



A VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL MANUFACTURING HUB FOCUSING ON FASHION AND TEXTILES

Feasibility Study



Kinaway
Chamber of Commerce
Victoria Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This feasibility study was requested by Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce in October 2020. Research and stakeholder engagement were conducted over two months to identify context and rationale and develop recommendations and a proposed model for an Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub focusing on fashion and textiles. This study includes three chapters – methodology, research and the model.

The Why

The Victorian Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub focusing on fashion and textiles (the Hub) sits at the nexus of several large-scale opportunities and catalytic changes. Contemporary industry perspective provides a renewed focus on local and ethical manufacturing, coupled with the ‘reckoning’ in the fashion industry, which has been driven by a focus on modern slavery, and sustainable and environmental practice. Consumer behaviour in 2020 has also changed. Globally, the Black Lives Matter movement and reorientation around COVID-19 have seen an explosion of interest in local, Aboriginal business. This fertile ground provides a once in a lifetime chance for a Victorian Aboriginal social enterprise to harness the employment and economic opportunity.

The research draws on global and Australian models of Indigenous entrepreneurship and explores the marriage of contemporary manufacturing practice as well as Aboriginal cultural celebration and expression through fashion. A deep dive into cultural values and ways of being (and how these permeate businesses in the fashion and textiles sectors) sits alongside contemporary ways of working in which Aboriginal businesses and entrepreneurs decolonise the Australian economy.

Aboriginal fashion designers need technical and adaptive skills to harness the current opportunities within the industry. A collaborative manufacturing Hub that grows Aboriginal excellence will support businesses and community to gain momentum and take Aboriginal fashion to the next level.

Slow fashion is key to the success of the Hub, it is the point where cultural values, scalability and commercial success are held in tension. Slow fashion provides an opportunity to deeply engage consumers and the industry in the unique story of Aboriginal fashion through ethical, sustainable and cultural practice. Slow fashion means the Hub can build a collective of designers, creatives and manufacturers that push the boundaries of production and contemporary cultural expression. The Hub, in partnership with Aboriginal fashion industry representatives, will support the introduction, establishment and growth of Aboriginal creatives in a national and global market.

The feasibility study demonstrates the application of an Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub in a fashion and textiles industry context. The collaboration model builds strength across small business and provides a space for leadership and innovation. The model of a centralised manufacturing point for Aboriginal business is transferable across many sectors and has the capacity to bolster Aboriginal industries in homewares, native grain production and bush medicine.

The model aligns to significant Victorian government priorities including:

- Tharamba Bugheen Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-21
- Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy
- Victorian Social Enterprise Strategy
- Victorian Advancing Manufacturing Statement
- Creative State 2021-2025
- Social Procurement Framework.

The What

The Hub brings together thought leadership, cultural celebration and business incubation to support manufacturing capability and community prosperity in the Aboriginal fashion industry. The Hub's inputs and how they articulate into impact is outlined through the logic model below. This demonstrates the rationale for the Hub.

Hub Logic Model (Theory of Change)

Input	Activity	Output	Outcome	Impact
Designer partnerships	Designers access low cost local manufacturing, designers engage in networking and events	Garment production, exposure, mentoring and support, collaboration	Strengthened business capacity, 'pay it forward' support, income and personal capability growth	A collaborative and vibrant Aboriginal fashion industry
Aboriginal employment	Staff are paid, supported and trained	Staff build skills and capability, employment history, formal qualification potential for advancement	Income, career opportunity and personal growth for individuals	Economic prosperity for the whole Aboriginal community
Commercial networks and marketing	Buyers pay for premium quality commercial manufacturing	Income for the Hub, Aboriginal manufacturing used in buyer supply chain	Offset cost for Aboriginal partners, growth in Aboriginal manufacturing	A resilient local Aboriginal manufacturing industry

Vision

Excellence in Aboriginal design, manufacturing, creativity and entrepreneurship. A Hub where culture, innovation and collaboration come together.

