

## Stage 1 bid summary

Submitted to the Australian Government CRC Grant Program on 24 August 2021

Australia has a great opportunity to develop its Indigenous industries. There are large, accessible national and international markets to enter.

EPIC CRC is co-led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from industry and research in 4 key sectors:

- First foods, fisheries and botanicals
- Services including tourism, creative arts, business services, IT and trades
- Green industries including carbon farming, renewable energy and sustainable land and water management
- Sector management, benefit sharing, knowledge protection and business growth.

The outcome will be globally connected industries that grow the Australian economy by \$1b in the first 15 yrs, address skills shortages, and close the Indigenous economic participation gap.

### Industry problem to be solved

Our nation holds extraordinary resources in its Indigenous people, knowledge, lands and waters. Indigenous people, however, are underrepresented in economic metrics. Reasons include:

- Low levels of employment/career advancement
- Living in areas with few opportunities
- Lack of access to capital/business support
- Systemic issues in protecting and managing Indigenous Knowledge, benefit sharing, land & water use
- Lack of engagement with the research community.

### Scope of the CRC

EPIC CRC aims to boost the competitiveness and productivity of Indigenous businesses by increasing their economic participation rate. The broader economy will benefit from applying the knowledge and intellectual property (IP) Indigenous people hold.

EPIC will focus on Indigenous sectors able to realise economic opportunities on traditional land, water and air. It will enable industries to grow the existing and new economy on lands and water recently returned to Indigenous communities, to create economic activity and celebrate culture.



# Our Research Programs

“We must walk together to make a difference...and a better world for everyone” (Merridoo Walbid, law man at Bidiyadanga community, Yulparija tribe). Merridoo’s powerful words are the ethos that guides EPIC CRC. They are underpinned by Black Card’s cultural capability framework which informs the EPIC approach whereby difference is appreciated, all identities are valued, and decision making is consensual and outcome focused leading to more rigorous long-term solutions. The CRC adopts non-hierarchical structures between men and women, akin to Indigenous enterprises. Our research programs will be co-led, with a preference for Indigenous leadership and a balance of male and female leaders, and will incorporate succession plans to build Indigenous research and industry leadership.

## Program 1: First Foods, Fisheries and Botanicals

The First Foods, Fisheries and Botanicals research program will create foundations for the sector to thrive and deliver place-based projects to address technical challenges for growing, harvesting and catching first resources. It will develop processes for businesses to gain approvals or certification, for example, FSANZ



registration, TGA approval, evidence of production or use history to establish geographical indicators.

Ecologically synergistic horticultural practices to increase production volume and meet supplier demand, and technologies for value adding, processing and aquaculture will be developed via trials at the sites of partners such as Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm (WA), Pundi Produce (SA) and Rainforest Bounty (Qld). These will be living labs for students, researchers and industry.

Supply chains for the top 25 products will be mapped with partners, such as ANFAB and FRDC, to enable industry to realise market potential and optimise supply.

Key activities will focus on:

- Provenance and certification
- Wild harvest and catch
- Production methods and agronomy
- Market and value-add technologies

## Program 3: Green Industries

The Green Industries research program will enable the development and utilisation of natural and renewable energy resources to maximise the economic and social benefits for Indigenous communities. It will co-develop and co-design methodologies to assess opportunities and benefits of ecosystem services economies including carbon farming, abatement, sequestration and biodiversity, and check their feasibility with the market.

Case studies will be conducted in regions where Indigenous peoples have rights and access to land and other resources to commence or expand green industries.

Key activities will focus on:

- Frameworks and methodologies to support innovative Indigenous economies
- Networks with national and international market agents and organisations
- Models for community-led renewable power generation, distribution and green hydrogen
- Construction and asset management of renewable energy remote area power systems (RAPS)
- Policies to facilitate the implementation of proposed green economies

## Program 2: Service Industries

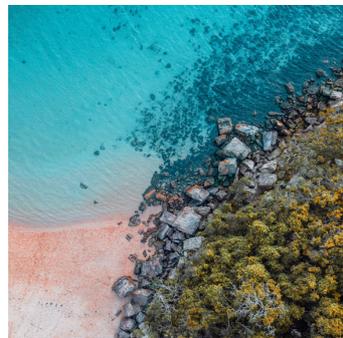
The Service Industries research program will develop a consultation framework to facilitate the co-design of solutions to challenges in the Service Industries, whilst avoiding consultation fatigue. Topics for exploration include: visibility of Indigenous businesses, lack of quality data, markets in need of re-shaping, and requirements for tailored training and partnerships that elevate and empower Indigenous leadership in the economy.

Service industries are one of the lowest paid sectors in Australia. Our program will seek to break down income barriers by increasing recognition and value of cultural knowledge by examining successful projects, for example, The Tasmania Project and Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm.

