

**DEADLY
INNOVATION
STRATEGY**



Acknowledgment of Country

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of the land and sea, their spirits and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors—our First Nations peoples—gives strength, inspiration and courage to current and future generations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, towards creating a better Queensland.

Acknowledgment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group (BIRG)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group brings together an outstanding group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs, business leaders and researchers to provide strategic advice on matters that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Reference Group aims to help increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs and innovators, and support the development of existing businesses across Queensland.

Members have been instrumental in the design of the *Deadly Innovation Strategy*, providing their insights and cultural knowledge to co-design a program that will achieve sustainable change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and innovators. BIRG contributors included: Leann Wilson, Shane Kennelly, Julie-ann Lambourne, Cr Desmond Tayley, Leesa Watego, Cr Ross Andrews, Noel Niddrie, Mundanara Bayles, Colin Saltmere, Terri Waller, and Charlie Jia.

COVER PHOTO: Yugambeh Dancers at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games © *Shutterstock Photography*

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Executive summary

In October 2017, the Queensland Government committed to deliver a Deadly Innovation Program to create pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to increase participation in Queensland's innovation economy.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people — also referred to as Indigenous Queenslanders — inherit a rich history of innovation, solving challenges and adapting to changes in the environment. They have much to offer and contribute to Queensland's innovation economy.

Mr Colin Saltmere, the Director of the Dugalunji Aboriginal Corporation and proud Indjalandji-Dhidhanu man, for example, has established commercial innovation solutions from the use of Spinifex — a grass that dominates the sand desert of Central Australia. This was achieved by exploring cultural expertise with cutting edge science to build new businesses in latex, civil solutions, textiles and much more¹.

This *Deadly Innovation Strategy* has been developed in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group and key stakeholders, to articulate a new approach to deliver economic opportunities to Indigenous communities. It is supported by a number of actions:

- Government will hear, by identifying and supporting a pathway for Indigenous businesses and innovators to achieve success.
- Government will share, by broadening access to existing opportunities. Strengthening respect for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will improve Indigenous participation in existing and emerging opportunities offered by government, Queensland industries and emerging business networks.
- Government will activate, by securing funding and backing feasible deals. Through backing opportunities, new innovative businesses will be created, led or managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

1. Deadly Innovation Strategy



In 2017, the Queensland Government committed to delivering a program designed to create more pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through participation in the innovation economy:

Advance Queensland: Foundations for the future. Partner with universities, TAFE, the education system and business to deliver Deadly Innovations, a program designed to create more pathways for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander innovators to turn their ideas into reality.

To deliver this commitment, the Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games (DITID), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group (BIRG) and key stakeholders have co-designed the *Deadly Innovation Strategy*.

The vision for the *Deadly Innovation Strategy* is to increase economic opportunities and independence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through greater involvement in the innovation economy.

The strategy creates pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, innovators, leaders, or future leaders (referred to as business and innovators) to turn their ideas into reality, so they can build wealth and create jobs. It supports research, innovation, entrepreneurship, business development and growth.

The strategy will be led by DITID in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group and key stakeholders, to articulate a new approach to deliver economic opportunities to Indigenous communities.

Queensland Government departments will contribute to the actions within this strategy as part of the broader Advance Queensland initiative.

The strategy will align with the three reconciliation themes outlined in the *Queensland Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021*: harnessing Relationships, strengthen Respect, and creating Opportunities.

Three core aims have been identified within the strategy for action:

Aim 1: Government will hear, by identifying and supporting a pathway for Indigenous businesses and innovators to achieve success.

Aim 2: Government will share, by broadening access to existing opportunities.

Aim 3: Government will activate, by securing funding and backing feasible deals.

