

Charles Darwin University

Submission to Senate Inquiry into
improving economic
self-determination and opportunities
for First Nations Australia

Table of Contents

Australia’s Most Connected University	3
Our Unique Context and Opportunity	3
Summary of submission and recommendations	4
Background	5
Context	5
Opportunities for, and barriers to training, employment, and business development	6
Impediments to building the economic and social infrastructure required to support economic prosperity	7
Unlocking capital and leveraging intellectual property, Indigenous Estate and First Nations skills to elevate First Nations people as economic partners	8
International and intergenerational experiences of fostering economic independence for First Nations communities	10
Conclusion	10
Appendix	11

Australia's Most Connected University

Charles Darwin University (CDU) welcomes this Senate Inquiry into improving economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations Australia. We appreciate and applaud the urgency to address the challenges and impediments, and wholeheartedly take this opportunity to contribute to solutions.

Our submission offers unique insight into 'place' that corresponds to the broader regions of the Northern Territory (NT), as well as to specific communities within. This requires a deep understanding of the Territory in terms of the social, economic, geographic, environmental and climatic challenges, as these will be critical to realising and sustaining a First Nations economic development agenda at a national level. This is particularly in relation to how it will be rolled out nationally, while taking into account the nuance and needs of the NT and its peoples.

Our vision at CDU is to be Australia's most connected university by being courageous and making a difference in the Northern Territory (NT), Australia and beyond. Our vision to making a difference, particularly in First Nations communities, directly aligns with the objectives of this Inquiry.

Our Unique Context and Opportunity

We are a unique institution, that is in a unique position to seize opportunities that many other Australian Higher Education (or dual sector) institutions don't have. This is due to a range of factors:

- We are a dual sector university that meets the education and training needs of Territorians across the NT, with CDU being an Australian leading university in First Nations student access and participation.
- We have campuses in strategic locations across the NT including Darwin, Alice Springs, Palmerston and Katherine. We also have study centres in Nhulunbuy, Jabiru and Tennant Creek and continue to deliver on Country (via a reverse delivery mode) in some of the most remote locations including Galiwinku, Maningrida, Borroloola, Wadeye and Hermannsburg.
- We are an exciting and progressive research-intensive university with a regional focus that prioritises complex issues facing Northern Australia and the Asia-Pacific.
- Our research institutes consistently perform at world standard and include the Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods (RIEL), Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR), Northern Institute (NI), Energy and Resources Institute (ERI) and The Molly Wardaguga Institute (MWI).
- We have developed and nurtured very close and genuine partnerships with First Nations communities in the NT over many, many years.
- We embrace the vitality and resilience of the Northern Territory, and can influence and shape partnerships that positively impact First Nations communities, particularly in relation to our neighbours in the Asia Pacific.

CDU is the only university in the NT and is its second largest employer. The attributes outlined above inform the recommendations of this Inquiry.

Summary of submission and recommendations

In line with the Terms of Reference, this submission has been led and delivered by CDU First Nations Leadership. We focus predominantly on the importance of on-Country education and workforce development in the Northern Territory as well as research collaborations based on co-design principles. Specific recommendations are aimed at enhancing education and training, culturally sensitive partnerships, and supporting First Nations communities in regional and remote areas. CDU's expertise within the unique education, training, and research environment of the Northern Territory is privileged.

This submission canvasses:

- Opportunities and barriers to training, employment and business development.
- Impediments to building the economic and social infrastructure required to support economic prosperity in the long term, including barriers to building the economic and social infrastructure required to support industry and business to expand and create jobs.
- Options to unlock capital and leverage intellectual property, the Indigenous Estate and First Nations skills to elevate First Nations people as economic partners; and
- The international and intergenerational experiences of fostering economic independence for First Nations communities.