Key activities will focus on:

- Heritage and Traditional Knowledges
- Creative and cultural industries
- Tourism industries
- Aboriginal enterprise and empowerment

## Program 4: Sector Transformation



The Sector Transformation research program will draw on case studies from Programs 1-3 to identify barriers and to use as examples of best practice to extract general solutions. The approach will be:

1. Review current and historical practice and identify challenges, knowledge gaps and exemplars of best practice.
2. Research in natural resource management, IP and economic development, including policy and governance to address knowledge gaps.
3. Generate 'solution packs' that embed existing and new knowledge into decision support tools which use evidence from previous best practice and new research and align with the needs of case studies.
4. Cross-link Programs 1-3 by developing an education and training framework and materials drawing on experts in education pedagogy, Traditional Knowledges systems and best practice in place-based and skills-based education.

Key activities will focus on:

- Policies and systems for land and water management
- Decision making tools to support communities to make best use of assets and address barriers to growing businesses
- Indigenous IP and Knowledges
- Market forecasting, analysis for trends and opportunities, consumer preferences and access to markets
- Cross-program education, training and knowledge sharing

## Education and Training Program

The Education and Training Program includes a succession plan to build the number and skill levels of Indigenous people at scale through:

- Certified vocational training delivered on Country in evidence-based ways
- Rising Stars program to mentor and develop Indigenous leaders
- Apprenticeships; secondments with CRC partners
- Industry PhD Program for 28 candidates, many in the last two thirds of the CRC's term to allow for succession.

## Research methodology

Teams will work within the programs, with Indigenous leadership, participation and knowledge embedded in all projects.

New evidence will be built and translated in Indigenous-led case studies. Projects most beneficial to Indigenous communities or that develop novel business models will be selected.

Collaboration across the country, organisations and other CRCs will enable EPIC to remove duplication and realise benefits nationally.

## Key activities of the CRC

Partners will complete mandatory training in Indigenous research principles. A Business Cluster for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will be set up as a separate company with its own board.

Research activities will include: trials on crops, farms and places; lab research in breeding, horticulture, plants, soils, fisheries, aquaculture, food technology; Indigenous community consultation, workshops; literature/policy reviews; recommendations for legislative change.

## Growth sectors

EPIC will build relationships with Australia's priority industries via growth sectors: Food & Agribusiness, Advanced Manufacturing, Oil Gas & Energy Resources. EPIC is aligned to National Manufacturing Priorities: Food & Beverage, Recycling & Clean Energy.

The \$1.3b Modern Manufacturing Initiative requires applicants to highlight connections with Indigenous communities for their project and include a mandatory Participation Plan. EPIC can connect and assist applicants with this.

## Specific objectives to guide the research

- a. Establish access and benefit sharing agreements that protect and value Indigenous Knowledge
- b. Fast-track Indigenous opportunity by: building capacity, leadership and participation; developing and trialling Indigenous compliance, regulation and benefit sharing; Indigenous-led/owned businesses and researchers leading the projects; aiming for >50% Indigenous students and entrepreneurs in the CRC, and; building a partnership model between Indigenous and other stakeholders
- c. Significantly increase investment in the sector to empower businesses to translate research outputs
- d. Create demand for and supply of developed products and services
- e. Build the capability of non-Indigenous business leaders to better understand the Aboriginal Terms of Reference so that together we can drive outcomes.

## What success looks like

A powerful Indigenous business sector valued globally by markets. Emerging Indigenous-led industries are developed and their viability demonstrated so that they attract investment.

Expected impacts include, ~\$1b in risk adjusted economic benefits for Australia in the first 15 years, 1,920 new jobs in the 15th year after CRC starts, 200+ Indigenous SMEs positively impacted, improved resource management, structural connections with the R&D community, and co-benefits (many with economic value e.g. reduced government spending & increased tax base): protecting Indigenous culture; relationships between Indigenous and other people; improved health and education.

Outputs include, business models & systems, models & demonstrations for Indigenous products, services, technologies, carbon farming methods under Indigenous ownership/management, land/water management practices based on Indigenous Knowledge, decision support tools featuring market trends/opportunities, best practices incorporating Indigenous Knowledges for Australian conditions and frameworks for Indigenous IP protection and use.

Possible technologies & processes include, primary production and food processing solutions, nutrition analyses and food registrations, and digital innovations for Indigenous tourism and business services

Potential products and services include, food compounds to manufacture health foods and bush medicines, restorative and regenerative tourism products, and sustainable housing for remote communities.

## Access and Benefit Sharing

ABS is an integral part of EPIC CRC. The following text comes from multiple parts of the Stage 1 proposal, as it was sprinkled throughout the proposal to demonstrate its centrality to all things EPIC.

There are systemic issues preventing the full participation of Indigenous people in the economy. Issues include protecting and managing Indigenous Knowledge, establishing respected access and benefit sharing principles, and issues around land and water access, use and ownership.

EPIC will include work on understanding the kind of development that Indigenous people want, and how to protect Indigenous IP while generating economic benefits and fostering co-design and co-development, led by Indigenous peoples.

