ADVENTURE NORTH
(Est. 2002, Indigenous Employees - 50% Indirect)
A Tropical North Queensland based Tour Company that links three highly acclaimed aboriginal tours with a range of mainstream operators from Cairns to Cooktown.

DREAMTIME CULTURAL CENTRE
(Est. 1994, Indigenous Employees - 100%)
Australia's longest operating Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Rockhampton) inclusive of conference and meeting facilities. The twelve hectare holding is home to Dreamtime Tours, replica burial grounds, rock art, gunyahs and traditional ceremonial sites.

GREYHOUND AUSTRALIA
(Est. 1920, Indigenous Employees - 1%)
An iconic Australian business and one of the oldest coach companies in the world with a travel schedule daily to over 1000 destinations across Australia.

CAPTA GROUP
(Est. 1996, Indigenous Employees - 24%)

REUBEN'S MILL SITE ON HVAR
(Est. 1995, Indigenous Employees - 97%)
Multi awarded Cairns located experiential Eco Lodge that combines the integration of nature, Aboriginal culture and spa treatments.

ECHO CREEK ADVENTURE & CULTURAL CENTRE
(Est. 2002, Indigenous Employees - 60%)
Tully based adventure and cultural camp that has fostered strong relationships with local Indigenous people to deliver an authentic cultural product called 'Spirit of the Rainforest Tour'.

FUSION GRAPHICS
(Est. 2002, Indigenous Employees - 60%)
A Cairns based cafe that has become a sanctuary for customers looking for good food and a damn great coffee. Sixty percent of the workforce is Indigenous.

KOOKABURRA TOURS
(Est. 2005, Indigenous Employment - 60% Indirect)
A locally owned and operated Townsville based Tour Company that links a number of indigenous tourism businesses under the banner of the 'Dreamtime Tracks'.

RIDERSLIFE KAPRABEGA
(Est. 2009, Indigenous Employees - 27%)
A Brisbane based joint partnership that combines Aboriginal Dance 'inope performances, a number of cultural experiences and land/water based 'adventure' activities.

TJAPARRA
(Est. 1982, Indigenous Employees - 64%)
A landmark Tropical North Queensland Cultural Park Dance Theatre that incorporates traditional dance and interpretive activities. For ease of reference each company has been exempted under the four identified potential barriers to the employment of Indigenous people:

“The Queensland Tourism Industry Council has selected twelve businesses (shown on this page) to demonstrate methodology in dealing with these potential barriers.”
The fully integrated employment of indigenous people in mainstream tourism businesses in Queensland is not common place.

QTIC would like to acknowledge the funding provided by Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to support the development of this resource.

QTIC gratefully acknowledges the use of images supplied from Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland and the QTIC Champions Network.

Caution:
Take care before viewing this document as it may contain images of and reference to deceased Indigenous people.
The fully integrated employment of Indigenous people in mainstream tourism businesses in Queensland is not common place.

Whilst roles do vary according to business size and type, in the main, Indigenous people are generally 'pigeon holed' to perform cultural activities and tour guiding responsibilities.

The proliferation of sector SME's (small to medium sized businesses) coupled with a lack of obvious career path opportunities has hindered progress and deterred potential employers from seeking out Indigenous people to be a part of their workplace.

Unfortunately to most it is perceived that it is just too difficult and time consuming to consider, when in reality sound process and good business practice will bear outstanding results.

Equally there is a lack of confidence on behalf of Indigenous people to make direct approaches to employers for jobs – hence the necessity for a range of interventions to build connections.

The purpose of this document is to outline some of the challenges facing employers and by case study cross reference provide an Indigenous employment methodology format that will provide practical solutions to real business issues.

Considerations for the successful employment of Indigenous people. Four have been identified:

1. PLANNING TO EMPLOY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
   - Reconciliation Statement
   - Action Plan
   - Flexibility in Planning
   - Policy
   - Strategy

2. RECRUITMENT
   - Stereotyping
   - Career Pathways
   - Job Matching

3. APPOINTMENT
   - Process – Two-Way Cultural Awareness
   - Cultural Individuality

4. MANAGEMENT
   - Retention
   - Conflict Resolution
   - Dealing with Death
   - Career Path
   - Integration
   - Secession Planning
PLANNING TO EMPLOY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
Greyhound Australia

'Building on our existing relationships with Indigenous Australians and fostering an appreciation of Indigenous cultures is a current goal for Greyhound Australia Pty Ltd. One way we have identified to achieve this goal is to support and resource strategies aimed at the recruitment and career development of Indigenous staff'.

