



27 July 2016

Productivity Commission

GPO BOX 1428

Canberra City ACT 2601

*Online submission*

## **SUBMISSION ON DATA AVAILABILITY AND USE**

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations represents the interests of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, which have or are in the process of gaining recognition under the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) or the Victorian Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic). The Federation and its members, along with other Traditional Owner organisations across the country, have a growing base of assets, resources and business interests.

Data, and the ensuing information and knowledge that can be drawn from it, has a potent and real effect on the outcomes that can be achieved by business and community organisations, and indeed by government. As such it is of utmost important to the productivity gains to be made and necessary for Australia's future growth and wellbeing.

We note two key areas to generate and manage data that contribute to understanding and growing economic opportunity.

### ***Indigenous business information base***

Implementing a statistical measure for Indigenous business within the business statistical frame, which is necessary in order to develop a more consistent and comprehensive picture of the value of the contribution made through the Indigenous economy. This portion of the economy is not currently able to be differentiated, well understood, or made relevant to policy development or the broader academic and business communities.

While acknowledging that there are some areas of definitional difficulty, such data collection has been achieved for example in New Zealand, enabling a greater understanding of the Maori 'indigenous economy' with consequent improvement in understanding the contribution to the

PO Box 431 North Melbourne VIC 3051

(03) 9321 5388

[info@fvtoc.com.au](mailto:info@fvtoc.com.au)

[www.fvtoc.com.au](http://www.fvtoc.com.au)

ABN: 40 164 514 121

broader economy including through a social accounting matrix approach, improved targeting and support through policy and program development, and importantly, the business community's recognition of the business potential.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Mechanisms to manage the confidentiality of sensitive cultural information***

The increasing level of data that is available and the increasing ability to capture and use it may in general have a positive effect on the decision-making of businesses, customers and investors. However, with the increasing openness in the nature of data, its availability, uses and the potential information that can be collected, collated, interpreted or linked to other data (particularly geographic information), it is important not lose sight of the non-empirical, emic, perspectives of the data collection and interpretation.

A key area to consider is the ownership or control of data that is sensitive to traditional owners as a collective. Similar to the need to protect privacy and personal data, the nature of such information requires consideration of the risks, certainty and mechanisms to enable exclusion or control<sup>2</sup>. This strongly relates issues of data which could affect indigenous cultural knowledge and intellectual or cultural interests/property.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend the productivity commission give consideration to:

1. The standardised collection of data within Australian business statistics to capture indigenous business activity;
2. The mechanisms required to ensure appropriate control in relation to sensitive information pertaining to Traditional Owner collective interests.

Yours sincerely

Janine Coombs

Chair

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<sup>1</sup> See, recent work: [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/people\\_and\\_communities/maori/tatauranga-umanga-2016.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/maori/tatauranga-umanga-2016.aspx) and previous work <https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/a-matou-mohiotanga/business-and-economics/>.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the aggregated geographical information on sites of significance to understand the proximity to water bodies has been invaluable in considering matters relating to water management, but information pertaining to the location of individual sites has been protected.