The Deadly Innovation Strategy Commitment and Action Plan (Figures 1 & 2) articulates the proposed government action to realise the vision. Actions are flexible in design to allow for pivoting towards new opportunities when they arise:

Figure 1: Deadly Innovation Strategy Commitment

Commitment	The <i>Deadly Innovation Strategy</i> seeks to create pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and innovators towards turning their ideas into reality, so they can build wealth and create jobs.
Opportunities	<p>Improve access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business leaders and innovators.</p> <p>Leverage strengths in land, water, culture and innovation.</p> <p>Engage a maturing Indigenous business and innovation sector.</p>
Challenges	<p>Capability to participate and contribute to outcomes.</p> <p>Cohesive and functional networks.</p> <p>Global and digital economy changes.</p> <p>Cultural capability.</p>
Mechanisms for delivery	<p>Working together.</p> <p>Targeted funding and partnering.</p> <p>Maturing of Indigenous business and innovation networks.</p> <p>Government policy reform.</p> <p>Flexible strategy design to pivot to needs as they arise.</p>
Outcome:	A pathway to a job or economic opportunity.

Advance Queensland and South East Queensland Indigenous Chamber of Commerce – Deloitte engagement event



Figure 2: Deadly Innovation Strategy Action Plan

We will harness relationships, strengthen respect, and activate opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and innovators.



The approach to implementation of the strategy is outlined in **Section 3**. This approach is informed by the shared cultural story of the Gidyea Tree in **Section 2**.

The strategy is aligned with the Advance Queensland Organising Framework demonstrating how the individual outcomes contribute to something that is more than the sum of its parts.

In line with the Advance Queensland Evaluation Framework, the strategy will be evaluated at appropriate intervals during and post-delivery. Programs will be flexible in design to allow for pivoting towards new opportunities when they arise.

2. Gidyea Tree—a cultural story

The Gidyea Tree story is only one of many that provides context on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as first nation people, are together.

As a collective, the foundational members of the BIRG articulated the concept of the Gidyea tree as a metaphor on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities, culturally bring forward relationships towards sustainability to grow prosperity.

This metaphor is a spoken one, rather than written, so its depth and powerful meaning is only partially captured in the written word.

The Gidyea tree is a resilient native tree, which grows slowly, laying down rings of growth around the hard core as seasons pass. Good seasons lead to thicker rings.

By way of metaphor, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as individuals or as a collective within cultural hubs of family connections, location, and community are the central core of strength upon which opportunity can be realised.

As cultural hubs they have a responsibility to each other and their country. To thrive, community members must have respect, responsibilities, relationships, and remember the past.

These cultural hubs are grounded in the first nation way of being and doing of 80,000 years. It is the way of holistic thinking, where the strength of the relationships comes from upstream and downstream responsibilities. When these elements are working effectively the rings are thicker because the decisions were good and sustainable.

As a cultural hub they bring forward activity in broader society, economies and the globe, to widen their frame of the world. They interact with others, government, universities, non government organisations (NGOs), corporates, investors, schools and educators, to build opportunity for social and economic parity.

They decide what the priorities are, and how to share the allocation of resources for the common good, to build identity and create resilience. One might say a stand of Gidyea trees, with even thickness of rings.

