

**SOCIAL TRADERS' CERTIFICATION PROCESS
AND INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE ENGAGEMENT**

AUGUST 2023

REPORT

PREPARED BY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge Country and the continuing custodianship and care by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the land, known as Australia. We pay our respects to the traditional custodians and Elders of the lands on which we live and work, and recognise their ongoing connection and care to this Country, their cultural practices and knowledges.



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INTRODUCTION



In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the significant contributions made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises to Australia's economic landscape. These businesses play a pivotal role in fostering economic development, preserving cultural heritage, and empowering Indigenous communities across the nation.

Indigenous entrepreneurs have highlighted the synergies between Indigenous approaches to business and the underlying values of Social Enterprise, resulting in a natural inclination toward the Social Enterprise sector. As a result, it is imperative for sector organisations and regulatory bodies to ensure equitable and accessible opportunities exist for Indigenous Social Enterprises.

However, while there is alignment with the sector there are multiple barriers, both externally and internally, that impact the participation of Indigenous enterprises. Predominantly, the capacity of Indigenous

enterprises in managing conflicting priorities while maintaining cultural responsibility and integrity, and adequately fitting into the confines of western business standards. A quote from Kombumerri philosopher and Elder, Dr Mary Graham, fittingly highlights the unique intersection of Indigenous entrepreneurs operating within mainstream contexts:

“Part of the problem for Aboriginal people in modern Australia is working out ways in which we can continue carrying out custodial responsibilities to land and, at the same time, try to obtain control over the economic development of our communities without falling prey to the seductions of individualism.” (Dr Mary Graham)

This report has been developed to ensure that Indigenous social entrepreneurs have equal opportunities to access and benefit specifically from Social Traders' certification.

BACKGROUND

First Australians Capital (FAC) published a report in the wake of the Social Enterprise World Forum (2022) held in Meanjin/Brisbane, highlighting issues facing Indigenous Social Enterprises within the broader sector. The *Addressing Indigenous Economic Inclusion in the Social Enterprise Sector* reflection report urged the Social Enterprise sector to take proactive measures in dismantling obstacles inhibiting First Nations enterprises' equal participation. It emphasises the significance of sharing risks and resources, enabling these businesses to flourish from inception to maturity.

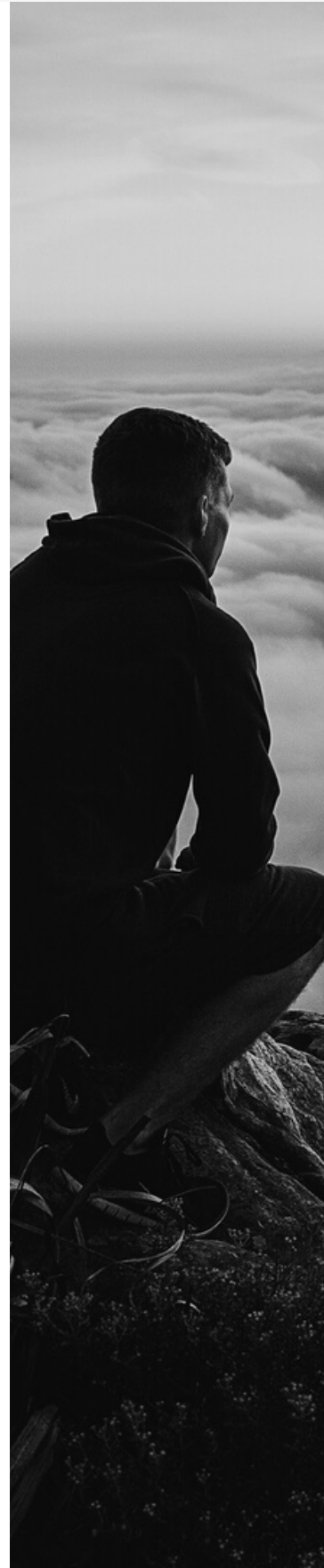
The FAC report highlights the necessity for the Social Enterprise sector to deeply understand Indigenous perspectives on social and environmental impact, employ patience, storytelling, and a collaborative community approach. In the FAC report, interviewees expressed that embracing these transformative shifts would foster a more inclusive Social Enterprise sector.

As a result of the FAC report Social Traders were prompted to assess the accessibility of their framework for Indigenous businesses and investigate concerns addressed in the report, to be proactive and implement any necessary changes. For this report, evaluations of the following were undertaken:

- Examination of Social Traders' website, certification webinar, Certification Pack, and Certification Guidance Notes and Standards
- Stakeholder interviews with current Indigenous Social Trader certified enterprises, prominent Indigenous Social Enterprises not certified through Social Traders, and Industry representative bodies to gain insights from various perspectives from across the sector

The evaluation project has proven invaluable in critically assessing the existing mechanisms and practices within Social Traders' framework that support Indigenous Enterprises in undertaking the certification process. By highlighting areas for improvement, the evaluation has laid the foundation for informed decision-making and positive change.

