



Better ways to grow First Nations tourism than existing approaches

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The two questions we will address

1. Why more Government support for First Nations tourism is now justified?
2. How to do Government support for First Nations tourism more effectively

Fortunately, the answers to these questions are closely linked.





Why First Nations tourism should have a higher Government funding priority?

Offers major potential benefits for the more pressing social and economic issues facing First Nations people. First Nations tourism can increase:

1. Non-Indigenous Australians' knowledge about First Nations culture and the importance of Country
2. First Nations people's economic self-determination and entrepreneurship
3. First Nations people's opportunities to live on Country with employment on Country
4. First Nations people exposing their young people to experiences on Country in community

Other Government programs have made limited progress in these areas. It's time for increased First Nations Tourism to be also used to target these major national goals



What's wrong with our current approach to developing First Nations tourism ?



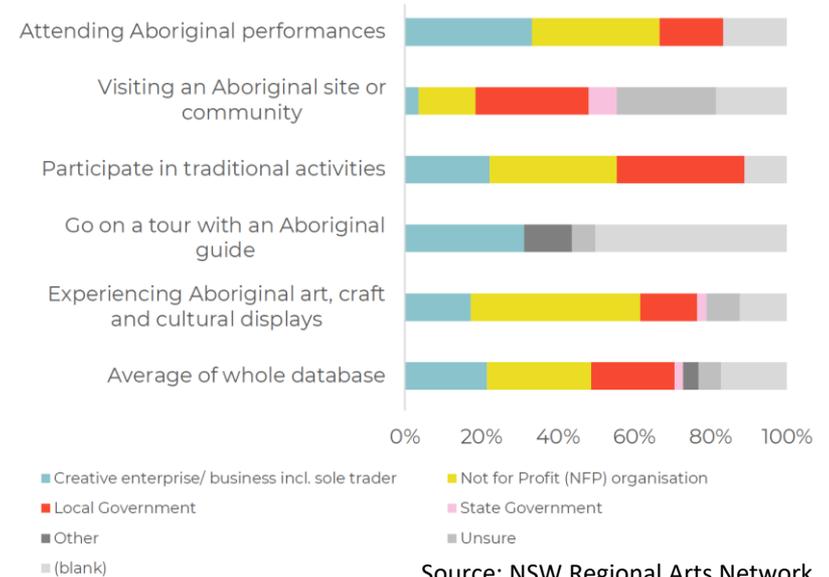
A large gap exists between Governments expectations on First Nations tourism and business reality...

How can we jump this gap?

Problem:

We are not sure how much First Nations tourism we have or who owns it

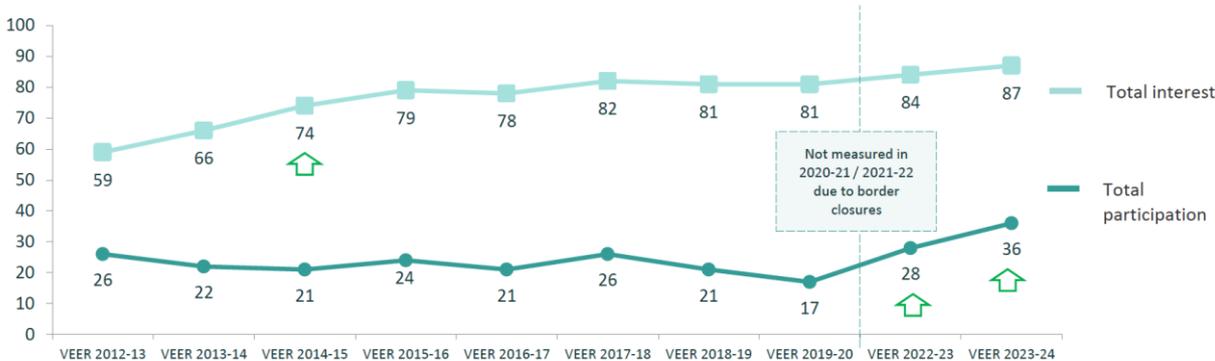
- Indigenous culture activities were particularly poorly represented on the ATDW
- Of the 3,262 cultural tourism experiences in the database
- Just 3% employed Aboriginal people (97), while a further 2% (65) were fully or partially Aboriginal-owned or operated
- Of the 154 Indigenous cultural experiences recorded in the database, 14% (21) were not Aboriginal owned or operated. A large portion (38% or 59) were classified as 'unsure' or with ownership not disclosed
- Aboriginal art, craft and cultural displays were most likely to be operated as not-for-profits (44% or 36 of 81), while Aboriginal sites or community experiences were most likely to be operated by local or state government (37% or 10 of 27), at a rate higher than the overall ATDW average (24%).