Recommendations

CDU recommends the following to ensure improvement of economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations peoples in the NT:

1. Increase funding for English Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Data Literacy 'on Country' programs and incentivise teachers and support staff appropriately.
2. Develop specialised training programs tailored to the needs of remote communities, emphasising practical skills and local relevance; support education providers to develop strategies for Remote Community-Focused Training, tailored for 'on Country' delivery.
3. Expand scholarship opportunities for individuals pursuing higher education, particularly in fields relevant to Territory industry and emerging fields.
4. Allocate increased funding to First Nations research students pursuing advanced degrees which focus on areas that benefit the Territory's economic and social development.
5. Provide education infrastructure in remote communities to address education and workforce participation.
6. Implement and fund community-driven initiatives to ensure that economic and workforce development initiatives align with the cultural values and aspirations of First Nations peoples.
7. Governments commit to funding and providing ongoing cultural education and meaningful, practical reconciliation measures across all sectors and mandate robust cultural competence training for all non-Indigenous participants pursuing economic and social development opportunities; appropriately monitor as a pre-requisite prior to any commercial agreements being entered into with First Nations community partners.
8. Audit current legislation regarding Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property to ensure all current and future laws comprehensively safeguard Indigenous Knowledge Systems, languages, and all cultural artifacts.
9. Audit legislation regarding First Nation's land and resource rights, to ensure it is in alignment with international standards, and strengthen legislation governing mineral and resource exploration, extraction, and development to align with international standards.

10. The Australian government fund research into successful international models of fostering economic independence, and analyse, adapt, and trial application of identified successful international and intergenerational initiatives.

Background

Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms that Indigenous peoples have *the right* of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. Economic development success in this context, must be explicitly tied to self-determination and self-governance.

Unfortunately, the gap between the UNDRIP definition of self-determination and the notion of Indigenous self-determination, as conceptualised in Australian political discourse, is wide and in many respects serves as an inhibitor of translation of the UNDRIP definition into Australian policy and legislation. Feeding this is the fact that there are no formal structures, treaties, agreements, or instruments by which First Nations Australians *negotiate* with Australian governments. This is critical to our submission, because the lack of reciprocal recognition of each other as 'nation states' has the potential to, and in many cases already does, undermine any attempt to genuinely recognise Indigenous self-determination.

The scepticism that First Nations peoples have toward government is informed by the history of colonisation, and in more recent times a lack of progress against the Closing the Gap targets that government has set. This is further compounded by the recent 2023 Referendum defeat resulting in a strong sentiment across First Nations communities that the nation has regressed socially. Unfortunately, any concerted effort led by Government to address and invigorate Indigenous Self-Determination is met by First Nations peoples with scepticism and doubt. Therefore, for greater chance of sustainable, on-going success, all efforts must be co-designed with, and led by First Nations peoples.

Context

The NT's population of around 256,000 people is dispersed across 1.4 million square kilometres of land mass. Although the NT is home to just one percent of Australia's population, 30 percent are First Nations people. Half of the First Nations population of the Territory live in very remote Australia (Appendix, Table 1). This compares with 6 percent of the non-First Nations population. Indeed, three in every four First Nations people are impacted by the challenges of remoteness such as accessing services, the increased costs of essential goods, and fewer opportunities to participate in the economy. They are also disproportionately represented in those living in overcrowded households (nearly 25 percent compared to less than one percent of the non-First Nations population) and this increases further in areas outside Greater Darwin (45 percent in East Arnhem).

The last census showed 60 percent of First Nations Territorians speak an Australian Aboriginal language at home (Appendix, Table 2), increasing as remoteness increases (e.g. up to 94 percent in East Arnhem). The diversity of languages spoken in the NT is an expression of the richness and strength of cultural knowledge and the historical and unbroken connection to lands and seas. First Nations people have native title over significant land and sea resources in the NT and are acknowledged in the Commonwealth's Indigenous Advancement Strategy and White Paper on Developing Northern Australia as being integral to economic development in the NT and Northern Australia.