Based on a review of the materials and the challenges and issues identified through stakeholder interviews, the evaluation report presents a set of informed recommendations for consideration. These recommendations are designed to address the identified gaps and contribute to a more accessible and supportive certification process, fostering an environment where Indigenous Social Enterprises can thrive and participate meaningfully in the Social Enterprise sector.



ABOUT SOCIAL TRADERS



Social Traders is Australia's only social enterprise certifier, providing assurance that Social Enterprises are creating genuine impact through trade. Their vision is to unlock business for good by creating a more inclusive and equitable Australia through making buying from Social Enterprises the norm.

They aspire to embed Social Enterprise procurement into business as usual, to contribute to a thriving Social Enterprise sector. Their mission is to work collaboratively to integrate Social Enterprises into Australian supply chains. This is done through three mechanisms:

- supporting business and government members to embed social procurement
- supporting Social Enterprises to thrive
- advocacy for government and business policy and practice changes

Social Traders believe that by making the switch to good, business and government members can contribute to positive social and environmental change to create a fairer world, for everyone.

JOURNEY MAP



Not all enterprises come to Social Traders to same way however, a typical enterprise journey follows:

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL TRADERS

- Website
- In person event

1

2

INFORMATION GATHERING

- Attend certification webinar
- Email exchange
- One-to-one conversation with Certification team

FOLLOW UP INFORMATION PROVIDED

- Social Traders' certification pack
- Membership brochure
- For detailed questions - *Certification Guidance Notes and Standards*

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RESOURCE EVALUATION

SOCIAL TRADERS CERTIFICATION WEBSITE

Assessment of Social Traders website revealed multiple areas for improvement. Considering the website will often be the first point of contact for enterprises, the recommendations have been developed to increase the value proposition of certification specifically for Indigenous enterprises.

KEY FINDINGS

- Absence of Indigenous content appealing to Indigenous Social Enterprises.
- Absence of Indigenous representation on the Social Traders Certification Advisory Group.
- Website appears to target the procurement audience more than Social Enterprises.
- Highlights the work enterprises are doing rather than the benefits or value of certification.
- Absent Indigenous representation on the Social Traders team and Board of directors.
- Acknowledgement of Country is a good indication that there is recognition of Indigenous peoples within Social Traders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

social traders website

- Develop a page dedicated to Indigenous Social Enterprises.
- Include elements of Indigenous design or iconography; developed with an Indigenous artist to ensure it fits within the current style guide and elements of Social Traders (see appendix for graphic explanation)
- Consider employing an Indigenous staff member to consult with enterprises wanting to gain certification.
- Consider having an Indigenous member on the Social Traders Certification Advisory Group.
- The inclusion of Indigenous specific success stories to demonstrate and promote the tangible benefits of certification.

SOCIAL TRADERS WEBINAR

The Webinar provides a good overall explanation of Social Traders and the certification process, however, some sections are less engaging than others, especially sections that present too much information on the screen (e.g., breakdown of criteria).

KEY FINDINGS

- The webinar provided a clearer explanation of Social Traders purpose in comparison to other resources (via the infographic).
- The 'Our community and impact' section lacks clarity and requires more context.
- The inclusion of metrics on visits the Social Enterprise register receives per month adds value to enterprises interested in certification.
- Inconsistent presentation of information; some aspects have been designed and are easy to follow while other parts with tables and too much content are not as engaging. (Feels like two different presentations put into one.)
- Under the membership packages, it is unclear how Government advocacy and representation is translated and what benefits can potentially be received.

RECOMMENDATIONS

social traders webinar

- Provide a case study or fictional example of how an Indigenous enterprise will be helped through the certification process and once certified, e.g., use the journey map as an example, talk about how XYZ enterprise was able to engage with Social Traders to gain certification and what the outcomes were and some specific procurement opportunities. This could even be done as an animated example to increase engagement with the content.
- Identify the membership tier most accessed by Indigenous Social Enterprises, as it may be indicative of the level of engagement they are experiencing with Social Traders and the benefits of certification.
- Consider a post webinar feedback form to gauge user experience and implement any recommendations for improvement.
- Clearly articulate in other communication material (i.e., website, certification pack) how Social Traders work with businesses and governments to embed social enterprises into their supply chain.

CERTIFICATION PACK

The evaluation has identified two main areas for improvement; value proposition and documentation requirements.

The certification pack lacks a strong value proposition and does not expressly provide what tangible benefits can be expected from gaining certification through Social Traders. The quotes from certified Social Enterprises (page 7 of Certification Pack) show minimum reference to the benefits, rather highlight Social Traders support mechanisms in gaining certification. This is consistent with feedback we received from certified enterprises; “support from Social Traders was amazing but we are not sure of the actual benefits yet of being certified” (Certified Enterprise).

