



AUSTRALIA



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UNGA Third Committee Item 71: General Discussion on Indigenous Rights

Statement delivered on 11 October 2019

Australia wishes to acknowledge and offer our respect to the custodians of the land, sea and air, and offer our respect to Indigenous Peoples here today.

In 2019 the Australian Government appointed its first Aboriginal Cabinet Minister, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Honourable Ken Wyatt AM MP. Australia is committed to pursuing appropriate recognition of Indigenous Australians in our Constitution and the Minister has committed to work with all Australians on this objective.

Consistent with the priority Australia places on protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples globally, Minister Wyatt participated in the Annual Panel Discussion on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the 42nd Session of the Human Rights Council in September this year.

Australia welcomes the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages. Our membership on the UNESCO Steering Committee for this International Year demonstrates our support and commitment to revive, maintain, celebrate and promote Indigenous languages. Our diplomatic posts around the world have supported a series of events celebrating Indigenous languages this year, including an event on *The role of language in rights comprehension, agency and enjoyment for Indigenous communities* at the meeting of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People in July.

Australia has been proud to continue promoting the rights of indigenous women and girls at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Commission on

the Status of Women; and by working with Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner [Ms June Oscar] on the photographic exhibition at the UN in August for International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples titled "Hear us, See us", documenting Ms Oscar's Women's Voices project.

Globally, we are seeing the change that comes through economic rights and empowerment. Indigenous People are running businesses, cultivating markets and growing economies. Economic empowerment is the pathway to:

- realise full participation of Indigenous People in the economic and social life of a State;
- provide equal opportunities in business and employment; and
- enable families and communities to thrive.

Since supporting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ten years ago, we have given and continue to give practical effect to the aspirations and rights it captures, including economic rights.

Australia has introduced an Indigenous Procurement Policy, using the buying power of Government. Indigenous businesses are thriving with more than \$2 billion in contracts awarded.

Investing in the futures of Indigenous Peoples is crucial to supporting the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and ensuring the global community achieves our commitment to 'leave no one behind'.

Both within Australia and internationally, we are achieving positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples and communities by partnering with Indigenous peoples on decisions, in line with the Declaration.

In Australia, we've established a landmark partnership agreement between all Australian governments, through the Council of Australian Governments, and Indigenous Australian representatives. The agreement establishes the Joint

Council on Closing the Gap which formalises shared decision-making, oversight, implementation and monitoring on matters that affect Indigenous Australians.

For the first time in our history, Indigenous Australians are chairing significant national meetings with Government. All parties are together at the table.

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