Source: NSW Regional Arts Network

Problem: Closing the gap between interest and participation

- Interest and participation increasing, but the gap stays
- The gap is biggest for internationals and smallest for intrastate



	 Intrastate	 Interstate	 International
Interested	88	81	84
Participated	29	36	42

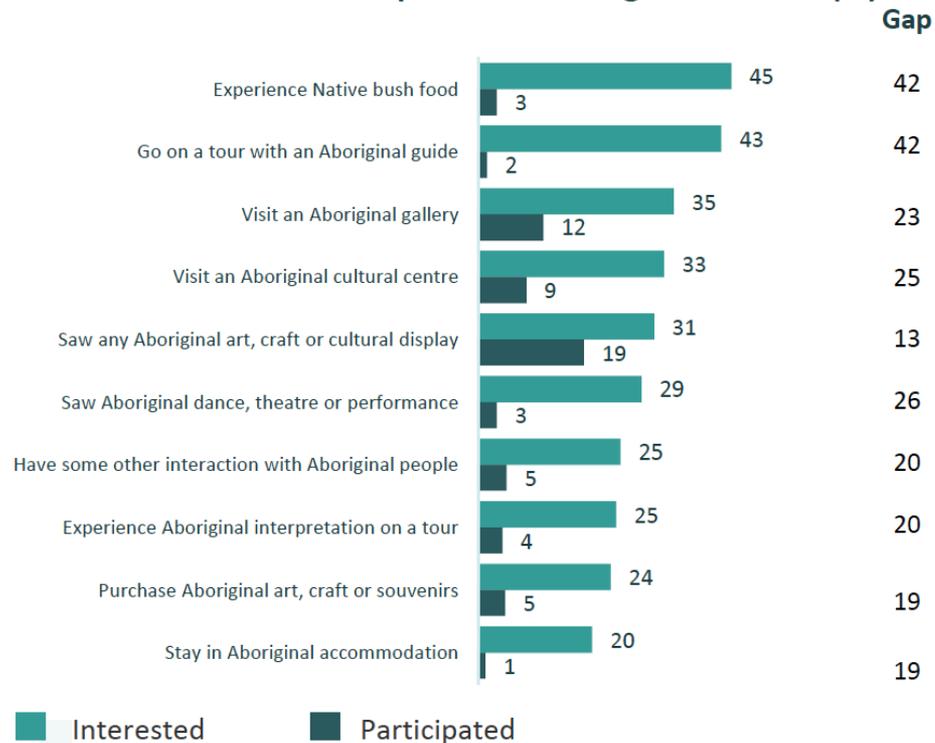


Problem: Closing the gap between interest and participation

The gap exists in every Aboriginal tourism experience monitored

Smaller gaps are with free experiences, bigger gaps are commonly where larger economic benefits lay

2023-24 Interest vs. Participation in Aboriginal tourism (%)



