



FIRST AUSTRALIANS  
CAPITAL



# Kolang, Kowa

TOWARDS, PURPOSE (*Awabakal Language*)

First Australians Capital Impact Report

## Acknowledgment of Country

First Australians Capital was founded on the lands of the Awabakal people. Over the years, our team and businesses have grown to cover the traditional lands across Australia. We pay our deepest respects to the Traditional Custodians of Country across Australia. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which Indigenous businesses are founded and operate.

# CONTENTS

02.  
Chairperson's message

03.  
Highlights

05.  
Our story

07.  
Investing for Change

09.  
Value Creation Model

11.  
Impact Outcomes

14.  
Artist & Language  
Acknowledgement

15.  
Indigenous Impact

17.  
Connection to Country,  
Community, and Culture  
(SDGs)

21.  
Radical Possibilities:  
Unlocking the  
Transformative Potential of  
Indigenous Knowledge

41.  
Appendix

43.  
Summary & Close

# CHAIR PERSON WORD

On behalf of the Board and team at First Australians Capital, I am proud to present our Impact Report.

When FAC was formed over five years ago, it was the culmination of 10 years experience in designing, testing and advocating for an Indigenous-led investment model that would harnesses the creative, cultural and economic value of Indigenous enterprises and communities. At the centre of the model is economic self-determination and to drive a new economy driven by First Australians.

In the pursuit for self-determination, “Indigenous businesses and community enterprises have become important vehicles for generating pride, independence and financial stability for their owners and employees and use their business activities to create positive futures for themselves, their families and Community” (Supply Nation).

This Impact Report is a culmination of the efforts of the Indigenous businesses and enterprises we have worked with and invested in over the past three years. Deep gratitude to our portfolio companies, who have worked incredibly hard to create economic success while increasing the positive impact they are having on the lives of Indigenous Peoples. This is their story.

We are also pleased to share our impact management approach which is guided by the foundation pillars in the Indigenous First Impact Framework. This report continues to deepen our alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIP) and the SDG's.

In addition, we have included some research on industry sectors where opportunities for enhancing sector development is demonstrated through the engaging with Indigenous peoples and knowledges.

Finally, the Report is a milestone in FAC's first horizon to pilot, plan and refine our Impact-first investment philosophy. It is recognition of the commitment and resilience of the FAC Board to pursue the right values aligned investors. We are also humbled by the trust and support of our investors for believing in our team and investing in our vision over the past 5 years.

We hope you enjoy reading this report and we hope to continue to share our impact stories and outcomes as we strive towards a just, prosperous Australia for all.



Leah Armstrong, Chairperson of the Board of First Australians Capital



# IMPACT

## RIGHT CAPITAL-RIGHT SUPPORT

**800+**

ENTREPRENEURS  
SUPPORTED SINCE 2016

**81%**<sup>1</sup>

INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES  
WITH IMPROVED ACCESS TO  
FINANCE

**94**

INVESTMENTS MADE  
SINCE 2020

**\$80M**

TOTAL LEVERAGED CAPITAL

## GENDER AND RACIAL EQUITY

**372**

TOTAL JOBS CREATED AND  
SUSTAINED THROUGH  
BUSINESS INVESTMENT

**37%**

ALL INVESTEEES ARE WOMEN  
ENTREPRENEURS

**80%**

REPORTED IMPROVED CONFIDENCE SINCE  
WORKING WITH FAC

Proxy indicator for Social and Emotional wellbeing



# HIGHLIGHTS

## COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY

**3.5**

PORTFOLIO IMPACT SCORE  
ACROSS ALL BUSINESSES  
USING FAC'S IMPACT  
SCORECARD

**98%**

INVESTMENTS HAVE  
DEMONSTRATED SOCIAL  
OUTCOMES FOR  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

**23%**

INVESTMENTS INTO SECTORS  
LEVERAGING INDIGENOUS  
KNOWLEDGES.

**8%**

OF INVESTMENTS MADE INTO  
COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

First Australians Capital investments approach contributes to achieving the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Sustainable Development Goals



# OUR STORY



**2009**

Regional Indigenous  
Social Enterprise

FAC was conceptualised in the early 2000s to promote and support Indigenous businesses and enterprises as a way for Indigenous peoples to become economically independent.

FAC identified an opportunity to bridge the gap in finance and investment markets for Indigenous businesses, and first pilots a social enterprise fund in 2011.

**2013**

Indigenous Social  
Enterprise Fund



**2016**

First Australians  
Capital (FAC)  
Launched

In 2016, FAC incorporated to drive access to capital and business capacity building for Indigenous led and owned enterprises.

A business support service was established to enable Indigenous-led businesses to develop their networks and resources for business growth.

**2017**

Business Advisory  
Service established



**2017-2020**

Murra Program  
University of  
Melbourne

FAC provided seed funding for the Murra Program to support Indigenous leaders to gain access to MBA courses.

In 2018, FAC launched the tourism market accelerator [Welcome to Country](#).

**2018**

Welcome to Country



# SO FAR...

In 2020, FAC leveraged \$30M in debt finance in partnership with Westpac.

**2020**

\$30 Million Westpac Partnership



**2020**

COVID-19 Recovery Program

The COVID Recovery program was critical to support Indigenous businesses during the pandemic.

FAC secures \$13M in investment to pilot the Impact Enterprise Concept Fund.

**2021 - 2022**

Impact Enterprise Fund



**2021...**

Radical Possibilities

FAC launches 2031 Strategy - Radical Possibilities and the Indigenous First Impact Framework.

In 2023, the FAC Catalytic Impact Fund was seeded, and FAC secures support to accelerate our market building (right support) model.

**2023**

FAC Catalytic Impact Fund







# INVESTING FOR CHANGE

This report sets out the early work First Australians Capital has accomplished to grow an Indigenous-led Impact Investment Fund for and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

First Australians Capital recognises a significant opportunity to build the Indigenous business sector and – by extension – the Australian economy while enabling whole communities to thrive.

The Indigenous business sector comprises more than 14,800 businesses and has grown by at least 47% in the period between 2016 and 2021<sup>1</sup>. Material opportunities exist to grow both the number of Indigenous businesses and the scale of these businesses across all regions and sectors.

A new Indigenous economy is possible by enabling enterprise growth and innovation driven by the skills and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It requires recognition of key systems and pillars for innovation, including:

- Growth in the Indigenous Procurement Policy (targets of both State and Federal Governments and major Australian corporations through RAPs).
- Recognising industries where Indigenous businesses have a natural competitive advantage (tourism, creative Industries, agri-business and bush foods).
- Valuing Indigenous knowledges, assets, and sustainable practices to help find solutions to some of the major issues facing people (climate change, food security, land degradation and biodiversity loss).
- Acknowledging that the key motivations of Indigenous entrepreneurs is to create impact for community, country and society. This research proposition was considered in M F Rola-Rubzen, (2011), 'The Anatomy of the Australian Entrepreneur: Understanding micro, small and medium business entrepreneurs in Australia' (shown in Table 1.). This position is further supported by First Australians Capital's survey of Indigenous-led businesses in 2020, that demonstrates the core motivations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs (shown in Table 2.).