Regarding the documentation requirements, from an Indigenous perspective; Indigenous enterprises may not be at the required level of formality or structure (financial, impact, legal documents) and potentially do not see the relevance of certification for their enterprise. The following quote from a participant we interviewed highlights the competing priorities of Indigenous social entrepreneurs: *“The cost of delivering the impact of what Indigenous business automatically does can be invisible, even to the business themselves, because it’s just the way they do things”* (Industry Representative - Non-Indigenous Participant).

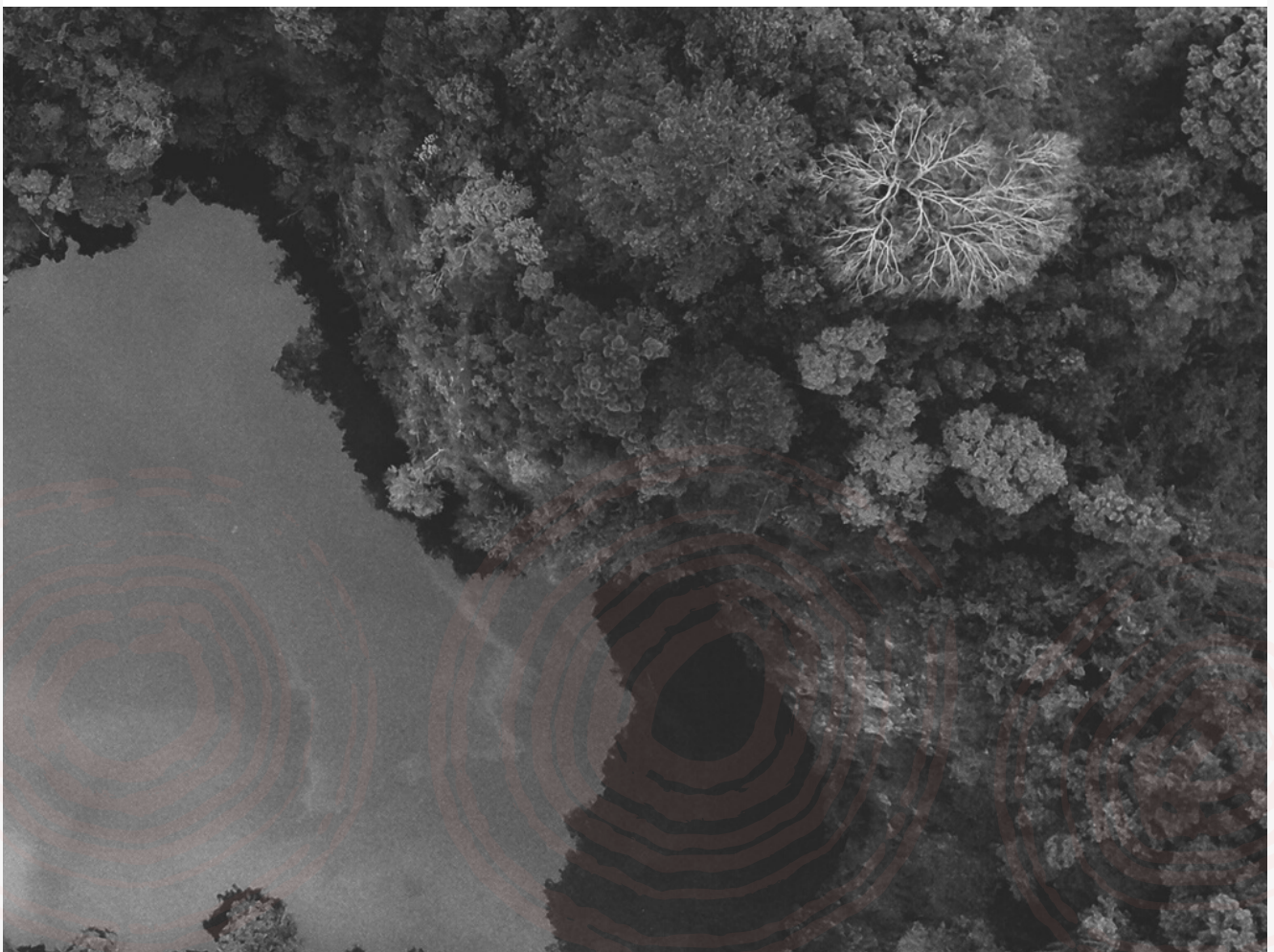
KEY FINDINGS

- The certification pack provides significant information about the certification process but a clear value proposition is absent, considering businesses can self-identify as a Social Enterprise and be part of the sector at no cost.
- There is an absence of clarity about each level of certification and what they entitle enterprises to access. It is not clear if the “Benefits of Certification” are applicable to all or some of the membership levels (Recognition, Connections and Grow).
- Complex records required for certification are a potential barrier. Many Indigenous enterprises may not be at this level of formality or structure (financial, impact measurement, or legal documents) as well as accessibility to accountants and legal professionals being a common barrier for Indigenous enterprises.
- Indigenous enterprises are often on the ground and doing the work in communities and may not have capacity to allocate resources to the certification data and documentation requirements (also highlighted in participant interviews).
- The reference to co-design in the appendix does not appear to include any Indigenous representation.
- Social Traders support during certification is highlighted in the certification pack, and by participants we interviewed, but more so than the tangible benefits of certification or impact on the enterprises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