Currently the company has 1.4 percent (84) Indigenous employees with an aim to increase the percentage to 5 percent by 2011.

THE STRATEGIES

GOAL

one

Become an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians:

- Promote employment opportunities to Indigenous Australians.
- Establish links with Indigenous employment service providers.
- Increase cross-cultural (both ways) awareness throughout the business.
- Develop systems to meet the special needs of Indigenous staff.
- Adapt induction programs to suit different cultures and learning styles.

GOAL

two

Increase participation of Indigenous Australians in vacant positions

- Review of recruitment processes to ensure they are culturally appropriate.
- Aim to recruit at least ten Indigenous employees across Australia each year.
- Recognise the skills and contributions of Indigenous staff.
- Enable Indigenous employees to develop their own goals and objectives.
- Support employee development.

GOAL

three

Develop systems to maintain Indigenous Australians in employment

- Set Indigenous employment targets
- Report on workplace diversity
- Evaluate the Indigenous Employment Strategy
- Use existing networks to promote employment of Indigenous Australians in other organisations
Tjapukai

‘The true challenge for innovators is in pioneering new horizons and succeeding is having their creation accepted. So we knew we had to proceed deftly; we had to win over a local community (both black and white), we had to win over a tourism industry unsure where to place a product like ours, and we had to win the hearts and minds of an audience who had never before been exposed to anything like what we were doing. Doing it first also meant we needed to do it so well we became the benchmark that those that followed us emulated’.

From its inception, the design and content of the park has been a co-operative and consultative venture.

An Employment Strategy Agreement has been developed between Tjapukai and the Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training. The strategy involves a series of program elements comprising:

Recruitment to permanent positions in the company in a range of occupations including management, administration, retail, hospitality, performing arts, grounds and maintenance.

Development of a variety of skills enhancement, empowerment and career development programs to meet the identified needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff that have been recruited by the company.

Cross cultural awareness training seminars for managers, supervisors and co-workers to create a receptive workplace environment and to influence career advancement and promote harmony and productivity within the workplace.

Tjapukai has also a ‘school recruitment program’ with a number of local high schools that incorporate an employment ethos of no school, no work. The program not only fosters work experience for young Indigenous people it also becomes a catalyst for career pathway employment.
CapTA Group

In an endeavour to attract more Indigenous employees to their workforce, CapTA have instituted a Structured Training and Employment Programme (STEP – funded by DEEWR). It is tailored to assist Indigenous employees with long term employment goals (including career pathways) and to provide support through indigenous mentoring.

The CapTA Group:

Values an inclusive and diverse work force

Respects the cultural, social and religious systems practised by Indigenous Australian people

Gives due recognition to the diversity of Indigenous Australian culture

Seeks to maximise employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians

Sees in-house and formal training and mentoring as a means of retention and career development for Indigenous Australian employees

Why an Indigenous Employment Strategy?

The CapTA Group recognises that Indigenous Australians are underrepresented in the workforce in general and in the Tourism industry in particular. The Cairns region, in which the CapTA Group is based, has a comparatively high proportion of Indigenous Australians within its population.

The Importance of the Strategy to the Business

With the current decline in the average size of Australian families there is an increasing overall decline in the working age population. Australia’s Indigenous population is growing at a faster rate than that of the non-Indigenous population. The current skills shortages in the Tourism industry, and the growth in the number of young working age people who are Indigenous Australians in the local region makes them a valuable labour source. By employing, training and developing the skills of local Indigenous Australians we can fill the dual role of alleviating our skills shortages and decreasing the regional Indigenous Australian unemployment rate.
Recruitment
Fusion Organics

The success of this business has been underpinned by dynamic staff and a creative team environment.

‘From what I gather we run differently from most businesses. There is a lot of co-creation, cross training (some of my staff had never worked before) as well as individual role training, lots of staff input and freedom of expression. Somehow it seems to work and we are always busy’.

Fusion Organics’ first Indigenous staff member was recruited through NEATO, an employment agency. Subsequent vacancies were filled by cousins, brothers, sisters and friends of the first employee. The workplace has become an extension of the Indigenous community and is more in line with an extended family concept.