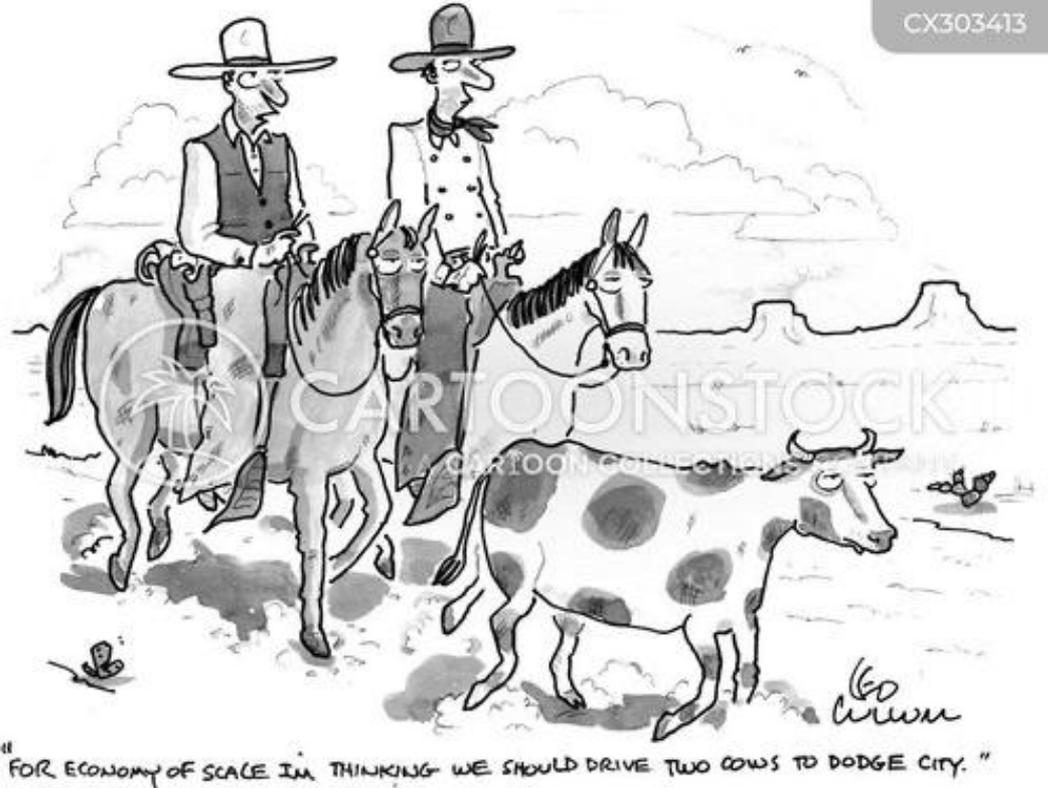
Problem: Funding support operates in a bubble?

- It's fragmented and patchy
- Grant applications drafted in isolation
- No connectivity with potential partners in Indigenous tourism or wider visitor economy



Problem: First Nations businesses are left too small

- No economy of scale to get things cheaper
- No profit for reinvestment and expansion
- With the owner focussed on day to day operations, no time to grow the business



WA partnership – Ngula Jar Island

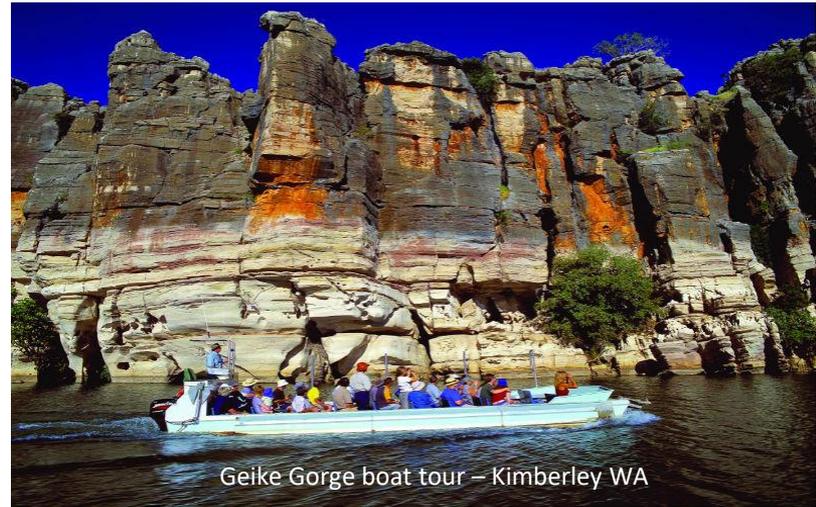
- Three way partnership between Seabourn (Carnival Corp), State/Fed Govt and WGAC
- WGAC created visitor pass to source funding for tourism
- Kimberley coastal cruising growing and a high yield sector
- Partnership is building a base camp for performers to live and work 14 day shifts in the dry season
- Seabourn Cruises have made several major contributions





Problem: Not enough First Nations accommodation

- Visitors do First Nations tours and visit attractions but normally stay in mainstream non-Indigenous owned accommodation
- Creates a fragmented experience
- Limits financial benefits for First Nations
- Limits reach of First Nations storytelling and selling other First Nations experiences



Our first approach...
Increase the focus on selling stays on country
– to fish where the fish are

There were 16 tourists who bought commercial visitor accommodation for every tourist who bought an organised tour in the most recent year. These tourists spent nearly 30 times more on visitor accommodation than on organised tours.