certification pack

- Provide clear and concise identification of the benefits for each package (Recognition, Connections and Grow).
- Offer a reduced fee to attract Indigenous Social Enterprises, as Indigenous cultures is based on relationships and trust versus paid service models. Consider offering a 'free' tier of certification to Indigenous Social Enterprises, that requires reduced documentation.
- Data capture upon application to clearly identify if enterprises are Indigenous owned/operated (consider 51% or more Indigenous ownership for qualification as an Indigenous enterprise).
- The inclusion of success stories highlighting tangible benefits of Social Traders certification, including Indigenous success stories.
- Have an Indigenous advisor to assist with the certification and provide a contact email (e.g., IndigenousCertification@ email).



CERTIFICATION GUIDANCE NOTES AND STANDARDS

Broadly, the *Social Traders Certification Guidance Notes and Standards* document is a dense collection of information and may overwhelm or discourage applications from enterprises, particularly Indigenous businesses as they are often heavily focused on providing more immediate impact within their communities.

KEY FINDINGS

- Guidance notes and standards are information dense, which may overwhelm or discourage applicants.
- Page 2 states: *“a substantial portion of its revenue is derived from commercial trade rather than grants or donations”*. Many Indigenous enterprises rely on donations or grant funding to establish and/or operate their enterprises and this criteria may be exclusionary for Indigenous Social Enterprises. Therefore, Social Traders' ability to be flexible in this area needs to be more clearly articulated in certification information.
- Certification Standards Table page 4: *“Business plan including 12-month cash flow forecast and evidence of proof of concept for both business and impact model”*. Such documentation may not be available for Indigenous Social Enterprises due to lack of resources or accessibility.
- No specific information regarding or referencing Indigenous enterprises specifically.
- The consistent reference to flexibility and catering to the needs of individual enterprises is a valuable inclusion that demonstrates Social Traders inclusive approach to certification.



RECOMMENDATIONS

guidance notes

- A less information dense version of the guidance notes could be developed to assist Indigenous Social Enterprises undertaking certification.
- Any variation or addition to the current guidance notes should be designed with Indigenous members of the Social Enterprise sector and include references to Indigenous understanding of business, culturally specific examples and Indigenous icons and designs.



INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

THIS SECTION CONTAINS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED DURING THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Interviews were conducted with multiple Indigenous Social Enterprises and Intermediary Industry Bodies, both virtually and via written response, to gauge their experience with the Social Traders' certification process, where applicable.

The objective of the engagement was to comprehensively assess the existing mechanisms, identify strengths, and uncover areas for improvement to enable Social Traders' commitment to Indigenous engagement.

While interview participation was inhibited by a short project time frame, non-incentivised participation and limited pre-existing relationships with some participants; the interview results provide significant value to the report findings and recommendations.

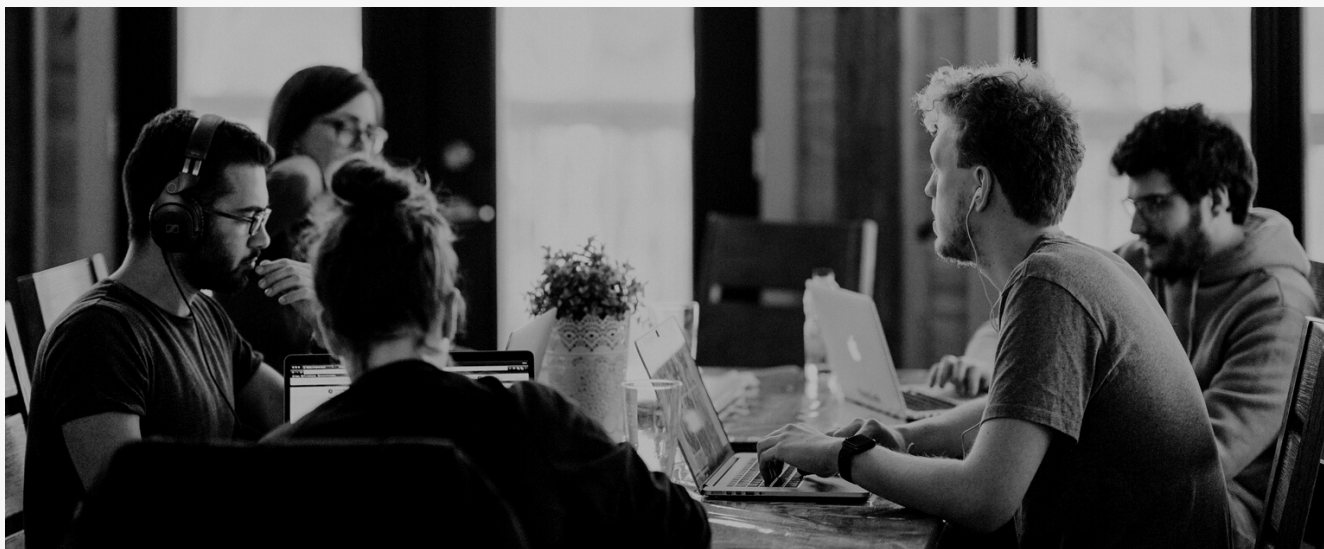
PARTICIPANTS

Participants were identified via Social Traders and our own sector networks.