<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://www.nintione.com.au/resource/NintiOneReport\\_AnatomyoftheAustralianEntrepreneur.pdf](http://www.nintione.com.au/resource/NintiOneReport_AnatomyoftheAustralianEntrepreneur.pdf) (22 accessed May 2017) / <https://www.pwc.com.au/indigenous-consulting/economic-contribution-of-indigenous-business-sector-is-growing.html>



# INVESTING FOR CHANGE

Table 1. Comparison of the non-Indigenous and Indigenous specific motivations (by rank) for starting a business

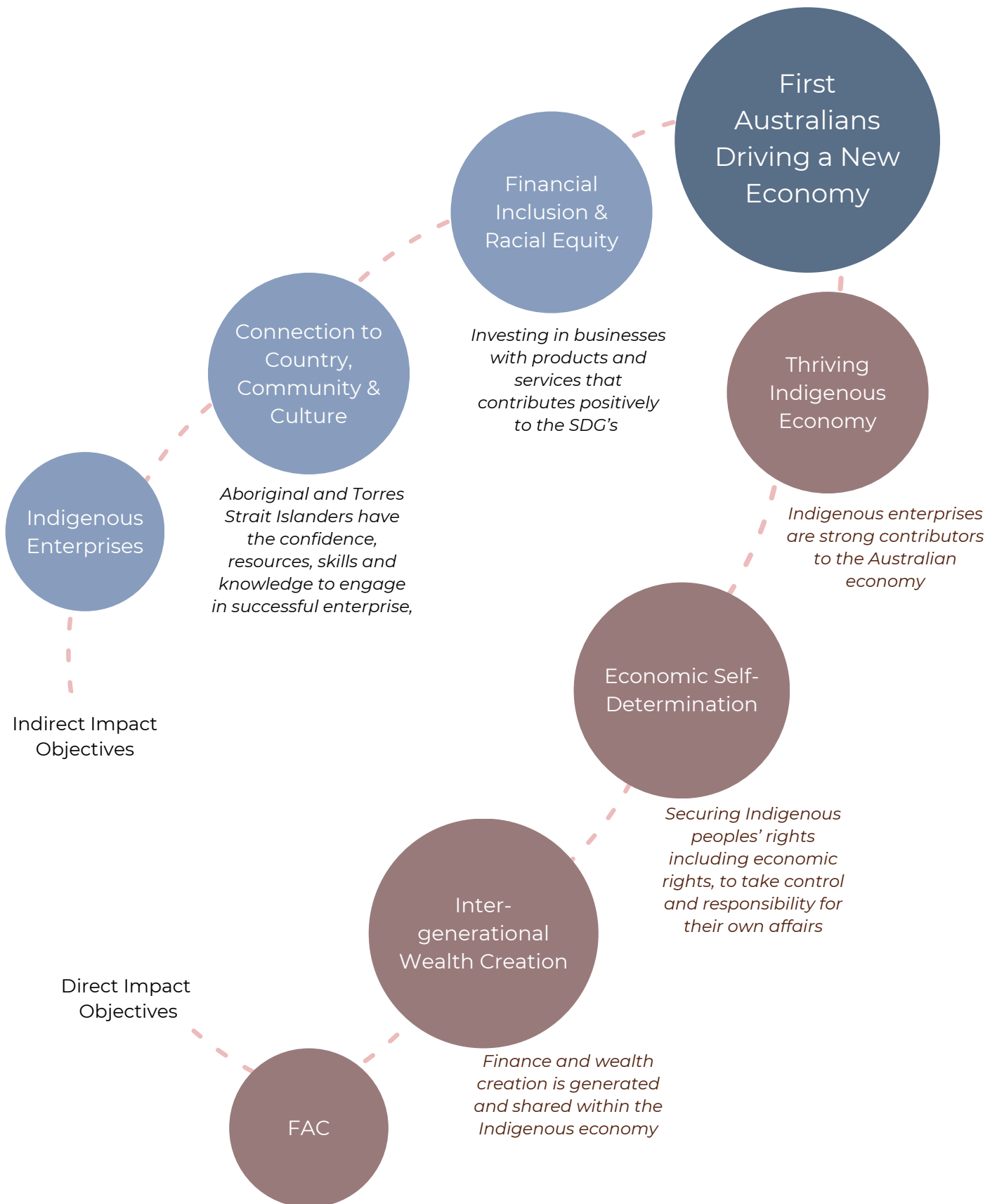
Reason	Non-Indigenous entrepreneurs	Indigenous entrepreneurs
To improve my income	1	4
To become my own boss	2	
To improve my lifestyle	3	3
To become wealthy	4	
To create employment for myself or my family	5	2
To contribute to my community by increasing employment opportunities		2
To contribute to my community by providing a needed service		1

Source: [http://www.nintione.com.au/resource/NintiOneReport\\_AnatomyoftheAustralianEntrepreneur.pdf](http://www.nintione.com.au/resource/NintiOneReport_AnatomyoftheAustralianEntrepreneur.pdf)  
 accessed May 2017, <https://www.pwc.com.au/indigenous-consulting/economic-contribution-of-indigenous-business-sector-is-growing.html>

Table 2. Core motivations of Indigenous entrepreneurs



# Value Creation Model





# Value Creation Model (Theory of Change)

The value creation model (Theory of Change) is a strategic response to the systemic barriers to Indigenous economic inclusion. The model is about unlocking opportunity within the Indigenous entrepreneurship landscape by delivering services that enable participants to grow and thrive.

The four pillars of FAC's pathway to change are set out in the 2021 [Strategy 2031: Radical Possibilities](#):

- Thriving Indigenous businesses
- Market equity
- Unlocking capital
- Influencing change

These pillars are underpinned by FAC's Impact Investing approach, the [Indigenous First Impact framework](#), where a 'Right Capital-Right Support' process is applied when working with Indigenous businesses.

The outcome of this support model is the impact criteria against which FAC measures its effect on Indigenous businesses:

- Intergenerational wealth creation
- Economic Self-Determination
- Thriving Indigenous Economy

FAC also acknowledges the substantial work being done by the Indigenous economy participants, where businesses themselves are driving change within the community through:

- Connection to Country, Community and Culture
- Financial Inclusion and Racial Equity





Through FAC's investment portfolio and leveraged capital, we are addressing the growing needs of Indigenous business enterprises, and challenging the way in which finance supports economic development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'.



# INTERGENERATIONAL WEALTH CREATION

Intergenerational wealth is important to the mobility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and community. It is the type of wealth that provides long-term security and financial stability and is one of the most common indicators used to determine social and economic mobility and reducing some measures of relative wealth inequality.




Drivers for intergenerational wealth creation in Indigenous economic development can build finance and access to capital that supports essential entrepreneurship for sector development (discussed further in the radical possibilities case studies in this report), and enables capacity to leverage the Indigenous asset base, build Natural Capital that supports all Australians, and reduces the wealth disparity in Indigenous families and communities.<sup>2</sup>

Target	Outcome	Indicator
 <p>Develop and unlock community assets for community development outcomes</p>	2	Number of investments made into community organisations that would otherwise not have access to capital
 <p>Support gender equality and increasing investment into Indigenous women-led enterprises</p>	37%	% of all investments made in to women-led organisations with 18% of total capital accessed by women
 <p>Reducing inequality through business support, and targeted investment into geographical areas of need</p>	22%	% of all capital has been provided to businesses operating in low income areas
 <p>Increasing per capital wealth for indigenous entrepreneurs across all FAC investments</p>	2X	On average the revenue generated by businesses has doubled post-capital with this increase over 2+ years

<sup>2</sup> [Wealth Transfers and their Economic Effects - Commission Research Paper - Productivity Commission \(pc.gov.au\)](#)

# ECONOMIC SELF-DETERMINATION




Economic self-determination is about securing Indigenous peoples' rights, including economic rights, to take control and responsibility for their own affairs. These rights, including land and economic rights not only contributes to the reduction of poverty (SDG 1) and improving food security (SDG 2), but also encourages long term benefits that are critical to meeting the sustainable development goals, and in particular SDG 13 – combating climate change and its impacts.<sup>3</sup>