FISH WHERE THE FISH ARE	2023/24 spending by visitors with spending on		2023/24 visitors with spending on	
	Accommodation (\$ million)	Organised Tours (\$ million)	Accommodation (millions)	Organised Tours (millions)
Domestic Overnight Visitors	31,000	631	49.0	1.5
Domestic Day Trip Visitors	0	73	0.0	0.7
International Visitors	8,400	660	3.6	1.1
Total	39,400	1,364	52.6	3.3

Source: Tourism Research Australia National and International Visitor Survey results for 2023/24



Selling stays on Country is a rich but as yet little exploited opportunity

- Only 3% of tourists (domestic and international) who have an Aboriginal visitor experience, have a camping experience on Aboriginal land.
- 50% more Australian visitors undertook Aboriginal tourism experiences than international
- First Nation tourism will be heavily reliant on Australian resident visitors
- Stays on Country is a great way to expose Australians to First Nations tourism and values, as well as provide much greater revenues from First Nations tourism

Adult 15+ visitors with Aboriginal tourism experience in year ending March 2024 (000s)	Domestic Overnight Visitors	International Visitors	Domestic day trip Visitors	Total	Share of domestic travellers in total visitors with activities	Share of total visitors with Aboriginal tourism experiences with particular experiences
Experience aboriginal art / craft and cultural displays	622	827	185	1,634	49%	57%
Visit an aboriginal site / community	481	190	252	923	79%	32%
Attend aboriginal performance	147	158	68	372	58%	13%
Go on a tour with an Aboriginal guide	209	83	61	353	77%	12%
Participate in traditional activities	199	106	128	433	75%	15%
Have an Aboriginal food experience	83	63	37	183	66%	6%
Have a camping experience on Aboriginal land	41	32	-	72	56%	3%
Total	1,205	1,104	558	2,868	61%	100%
Source: TRA, National and International Visitor Survey						

Four benefits of selling stays on country



1. Greater job opportunities for First Nation people – total visitor accommodation employment was 107,000 jobs in the August 2021 Census, many times the scale of employment in visitor tours
2. Greater opportunities to share First Nation cultures with visitors and the importance of Country
3. Greater opportunity for many more First Nation People to live and work on Country
4. Increases opportunities to grow associated businesses of tours and art sales

Selling stays on country – shifts in the opportunity

An aerial photograph of a rural property. In the foreground, two modern, single-story cabins with large glass windows and dark roofs are situated on a grassy field. Behind them, a tennis court and a swimming pool are visible. The property is surrounded by rolling hills with scattered trees and a mix of green and brown grass. In the background, there are more hills and a cloudy sky.

Focus shifted from international to domestic tourism due to COVID and urban to regional and remote visitation

Growth in the commercial caravan park and camping sector, many more caravans bought over COVID

Pre-fabricated cabin/tiny home costs have not increased at the same rate as construction costs for hotels and motels, while finding skilled tradesmen in many regional areas has become more challenging so pre-fabricated buildings lower cost, quicker and more readily developed

Key challenge for visitors to many regional areas is finding high-quality visitor accommodation;

– many hotel/motel properties are outdated and tired, and greater interest by visitors in having own space

– there is often a gap in regional markets for visitor accommodation near First Nation Country

Selling stays on country – winning with this opportunity

Visitor accommodation & supporting infrastructure needs more capital investment than for tours
- a larger upfront contribution from Governments is necessary, which is a barrier overdue for dismantling beyond WA