First Nations people provide a more stable population supply, contributing to NT growth, because they are more likely to remain living here. Despite these advantages, gaps in education attainment and labour force participation are significant. The labour force participation of First Nations Territorians is less than half that of the non-First Nations population in all age-groups from 15 to 64 years and can differ by as much as 60 percentage points in regional areas (Appendix, Table 4). The gap in post school qualification is nearly as stark. First Nations Territorians are significantly less likely than non-First Nations Territorians to hold all post school qualification levels, from Certificate III to higher degree levels, and again the gap widens further in the regions (Appendix, Table 5).

Opportunities for, and barriers to training, employment, and business development

Improving local capacity in community is critical to developing sustainable intergenerational economic independence. This is best realised through harnessing and leveraging local community expertise. Meeting the challenges in developing remote business ventures and workforce participation will require the development and application of culturally appropriate training on Country. To foster a dependable local workforce, prioritising extensive training and workforce development is imperative. This not only ensures stability but also harnesses the potential to generate fresh employment opportunities within the Territory.

Investment in the development of a proficient workforce through education is crucial. The advancement of environmental, tourism, education, agricultural, mining and resource sectors in the NT influences First Nations communities and presents economic growth and social improvement opportunities. Tailoring training initiatives to incentivise workforce engagement is vital, with an emphasis on programs conducive to remote community settings.

It is important to note the diversity of cultures, languages, and circumstances within the NT First Nations populations. This offers challenges - i.e. applying any singular model that might be assumed to be effective across communities likely will not work. This also offers opportunities i.e. - increased breadth and diversity of cosmologies, cultural knowledges, and practices that provide a deep layering to issues and solutions, will require a sophisticated and nuanced approach at all stages of development, particularly during implementation.

We applaud the Commonwealths 2023-24 Budget commitment to introduce a redesigned Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program from 1 July 2024, to improve access to foundation skills training for all Australians with an English language, literacy, numeracy and data literacy need.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) reports:

'It is estimated that 40 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults have minimal English literacy and that this figure can rise to as high as 70 percent in remote communities.'

In addition, the Literacy for Life Foundation revealed that up to 87 percent of Aboriginal adults in the NT were below level 3 in reading and writing and up to 94 percent below level 3 in numeracy.

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/Adultliteracy/Report/section?id=committees%2Freportrep%2F024806%2F77908

Recommendation 1

1. Increase funding for English Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Data Literacy 'on Country' programs and incentivise teachers and support staff appropriately.
2. Develop specialised training programs tailored to the needs of remote communities, emphasising practical skills and local relevance; support education providers to develop strategies for Remote Community-Focused Training, tailored for 'on Country' delivery.
3. Expand scholarship opportunities for individuals pursuing higher education, particularly in fields relevant to Territory industry and emerging fields.
4. Allocate increased funding to First Nations research students pursuing advanced degrees which focus on areas that benefit the Territory's economic and social development.

Impediments to building the economic and social infrastructure required to support economic prosperity

Sparsely populated and remote, the Territory historically fails to attract adequate and ongoing Federal investment in economic or social infrastructure. To improve economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations people in the Territory, this must change.

A significant percentage of the population is transient, and for many workers there are insufficient incentives to work or live in the Territory for the longer term. This results in a significant lack of skilled workforce, particularly in health, education and maintenance workers, resulting in frequently compromised social services and infrastructure.

There are numerous widely reported factors that prevent communities from achieving self-determination and self-sufficiency, such as:

- Inadequate access to education and training
- Poor technology
- Insufficient healthcare
- Lack of infrastructure and housing
- High unemployment rates
- Discrimination
- Limited access to finance and capital
- Geographical isolation.

Structural barriers, including complex regulatory frameworks, further exacerbate these challenges, constraining the ability of First Nations communities to participate fully in the Territory and national economies.

