



Submission – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts and Crafts Draft Report

Having provided a submission in 2021 and participated in direct consultation with the Productivity Commission, Creative Economy makes the following contribution in response to the draft report released in July 2022.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the learnings and understandings the Productivity Commission has made during the course of developing this report, from a rudimentary understanding to a full exploratory study and in particular engagement directly with the sector and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and enterprises. I would particularly like to thank Commissioner Romlie Mokak for his leadership and guidance of this report that makes a difference in understanding context, meaning and issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Creative Economy offers its support for the following recommendations with additions including:

A mandatory labelling scheme for inauthentic products should be developed.

The Australian Government should develop a mandatory information standard to require the labelling of inauthentic Indigenous-style products to indicate to consumers that they are not created by or under licence from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.

Addition:

- To be effective the scheme will need to be enforced for compliance with penalties for non-compliance.
- A consistent consumer information campaign will be needed to promote the scheme.
- Simple messaging should include: buy from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

The Indigenous Art Code can be strengthened through a joint commitment of government and industry.

Addition:

- Without an auditing function the Code has limited effectiveness and gravitas in the industry and the marketplace. The Code should be appropriately resourced to conduct regular audits of members to ensure confidence in the code. For example, audit mechanisms like the T-QUAL auditing for the National Tourism Accreditation Framework or Queensland Visitor Information Centre audit program.

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In addition, Creative Economy makes the following proposals.

Invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and workforce development for sustainability and growth of the sector.

A key Closing the Gap indicator that has never been achieved is Indigenous employment. In remote locations of the NT, Indigenous employment is as low as 30%. At the same time Aboriginal Art Centres are the economic engine of many remote communities. Employment, growth and sustainability can be achieved through increased employment and workforce development programs for art centres.

First Nations Culture Fund

Our biggest learning from working in Aboriginal communities is that Aboriginal logic and cultural practice is the best proven model for sustainability. In a contemporary world, cultural practice and cultural expressions are intrinsically linked to social and economic wellbeing and prosperity. For First Nations people, Australia has no dedicated program or fund to enable Indigenous cultural practice or to revive cultural practice. If First Nations people are to be the priority, a First Nations culture fund should be a priority. A national First Nations culture fund has greater potential to improve the social and economic wellbeing and prosperity of First Nations people than any of the versions of the Governments Closing the Gap policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission.

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