Mission

The Hub provides:

- support for partner Aboriginal designers and creatives to establish and grow their businesses and push the boundaries of manufacturing practice
- employment and training for Aboriginal people in the creative and manufacturing industry
- access to Aboriginal manufacturing for supply needs, generating revenue to build robust commercial outcomes.

Values (adapted from 'Blak Ethics', Linda Ryle) ¹

Blak Ethics are a way of being founded in cultural principles and constitute a guiding star for the Hub's establishment, operation and growth. Values include:

- Trust
- Responsibility
- Integrity
- Respect
- Spirituality
- Humility
- Mutuality
- Reciprocity

¹ Ryle, L, 2020

The Who

The following five influential, emerging and established Aboriginal designers have indicated willingness to work together through the Hub and form the foundation of the new collective.




Ngali



Kaiela Arts



Nathan McGuire



Amber days



Daen Sansbury-Smith



Kurrong Kalat

Staff and designers will work together with partner businesses and organisations to lead and learn in the Aboriginal fashion and manufacturing sectors. Staff will be paid above award rates and have access to supported training, coaching and development.

Community partnership is central to the success of the Hub. Community engagement through openly accessible training, cultural and fashion runway events will support cultural safety and connectivity for all involved with the Hub.

A steering Committee made up of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and fashion industry experts will guide the establishment and implementation of the Hub.

Production

The Hub will focus initially on the manufacturing of woven materials and provide capability for:

- sample making to support rapid prototyping and execution of design
- design through a creative studio and access to technology
- pattern making and grading through a pool of technical experts
- print from screen and digital printing experts with a view to bring this capability 'in hub' post establishment
- textile cutting using traditional cut and state of the art auto-cutting technology
- overlocking and sewing by hub machinists
- hardware and branding using ethically and sustainably sources products
- press, trim and ticketing to provide a professional and detailed finish to garments
- quality control, packaging and distribution to ensure high levels of trust in production quality.

The When

Establishment and growth have been mapped over five years, this is indicative and can be expanded or contracted dependent on levels of initial investment.



The How

The Hub would commence operation as an 'arm' of Kinaway. Within one to two years of operation, the Hub would become its own separate legal entity.

The Hub requires bespoke, hybrid funding to establish and succeed as a leader and centre for excellence for Aboriginal fashion manufacturing. The Hub is seeking a range of grants and investments from government and philanthropic sectors to support effective implementation of the model, this includes:

- Seed funding to support a first run of manufacturing and launch event in the first 6 months
- Establishment funding to support scaling up purchasing of equipment and securing premises
- Small reflexive grants to support emerging projects
- Impact investment loans and grants throughout the first 5 years to boost capability and grow commercial viability.

Robust evaluation of Hub impact using an evaluation framework mapped to the Kinaway Theory of Change, Aboriginal cultural values and Linda Ryle's Blak Ethics will ensure the Hub remains a strengths-based centre for Aboriginal cultural creativity and excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners of land, sea and air throughout Victoria and Australia. The inalienable right of First Nations people to sovereignty and self-determination is imperative to vibrancy and success of our communities locally, nationally and worldwide.

The word Aboriginal has been used throughout this study to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on mainland Australia, predominantly in Victoria. Other terms have been retained where they appear as part of a program or business name. The word Indigenous has been used to refer to first peoples outside of Australia, or as a global collective.

I wish to acknowledge and thank the contributions of the following people. Thank you to Karen Milward for playing the role of great connector and bringing me and this project together. Scott McCartney, your direct and executive approach kept things moving and gave the project the authorising environment in which to operate. John Condilis, your entrepreneurial flair, clear head and generous spirit helped bring this project to life in our first meeting. Peter Naughton, thanks for your ongoing guidance and support for this project, for activating your professional networks and affording me your deep insights into the 'reckoning' in the fashion industry.