As part of the recruitment process, the business ethos is discussed both formally and informally with the following values outlined:

- Cultural equality
- Ownership
- Responsibility
- Respect
- Consistency
- Believability
- Opportunity (to gain ‘on the job’ training through an established business network)
- Reward

The business now has an Indigenous workforce that has over three years’ service experience across a diverse range of roles including management, chefs and baristas.

Adventure North

Recruitment in tourism is not always about a direct relationship between employer and employee. The linking together of product by tour operators has opened up a myriad of opportunity and diversity for Indigenous people.

Established product and the creation of new product being packaged under one umbrella have created highly successful recruitment and business growth opportunities.

Adventure North has brought together three Indigenous products under the banner of the ‘Bama Way’. It showcases some of Tropical North Queensland’s unique Aboriginal culture with Guurrbri Tours in Cooktown, the Walker Family Tours based in Wujal Wujal and Kuku Yalanji Cultural Tours at Cooya Beach.

The management of Adventure North also provides some of the Indigenous businesses with financial management advice and business best practice methodology.

The willingness to empower others has led to the development of additional product and business opportunities for Indigenous families that make up the ‘Bama Way’.
Appointment
Echo Creek Adventure and Cultural Centre

'The relationship with the local Indigenous people has taken many years to cultivate. Trust comes from mutual respect and an understanding that cultural integration from a product and business perspective is a long term process and project. Negotiation is not about doing the deal, it is about creating an environment where all bring something to the table and all take something home from the table. The Indigenous people control the cultural and packaging component of the product'.

The Echo Creek Adventure and Culture Centre is committed to ensuring that Indigenous employees are fully assimilated into the business and are involved in a two way cultural awareness process. It is of equal importance that employer and employee have understanding of each others culture.

Unlike the majority of businesses profiled, this business deals predominately with school aged children – some whom have not met an Indigenous person and quite naturally are extremely inquisitive. In so much to ensure that Indigenous staff feel confident to speak about their culture and this may need to be supported through elders and mentors.

Appointment also takes into consideration the necessity of cultural individuality. As in every workplace a work/life balance ensures better productivity and harmony. Given the nature of Echo Creek Adventure and Cultural Centre's advance booking structure employees are able to plan work contact hours and home/community responsibilities accordingly.

Kookaburra Tours

Based on the linking of tourism product by a tour operation model, Kookaburra Tours has forged significant relationships and partnership with seven Indigenous business operators.

The willingness to gain a real understanding of Indigenous culture and then mentor individuals with two- way cross cultural training has contributed significantly to the businesses success.

A partnership has also been established with the Townsville Regional Tourism Organisation Indigenous Unit to enable the delivery of Nationally Accredited Training Courses to assist with the employment and the product development for local Indigenous groups.

Kookaburra Tours engrained philosophy in regard to appointment is gaining a complete understanding of the cultural product and the Indigenous individuals that make up the businesses that provide that product.

This process ensures all are very much on the 'same page' in terms of the collaboration and the planning direction the collective is heading.

Furthermore as the responsibility of marketing 'The Dreamtime Tours' is undertaken by Kookaburra Tours this makes practical business sense.

In terms of allowing for cultural individuality, the company is required to coordinate multi- businesses and significant numbers of Indigenous people.

Respect, genuine understanding and the willingness to learn and listen creates an environment where all can prosper.
Management
Dreamtime Cultural Centre

In the words of General Manager – Rob Blair

"We have made plenty of mistakes, but we hope we haven’t made any of the same mistakes. It’s a learning process. We don’t get tied up in politics. We make sure our staff talks about our culture but not the politics associated with it. Whatever they want to talk about when they get out of Dreamtime that’s fine. Boomerang throwing is just that, didgeridoo is how the instrument sounds and how you continue with that circular breathing."

"We say that from our point of view, because we are Indigenous, we have to try that little bit harder. I know that sounds a little difficult to comprehend but we have to really establish ourselves. I always said a smile does not go astray but if you get off your butt and start to look after people the way you would expect them to look after you. I think that is our motto here.

