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By email: IPPreform@niaa.gov.au

DCA submission in response to Strengthening the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) through reform

Dear Jody Broun, CEO, National Indigenous Australians Agency,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the *discussion paper on Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) reform*.

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the independent not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace. We have over 1,300 member organisations, reaching approximately 20% of the Australian labour market.

We are guided in all our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by an expert Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander External Advisory Panel. This group, made up of respected Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members across Country, meets regularly to provide expertise, cultural knowledge and lived experience to DCA, helping us direct and conduct our activities in areas of employment, community engagement and supplier diversity.

DCA welcomes reforms to improve opportunities for First Nations businesses which will provide far reaching economic and social benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

Through our own research: [Racism at work](#) (2022), [Gari Yala – Speak the Truth: Centreing the experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians at work](#) (2020) and a further publication: [Gari Yala \(Speak the Truth\) Gendered Insights](#) (2021), we found concerning evidence of experiences of racism and exclusion, lack of cultural safety and identity strain. As a result, Indigenous workers reported impacts on their wellbeing and job satisfaction. For Indigenous women who are carers, experiences of discrimination and exclusion at work are further amplified.

The workplace environment for many First Nations people is not a welcoming and supportive one. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, following the result of the referendum last year on the Voice to Parliament, this environment may be even less supportive. DCA plans to conduct further research into the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at work, later this year.

Our 2020 research, [Gari Yala – Speak the Truth](#) identified 10 Truths to centre Indigenous Australians' voices to create workplace inclusion:

1. Commit to unearthing and acting on workplace truths – however uncomfortable this may be.

2. Ensure any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-related work is Indigenous led and informed.
3. Develop organisational principles to make it clear how Indigenous community engagement and employment should work in practice.
4. Focus on workplace readiness (cultural safety) rather than worker readiness.
5. Recognise identity strain and educate non-Indigenous staff about how to interact with their Indigenous colleagues in ways that reduce this.
6. Recognise and remunerate cultural load as part of an employee's workload.
7. Consult with Indigenous staff on how to minimise cultural load while maintaining organisational activity.
8. Focus on sustainable careers and career development, rather than short-term appointments.
9. Take action to address workplace racism.
10. Look to high-impact initiatives – those that research shows are linked to better wellbeing and retention for Indigenous staff.

Also, in our [Racism at work](#) report, we recommend six strategies for organisations to respond effectively to racism:

1. Build racial literacy.
2. Centre lived experience.
3. Audit for racial equity.
4. Remove racial bias in recruitment.
5. Remove racial bias in recognition and reward.
6. Create the capacity to call it out.

Each of these strategies are explained in detail to help workplaces 'unlock' racism and become actively anti-racist.

All organisations in Australia must address racism. They have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that employees live work lives that are free from racism and discrimination.

The evidence cited in the discussion paper suggest First Nations businesses are more likely to employ First Nations people. Reforms to the IPP that support growth in First Nations businesses, assistance to develop and provide meaningful employment as well as skills and economic development, will go part way to addressing the negative experiences Indigenous people are having at work. Of course, this does not negate the need for non-Indigenous businesses to provide safe, inclusive and supportive workplaces for First Nations employees.

Growing First Nations businesses will employ more First Nations people, provide a culturally safe and supportive environment and also creates greater diversity in sectors and industries. This environment can only benefit those from diverse and marginalised groups who may feel a greater sense of belonging. Evidence cited in the discussion paper suggests that young First Nations people can be encouraged into long-term

career pathways through First Nations businesses.

DCA's focus is on diversity and inclusion in the workplace so cannot comment on some specific aspects of the proposed reforms. However, DCA can make comment on:

- The best definition of a genuine First Nations business: DCA supports Supply Nation's definition and 'certified' standard – at least 51% owned, managed and controlled.
- Strengthening Commonwealth procurement framework and guidance: DCA supports preference of tenders that show economic impact such as high levels of First Nations ownership and involvement, commitment to more First Nations employment, qualifications and skills development etc. and broader economic benefits. DCA also considers social impacts/benefits are important.
- Requiring First Nations businesses to report First Nations employment levels: DCA supports improved data on employment which will provide better evidence for a range of policy development and provide a greater understanding of the First Nations business sector and how it impacts First Nations peoples. In the overall spirit of self-determination, DCA would support reporting to Supply Nation.

Please feel free to contact myself or Jacqueline Braw, Senior Advocacy and Government Relations Manager, on jacqueline@dca.org.au should you require any further information about this matter.

Yours sincerely



Lisa Annese
Chief Executive Officer