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Kade McDonald, Sarah Sheridan and Laura Thompson – thank you all for giving me a strong push in the right direction, at the right time and in the right way. Your level-headed, articulate and no-nonsense advice significantly impacted the development of this study and the positioning of the Hub as a strengths-based centre for excellence, not a hand up. To Linda Ryle, your Blak Ethics have formed the foundation of the Hub, they are the beating heart of what the Hub hopes to achieve. Thanks Nathan McGuire, Angie Russi, Corina Muir and Daen Sansbury-Smith for your openness to get on board and your keen interest in seeing the industry prosper.

Thank you to numerous staff and leaders at Creative Victoria, Launch Vic, Sustainability Victoria, Ethical Clothing Australia, Swinburne University of Technology (including Social Startup Studio) and Social Traders who are all doing incredible work to build the social enterprise and fashion sectors in Victoria. Rachel Matthews and Stewart Russel thank you for your generosity with your time and expertise.

Lastly, and mostly, to Denni Francisco, you are the one my friend! This is your brainchild and I am so privileged to have been supported, coached and guided by you in the ideation, research, development and presentation of this work. Thank you for affording me the time to connect and understand the wondrous possibilities that lie within Aboriginal fashion and design. Your commitment to mindful manufacturing, Country and collaboration will stick with me for a lifetime. Thank you for sharing your vision with me, I hope this goes some way to making it a reality.





METHODOLOGY

The Feasibility Study was undertaken using a literature review and semi structured interviews, which were then synthesized into a final report and presentation for Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce.

Literature review

Using Swinburne University of Technology, University of New South Wales and the Victorian Government Library Service subscriptions, a search of EBSCOhost, Scopus, Informit, Google Scholar, Emerald, Science.gov, OECD, Leganto, ProQuest and Nexis Uni databases were undertaken using the following key terms:

- Domain 1: Aboriginal, Indigenous, Torres Strait Islander, First Nation
- Domain 2a: Aboriginal business, Aboriginal economy, Aboriginal industry, Aboriginal economic policy, Business, Economy/ies, Industry/ies, Economic policy/ies
- Domain 2b: Manufacturing, Manufacturing Hubs, Business incubators, Fashion, textiles, clothing, garments, slow fashion
- Domain 3: Social enterprise, Social value, Social business, Social capital, Social economy, Best practice

A further analysis of IBIS World Industry Reports was undertaken to determine:

- Impacts of COVID-19 on clothing, textiles industries
- Opportunities for Aboriginal businesses to enter and grow in specific markets (i.e. where there is fertile ground)
- Social impact capacity of specific industries including levels of employment opportunity.

Semi structured interviews

Under the guidance of Denni Francisco, Jeremy Cussen conducted 29 semi-structured one-hour interviews with 24 stakeholders (listed at Table 1) including Aboriginal creatives and entrepreneurs, Industry specialists from the fashion, manufacturing and social enterprise sectors, government, education and law.

Aboriginal creatives and entrepreneurs	Fashion Industry Specialists	Government	Other
Indigenous Fashion Project	Nobody Denim	Creative Victoria	Swinburne University of Technology
Nathan McGuire	Peter Naughton	Launch Vic	<i>Suppressed - Legal</i>
Ngali	HoMie	Sustainability Victoria	Social Traders
Daen Sansbury-Smith*	The Social Studio		Social Startup studio
Clothing The Gap	Belinda Cook		Ethical Clothing Australia
Amber Days*	Collarts		
<i>Suppressed</i>	Spacecraft		
Kaiela Arts			
Agency Projects			

Table 1: Stakeholder interviews *Interviews conducted by Denni Francisco

First Nation Fashion + Design (FNFD) were unfortunately unavailable to meet during the development of this study. Strong engagement with FNFD is recommended to enable success for the concept and implementation.

Interviewees were asked, among other questions:

- What are the manufacturing requirements, challenges and opportunities in the Aboriginal fashion industry?
- What are your thoughts on the Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub concept – What could work, what is working, what should we consider, what are we missing?
- What role would you see your organisation having in relation to an Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub focused on fashion and textiles?

