

9 January 2014

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Mr Andrew Forrest
Chair
Review of Indigenous Training and Employment
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
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Dear Mr Forrest,

Review of Indigenous Training and Employment

The Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) appreciates the opportunity to meet with you at the recent roundtable, to contribute to your recommendations to the Prime Minister and hopefully to implement effective initiatives in due course.

Seven opportunities / ideas for consideration (as requested, this has been kept brief):

(1) Promoting lessons from the resource industry: 3.1% of the resource workforce is Indigenous, compared to just 1.4% of the wider workforce. This is not something to rest on, but successful efforts in the resources sector could provide options and ideas for other industries (and to be frank for the south of Australia to learn from developments in the north). We heard in Melbourne of the work of John Holland for example, which could be very instructive for other employers and get them thinking.

An opportunity exists to share the positive experiences and examples from the resource industry with the wider business community. A researcher working with business through an organisation like AMMA could produce case studies on successful programs and initiatives, distilling key themes and approaches which could be widely promoted. AMMA could host and support someone funded to do this.

In advance of your recommendations, AMMA is moving to identify in-company experts working on Indigenous employment initiatives to help facilitate this information sharing. This could initiate something more substantial arising from your recommendations.

(2) International lessons: Indigenous employment challenges are not unique to Australia, with clear parallels in Canada and the US in particular. An opportunity exists to research and promote successful international practices and initiatives, to further Indigenous employment prospects in our nation. International examples of business driven initiatives could be particularly interesting and instructive.



(3) Job readiness/skills: AMMA already delivers successful resource industry programs for Indigenous employment. We have targeted the diverse mining supply sector to maximise opportunities for skills development and ongoing employment.

Our government-partnered initiatives and T&D capabilities are connecting pools of job seekers to potential employers; identifying skills gaps to ensure job seekers are job ready; and undertaking pre-employment processes. These programs have delivered fast, economical and practical employment outcomes. A recent program saw 10 Indigenous job seekers successfully trained and take up jobs in mine site security in Western Australia.

With each program to date being small in scale, an opportunity exists to scale up this work to either progress multiple groups of 10 to 15 Indigenous job seekers, or to support larger numbers of job matches, perhaps in the context of particular resource projects.

A further opportunity could specifically target female Indigenous job seekers, an area already supported by AMMA's successful Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA) program. The benefits of injecting incomes into communities through women are clear, however attention is also turning to women as a new source of skilled employees. AMMA's significant experience in this area could be well utilised for this role.

The strength of our delivery of such services is our commercial orientation under a not-for-profit operations model, and the trust and rapport we have with industry.

AMMA is also a member of ACCI, and further commends to you ACCI's input on skills, training and the *Employing Outside the Box* initiative (ACCI's letter of 2 January 2014).

(4) Scope to advertise for Indigenous applicants: Some employers wish to explicitly advertise for Indigenous people to fill particular roles. However, ambiguity as to whether this requires an exemption under anti-discrimination laws is holding up these job opportunities. Your review could recommend to the Attorneys General that they urgently amend legislation to explicitly allow/legally indemnify such targeted job advertising.

(5) Capacity to do business with Indigenous communities: Many resource companies successfully award commercial contracts to Indigenous-owned companies, however unmet opportunities exist. Research could target how to better equip Indigenous businesses to tender for resource industry work. This could lead to informed practical support being provided as part of a wider program to improve the commercial operation of Indigenous enterprises.

There would be significant scope for cooperation and support from the wider business community, and to promote examples of operators in our sector awarding contracts to Indigenous-owned companies.

(6) Financial services and managing incomes: Discussion with ANZ Bank was instructive on how financial institutions can support Indigenous employees managing their incomes. Resource employers, Indigenous groups and financial institutions could further collaborate on financial products and remuneration practices that best sustain and support Indigenous employment. Our industry is also well placed to incubate/road-test any innovative personal financial services, partnerships or initiatives.

(7) FIFO/remittances: FIFO is seeing a growing number of Australian workers, communities and families secure income from remittances. Options could be examined to encourage more Indigenous people to take their skills and experience to FIFO/DIDO working areas.

Consideration could be given to exploring (a) what is necessary to equip more indigenous people to take up FIFO/DIDO work, and (b) what would encourage FIFO employers to offer more opportunities to Indigenous job seekers.

The "Pathways to the Pilbara" program, which supports flying Indigenous employees into the Pilbara may be a model to build on. (www.pathwaystopilbara.com.au/)

A covenant for action

The clear message from your consultations was the need to move beyond talk to action. The concept of a covenant and business publicly committing to actions, not words, remains highly relevant. This should form a key foundation for what you recommend. Linked to this are the Indigenous employment targets that contract principals require of major construction and supply contractors in our industry (something that could be better promoted and understood in the wider business community).

An ongoing challenge will be keeping these commitments fresh and dynamic, and leadership in this area will need to continue to come from CEO and board level in Australia's leading companies, and from more of these companies.

AMMA National Conference

We have previously invited you (letter of 13 November) to address the 2014 AMMA conference in Perth (29 and 30 May) on Indigenous employment opportunities.

This opportunity seems even more relevant given your review and recommendations to the Prime Minister.

Once again, we will be very pleased to provide a platform for you to speak directly to resource industry professionals and executives on the next steps for indigenous employment following your review and recommendations. This could be a platform for you to launch initiatives, deliver key messages, or to challenge the industry to get behind your recommendations.

Further cooperation

We encourage you and/or the department to contact us if we can further develop any of the preceding concepts or to harness whatever practical assistance and convening power AMMA can offer with any of the initiatives you recommend.

Yours sincerely



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