development projects can occur on land subject to native title.

In undertaking the future acts review, the ALRC will consider the opportunity for the native title system to contribute significantly to economic outcomes for First Nations people and business; the role of the future acts regime as a precursor to economic and other activities on native title land; and the importance of the future acts regime being appropriately designed for Australia’s current and future social and economic development, in a way that respects the rights and interests of native title holders.³

In addition to the ALRC review, section 209A of the Native Title Act requires an evaluation of the amendments made by the Native Title Legislation Amendment Act 2021 to be conducted by 25 March 2026.

The Australian Government considers that current and planned reviews of the Native Title Act should be completed before consideration of any further reviews.

Recommendation 11

4.112 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure resourcing for Prescribed Body Corporates in the Native Title Act 1993 is sufficient to enable delivery of its full legislative potential.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle**. In line with the Australian Government’s in principle commitments to recommendation 7 in *A Way Forward: Final report into the destruction of Indigenous heritage sites at Juukan Gorge*⁴ the Government is committed to working with Native Title holders, their Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), state and territory governments and other stakeholders to consider a range of options to reform funding of PBCs and build PBC capacity.

The Government recognises PBCs play an essential role in the Native Title system and in safeguarding Native Title holders’ rights and interests. PBCs are also frequently the main vehicle for Native Title holders land management and economic aspirations and may also undertake various programs, such as ranger and cultural heritage management programs.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency is working closely with the National Native Title Council and receiving advice from the PBC Steering Group on issues impacting the sector and options for funding reforms that would support economic self-determination and opportunities.

The Government enhanced PBC Capacity Building grant funding of \$77.2 million over 3 years (from 2024–25 to 2026–27) to improve organisational capacity and support PBCs to realise economic opportunities. This is provided in addition to the Government’s Basic Support funding via Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers that was noted as part of the Inquiry Report.

On 2 August, the Australian Government committed an additional \$75 million to PBCs over three years to 2028-29, taking the Australian Governments investment through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy for the PBC sector to over \$200 million.

Recommendation 12

5.83 The Committee recommends the Australian Government ratify the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization and the World Intellectual Property Organization’s Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge.

Response: Support in part

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in part**. The Government **supports** the recommendation to ratify the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge (GRATK Treaty), subject to normal Treaty making processes, including consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. The GRATK Treaty will require patent applicants to disclose the source of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge when submitting patent applications. This Treaty is the first to address issues relating to the intellectual property (IP) system and traditional knowledge, providing for greater recognition and transparency.

The Government **notes** the recommendation to ratify the Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing. In 2012, Australia signed the *Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization* (Nagoya Protocol). It has not yet ratified the Nagoya Protocol which came into effect in 2014. The Australian Government, along with each state and territory currently manages access to biological resources in its jurisdiction under its own laws. These legislative frameworks are largely aligned with the principles of the Protocol.

The Australian Government remains committed to engaging with stakeholders to examine the implications of ratifying the Nagoya Protocol. This will include considering how best to safeguard Traditional Knowledge associated with the use of biological resources and any related genetic information.

Recommendation 13

5.84 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government task IP Australia, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to investigate legislative and regulatory options to strengthen the protection, certification, promotion, and marketing of First Nations products and services domestically and internationally.

Response: Support

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation**. This recommendation aligns with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Commitment to empower First Nations economic self-determination across Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.⁵ This empowerment will take place through enhancing the productivity, resilience and innovation of Australian food and fibre supply chains, and by expanding pathways for First Nations food and fibre exporters to international markets.

The Government notes there is work underway to develop an Indigenous Agricultural Product Framework to define characteristics and provide an evidence-base to support the establishment of Indigenous agricultural product credentials. This framework and eventual credentials will assist First Nations agricultural businesses and communities to demonstrate product authenticity, verify provenance, prove product claims, and provide assurance to consumers, governments and processors.

There is also continuing work to support promotion and marketing of First Nations products internationally. Austrade amplifies First Nations trade and investment success stories and the participation of qualified export ready First Nations businesses in international trade missions. Austrade also promotes *The National Sustainability Framework for the Visitor Economy*, released by Tourism Ministers in November 2023, and the accompanying sustainability toolkit to support respectful First Nations engagement in the visitor economy.

