FSO FUTURE SKILLS
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Consultation Paper

First Nations Representation in the Finance, Technology and Business Workforce

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First Nations Representation in the FTB Workforce

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Executive Summary

The participation of First Nations peoples in the Finance, Technology and Business (FTB) workforce in Australia presents both challenges and significant opportunities. First Nations peoples remain underrepresented in these workforces, comprising less than 1% of finance and technology and only 1.7% in business occupations[1]. This underrepresentation highlights continuing disparities that hinder innovation, economic performance and prosperity.

First Nations businesses are emerging, diversifying the economic landscape. They face the same challenges as all emerging businesses, including limited access to finance and difficulties in developing customer bases. An inclusive workforce that incorporates First Nations peoples offers numerous advantages, including enhanced cultural knowledge and competence, improved service delivery and contributions to reconciliation efforts[2].

First Nations women face obstacles in achieving self-employment, with only 30%[3] of businesses in New South Wales (NSW) that are registered with Supply Nation[4] being owned by them. Enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and mentorship can significantly impact economic empowerment and community development, highlighting an opportunity in the social enterprise sector. To support this, investment in and policies recognising First Nations women-led businesses can help to increase their participation in entrepreneurship and contribute to community economic growth[5].

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap has set a target for 2031 to raise the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in employment, education or training to 67%[6]. Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) will play a role in meeting this target. However, enrolments and completions in FTB courses has been decreasing since 2015, especially in the tech sector. Access to high-speed internet and digital devices, especially in rural and remote First Nations communities, presents challenges for tech training and career opportunities. There is a gap between metropolitan and regional areas, which widens in remote Australia, particularly affecting First Nations communities. The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) has expressed concern about this issue, highlighting the impact of inadequate communications infrastructure on digital exclusion. Poor mobile coverage in these communities makes accessing services even harder for

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[1] Future Skills Organisation (2023), Initial Workforce Plan, FSO.

[2] Evans & Polidano 2022; Reserve Bank of Australia (2022) First Nations businesses: Progress, challenges, and opportunities, RBA, Australian Government, accessed 11 April 2024

[3] NSW Treasury (2023) First Nations Women's Economic Participation Review: Pathways to Prosperity, NSW Treasury, Government of NSW, p. 32

[4] Note: Supply Nation is an Australian organisation that focuses on promoting and facilitating Indigenous business. It works towards connecting Indigenous businesses with both government and private sector organisations as suppliers. Supply Nation aims to support Indigenous entrepreneurship and economic development by fostering relationships between Indigenous-owned businesses and procurement teams across various industries.

[5] New South Wales Treasury. First Nations Women's Economic Participation Review: Pathways to Prosperity. August 2023. Available: https://www.treasury. nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/trp23-05_first-nations-womens-economic-participation-review_pathways-to-prosperity.pdf

[6] Closing the Gap Targets and Outcomes." Closing the Gap, Australian Government, https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets.

those lacking connectivity.[7] Government policies and funding changes will also impact enrolment rates and representation in fields like cybersecurity.

Education and training are fundamental in promoting diversity within the workforce. First Nation women play a crucial part as role models and influencers in driving change. However, there remains a disparity, with more representation in certain sectors like business and fewer in technical fields. This highlights the opportunity for the vocational education and training (VET) sector to establish clear career pathways and encourage greater participation of First Nations women in technology-related qualifications.

Importance Of Skills Training and Development

"Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the 2031 target is to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education and training to 67%. "

Source: https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets accessed 5th April 2024

Skills training is crucial for empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and promoting community development by bridging gaps in education and employment. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap[8] has set a target to lift the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (aged 15-24) in employment, education or training to 67% by 2031; in 2021, the proportion was 58%.