Appropriately addressing these infrastructure gaps requires significant, long-term investment and active partnership between Federal, State and Territory governments, private sector stakeholders, and First Nations communities. Investment in First Nations community-led ventures and supporting partnerships with the private sector will provide avenues for substantive economic empowerment. Initiatives to protect and commercialise Indigenous intellectual property rights can generate economic benefits and empower Indigenous communities to effectively control their cultural assets.

The recent Productivity Commission review of Closing the Gap advised:

'...in order to see change, business-as-usual must be a thing of the past... This means looking deeply to get to the heart of the way systems, departments and public servants work. Most critically, the Agreement requires government decision-makers to accept that they do not know what is best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people'

<https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20240218132645/https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/closing-the-gap-review/report/closing-the-gap-review-report.pdf>

Several practical opportunities for short-term progress and transformation are emerging. The 2024 budget highlights examples such as the remote training hubs in Yuendumu and Ntaria, Central Australia.

Wider University reforms, needs based funding and the University Accord recommendations provide generational opportunity for the sector and governments to work together with First Nations communities to foster genuine transformation towards a future of self-determination. Ongoing investment in cultural preservation, social supports and education may see decreases in incarceration rates, substance abuse and domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 2

1. Provide education infrastructure in remote communities to address education and workforce participation.
2. Implement and fund community-driven initiatives to ensure that economic and workforce development initiatives align with the cultural values and aspirations of First Nations peoples.
3. Governments commit to funding and providing ongoing cultural education and meaningful, practical reconciliation measures across all sectors and mandate robust cultural competence training for all non-Indigenous participants pursuing economic and social development opportunities; appropriately monitor as a pre-requisite prior to any commercial agreements being entered into with First Nations community partners.

Unlocking capital and leveraging intellectual property, Indigenous Estate and First Nations skills to elevate First Nations people as economic partners

Colonisation in Australia has had a devastating impact on Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Since the earliest days of invasion, Indigenous knowledge has been positioned as lesser than Western knowledge, which has contributed significantly to racism, and the economic, political, and social marginalisation of First Nations people.

'... there are a variety of ways in which international, federal, state and territory laws define or recognise Indigenous cultural heritage in Australia. However, the legal protection of that heritage typically depends upon the interpretation of its 'value' or 'significance', which will often need to be proven before any protection can occur.' ([Protecting Indigenous cultural heritage Dr Evan Hamman, Law and Bills Digest](#)).

Intercultural competence, genuine respect, and robust legislation - with strong protections against non-Indigenous 'interpretation' - are required before Indigenous intellectual property and skills can be leveraged to elevate First Nations people as equal economic partners. Developing greater awareness and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge in the broader Australian population is vital.

‘With the growth of Indigenous business, there needs to be a focus on: strengthening the “brand” of Indigenous business (including efforts to address issues such as “black cladding” – the practice of a non-Indigenous business entity or individual taking unfair advantage of an Indigenous business entity) and supporting Indigenous businesses to protect their intellectual property and to use their Indigenous Knowledge (including efforts to address misappropriation of Indigenous Knowledge and providing education and guidance for non-Indigenous businesses and individuals on how to approach getting free, prior and informed consent to use Indigenous Knowledge)’ (National Roadmap for Indigenous Skills, Jobs and Wealth Creation | December 2021).

Moreover, the growing recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems present unique prospects for seeding generational economic growth, particularly in sectors like environmental protection, sustainable land management, cultural tourism, resources extraction and development, and renewable energy development. Governments and non-Indigenous business partners must embrace the concept of generational sustainability for community wellbeing and understand that First Nations communities’ economic development will have greater chances of success if conducted in culturally appropriate ways and embracing cultural continuity and longer-term planning. Concepts such as family and communal ownership of assets and capital needs further attention.

‘Indigenous businesses have a potentially significant comparative advantage across a range of sectors that rely on traditional knowledge, such as environmental services (including the emerging carbon abatement sector), bush foods and nutraceuticals, and arts and cultural experiences, including through tourism. Indigenous businesses also deliver services to Indigenous communities, including health and education services, in a culturally sensitive manner which is essential for ensuring trust and accessibility of services for the Indigenous people that rely on them’. (National Roadmap for Indigenous Skills, Jobs and Wealth Creation | December 2021).