Australia's First Nations people and cultures are at the heart of Tourism Australia's *Come and Say G'Day* campaign and First Nations representation is prioritised in all of Tourism Australia's marketing activities.

The intellectual property (IP) system is another mechanism available to support the protection, certification, promotion, and marketing of First Nations products and services. IP Australia is increasing its public education and awareness material for First Nations businesses and examining other IP system changes.

Further, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is collaborating with the World Intellectual Property Organization on a pilot project which aims to assist First Nations bushfoods exporters better understand how to protect and commercialise their products through the international IP system.

These work streams are intended to make the IP system more accessible to First Nations businesses. The work on stand-alone legislation for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), as discussed in Recommendation 14, may also assist once implemented.

Recommendation 14

5.85 The Committee recommends the Australian Government task IP Australia as part of its current works to protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, to investigate legislative options to strengthen legal protections for collective knowledge and historical rights and opportunities.

Response: Support

The Government **supports this recommendation**. On 30 January 2023, the Australian Government released *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, Australia's National Cultural Policy (*Revive*) for the next five years. One of the actions under Pillar One of *Revive*, First Nations First, is to introduce stand-alone legislation to protect First Nations traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, including to address the harm caused by fake art, merchandise, and souvenirs.

The Office for the Arts is the lead Australian Government agency working to develop stand-alone legislation to protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. The Office is working closely with a First Nations expert group and other government departments on the legislation.

In addition to the work on stand-alone legislation, as part of their ongoing work IP Australia is examining what complementary changes could be made to the Patents, Trade Marks, Designs and Plant Breeder's Rights Acts to improve the consideration of Indigenous Knowledge in applications for IP rights and support the cultural integrity and economic potential of Indigenous Knowledge held by First Nations peoples. These changes include possible amendments to trade mark and designs laws to prevent the misappropriation of First Nations' language or imagery. Possible changes to patent and plant breeder's rights laws, such as the requirement to disclose the source of Indigenous Knowledge used in new innovations, would make it easier to determine if Indigenous Knowledge has been used in a patent or plant breeder's right application.

Recommendation 15

5.90 The Committee recommends establishing and funding a centralised database or national registration system to substantiate Indigenous knowledge and facilitate the creation of access and benefit sharing agreements. Such a database would enable a digital repository for data and knowledge associated with genetic resources found in Australia.

Response: Noted

The Australian Government **notes this recommendation**. Indigenous Knowledge is an important asset belonging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their communities, organisations and businesses. Indigenous Knowledge can reflect and identify a community's history, cultural and social identity, and its values.

The Australian Government **notes** the interest in databases as a potential mechanism to support the protection of Indigenous Knowledge. Databases can complement legislative protections for Indigenous Knowledge but any collection and storage of knowledge must be done appropriately and in partnership with Indigenous Peoples so that information is not more vulnerable to misuse or misappropriation.

In prior public consultations on databases for Indigenous Knowledge stakeholders raised the need for appropriate access controls, incorporation of the principles of free prior and informed consent and the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to retain data sovereignty.⁶

The Productivity Commission has urged caution around the use of registries (required or voluntary) in the context of First Nations visual arts and crafts.⁷ The Commission found that the expected benefits of registration, in the form of greater certainty about the allocation of rights, are unable to be realised due to several factors:

- Registration would not provide complete certainty, as the contents of a register can still be open to dispute.
- Registering their cultural assets could be costly and onerous for Traditional Owners. Disputes about ownership would need to be settled before registration.
- Registration is not compatible with the aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures that are secret or sacred.

There are existing regulatory systems of the Australian, state and territory governments in relation to the accessing of biological resources and benefit sharing where traditional knowledge is involved.

Please see responses to Recommendation 12 and Recommendation 14 for further context and information on the Australian Government's support of Indigenous Knowledge.