Participants were classified into the following categories:

- Social Traders certified Indigenous Social Enterprises (active)
- Indigenous enterprises who have not renewed their Social Traders certification (lapsed)
- Indigenous enterprises who have expressed interest in certification but not applied (expressed interest)
- Prominent Indigenous Social Enterprises who have not expressed interest in certification (prominent SE's)
- Industry representative bodies (intermediary bodies)

INTERVIEW SETUP



Virtual interviews were 30 minutes on average and participants were asked to talk about their experience as an Indigenous Social Enterprise, views on certification and any of their experiences with Social Traders.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- What motivated you to pursue certification as a social enterprise?
- Social Traders provide resources to assist in the certification process, (webinar, guidance notes, one-to-one calls), did you tap into any of these resources? If so, how did you find them?
- Do you believe there are culturally specific aspects that need to be considered and/or included in a certification process?
- Is there any information or support you would find helpful if you decided to apply for certification?
- Is Social Traders certification something that you recommend to the enterprises in your network?
- Can you identify any of the key barriers for enterprises in your network seeking accreditation from bodies like Social Traders'?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

An *Interview Participant Information Booklet* (see in Appendix) was developed for participants outlining the background and objectives of the project, along with requirements of participants and data handling protocol.



KEY FINDINGS

from interviews



CERTIFICATION

Not all representatives from industry intermediary organisations were familiar with Social Traders and their certification process. One stated, *"I am not sure how they differ to B Corp"*. (Indigenous participant).

Aside from not understanding the impact from certification, one respondent shared: *"[Indigenous enterprises] don't know why Social Traders is valuable or the way Social Traders see a social enterprise is fundamentally different to how [another organisation] sees social enterprises."* (Industry Representative/Indigenous participant)

The certification process can help organisations gain clarity about how they fit as a social enterprise: *I knew that I was a social enterprise, and operated as such, but I wasn't completely sure whether I fully fit the definition. Social Traders' supportive certification process helped me to gain a deeper clarity, and to be honest, reassurance that I actually was a social enterprise as per the definition.* (Certified Business)

A respondent from a certified business provided insight into what they would like to see after the certification process: *"I haven't worked out yet how to really leverage the certification. People are impressed when I tell them, but I can't say I've seen a direct correlation to results such as sales. That is one thing I would recommend as an improvement in the after-certification support... I would really benefit from a consultation to brainstorm ideas of what I could do to leverage the certification because the more product I sell, the greater the impact I create."*

“ I THINK HAVING CERTAIN CERTIFICATIONS MAKES THE WESTERN WORLD OF BUSINESS FEEL GOOD AND IDENTIFY BETTER WITH INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES. ”

(INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE)

CERTIFICATION

benefits

When asked if they had received any benefits from certification, one enterprise states, *"Nothing yet."* (Certified Business).

Another said, *"No, not really. Customers usually find me, so telling them I'm a certified Social Enterprise just affirms for them that they made the right choice. I would like to strategise a way to be able to use my certification to gain new customers."* (Certified Business)

We acknowledge these responses are not indicative of all certified enterprises and it should be noted that those certified businesses who participated in interviews had been certified for a short amount of time and were anticipating future benefits. However, one Certified Business had a positive view of the potential benefits: *I know that going through the certification process and having my promotional material showing the certified badge is likely to support both my business AND the people that I support, with this becoming more important as State/Territory and Federal Governments/Corporates take a more structured approach to procuring with social enterprises.*

Another participant indicated a gap in sector perceptions of Social Traders certification and the realistic outcomes for enterprises: *"I have had some negative feedback generally, as well as from Indigenous organisations that the certification doesn't actually mean more procurement which has been frustrating. There seems to still be a wall between decent sized contracts for social procurement and buyers. I believe (anecdotally) that it is worse with Indigenous businesses."* (Industry Representative/ non-Indigenous participant)



I'M NOT SURE WHY AN INDIGENOUS BUSINESS WOULD GAIN VALUE FROM A CERTIFICATION PROCESS BUILT OFF WESTERN TERMS OF REFERENCE.

