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The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
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Re: Inquiry into Developing Indigenous Enterprises

Confidentiality: I request that this submission remain Confidential.

Dear Secretary,

This letter is my submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Developing Indigenous Enterprises.

I have been involved directly in Indigenous issues throughout Australia continuously for the past fifteen years. In that time I have always worked towards supporting Indigenous youth, mainly in the areas of health and education.

During that time I have seen many changes – not all for the better. One particular area that has not progressed is the topic of the Inquiry. Indigenous Australians still do not engage with the Australian or the global economy. As a result, of course, a large majority of our people remain dependent upon Government welfare, handouts and subsidised employment schemes. Indigenous Australian's have for some years now been calling for an end to passive and direct welfare. To be fair to all, Indigenous Australians and Governments alike, there is no easy or quick solution to this problem.

Three years ago I was introduced to the Supplier Diversity models which have progressed in the US, Canada and now in England. Over the past few years I have steadily increased my knowledge of the potential of this model for Indigenous Australia. The Canadian and English examples are particularly interesting as those models have started up without the benefit of Federal Government legislation.

Over this same period it has become increasingly apparent that there are a large number of Indigenous Australians who do wish to achieve economic independence by way of entrepreneurialism. Most, however, do not have the confidence to do so. Anecdotally I would suggest that the main reason for this is that most do not feel if they would be welcome in the field of commerce nor would they be taken seriously. I have always found that Indigenous Australians are particularly sensitive to rejection in areas that they are not familiar with.



The adoption of a Supplier Diversity model in Australia would have my total support. Indeed I am aware of no comparable initiative coming out of any State or Federal Government at this time. I can see that this type of model would create significant benefits for those who wish to own and operate their own business. I recently met with seven Indigenous business owners to discuss this very model. Every person in the room agreed this model would be of significant assistance to them and those they knew. All became excited at the prospect of being able to employ more Indigenous young people (as opposed to being excited about their business making more money!).

Recently I was offered the opportunity to apply for a Churchill Fellowship. These Fellowships are awarded by The Churchill Trust – an Australian Trust established in the year 1965, the year Sir Winston Churchill died. The principal object of the Trust is to perpetuate and honour the memory of Sir Winston Churchill by the award of Travelling Fellowships known as Churchill Fellowships.

A Churchill Fellowship is the award of an opportunity through the provision of financial support, to enable Australian citizens from all walks of life to travel overseas to undertake an analysis, study or investigation of a project or an issue that cannot be readily undertaken in Australia. The study is to be in a topic area that is aimed to better the future of Australia and Australians who are in need of assistance in life.

In my application, I chose the Adoption of a Supplier Diversity model in Australia as my topic of study. Underpinning my application was the need for Australia to find a way for Indigenous Australians to begin the long path towards breaking free from welfare dependency.

I am proud to confirm that I have been successful in my application and have been awarded my Churchill Fellowship. This will enable me to travel to the US, Canada and the UK to fully research the respective Supplier Diversity models in these countries. The Presidents of each of the respective bodies in these countries have welcomed this initiative and have kindly provided letters of support. I attach a copy of these letters for your information.

In my humble view, your Inquiry is addressing one of the most exciting topics for Indigenous Australians. If we get this right, I believe this initiative will have momentous consequences for future generations of Indigenous Australians.

I look forward to participating further in your Inquiry.

Yours Sincerely

David Liddiard

Chairman
Message Stick Group.