Need some First Nations accommodation success stories

Also need training for First Nations accommodation staff and management



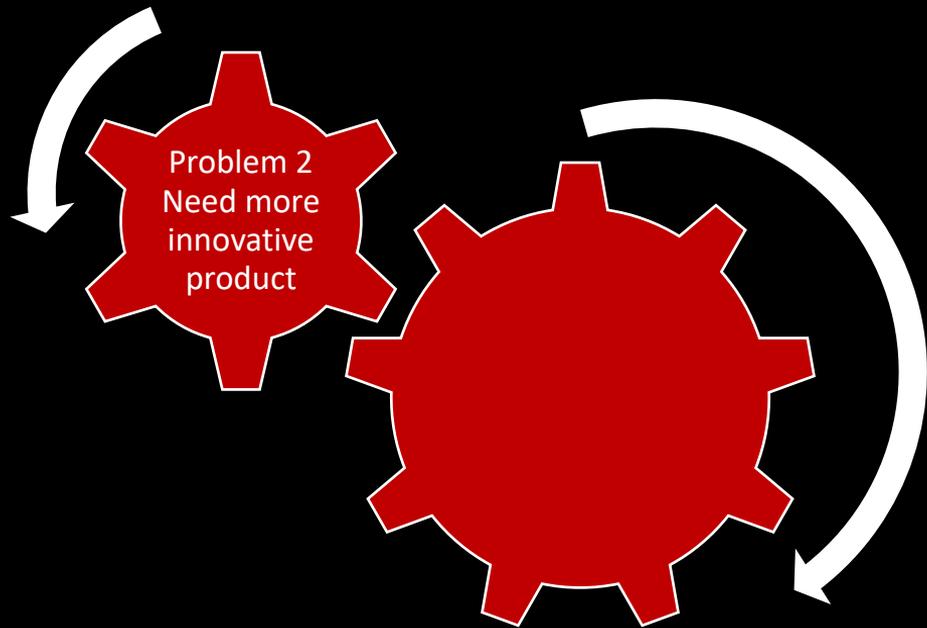
WA is taking on the accommodation challenge

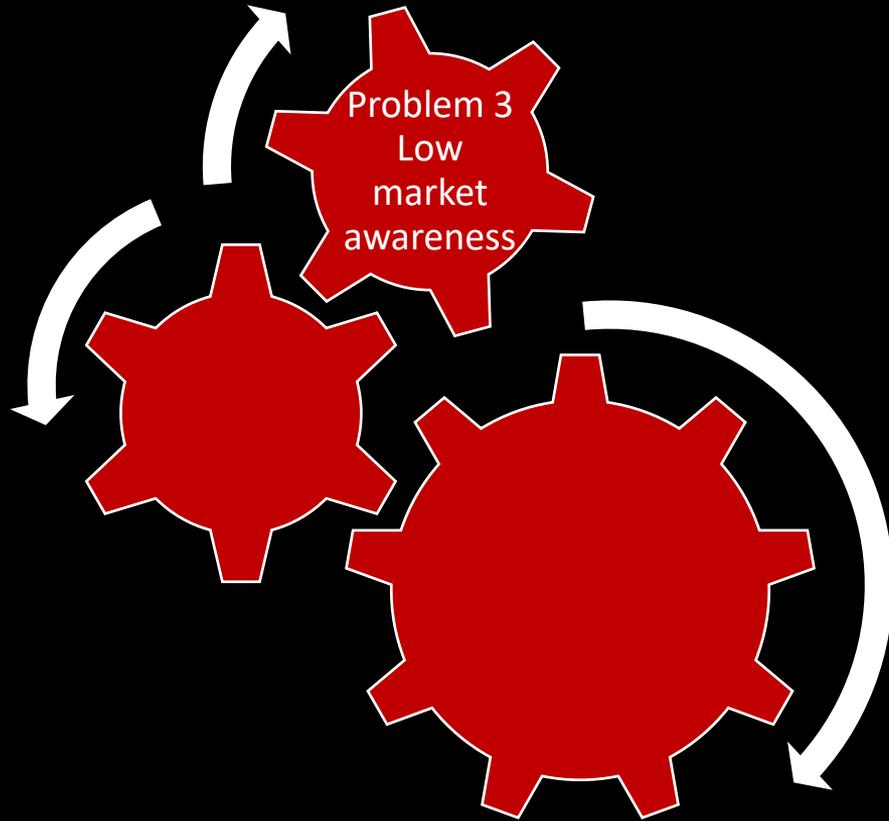
Camping with custodians

- 7 sites
- Getting bigger and more sophisticated
- More on the way
- Marketing & promotion by Tourism WA and WAITOC









1

1. Problem: Existing Aboriginal tourism operators in the region too small to achieve economy of scale for profitability

Response: A regional audit has prioritised opportunities to invest in businesses with the greatest immediate profitable growth potential. This proposal invests in selected Aboriginal tourism operator's assets; developing accommodation, infrastructure and equipment that increases yield per customer.