Target	Outcome	Indicator
 <p>Indigenous peoples and entrepreneurs having more capacity to promote, development, and finance their institutional structures and governance arrangements.</p>	75%	% of businesses accessing capital through First Australians Capital would not have access to capital elsewhere
 <p>Greater participation of Indigenous peoples in governance and in the economy as business owners and operators (through increased participation on boards and as shareholders)</p>	78%	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business owners have been supported to grow and sustain their business with access to capital and support services
 <p>Improved financial inclusion through Indigenous businesses having greater access to appropriate capital ("right capital") and more choice in available finance options to grow their business</p>	45%	% of businesses supported indicated that their financial options improved since working with First Australians Capital
	\$80M	Leveraged Capital for Indigenous business

<sup>3</sup> State of the Worlds Indigenous Peoples Report, Volume 5, page 149

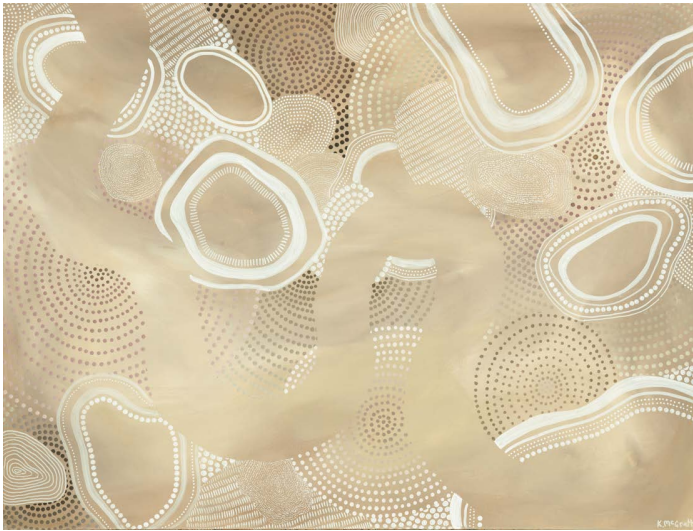
# THRIVING INDIGENOUS ECONOMY

Thriving Indigenous businesses is about ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and their enterprises can participate in and be strong contributors to the Australian economy. Indigenous businesses have a multiplier effect, where the impacts of a successful business go far beyond financial benefits to the local economy and where successful business owners are often role models and catalysts for change within the community, and as businesses, Indigenous enterprises are 100x more likely to employ other Indigenous people.<sup>4</sup>

Target	Outcome	Indicator
 <p>Increased economic activity (numbers of new businesses) and more profitable and resilient Indigenous business sector</p>	16	New businesses created with access to finance since the launch of the FAC impact enterprise fund in April 2021
 <p>Improved access to financial services and capital through the FAC investment fund.</p>	37%	Funded opportunities going to women-led enterprises
	22%	Businesses supported are operating in low income areas)
 <p>Up to 10,000 Indigenous people (beneficiaries) directly benefiting from the Indigenous economy over 10 years</p>	305	Direct beneficiaries including business owners, employees and Indigenous suppliers
	95	New jobs created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and another 150+ jobs sustained through investment.

<sup>4</sup> [Building-Indigenous-Growth-Report.pdf \(supplynation.org.au\)](#)





# Kate McGrath

Awabakal & Guringai

Kate McGrath is a proud Awabakal and Guringai woman, living, creating, and teaching on Dhawaral Country in the Illawarra. She was born and raised on Wiradjuri country in Wagga Wagga, there Kate developed a deep love of nature, culture, and telling stories through her art.

## The Story:

"Kolang Kowa (Towards Purpose)," is an artwork that echoes the beating heart of our Indigenous heritage and First Australian Capitals purpose and vision.

As you immerse yourself in "Kolang Kowa," witness the beauty of community service and mutual support, where every small action creates ripples that reverberate outward, much like raindrops nurturing the earth. It is a powerful reminder that even the tiniest actions can grow into powerful movements. Just like the rocks nestled on the riverbed, each one contributing to the course of the river's journey, our collective actions nurture our culture, creativity, and economic strength, allowing us to chart our destiny.

First Australians Capital, with its unwavering commitment to Indigenous businesses and communities, is like a guiding current in this river of progress. This artwork shines as a beacon of hope and inspiration, reflecting our shared dreams and aspirations. Together, we are crafting a narrative where small actions, bring growth, nourish new life, and cultivate a brighter future for all Indigenous and non Indigenous peoples of Australia.

## Kolang, Kowa

### Language Acknowledgement



First Australians Capital (FAC) would like to acknowledge and thank the Miromaa Institution for the naming of our Impact report. This impact report represents the past five years of FAC's commitment to the growth of the Indigenous economy, and recognises the previous decade of work toward its creation.

In acknowledgement of the Awabakal land on which FAC was founded, the report has been named **Kolang, Kowa**. Two words deriving from the Awabakal language, loosely meaning "Towards, Purpose".

FAC would like to acknowledge Awabakal man Daryn McKenny for his research, support and approval of the use of these words.

# IMPACT OF INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS

## *Connection to Country, Community, and Culture*

The additional work done by the Indigenous entrepreneurs in the FAC investment portfolio demonstrates that the real drivers of change sit within the Indigenous economy and entrepreneurship already and facilitating those positive changes, is all that's required to link sector development and entrepreneurship to Country, Community, and Culture.

The alignment of the FAC investment portfolio to the Sustainable Development Goals is carried out at a portfolio level, with the data captured at the investee level.

For the protection of the assets and intellectual property of the businesses we support, FAC does not make available individual results. As part of our Indigenous First Impact priorities, FAC upholds the protection of Indigenous data and IP, and for any data we require from businesses in the process of enabling our investment decision-making. FAC works with the business to identify information that is useful to both the Indigenous business and FAC.

FAC's approach for investing follows the Impact Management Project (IMP) 5 dimensions of Impact.

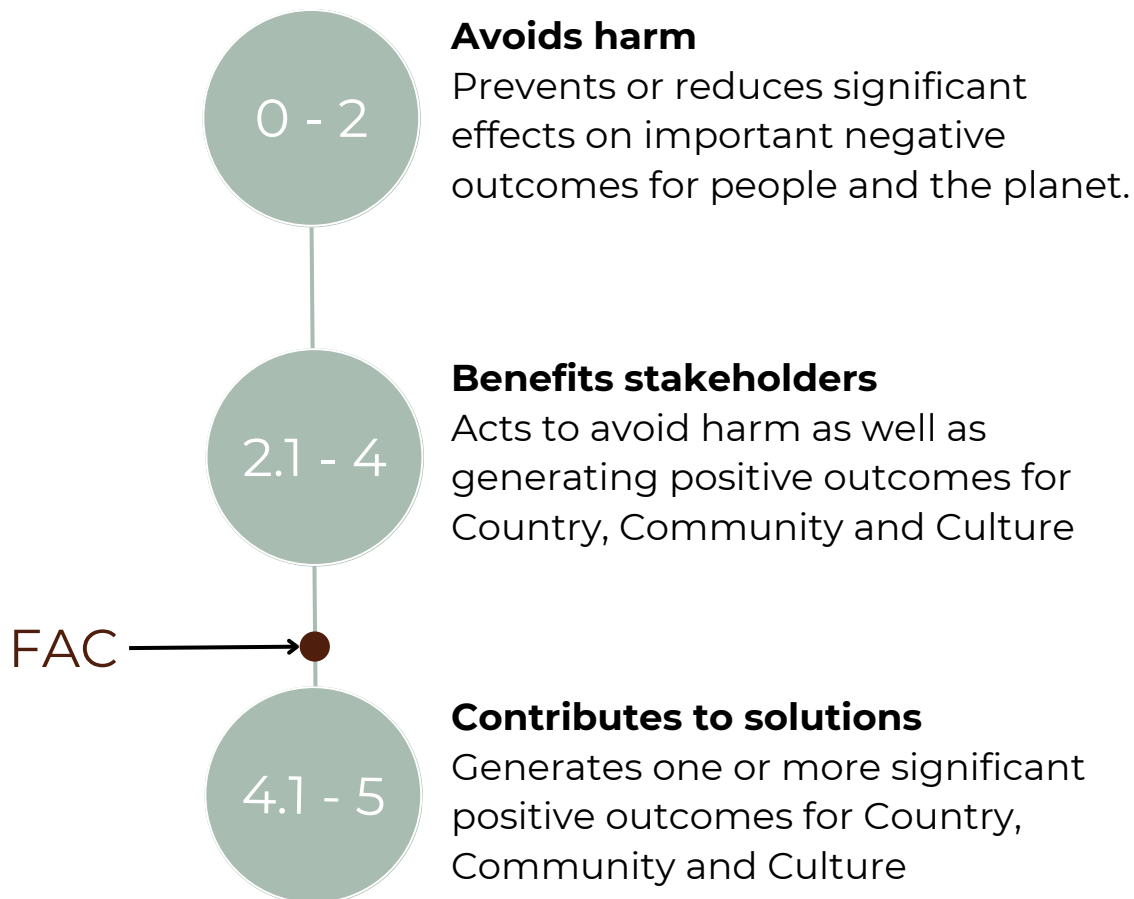
Dimension	Description	Indicator
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enabling self-determination</li><li>• Strengthen connection to Country, Community and Culture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sum of individual and community assets</li><li>• Size of business value chain</li></ul>
WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct beneficiaries: entrepreneurs, suppliers, staff and end-users</li><li>• Indirect beneficiaries: family, community, nations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Profile of beneficiaries reached</li></ul>
HOW MUCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Up to 10,000 beneficiaries over the 10-year lifetime of the current FAC strategy and fund</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of beneficiaries reached</li><li>• Shift in beneficiary well-being</li></ul>
CONTRIBUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing the "Right Capital", proactive capacity building, technical, market and network development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of businesses supported, particularly in areas of need</li><li>• Value of non-financial supported by FAC</li></ul>
RISK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exposure by fundee and across the portfolio</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent 3rd party assessment and validation</li></ul>

