



ONE COUNTRY, MANY VOICES
BCA 2012 INDIGENOUS
ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

SUMMARY



Business Council
of Australia

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The Business Council of Australia (BCA) brings together the chief executives of more than 100 of Australia's leading companies. The BCA's vision is for Australia to be the best place in the world to live, learn, work and do business.

The BCA has been talking with people and organisations from different parts of the community. The intention, on all sides, has been simple: to find common ground on goals for achieving national wealth for Australia and to make sure groups of Australians are not left behind as the nation prospers.

Working with others to develop interconnected policy responses, we can transcend limited short-term thinking to envision a future we would wish for the generations to follow.

This is a summary of the fourth annual report of the Indigenous engagement efforts of the membership of the BCA. The report is available at www.bca.com.au.

**Cover: Yuyuya Nampitjinpa,
Women's Ceremony, 2011**

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Survey aim and scope

Since 2009 the Business Council of Australia has surveyed its member companies on the contribution they are making to improve the economic capacity and social wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.

The 2012 survey questionnaire was distributed to 117 companies. The results were calculated and reviewed for this report. With the exception of some selected quotes, reproduced with permission, individual survey responses remain confidential.

Throughout the report, the term 'Indigenous' is used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

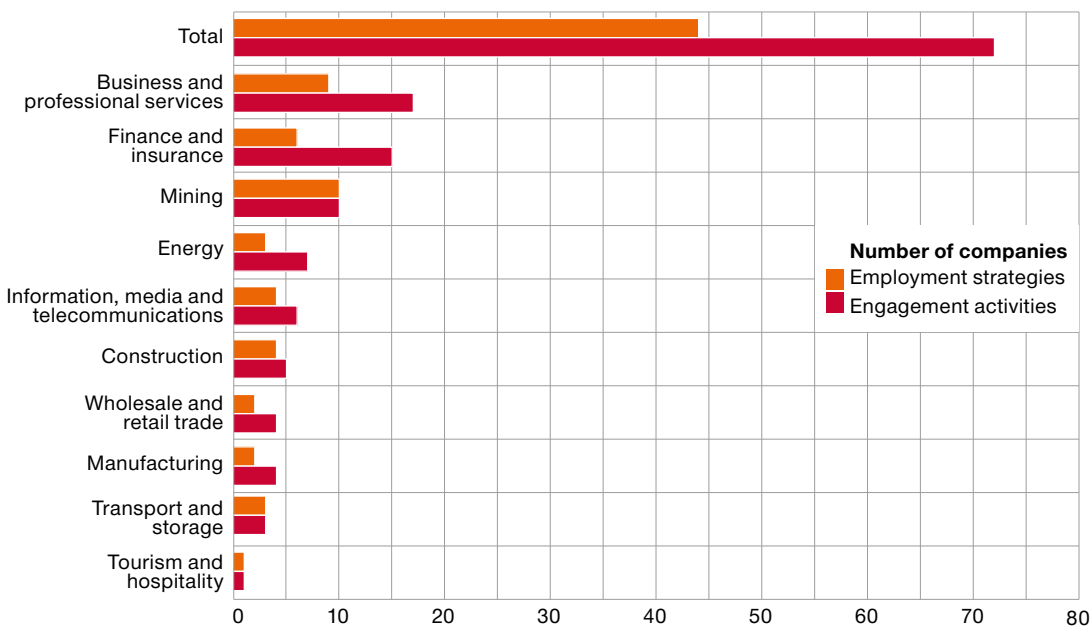
Key findings

- » There was a record response rate of 81 per cent of BCA member companies compared to 74 per cent in 2011
- » Seventy-six per cent of respondents have Indigenous engagement activities
- » Almost a third of respondents reported having more than 50 Indigenous employees
- » There was an increase of more than 2,000 Indigenous employees and more than 700 Indigenous trainees over the last 12 months
- » BCA member companies provided more than 48,500 hours of unpaid work in Indigenous activities

Which companies are engaged?

Indigenous engagement activities are undertaken across most industry sectors. Figure 1 shows engagement activities and employment strategies in each industry sector.