I DON'T THINK THE SOCIAL TRADERS' FRAMEWORK WAS DEVELOPED WITH FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE, SO IT COULD BE ANOTHER BOX FITTING EXERCISE. I SAY COULD, MEANING, I MAY BE WRONG. BUT THIS IS MY PERCEPTION.

(INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANT)



barriers

When asked about barriers to certification, one Industry respondents stated: *"Barriers to certification can exist with constantly needing to apply for different levels of verification - Indigenous identity, business details, businesses and people needing to prove themselves. They need to apply constantly for different aspects of running a business, sometimes with other businesses, like chambers of commerce. There can be too much certification and proof - there is this and this and this - like over surveying."*

recommended enablers

Have an independent Indigenous consultant review the certification process to provide suggestions to make it more inclusive of First Nations businesses." (Industry Representative/Indigenous participant)

Feedback from participants highlighted that assistance, not just with the certification but also immediately post-certification would be beneficial. Similarly, being connected with other certified businesses who had or were going through the process at the same time.

APPLICATION PROCESS

An Industry Representative said they have *"a one-year-free certification deal with Social Traders for any [company] members"*, so they recommend Social Traders certification to their members.

Certified businesses praised the help they received from Social Traders during the certification process:

"Social Traders staff patiently grounded me and helped me with guidance. I received all the guidance and support that I needed, and I'm very grateful." (Certified Business)

"Wasn't long from Social Traders' side, it was from our side as we were trying to get everything worked out on our end and were focusing on more than one project at a time ... We just didn't have the capacity to focus on the process as there was more than one aspect of our business and the community comes first." (Certified Business)



GETTING THE FINANCIALS RIGHT WAS A CONCERN FOR US, WE DIDN'T HAVE A SEPARATE ACCOUNT FOR THE [TYPE OF] BUSINESS AND IT TOOK ABOUT 12 MONTHS TO GET ALL OUR PAPERWORK AND THINGS IN ORDER TO APPLY.

(NON-INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANT)

challenges encountered

Insights gained from participants underscored the importance of clear communication, adaptable processes, and accessible resources for businesses who feel they are time poor. This was highlighted by both an Industry Representative body and also a Certified Business.

Industry Representative: *"In our network, most businesses are time poor and get frustrated trying to make their ways of doing business fit into other frameworks."*

Certified Business: *The need to take time away from businesses was also identified as a challenge: "I am so time poor that written resources stress me out." (Certified Business)*

One Certified Business felt they were facing a challenge and worried about it for some time before talking to Social Traders: *"We were concerned about not having DGR status, but the Social Traders certification team informed us DGR status was not a requirement. Further, the Social Traders certification team made it easy and there wasn't anything else they could have done to assist us in the certification process."*

The consensus from Certified Businesses was that Social Traders were extremely helpful with the process. Participants felt like Social Traders went 'above and beyond' to help with the certification process.

IMPACT

Sector bodies are often at the forefront of supporting new and emerging social enterprises on their journey; a participant from an intermediary organisation referenced the issue of having adequate resources to measure impact: *"I think many of these additional paths (like impact measurement) take a great deal of time and resourcing to ensure they tell the correct impact that buyers want. Certification seems like it's the most painless path, but there are still many barriers that prevent social enterprises using the system."* (Non-Indigenous participant)

When asked about the advantages of certification, one participant indicated that the key advantage was procurement pathways rather than formal Social Enterprise certification: *We have a very poor culture of supporting Indigenous business as major suppliers. There needs to be support to create a measurement framework that is connected to the busy work of the Indigenous businesses that already exist, a framework that is co-designed and mutually recognised that there is an intention to change the buying landscape. It needs to be linked with outcomes so that Indigenous businesses can actually make the difference they are striving to make.* (Industry Representative)

"As a large component of First Nation's impact is social, it can be hard to show monetary evidence of social entrepreneurship." (Certified Business)

When asked how they articulate the social impact of their enterprise, one Certified Business said, *"Not with lucidity, and I would really benefit from coaching in this regard."*

“INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES ARE NOT IN THE HABIT OF COUNTING AND MEASURING THEIR IMPACT... THEY JUST DO IT INNATELY. I FEEL THERE NEEDS TO BE TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR THE MEASUREMENT TO BECOME A PRIORITY. THERE IS AN EXISTING INDIGENOUS BUSINESS TARGET SET, HOWEVER, MANY INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES STILL MISS OUT ON CONTRACTS.”

(INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE/ NON-INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANT)



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CERTIFICATION PROCESS

When asked if they believed culturally specific aspects needed to be considered and/or included in a certification process, one participant shared, *"I think this is a question that shouldn't be asked of First Nations people who aren't being remunerated for their knowledge sharing. I think there are opportunities for First Nations consultants to provide this advice and we shouldn't expect First Nations people to provide knowledge and wisdom for free."* (Indigenous Participant)

Non-Indigenous respondents did not feel qualified to answer. This quote is representative of the general responses received: *"Yes. But I think it is best to talk with existing Indigenous businesses to make sure that any assumptions we might make are balanced with the practical application of the measures."* (Non-Indigenous Participant)

GENERAL FEEDBACK

Certified Business: *"I would like to know if there is an opportunity to be put in contact with other First Nations social enterprises involved in [our industry], as we'd love to have a chat about issues we are both facing."*

Industry Representative: *"I would be interested in exploring a collaboration with Social Traders, but the discussion would need to happen with people a lot further up than me."*

When asked about interest in collaborating with Social Traders, an Industry Representative said: *"I think [company] could definitely play a part in helping the network access procurement and also gain and maintain certification. It would be particularly good if we could unlock the benefits of procurement through a target for Govt Buyers, especially in the lead up to the Olympics and Paralympics."*

PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Developing a tailored pipeline for Indigenous Social Trader Certification that takes into consideration the barriers identified within the participant feedback. This pipeline would require an Indigenous led co-design process to ensure culturally appropriate and informed outcomes.
- Offer free certification (Connections package) to Indigenous Social Enterprises for the first year and/or a reduced fee rate. Consider offering a set number of Grow packages every year, run through an application/ scholarship process.
- Consider offering specific programs, initiatives or partnerships with intermediary organisations that focus on supporting Indigenous Social Enterprises. Including Supply Nation, Indigenous Chambers of Commerce in each state, Indigenous Business Australia and First Australians Capital.
- Provide an indicator of how many people are accessing the Social Traders Enterprise finder, as statistics could be an incentive to enterprises considering certification.
- Promote Reconciliation Action Plan and ensure regular review of the document. Promotion could be a link on website.
- Include Indigenous representative on the Social Traders Certification Advisory Group (this could be just for Indigenous applicants, however could bring benefit for all applicants).
- Targeted employment of Indigenous staff and representation on Certification Advisory Group and Social Traders Board.
- Create an identified position for an Indigenous social procurement advisor.
- Include content that specifically targets Indigenous Social Enterprises, including Indigenous specific content across platforms and an Indigenous certification pack.
- Targeted Indigenous engagement. Work with Indigenous entrepreneurs or industry experts to co-design a Social Traders specific Indigenous Engagement Strategy.
- Networking events made available to all social enterprises, regardless of level of certification package. These events could even be open to all social enterprises, irrespective of certification and used as an opportunity to promote certification.

Highlight Social Traders certification value proposition and feature specific benefits to Enterprises about certification, for example an excerpt from the 2022 Impact Report:

“Driven by the Victorian government’s Social Enterprise Strategy in 2017, -Fruit2Work experienced significant growth. By the end of FY 2020, the organisation had achieved a turnover close to \$1 million. They had 9 employees and transitioned 22 people to full-time employment, - including three within the organisation. Supported by Social Traders and the Victorian Government’s social procurement mandate, Fruit2Work now serve over 1,000 corporate clients, generate \$7million in turnover, have 45 employees, and, have successfully transitioned over 80 people to full-time employment, including 23 within Fruit2Work.”

CONCLUSION

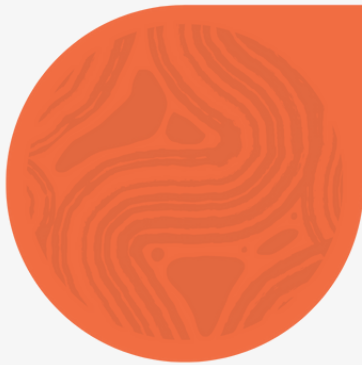
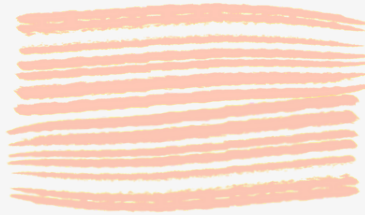
Indigenous businesses often hesitate to identify as social enterprises because the sector fails to fully appreciate the significance of Indigenous cultural practices and knowledge in business. A clear illustration of this issue arises in certification processes, as indicated in the FAC report, which overlooks Indigenous cultural principles as factors for consideration. As a result, Indigenous enterprises struggle to conform to the conventional social enterprise definition, as it lacks representation and influence from Indigenous voices and decision-makers.

The recommendations provided in this report provide simple and concise changes for Social Traders to implement moving forward. Of particular value are the recommendations that highlight the inclusion of co-design processes that will ensure changes are developed alongside Indigenous peoples rather than 'for' Indigenous peoples. This approach establishes a level of reciprocity and respect for Indigenous enterprises and aims to empower rather than rescue.

While the current state of the Social Enterprise sector fails to align with the requirements of First Nations businesses, we believe there is an opportunity for Social Traders to take a transformative approach and lead the way in dismantling barriers and striving toward equitable opportunity for Indigenous enterprises operating within the Social Enterprise sector.