# FAC IMPACT SCORECARD

3.5/5

## FAC PORTFOLIO IMPACT SCORE

FAC uses an Impact scorecard across the five dimensions of impact to determine the extent to which a business is able to demonstrate outcomes for their target beneficiaries.









For each business in the investment portfolio, the current and potential impact of the activities are assessed. The score between 0-5 is assigned and an average score placed across the portfolio.





As of 30 June 2023, the FAC Portfolio Impact score is: 3.5/5.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

IMPACT AREA	SDG ALIGNMENT	%	IMPACT OUTCOMES
SOCIAL			
HEALTH AND WELLBEING	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 programs aimed at healthier food choices for community</li> <li>• 4 Programs for mental health and wellness</li> <li>• 2 programs providing access to Country and Native Foods growers</li> </ul>
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Profit sharing schemes with Community</li> <li>• 2 Businesses donating time to local community projects</li> <li>• 4 programs providing access to land for, youth training and juvenile justice, psychology and mental health services.</li> </ul>
EDUCATION	<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 youth education programs incl. K-12 teacher resources, a children's book. and youth justice</li> <li>• 1 program providing business skills development for SMEs</li> <li>• 2 On-Country drone training programs</li> </ul>
COMMUNITY ASSET DEVELOPMENT	<b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	28%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Health and wellbeing programs aimed at healthier food choices for community</li> <li>• 4 Programs for mental health and wellness</li> <li>• 2 Access to Country and Native Foods growers</li> </ul>
EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	53%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 372 new jobs created and sustained</li> <li>• 94 new jobs created for Indigenous peoples</li> <li>• 81 people in traineeships or training programs</li> </ul>
SUSTAINABLE AND INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT	<b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 	43%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 sustainable housing design program suitable for Indigenous family living</li> <li>• 5 businesses unlocking community assets for development</li> </ul>

# INVESTEE OUTCOMES ALIGNMENT

IMPACT AREA	SDG ALIGNMENT	%	IMPACT OUTCOMES
ENVIRONMENTAL			
CLIMATE MITIGATION AND ENERGY USE	<b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION 	<b>3%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 programs providing Engineering services to Energy sector to minimise energy waste</li> <li>• 1 program reducing energy use through sustainable construction techniques</li> </ul>
BIODIVERSITY AND LAND MANAGEMENT	<b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND 	<b>7%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 program utilising land assets for sustainable aquaculture</li> <li>• 2 programs revitalising Indigenous practices for the regeneration of native food growing, harvesting and consumption</li> </ul>
CULTURAL			
ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	<b>22%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 Businesses operating in industries that utilise Indigenous knowledges</li> <li>• 8 Businesses in industries of importance to Indigenous knowledges such as Regenerative Agriculture and Technology innovations</li> </ul>
SHARING KNOWLEDGE	<b>17</b> PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	<b>23%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 Sharing of stories through products and services</li> <li>• 6 Showcasing art and artists</li> <li>• 2 Protecting and Preserving knowledges and heritage</li> </ul>

# SOBAH

Sobah Beverages is Australia's first non-alcoholic craft beer company. Based on Yugambeh country in Coastal Queensland, Sobah was founded by Gamilaroi man and psychologist, Clinton Schultz. Now operated and run together with his wife Lozen, Sobah functions from the philosophies of Gamilaraay Lore, along with other lessons Clinton has been fortunate to learn from Elders from around Australia. This includes acting from a position of respecting people, place and the environment; understanding and working towards fulfilling responsibilities that we are connected to and, engaging in positive reciprocity.

Sobah is a social enterprise that reinvests its profits in promoting healthy lifestyles and remove the stigma associated with alcohol consumption. They are raising positive awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, while promoting locally sourced native foods to educate Australians about the uses of bush foods.



Sobah also employs an environmentally friendly production process by packaging its product in 100% recyclable aluminium cans and by bringing its brewery operations in-house to deliver a closed-loop manufacturing system.

FAC has been working alongside Sobah Beverages since 2019 when they were still selling their beer out of a food truck brewing at home.

FAC assisted the business to secure working capital to scale production, and since then, the business revenue has grown from 150K p.a. to over \$1M p.a.

In 2023, Sobah opened Australia's first non-alcoholic brewery and café, based in Burleigh Heads, after securing finance, including financial support from FAC alongside a successful capital raise.



# ABORIGINAL SUSTAINABLE HOMES

ASH is a building company formed by Brad Draper (CEO and Director), a Wiradjuri leader along with Andrew Scatow (Director with a focus on innovative building design) and Chris Doolan (an experienced Project Director).

Established in 2019, ASH is engaged in the design and building of culturally sensitive sustainable homes and using environmentally sustainable products to extend the life of the residences and to reduce ongoing repair and maintenance costs.

They build sustainable homes that are fit for purpose, but also that utilise innovative building materials that maintain stable temperatures inside of the home, and that cost less to heat and cool. Their design approach offers better housing options in terms of lifestyle and comfort for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Aboriginal Sustainable Homes have two key areas of impact – employment and sustainable housing environment. On each site, ASH provides Indigenous employment and apprenticeship opportunities to local Indigenous peoples. The business is committed to providing a culturally safe place to work for all its employees and maintaining its position as an employer of choice for Indigenous peoples.

First Australians Capital has worked with Aboriginal Sustainable Homes since 2021 on financing the development of a number of Aboriginal Housing Office building projects across regional NSW and VIC, supporting short-term construction costs to enable project completion and defect guarantees required by these projects.



# RADICAL POSSIBILITIES

## Unlocking the Transformative Potential of Indigenous Knowledge for Industry Development

The Indigenous business economy in Australia has witnessed remarkable growth over the past eight or more years, paving the way for significant advancements in economic development and self-determination.<sup>5</sup> Despite this progress being made by Indigenous entrepreneurs, Indigenous communities continue to have limited access to mainstream economic participation, driven largely by historical practices that have left communities with low rates of intergenerational wealth transfer<sup>6</sup> and exacerbated by the exaggerated perception of risk within Indigenous businesses, and unconscious bias and discrimination which is explored in more detail in FAC's 2021 Position Paper: Brave Action for a more just, impact-led economy.