Recommendation 16

5.96 The Committee recommends the Australian Government work with the bush foods and fibre industry to establish a sustainable peak industry body.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle**. The Australian Government notes the establishment of a sustainable peak body for bush foods and fibre would align with Priority Reforms One and Two in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, to build structures that empower First Nations people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against Closing the Gap socio-economic outcome areas, and build community-controlled capacity to deliver this.

The Government is committed to working in partnership with First Nations stakeholders in the bush foods and fibre industry. The recommendation to establish a peak industry body aligns with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (DAFF) commitment to empower First Nations economic self-determination across Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries by working in partnership with First Nations stakeholders in the sector through ongoing engagement.

The Department of Industry, Science and Resources continues to contribute to collaborative research on First Foods and is working with Indigenous business researchers, DAFF and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to bring key stakeholders in the system together to capitalise on opportunities and overcome challenges faced in bringing traditional foods and medicines to market.

Recommendation 17

6.84 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government explore and consider best practice mechanisms to improve First Nations workplace cultural safety.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle**. The Australian Government recognises the importance of workplace cultural safety. In culturally safe workplaces, employees feel comfortable, supported and respected. This provides an environment where employees can fully participate at work, will work more safely and be more productive.

Cultural safety is also a right. There are a number of regulatory frameworks which provide for aspects of cultural safety including work health and safety (WHS) legislation, and protections against racial discrimination in human rights legislation and the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Under model WHS laws, a person conducting a business or undertaking, such as an employer, has a duty of care ensure the health and safety of workers and other people in the workplace, to the extent that is reasonably practicable. Recent changes to WHS safety regulations specify the obligation to protect employees from psychosocial hazards and risks. Psychosocial hazards refer to aspects of work design, the work itself, and the interactions between employees which can negatively influence mental health and emotional wellbeing. The laws are supported by a model *Code of Practice on Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work*, published by Safe Work Australia and was adopted by the Australian Government in November 2024.

The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* protects an individual's rights (including all employees) to be free from discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin in any field of public life, including in employment and the provision of human services.

While this regulation protects the right to feel safe at work, it is not the only mechanism to promote cultural safety. In signing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, all Australian governments committed to embed meaningful approaches to promoting cultural safety (Priority Reform Three). The Priority Reforms Roadmap is a practical guide to help the Australian Public Service (APS) do things differently when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) support the building of cultural capability across the APS. Launched in 2023, the Cultural Capability Hub provides a central repository of practical tools, examples, and resources to help APS staff enhance their cultural capability through self-paced learning modules. In addition to facilitating learning and training opportunities for individual staff, the Hub supports the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework and assists agencies in improving workforce management processes so that APS policies, programs, and services are responsive to the needs of First Nations people.

The Australian Government continues to explore mechanisms to build cultural capability and to attract and retain First Nations employment across the APS. Following recommendations from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) Committee Collaboration Circle (which teams up several agency Chief Operating Officers and First Nations staff from across the APS), the APSC are in the process developing guidance on elements of cultural training that meet a foundation level, and a more advanced level of knowledge on cultural awareness.

A First Nations Partnership Playbook has been developed. This playbook provides the APS with practical guidance and best-practice examples on working in partnership with First Nations people. Prevailing systems and structures within government can create barriers to meaningful partnerships. The playbook provides guidance on how the APS can navigate government processes, including practices, behaviours and culture that will enable effective partnerships between government and First Nations people. This internal-to-government document will contribute to building culturally safe workplaces by building the cultural capability of the APS.

The Priority Reforms Roadmap is a practical guide to help the Australian Public Service (APS) do things differently when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The APS is at a key moment in its transformation journey. While some agencies have already made strong progress, there is more work to do across the APS to fully meet our commitments. The Roadmap gives every APS agency, no matter where they are starting from, a clear framework to begin or strengthen this transformation.

The Government also develops and provides resources that may be used by mainstream agencies to promote cultural safety. For example, the Australian Institute of Family Studies have publicly available resources to assist non-Indigenous practitioners to provide culturally safe service responses to First Nations people, families and communities, as well as resources on building culturally safe workplaces with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Recommendation 18

6.92 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government implement the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy and consider a target for First Nations project ownership and equity in clean energy.

