



# about Australia

## Indigenous programs: business and employment

- The Australian Government places strong emphasis on working with employers to generate job opportunities for Indigenous people in the private sector, as well as supporting the growth of Indigenous small business.

About 3000 Indigenous Australians are currently running their own businesses in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, arts, retailing, transport, building and maintenance, and services to mines and farms. However, while employment opportunities have improved in recent years, the government views the Indigenous unemployment rate as being unacceptably high.

### Indigenous Business Australia

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), established in April 2001, aims to forge partnerships between Indigenous people and corporate Australia and operates with a capital base of approximately \$600 million. It invests these funds in a range of industries, such as mining and tourism, usually through joint ventures with industry partners and Indigenous communities.

In March 2005, IBA acquired responsibility for two Indigenous-specific programs—Home Ownership and Business Development. These additions make IBA a key platform for the Australian Government's wider Indigenous program.

Since it was established in 1975 under a previous agency, the Home Ownership

Program has helped almost 12 000 Indigenous families to buy their own homes. The program was originally set up because regular financial markets do not provide the necessary opportunities for many Indigenous Australians to obtain home loan finance.

The Home Ownership Program approved 580 new loans in the 2005–06 financial year with a total value of \$122.9 million.

IBA's Business Development Program (BDP) provides financial assistance and business support that includes advice on financial planning and management, marketing, training, mentoring and facilitation of access to other public and private sector services. In the 2005–06 financial year, the BDP budget allocation was \$27.2 million.

There was a significant increase in demand for IBA's services in the 2005–06 financial year, particularly in the IBA Enterprise loan scheme. This scheme facilitates the acquisition, establishment and development of commercially viable businesses by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In the 2005–06 financial year, the program approved 72 loans, to a total value of \$14.2 million.

### Community Development Employment Projects

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program is an Australian Government funded initiative for unemployed Indigenous people. It provides for activities that meet community needs and develop participants' skills and employability so they can take up jobs outside CDEP. The overall aim is to support Indigenous Australians to achieve economic independence. The program is managed by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

In 2008, the Australian Government will be consulting Indigenous people about future directions for this program.

### Indigenous Employment Policy

The aim of the Indigenous Employment Policy is to generate more employment opportunities for Australia's Indigenous peoples. The policy is made up of 10 program elements:

Program elements that focus on **employment and job skills**:

- Structured Training and Employment Projects provide flexible financial assistance for projects that offer structured training leading to lasting employment for Indigenous job seekers.
- The Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project is a partnership between individual private sector companies and the Australian Government to generate more jobs for Indigenous Australians.

- Wage Assistance is a wage subsidy for employers to employ Indigenous Australians.
- The National Indigenous Cadetship Project links Indigenous tertiary students with employers in an arrangement that involves full-time study and work placements.
- The Community Development and Employment Project Placement Incentive is a payment for CDEP organisations to get Indigenous people into employment.
- The Aboriginal Employment Strategy provides individually tailored assistance to help Indigenous job seekers prepare for, gain and retain jobs.

Program elements that stimulate **Indigenous economic activity**:

- The Indigenous Small Business Fund provides funding for community-based organisations to help them develop their business.
- The Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme provides funding to Indigenous businesses to help them develop their business.
- The Emerging Indigenous Entrepreneurs Initiative provides funding to support initiatives to improve the economic development, business skills and financial literacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Measures to improve employment services and outcomes include:

- Job Network, a network of private and community organisations contracted to find jobs for unemployed people, particularly the long-term unemployed. Job Network is the main source of employment assistance to Indigenous people and special measures have been introduced to help

them secure employment. These include specialist Indigenous providers offering services that cater specifically for their Indigenous clients, and the requirement for Job Network and New Enterprise Incentive Scheme providers to have specific strategies for Indigenous service provision in areas where the Indigenous population is 5 per cent or more of the total population.

- Indigenous Employment Centres, which were introduced in order to bridge the gap between the Job Network and CDEPs.
- The Indigenous Youth Employment Consultants program, which provides support and encouragement for Indigenous young people aged 15 to 19 to stay in education or move into training and/or work.

### Indigenous communities and the mining industry

The Working in Partnership Program, which is now in its sixth year, is designed to foster closer relationships between Indigenous communities and the mining industry. At its core is the recognition of the need to build these relationships, as well as the fact that, for many remote communities, the mining industry provides excellent opportunities for mainstream employment.

### Indigenous tourism businesses

Over the past 10 years, the Australian Government has provided funding assistance to several Indigenous tourism enterprises and organisations through its regional tourism programs.

The Aboriginal Art and Cultural Centre in Alice Springs and the Tjapukai Aboriginal

Cultural Park in Cairns have won major international tourism awards. The Tjapukai Park employs nearly 100 staff, of whom 85 per cent are Indigenous. It is a partnership between the long-term employees, the Tjapukai-speaking communities and several private business people, with the Indigenous shareholders holding just over 50 per cent of the company.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all dollar amounts are in Australian dollars.

### Further information

Centrelink

[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

[www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)

Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism

[www.ret.gov.au](http://www.ret.gov.au)

Indigenous Employment Policy

[www.workplace.gov.au/Indigenous](http://www.workplace.gov.au/Indigenous)

Working in Partnership Program

[www.ret.gov.au/Programsandservices](http://www.ret.gov.au/Programsandservices)

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[www.dfat.gov.au/geo/australia](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/australia)

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Western Australia coastline.

