
**RESPONSE TO THE
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT ON THE
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING WORKFORCE**

**BY ANDREW MCINTOSH CPA
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, MARCH 27, 2011**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are acknowledged as the First Australians and respect is paid to the Elders, past and present, from all the Nations across Australia.

For tens of thousands of years the strength and resilience of Indigenous people has been guided by the wisdom of the Elders. The courage of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, often in the face of great adversity, is acknowledged.

Let the real opportunities afforded by education, economic participation and strong governance take the Indigenous people of Australia to new prosperity.

OVERVIEW

Uncle Stan Yarramunua is an Aboriginal of the Wautharong and Yorta Yorta people. He operates a successful business, Art Yarramunua, in Collins Street, Melbourne. He works in close physical proximity to the Productivity Commission's offices at 35 Collins Street, Melbourne.

As a Senior Elder in his community, he was unaware the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Workforce inquiry had commenced in April 2010 and that it had invited public submissions from "interested" parties. He expressed concern on learning the official date to provide a response to the 'draft' had passed and that his people did not seem to have been aware of the inquiry (as evidenced by an apparent lack of Indigenous submissions). In addition, he is also concerned that there only appeared to be very limited 'direct' representation to Commission from Aboriginal people during public consultations.

As an Aboriginal artist and businessmen, Yarramunua has a unique perspective on the skills and training required by his people to succeed in business. Yarramunua sees education, involving the VET sector in particular, as critical to running a business and ultimately growing the 'business' and other capabilities in Aboriginal Australia.

He understands that basic business training provided by the VET sector, such as business administration and book keeping skills, become the foundation for building knowledge and experience that may ultimately see people 'guided' into a business or accounting career. The VET sector is, therefore, key in creating 'supply' for Indigenous business professions in fields like commerce and accounting.

As an Indigenous role model and mentor, Yarramunua stressed the need for more business and accounting role models to 'provide hope' for Aboriginal Australia. However, with only very basic literacy skills, his ability to communicate this to the Commission in a submission is limited.

Yarramunua's situation represents a very practical example of difficulties experienced by the Aboriginal community in engaging in this inquiry - Yarramunua can meet face to face or discuss his views by telephone, but only if he know the inquiry exists in the first place.

A lack of qualified business professionals in the Aboriginal community, like Certified Practising Accountants and Chartered Accountants, also means the capabilities of the Indigenous community to interpret, critically analyse and respond to complex governance, education and business issues, such as this, is severely compromised.

The VET Workforce's awareness, engagement and capabilities to successfully educate and deliver positive outcomes for an Indigenous student is therefore critical. The VET sector needs enhanced capability to help identify, train and mentor Indigenous business professionals of the future, as it will act as a feeder for tertiary education and eventual entry into the professions.

TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

SUBMITTED BY ANDREW MCINTOSH CPA FOR AND ON BEHALF OF
YARRAMUNUA. UNCLE STAN (DRYDEN), WAUTHARONG & YORTA YORTA

Saturday, March 26th, 2011
Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION MAKING & THE ECONOMY

“Just because we can’t read it doesn’t mean we have not got an opinion. Just because I can’t write it doesn’t mean I have not got an opinion. I still have an opinion.

Now that we know about this, let’s do something about it.¹

Let’s come together as one, because after all, we are all Australians – because if you don’t care about your culture you are not a real Australian.

If we take care of our culture, and the people of our culture, that means we can include them in the wider community, education and opportunities.”

INDIGENOUS ACCOUNTANTS

“Being told that there are only nine accountants², for me to hear that as an aboriginal man, that makes me sorry that no one else is out there. It makes me sorry that no one else is giving opportunities to our people.

We have the oldest living culture in the world, so let us be proud and start looking after it. Let us give the same opportunities to Aboriginal people as for others.

It’s all about responsibility as Australians. It’s about coming together. If you give opportunities to the Aboriginal community to come out and learn business and accounting and be role models, then they go back into those communities as role models.

That gives us hope that there is a better life for them.

It’s being done for footballers, but not for others. If I don’t want to be a footballer, what opportunities do I have?

Looking back in two hundred years from now, what we start today, it will result in fifty, a hundred... thousands of accountants. Our children’s, children will know.”

THE DROUGHT HAS BROKEN

“People should look right in front of themselves for opportunities. If they look after the Spirit of the Land, then they will receive good karma.

When the Prime Minister of Australia said Sorry we had a drought. Since then the draught has broken and the rain has come. The rain is the tears that have come out of the eyes of our people.

If the people in charge of business and accounting can help us, then that gives our people opportunities. Good karma will come back to them.”

OUR CHILDREN

“I want our kids to play together. We want little kids from our community to say I want to be a lawyer, an accountant, a judge and Prime Minister.

Please give them the opportunity to broaden their minds.

It’s about a far go, a fair go for all Australians. “

YARRAMUNUA
80,011

¹ This comment refers to the Productivity Commission’s VET Workforce study and lack of submissions to the Commission directly from Aboriginal organisations and people (as at March 20, 2011, <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/education-workforce/vocational/submissions>)

² (a) Lombardi, Luisa and Clayton, Bruce (2006) Indigenous Australian accountants: why so few? A historical and cultural perspective, *Global business & economics anthology*, vol. 1, pp. 63-74, Business & Economics Society International, Worcester, Mass. (b) VET Workforce Productivity Commission Study – Submission DR108 by Adrian Williams CPA, 22/03/11
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