

Resource Guide

Humanities and Social Sciences— Economics and Business

The information and resources contained in this guide provide a platform for teachers and educators to consider how to effectively embed important ideas around reconciliation, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions, within the specific subject/learning area of [Humanities and Social Sciences- Economics and Business](#). Please note that this guide is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, and that users are encouraged to consult with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and [critically evaluate resources](#), in engaging with the material contained in the guide.

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Please be aware this guide may contain references to names and works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are now deceased. External links may also include names and images of those who are now deceased.

Background and Introduction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economics and Business

“The start of [the] journey is to allow the knowledge that Aboriginal people did build houses, cultivate and irrigate crops, did sew clothes and were not hapless wanderers across the soil, mere hunter-gatherers. [Aboriginal people] were intervening in the productivity of the country and what they learnt during that process over many thousands of years will be useful to us today. To deny Aboriginal agricultural and spiritual achievement is the single greatest impediment to inter-cultural understanding and, perhaps, Australian moral and economic prosperity” – Bruce Pascoe, Aboriginal teacher and writer.

It is important to recognise that there can be significant distinctions between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous perspectives pertaining to economics and business-related concepts or conventions. For example, ‘Western’ concepts of “property” or “ownership”—particularly when it comes to land—do not adequately or accurately describe the intricate relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and place (Country). That is, rather than being described as an economic or contractual relationship, this relationship is often described as deeply personal, cultural and spiritual from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspective. Similarly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander “trade” has not been limited to the exchange of economically quantifiable goods and services, but has also included the exchange of socially, culturally and spiritually valuable songs, dances, art, stories, rituals and ceremonies, with the corresponding trade route ‘mapped out’ or guided by sacred pathways or Songlines.¹ Furthermore, the ‘extra-economic’ nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business is also reflected in the fact that even the term “business” can refer very widely to not just financial or transactional “business,” but also to culturally informed “[Sorry Business](#)” and “[Men’s or Women’s Business](#).”

It is often assumed that traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economics and business has exclusively operated as a form of subsistence affluence through hunter-gatherer means of production and consumption, and according to cultural institutions of sharing among kin following gender and age-based divisions of labour. However, this assumption, although in part recognising the significance of cultural and kinship values over monetary value, can problematically underestimate the pre-colonial existence of extensive economies and enumeration/remuneration systems across Australia. For example, while exchange of objects may not have been motivated by a desire for wealth accumulation but instead acted as a social system to build connection between people and groups, even before 1788 there were complex relationships for long distance trade between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, especially for coastal shells and stone hatchets. When people from different groups met socially to share resources, for ceremonies, or to settle disputes, they brought items to exchange. Items included stones for axes, kangaroo skins, timber for spears, ochre or clay for paint and marine shells for decoration, and archaeological evidence suggests some of these travelled hundreds of miles from their source. In Queensland, a major trade item was a narcotic known as pituri, which was a hunger and pain suppressant. Furthermore, communities in northern parts of

¹ References: Queensland Museum (2012) *Indigenous Science: “Australia had Ancient Trade Routes too,”* <<https://blog.qm.qld.gov.au/2012/05/16/indigenous-science-australia-had-ancient-trade-routes-too-2/>>; Norris, P./CSIRO (2014) *Songlines and Navigation in Wardaman and other Aboriginal Cultures*, <<http://www.atnf.csiro.au/people/Ray.Norris/papers/n315.pdf>>

Australia even traded with people from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. For example, Macassans collected beche-de-mer (trepang) and trochus through trade with mainland Aboriginal people. Torres Strait Islanders had trading relationships with the people of both mainland Australia and Papua New Guinea, the latter being crucial as a source of heavy timber for sailing canoes.

Since colonisation, a number of unjust policies and practices have (in)directly excluded or marginalised many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from opportunities to fully, equally or equitably participate in the Australian economy. For example, the immediate and intergenerational impacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander labour exploitation and [stolen wages](#) in the postcolonial period are yet to have been adequately addressed, amended and/or compensated for to this day. The challenges brought by such colonial injustices are important to keep in mind in acknowledging the positive contributions of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, businesspeople and business events outlined in the remainder of this guide.

Timeline of Key Dates in the Contemporary History of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economics and Business

This timeline chronologically lists some of the key dates in the more recent history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economics and Business and/or with regard to the relationship between economics, business and reconciliation more generally.

- **60,000+ years ago:**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia have maintained longstanding conventions and conceptualisations pertaining to economics and business for tens of thousands of years.