Quotes and industry estimates for machinery, materials and assets were sought to aid in the development of a sophisticated financial model for the Hub.

Research and stakeholder input were analysed, synthesized and presented into the following:

- Context and rationale for the Hub
- Proposed model for the Hub
- Financial model for the Hub.

The final report and proposed models were refined in consultation with Kinaway.

Stakeholder participation in the development of the Feasibility Study does not equate to endorsement of the findings or contents of the models.

In this study, Aboriginal businesses and professional bodies have been hyperlinked to support readers to easily explore and access these businesses. Readers are encouraged to consider supporting Aboriginal business in professional and personal purchasing.

THE RESEARCH

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The industry context for a Victorian Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub focusing on fashion and textiles (the Hub) encompasses the manufacturing and fashion industries using the business models of social enterprise and Aboriginal entrepreneurship. This section takes a structured approach to examining the nexus of these four elements, and the contextual aspects of Victorian community, economy and government policy. By doing so, a solid foundation of fertile ground is demonstrated, providing the necessary rationale for the Hub.

Victorian manufacturing and fashion industry context

The Victorian economy, which was once predominantly automotive industries now consists of diverse industries including manufacturing, education and design. Melbourne is also characterised by major economic events promoting arts, literature and fashion – often drawing global interest.²³ Manufacturing in Victoria, a \$26 billion industry, is the third largest overall employer of Victorians comprising over 283,000 jobs, over 80% of which are full time. It also has the fastest employment growth rate of any Victorian industry.⁴

Fashion, textile and footwear manufacturing in Australia is an industry worth around \$5 billion per annum, employing over 21,000 people across over 4,300 businesses.⁵ In 2019-20, 6,590 Victorians were employed in fashion design and production.⁶ However, industry stakeholders report that COVID-19 has brought international fashion 'to a standstill' and provided a once in a lifetime chance for a 'reset' in the industry.⁷ The

pandemic has impacted supply chains and imports for most industry segments (menswear, sleepwear, womenswear etc.) nearly all of which are expected to contract over the coming years. The exception is womenswear manufacturing which will likely see an increase this year and into the future – largely driven by an increase in online sales.⁸ Market concentration across the fashion and textiles manufacturing industry is low, meaning there are few businesses dominating the industry. However, competition is high and barriers to entry (generally speaking) are medium and steady. Despite government rhetoric to boost local manufacturing industries, assistance to operate in the fashion and textiles manufacturing industry is low and decreasing.⁹ Fashion is a dynamic industry that drives economic output and innovation in science, technology, photography, manufacturing, graphic design, marketing, modelling, and other ancillary industries.¹⁰ While Aboriginal fashion has a high profile, industry

² State Government of Victoria, 2017, Advancing Victorian Manufacturing

³ Blanco, J 2012

⁴ State Government of Victoria, 2017, Advancing Victorian Manufacturing

⁵ IBIS World, 2020, Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies; IBIS World, 2020, Women's and Girl's Wear Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Sleepwear, underwear and Infant Clothing Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Tailoring and Clothing Accessories Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Footwear Manufacturing

⁶ Creative Victoria, 2020, Employment Data

⁷ Ethical Clothing Australia, 2020, The Quick Unpick: Episode 5; Milani, A, Miles C & Conquest, S, 2020

⁸ IBIS World, 2020, Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies; IBIS World, 2020, Women's and Girl's Wear Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Sleepwear, underwear and Infant Clothing Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Tailoring and Clothing Accessories Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Footwear Manufacturing

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Milani, A, Miles C & Conquest, S, 2020

representatives report that few of the 4,300 plus Australian fashion businesses are Aboriginal.

