# New Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation

On 1 December 2021, the Australian Parliament passed the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment (Economic Empowerment) Bill 2021 (the Bill). The Australian Government has worked in partnership with the four NT Land Councils to co-design a package of generational reforms to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA).

The centre-piece of the reforms is a new, Aboriginal-controlled body called the NT Aboriginal Investment Corporation (the new Corporation) to empower Aboriginal people in the NT to maximise the economic future of their families and communities for generations to come. The new Corporation will be established in 2022, with the first step to establish an Interim Board.

## Why the new Corporation is needed

With over 47 per cent of the NT granted as Aboriginal land under the ALRA, Aboriginal Territorians, and Indigenous peoples all over Australia, are turning their minds to activating the potential of their land. The Government is unlocking the $1.3 billion Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) to pave the way.

Delivering on its Closing the Gap commitments, the Government is introducing legislation to establish the new Corporation to invest in projects that will grow wealth and support sustainable Aboriginal economies in the NT for the long term - seven generations ahead. The new Corporation will be led by a diverse Board with a range of cultural, land and financial expertise, including a majority of Aboriginal representatives, independent directors and members appointed by government.

It will receive an initial $500 million endowment, $60 million per year for the first three years of its operation and subsequent yearly funding from the ABA. The new Corporation will use this funding to invest in Aboriginal businesses and commercial projects like aquaculture, agriculture and tourism enterprises, and support community projects like art centres and youth centres.

Currently, the Minister for Indigenous Australians is responsible for approving beneficial payments from the ABA on the advice of the ABA Advisory Committee. The new Corporation will replace the current beneficial payments process, putting funding decisions in the hands of Aboriginal Territorians.

## The co-design process

Government, the four NT Land Councils and the ABA Advisory Committee have met over 8 times since 2018 through an extensive co-design process to develop the new Corporation based on ABA reform principles developed by the NT Land Councils. People have been calling for these reforms since 1984.

## Strong Governance and Management

The new Corporation will work within the rules set out in the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). It will have strong governance structures and transparent reporting to ensure accountability to Aboriginal people in the NT and the Australian Government.

In addition to PGPA Act requirements, the ABA entity will:

* Consult widely with Aboriginal Territorians on a 3-5 year Strategic Investment Plan setting out its investment and funding priorities, which will be tabled in Parliament,
* Publish Codes of Conduct for its Board and CEO,
* Have a strong Investment Committee with external financial expertise to provide business advice and support to the Board, and
* Seek government approval of investments of over $100 million.