Response: Support in principle

The Government **supports this recommendation in principle**. The First Nations Clean Energy Strategy (the Strategy), released on 6 December 2024, provides a national framework for First Nations peoples' participation and empowerment in the energy transition.

The Australian Government has committed \$70 million for implementation of the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy 2024–2030 (the Strategy) over three years from 2025–26.

The Strategy includes objectives for assisting First Nations project ownership and equity stakes in project partnerships.

Work is underway with government specialist investment vehicles and other financial institutions such as Indigenous Business Australia and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation to improve strategic investment of capital and support for First Nations project ownership and equity.

Recommendation 19

7.85 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government facilitate knowledge exchanges between First Nations Australians and international First Nations communities to share experiences and lessons on economic empowerment and trade.

Response: Support

The Government **supports this recommendation**. This recommendation aligns with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) inclusive trade, and public diplomacy agendas. This includes establishment of the Ambassador for First Nations People and the Office for First Nations International Engagement in DFAT.

The Government, through DFAT, Austrade and other Departments continue to implement a range of initiatives that support this recommendation, including:

- **International knowledge exchange grants.** The First Nations International Fellowships and Partnerships Grants Program (\$3.6 million over three years - 24-25 to 26-27) facilitates knowledge exchange through: First Nations 'Partnerships' - supporting First Nations Australians to initiate an international partnership or knowledge exchange (including on economic empowerment and trade) in the Indo-Pacific; and 'Fellowships' that increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in global forums, including the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
- **Increasing support for First Nations trade delegations.** For example:
 - In 2024 Austrade and DFAT supported the largest First Nations delegation to the US, in partnership with First Nations business chambers and the Victorian government, to develop export readiness networks, including knowledge exchange between First Nations Australians and North American First Nations communities.
 - At World Expo 2025 Osaka, Australia co-hosted Indigenous Peoples Week, with a First Nations Trade delegation in attendance. First Nations priorities were also integrated as a cross-cutting value for Australia throughout the Expo.
 - DFAT facilitates connections between Australian First Nations businesses and international First Nations people and businesses.
 - Austrade services and supports First Nations businesses internationally and connects them with international buyers domestically.
 - Austrade is growing opportunities to showcase First Nations trade and investment successes that can support engagement. This includes amplifying Australian First Nations trade and investment stories through its online channels, building export capability and the establishment of a new First Nations award category at the Australian Export Awards from 2025.
- Contributing to the inclusive growth agenda and knowledge exchange through **international trade fora** such as:

- APEC - by supporting policy discussions, including the APEC Ministerial Dialogue with Indigenous People and a suite of capability building activities to support Indigenous trade and economic empowerment.
- the Indigenous Peoples' Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement (IPETCA)-Australia is one of four founding members of this Indigenous-led, government enabled trade grouping and supports implementation of knowledge and lessons sharing under the IPETCA workplan.
- the annual Indigenous-led World Indigenous Business Forum (WIBF) - Kinaway Chamber of Commerce hosted the 2025 Forum in Melbourne, with Australian and Victorian Government support. This Forum supported international exchange on Indigenous economic development.
- the business-led Australia-New Zealand Leadership Forum (ANZLF) which facilitates trade and economic knowledge sharing opportunities for First Nations people of Australia and New Zealand through the Indigenous Business Sectors Group (IBSG).
- **Implementing international economic strategies and trade agreements** that prioritise First Nations economic empowerment and trade, and international exchanges in these areas, such as:
 - the Southeast Asia Economic Strategy - including opportunities to expand two-way First Nations trade.
 - a standalone First Nations chapter in the Australia-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (Entry into Force October, 2025), the first such chapter in an Australian free trade agreement and support for its implementation.
- Supporting international First Nations participation in **Australian forums relating to trade and economic empowerment**. For example,
 - International First Nations participation at the 2024 Supply Nation Connect Forum, with representatives from Indigenous cultures in Malaysia and Fiji.

Recommendation 20

7.86 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government accelerate its work with the First Nations Economic Partnership and consider the experiences of international jurisdictions and their fiscal management powers and frameworks (for example, Canada).

