

1. Introduction

Referral of the inquiry

- 1.1 On 26 October 2021, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt MP, requested that the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs consider an inquiry into how the corporate sector establishes models of best practice to foster better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers.
- 1.2 The committee adopted the inquiry and its terms of reference on 28 October 2021. The terms of reference are listed on page iii of this report.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.3 The inquiry received 25 submissions and 5 supplementary submissions. These are listed at Appendix A. The committee conducted six public hearings by videoconference and teleconference. These are listed in Appendix B. In-person hearings and interstate travel were not possible due to continuing restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Report structure and themes

- 1.4 This interim report is presented as an issues paper. The decision of the committee to prepare an interim report only was based on the short timeframe available to conduct the inquiry before the conclusion of the 46th Parliament. The inability to travel due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was also a factor in the committee's decision not to present a final report. Given our restricted time frames and limitations on travel we have not concluded gathering evidence of misfeasance by corporations against Indigenous consumers. Accordingly, while that process remains incomplete,

we have also not put the evidence gathered to the impugned corporations for their response.

- 1.5 This interim report makes no formal recommendations and will therefore not require a response from the Australian Government. The issues highlighted herein are intended to initiate discussions by the future members of this committee in the next Parliament about whether to seek a rereferral of this inquiry from the Minister.
- 1.6 Chapter 2 of the report discusses core issues raised in the submissions and at the public hearings on engagement by the corporate sector with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and communities, on:
 - the current state of cultural awareness within the corporate sector
 - the background, operation, and impact of Reconciliation Action Plans
 - critical market sectors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and impacts of poor corporate behaviour.
- 1.7 Chapter 3 provides committee comment on the issues and offers some future considerations. It is the committee's view that important matters have been raised in the initial evidence to this inquiry that need to be investigated further in the next Parliament.