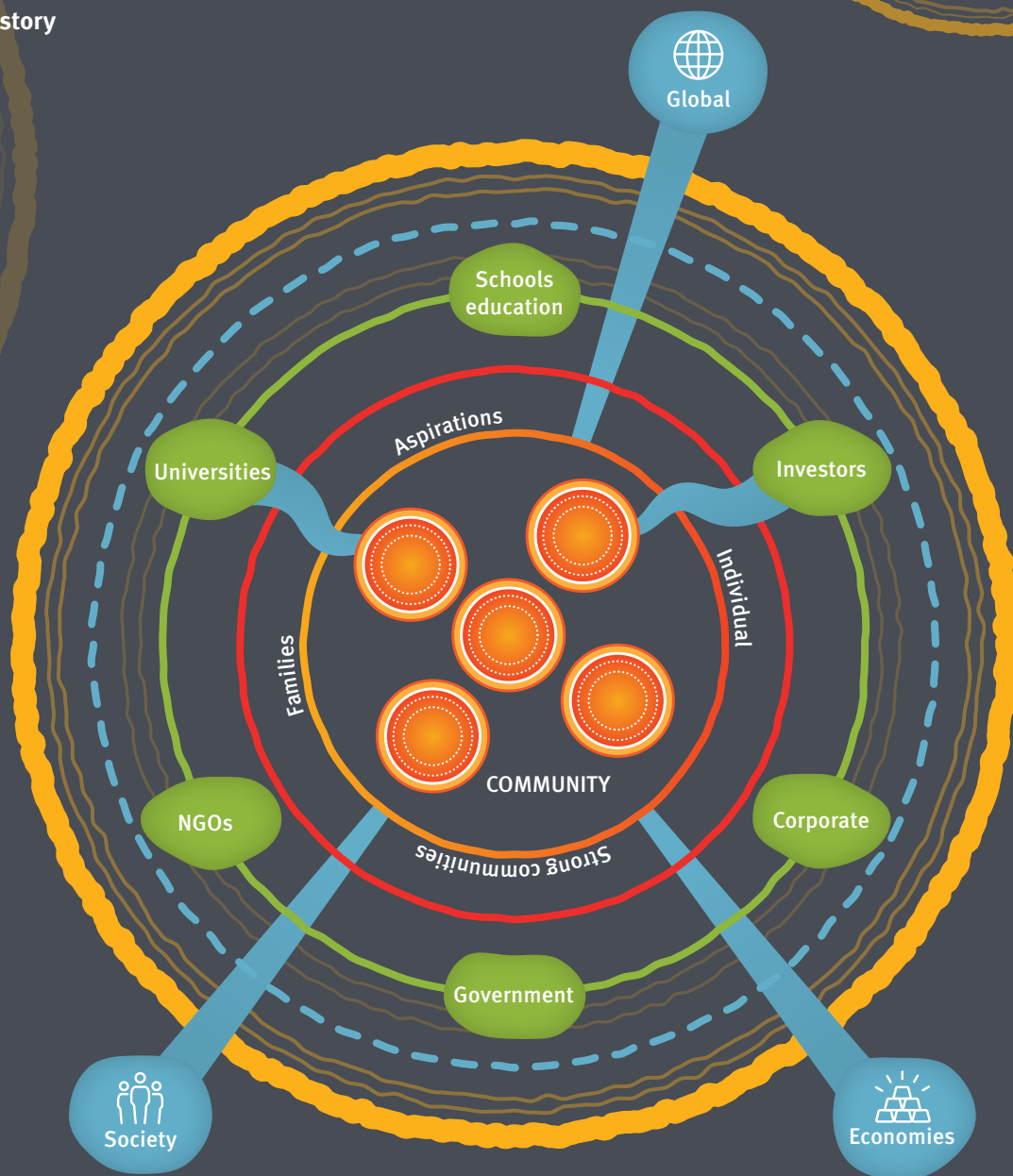
To reclaim, restore, and revitalise cultural hubs across Queensland, relationships with government need to be viewed differently. Business as usual must make way for a refreshed approach, one that puts at its core the people, their story and their approach to identifying priorities and activating decisions.

Hearing is the key if the culture of past, present and emergent is to thrive in a modern economy.

A cross section of the Gidyea tree showing growth rings.



Figure 3: Cross section of the Gidyea tree as a visualisation of the cultural story



Acknowledgment of Cultural Story

The Gidyea Tree Story—A tough resilient slow growing tree found in Central Western Queensland, where this story originates. My father the late Roy Thompson told me the story of the Gidyea Tree as a young girl and it has become my dreaming story to take forward. As we fenced together I recall him talking about the timber’s strength and resilience and that it would outsee him. He spoke about the Gidyea rings and how each ring represented approximately seven years of growth and when you study the rings they tell the story of the seasons before. Dad also provided counsel about how the rings relate to how we do things in and across our communities. He would say “my girl, remember when our seasons are good, strengthen relationships by respecting and sharing those up from you and those down from you because that is our responsibility and they will do the same when their season is good because our way is circular, it always come back and that is our strength.”

Story by Leann Wilson

Artist: Based on the 2016 Gidyea tree picture developed by the foundational members of the BIRG. Drawn by the Honourable Minister Leeanne Enoch as a proud Nughi woman of the Quandamooka nation, and the BIRG chair at that time.