While there appears to be a renewed Australian focus on local manufacturing, stakeholders identify that the past 30 years have been predominantly characterised by shrinkage due to increased popularity in offshore production and an ageing workforce.¹¹ Conversely to the manufacturing sector, online shopping, clothing, work wear and personal protective equipment (e.g. masks and gloves) retailing is expecting to grow significantly over the next five years.¹² It is

possible that a renewed market focus on local business and production may see a bolstering of both the manufacturing and retail sides of the market. IBIS World also identify the key success factors for clothing and textile manufacturers in Australia as brand strength, premium high-quality products, marketing expertise, access to niche markets and strong contacts and relationships with retailers and stakeholders.¹³ Industry research suggests that a thriving Victorian fashion manufacturing sector will only be possible with collaboration, government support and a shift in consumer mindset.¹⁴

Social enterprise and Aboriginal business context

The Victorian social enterprise sector is a \$5.2 billion industry with roughly 5,000 social enterprises in Victoria employing around 60,000 people.¹⁵ Almost 30% of social enterprises in Australia have a primary purpose of providing opportunities to people who face barriers to employment.¹⁶ Social enterprise is an effective way for Aboriginal Australians to increase economic prosperity and build social capital – underpinned by self-determination.¹⁷

There are around 60,000 Aboriginal people living in Victoria, comprising 0.9% of the population.¹⁸ Aboriginal communities are a young, dynamic, growing segment of the labour market.¹⁹ Yet Aboriginal people have significantly higher unemployment rates than non-Aboriginal communities, nearly triple in 2016.²⁰ As Aboriginal people are overrepresented in automation risk

industries such as hospitality, retail and construction, growing successful Aboriginal businesses is critical to reducing unemployment and improving economic prosperity in the years to come.²¹ In 2011, most Victorian Aboriginal people were employed in health care and social assistance, construction or public administration. 9% of all people were employed in the manufacturing industry, the fourth most common out of 19 industry segments. There is also a growing number of Aboriginal people who own businesses in manufacturing.²² Among these businesses, [Wathaurong Glass](#) is often promoted as an exemplar of successful Aboriginal-owned manufacturing in Victoria.²³

Aboriginal businesses provide economic sovereignty and self-determination for Aboriginal communities as well as economic opportunities

¹¹ Ethical Clothing Australia, 2020, The Quick Unpick: Episode 5; Milani, A, Miles C & Conquest, S, 2020
¹² IBIS World, 2020, Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies; IBIS World, 2020, Women's and Girl's Wear Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Sleepwear, underwear and Infant Clothing Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Tailoring and Clothing Accessories Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Footwear Manufacturing
¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ Milani, A, Miles C & Conquest, S, 2020
¹⁵ State Government of Victoria, 2019, Victorian Social Enterprise Strategy; Barraket, J, Collyer, N, O'Connor, M, & Anderson, H, 2010

¹⁶ Barraket, J, Mason, C & Blain, B, 2016
¹⁷ Loban, H, Ciccotosto, S & Boulot, P, 2013
¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016
¹⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2019
²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Morrison, M, Collins, J, Basu, PK, Krivokapic-Skoko, B, 2017
²² Ibid.; State Government of Victoria, 2013, Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy
²³ State Government of Victoria, 2017, Tharamba Bugheen

and employment pathways for young Aboriginal people across metropolitan, rural and remote locations.²⁴ Aboriginal businesses have a unique value proposition whereby the success of a business elevates prosperity and self-sustainment for whole families and large communities, rather than solely for individuals.²⁵ The evidence is clear, Aboriginal businesses generate significantly larger employment opportunities for Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal businesses.²⁶

Academics and industry specialists describe the Aboriginal business sector as a 'sleeping giant' due to the huge untapped potential.²⁷ While Aboriginal business ownership is low compared to non-Aboriginal, conservative estimates indicate that there were roughly 1,300 Victorian Aboriginal business owners in 2016 and that this number grew by 42% between 2011 and 2016, almost exclusively in metropolitan locations.²⁸ In 2019, Launch Vic reported that 2% of Victorian start-up founders were Aboriginal, double population parity.²⁹