Self-discipline, being able to get off your butt without someone telling you to. I tell all the staff when we start with training people it’s just like your kids at home; you can put them on the right track and in the right frame of mind but you can’t sit in their back pocket. So when they get out in front of the public, you put enough emphasis on the things you want to talk about and how to talk but you can’t be in their back pocket.

We see it as not only looking after the culture, but also, we are on the same commercial basis as the motel down the road.

We have to be better than them because we are Indigenous. Visitors, conference and motel guests are not coming here to feel sorry for us because we are black. They are coming here for the service and we have to deliver and it has to be better than anybody else.

We have this thing in black communities at the moment which we call Murrī time. What we have to do is get rid of Murrī time and concentrate on the real time because at the end of the day that is our bread and butter and the smaller the operator the better the service you have to deliver to those people or they won’t be back again."
Riverlife Mirrabooka

Business Aims

To deliver a sustainable and interactive Aboriginal tourism product, that exhibits and respects the rich Indigenous cultural heritage of the region.

To develop deep friendship and respect, resulting in a smooth working relationship between Riverlife staff and the Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Troupe.

To promote reconciliation and understanding between the traditional owners of the land, the Nunukul Yuggera Yugimbir and Nugi Aboriginal people and visitors, participants and the wider Brisbane community.

To be professional, authentic and relevant in delivering unique Aboriginal tourism experiences that provide a real understanding of local Indigenous customs, art, culture and heritage.

Incorporating an Indigenous component in the Riverlife product mix has created opportunity and mutual benefits for the joint venture. The established business venue and product has anchored the regular exposure of the Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Troupe.

The business has embarked upon a cross training programme with members of the dance troupe actively being involved in outdoor ‘adventure’ activities, booking services and hospitality. This added dynamic to the business has been particularly well received by the predominately international client base.

Joint venture success takes time and is based on partnership and partnership is about trust. The business working relationship between the two Directors is critical to the overall business well-being. The division of responsibilities and the internal understanding of service provision have been pivotal in the business planning.

The promotion and commitment to partnership, ownership and responsibility are cornerstone qualities of the operation.

The preparedness of the Directors to engender Aboriginal leadership and professional and business development has been critical to the success of the joint venture.

In observational terms, Riverlife is a classic example of the business parlance ‘if you are not planning for success – you are positioning for failure.'
Daintree Eco Lodge & Spa (Karrba Foundation)

The Daintree Eco Lodge & Spa through the Karrba Foundation has established a partnership that inextricably links the business with the Kuku Yalanji people.

The Foundation is based on solid planning:

Our plan through the Karrba (Healing) Foundation is to assist in providing improved outcomes for Aboriginal people while contributing to the cultural and social wealth of all Australians.

Objectives:

- Provide and facilitate education and training.
- Provide and facilitate employment.
- Create and facilitate and improve the quality of health care and operate initiatives for better health and wellbeing, including the promotion of health education generally, to promote the prevention, control and treatment of those diseases that affect the KuKu Yalanji Aboriginal people in particular and enhance the general standard of health care.
- Encourage and foster the interest and financial support of governments, trusts and other grant bodies, corporations and other benefactors.
- Develop sustainable business opportunities in the region for tour guiding, Aboriginal art and cultural workshops.
- Promote and encourage the acquisition of business and management skills and to support the development of successful business enterprise.
- Facilitate the development of tourism services and products.
- Assist in evaluating existing and future business opportunities.
- Encourage and support the Kuku Yalanji Aboriginal people in retaining and observing their customary values, traditions and culture.

The Daintree Eco – Lodge has a long-term commitment to providing a career pathway for Indigenous people and recognises the importance of cultural differences and their impact on the employer and employee relationship.

This commitment and a relationship based on trust and respect has enabled significant opportunities for the development of Indigenous people employment and the sharing and preserving of their rich and ancient culture.

In the past thirteen years the Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa have employed and trained over forty Indigenous staff.

In Conclusion:

Whilst the businesses in these case studies have been categorised in one of four broad employment stages, all demonstrate strong commitment to the other three.

This document has endeavoured to highlight real life working examples of businesses that have successfully employed Indigenous people.

In all cases the employer and employee relationship is based on mutual respect and trust.

The larger organisations have extensive documented strategies and clear Indigenous employee career pathways.

The smaller organisations work closely mentoring and empowering individuals.

It is trusted that the preceding Case Studies will assist in the successful employment of more Indigenous people in Queensland tourism businesses.