Recommendation 3

1. Audit current legislation regarding Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual property to ensure all current and future laws comprehensively safeguard Indigenous Knowledge Systems, languages, and all cultural artifacts.

Balancing economic development with the preservation of First Nations peoples rights is essential. The government must ensure all existing and future mineral and resource exploration and extraction laws and policies align with international standards related to First Nations peoples’ rights, with significant penalties for failure to do so.

These standards include adequate consultations with affected Indigenous communities, informed consent, mitigation measures, compensation, and benefit sharing. Securing inalienable rights over these lands, seas and the natural resources contained therein is crucial for First Nations peoples’ cultural and economic self-determination.

Recommendation 4

1. Audit legislation regarding First Nation’s land and resource rights, to ensure it is in alignment with international standards, and strengthen legislation governing mineral and resource exploration, extraction, and development to align with international standards.

International and intergenerational experiences of fostering economic independence for First Nations communities

There are numerous examples of international and intergenerational experiences of effectively fostering economic independence for First Nations communities, including the many successful Māori economic initiatives in New Zealand, those of the Sami in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and of multiple First Nations owned enterprises in the United States of America and Canada.

These offer valuable insights into fostering intergenerational economic independence and ongoing self-determination. These experiences underscore the importance of self-governance, informed and culturally sensitive policies, and community led development approaches in achieving sustainable economic outcomes for First Nations people.

Recommendation 5

1. The Australian government fund research into successful international models of fostering economic independence, and analyse, adapt, and trial application of identified successful international and intergenerational initiatives.

Conclusion

Achieving economic self-determination for First Nations Australians requires a wholistic approach that acknowledges and addresses institutional racism and racist attitudes, direct and indirect discrimination, systemic and structural barriers.

There are real opportunities for growth. By investing in education and training, English literacy, in vital infrastructure, improving access to essential services, fostering entrepreneurship, and recognising and celebrating Indigenous knowledges and cultural assets, Australia can make substantive progress to the Government's aspirations towards Closing the Gap, and will benefit from the full economic potential of its First Nations peoples.

Through culturally informed and sensitive collaborative efforts and inclusive policies, we can build a future where First Nations communities thrive as equal economic partners in the nation's prosperity.

The Northern Territory faces unique challenges but also possesses significant strengths in the diversity of First Nations peoples and their eagerness to engage more fully in Australia's socio-economic future.

Appendix

Snapshot of First Nations Population, Northern Territory
Key Data

Table 1: Remoteness by Indigenous status – proportion, 2021

	First Nations	Non-First Nations
Remote	24.2	18.5
Very Remote	49.9	5.6
Remote or Very Remote	74.1	24.1

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Usual residence

Notes: Data does not include population for whom Indigenous status was unknown.

First Nations includes people identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Table 2: Speaks a First Nations language at home by Indigenous status – proportion, 2021

Northern Territory		Greater Darwin		To End		East Arnhem		Big Rivers		Barkly		Central Australian	
First Nations	Non-First Nations	First Nations	Non-First Nations	First Nations	Non-First Nations	First Nations	Non-First Nations	First Nations	Non-First Nations	First Nations	Non-First Nations	First Nations	Non-First Nations
59.3	0.1	9.2	0.0	87.7	0.5	93.7	1.4	70.0	0.2	65.2	0.5	60.6	0.4

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Usual residence

Notes: Data does not include population for whom Indigenous status was unknown. Data is reported for NT Government Regions.