Skills training for Indigenous Australian females plays a crucial role in creating positive impacts within their communities. It not only breaks cycles of disadvantage but also enhances employment opportunities and fosters leadership roles among Indigenous women. This effort promotes gender equality while contributing to cultural sustainability.[9]

VET is one mechanism to provide support to First Nations peoples in skills training. The report Vocational education and training in regional, rural and remote Australia[10] by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) highlights that VET students in regional Australia are more likely to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. As of 2020, First Nations student program enrolments in remote regions comprised 31% of total enrolments, compared to just 5% in major cities and 12% in inner regional areas of Australia. These figures may be attributable in part to the fact that the First Nations share of the population grows with increasing remoteness, reaching nearly 50% of the total population in very remote Australia.[11]

The National Skills Agreement[12] introduces the 'Ensuring access to foundation skills training' initiative. This initiative supports individuals in accessing necessary foundation skills training and commits to developing a 10-year national foundation skills strategy by the end of 2024, which may include a national suite of activities to better reach cohorts with diverse and complex needs.[13]

[7] Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities. (2023). Mobile coverage in Australia: Enhancing competition in the allocation of public funding. Retrieved from https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Communications/Mobileco-investment/Report/Chapter_5_-_Mobile_access_and_functionality_in_remote_Australia

[8] Productivity Commission (2023) Socio-Economic Outcome Area 7: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Are Engaged in Employment or Education, Productivity Commission, Australian Government.

[9] ITECA Skills Training Snapshot: Indigenous Students. (March 2024)

[10] National Centre for Vocational Education Research. (2021). VET in Schools 2020: Australian vocational education and training statistics. Retrieved from https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A96033

[11] Ibid

[12] https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/agreements/national-agreement-skills

[13] Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2022) National Foundation Skills Framework 2022 to 2032, DESE, Australian Government

First Nations Education and Employment

The [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage](#)[14] and '[Closing the Gap](#)[15]' reports have provided insights into the education and employment of First Nations people in Australia. Whilst First Nations participation in education has increased, with Year 12 completions and tertiary education participation on the rise, employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have not seen equivalent improvements.[16] VET could help address this challenge. First Nations VET learners have been found to achieve higher rates of sustainable employment than their non-First Nations peers, regardless of whether they completed their VET program (completers were 17% more likely and non-completers 15% more likely to achieve sustainable employment). Factors like residing in less disadvantaged areas (likelihood increases by up to 320%) and participating in apprenticeships or traineeships (likelihood increases by up to 150%) significantly enhance employment prospects.[17]

Challenges persist in the transition to sustainable employment, though, such as the increased likelihood of casual employment or entry-level positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. This, combined with the balancing of work, family, and community responsibilities, in workplaces that could benefit from greater cultural understanding, contribute to voluntary departures of First Nations employees.[18] Broader social, institutional and economic barriers, such as poorer schooling outcomes, lower language, literacy and numeracy skills, disproportionately affect First Nations peoples as much as challenges in accessing local employment opportunities.[19]

A multifaceted approach is required to facilitate the transition from VET to employment. Empowering students and incorporating traditional culture into educational models can directly impact education and employment outcomes. Holistic support models that address cultural understanding, alongside the presence of mentors and role models, place the focus on the strengths of individuals and their families, enabling them to be active decision-makers in their educational and employment journeys.[20]

The Country Universities Centre operates across regional New South Wales. It provides students with access to tertiary education and support without the need to relocate, leveraging local academic and digital resources to meet the specific needs of regional students. This approach is indicative of the broader movement towards locally led development, which emphasises the importance of sustainability and the integration of local knowledge into program design for long-term success.

Sources: Yadha Muru Foundation (https://www.yadhamuru.org) and Country Universities Centre (https://www.cuc.edu.au)

[14] https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/2016

[15] https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/annual-data-report/2022

[16] National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2017) Indigenous VET participation, completion and employment outcomes: infographic, NCVER

[17] NCVER (2023) From VET to sustainable employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,. In this research, sustainable employment was defined as six months or more of continuous employment.

