

## United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – 18th Session

### Item 4: Implementation of the Six Mandated Areas

#### Australian Statement – DRAFT not checked against delivery

Thank you Madam Chair.

Australia remains committed to the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and takes this time to highlight ways we are enabling economic development opportunities.

Australia recognises the importance of empowering indigenous people with economic opportunities both in business and employment.

Australia is implementing economic policies to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same opportunities for business and employment as other Australians. Funding support and procurement strategies, including targets for Indigenous businesses are growing the sector, creating jobs and driving demand for Indigenous goods and services.

For example, Indigenous businesses have been growing and creating more jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by leveraging the economic opportunity provided through government procurement of goods and services. Australia now requires at least three percent of government contracts be awarded to Indigenous providers, resulting in 1,473 Indigenous businesses winning 12,000 contracts worth more than \$1.83 billion since July 2015.

Indigenous businesses are increasingly participating in national projects, such as the contract management of a Royal Australian Navy Base refurbishment, worth up to \$6 million. Projects of this scale delivered by Indigenous Australians provide wider benefits to the community, with Indigenous Australians involved in multiple levels of the project, from administration and construction, to design and engineering – showcasing a diversity of backgrounds and skills. The project also encompasses cultural awareness training which raises awareness of Indigenous history and heritage in the area.

Australia is working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people caring for their country to gain economic benefit from their work. For example, Indigenous Rangers are bringing together traditional conservation knowledge and compliance training to protect Australia's World Heritage Site, the Great Barrier Reef. Rangers are being trained through a nationally accredited system and can be appointed as Marine Park Inspectors, further developing their careers.

By harnessing traditional knowledge and the entrepreneurial skills of Indigenous Australians, the Indigenous business sector and employment opportunities are growing the economic empowerment of Indigenous Australians.

Thank you.