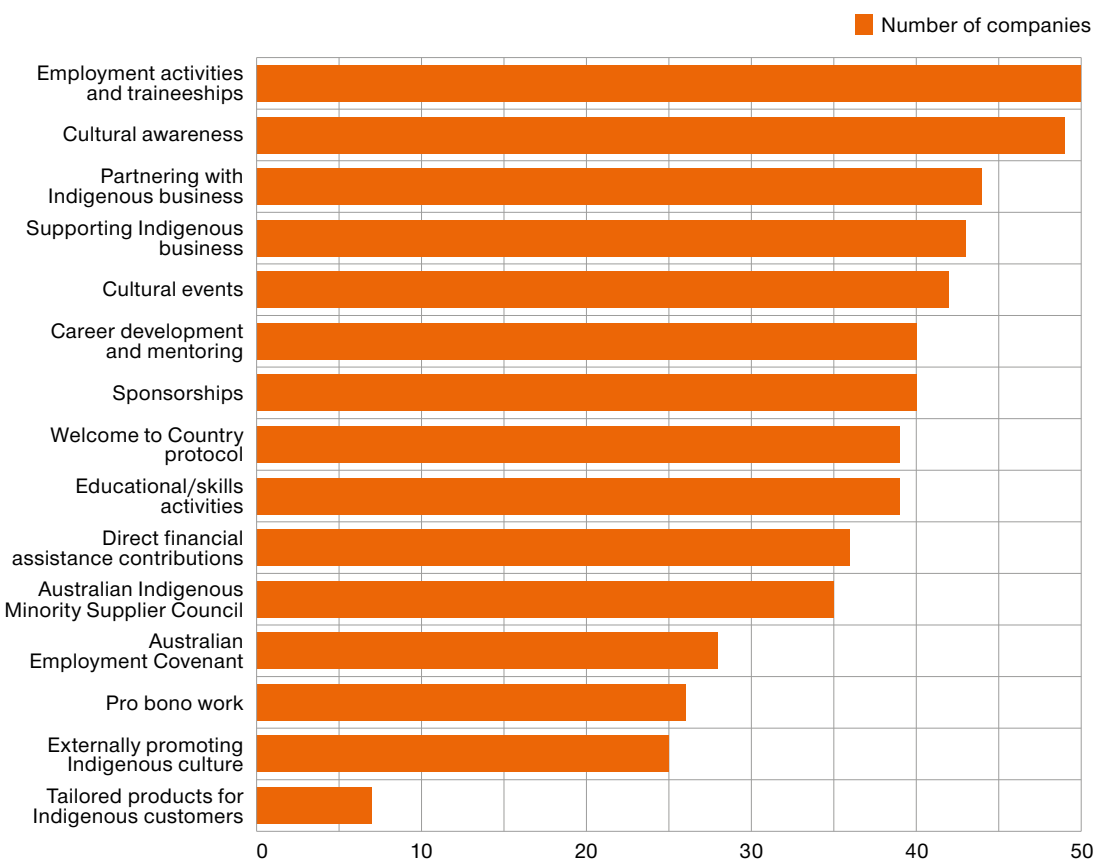
Figure 1: Indigenous engagement by industry sector



How are companies engaged?

The most common engagement activity is providing employment and traineeships, closely followed by cultural awareness.

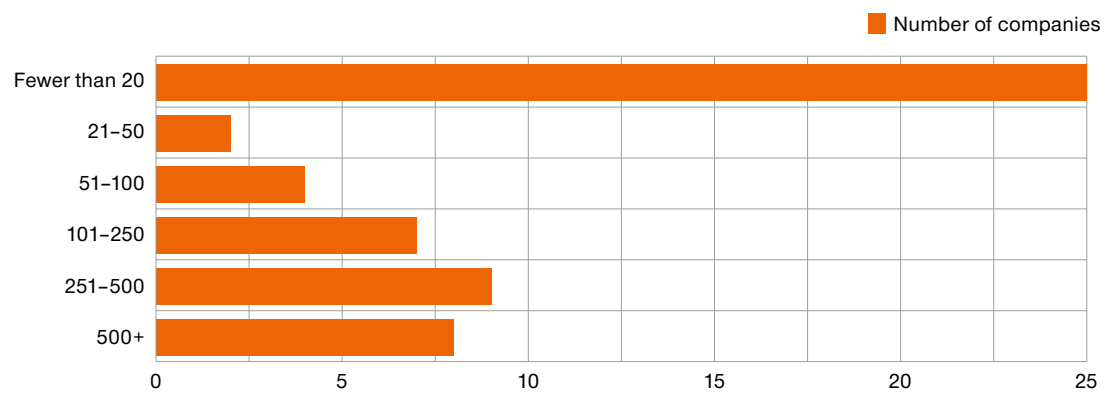
Figure 2: Diversity of Indigenous engagement activities



The scale of Indigenous employment varies among companies. Almost a third of respondents reported having more than 50 Indigenous employees. Seventeen companies employ more than 250 Indigenous people and eight employ more than 500.

Direct employment is not the only way of improving Indigenous economic outcomes. As Figure 2 shows, 43 companies are engaged in supporting Indigenous businesses and 26 provide pro bono support to help develop Indigenous business capability.

Figure 3: Indigenous employment in BCA member companies



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Our engagement activities are focused on achieving positive outcomes. We believe that jobs and real business opportunities are the key. We develop all our programs around this. – Fortescue Metals Group Limited

▼
The Commonwealth Bank is focused on delivering great customer service for all our customers at 1,000 locations throughout Australia. Our experience with offering traineeships to young Indigenous people has been a positive one for us and for our many customers. – Commonwealth Bank of Australia



We understand the importance of building community trust. A great example of this is we visited a community four times to complete our recruitment exercise. The end result was we recruited 19 local Indigenous people and 15 are still employed with us.