[18] Hunter, B. & Gray, M. (2016) The Ins and Outs of the Labour Market: Employment and Labour Force Transitions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Canberra

[19] Productivity Commission (2020) Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020, Productivity Commission, Australian Government

[20] Victorian Department of Education and Training (2019) Promoting Participation and Engagement for Koorie Learners in VET: Planning for Success, Department of Education

Waters, M 2019, Ready for Work: Stories of Innovative Vocational Education and Training for Regional and Remote Students at Charles Darwin University, Charles Darwin University, Darwin.

Wilson, B, Abbott, T, Quinn, S, Guenther, J, McRae-Williams, E & Cairney, S 2019, Empowerment is the basis for improving education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal peoples in remote Australia, Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, vol.48, no.2, pp.153—61.

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In finance, technology and business occupations, 48% of the workforce have a higher education qualification as their highest post-school qualification, while 26% hold a VET qualification as their highest.[21] By improving educational pathways tailored to First Nations' needs, there is an opportunity to increase participation in education, empowering First Nations peoples to seek employment in these industries.

In summary, integrating finance, technology and business education within First Nations communities can bridge the employment gap in these sectors. Programs focusing on financial literacy, digital skills and entrepreneurship may help to empower First Nations peoples to pursue careers in these sectors. Access to finance and business development resources, coupled with mentorship and networking opportunities, can foster sustainable economic growth and employment opportunities within local communities.

Participation of First Nations Women in the Business Sector

The rate of self-employment among First Nations women is lower than that of non-Indigenous Australian women and First Nations men. In NSW, only 30% of Supply Nation[22] certified businesses are majority-owned by First Nations females. These women often engage in entrepreneurship without extensive business-related social and human capital and rely on mentors, which can affect their business success. First Nations businesses not only provide employment opportunities — being 100 times more likely to hire First Nations staff than non-Indigenous businesses[23]— but also contribute to community services and act as role models. Enhancing entrepreneurial skills and mentorship for First Nations women could have a significant impact on both individual economic empowerment and community development.[24]

First Nations women may face additional challenges, including significant caregiving responsibilities and limited access to traditional employment and education opportunities. By fostering entrepreneurial skills and providing support, opportunities can be opened for First Nations women to pursue self-employment, accommodating their obligations and overcoming these systemic barriers. This can empower them economically and foster deeper community engagement.[25]

The First Nations Business Sector Report[26] identifies First Nations women's entrepreneurship as a key enabler for sector growth, offering flexibility to manage both economic activities and family or community responsibilities. The social enterprise sector, operating with the objective of improving social or environmental outcomes and reinvesting profits to achieve these goals, provides a significant opportunity for First Nations women, particularly in remote communities. The Australian Human Rights Commission[27] notes that this business model aligns with the community-first approach of First Nations culture and can provide culturally responsive economic pathways for First Nations women.[28]

[21] Future Skills Organisation (2023), Initial Workforce Plan, FSO.

[22] https://supplynation.org.au/

[23] Hunter, B and Gray, M (2016), Ins and outs of the labour market: employment and labour force transitions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, CAEPR, Australian National University

[24] NSW Treasury (2023) First Nations Women's Economic Participation Review: Pathways to Prosperity, TRP23-05:32, NSW Treasury, Australian Government,

[25] NSW Treasury (2023) First Nations Women's Economic Participation Review: Pathways to Prosperity, TRP23-05:21, NSW Treasury, Australian Government

[26] https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/trp22-31-first-nations-business-sector-report_20221102.pdf?trk=public_post_comment-text

[27] Australian Human Rights Commission 2020.

[28] NSW Treasury (2023) First Nations Women's Economic Participation Review: Pathways to Prosperity, TRP23-05:46-47, NSW Treasury, Australian

To facilitate growth in this sector, the NSW Government announced a $30 million Social Impact Outcomes Fund in July 2021, with initial investments focusing on the social and economic wellbeing of women facing disadvantage and First Nations youth, particularly girls. The 2022-23 NSW Budget allocated $1.29 million for women-focused social enterprises, with First Nations women's enterprises being a priority group. These initiatives are part of a broader commitment to support First Nations women in entrepreneurship and social enterprise, recognising the potential for these businesses to contribute to community development and employment.[29]