Response: Support

The Australian Government **supports the recommendation**. The Government has established a new First Nations Economic Partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance. Design of the Economic Partnership has been informed by lessons from international jurisdictions.

The Economic Partnership will focus on the full range of policy levers available to the Commonwealth Government to advance the economic empowerment and lasting economic security for First Nations peoples, communities and organisations including:

- designing an inclusive and transparent approach to developing the First Nations Economic Framework
- improving access to capital
- growing employment and career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendation 21

7.87 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ratify the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and explore opportunities for UNDRIP to guide commonwealth, state, and territory policy development and its relevance to good government in Australia.

Response: Noted

The Australian Government **notes this recommendation.** The Australian Government recognises the important principles articulated through UNDRIP and acknowledges the important work done by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Indigenous peoples globally in the negotiation of UNDRIP in the UN. It promotes the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in all matters that concern them, and the ability of Indigenous Peoples to pursue their own priorities in economic, social, and cultural development, recognising their political, economic and social structures and cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies.

As a resolution of the UN General Assembly, UNDRIP is not a legally binding instrument, and is not open for signature or ratification by states. Despite this status, since Australia formally supported UNDRIP and the principles it outlines in 2009, the Australian Government has given practical effect to the Declaration through its programs and policies and its approach to engagement and collaboration. UNDRIP informs the way Australian governments engage with and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Australia seeks to proactively include references in support of UNDRIP in international instruments. This work is ongoing in pursuing the ambitions set out in UNDRIP.

The Australian Government has used successive Closing the Gap frameworks since 2008 to guide and coordinate national efforts to improve the economic, health and education outcomes of First Nations Australians. Since that time, the Government has made a conscious effort to improve concordance with the guiding principles of UNDRIP, such as self-determination, participation in decision-making and partnership, through accountability measures such as implementation plans and the Partnership Agreement.

The Australian Government is ensuring that future policies have consideration of First Nations people through the First Nations Impacts Framework (the Framework). The Framework provides guidance to Australian Government departments and agencies on how to meaningfully consider impacts of policy on First Nations people, communities and organisations. The Framework references the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and extends to broader impacts on First Nations people.

The Australian Government is committed to progressing meaningful programs and policies that empower all First Nations people through strengthening partnerships and hearing from them about what works and will lead to meaningful change.

The Australian Government is carefully considering the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs report into the application of UNDRIP in Australia and its recommendations, that was tabled on 28 November 2023.

Recommendation 22

7.88 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider capacity and capability support for First Nations and Traditional Owner groups to strengthen their engagement in the energy transition and other Australian Government initiatives.

Response: Support in principle

The Australian Government **supports this recommendation in principle**. As stated in response to recommendation 11, the Australian Government is committed to working in partnership with Native Title holders, their Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), state and territory governments and other key stakeholders to consider a range of options to reform funding of PBCs and build PBC capacity. On 2 August, the Australian Government committed an additional \$75 million to PBCs over three years to 2028-29, taking the Australian Government's investment through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy for the PBC sector to over \$200 million.

The Government recognises that PBCs and other Traditional Owner groups have a key role to play as partners, leaders and supporters of Australia's clean energy transition. At a project level, PBCs and other First Nations stakeholders' participation can save time, reduce cost and improve overall outcomes through the life of green energy projects.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency is working closely with the National Native Title Council and receiving advice from the PBC Steering Group on issues impacting the sector and options for reforms. This includes advice on ways to support PBCs to participate in the clean energy transition.

The First Nations Clean Energy Strategy (the Strategy), released on 6 December 2024, provides a national framework for First Nations peoples' participation and empowerment in the energy transition.

The Strategy includes objectives for assisting First Nations-led coordination and capacity building and improving First Nations engagement in the clean energy sector. To date a total of \$70 million has been announced to support these objectives and programs are now in development for commencement in 2025/26.

More support and funding may be needed to improve engagement capacity and capability for First Nations people affected by other emerging initiatives and industries. Not all relevant First Nations peoples and groups are covered by existing programs such as PBC funding.

Additional comments

Coalition members of the Committee endorsed, or made recommendations similar to recommendations 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 20.