2

2. Problem: Existing product could be made more innovative to become more attractive to current and emerging markets

Response While upgrading their assets, this proposal will deliver in situ needs-based operator capacity building in interpretation and guiding.

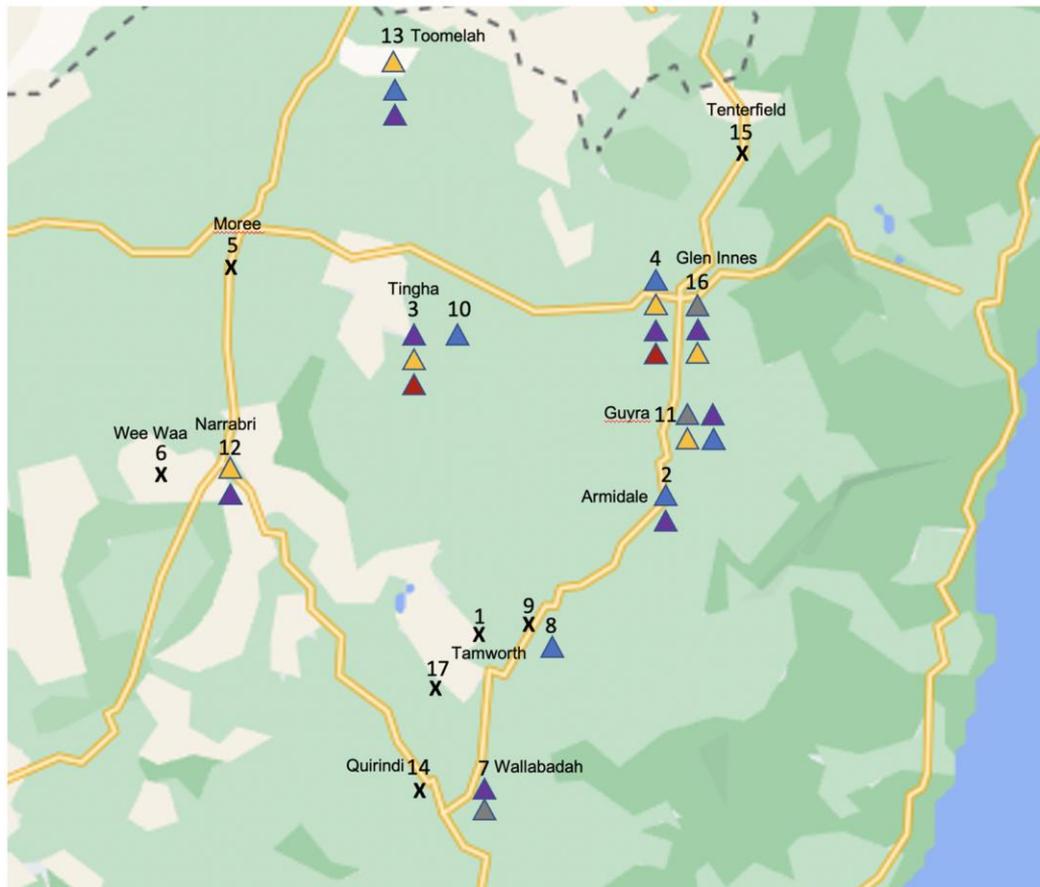
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3. Problem: Minimal market awareness of Aboriginal tourism in region and product hard to find & book

Response: A marketing platform for the region's Aboriginal tourism will be developed that includes a booking system and capacity building in digital marketing to help leverage the investment.