	2006	2011	2016
Victoria	692	902	1292
Australia	10,400	13,700	17,900

Table 2: Number of Aboriginal owner-managers in Australia and Victoria³⁰

67% of Aboriginal business owners in 2016 were male, identical to the rates for non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal business owners were generally younger than non-Aboriginal counterparts, roughly 3.8% of Aboriginal business owners operated in the arts sector, 3.7% in manufacturing. 63% of Aboriginal business owners have no employees, notably higher than for non-Aboriginal businesses. Similarly, 33% of Aboriginal businesses were small to medium enterprises of 1-19 employees, lower than that of non-Aboriginal. Large enterprises of 20+ employees were on parity at 4% of total businesses.³¹

Of the 902 Victorian Aboriginal business owners in 2011, 354 were in regional Victoria and 548 were based in metropolitan Melbourne, this is despite

the trend for more Aboriginal people to live in regional Victorian locations.³² It is important to note that the information described in this section does not include the number of Aboriginal social enterprise owner-managers due to inconsistent wording in the Australian census, including definitions of 'ownership' in the differing contexts of social enterprise and business.³³

Low rates of business ownership and management in Aboriginal communities have been attributed to structural inequality, racism and discrimination.³⁴ Aboriginal women also face additional gender-based discrimination when seeking to establish businesses.³⁵ Aboriginal entrepreneurs are most often motivated to establish businesses in order to combat this racism and lift economic outcomes for the whole

²⁴ Morrison, M, Collins, J, Basu, PK, Krivokapic-Skoko, B, 2017

²⁵ Furneaux C & Brown K 2008; HRSCATSIA (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs) 2008; Morley, S, 2014

²⁶ Collins, J, & Norman, H, 2018

²⁷ Hudson, S, 2016

²⁸ Shirodkar, S, Hunter, B & Foley, D 2018; Hudson, S, 2016

²⁹ State Government of Victoria, 2019, Launch Vic Impact Report

³⁰ Shirodkar, S, Hunter, B & Foley, D 2018

³¹ Ibid.

³² State Government of Victoria, 2017, Tharamba Bugheen

³³ Shirodkar, S, Hunter, B & Foley, D 2018

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Wood, G.J. and Davidson, M.J. 2011

community.³⁶ Stakeholders reported that Aboriginal people establish businesses to find ways to live cultural values and have a prosperous life at the same time. Aboriginal entrepreneurs struggle to break into supplier and business networks and are often undercut by established competitors when seeking early business opportunities. Aboriginal entrepreneurs may also have diminished prior experience or lack of opportunity and formal education³⁷ as well as having more difficulty meeting establishment costs, start-up finance and assistance to grow and tender for business competitively.³⁸

Aboriginal entrepreneurship is impactful in increasing economic outcomes for Aboriginal

communities, however little research has been done into the impacts of Aboriginal social enterprise on the broader community. Aboriginal entrepreneurship underpinned by self-determination is a culturally safe and flexible way to address inequality, particularly in regional and remote areas.³⁹ Aboriginal business has the capacity to reform the capitalist business mindset and decolonise the Australian economy. Aboriginal entrepreneurs are calling for recognition that many 'innovative' ways of thinking are ancient knowledge systems which are being rediscovered by Aboriginal communities' post-colonisation.

Global Indigenous entrepreneurship

Worldwide, Indigenous people are using social enterprise to forge new pathways to economic prosperity. In the Philippines, social business incubation has been successful when programs have adopted an ecosystem approach that leverages the entrepreneurial skills of partner businesses, makes use of the knowledge of volunteers and utilises the expertise of other more established business and social enterprises.

⁴⁰ This networked approach builds a robust collective of partners, stakeholders and funders where knowledge, support and learnings are shared.