To promote the growth of First Nations women's self-employment and social enterprise, investment into supporting these initiatives are recommended. These could include leveraging NSW procurement policies to support businesses owned by First Nations women and expanding the NSW Government's 2022-23 Women's Opportunity Statement[30] to specifically recognise First Nations women-led businesses. A co-design approach involving entrepreneurs in program creation and implementation, along with evaluating the location and effectiveness of First Nations business hubs and networks, is also crucial. By implementing these strategies, the aim is to create a supportive framework that can lead to increased participation of First Nations women in entrepreneurship and contribute to the economic development of their communities.[31]

The Women's Business Second Chance (WB2C) program, launched in March 2020, offers tailored educational and vocational training, along with social and emotional support in culturally safe environments. Services are delivered through women-only hubs and outreach in areas chosen for their emerging industries, such as Greater Sydney, the Hunter region, the Mid North Coast, and remote Western Australia. WB2C also connects participants to community services like housing, childcare, legal advice, and health and wellbeing support. The program has engaged over 630 women, resulting in career training, life skill development, vocational pursuits, and the creation of 16 start-ups.

Sources: First Nations Women's Economic Participation Strategy pg 50

Graphic 1: Snapshot of First Nations participation in FTB Qualifications

As of September 2023:

10% of First Nations people enrolled in a traineeship or apprenticeship were in FTB occupations.

Of that ten per cent **86%** were enrolled in **BUSINESS.**

In 2022 there were **16,573** First Nations people enrolled in a FTB qualification.

In 2022 **86%** of the total FTB completions were in Business compared to **5%** in Tech.

As of September 2023:

73% of First Nations people enrolled in a traineeship or apprenticeship in FTB occupations were women.

Of that **92%** were enrolled in **BUSINESS** compared to **2%** in **TECH.**

In 2022 **84%** of First Nations people enrolled in FTB qualifications were women.

SINCE 2015 FIRST NATIONS ENROLMENTS IN FTB QUALIFICATIONS HAVE DROPPED BY ALMOST **50%.**

TECH BASED FIRST NATIONS ENROLMENTS HAVE DECREASED BY **70%** SINCE 2015.

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS TVA program enrolments 2015-2022 Type of training by year and Indigenous status and Apprentices and trainees – September 2023

First Nations Participation in Technology

Enrolments and completions in technology VET programs among First Nations learners have been declining since 2015. This trend extends across the FTB sectors, showing a 50% drop in enrolments since 2015 and a steeper 70% decline in the tech sector specifically. Completion rates have followed a similar trajectory, down 40% overall since 2015, with tech sector completions declining by 69%. These statistics highlight the potential for RTOs to address the growing demand and challenges within the tech training and education landscape.[32]

The [First Nations People Workforce Analysis](#)[33] by JSA, revealed that First Nations peoples who studied IT, either at university or through VET, were less likely to work in IT-related occupations than non-Indigenous Australians (21% vs 46%). This disparity is attributed to lower completion rates of bachelor's degrees among First Nations students (18% vs. 62% for non-Indigenous Australians) and competition from larger businesses for qualified graduates.[34]

The decline in participation in tech qualifications by First Nations peoples is multifaceted. There is a digital divide in Australia, with limited access to high-speed internet and digital devices for some First Nations communities (especially remote regions), hindering inclusion in tech-focused training, especially if it is delivered online. Government policies, funding changes and program variations affect the availability and accessibility of such training, leading to reduced enrolment rates. Lack of awareness within First Nations communities about existing tech programs and the potential career paths, combined with insufficient career counselling and support services, also contributes to the issue. Short-lived pilot programs struggle to build trust and continuity, while existing attitudes toward training affect the representation of First Nations individuals in technical fields such as cybersecurity.[35]

Efforts to improve digital inclusion for First Nations communities include the [Mapping the Digital Gap](#)[36] project, a four-year research project conducted by the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society in partnership with Telstra. Aiming to track digital inclusion and inform policy development, this project is crucial for meeting the Closing the Gap target of equal digital inclusion by 2026.[37]

