

National Indigenous Australians Agency
Employment Branch
ISEP@niaa.gov.au

Attention: Deborah Fulton

Tuesday 21st September 2021

Re: AFL SportsReady's Response to Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program Consultation Process

AFL SportsReady welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) in respect to its *Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program*. AFL SportsReady (AFL SR) would be pleased to provide further assistance if required.

This submission confirms AFL SR's commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with tailored employment and education pathways that aim to provide First Nations peoples with the opportunity to thrive and achieve successful outcomes.

AFL SR is currently a national provider of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and a recipient of Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG); administering programs in the following three streams of TAEG:

- **Employment:** assisting participants with employment opportunities through direct placement in jobs and traineeships, and traineeship participants.
- **Cadetships:** assisting university students throughout Australia to be placed with employers to obtain hands-on work experience aligned to their studies.
- **School-based Traineeships:** supporting senior secondary school students to gain workplace experience and a nationally recognised qualification as part of their school studies.

This submission contains general comments which we believe are particularly applicable to the current discussion paper and is based on more than 20 years of AFL SR's history and experience working with over 3000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as delivering NIAA's TAEG program streams with around 80 employers to support employment and training pathways for First Nations peoples.

General comments

- We work with a number of large corporate partners with established strong working relationships, as well as with a variety of national partners to champion employment and training opportunities for First Nations peoples.

Table of industries

Industry sectors	Current partners
Financial institutions	Commonwealth Bank, ANZ, Bendigo Bank, Westpac
Sporting institutions	AFL, Basketball ACT, St. Kilda FC, Adelaide Football Club, Sydney Swans.
Federal and state government agencies	Department for Energy and Mining SA, Dep. of Environment, Land, Water, & Planning VIC, Dept. of Jobs, Precincts, & Regions VIC, Australian Research Council, Dept. of Energy & Works Qld, Dept. of Natural Resources, Mining and Energy Qld
Local government agencies	City of Sydney, Melton City Council, Whittlesea Council, Brisbane City Council
Energy companies	Rio Tinto, Origin, Viva, Arrow, Santos
Retail businesses	Office Works, Kmart, Westfield
Health sector	Metro North Health & Hospital Services Qld, The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service, Pathology Queensland, Victoria Health
Tertiary institutions	Melbourne University, Monash University, University of Sydney
Arts organisations	Qld Ballet, NIDA, Create NSW, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, National Gallery of Victoria, HotHouse Theatre
First Nations organisations	Barengi Aboriginal Land Council, Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative, Indigenous Land & Sea Corporation, Clothing The Gaps, Price Waterhouse Indigenous Consulting, Rubik3

- The value of having an organisation with long established and credible relationships with large scale corporate, sporting, community and government bodies has made the transition into providing employment for over 3000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people possible.
- We have often been an intermediary organisation to broader engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities. Our capacity to influence that engagement and encourage organisations to invest in young people because of our history and network is an asset for giving an opportunity to young people who may not have got that chance with those businesses.
- As a national employment provider, the ability to leverage the work within the non-Indigenous traineeship space to create opportunities for First Nations peoples by encouraging corporate organisations to expand and enhance their workforce planning strategies to include a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment is a significant benefit.
- As a national company, there is benefit in providing a suite of connected programs that supports First Nations peoples take up of employment and education opportunities. This ability to provide a number of connected programs is a strong platform to engage with employers and provides employers with options for supporting First Nations participants in their workplace.



- The partnerships between large corporates and national providers is further strengthened based on corporate procurement processes. These procurement processes often favour working with national providers who have the established infrastructure and reach to:
 - service multiple regions;
 - create value for money due to the ability to create scale that can offset the cost of working in underperforming areas;
 - minimise the administrative burden of establishing multiple service level agreements with smaller providers where service offerings can differ due to their capacity and capability; and
 - streamline troubleshooting by having one key contact that can service a range of locations.
- Being a national provider with an in-house Registered Training Organisation ensures that the workplace experience is matched with accredited learning. This service also provides additional benefits to participants as they are able to provide a participant centric service model that has close-knit, wrap around support services that can better respond to the needs of our participants. At AFL SR for example, our in-house wrap around service includes a cultural Mentor, a Field Officer and an Educator that have the ability to tap into local community issues while benefiting from learnings that are being developed throughout Australia.
- The ability to tailor service delivery approaches and respond to trends or issues that appear can be contributed to having service delivery staff from around Australia coming together to share their experiences and learnings from the regions in which they serve. This often means that one regional office can benefit from the learnings of another office; enabling them to be efficient and responsive to a place-based issue whilst also considering the local context.
- As an established national provider AFL SR has existing infrastructure in major capital cities throughout Australia that can provide end-to-end services from attracting new businesses with dedicated marketing areas through to service delivery including a diverse range of Mentors (in age, gender and culture), as well as in-house RTO services. While this creates cost efficiencies for our business, it also provides a more extensive range of services that can benefit participants e.g. if there is a participant who has specific Torres Strait Islander cultural need and is based in Perth, we have the ability to tap into our Torres Strait Islander Mentor in Brisbane to assist in this unique situation. This enables national providers to provide more services in place-based locations where a dedicated resource does not exist at that location.
- Other benefits that can be provided by national providers includes the ability to provide reach into regional locations where there may be gaps with providers in the area or where the economics don't allow for an established smaller provider to expand into the area. The economies of scale that are generated as a national provider enables service areas where there may only be five participants in a location or where there are participants spread across regions spanning 300-400km between but can be serviced through a clustered regional visit.



- It has been AFL SR's experience that being a national provider affords us flexibility and adaptability to follow employment and training trends whereby there can be an influx in place-based opportunities that are cyclical in nature and thereby, would not be feasible for regional hub providers to sustainably service these ad-hoc opportunities. For example, in one year we may see 10 local opportunities that do not return the following year but may come back three years later.
- We readily acknowledge the value of local solutions to local problems and strongly support the increased support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait owned and controlled organisations to provide services in this area. As a non – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation we are acutely aware of where we add value and ensuring we do this in the most culturally appropriate manner possible. Our credibility, performance and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is the foundation of our work in this area.
- Our commitment to working in partnership with First Nations people is unwavering and our commentary around the role of national providers is not in opposition to local service provision but rather a way of providing additional employment opportunities that compliment local service provision for the benefit of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

The above comments serve to provide feedback on how a national provider can contribute to supporting increased economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on a regional basis by leveraging the advantages of infrastructure, scale and reach that a national service provider such as AFL SR provides.

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Regards,

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Chief Executive Officer
AFL SportsReady

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Executive Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs
AFL SportsReady