APPENDIX

EXAMPLE OF CUSTOM ICON IDEAS



APPENDIX

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

Social Traders' Certification Process and Indigenous Enterprise Engagement Interview Participant Information

Contact: Gaala Watson | 0432 388 852 | gaala.watson@gmail.com

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Background

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the significant contributions made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises to Australia's economic landscape. These businesses play a pivotal role in fostering economic development, preserving cultural heritage, and empowering Indigenous communities across the nation. Many Indigenous entrepreneurs have highlighted the synergies between Indigenous approaches to business and the underlying values of Social Enterprise, resulting in an almost natural inclination toward the Social Enterprise sector. As a result, it is imperative for regulatory bodies to ensure equitable and accessible opportunities to Indigenous Social Enterprises.

Project Context

Social Traders have identified a risk regarding the accessibility of their framework for Indigenous businesses and are motivated to investigate this matter, in order to implement any necessary changes. This project seeks to evaluate the certification processes employed by Social Traders with regards to Indigenous Social Enterprises. The objective is to comprehensively assess the existing mechanisms, identify strengths, and uncover areas for improvement in order to enhance Social Traders' commitment to Indigenous engagement.

To achieve our objective, we will undertake stakeholder consultations to gain insights from various perspectives, including interviews with:

- Social Traders certified Indigenous Social Enterprises and enterprises that did not renew their certification
- Indigenous enterprises who have expressed interest in certification
- Prominent Indigenous Social Enterprises that have not expressed interest in certification
- Industry representatives and experts with experience in Indigenous entrepreneurship

Findings will enable us to identify the challenges faced by Indigenous Social Enterprises in engaging with Social Traders' certification process and help inform recommendations for improvement. A report will be developed for Social Traders to ensure that Indigenous social entrepreneurs have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from certification programs.

Who is undertaking this research

The research is being undertaken for Social Traders by independent consultants, Gaala Watson and Bim O'Dea.

What will I need to do?

If you agree to be involved, you will be asked to participate in an interview, which is anticipated to take approximately 30 minutes, depending on how much you would like to share.

Page 2

You will be asked to talk about your experience as an Indigenous Social Enterprise, why you did or did not choose Social Traders certification, and what your expectations are of certification.

Example of interview questions:

- Do you know about Social Traders? If so, what do you know?
- Have you considered certification/how long have you been certified?
- What are your expectations of being certified as a social enterprise?
- Do you receive/perceive any advantages/disadvantages of being Social Traders certified?
- Have you explored alternative avenues to showcase the social impacts of your enterprise?
- Is there any information or support you would find helpful in the certification process?
- Do you believe there are culturally specific aspects that need to be considered and/or included in a certification process?

Please note, you are free to stop participating at any time, without penalty or your decision affecting current or future dealings with Social Traders or the consultants.

What are the possible risks of participating?

We do not think there is any risk to you if you agree to be part of the project. However, you can skip any questions that you do not want to answer and stop participating at any time. If you are ever upset during the project, support services are listed on the last page.

What will happen to the information about me?

All information collected will remain confidential, with sensitive and potentially identifying data removed, unless rare identifying factors about your data cannot be omitted. Data will be presented at an aggregate level in the Report for Social Traders. Data collected will be stored by the consultants until the finalisation of the report, when it will be destroyed. Any data shared with Social Traders will be deidentified.

Why Participate?

Empowering Indigenous Social Enterprises contributes not only to economic growth but also to the preservation and celebration of Australia's rich Indigenous culture while promoting inclusivity, transparency, and cultural responsiveness.

Can I hear about the results of the project?

A report on a page¹ will be provided for participants, who are interested in results.

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EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR HELP DEALING WITH STRESS

ORGANISATION	CONTACT	DETAILS
13HEALTH	13 43 25 84	24/7 confidential phone service that provides health-related advice from registered nurses.
13Yam	13 92 76	24/7 free and confidential service run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, available from any mobile or pay phone. www.13yam.org.au
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS)	Call Woolloongabba to find closest clinic (07) 3240 8900	Medical Service with links to psychologists and counsellors. Social Health - ATSICHS (atsicbribsbane.org.au)
Brother to Brother	1800 435 799	24-hour crisis line for Aboriginal Men.
Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636	Information and support for anxiety, depression, and suicide prevention. www.beyondblue.org.au
Lifeline	131 114	24/7 Crisis Support www.lifeline.org.au
Mental Health Access Line	1300 642 255	24/7 confidential mental health telephone triage service and link to nearest Qld Public Mental Health Services.
Qlife	1800 184 527	Anonymous and free LGBTI peer support from 3pm to midnight daily. www qlife.org.au
Relationships Australia	1300 364 277	Monday-Friday: 8:00am-8:00pm Saturday: 10:00am - 4:00pm
WellMob	www.wellmob.org.au	Social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

In an emergency, call 000.

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REPORT LAYUP & DESIGN AND FEATURED WATERMARK ELEMENT CREATED FOR
CONSULTANTS, GAALA WATSON AND BIRRI O'DEA, BY HUMANIZE MEDIA.

