

## ICN Queensland's Black Business Finder Exceeds Growth Forecasts

ICN Gateway's Black Business Finder is fast becoming one of Australia's most successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business directories with 224 Queensland companies having now registered with the online program since its launch in October 2012.

Commissioned by the Queensland Government, ICN Queensland developed Black Business Finder specifically to encourage growth and development of Indigenous businesses in Queensland by linking them to major project contractors and work opportunities across the state.

To date, 224 businesses have registered with the database, which employ a total of 3,590 Australians of which 1,786 are Indigenous. This exceptional result was achieved in just over 12 months and has positioned Black Business Finder on par and, in some cases, even ahead of many of Australia's older, more widely known Indigenous databases.

In comparison to the other states and territories, New South Wales' Indigenous database has 236 registered businesses after four years of operation, Victoria's has 172 registered after 14 years of operation and Black Business Finder's registered business figures are on par with Australia's national database, which has been in operation for five years.

### Engaging Indigenous Businesses

Looking to increase demand from both the public and private sectors for goods and services from Indigenous businesses, the Queensland Government

commissioned the Industry Capability Network (ICN) Queensland, a brand of QMI Solutions, to develop Black Business Finder (BBF) in early 2012.

With a 2011 national census showing 6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians operated their own business, compared to 15.2% of the non-Indigenous population, the Queensland Government sought a solution that would provide greater support to Indigenous businesses, as they are the prime movers of Indigenous employment.

The objective for BBF was twofold – to provide Indigenous businesses with the opportunity to participate in supply chains for major projects listed on the database and to provide government or businesses looking to source goods and services from Indigenous suppliers with a platform in which to gain more information about their capabilities.

Going live in October 2012, BBF, which is a free online database, had 158 listed Indigenous businesses by July 2013, exceeding initial targets, and by September 2013 this had risen 14.6% to 181.

"BBF brings invaluable benefits to Queensland," Thacker explained. "It is helping to bring income into Indigenous households and is working to bolster the state's economy by encouraging project developers to employ local suppliers."



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Indigenous businesses have been connected to many new work opportunities through BBF, including major organisations Thies, Arrow Energy and QGC.

Member of the BBF Steering Committee and Director of Queensland manufacturing company Pro Weld, Bruce Stedman states that since registering his business with the program a year and a half ago, he's experienced significant success.

*"Through Black Business Finder, we've won contracts in Cooper Pedy and in Papua New Guinea that are worth in excess of \$2 million to the company,"* he said. *"It's made a huge, positive difference to our bottom line."*

Manager of Indigenous Business at ICN Nicholas Thacker adds the database is successfully meeting its objective of integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations into private sector and government supply chains and is helping to boost the local economy.

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## Building Black Business Finder into a Success

BBF began as an online database connecting Indigenous businesses with a view to connect major Queensland contractors and increase access to major projects in Queensland.

However, Thacker believes one of the key factors to BBF's rapid success is that the database is applicable and beneficial to all Queensland Indigenous businesses looking to make new business connections and to drive growth.

*"We developed BBF to be a directory that any Queenslander can go to for information on Indigenous businesses throughout the state in a wide*

*"It strives to support all Indigenous businesses by introducing them to potential partners, suppliers and customers that are outside of their everyday network."*



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variety of industries from construction and mining through to arts and retail," explained Thacker. "It is a program that strives to support all Indigenous businesses by introducing them to potential partners, suppliers and customers that are outside of their everyday network"

"It enables businesses to get their name out more prominently in their industries," adds Stedman. "The fact that it only sends through tender opportunities that are relevant to each individual business' interests and capabilities is also hugely valuable as it makes sure that they are only spending time applying for contracts that they have the greatest chance of winning."

Stedman is one of eight leading experts on BBF's dedicated steering committee, who were selected for their experience within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

"The members of the steering committee have a genuine passion for growing Indigenous business and bring new and innovative ideas to the table, making BBF so much more than just another business directory," Thacker says.

"I think this team is one of the core reasons why the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have embraced BBF so quickly."

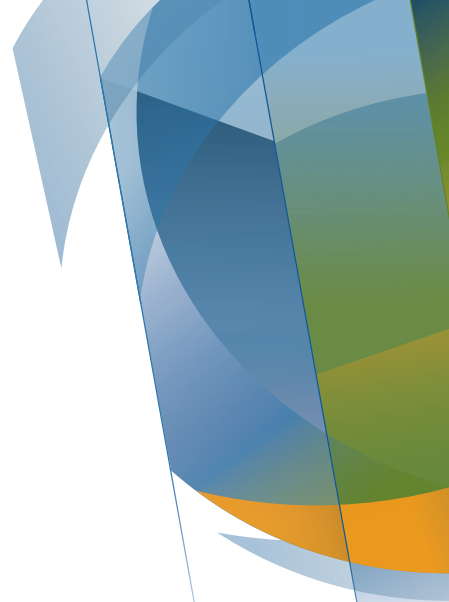
## The Future of Black Business Finder

Now established and going from strength to strength, ICN staff are working to actively promote BBF as a complete resource for businesses and major project proponents.

Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses through targeted training activities across five core areas; people management, point of sale, inventory management, financial management and accredited management streams is supported through the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDIP).

As part of this new segment of BBF, ICN is also looking to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to develop strong capability statements that will effectively grab the attention of contractors looking for suppliers on the online database.

In just over a year, the Queensland Government's and ICN's Black Business Finder has achieved significant success, which through innovative new developments and strategic leadership from a passionate steering committee, only looks to grow over the next few years.



## About Black Business Finder

Black Business Finder is a free online database that is supported by the Queensland Government, hosted by QMI Solutions Ltd and part of the ICN Gateway. It is a resource for major project owners to source Indigenous businesses to provide goods and services for major projects throughout Queensland. ICN Gateway is a nationally recognised connection point for buyers and suppliers.

For more information, please visit [www.bbf.org.au](http://www.bbf.org.au)



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