



# The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP

Minister for Indigenous Australians  
Member for Hasluck

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **\$123 MILLION BOOST TO INDIGENOUS RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The Australian Government is making \$123 million available over two financial years for targeted measures to support Indigenous businesses and communities to increase their responses to COVID-19.

Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP, said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are particularly vulnerable and more resources will strengthen their ability to manage the ongoing threat and impacts of the pandemic.

“The Government’s health and economic response to COVID-19 is significant,” Minister Wyatt said.

“All Australians are beginning to access a variety of supports and we are making sure that the unique issues facing Indigenous Australians are specifically addressed through discrete measures.

“We have already implemented plans to protect Indigenous health, limit the movement of people into designated areas, and made adjustments to the Community Development Program and other activities funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

“We are now extending our response by linking Indigenous businesses with additional support, taking steps to better apply the available Indigenous workforce to industries and regions in need and increasing the preparedness and response capability of communities.

“Through Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), we are providing up to \$50 million to help Indigenous businesses over coming months.

“This includes providing specialist advice to help businesses survive, adapt and recover, assistance to access the different business support packages available from Government, and new funding arrangements where there are gaps in the mainstream measures and a demonstrated need.

“This assistance is available to all Indigenous businesses affected by the crisis, whether or not they are current IBA customers, in an effort to see the gains made in recent years to foster a vibrant Indigenous business sector are not lost.

“The National Indigenous Australians Agency is supporting a variety of agencies to look at how local Indigenous workers can help address workforce shortages, particularly in regional and remote areas where the usual workforce is unavailable.

“Up to \$25 million will be available to targeted regions and industries facing labour shortfalls to provide incentives to employers, support to Indigenous job seekers and greater flexibility to access employment initiatives in a way that suits their short term needs.

“Our Government is also providing funding to regional and remote communities while travel restrictions are in place so they are prepared and responsive to evolving issues that emerge during the crisis.

“The Aboriginals Benefit Account will deliver \$10 million across the four Land Councils in the Northern Territory to allow them to address immediate infrastructure needs and travel expenses associated with people returning to homelands.

“Community Night Patrols will be bolstered with up to \$10 million to extend their reach and provide guidance to their community, ensure safety is maintained and that travel and physical distancing requirements are adhered to.

“\$23 million will go towards enhancing the delivery of critical social support programs, including alcohol and other drug services, social and emotional wellbeing projects, family support and youth engagement and diversion programs.

“Providers are working to deliver services in different ways where possible and this funding will help find innovative solutions to continue these programs.

“And up to \$5 million will be made available to expand the school nutrition program in the Northern Territory so that meals can continue to be delivered during school closures and holiday periods and also to extend the program to vulnerable families and the elderly where required.

“The Government is doing all it can to protect all Australians from the health threat of COVID-19 and cushion the economic impacts so we can bounce back when the pandemic is over.

“I am encouraged by how all sectors in the Australian community are working positively and collaboratively to support businesses, their employees, and customers through this significant challenge.

“We will get through this together by everyone following the health advice and complying with the restrictions that are necessary to protect our Elders and our culture.”

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