3. Deadly Innovation Strategy Implementation

The strategy defines government support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to walk their own pathway to success. The strategy builds on the metaphor of the Gidyea tree which places the person and their community at the centre.

The approach of the strategy is visualised in Figure 4.

To identify Indigenous businesses and innovators and support them to become agents for change, on the premise that their ideas, with government support, will create new jobs.

Building on the ideas and innovations of existing businesses and innovators, the government supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, empowering them to take their next steps with a higher chance of success.

This approach to the strategy respects the vital need for self-determination to achieve sustainable change, recognising that Indigenous people work within their communities to support each other and share their successes.

It reflects the understanding that it is the individual—through their business or innovation—that will drive the transformation and mobilise the community to participate in the emergent business opportunities. As such, the driving outcome for all investment through the strategy is to ask: is there a pathway to a job or economic opportunity?

The strategy provides government scaffolding to support the person on their pathway to success by:

- **Aim 1: Government will hear, by identifying and supporting a pathway for Indigenous businesses and innovators to achieve success.** Harness relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to identify relevant opportunities, risks and stimuli for innovation and business.

Government will support the change agents by:

- respecting their culture and their traditions
- supporting them and their community, to activate the business and innovation mindset
- building expertise through education, business acumen, digital know-how, and mentoring
- promoting their success
- identifying and empowering Indigenous voices.

- **Aim 2: Government will share, by broadening access to existing opportunities.** Strengthen respect to improve Indigenous participation in existing and emerging opportunities offered by government, Queensland industries and emerging business networks.

Government will walk beside the change agents along their pathway by:

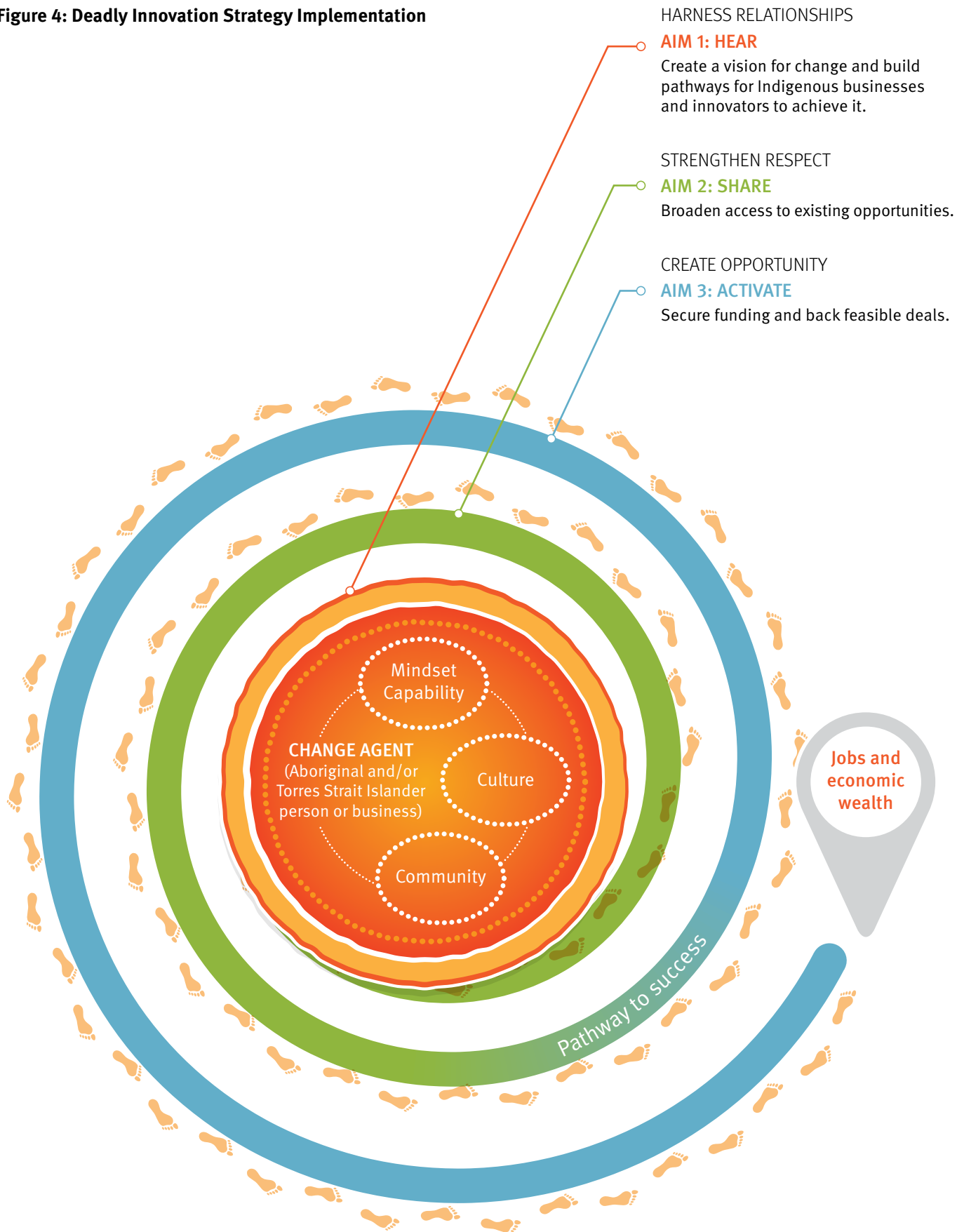
- supporting structures that strengthen their cultural voice in business
- linking the innovation and business ecosystems
- increasing participation in government business as usual
- facilitating access to the expertise of many people to develop emergent opportunities.