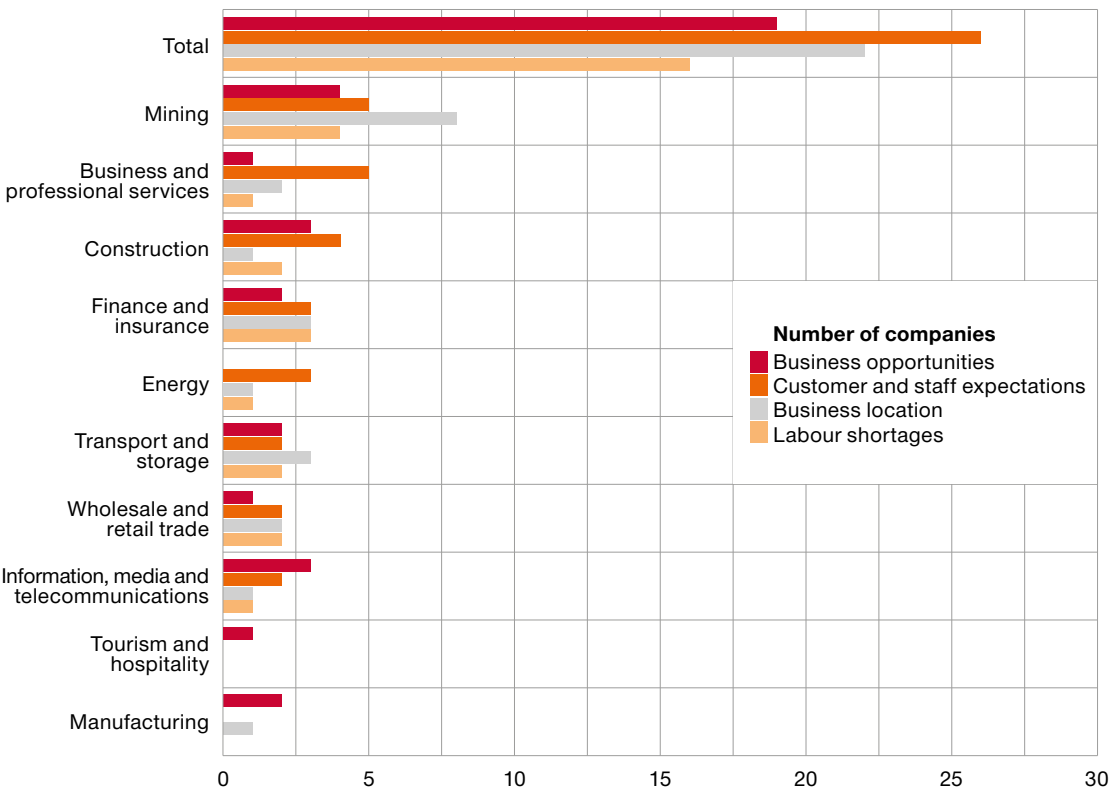
– Transfield Services

Why are companies engaged?

Across all BCA member companies, the expectations of customers and staff are the most important driver of Indigenous engagement activities.

Most companies are engaged in Indigenous employment activities with a view to building sustainable careers for people in Indigenous communities. This is seen as the main way companies can contribute in a practical manner to improving economic outcomes.

Figure 4: Main reasons for Indigenous engagement activities, by industry sector



Indigenous employment and engagement bring clear commercial benefits to companies.

Intangible benefits are also important to companies, in particular the two-way benefits of Indigenous engagement, and its ability to improve corporate culture and staff morale.

Employee and company commitment to 'doing the right thing' is a key driver and a consistent reason for company engagement.

Companies consider the most effective activities they undertake to be employment and cultural awareness, with the most commonly identified benefits being increased staff awareness, staff engagement and reputation.



As a large retailer, we believe our staff should reflect the communities we serve, so this is one of the key reasons for engagement. – Woolworths Limited



The focus on a pathway from unemployment to a rewarding business or career is the simplest and most direct contribution business can make to redressing areas of Indigenous disadvantage. – MMG Limited



... diverse backgrounds bring new ways of thinking and solving issues in a business environment. – Microsoft Australia