This section of the report aims to demonstrate the value of the growing Indigenous business economy within three industry examples - Agriculture, Construction, and Consumer Retail. It outlines the breadth of activities in which Indigenous enterprises are actively operating while shedding light on the challenges Indigenous people encounter within these sectors. By recognising these obstacles and proposing key actions, we can empower the investment and broader finance sector to actively participate in fostering sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous Indigenous economies that will benefit all Australians.

### SCOPE OF INDUSTRY RESEARCH:

The research included in this section is gathered from the network of Indigenous entrepreneurs First Australians Capital has worked with since its inception in 2016.<sup>7</sup> The research draws on qualitative data from interviews with Indigenous businesses and insights gathered from the FAC business development team over the last three years (since the 2020 launch of the FAC Impact Enterprise Fund).

The research is supported by external reference<sup>8</sup> materials cited in the report and data made available from external Indigenous business networks such as Supply Nation. This is not intended to be an exhaustive research study into the current state of the Indigenous economy. Rather, it draws on the lived experience of more than 300 businesses that FAC has worked with since 2020 and publicly available case studies on the experiences of Indigenous-led businesses operating in Australia.

<sup>5</sup> The economic contribution of Indigenous business sector is growing ([pwc.com.au](http://pwc.com.au)).

<sup>6</sup> *Money Stories: financial resilience among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, notes 'only one in 10 First Nations Australians are financially secure, nearly half are in severe financial stress (compared to 11 per cent of the general population), 52 per cent have no savings and 75 per cent struggle to access financial services.'

<sup>7</sup> More than 800 businesses have been supported since 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Supply Nation database: [Supply Nation | Australia's largest national directory of Indigenous businesses](https://www.supplynation.com.au)

## INDUSTRY ECOSYSTEM MAP:

The maps in this section are drawn from the source materials in the commentary; the sector actors are mapped to examples of businesses applying this Indigenous knowledge and described in the sector opportunities sections of the report.

Additional quantitative details are sourced from Indigenous business databases accessed by FAC:

- The size of the Sector – is measured against publicly available Indigenous business databases, including Supply Nation, ORIC, Kinaway Chamber of Commerce, Yarpa Hub, Ngarrimili, Waalitj Hub, NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce, South East Queensland Indigenous Chamber of Commerce, Murri Chamber of Commerce, Goldfields Aboriginal Business Chamber, Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network, and the ACT Indigenous Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This data is aggregated and measured on the basis that approximately 12,000 - 16,000 Indigenous businesses are operating in Australia.
- Distribution of Sector – is measured based on the FAC database of businesses.
- Maturity – is measured using the FAC database of businesses.

Note: in each of these cases, the size, distribution, and maturity of the businesses across the sectors represented, FAC recognises an opportunity. The opportunity to grow activities in sectors and regions where these businesses are needed and to enhance these sectors with knowledges that comes from Community, Country and Culture.

Heatmap measurements:

- **Size of sector**
  - Small - less than 50 businesses
  - Medium - 50 - 500 businesses
  - Large - more than 500 businesses
- **Distribution of sector:**
  - Concentrated - businesses are established in a small number of places; activities are not occurring across states and in urban, regional and rural areas.
  - Distributed - businesses are disbursed across regions and states and into many urban, regional and rural areas.
- **Maturity of sector:**
  - Early stage - the majority of businesses are early start-up businesses with limited trading experience (less than two years) and may require capital to cover their start-up costs.
  - Trading - the majority of businesses have been trading for more than two years and may require capital to maintain their operations and increase their financial sustainability to operate over the longer term.
  - Growth - the majority of businesses been trading for more than two years and are ready to grow their business and may need capital to cover the cost of growing their businesses while maintaining their goods and services outputs.



# AGRICULTURE

## INDUSTRY OVERVIEW



# AGRICULTURE

## *Industry overview*

The Indigenous Agriculture Industry encompasses a whole of land approach which includes agricultural activities and land management practices.

In Australia, these activities have emerged as a source of immense opportunity and is already recognised as a source of significant economic and social development potential, with the National Indigenous Australians Agency stating that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights and interests in land are formally recognised over around 50 per cent of Australia's land mass'. The breadth of opportunities between existing agriculture activities, and the assets and knowledges brought by the Indigenous economy is critical to the future of effective and appropriate land management and agricultural practices in Australia.

Indigenous Australians possess an unparalleled cultural connection to the land, embodying a unique understanding of sustainable land management practices and environmental stewardship, however, Indigenous participation is often perceived as, and limited to, environmental conservation and offsets.

A 2019 report from IP Australia identifies that Indigenous knowledge has exceptional market value to Australians businesses and the economy, but Australia's IP system has gaps when it comes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' expectations about how Indigenous knowledges should be used. For example, Indigenous agribusiness, including the demand for Australian native foods, is by far exceeding supply, but it is well understood that less than 2% of the native foods and botanicals industry is under Indigenous leadership.

Global demand is on the rise and includes increased interest from China in accessing high quality food products, but these demands are quickly being filled by industry participants that are non-Indigenous, and do not utilise food knowledges for growing and harvesting that work in accord with the landscape and seasonal environment of Australia. Indigenous participation must incorporate the full extent of environmental market opportunities to enable and enhance these sector knowledges and skills in a just and meaningful way.

<sup>9</sup> Land and Housing, National Indigenous Australians Agency, [\(niaa.gov.au\)](https://niaa.gov.au/)

<sup>10</sup> Protection of Indigenous Knowledge in the IP system 2019 | IP Australia

<sup>11</sup> Boost for Indigenous native food businesses - Ministerial Media Statements: [Bush food industry booms, but only 1 per cent is produced by Indigenous people - ABC News](#)

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDUSTRY ENHANCEMENT

Across sectors within the Agriculture Industry, there are pathways to enhancement that utilise Indigenous knowledges to improve outcomes on land.

### **Seasonal planting and harvesting, and Local crop variation and biodiversity**

Indigenous communities often have a deep understanding of local ecosystems and techniques for the utilisation of land and food resources that go well beyond the standard agriculture practices.<sup>12</sup> Engaging with Indigenous communities in a meaningful and productive way creates opportunities to expand land use beyond the basic needs of food production and enables practices that are built around seasonal activities that go beyond the four seasons we know, which can enhance land use in many ways to improve the useability of land as well as enhancing the biodiversity of flora and fauna.

### **Cultural heritage, education & preservation, Local ecosystem restoration, and Conservation planning**

Indigenous-led land management enterprises have emerged as crucial contributors to ecological preservation and environmental sustainability. These enterprises offer a range of services, including land rehabilitation, cultural tourism, fire management, and ecological consulting.<sup>13</sup> Through their deep-rooted connection to the land, Indigenous enterprises ensure the preservation of biodiversity, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, and the mitigation of climate change impacts.<sup>14</sup>

### **Traditional food, land, and water management**

Indigenous-led agriculture enterprises embrace innovative farming techniques, including regenerative agriculture, permaculture, and native food production.<sup>13</sup> By integrating traditional knowledge with modern practices, these enterprises not only provide sustainable food sources but also play a pivotal role in revitalising Indigenous culture, improving food security, and fostering economic autonomy.<sup>14</sup>

### **Native foods and botanicals**

The native foods and botanicals sector is quickly emerging as one of the most exciting new sector opportunities for long term food security, as well as interest in the medicinal benefits of native produce.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [Australia's State and Forest Report 2018](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Baseline Study: Agricultural Capacity of the Indigenous Estate](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Indigenous Land Management In Australia 2013](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Foster 2018, Indigenous Knowledge Institute 2021](#)

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING INDUSTRY GROWTH

The primary barrier to entry for the majority of Indigenous enterprises is access to sufficient capital to support growth utilising existing land assets and culture.

