

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

1) Opportunities for, and barriers to training, employment and business development;

Opportunities: As a consultant, I see lots of space for making positive improvements to First Nations economic self-determination and employment opportunities, namely through developing frameworks/imbuing infrastructure and urban design projects with Indigenous artwork and caring for Country frameworks (e.g. sustainable urban design initiatives invoking a sense of place and meaning, whilst using artworks and murals to tell Indigenous stories relevant to individual clan groups, or hiring Indigenous consultants to teach groups such as the CFA sustainable firestick farming methods). I believe projects such as SRL would be great opportunities for Indigenous companies to create First Nations dreaming stories painted at every stop. These opportunities could extend to sites across major cities which highlight the Indigenous stories explaining the formation of physical landmarks (e.g., how the Yarra is linked to dreaming stories, how Indigenous people conceptualise Country as having personhood, explaining the origins of certain species, chronicling Indigenous stories about extinct megafauna, or highlighting pre- and post-colonial First Nations cultural practices, laws and corroborees). Corporations are also keen to better understand and integrate Indigenous cultures, knowledge and people. I believe this provides an opportunity for First Nations businesses to create cultural awareness programs and training, which could take the form of face to face training, or generic programs purchased by corporations.

Barriers: Access to educational pathways which allow First Nations people to pursue technical pathways within our business. Whilst we have engaged with Indigenous run businesses via cultural awareness programs/niche First Nations architecture firms, we have very few First Nations peoples working at our consulting firm. To me, this suggests that the groups we've worked with are an exception, rather than a norm when pertaining to First Nations participation in the corporate sphere. Steps towards rectifying this would probably involve a greater investment in the educational needs of First Nations people, while shifting the discourse around deficits (I believe First Nations educational outcomes lag behind partially *because* our society tells Indigenous people that they are not able/worthy of "making it").

2) Impediments to building the economic and social infrastructure required to support economic prosperity in the long term, including barriers to building the economic and social infrastructure required to support industry and business to expand and create jobs;

In addition to the above, I believe First Nations Australians are unaware of how their identity as Indigenous peoples can be positively utilised to educate people in the corporate space/enrich infrastructure and urban design projects. Another barrier to building economic and social infrastructure is societal/political. If we can shift dialogue to ensure all of our infrastructure/urban design projects are imbued with First Nations perspectives/caring for Country, then we can *show* First Nations people that their work is *needed* to bind the cultural fabric of building Australia's infrastructure and next generation towns and cities. Beyond this, Indigenous people need to know that their stories should already reflect the landscape and world around us – I think we could do a much better job of advertising the necessity of this across the country (e.g., sites might mention pre-colonial activities and lore, be they yam cultivation, or clan stories about the landscape we're standing on).

3) Options to unlock capital and leverage intellectual property, the Indigenous Estate and First Nations skills to elevate First Nations people as economic partners;

See the above answers about cultural awareness programs and Indigenous participation in infrastructure/urban design projects.

4) The international and intergenerational experiences of fostering economic independence for First Nations communities;

As a non-Indigenous person, I don't feel I have the knowledge to answer this question.

5) Any other related matters

N/A