Digital inclusion for First Nations peoples involves more than connectivity. It also includes issues of affordability and digital literacy. These barriers are being addressed through strategic frameworks and actions, such as the [First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan](#)[38], which focuses on enhancing access, affordability and digital ability.[39]

Our discussions during recent stakeholder engagements with Phillip Jenkinson, CEO and Co-Founder of Baidam Solutions, Australia's leading Indigenous ICT security

[32] NCVER VOCSTATS TVA Program Enrolments and Completions 2015-2022 Type of training by year and Indigenous status

[33] https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/studies/first-nations-people-workforce-analysis

[34] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2023) First Nations People Workforce Analysis, DEWR, Australian Government

[35] Braue D (2021) 'Too Few Indigenous People in Tech: Aboriginal Children Are Particularly Suited to STEM', Information Age; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2023) First Nations People Workforce Analysis: Jobs and Skills Australia, DEWR, Australian Government, accessed 12 April 2024; First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group (n.d.) Initial Report

[36] https://apo.org.au/node/319809

[37] ARC Centre of Excellence (2023) Mapping the Digital Gap - ADM+S Centre

[38] https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/first-nations-digital-inclusion-plan-2023-2026_0.pdf

[39] National Indigenous Australians Agency (2023) First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan 2023-2026, NIAA, Australian Government

services and solutions provider, reveals the critical importance of enhancing First Nations participation in the technology sector. He highlights both the opportunities and challenges inherent in this endeavour. A key theme of the discussion revolved around recognising the vast potential within First Nations communities to contribute to and benefit from the tech industry, given their rich history of innovation and problem-solving. However, there are still barriers that need addressing to unlock this potential fully.

Opportunities for First Nations participation in tech are vast and varied, ranging from direct employment and leadership roles within the tech sector to leveraging technology for community development and cultural preservation. Initiatives such as the Indigenous Tech Academy[40] and programs offered by the First Nations Technical Institute[41] exemplify efforts aimed at supporting First Nations peoples. These programs not only deliver the technical training necessary to thrive in the tech economy but also incorporate First Nations knowledge and perspectives, ensuring a culturally relevant learning experience.

By partnering with some of Australia's largest employers, Baidam Solutions is able to offer secure employment options through the Baidam Initiative program.[42] This program gives a significant percentage of its profits to open pathways to employment in the IT sector for Indigenous and First Nations peoples. They provide organisations with business-as-usual outcomes while also providing a procurement vehicle to achieve Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP). This partnership allows for a direct challenge to the status quo and combats the profound IT security skills shortage faced in Australia.

Baidam Solutions has committed to finding jobs for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian information security sector. They also offer lifetime scholarships at university for First Nations peoples who want to study STEM-based degrees. In 2023, they provided ten of these scholarships, of which seven recipients were First Nations women. This will serve as role models for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, build intergenerational wealth, drive our economy forward and support reconciliation through positive employment.

[40] Revolent Group (2021) Indigenous Tech Academy, revolentgroup.com
[41] Discover FNTI (2024) History: First Nations Technical Institute, FNTI
[42] Bridging the Gap (2024) The Baidam Initiative, Baidam Solutions

Focus on: First Nations Participation and Representation in Australian Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM)

With the strong interest observed in business qualifications and the opportunity to increase participation in technology qualifications for First Nations people, there is significant opportunity for them to explore and contribute to the GLAM space providing a chance to prioritise cultural empowerment, foster supportive environments and promote more diverse practices within these institutions. Work in this field contributes to the ongoing healing and empowerment of First Nations communities while enriching archival spaces with diverse voices and perspectives.[43]

The "National Survey on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment in Australian Libraries," conducted by the Jumbunna Institute at the University of Technology Sydney, sheds light on the employment experiences, challenges and opportunities for First Nations workers in Australian libraries. One significant finding from the survey is that 32.7% of participants entered library work via cadetships, indicating a viable pathway for First Nations individuals to enter and thrive in the library sector.[44]

This underscores the potential for RTOs to play a crucial role in supporting First Nations individuals in accessing and excelling in library and information services. With the observed strong interest among First Nations peoples in business qualifications, there is a unique opportunity to expand training and course material in this space, particularly focusing on the intersection of business and library sciences. By tailoring programs to incorporate business skills alongside library and information management knowledge, RTOs can enhance opportunities for First Nations people to pursue careers in libraries and archives.

