



Indigenous mentors – the key ingredient

The House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee is travelling to Brisbane to hear from mentors, academics and Indigenous business owners operating in the dynamic region of South East Queensland.

Committee Chair Richard Marles said there was a high level of activity in Indigenous businesses in Queensland, with hubs of activity in the Cape region, mining areas and Brisbane.

“Research from the South East Queensland Indigenous Chamber of Commerce indicates that there are in excess of 200 businesses in South East Queensland that are either owned and/or managed by Indigenous Australians. There has also been recognition of the opportunities presented by the mining boom with the Queensland Government and Queensland Resource Council developing a formal memorandum of understanding to encourage Indigenous employment in the Queensland resources sector and Indigenous enterprise development,” Mr Marles said.

At the Brisbane public hearing, the Committee will hear from Australia’s first published Aboriginal business author, Neil Willmet, who is also a successful Indigenous business owner. Mr Willmet recently launched *“How to Start a Successful Aboriginal Business in Australia”* and has big ideas for Indigenous business, including filling the business gaps left by a non-indigenous shift towards the coast. University of Queensland Professor Paul Memmott will discuss possible collaborations between mining and the development of Indigenous tourism operations in northern Australia.

In a roundtable discussion Indigenous business mentors will highlight some of the key issues for people in the region starting out in a wide range of business enterprises, including the arts. The idea that women are often the initiators of a business concept will also be discussed. The roundtable will consider some of the barriers to setting up businesses and the possible role of a Minority Business Council.

“Researchers from the Queensland University of Technology have proposed that the lack of access by Indigenous Australians to most forms of capital, such as financial, human, physical, organisational and technological, has a significant constraint on their entrepreneurial activity. The proposers of this model consider that a Minority Business Councils model would seem to provide mechanisms for access to this capital and would therefore help to reduce the barriers to entrepreneurship,” Mr Marles said.

Public hearing schedule for Tuesday 9 September 10.30am – 4pm

VENUE: Ahimsa House, 26 Horan St, West End

10.30 am	Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry (Qld)
11.00 am	Neil Willmet
11.45 am	Focus Pty Ltd
12.15 pm	Indigenous Tenders
1.15 pm	Craig Furneaux & Professor Kerry Brown
1.45 pm	Professor Paul Memmott
2.30 pm	Roundtable
4.00 pm	Close

Further details on the inquiry can be obtained from the Committee’s website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/atsia>.

For **media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair, Mr Richard Marles MP, on 02 6277 4330 (Canberra) or 03 5221 3033 (Electorate Office).

For **background information**, please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4559 or 0421 611 182 by email at atsia.reps@aph.gov.au