To seize the potential of Indigenous agriculture and land management as a driver of economic development, the investment and banking sector must adopt proactive measures that promote inclusivity, sustainability, and collaboration.<sup>14</sup>

**Cultivating Indigenous Business Partnerships:** Building genuine and respectful partnerships with Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities is essential. The investment and banking sector should actively seek to engage and collaborate with Indigenous businesses, employing cultural sensitivity and recognising the unique perspectives and knowledge they bring to the table.<sup>14</sup> By fostering meaningful relationships, financial institutions can enhance their understanding of Indigenous needs, develop appropriate financial products, and offer tailored support.<sup>16</sup>

**Strengthening Financial Literacy and Capacity Building:** Institutions should invest in targeted programs aimed at strengthening financial literacy and capacity building within Indigenous communities.<sup>17</sup> By providing training, mentorship, and educational resources, financial institutions can empower Indigenous entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate financial systems, attract investment, and manage successful businesses.<sup>18</sup>

**Creating Inclusive and Flexible Financing Solutions:** The investment and banking sector should develop inclusive financing solutions that address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous businesses.<sup>19</sup> This includes flexible loan structures, accessible financing options, and specialised funds dedicated to Indigenous economic development. By demonstrating a commitment to inclusive financing, financial institutions can play a pivotal role in reducing barriers and facilitating sustainable growth within the Indigenous agriculture and land management sector.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> 2021 State of the Environment Caring for Country

<sup>17</sup> 2021 State of the Environment Outlook and Impact

<sup>18</sup> North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance

<sup>19</sup> OECD Policy review - Indigenous Entrepreneurship

## INDIGENOUS AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ECO-SYSTEM HEATMAP

Sector	Size	Distribution	Maturity	Indigenous knowledge & asset alignment
Agriculture & Aquaculture Farming	Small	Concentrated (regional)	Early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seasonal planting and harvesting</li> <li>Native foods and botanicals</li> <li>Traditional food, land, and water management</li> <li>Local crop variation and biodiversity</li> </ul>
Seed Harvesting for restoration, food, & arts	Medium	Concentrated (regional)	Growth	
Agri-processing	Small	Concentrated (regional)	Early stage	
Agriculture technology & precision technology	Small	Concentrated (regional)	Early stage	
Renewable Energy	Medium	Concentrated (regional/rural)	Early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to land containing Native foods and botanicals</li> </ul>
Agri-tourism & cultural experiences	Medium	Distributed (regional)	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural heritage, education &amp; preservation</li> </ul>
Land Remediation & Rotation	Medium	Distributed (regional/rural)	Mature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local ecosystem restoration</li> <li>Cultural heritage education &amp; preservation</li> </ul>
Environmental consulting	Medium	Distributed (urban, regional, rural)	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation planning</li> <li>Community driven planning</li> </ul>
Land surveying & mapping				



## BUSINESS CASE: NATIVE SECRETS

Native Secrets is a business combining land management practices with traditional native foods and botanicals to bring traditional medicinal practices to everyday products.

Co-founders Bidjara man Phil Thompson and Wailwan woman Cherie Thompson founded the business on Wiradjuri Country (outside Dubbo) to bring to consumers the understanding of how plants and botanicals that tend to be ignored have the ability to become products that we use in everyday life.

They started the business through a locally developed process that takes advantage of essential land management practices, which involves clearing locally grown White Cypress, a species endemic to the region which has become invasive due to years of land clearing practices. Increased biodiversity helps reinvigorate the ecosystem for native wildlife, such as the rare Pink-tailed worm lizard. It also encourages other native plants like wattle and eucalyptus to regrow.

The founders work closely with local Wiradjuri elder Uncle Peter Peckham to cultivate knowledge of traditional oil extraction practices. From there, there essential oils are added to shampoo, conditioner, essential oil, and body lotions sold across Australia. Their white cypress oil products have been tested by CSIRO and recognised for their anti-inflammatory properties.

Native Secret's mission is to ensure future generations remain connected to the country by providing opportunities to learn the ways of our Elders, past and present, and creating social, economic, environmental, and health benefits for our people.







# CONSTRUCTION

## INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

# CONSTRUCTION

## *Industry Overview*

Indigenous participation in the Construction industry holds substantial promise for economic growth, cultural preservation, and social development. To fully unlock these opportunities, there's a need for comprehensive support structures that address financial constraints, provide mentorship, facilitate understanding of bureaucratic processes, and ensure fair payment practices.<sup>20</sup>

**Financial Constraints:** Indigenous businesses struggle with the costs of running operations and supply chain management.<sup>21</sup> This financial burden limits their ability to pursue larger tenders and projects, hindering expansion.

**Perception-Based Hurdles:** Indigenous businesses often face scepticism regarding their capacity to deliver projects due to concerns about their track records and operational checks.<sup>21</sup> This perception of risk impedes their access to opportunities and growth.<sup>22</sup>

**Scalability and Structure:** While some Indigenous businesses secure smaller contracts, achieving scalability remains a challenge.<sup>22</sup> The transition from sole traders to structured companies requires significant financial investment and expertise, often unavailable to them.

**Lack of Adequate Support:** Indigenous businesses lack the necessary support structures for growth.<sup>20</sup> The progression from small-scale to larger projects demands resources and guidance that are currently lacking.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> [Supply Nation Indigenous Growth Report](#).

<sup>21</sup> [First Nations Businesses: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities](#)

<sup>22</sup> [2016 Barriers to the Indigenous Enterprise in the Australian Construction Industry](#).



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDUSTRY ENHANCEMENT

Indigenous businesses' participation in the Construction Industry is by far the most mature and easily accessible industry from skills development and access to opportunities for business growth through a sole trader pathway.

Indigenous knowledge and ways of being and knowing have the potential to enhance Construction and its related industries in various ways. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives can lead to more sustainable, culturally respectful, and community-oriented outcomes. Here are some ways in which Indigenous knowledge can be applied to enhance these sectors:

### Community Engagement and Consultation

Indigenous ways of knowing to prioritise community consensus and consultation. Engaging with Indigenous communities during construction projects' planning and development stages can lead to a better understanding of local needs, cultural considerations, and potential impacts. Collaboration between Indigenous practitioners and industry professionals can also lead to knowledge exchange, enriching the construction sector with Indigenous insights and approaches.<sup>20</sup>

### Resource Management and Waste Reduction

Indigenous practices often involve resource management and minimal waste generation.<sup>23</sup> Applying these principles to construction can lead to more efficient use of materials and reduced environmental impact.<sup>24</sup>

### Respect for Land and Nature

Indigenous cultures have a strong connection to the land and natural resources. Incorporating these values into construction projects can lead to more responsible land use, reduced environmental impact, and the preservation of biodiversity.<sup>24</sup>

### Sustainable Construction Practices (including Holistic Design Principles and Cultural Preservation and Participation)

Indigenous communities often possess deep knowledge of their local ecosystems and resources.<sup>24</sup> By integrating traditional practices such as using natural and locally sourced materials, indigenous construction techniques can contribute to more sustainable and environmentally friendly building methods. In addition, incorporating indigenous aesthetics, designs, and symbols into architecture and infrastructure can celebrate cultural identity, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among community members and visitors.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> [Report on Indigenous Participation in Employment and Business House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Indigenous Peoples and the nature they protect | UN Environmental Programme](#)

<sup>25</sup> [IISD 2022 - Indigenous Peoples: Defending an Environment for All](#)



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING INDUSTRY GROWTH

To harness the potential of Indigenous businesses in the Construction sector, the investment and banking sector must address the existing barriers and offer targeted support. This can be achieved through a range of strategies:

**Financial Support and Investment:** The investment sector should develop financial mechanisms tailored to the needs of Indigenous businesses.<sup>26</sup> Providing accessible capital, low-interest loans, and grants can help address their financial constraints.