The CRC will bring together Indigenous people to work collaboratively on research into one well-funded R&D vehicle. Where relevant, we can apply learnings from one jurisdiction to other locations. For access and benefit sharing and traditional knowledge protection, EPIC can map out the principles and values, use them in pilot studies and ultimately produce industry guidelines or procedures. The specific objective here is to “Establish access and benefit sharing agreements that protect and value Indigenous Knowledge”.

Cultural advisors initiated in Indigenous cultural law will be embedded in the methodology to inform us on laws around traditional medicines and plant knowledge. The advisors will work with EPIC partners to develop song lines and dreaming stories. This is an important spiritual role for Indigenous men and women and will have the spill-over effect of strengthening and building spiritual and mental health in Indigenous communities. Ethnobotanists will also be part of the CRC, to take part in research projects and to direct the benefit sharing and treatment of traditional knowledge.

## Level of support

**Total Commonwealth Funding Sought (\$AUD and GST exclusive)**

\$40 million

**Total project resourcing**

\$138.5 million

**CRC funding term (up to 10 years)**

10 years

The above figures include total partner contributions of \$89.5 million, comprising \$28 million cash and the rest in-kind, plus \$9 million in pledges from Third Parties.

## Partners

**End users: 26 partners**

Roles: Provide advice on project ideas and implementation, participate in projects, and translate outcomes.

**Enablers: 14 partners**

Roles: Advise on project ideas, participate in projects, and assist others to adopt outcomes.

**Government: 3 partners**

Roles: Advise on policies and ways to align EPIC's activities to them.

**Researchers: 11 partners**

Roles: Co-lead the programs, implement research and publish findings (as agreed in project agreements).

**Education & training agencies: 5 partners**

Roles: Develop and implement courses.





## Governance

EPIC will be an incorporated not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. Its 7-member skills-based Board will comprise: Independent Chair, Alison Page; CEO of Reconciliation Australia, Karen Mundine; elected director from the EPIC Business Cluster, and; 4 x independent directors. At least 4 of the 7 directors will be Indigenous.

Directors will have 3-year terms (except Reconciliation Australia's representative), be responsible for strategy, risk, security and financial governance, and ensure Commonwealth Agreement milestones are met. Two sub-committees of the Board will be established: Finance, Audit & Risk; Remuneration, Nominations, Access & Equity.

The CRC Executive will include the CEO, COO, Business and Commercial Manager, Program Leads and Education and Training Manager.

Two committees will advise the Executive:

1. Research and Commercialisation Committee to review project proposals submitted by members and provide recommendations to the Board. To be chaired by a Board member and include the CEO, program leads and nominated CRC partners.
2. Capacity and Capability Building Committee to identify opportunities, responses and options to advance the capability and capacity of Indigenous people. With the E&T Manager, it will oversee the E&T and Rising Stars programs. It will be chaired by a Board member (most likely an EPIC Business Cluster representative) and include the E&T Manager and nominated CRC Partners.

Project management processes will streamline monitoring and reporting obligations. Innovation mgnt processes will optimise transparency and collaboration. Software (potentially from partners) will facilitate these processes, minimise the administrative burden and maximise security.

CRC projects will apply standard agreements (developed with IP Australia) to vest Traditional Knowledges with Indigenous communities, and standard protocols for working with Indigenous enterprises. There will be requirements to gain appropriate consents to conduct research on Country; identify and agree on project outcomes sought by Indigenous businesses and other partners, and; enable Indigenous people to manage research activities.

Following a 10-year term, EPIC will devolve activities to Reconciliation Australia and other relevant CRC partners.

## Stage 1 confirmed partners

- Aboriginal Carbon Foundation
- Alluvium
- Anthony McAvoy, Barrister
- Atlas of Living Australia (CSIRO)
- Australian Native Food and Botanicals (ANFAB)
- Bioplatforms Australia
- Canberra Indigenous Business Network (CIBN)
- Charles Darwin University
- Consulting and Implementation Services
- Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm
- Desert Knowledge Australia
- First Australians Capital
- First Nations Futures
- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)
- Food Futures Co
- Food Innovation Australia Limited (FIAL)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)
- Gadji Gadji
- Griffith University
- HCare Australia
- Impact Innovation Group
- Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC)
- Integria Healthcare
- IP Australia
- Iscarlot Media
- Jala Jala Treats
- Kaiyu Processing
- Menzies School of Health Research
- Minderoo Foundation
- Myera Group
- Ninti One
- Pilbara Solar
- Pundi Produce
- Queensland University of Technology
- Rainforest Bounty
- Reality Dreaming
- Reconciliation Australia
- Reconciliation Council of Tasmania
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
- South Australian Museum
- SkillsIQ
- Social Outcome Solutions
- Swinburne University of Technology
- Sydney Zoo
- The Black Card
- The Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation
- The University of Adelaide
- The University of Sydney
- The University of Queensland
- The University of Western Australia
- Tiwi Resources
- University of Canberra
- University of Tasmania
- Untapped Holdings
- Warndu
- Willyama Cyber Security Services
- Woodlands and Wetlands Trust
- Woolgoolga Rainforest Products

## Bid contacts

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