RTOs can collaborate with library institutions to create pathways that provide hands-on experience, mentorship, and career development opportunities for First Nations learners. This collaborative approach not only increases opportunities for First Nations people but also contributes to a more diverse and inclusive workforce within the library and information sector. It also aligns with broader initiatives to promote cultural empowerment, foster supportive environments, and promote diversity and inclusivity within GLAM institutions. Overall, leveraging the interest in business-based opportunities presents a real opportunity for RTOs to support First Nations people in thriving within the library and information services sector.
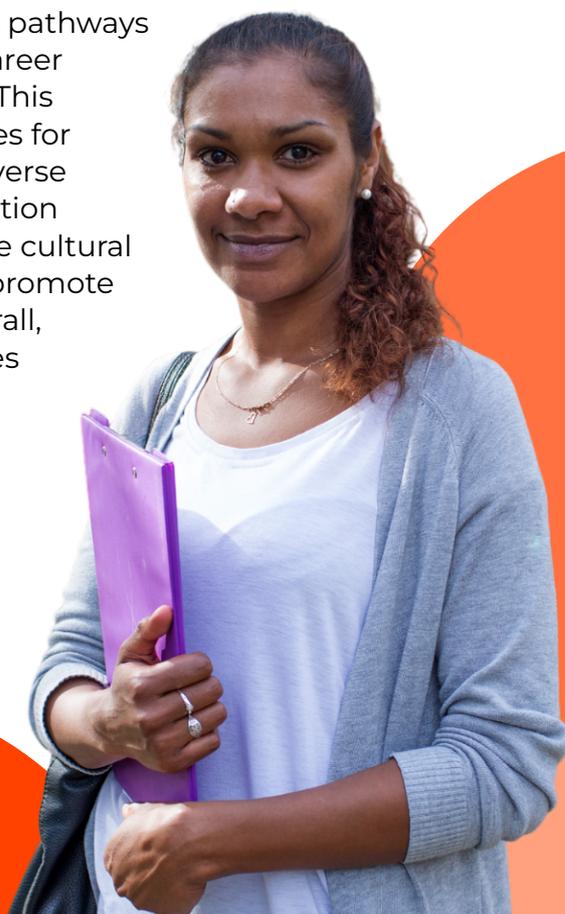
[43] Thorpe, K. (2021) National Survey on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment in Australian Libraries: Research Report, Jumbunna Institute, University of Technology Sydney.

[44] Ibid.

Building a First Nations Archivist workforce to drive language and cultural revitalisation

First Nations archives are crucial for language and cultural revitalisation, serving as vital tools for truth telling, healing and reparations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Yet, challenges persist with limited access to materials, support, funding, and adequate training.

"There's currently a gap where some staff lack foundational knowledge about archive and record keeping work and its principles, leading to tensions in how First Nations priorities are progressed," says Kirsten Thorpe[45] (Worimi, Port Stephens), Associate Professor, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research.[46]

Kirsten notes that Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)[47] are working to improve career pathways in the sector.

"It's essential to address the critical levels of Indigenous employment in libraries and archives and involve current staff in shaping training programs to meet their needs and enhance their skills," adds Kirsten.

