



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

Tony Abbott MHR

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INDIGENOUS CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Tony Abbott, today announced funding of up to \$10.5 million over four years from 2003-04 for an Indigenous Capital Assistance initiative under the Indigenous Employment Policy (IEP).

Indigenous Capital Assistance aims to increase employment opportunities, including self-employment, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by:

- engaging the private financial sector to help to kick-start Indigenous businesses; and
- promoting economic independence for Indigenous people by encouraging the private financial sector to provide business and financial advice prior to and during the early stages of a loan period.

Flexible capital assistance packages will be developed in cooperation with finance houses to help stimulate Indigenous business development at the local level.

The aim is to reduce welfare dependency and increase economic sustainability for Indigenous people, particularly in remote areas where jobs are scarce. There are potential business opportunities in fishing, tourism, construction, aquaculture, agriculture and Indigenous arts. These opportunities are often lost because Indigenous Australians have limited access to capital, limited or no credit histories, and little access to financial and business literacy skills.

Business advice will be provided to meet corporate governance and business planning requirements during the loan application and business establishment phases. This assistance will be provided through existing Indigenous business support programmes and services.

This initiative should further encourage economic participation and lead to more jobs for Indigenous Australians.

For more information call Simone Holzapfel on 0417 656 668.