First Nations includes people identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Table 3: Lives in an overcrowded dwelling by Indigenous status – proportion, 2021

PROPORTION	Northern Territory				Greater Darwin				Daly/Tiwi/West Arnhem			
	First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
People living in severely crowded dwellings	15.1	16.5	0.1	0.1	0.9	0.9	0.1	0.1	24.1	25.1	0.0	0.0
People living in other crowded dwellings	7.2	7.5	0.3	0.3	1.0	1.1	0.3	0.3	11.3	11.9	0.4	0.6
Total people living in overcrowded dwellings	22.2	23.9	0.4	0.4	1.9	2.1	0.4	0.4	35.4	37.0	0.4	0.6
PROPORTION	East Arnhem				Katherine				Barkly			
	First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
People living in severely crowded dwellings	33.2	35.5	0.6	0.5	19.0	20.7	0.3	0.2	13.7	16.7	0.0	0.0
People living in other crowded dwellings	11.4	11.5	0.2	0.5	10.2	9.5	0.4	0.4	7.6	7.5	0.0	0.0
Total people living in overcrowded dwellings	44.6	47.0	0.8	1.0	29.2	30.2	0.8	0.7	21.3	24.3	0.0	0.0
PROPORTION	Alice Springs											
	First Nations		Non-First Nations									
	Male	Female	Male	Female								
People living in severely crowded dwellings	11.2	12.8	0.2	0.2								
People living in other crowded dwellings	6.3	7.2	0.2	0.3								
Total people living in overcrowded dwellings	17.5	20.0	0.4	0.5								

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Place of Enumeration

Notes: Data does not include population for whom Indigenous status was unknown.

Data is reported for ABS SA3/4 regions where Daly/Tiwi is similar to Top End, Katherine is similar to Big Rivers, Barkly is similar to Barkly, Alice Springs is similar to Central Australia. Greater Darwin and East Arnhem are equivalent.

Severely crowded dwellings are defined by the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) which is used to determine the number of bedrooms a dwelling should have to provide freedom from crowding. It accounts for the number, age, sex and inter-relationships of the household members. All usual residents of the dwelling are counted as homeless under the ABS definition.

Other crowded dwellings are also defined by CNOS. All usual residents of the dwelling are considered to be at risk of homelessness under the ABS definition.

First Nations includes people identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Table 4: Labour Force Status for age groups by Indigenous status – proportion, 2021

	Northern Territory									
	First Nations					Non-First Nations				
	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Employed	20.7	31.2	33.7	36.4	33.2	71.7	87.7	88.7	88.3	76.0
Unemployed	9.2	9.1	8.1	6.1	3.9	5.2	2.5	1.9	2.1	2.4
Labour Force Participation	30.0	40.3	41.8	42.5	37.1	76.9	90.2	90.6	90.3	78.4
	Greater Darwin									
	First Nations					Non-First Nations				
	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Employed	42.0	54.9	53.5	58.0	48.1	70.2	87.1	88.1	87.6	74.4
Unemployed	9.3	6.5	5.7	3.9	3.4	5.9	2.8	2.0	2.2	2.7
Labour Force Participation	51.3	61.4	59.2	61.9	51.5	76.2	89.9	90.2	89.8	77.1
	Top End									
	First Nations					Non-First Nations				
	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Employed	11.7	21.6	23.7	26.4	25.8	72.6	86.8	87.4	85.5	65.8
Unemployed	11.0	12.7	10.4	9.1	4.5	0.0	1.4	2.5	2.1	3.4
Labour Force Participation	22.6	34.3	34.1	35.6	30.3	72.6	88.3	89.9	87.5	69.3