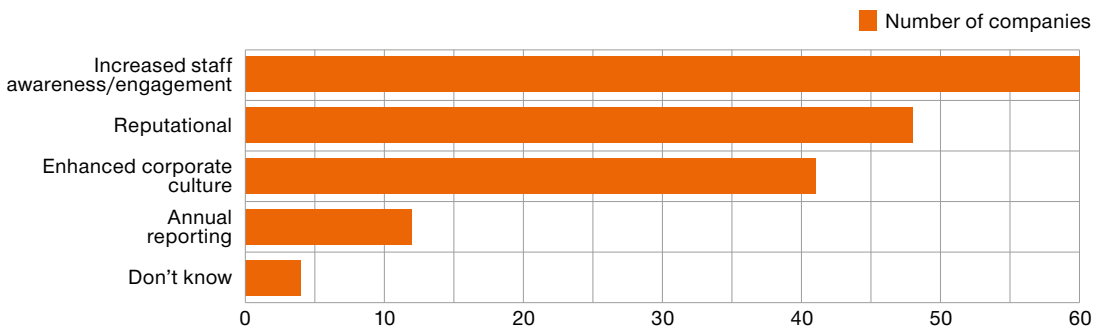
Our team members really like being involved in this work... They seem really proud to work for companies that work in this space, and they really welcome the chance to 'give back'. – Wesfarmers Limited



Practical and hands-on benefits arise from allowing people to participate and engage with culture and change mindsets. Our people are very practical and want to see a direct correlation between action and outcome.

– Programmed

Figure 5: Main benefits of Indigenous engagement activities



Employment activities yield the most direct and observable benefits.

Cultural awareness activities help develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous Australians but are also found to support greater cultural competency across the workforce.

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Building cultural awareness is integral to creating an inclusive environment. This will allow us to embrace the diverse contributions of our people to be more innovative and relevant to the clients and communities that we serve. – Leighton Holdings Limited

▼
... senior management engagement in all levels and on a permanent basis is critical for success. – Orica Limited

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At the heart of our Indigenous strategy is building partnerships with Indigenous organisations as external relationships rather than external resources have supported us in successfully achieving the benefits of engagement. – National Australia Bank Limited

Lessons from experience

What works

- » Senior leadership support
- » Dedicated resources
- » Don't do too much too soon
- » Partnering with Indigenous organisations
- » Focus initially on building relationships before setting targets
- » A local approach
- » Use internal champions
- » Engage the commitment of employees as their participation and action are the keys to success
- » Learn from others by building networks to share information of what works and what doesn't
- » Aligning engagement activities with the business



Understanding what we want to achieve and how we want to do it on a site-by-site basis is fundamental to our success. Each of our sites operates in very different environments, has different stakeholders, needs and challenges. Each site is responsible for setting its own targets, identifying its own strategies and processes that will suit its needs. This individual approach, underpinned by broader company-wide support of Indigenous engagement, has helped us achieve success in these areas. We continue to adjust our approaches and strategies to meet the needs of the people living by and working at our businesses. – BHP Billiton



Having a clear structure and activities that made sense within the nature of the business we operate. Clear values and alignment of these with the business and skill needs increased the effectiveness of the engagement activities. – Corrs Chambers Westgarth

What we would do differently

- » Be open to doing things differently in the light of experience, or ‘lessons learnt’
- » Engage more with Indigenous staff and community members
- » Only use tailored training that is linked to a specific job
- » Have a stronger network of ‘workplace heroes’ and engagement with senior management
- » Introduce cultural competency training earlier and before Indigenous engagement activities are introduced
- » Leverage the ‘goodwill’ that Indigenous opportunities provide
- » Better vet the capacity of consultants as many are overstretched
- » Measure success differently



We have changed the way we measure success by shifting the focus from volume to value. In the past, we measured numbers. Now we think about impact. Our focus for employment is on the value of the experience with us, rather than the number of employees we recruit and retain. Success for us is investing in and developing future Indigenous leaders. – Allens

Comparison with 2011 results

	2011	2012
Response rate	74% (88 companies)	81% (95 companies)
Indigenous engagement strategies	71 companies	72 companies
Indigenous employment strategies	43 companies	44 companies
Increase in number of Indigenous employees employed over the preceding 12 months	Over 870*	Over 2,000*
Increase in number of new Indigenous trainees employed over the preceding 12 months	Over 560*	Over 700*
Main barriers (% of companies without engagement activities citing barriers)	Not in line with business objectives (53%) Limited resources (41%)	Limited resources – time and money (69%) Not in line with business objectives (6%)
Main types of engagement activities	Employment and traineeships	Employment activities and cultural awareness
Companies that encourage business partners to develop Indigenous initiatives	40 companies	40 companies
Dedicated employee overseeing Indigenous engagement activities	47 companies	42 companies
Participation in the BCA's Business-Indigenous Network ⁺	32 companies	50 companies

* Where respondents identified only an employment range instead of a specific number, a conservative estimate was made using the minimum number in each range.

⁺ The BCA's Business-Indigenous Network of member companies meets at least four times a year to share experiences of their Indigenous engagement activities.

More information

More detailed information on the 2012 survey is contained in a separate report available on the BCA website at www.bca.com.au.

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