There has been some criticism of Canadian efforts to build Indigenous economic development and entrepreneurship noting that there is an undercurrent of assimilation that seeks to convert

Indigenous peoples to western capitalism ideologies. Financial and non-financial goals need to coexist 'in tension' in order to allow self-determination in a postcolonial context.⁴¹ Canadian research also clearly demonstrates the bricolage proficiency of Indigenous peoples in using culture and traditional knowledge to innovate and push the boundaries of contemporary practice and arrangements.⁴²

In New Zealand, Maori values are commonly built into businesses driving social innovation and cultural safety in industry and public policy.⁴³ One example of this is the forestry industry where Maori values and agricultural knowledge systems have been used to reduce dependency on plantations.⁴⁴

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Wood, G.J. and Davidson, M.J. 2011

³⁸ Denny-Smith, G & Loosemore, M, 2017

³⁹ Spencer, R., Brueckner, M., Wise, G. and Marika, B. 2016

⁴⁰ Habaradas, RB, Aure, PAH & Mia, IBR 2019.

⁴¹ Pinto, L.E. and Blue, L.E. 2017; Overall, J., Tapsell, P., & Woods, C. 2010

⁴² Abu, R & Reed, MG 2018

⁴³ de Bruin, A. and Read, C. 2018

⁴⁴ Hénare, M 2015

Victorian government policy and initiatives

Australian governments have regularly initiated programs to support Aboriginal entrepreneurship to limited effect, mainly due to a lack of understanding of the additional factors that impede on new entrepreneurs.⁴⁵ Some studies emphasise the need for business acumen development for Aboriginal businesses – in particular, digital, commercial and financial literacy,⁴⁶ however this can be seen as a colonial mindset that fails to celebrate the strength of Aboriginal business. Additionally, research suggests that white standards and practice models fail to interface effectively with Aboriginal entrepreneurial knowledge systems, intellectual property and ways of being.⁴⁷ Similarly, government programs to support Aboriginal education and employment are often based on the ‘stepping-stone’ premise that any job or training, will eventually lead to a better job.⁴⁸ Career pathways for Aboriginal people are not the same as for non-Aboriginal people, supports need to be adaptive and responsive to non-linear training and work, as well as rooted in Aboriginal community values and knowledge.⁴⁹

Melbourne has been referred to as the ‘city of knowledge’, and Victoria, ‘the Education State’, however, Aboriginal enrolments in post compulsory education remain low.⁵⁰ Enrolments in business education and engineering at a tertiary level are low compared to other disciplines as Aboriginal students are more likely to be undertaking studies in the fields of health, education or the creative arts.⁵¹

The Victorian government has two strategies to support Aboriginal economic development, Tharamba Bugheen and the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy. Tharamba Bugheen Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-21 seeks to support Aboriginal businesses the access advice, improve visibility and networks and strengthen Aboriginal entrepreneurship.⁵² The Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy aims to build business aspiration, create job opportunities and grow Aboriginal enterprise.⁵³ Tharamba Bugheen references support for young Aboriginal Victorians to engage in the fashion industry and supporting marketing and distribution of Aboriginal products.⁵⁴

The Victorian Social Enterprise Strategy seeks to improve access to the market for Victorian social enterprises, build social enterprise capability and increase the impact and innovation of social enterprises.⁵⁵ Similarly, the Victorian Advancing Manufacturing Statement commits to supporting small and medium enterprises to access markets and enhance supply chains, as well as working to create ‘cooperative clusters’ in industries.⁵⁶ In 2020, the Victorian State Government commenced consulting on the development of a new strategy to support creative industries, Creative State 2021-2025.⁵⁷ Additional to these strategies, the Victorian State Government has overarching policy commitments to Aboriginal self-determination, procurement from Aboriginal businesses, ethical procurement of uniforms and personal protective equipment and ensuring government expenditure supports local jobs.⁵⁸

⁴⁵ Shoebridge, A, Buultjens, J & Peterson, LS 2012

⁴⁶ Bodle, K, Brimble, M, Weaven, S, Frazer, L and Blue, L, 2018

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2009

⁴⁹ Moodie, N & Cubillo, J, 2018

⁵⁰ Blanco, J 2012; State Government of Victoria, 2016, Marrung

⁵¹ Asmar, C., Page, S., & Radloff, A. 2011; Vitartas, P, Ambrose, K, Millar, H, and Dang, TKA, 2015; State Government of Victoria, 2017, Tharamba Bugheen