- **Early colonial period:**

- Colebee and Nurraginy represent, in 1819, the first Aboriginal people to have been granted, by the colonial government, a plot of land (see the [Colebee and Nurraginy Land Grant](#)).
- Emergence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commercial businesses. For example, in the 1830s, Mahroot, an Aboriginal man from the Botany Bay area, acquired 10 acres of land at Banksmeadow and started a commercial fishing business using his own boat.

- **1966:**

- A new one dollar banknote was released, featuring a design by the Aboriginal artist [David Malangi](#). Note that this artwork, depicting the mortuary feast of the ancestral hunter Guumirringu, was [used without David Malangi's permission](#), however.

- **1977:**

- The Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations (now [ORIC](#)) was established to support and regulate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations, and to register Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups wanting to become corporations.

- **1990:**

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation (now [Indigenous Business Australia](#)) was established to assist and enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-management and economic self-sufficiency through a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence in mainstream economic activity.

- **1991:**

- Entrepreneur [Paul Newman](#) became the first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Business graduate from the University of Western Sydney.

- **1992:**

- The [Mabo Decision](#) was made by Australia's High Court on June 3, recognising the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of their lands. This landmark decision challenged the longstanding colonial declaration of *terra nullius*, which failed to recognise the complex and highly significant relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the land as distinct from Western economic conceptualisations of "occupation," "ownership" or "property."

- **1995:**
 - Image of Aboriginal inventor and author, [David Unaipon](#), first printed on the Australian \$50 note.
- **2003:**
 - [Ninti One](#) was established as a not-for-profit organisation, focused on servicing the business needs of *remote* Aboriginal Australia.
- **2005:**
 - Reconciliation Australia, in partnership with BHP Billiton, launched its inaugural [Indigenous Governance Awards \(IGAs\)](#) to recognise excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance in incorporated and non-incorporated organisations alike.
- **2006:**
 - The Parliament of Australia released a key inquiry report, [Unfinished business: Indigenous stolen wages](#)
 - The [Corporations \(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander\) Act](#) was introduced.
 - Reconciliation Australia launched its workplace [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) program for Australian organisations across industries.
- **2009:**
 - The Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council (AIMSC) was established, and was officially launched at the Mural Hall in Australian Parliament House on September 15.
- **2013:**
 - After successfully completing a 3-year pilot phase, AIMSC was rebranded to become [Supply Nation](#), Australia's leader in supplier diversity, working to connect Australia's leading brands and government with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses across the country.
- **2015:**
 - The First Australians Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FACCI) was established as the peak body to provide a national and global voice for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business sector.
- **2016:**
 - Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull delivered a [speech](#) in Parliament House specifically dedicated to young Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs.
 - [Sonya Pearce](#) became the first Aboriginal woman to receive a PhD in entrepreneurship.
 - The Queensland Government announced a [Stolen Wages Reparations Scheme](#) for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who suffered direct disadvantage due to racially discriminatory government control over wages and savings throughout the late 19th Century and the greater part of the 20th Century.
 - The inaugural Indigenous Business Month was launched, driven by the alumni of Melbourne Business School's [MURRA Indigenous Business Masterclass](#).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economics and Business Network/Reference Groups and Representative Bodies

Listed below are a number of relevant representative bodies and network/reference groups specifically focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economics and business.

- [Aboriginal Business Indigenous Chamber of South Australia \(ABICSA\)](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group](#)
- [Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [First Australians Chamber of Commerce and Industry \(FACCI\)](#)
- [Indigenous Accountants Australia](#)
- [Indigenous Business Australia](#)
- [Kinaway—Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [New South Wales Indigenous Chamber of Commerce \(NSWICC\)](#)
- [Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network \(NTIBN\)](#)
- [Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations \(ORIC\)](#)
- [South East Queensland Indigenous Chamber of Commerce \(SEQICC\)](#)
- [Torres Strait Regional Authority \(TSRA\)](#)
- [Townsville Region Indigenous Business Network \(TRIBN\)](#)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Businesses

There is a multitude of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses across Australia, meaningfully catering to distinct and diverse communities as well as adding a healthy level of supplier diversity within the mainstream economy. Indeed, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses—as well as positive joint ventures between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous businesses—is too significant to list in this specific guide. There are, however, a number of suitable search avenues to research the range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business institutions and activities throughout the nation.

[Supply Nation](#) is a leading directory of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. You may wish to engage with Supply Nation's [Indigenous Business Direct search tool](#) to identify and learn more about formally certified and registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business initiatives in your local area and/or across Australia.