**Capacity Building and Mentorship:** Establishing mentorship programs that connect experienced professionals with Indigenous businesses can help bridge the perception gap and enhance scalability.<sup>27</sup> These programs can provide guidance on project execution, risk management, and overall business growth.<sup>27</sup>

**Process Simplification:** The investment and banking sector can collaborate with Indigenous businesses to simplify the process of applying for tenders and contracts.<sup>28</sup> Providing resources, training, and assistance in navigating bureaucratic hurdles can enable Indigenous businesses to compete effectively.<sup>28</sup>

**Cultural Preservation Emphasis:** Recognising the value of Indigenous knowledge, the sector should emphasise the incorporation of cultural insights into construction projects.<sup>26</sup> This can foster sustainability, align projects with community needs, and enhance long-term viability.<sup>29</sup>

**Partnerships and Collaborations:** Establishing partnerships between Indigenous businesses and established construction firms can create opportunities for knowledge exchange and capacity building.<sup>28</sup> These collaborations can leverage shared expertise to drive sectoral growth.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> [Supply Nation Research Report No.4 2021](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Driving Growth Across the Indigenous Business Sector | Supply Nation](#)

<sup>28</sup> [PWC 2018 Report | The contribution of the Indigenous business sector to Australia's economy](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Australia](#)

## INDIGENOUS CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ECO-SYSTEM HEATMAP

Sector	Size	Distribution	Maturity	Indigenous knowledge & asset alignment
Residential & Commercial construction	Large	Concentrated (urban/regional)	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement &amp; consultation</li> <li>• Resource management &amp; waste reduction</li> <li>• Respect for Land and Nature</li> <li>• Sustainable Construction Practices</li> </ul>
Engineering Services	Medium	Distributed (regional)	Growth	
Logistics & Distribution	Small	Distributed (regional/rural)	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource management &amp; waste reduction</li> <li>• Respect for Land and Nature</li> </ul>
Equipment & Machinery	Small	Distributed (urban, regional, rural)	Growth	
Building Products & Materials	Medium	Distributed (urban, regional, rural)	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource management &amp; waste reduction</li> </ul>

## BUSINESS CASE: BOODJARA

Boodjara Pty Ltd is an Aboriginal-owned and operated company providing end-to-end electrical, civil and mechanical services across Western Australia. Boodjara translates to 'country of origin', which, together with their motto of 'powering our country', demonstrates their strong connection to land and country.

The business was started four years ago by friends Jak Tidman and Koen Matera and have quickly established a reputation in providing highly skilled multi-disciplinary resources for deployment on industrial projects throughout WA's energy, mining, oil & gas, defence, building and infrastructure sectors.

The business model is to source qualified electrical professionals and deploy these as contractors into different industrial sectors in and around the Perth area, creating long-term employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people.

With the growth opportunities available to the business through the Indigenous Procurement Policy, the business has pivoted from supplying mainly major subcontractor labour providers to directly supplying large organisations, and this growth strategy has been supported by flexible and patient capital that enables the business to build on its strengths and develop its capacity over time.



A photograph of a retail store interior. On the left, several coats are hanging on a rack. In the center, a wooden pillar stands. To the right, a lamp with a black shade and a glass base sits on a metal counter. The background shows wooden beams and shelves.

# RETAIL GOODS & SERVICES

## INDUSTRY OVERVIEW



# RETAIL GOODS & SERVICES

## *Industry Overview*

The Indigenous business landscape in retail presents both opportunities and significant barriers. Unique products rooted in Indigenous knowledge hold the potential for substantial market presence and community benefit. However, several challenges hinder the seamless integration of Indigenous products into mainstream consumer channels.

Despite the opportunities, the Indigenous retail sector faces substantial obstacles that impede growth and market access. These barriers encompass issues ranging from limited appreciation of cultural property and knowledge to challenges in distribution and dealing with wholesale distributors.

**Cultural Appreciation and Respect:** Indigenous businesses offer products rich in cultural value, yet there is often a lack of appreciation for the significance of these offerings in the buying and selling of products.<sup>30</sup> The industry's reluctance to recognise and respect cultural property poses a barrier to Indigenous business growth.

**Distribution Hurdles:** While there is no shortage of unique Indigenous products, the challenge lies in the distribution process. Existing manufacturing, distribution, and sales networks in Australia are geared towards larger players, making it difficult for smaller Indigenous businesses to access and benefit from these networks.<sup>31</sup>

**Gatekeepers and Foot in the Door:** Establishing a foothold in the wholesale network is a formidable challenge for Indigenous businesses. Large-scale wholesale businesses, despite having Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), often wait for businesses to approach them, resulting in missed opportunities.<sup>32</sup> The difficulty of gaining access to the market inhibits the growth of Indigenous products.

**Promise vs. Reality:** There's a disconnect between the intentions expressed by retail chains and the actual support provided to Indigenous businesses.<sup>31</sup> Promises of platform accessibility and support for Indigenous products often fail to materialise, leaving businesses struggling to navigate the marketplace.

<sup>30</sup> [Australian Parliament House | The Benefits of Indigenous Art](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Australia | Creating an enabling environment for Indigenous entrepreneurs and small business](#)

<sup>32</sup> [First Nations Businesses: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities](#)

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDUSTRY ENHANCEMENT

Incorporating Indigenous knowledges and ways of being and knowing into the retail sector and related industries not only promotes cultural preservation but also fosters sustainable, inclusive, and culturally rich business practices. Collaboration and respect for Indigenous perspectives are essential in realising the full potential of these contributions.

### **Representation of goods and services**

Partnering with or promoting Indigenous-owned businesses can create economic opportunities within communities and help retailers diversify their product offerings.<sup>33</sup>

### **Ethical Sourcing and Supply Chain**

Indigenous communities often have deep connections to their local environments. By engaging with Indigenous suppliers and artisans, retailers can promote ethical sourcing practices, support local economies, and offer unique products.<sup>34</sup>

### **Cultural representation & Authenticity**

Incorporating Indigenous arts, crafts, and designs into retail spaces can provide a platform for cultural representation and authenticity that supports Indigenous artists.<sup>35</sup>

### **Community engagement**

Retail businesses can collaborate with Indigenous artisans and craftspeople to provide platforms for skill development, training, and entrepreneurship. Partnering with Indigenous communities for events, workshops, and exhibitions can build relationships and contribute to cultural awareness.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> [University of Melbourne | Indigenous Sector Snapshot](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Productivity Commission | Indigenous Arts](#)

<sup>35</sup> [AIATSIS | Art & Authenticity](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Australian Parliament House - Commercialising First Nations Art](#)

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING INDUSTRY GROWTH

To realise the potential of Indigenous businesses and products, the retail and distribution sector must take proactive steps to address these barriers and support the growth of Indigenous entrepreneurship.

