

# POLICY FUTURES

## *A Reform Agenda*



### First Nations First: Targeted investment to grow a dynamic and sustainable First Nations fashion sector.

The First Nations fashion sector has seen exponential growth in recent years, employing Indigenous Australians from urban centres to the most remote communities of Australia. It is a multifaceted industry with the potential for extensive and sustained cultural, social, and economic outcomes and to meet Closing the Gap targets.

First Nations fashion programs and organisations are carving new pathways for First Nations people and creating one of Australia's most marketable export commodities. This growth sector provides a significant investment opportunity for the Australian Government, but lacks due recognition at both a research and policy level.

First Nations fashion needs coordinated state and federal investment in First Nations-led businesses and organisations for continued and sustainable growth and to realise the sector's significant potential.

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2016 Churchill Fellow (WA)

## Key Policy Recommendations

1

### Recognise the value of the First Nations fashion sector through funded research and the co-design of a coordinated national strategy

The Australian Government should fund First Nations-led research and resource development to document the sector's value and measure its impacts. It should engage First Nations sector leaders and organisations to co-design and develop a coordinated national strategy.

2

### Resource First Nations fashion programs through federal and state funding schemes

Provide targeted funding schemes for all First Nations organisations within the fashion industry supply chain, scaled to the sector's needs, with flexible options ranging from short-term business scaling and seed funding to sustained operational funding for First Nations fashion organisations.

3

### Commit to First Nations cultural leadership

Accept and implement recommendations from Arts Law, Copyright Agency and the Indigenous Art Code to protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and educate the broader fashion industry. Incentivise and subsidise First Nations led cultural competency and awareness training for fashion businesses, organisations, and government departments.

4

### Improve regional and remote access to education, training, manufacturing, and business development

Fund fashion related infrastructure for manufacturing in remote and regional areas that can support on the job training, employment and improve access and capacity for remote based fashion and textiles businesses to grow. Resource existing and incentivise the development of new regional and remote textile and fashion training and business mentoring programs.

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## Closing the Gap

**Recommendations support the following targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:**

### Target 7

Youth are engaged in employment or education

### Target 15

People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical, and economic relationship with their land and waters

### Target 8

Strong economic participation and development of people and their communities

### Target 16

Cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing



## Potential value

The Australian fashion industry is worth

# \$27.6 billion

annually, including \$7.2 billion in exports, and employs 489,000 people.

The potential of a First Nations fashion industry, based on conservative estimates from population statistics of 3%, is approximated at

# \$816 million

and would provide much needed employment pathways for First Nations people.



## Making impact

### Australian Fashion Week //

**7%** of collections shown in 2022 were First Nations labels from **13** First Nations designer collections and a total of **56** designers.

**Australian Fashion Week was opened and closed by First Nations Fashion Design for two years running (2021, 2022).**



**#AusIndigenousfashion**  
62.2K Instagram followers

**Country To Couture**, Darwin-based Indigenous Fashion runway has grown from 7 textile collections in 2016 to 18 designed fashion collections in 2022.



## Evidence of programs fostering sustainable creative industries

### Indonesia Fashion Forward Exchange Program – British Council and the Indonesian Fashion Industry

Since 2012, the program has supported more than 50 emerging Indonesian designers through training programs run by Indonesian and UK experts. Designers have grown from being local and bespoke to meeting international standards. This has created a significant rise in demand for Indonesian designs to nurture an innovative and sustainable Indonesian fashion industry. Jakarta Fashion Week is now the largest fashion event in South East Asia.

### Indigenous Visual Arts Sector – IVAIS Funding Model

IVAIS supports the operations of 80 Indigenous-owned art centres and many art fairs, regional hubs, and industry service organisations. Each year the Australian Government invests \$21 million to support the program. In 2018/19, IVAIS supported organisations generated \$31 million in sales and contributed \$70 million to the Australian economy, representing a significant return on investment.