	East Arnhem									
	First Nations					Non-First Nations				
	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Employed	10.0	18.4	25.4	26.8	28.6	68.0	90.8	91.8	92.8	89.2
Unemployed	10.8	9.1	9.9	6.2	4.4	3.2	0.0	1.4	1.3	1.6
Labour Force Participation	20.8	27.5	35.4	33.0	33.0	71.2	90.8	93.2	94.1	90.8
	Big Rivers									
	First Nations					Non-First Nations				
	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Employed	14.9	25.6	32.9	32.5	30.1	83.3	90.4	91.7	89.6	78.8
Unemployed	7.9	9.9	7.6	6.1	5.3	1.6	1.5	2.0	1.6	1.4
Labour Force Participation	22.7	35.5	40.5	38.7	35.4	84.8	91.9	93.7	91.1	80.2
	Barkly									
	First Nations					Non-First Nations				
	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Employed	12.8	21.0	26.4	25.6	29.3	90.0	87.7	91.8	92.6	79.9
Unemployed	9.6	12.4	9.9	6.5	2.6	2.1	1.9	0.0	0.0	1.5
Labour Force Participation	22.4	33.4	36.3	32.2	31.9	92.1	89.6	91.8	92.6	81.3
	Central Australia									
	First Nations					Non-First Nations				
	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years	15 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 45 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Employed	20.9	29.3	30.8	33.8	29.6	74.5	89.3	90.3	90.9	83.0
Unemployed	8.2	7.3	6.8	4.5	3.6	3.2	1.7	1.3	1.7	1.7
Labour Force Participation	29.1	36.6	37.6	38.3	33.3	77.7	91.0	91.5	92.6	84.7

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Usual residence

Notes: Data does not include population for whom Indigenous status was unknown.

Data is reported NT Government Regions.

Employed = people who are employed full-time, part-time, and those employed but away from work on day of census.

Unemployed = people who are unemployed and registered as looking for full-time or part-time work.

Labour force participation = people who are employed or unemployed and registered as looking for work.

First Nations includes people identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Table 5: Highest post-school qualification 15 years and over by Indigenous status - proportion, 2021

	Northern Territory				Greater Darwin				Top End			
	First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
PROPORTION												
Higher Degree Level	0.3	0.5	7.3	9.0	0.9	1.4	7.6	8.9	0.0	0.3	3.9	6.6
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	0.3	0.7	1.9	4.6	0.7	1.7	1.9	4.5	0.3	0.3	1.1	5.6
Bachelor Degree Level	1.3	3.0	15.1	23.4	3.0	6.9	15.2	22.9	0.4	0.9	11.5	20.4
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	1.9	3.4	9.4	10.8	4.1	7.4	9.4	10.7	1.2	1.2	7.5	11.1
Certificate III & IV Level	11.5	8.8	27.4	12.8	20.5	18.1	26.8	12.6	7.3	4.8	31.2	13.5
	East Arnhem				Big Rivers				Barkly			
	First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations		First Nations		Non-First Nations	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
PROPORTION												
Higher Degree Level	0.0	0.2	5.3	9.9	0.0	0.0	4.8	6.7	0.0	0.0	6.5	9.5
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	0.0	0.1	1.9	7.3	0.0	0.4	1.2	4.0	0.4	0.5	2.1	4.8
Bachelor Degree Level	0.4	1.5	14.7	25.9	1.3	2.3	10.8	22.4	1.0	1.3	12.9	22.0
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	0.8	1.8	9.0	10.1	1.2	2.6	9.8	12.2	1.3	2.5	10.1	12.4
Certificate III & IV Level	5.0	3.6	38.5	14.5	12.2	8.1	31.6	15.0	9.2	4.3	29.2	14.7

	Central Australia			
	First Nations		Non-First Nations	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
PROPORTION				
Higher Degree Level	0.5	0.4	7.7	10.5
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	0.3	0.6	2.1	5.4
Bachelor Degree Level	0.8	2.5	17.2	26.5
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	1.1	2.9	10.2	10.5
Certificate III & IV Level	9.8	7.6	26.2	12.5

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 202, Usual residence

Notes: Data does not include population for whom Indigenous status was unknown.

Cert I&II are considered to be equivalent to year 10 schooling.

Data is reported for NT Government Regions.

Higher Degree Level includes qualifications of PhD, Masters (by research or by coursework).

First Nations includes people identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.