[Black Pages](#) and ORIC's [Skill meets Need](#) resources are examples of other national-level search portals that can be used to locate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses across Australia and/or to match these businesses with individuals and groups seeking the particular goods, services, and skills that these businesses can provide.

Some Australian states and territories also have their own specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business directories, such as:

- [Aboriginal Business Connect South Australia](#)
- [Aboriginal Business Directory WA](#)
- [Black Business Finder: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Directory](#)
- NSWICC [NSW Aboriginal Business Portal](#)
- Victorian Government Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources [Victorian Aboriginal Business Directory](#)

Furthermore, you may also find it useful to do an industry-specific search for particular goods and services. For example, you may wish to search for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts products or professional information services via the [ANKAAA Art Centre Directory](#) or the [Aboriginal Art Directory](#), or it may be effective to map out the boundaries of distinct local or regional Aboriginal Land Council business via resources such as the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council's geographically represented [Land Council listings](#).

For inspiration around ways to positively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, the Supply Nation website lists a number of [stories of success](#) about how government and corporate procurement teams have effectively connected with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. You may also wish to read about [past Indigenous Governance Awards winners and finalists](#), all of which represent the exceptional work being done by diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations across Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economists and Entrepreneurs

There is a vast number of successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economists and entrepreneurs doing exceptional work within and across communities throughout Australia. The list below features just a small sample of web articles acknowledging the valuable contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and groups to the contemporary economics and business arena.

- ABC News (2016) [Indigenous entrepreneurs tackle community joblessness](#)
- ABC News (2016) [NAIDOC 2016: Australia's first Indigenous Start-up Weekend aims to empower young business minds](#)
- ABC News (2016) [The new wave of Indigenous entrepreneurs](#)
- BBC News (2014) [Aboriginal entrepreneurs hope to change perceptions](#)
- Dynamic Business (2013) [Spotlight on Indigenous Business: DB Meets Paul Newman](#)
- Federation University Australia News (2016) [Canoe project sheds light on hidden Aboriginal history](#)
- NT News (2014) [Successful indigenous entrepreneurs on the rise: report](#)
- Refraction Media (2016) [Indigenous top tech entrepreneurs revealed in Australia's national code careers guide](#)
- RMIT University News (2015) [Aboriginal entrepreneurs smash the gap](#)
- SBS/NITV News (2016) [Businesswomen's Hall of Fame Appointee leading the way for women entrepreneurs](#)
- SBS/NITV News (2016) [Aboriginal entrepreneurs pitch for a win at Australia's first Indigenous startup weekend](#)
- SBS/NITV (2016) [How Indigenous business can 'change the game'](#)
- SBS/NITV (2016) [Secrets to success: Building a business](#)
- SBS/NITV (2017) [National Indigenous Business Month – Redfern business owner takes charge](#)

- StartupSmart (2016) [Aboriginal entrepreneurs launch Australia's first innovation hub for minorities so no one gets left behind in the digital economy](#)
- StartupSmart (2016) [Meet the Australian entrepreneur using technology to preserve Indigenous culture who inspired Malcolm Turnbull](#)
- Sydney Morning Herald (2015) [Loaded: the Indigenous businesses competing in the open market](#)

Of course, a range of other stories can continue to be explored by using search terms such as '[Aboriginal Business](#),' '[Indigenous Business](#),' '[Aboriginal entrepreneur](#),' and '[Indigenous entrepreneur](#)' within web-based search filters of mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media platforms.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economics and Business Events/Celebrations

Listed below are examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economics and Business-related events and celebrations, past and present.

- Annual [Indigenous Business Month](#)
- Business Council of Australia [Indigenous Network](#) meetings
- [Dardi Victorian Aboriginal Business Excellence Awards](#)
- Deakin Business School annual [Indigenous Accounting and Business Conference](#)
- Government of Western Australia [Regional Small Business Awards](#) (Aboriginal Business Award category)
- [Indigenous Business, Enterprise and Corporations Conference](#)
- [Indigenous Economic Development Forum](#)
- [Queensland Reconciliation Awards](#) (Business category)
- Reconciliation Australia [Indigenous Governance Awards](#)
- Supply Nation [Supplier Diversity Awards](#)
- Supply Nation [Connect](#) tradeshow