Training needs analysis



Capacity building proposal

- ▲ Interpretation development, guiding
- ▲ Digital marketing eg websites, Facebook, Instagram etc.
- ▲ Business development (record keeping, visitor monitoring reservation systems)
- ▲ Financial management / bookkeeping
- ▲ Cultural (Aboriginal) knowledge / Gamilaraay language
- X No capacity building identified

Operators

1. Len Waters Aboriginal Cultural Tours
2. Armidale Cultural Centre
3. Droonoodoo Cultural Immersion
4. The Willows on the Severn
5. Yinaar Ma Bush Tucker Tours
6. Wee Waa Community Arts
7. Art Shack @ Wilgabah
8. Tamworth & Kootingal Horse Riding Adventures
9. Gamilaraay Keeping Place
10. Dhwhudaar Wandaa Yulgi Immersion
11. Wattlebridge, Guyra LALC
12. Duhwi Doll Studio, Wahgunyah Aboriginal Housing
13. Toomelah Aboriginal River Fishing
14. Nungaroo Nature Tourism Operation
15. Gunimaa Nursery
16. Cooramah Aboriginal Cultural Centre
17. Trelawney Station



Shortlisting for business case (first 8 / 14)

Shortlisted proposals for consideration in a business case	Priority	Score	Proposal summary	Existing operator	Potential operator
Yinarr Ma Bush Tucker Tours	1	162	Long wheel-based 4WD to collect seed and take tour groups to grain collection areas, public address system	Private	
ArtShack @ Wilgabah	2	152	Finish the main dining room, adaptation of two donga accommodation buildings, two tiny houses, sculptural interpretive trail	Private	
Droonoodoo Cultural Immersion	3	151	2 – 3-night cultural immersion experience, that helps guests connect, restore and reinvigorate via arts centre, bird watching, fishing and yabbing, guided tours to various Aboriginal sites, requiring manager's residence, 6 – 8 glamping tents or yurts, amenities block, kitchen / dining building, walking tracks & bird hides, mini-bus, 4wD utility	Private	
Len Waters Aboriginal Cultural Tours	4	144	Multi-function centre – providing a venue for other interpretive activities and functions (including wedding ceremonies larger than the Bush Chapel located within the Botanic Gardens)	Private	
The Willows on the Severn	5	136	New reception / kiosk building, upgraded conference room, replace bunkhouses with tiny houses, central amenities building, glamping sites, upgraded interpretive walking trail, yarnning circle, green chapel, extensive training and certification	Glen Innes LALC	
Armidale Aboriginal Cultural Centre	6	135	Half & full day and eventually overnight guided tours to Aboriginal sites	Not for Profit, all-Aboriginal Board	
Tamworth and Kootingal Horse Riding Adventures	7	130	Four self-contained cabins with strong sustainability elements, surrounding each cabin could be a fenced experimental pasture plot managed to suggest pre colonisation, featuring native grasses and minimal weeds	Private	
Duhwi Doll Studio	8	117	Purchase retail building and land, sewing equipment, fabric and stuffing, preliminary period for wages (until sales commence), business development consulting advice and Trademark registration		Wahgunyah Housing Aboriginal Corporation

Benefits of implementation (from the Business Case)

- Most of the businesses to be financially self-sufficient from the first year in operation, and all by the second year
- There is enough profitability to sufficiently market, meet all costs, cover taxation obligations set aside funds for continuous renewal
- Converts the \$232,493 combined net debt of four businesses to break-even in Year 1, then \$1M Net Profit by Year 5
- Increase Aboriginal employment from the current 5.9 to 17 FTE
- NPV of \$29M and a Benefit Cost Ratio of 5.3 to 1
- Other larger social benefits. Keeps local culture alive, share the Storylines, learn how to use the local language and teaches self-respect, leading to increased self-worth
- A set of Aboriginal tourism mentors that can inspire and guide the emerging Aboriginal tourism sector in the region and across NSW





More information:

