

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2017

Australian Statement

Item 4

**Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Economic development**

**Delivered by Ms Rachel O'Connor, Assistant Secretary, Strategy Policy and Coordination Branch,
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Thank you Madam Chair

Australia acknowledges and is committed to the implementation of all six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum. Today we are focusing our statement on economic development, and highlighting within this area the importance of empowering Indigenous women.

Australia believes that innovation and entrepreneurship are critical to driving Indigenous economic development and empowering communities.

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have demonstrated great talent, imagination and entrepreneurialism. The Australian Government is committed to supporting innovative Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs to create more opportunities and jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We are working across all levels of government to increase Indigenous participation and drive Indigenous business performance, including through public sector employment policies, government procurement and government funded infrastructure projects and grants.

Our priority policy aims make sure Indigenous people have the same opportunity for business and employment as all other Australians. For example, our Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) is bridging the gap for Indigenous businesses to supply Government with goods and services. This policy commenced in 1 July 2015 and includes a target for domestic contracts being awarded to Indigenous businesses and greater access for Indigenous businesses to the most relevant Government contracting opportunities.

In the first year of the policy, more than 1500 direct and indirect contracts to almost 500 Indigenous businesses worth a total of more than \$284 million AUD have been awarded by the Australian Government. Given the success of this policy, the Government has brought forward the 2020 target to ensure at least 3% of Government contracts are with Indigenous businesses this year, nearly 3 years ahead of schedule.

We engage with communities in meaningful consultations to give further shape to the Indigenous economic policy agenda and to ensure policies are targeted and adapted to the needs of specific communities.

Australia recognizes the leadership role Indigenous women play in their families, communities, and as contributor to the economy and the impact that investing in indigenous women can have for the

wider community. We know that investing in women and girls has a positive flow on effect for families, communities and the economy. Empowered women also have greater employment opportunities and reduced vulnerability to poverty, homelessness and family violence.

Australia is working to support the economic empowerment of Indigenous women. Our strategies include support for Indigenous women to access loans and capital, mentoring and networking support, and advice for start-ups and growing enterprises.

We look forward to sharing lessons learned and best practice for the economic empowerment of indigenous peoples at United Nations fora in the future.