- **Aim 3: Government will activate, by securing funding and backing feasible deals.** Back opportunities that create new innovative businesses, led or managed by, Indigenous businesses and innovators embracing technology and innovative practices, where feasible.

Government will champion opportunities for change agents by:

- working together to identify and access buyers, assets, capital, industry and expertise to secure the deals that lead to economic wealth and prosperity.

Figure 4: Deadly Innovation Strategy Implementation



4. Snapshot of Indigenous businesses and innovators

Indigenous businesses and innovators

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 4.6 percent of the Queensland population.² The 2016 census data shows, in Queensland, one percent of business owners identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

It is estimated there are between 12,500 and 16,260 Indigenous businesses nationally.³ The vast majority of these Indigenous businesses are micro-businesses comprising between one and five staff or sole traders and operators.

The geographic spread of Indigenous businesses in Queensland indicates the majority of businesses are located outside of South East Queensland. However, South East Queensland represents the single largest concentration of Queensland Indigenous businesses. Specifically, 450 businesses are located in the Greater Brisbane region, while 1028 are located in other areas of the state.

A view on the industries and markets serviced by Indigenous businesses is only possible in terms of available data via Supply Nation and Black Business Finder (BBF), which were originally established to service the construction sector.

Peak supplier portal sites such as Supply Nation, BBF and First Australians Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FACCI) have much lower representation from Indigenous businesses than the national census would suggest exists:⁴

- Supply Nation—1000 member businesses
- BBF—600 member businesses
- FACCI—3500 member businesses.

Although growing fast, Indigenous innovation ecosystems are still at an early stage in Queensland. Statistics on the broader cohort of Indigenous innovators who are startups, entrepreneurs, or youth could not be accessed. Looking more broadly at the startup ecosystem in Queensland the 2017 Startup Muster report indicates that 20.8 percent of Australia's startups are based in Queensland with 14.4 percent in Victoria and 44 percent in New South Wales. In addition, Startup Muster indicated Queensland has higher numbers of startups in regional areas⁵.

Opportunities

Research indicates the Indigenous business community continued to grow strongly in the 10 years to 2016, reaching 17,900 owner-managers Australia-wide in 2016.⁶

Economic participation in regional and remote locations has the opportunity to thrive by embracing the natural strengths of Indigenous communities such as their culture and connection to land and water.