**Diversified Financial Support:** Investment should be directed towards Indigenous businesses, offering accessible capital, low-interest loans, and grants to overcome financial constraints and foster growth.<sup>37</sup>

**Streamlined Distribution Channels:** Collaboration between Indigenous businesses and industry players can lead to the creation of distribution channels that cater to the unique needs of Indigenous products.<sup>37</sup>

**Transparent and Inclusive Procurement:** Wholesale distributors should uphold the intent of RAPs by proactively seeking out Indigenous businesses and products. The inclusion of Indigenous products in mainstream consumer channels should be a priority.<sup>33</sup>

**Cultural Awareness Training:** Retail chains and distributors should undergo training to enhance their understanding of Indigenous cultural sensitivities and their role in fostering cultural preservation.<sup>34</sup>

**Business-to-Business Solutions:** Experienced individuals within the industry can provide mentorship and guidance to Indigenous businesses, aiding them in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities.<sup>33</sup>

**Networking and Collaboration:** Encouraging Indigenous businesses to collaborate with each other can lead to a more resilient Indigenous economy and strengthen the supply chain.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> NIAA 2018-2028 The Indigenous Business Sector Strategy

<sup>38</sup> ANAO | Indigenous Business Australia's Business Support and Investment Activities 2021

## INDIGENOUS RETAIL INDUSTRY ECO-SYSTEM HEATMAP

Sector	Size	Distribution	Maturity	Indigenous knowledge & asset alignment
Health & Wellness products	Medium	Distributed (urban, regional)	Early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representation of goods and services</li> <li>• Cultural representation &amp; Authenticity</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> </ul>
Clothing, Textiles & Arts and Crafts	Small	Concentrated (urban)	Early stage	
Food & Beverage	Medium	Concentrated (urban)	Early stage	
Professional Services	Medium	Concentrated (urban)	Growth	
Technology & Software	Small	Concentrated (urban)	Early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural representation &amp; Authenticity</li> </ul>
E-commerce	Small	Concentrated (urban)	Early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representation of goods and services</li> </ul>
Logistics & Distribution of Goods	Small	Distributed (urban, regional)	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representation of goods and services</li> </ul>



## BUSINESS CASE: YAALA SPARKLING

Yaala Sparkling is an Indigenous-owned and locally sourced sparkling water company that is devoted to making vibrant beverages that honour the authentic flavours that Indigenous people have enjoyed throughout the ages.

Yaala believes in sustainable growth, from the inception of the plants they use, to their business practice. Its mission is to establish an Indigenous-owned business in the Native Foods Industry and to contribute to First Nations people achieving self-determination.






Proudly owned by Wiradjuri Yinaa 'woman' Tara Medika 'blossom'. She is passionate about advocating and supporting the realisation of Yaala's natural land within the greater community. Their venture supports true fair-trade practices, Indigenous wild harvesters, and local farmers to create healthy beverages with benefits.




FAC and Yaala Sparkling first engaged in early 2022 with investment readiness support, including business planning and financial forecasting, which led to the company being provided a blended finance package including a grant and loan funds in late 2022.

The business pitched on Shark Tank in mid-2023 after their first manufacturing run was completed, and were able to secure financing and support from two industry experts to provide the financing and network of experts to which they would otherwise not have access.



## Appendix: Impact methodology and outcomes

FAC TARGET IMPACT	MEASURED BY	CALCULATED AS	IMPACT OUTCOME
<b>INTERGENERATIONAL WEALTH</b>   	# community orgs funded in the portfolio as well as their total assets under management	Community organisations as % portfolio. Including all businesses funded since April 2020	<b>8%</b>
		# community organisations that would otherwise have not had access to finance, expresses as whole number	<b>2</b>
		# community organisations that leveraged land for development	<b>2</b>
	Gender split of investments in portfolio (and how FAC compares to current best practice)	\$ value of investments into women-led enterprises	<b>\$1,864,349</b>
		% investments made into women-led enterprises (of all investments to date)	<b>37%</b>
		# of women directors across the portfolio (against all investments made in the portfolio)	<b>34</b>
		Average dollar size of investments into women-led enterprises	<b>\$84,743</b>
	GIIN accredited metrics (short-term outcomes)	Value of Investments in Communities Historically Marginalized Due to Race and/or Ethnicity	<b>\$10.35m</b>
		New Businesses Created: Low Income Areas	<b>22</b>
	GIIN accredited metrics (medium-term outcomes)	Non-financial Support Offered	<b>Support services provided to 288 businesses</b>
		Social Responsibility Client Policies	<b>Indigenous First Impact Framework</b>
		Location state and remoteness (% regional and remote investments)	<b>36.6%</b>
<b>ECONOMIC SELF-DETERMINATION</b>    	Short term outcomes for self-determination	Improved choice of financial provider (self-reported by survey of businesses)	<b>45% businesses reported improved choices as result of working with FAC</b>
	Participation on Boards	% Indigenous directors as total directors) (across portfolio)	<b>88%</b>
		# Indigenous shareholder / owners (aggregate across portfolio)	<b>78</b>
	GIIN accredited metrics (short-term outcomes)	# businesses that would otherwise not have qualified for mainstream finance	<b>75%</b>
	Medium-term outcomes for self-determination	Total capital leveraged into FAC supported businesses from other funders	<b>\$78m</b>

FAC TARGET IMPACT	MEASURED BY	CALCULATED AS	IMPACT OUTCOME
<b>THRIVING INDIGENOUS ECONOMY</b>    	GIIN accredited metrics (short-term outcomes)	New Businesses created: Total	16
	Increased business resilience	% change total revenues by business over period (top line growth)	Average revenue doubled across businesses after investment
		Gross profit % (improvement in profitability)	Average 30% increase in profitability
	Growing sector contributing to the Australian Economy [short term]	Growth in jobs (Total new jobs / Total Indigenous jobs / Total jobs)	95 new jobs created
		Supply chain and procurement # Indig businesses across the portfolio / total aggregated # and value of Indig businesses	47 Indigenous suppliers supported through business value chain
		Aggregated reporting #beneficiaries: Employees, directors, shareholders, other beneficiaries	305*
<b>CONNECTION TO COUNTRY, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE</b>	Short-term outcomes	Thematic SDG Alignment (100% businesses)	See details on page 13
	Medium- to Long-term outcomes	Measured by self-reported individual / community wellbeing surveys tailored to business lifecycle stage	81% businesses report improved outcomes as result of working with FAC
<b>FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND RACIAL EQUITY</b>	Short-term outcomes	Measured by partnerships and referrals to mainstream finance	15 businesses successfully referred to mainstream finance
	Medium-term outcomes	Total \$ leveraged in the sector to support Indigenous business	\$80m

### Summary of scope:

The impact outcomes in this report draws on all the business engagement, capacity building, network development, and investment made into Indigenous enterprises since FAC launched its Impact Enterprise Fund in April 2021.

Unless otherwise stated the data collected is from businesses in the period from April 2021 - June 2023, and throughout the whole of the 2022 and 2023 financial years.

Evaluation criteria are mapped to FAC's 5 measurement, evaluation and learning sections as outlined in the Appendix tables: Intergenerational Wealth Creation, Economic Self-Determination, Thriving Indigenous Economy, Connection to Culture, Community and Country, and Financial Inclusion and Racial Equity.

# THANK YOU

Our partners stand alongside Indigenous entrepreneurs and help break the systemic barriers that exclude them from accessing the support they need to flourish.

Thank you to all our partners for your contributions to FAC and the Indigenous economy.

## Photo credits summarised

1. pg.02 Leah Armstrong - Chairperson of First Australians Capital
2. pg.19 Sobah Beverages - Clinton & Lozen Schultz
3. pg.19 Sobah Beverages - Non Alcoholic Beer
4. pg.20 Aboriginal Sustainable Homes
5. pg.20 Aboriginal Sustainable Homes - Final Build
6. pg.28 Native Secrets - Phil Thompson
7. pg.34 Boodjara - Team on site
8. pg.40 Yaala Sparkling - Mel and Tara Croker on Shark Tank



## ABOUT FAC:

First Australians Capital is an Indigenous-led organisation that builds investment readiness and designs the right capital solutions for Indigenous businesses to thrive. We have a vision to create a new economy driven by First Australians.

## CONTACT US

To learn more about FAC, or to get in contact with our team  
[info@firstaustralianscapital.org](mailto:info@firstaustralianscapital.org) or visit our website [firstaustralianscapital.org](https://firstaustralianscapital.org)



