

Media Release

Call for More Innovation to Build Aboriginal Business Capability

A report on developing small business in remote Aboriginal communities, released earlier this month by the Central Desert Regional Council, calls for a higher level of targeted support to aspiring small business operators. The report also recommends that more attention be given to the appropriate timing of support, more innovation and community design to deliver training, and Governments at all levels working together to provide ongoing and consistent training to aspiring remote business people.

The report, written by Matrix on Board follows the successful delivery of the “Doing Small Business in the Bush Workshop” in Yuendumu. Designed and developed by Warlpiri people with support from Matrix on Board and the Central Desert Regional Council, the workshop was delivered in Warlpiri and contextualised to the Yuendumu environment.

Warlpiri Facilitator and community leader Otto Simms said the opportunity to play a key role in the project from start to finish was its strength. “Because we were able to use Yuendumu businesses as examples, we could see and hear and get in touch with real life examples. Telling the small business story in Warlpiri, our first language, made it much easier to understand for everyone,” Mr Simms said.

A key outcome of the Workshop was the realisation that current small business support being offered to Aboriginal communities is not targeted at the right level. The authors of the report found that while developing a small business in a remote community can take as many as fifteen steps, the current small business development support to remote Aboriginal entrepreneurs commences at about step nine.

Central Desert Regional Council CEO Diane Hood said the Council is committed to assisting Aboriginal people to participate in the economy, whether that’s securing employment or starting their own small business. “The Council’s CDP Program is already assisting people with training, job readiness, and employment assistance. As a result of the workshop, we are also developing places where people can receive more intensive support, to incubate their ideas, Ms Hood said.

Ms Hood explained that often the big talk of governments about economic development and business enterprise is too complex and excludes Aboriginal people. “To take a smart business idea and turn it into reality, you need to understand the business world. Before you develop a business plan, you need a basic understanding of how businesses work. This is a very creative and innovative approach because it puts those business constructs into a local community context.” Ms Hood said.



two ways :: one outcome

Ms Hood said that while this workshop was made possible through funding and support of the NT Department of Chief Minister, it would be a shame for it to be a one off. “This approach demonstrates that if you genuinely engage with Aboriginal people the outcomes can be really powerful. We don’t want to stop at a one off workshop that leaves people hanging. We want a genuine collaboration with the Commonwealth and Territory Governments to embed this training into business support for remote Aboriginal people. Ms Hood said

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