Innovation is intuitive to community, with a deep history of turning limited resources into the best results. This is opportune, as innovation has proven to be key to improving productivity, driving economic growth and job creation. Embracing innovation is critical for preparing Queensland businesses to be sustainable and competitive into the future, to finding and exploiting new export opportunities, and to preparing the workforce for the jobs of the future.

Innovation activity is rarely successful when done alone. Gaining diversity of thought creates better ideas, and new and better approaches. When you take account of the experience and knowledge of other people, you widen your own understanding and create valuable insights. Harnessing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people's appreciation for traditional knowledge, culture and experience is likely to lead to a rich diversity of innovation opportunity.

We are on the cusp of a new revolution in relation to digital and robotic capability. The impact of advanced technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence, big data and others has the potential to reshape the state's economy. CSIRO estimates 860,000 jobs are at risk over the next 20 years due to disruption brought about by new technologies and business models. However, CSIRO estimates that one million jobs could be created if the state manages this transition effectively.⁷ This figure is echoed by Synergies Economic Consulting, which found that up to 1.1 million new jobs could be created in Queensland through the rapid uptake of robotics and automation.

Queensland has a chance to take advantage of our growing startup sector, to create new jobs and to increase economic opportunities throughout the state. Early stage, new, innovative businesses have high growth potential and the ability to offer new employment opportunities for Queenslanders as they grow and develop their markets.

Challenges

History impacts the present. Indigenous businesses are often first generation,⁸ which are still maturing in terms of business capability and opportunity to participate. For example, their success may be limited by their length of establishment, limited cash flow, turnover, assets and funding collateral, rigorous eligibility requirements, digital literacy, and ability to navigate systems and processes.

Furthermore, the historic discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people means that today's push into entrepreneurship is 'catch up'. When operating on Country, strong and capable business cultures are yet to mature, meaning the creation of products and services for sustainable economic markets remains a challenge.

The world is changing and the pace of change is increasing, which is both an opportunity and a challenge. Global disruptors continue to impact the Queensland economy and way of life. Technology, emerging global markets, demographics, cultural change and other driving forces, including the impacts of the digitisation and smart automation of manufacturing, are significantly reshaping the operational landscape for Queensland businesses, governments and communities.⁹

This revolution could have a significant impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, if data literacy is encouraged and access to technology/digital infrastructure is significantly enhanced. In the recent report, *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide 2018*,¹⁰ the long-term trend has been an improvement in digital inclusion for Indigenous Australians residing in Queensland, but it is still low. Across Australia, Indigenous Australians living in urban and regional areas have low digital inclusion (54.4, or 5.8 points below the national average), scoring below the national average on each of the three Australian Digital Inclusion Index sub-indices (Access, Affordability and Digital ability). The largest gap is in Affordability, where the score for Indigenous Australians (49.7) is 7.9 points below the national average (57.6). Case study findings further suggest that remoteness further diminishes digital inclusion for Indigenous Australians, particularly with regards to Access and Affordability.

Queensland is vast, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have networks for business and innovation that are still maturing. Nationally, in 2018 there was a myriad of government supported structures (e.g. Supply Nation), a number of community-based organisations (e.g. the Chambers), as well as privately-controlled initiatives working in the sector (e.g. Barayamal, Ngyiani Pty Ltd, Murawin –Tiddas in Business). This space is continuously evolving, seeing players moving in and out of play. One of Queensland's strongest Indigenous networks is the South East Queensland Indigenous Chamber of Commerce, and it is only a volunteer organisation.

State Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic policies

The Queensland Government has taken an active policy role in improving opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with the:

- whole-of-government *Moving Ahead Strategy 2016–2022* that aims to increase the economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through training, skilling, work, business development and growth
- *Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy (QIPP)*, a whole-of-government framework to increase government procurement from Indigenous businesses, supporting growth and development of the sector in Queensland
- *Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021* which includes actions and targets that will support a reframed relationship between the Queensland Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- *Queensland Government Building and Construction Training Policy* which includes requirements and targets for the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in projects supported.

