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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Indigenous Australians at work

## **Successful Initiatives in Indigenous Employment**

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

June 2007  
Canberra

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# Foreword

## The Positives

The Aboriginal face on the Australian \$50 note is David Unaipon, author, inventor and sometimes thought of as “Australia’s Leonardo”. As a remarkable example of the capacity of Indigenous people, I am sure that there are many David Unaipons across Australia and I dedicate this foreword to his memory and the future creativity of every Indigenous Australian.

In discussing our request to the Minister of the need for a positive approach to Indigenous matters, employment was an area where progress could be demonstrated. At a time of strong economic performance at the national level and with workforce shortages a growing reality, the opportunities for further development of Indigenous employment appeared to be significant.

Over the past two years we were fortunate to share the views and better understand the outcomes for many individuals, companies and the wider community in this vital human activity.

The central role of work and the workplace in most Australian’s lives is something that we perhaps take for granted – but the lessons of the past two years remind all of us that the variation in workforce participation by Indigenous people is very much a result of a complex set of factors which some achieve with significant success and others have a more limited result.

The above is very much a two way street with some employers leading the way with many employees open to opportunities and both able to achieve great results.

The recurring theme of many people who presented before the Committee was the overwhelming impact of welfare policies as a deterrent to sustainable employment. The need for Government policies to strike a better balance between the incentives for work and the incentives to be distracted by welfare is vital.

Our inquiry attempted to seek out the committed employers and employees and understand their views and what motivated them to achieve and these experiences are documented from that perspective. Their views are the basis of current progress and I thank them for their willingness to share with the Parliament their experiences in the hope that policy makers will better understand the value that employers and employees found for their general and economic well-being.

I acknowledge and thank my fellow Committee Members, all staff for their patience and tolerance and all members of the Australian community who participated in our inquiry to offer not only a better employment outcome for more Australians but to further unlock the economic future for Indigenous people.

**Mr Barry Wakelin MP**  
Chairman



## Membership of the Committee

Chairman Mr Barry Wakelin MP

Deputy Chair The Hon Dr Carmen Lawrence MP

Members Ms Annette Ellis MP

Mr Peter Garrett MP

Mr Andrew Laming MP (from 28 February 2006)

Mr Andrew Robb MP (until 28 February 2006)

The Hon Peter Slipper MP

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Dr Andrew Southcott MP

The Hon Wilson Tuckey MP

The Hon Danna Vale MP

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## Terms of reference

That the Committee inquire into positive factors and examples amongst Indigenous communities and individuals, which have improved employment outcomes in both the public and private sectors; and

1. recommend to the government ways this can inform future policy development; and
2. assess what significant factors have contributed to those positive outcomes identified, including what contribution practical reconciliation has made.



## List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
AEC	Aboriginal Education Council
AES	Aboriginal Employment Strategy
AFL	Australian Football League
ALPA	Arnhemland Progress Association
ALTA-1	Altering Lives One at a Time Program
ANZ	Australian and New Zealand Banking Group
APS	Australian Public Service
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
BAC	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
BCC	Brisbane City Council
BUC	Breaking the Unemployment Cycle
CAAMA	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CDEP	Community Development and Employment Projects
CDRHC	Cairns and District Regional Housing Corporation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer

COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HOP	Home Ownership Program
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
ICC	Indigenous Coordination Centre
IEC	Indigenous Employment Centre
IEP	Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships
IHANT	Indigenous Housing Authority Northern Territory
ILC	Indigenous Land Corporation
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IPP	Indigenous Pastoral Program
JYP	Jobs for Young People
KBN	Koori Business Network
LDC	Larrakia Development Corporation
MATES	Mentoring Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme
MCA	Minerals Council of Australia
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NGO	Non-government organisation
NLC	Northern Land Council

NORFORCE	North West Mobile Force
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Service
OAM	Order of Australia
OIPC	Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination
PM&C	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SACOME	South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy
SRA	Shared Responsibility Agreement
STEP	Structured Training and Employment Programme
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TIC	Tasmanian Investment Corporation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy Program
YES	Youth Employment Scheme





# List of recommendations

## Construction and maintenance programs

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Minister propose that the corporate governance procedures and the sound business principles under which the current Board of the Cairns and District Regional Housing Corporation are operating (noting the average of 70 per cent local Indigenous labour component in their maintenance and building programs) be considered as a model practice for other Indigenous housing and tenancy corporations (paragraph 3.13).

### Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that all Federal Government construction contracts in regional areas give due recognition to aspirational imperatives for Indigenous employment outcomes (paragraph 3.22).

## Tender requirements

### Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Federal Government amend government service delivery tender requirements and contracting processes to recognise and encourage Indigenous involvement (paragraph 3.23).

## **Indigenous employment by small businesses**

### **Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommends that the Federal Government ensure that small businesses employing Indigenous people receive comparable support to that received by the large business sector (paragraph 3.63).

## **Micro-finance**

### **Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends that the relevant Government departments that administer programs providing micro-finance and small business assistance to Indigenous people, actively promote such programs and facilitate better access to that support (paragraph 3.85)

## **Funding for mentors**

### **Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that the Federal Government provide adequate resources for mentoring in addition to the funding provided for training and employment of Indigenous Australians (paragraph 4.39).

## **Education**

### **Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that given the importance of education to future employment possibilities, the Government consider requests from Indigenous communities in relation to their preferred options for stronger incentives to encourage school attendance (paragraph 5.32).

### **Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the Federal Government evaluate and fund a range of options to improve educational outcomes including but not limited to, Indigenous teaching aides, tutors and individualised learning plans (paragraph 5.41).

## National Indigenous Cadet Scheme

### Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Government:

- review the National Indigenous Cadet Scheme to identify the most productive avenues for its expansion;
- actively promote cadetships to Indigenous students at the matriculation level as a means of continuing their education; and
- provide public service rotational opportunities for Indigenous cadets in Indigenous organisations and in the private sector (paragraph 5.89).

## Work experience

### Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination develop a model which allows Indigenous employees of non-government organisations to experience work within the public sector (paragraph 5.93).

## Public servants in regional and remote areas

### Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the terms and conditions offered to all Government employees in communities not disadvantage local employees compared to those recruited from elsewhere (paragraph 6.24).

## Private sector Indigenous employment

### Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the best practice models within industries like the mining industry be understood, promoted and encouraged by Government as one of the best models to achieve greater Indigenous participation in the workforce (paragraph 7.128).

### **Recommendation 13**

The Committee recommends that the Government promote the Memorandum of Understanding of the Minerals Council of Australia and the Indigenous Land Corporation models as best practice which could be adopted by other sectors (paragraph 7.130).

### **Recommendation 14**

The Committee recommends that the Government disseminate innovative strategies with respect to Indigenous employment within and between public and private sectors and the implementation of best practice within the public service where appropriate (paragraph 7.131).