<https://alc.org.au/nenw-aboriginal-tourism/>

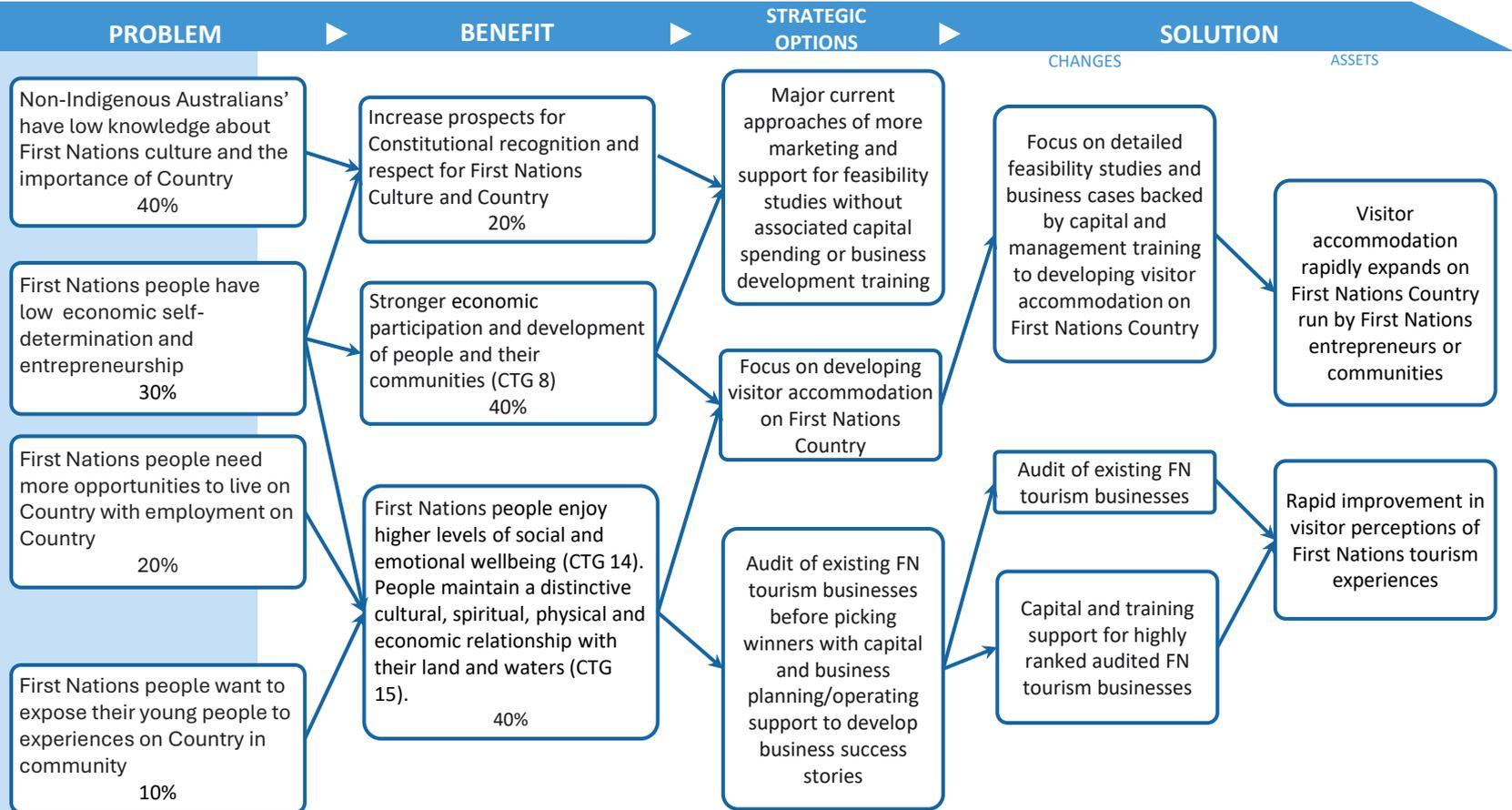
1. Investor video
2. Investor Prospectus
3. Business Case



The NSW government scrapped the funding program the business case was targeting, so we wait, but this region waits ready

A better approach by Governments to supporting First Nations Tourism

INVESTMENT LOGIC MAP





Big gap between Governments' policy priority to First Nations tourism development and achieving sustainable success. An increased logic for developing First Nations tourism as more central to First Nations Government policies

Need to rethink failed past approaches

The crying need is for tourism business planning and management skill transfer to First Nations' tourism business owners

Two opportunities to build critical mass for profitability and commercial sustainability:

1. Audit to identify and professionalise the most promising micro First Nation businesses in a region to form a marketed network of high-quality First Nation visitor experiences
2. Refine and develop larger investments in outstanding sites to demonstrate and popularise First Nation - led accommodation linked experiences

Requires detailed business planning and skill transfer to First Nation owners, backed by Government funding

Conclusion