Furthermore, the Queensland Government hosts the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group (BIRG). The BIRG brings together a respected group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs and business leaders to provide strategic advice on matters that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs, businesses and communities. The BIRG provides recommendations to assist the Queensland Government in supporting the development of new, emerging and existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and innovators across Queensland.

Programs to support Indigenous businesses and innovators

The Queensland Government has numerous programs to help improve opportunities for innovators, such as the Advance Queensland suite of programs to drive innovation, build on our natural advantages, and help raise the state's profile as an attractive investment destination.¹¹

The uptake of the Advance Queensland programs by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants in 2018 is estimated to be 2.9 percent of the whole initiative and 1.85 percent of the Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games (DITID) administered programs. For the small business-related grants administered by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT), Indigenous small businesses make up 4.1 percent of grant recipients and receive 5.6 percent of grant funding.

Cultural awareness and understanding plays an important role in ensuring opportunities are maximised for Indigenous businesses and innovators. For example, the recent efforts by DITID, under the 2018-2021 Indigenous Participation Plan,¹² have already generated changes to departmental business as usual, for improved opportunities.

Furthermore, a detailed mapping of existing federal, state and local government programs that support Indigenous business and innovators to establish and grow innovative and successful businesses has also been conducted to identify opportunities and gaps in the existing market that the *Deadly Innovation Strategy* could address.

As at November 2018, there were 94 programs identified involving participant interaction. Of these, 37 are offered by the Australian Government, 50 are offered by the Queensland Government and 7 are offered by local councils.

Research considered four themes of support that would help an Indigenous business and innovator succeed:

1. **Commercial pathway**— supporting Indigenous businesses and innovators to take an idea or business to commercial launch or scaling. It identifies the programs that offer support from creating business or research readiness, to idea development, through to launch and scaling for commercial success.

2. **Innovation enablers**— are necessary for innovation to flourish. Program access to the different skills needed for effective innovation to occur. It is commonly acknowledged that a business must have leadership, culture, capability and collaboration for innovation to succeed.
3. **Participant access**— programs allowing Indigenous businesses and innovators to participate. To determine whether the applicant for government programs can participate in light of their capability, consider factors such as: Do they meet the eligibility criteria, are they in a location that facilitates participation, if the program responds to cultural sensitivity in the way it invites participation, does the applicant have the unique skills and digital access necessary to be in the sector?
4. **Key market segments**— program accessible to any of seven key market segments, namely, business enterprise, entrepreneurs, youth, primary school, secondary school, vocational education training, and the university sector.

Overall the detailed mapping report demonstrated support is available through various government programs, which can be accessed and leveraged for impact. There was, however, a clear need to fill some gaps in the program offerings including:

- More interactive support for Indigenous businesses and innovators to:
 - Refine and take their ideas through all stages of the commercial pathway, in particular the development stage.
 - Apply sound business methods, and support for success.
 - Improve digital literacy and digital access.
 - Consider more innovative agricultural technology appropriate to the climatic conditions.
- More support to potential applicants and suppliers by:
 - Modifying government programs to improve access and opportunity for Indigenous businesses and innovators. Many programs require a co-contribution, however, there are few Indigenous businesses with available cash flow or financial history.
 - Mentoring applicants to be potential recipients of competitive funding, and better engage with, sell and supply to Queensland Government agencies.

- Create opportunities for commercial success and future jobs:
 - Create new opportunities for business and innovation.
 - Promote opportunities to Indigenous businesses and innovators directly.
 - Invest in mechanisms that will allow Indigenous businesses and innovators to improve trading with a broader group of purchasers and connect to more business ecosystems.
 - Invest in Indigenous business and innovator networks to support them to capture business mindset and culture, and advise government.
 - Ensure effort leads to a job at the end of the process.
 - Understand the sector:
 - Recognise the sector is much broader than expressed in current database systems such as Supply Nation and Black Business Finder.
 - Land and water are core advantage of Indigenous communities.
 - Engage in personal communications—verbal relationships are culturally important.
 - Embed the uptake by the sector and its success in reporting.
 - Create mechanisms to learn more about the sector, its capability and its performance.
- These findings have been translated into the design of the strategy.



Endnotes

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