Other Online Guides/Reference Materials

- Australian Government (2011) *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011-2018*, https://www.ilo.org/dyn/youthpol/en/equest.fileutils.dochandle?p_uploaded_file_id=500
- Australian Government (2015) *Commonwealth Indigenous Procurement Policy*, https://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous_procurement_policy.pdf
- Australian Government Department of Social Services (2012) *Business Toolkit for Indigenous Women*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/publications-articles/economic-independence/business-toolkit-for-indigenous-women-publication?HTML>
- Australian Government Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (2017) *Resources*, <http://www.oric.gov.au/resources>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare/Morley, S. (2014) *Success Factors for Indigenous entrepreneurs and community-based enterprises: Resource sheet no. 30 produced for Closing the Gap Clearinghouse*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/2804f99f-1995-473a-939e-0fb02a1152f3/16693.pdf.aspx?inline=true>
- Australian Securities and Investments Commission (2017) *Knowing, Growing, Showing: Financial Literacy for Indigenous Students*, <https://www.moneysmart.gov.au/teaching/teaching-resources/knowning-growing-showing>
- Business Council of Australia (2016) *2016 Indigenous Business Engagement Survey*, https://www.bca.com.au/2016_indigenous_engagement_survey
- Burton, R. & Tomkinson, E. (2015) *The Sleeping Giant: A Social Return on Investment Report on Supply Nation Certified Suppliers*, <https://supplynation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Sleeping-Giant-Report.pdf>
- Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (2017) *Publications*, <http://caepi.anu.edu.au/publications.php>
- Foley, D. (2014) *What is an Indigenous Business? The Many Definitions are Confusing*, <https://damienfoley.wordpress.com/2014/07/04/what-is-an-indigenous-business-the-many-definitions-are-confusing/>
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2007) *Indigenous Australians at Work: Successful Initiatives in Indigenous Employment*, http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=/atsia/indigenousemployment/report.htm

- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2008) *Open for Business: Developing Indigenous enterprises in Australia*, http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=/atsia/indigenousexterprises/report.htm
- Janke, T. and Company (2013) *Law Way: Indigenous Business and the Law*, <https://www.iba.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/Law-way-booklet.pdf>
- Ninti One (2017) *Publications*, <https://www.nintione.com.au/publications/>
- NSW AECG (2016) *On the Money: Aboriginal Representation on Our Currency*, <https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/On-the-Money.pdf>
- NSW AECG (2016) *On the Money: Teaching and Learning Activities*, <https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/On-the-Money-Teaching-and-Learning-Activities.pdf>
- Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (2013) *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Economic Participation Framework*, <https://www.cabinet.qld.gov.au/documents/2013/dec/econparticipationwork/Attachments/Framework.PDF>
- Queensland Government Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (n.d.) *Contacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Enterprises*, <https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/resources/datsima/programs/enterprise-contacts.pdf>
- SBS/NITV (2016) *How the system of money works against traditional Aboriginal culture*, <http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/09/14/how-system-money-works-against-traditional-aboriginal-culture>
- Tasmanian Government (2018) *The Orb: Living Cultures*, <https://www.theorb.tas.gov.au/living-cultures>

Reflective Questions for Economics and Business Staff and Students

- How have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures influenced Australian economics and businesses, and what active role do these histories and cultures play today?
- What is the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economics and business, and other subject/learning areas? Why is this relationship important to appreciate?
- Why is it important to think about the ‘value’ of cultural items and information—and of intra-or inter-cultural exchange relationships—beyond the economic? That is, what are some of cultural, social, emotional and/or spiritual values that may be embedded in, or imbued through, these items, information and exchanges?
- Choose two businesses or businesses models—one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander example and one non-Indigenous example (remembering of course that there is no single Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander model, nor a single non-Indigenous model). How are they similar and how are they different? How might these businesses or business models effectively work together? What are some examples of joint ventures that help to stimulate positive business/economic activity, and help to support reconciliation?
- Where possible, organise an excursion to a public Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business, or economics and business-related event. What information and ideas did you take away from visiting this business, or business event? How was it similar or different to non-Indigenous businesses, or business events, that you have engaged with?
- Choose to research an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander economist or entrepreneur. What is the importance of his or her contributions to economics and business on either a local or (inter)national scale?
- How might questions of governance, ownership, authority, authenticity and intellectual property be important when it comes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economics and business?
- What are some effective strategies for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement, recruitment, and retention within non-Indigenous businesses?
- How might your school or early learning service contribute to the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economics and business, and economists and entrepreneurs?
- How can embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures into the study and practice of Economics and Business help to foster reconciliation?