Read the full case study here.[48]

There are a number of current initiatives in this area:

- Initiatives by The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA): ALIA has introduced initiatives to promote First Nations perspectives in library and archive services. This includes a seven-part video training series aligned with the Guidelines for First Nations Collection Description, emphasising inclusivity and cultural recognition. Additionally, ALIA has formed an Expert Advisory Group focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority areas, and through the Professional Pathways project, Indigenous knowledge is integrated into core competencies, showcasing ALIA's dedication to promoting First Nation's representation.[49]

- National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) Collaboration: The collaboration between NSLA libraries has resulted in significant progress towards enhancing Indigenous representation in library collections and services. A recent audit of contemporary Indigenous collections led to the development of guidelines for describing First Nations material, aiming to ensure consistency and confidence across the sector. Through collaboration with ALIA and other organisations, NSLA libraries are working towards achieving broader sector-wide goals related to First Nations engagement and representation.[50]

- The Indigenous Graduate Program at the National Library of Australia: The National Library of Australia's Indigenous Graduate Program offers valuable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates to gain hands-on experience in

[45] https://www.linkedin.com/in/kirsten-thorpe-2010278/

[46] https://www.uts.edu.au/research/jumbunna-institute-indigenous-education-and-research

[47] https://www.alia.org.au/Web/Web/Advocacy/Indigenous-Matters.aspx?hkey=99c42b07-ee70-4579-963b-b3611e99cc09

[48] https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/building-a-first-nations-archivist-workforce-to-drive-language-and-cultural-revitalisation

[49] Australian Library and Information Association (2024) Indigenous Matters, alia.org.au

[50] National and State Libraries Australasia (2022) Library Sector Unites for First Nations Collection Description

various library areas. Participants in the program have the chance to explore diverse roles, including engagement with the library's Indigenous collection and community outreach. The program's emphasis on First Nations mentorship and support networks enhances the overall experience for participants and contributes to their professional development.[51]

Conclusion

The active involvement of First Nations peoples in the FTB workforce significantly contributes to Australia's economic and social progress. While obstacles like underrepresentation and disparities in skills training persist, there are clear opportunities for improvement. These include:

- Increasing access to skills training and development.

- Supporting First Nations businesses.

- Fostering an inclusive workforce.

Initiatives and programs aimed at empowering First Nations peoples and integrating their cultural knowledge into various sectors are crucial steps toward achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the opportunities presented by First Nations participation, Australia can unlock a wealth of potential that benefits not only Fist Nation communities but also the nation.

[51] Katrina C (2021) 'National Library's Indigenous Program Opens Doors for Uni Graduates', Riotac

FSO Suggested Future Activity

First Nations people only make up 1.2% of Australia's approximately 3 million FTB workforce. This statistic underscores a significant opportunity to not just increase the First Nations workforce in FTB occupations but to fundamentally transform the workforce by fostering engagement and inclusion. By focusing on skills and training, we can help create an FTB workforce that capitalises on the unique perspectives and talents of First Nations peoples, ultimately leading to a more equitable and thriving society.

Accordingly, we propose to:

- Include First Nations trainers and organisations in the gaps analysis and review of the current ICT, FNS and BSB training packages to ensure that training is adapted to provide opporutnity for the inclusion of First Nations Languages and allow for better cultural understanding.

- Conduct a gap analysis of the current libray and information services training package and work with organisations to ensure there is a suitable and accredited pathway for First Nations Archivists.

- Support and help promote within local communities the existing opportunities that exist as pathways into the FTB workforce, including showcasing First Nations role models within these occupations.

What industry can do:

- Create pathways for leadership development and showcase diverse career opportunities to avoid sterotyping First Nations roles.

- Establish mechanisms to recognise and value the cultural labour and expertise of First Nation workers.

- Ensure that cultural work is acknowledged and compensated appropriately within organisational structures.

- Invest in cultural competence training and mechanisms for addressing the needs of First Nations staff.

- Develop policies and procedures that promote cultural safety and respect for First Nations knowledge and perspectives.

- Establish forums and networks to facilitate national networking for First Nations workers.

- Promote awareness of career opportunities within the FTB sectors amongst First Nations communities.

- Partner with First Nation organisations and communities to create pathways for entry into FTB occupations.

- Be open to non-traditional pathways into an occupation or training program.