



Priority 4: Increase entrepreneurship, business growth and innovation

“ *Indigenous entrepreneurs and small businesses need to be supported to develop and access relevant market opportunities in order to create jobs now and into the future* ”

Entrepreneurs and small business are vital to harnessing innovation, driving productivity and creating new jobs: 97% of all businesses in Queensland are small (employing less than 20 staff). Together, this accounts for 43% of the state's private sector workforce and over \$100 billion of Gross State Product (GSP).

The Queensland Government has clear ambitions to see more businesses start, innovate and grow to their potential. Businesses that innovate are more likely to increase their profits, access new markets and create jobs. Businesses and communities across Queensland can be transformed through innovation, and it is important that all Queensland communities are participating in the new economy.

The Queensland Government can offer support and assistance in building the skills and knowledge of Indigenous business owners and operators. Growth in the number of strong and sustainable Indigenous businesses will provide opportunities for employment, income and wealth generation.

Therefore, we need to support the development and growth of businesses owned by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes profiling our successful innovators, sharing success stories, growing capability and building collaborations and networks between communities.

Growing Indigenous businesses is a highly viable pathway to creating opportunities, and research suggests the number of Indigenous owned and operated businesses has increased over the last 20 years (Business Council of Australia, 2014; Hunter, 2014), and the number of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people self-employed almost tripled between 1991-2011 (Hunter, 2014).

The "flow on" employment and productivity benefits of increasing and growing Indigenous businesses are also significant. Evidence suggests Indigenous businesses are significantly more likely to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff compared with non-Indigenous businesses. Therefore, if Indigenous owned small businesses could hire 1 more person or grow to be medium-sized businesses, it would result in multiple jobs created and increases in productivity.

Jobs in the future will increasingly to depend on skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and developing these skills will enable young people to make a job, as well as get a job. By increasing STEM skills for Indigenous students, opportunities will be created for jobs and business creation in the future.

[Advance Queensland](#) is the Queensland Government's agenda for innovation-led economic growth. Advance Queensland programs are available to communities across the state and programs in innovation have been delivered with Indigenous participation. The uptake of programs will be targeted for increase to help encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander startups and entrepreneurs.

The [Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy 2016-20](#) will create an environment for Queensland to be the place for small businesses to start, grow and employ. This includes initiatives that result in more Indigenous businesses established in regional Queensland, more businesses starting with a plan for success, stronger Indigenous businesses and more Indigenous businesses growing and employing.

Actions

1. Assist Indigenous small businesses to develop and grow, through:

- a suite of programs delivered under the Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy 2016-20 (Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games).
- the development of 'Advancing Queensland's Indigenous Businesses: A guide to creating an environment for Indigenous businesses to start, grow and employ' will link key Queensland Government policies and programs that impact on Indigenous small businesses (Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games)
- co-design the Enterprise Queensland Indigenous Program (EQuIP) for the collective investment by the Queensland, Australian and Local Governments in building the capability and capacity of the Queensland Indigenous Business Sector (Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships).

2. Build the capability and capacity of Indigenous businesses through mentoring under the Mentoring for Growth Program (Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games).

3. Harness the Advance Queensland initiative to develop stronger pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers by supporting:

- Research Fellowships of up to \$240,000 over 3 years
- PhD Scholarships of up to \$120,000 over 3 years
- collaboration with industry partners (Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation).

4. Build STEM skills for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by increasing their participation in coding and robotics workshops (Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation).

5. Convene a forum bringing together Indigenous business leaders, chambers of commerce representatives, researchers and thought leaders to help design a new approach to encouraging greater Indigenous entrepreneurship, business growth and innovation (Departments of Science, Information Technology and Innovation; and Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games).

Case study

Advance Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellowship

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellowship supports early-career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers with funding of up to \$240,000, for a 3-year research project that contributes to Queensland's knowledge-based economy.

The Fellowships support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in completing original research that will have positive impacts on Queensland.

The program will:

- support early-career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in gaining post-doctoral professional

research experience

- support innovative, practical and applied research that addresses one of the Queensland Science and Research priorities
- address the 'brain drain' by keeping research graduates in their chosen profession
- foster increased linkage and closer collaboration with industry organisations
- deliver tangible social, economic, environmental and/or regional benefits for Queensland in the next 5 years.

Dr Cass Hunter from the CSIRO, and located within the Cairns Campus of James Cook University, is the 2016 recipient of the Advance Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellowship. Dr Hunter is undertaking a research project titled *Transforming hidden data: an integrative information system for Torres Strait*. The key outcomes from this research will be an improved capacity of Indigenous people and stakeholder partners to make more informed decisions about the environment given better understanding of accessible scientific information; strengthened knowledge sharing between Torres Strait communities and agencies; and building community confidence with keeping track of the information collected in the region and understanding the supporting information for decision making.

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