⁵² State Government of Victoria, 2017, Tharamba Bugheen

⁵³ State Government of Victoria, 2013, Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy

⁵⁴ State Government of Victoria, 2017, Tharamba Bugheen

⁵⁵ State Government of Victoria, 2019, Victorian Social Enterprise Strategy

⁵⁶ State Government of Victoria, 2017, Advancing Victorian Manufacturing

⁵⁷ State Government of Victoria, 2020, Creative State

⁵⁸ State Government of Victoria, 2020, Self-Determination Framework; State Government of Victoria, 2020, Social Procurement Framework; State Government of Victoria, 2018, Guide to procuring uniforms and PPE; State Government of Victoria, 2020, Local Jobs First

Aboriginality and fashion models

Fashion is a tool for cultural connectivity and celebration, social impact and economic opportunity. All over the world, the fashion industry provides ongoing employment and income, as well as a medium for the creation of cultural assets and ongoing use of cultural practices in a contemporary context.⁵⁹ There are several models of fashion:

- Fast Fashion which uses cheap fabrics and new technology to mass produce low cost, low quality garments. Very little fast fashion manufacturing occurs in Australia.⁶⁰
- Ready-to-wear fashion refers to the 'off the rack' garments which have standardised sizes, scales of ready-to-wear fashion includes mass produced items but can also refer to small collections with limited production numbers.⁶¹
- Haute Couture is the most exclusive and high-priced fashion approach, characterised by hand sewn details and the requirement to be produced in Paris.⁶²
- Bespoke, like European high-end approaches where clothes are tailored to fit, this is also a common approach in Africa and Asia where garment makers routinely create custom garments for individuals.⁶³
- Modest fashion which has its foundations in religious and cultural practice, prioritises modesty and skin coverage.⁶⁴
- Luxury brands that incorporate the philosophies of bespoke and haute-couture approaches, maintaining an elite market segment and high price point – however without the strict classification requirements.
- Slow fashion involves high quality hand or machine-made garments which are often accompanied by a production and creation story, slow fashion is also characterised by ethical, environmental and sustainable principles.⁶⁵

The Australian Aboriginal fashion industry has a unique story to tell and is a rich cultural exchange of identity and values.⁶⁶ A recent consultation co-hosted by the Indigenous Fashion Projects (IFP), a program of the [Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation](#) (DAAFF) and Australian Fashion Council notes that the top words used to describe Aboriginal fashion by people in the industry were 'culture', 'ethical', 'respect' and 'slow fashion'.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Cook, B, 2016

⁶⁰ Ibid.; Wood, Z., 2009

⁶¹ Cook, B, 2016; Hollander, A, 1992

⁶² Cook, B, 2016; Bala, D, 2019

⁶³ Cook, B, 2016

⁶⁴ Ibid.; Bauck, W, 2016

⁶⁵ Cook, B, 2016; Pookulangara, S & Shephard, A, 2013

⁶⁶ Cook, B, 2016; Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

⁶⁷ Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

Aboriginality and Slow fashion

Slow fashion, like slow food, has emerged as a countercultural movement that juxtaposes the global addiction to 'fast'.⁶⁸ Slow fashion provides an opportunity for buyers to engage deeply with the creation of the product, this may include through involvement in conceptual and manufacturing phases or through alignment of values and beliefs.⁶⁹ Story and narrative are critical to slow fashion.⁷⁰ Slow fashion may include longer than normal wait times for a product or 'pre-ordering' from a sample, but this is not a requirement of the genre.⁷¹ Labourers in the slow fashion industry are often highly skilled and well paid.⁷² The slow fashion industry is generally higher priced and attracts a wealthy older customer base. Slow fashion businesses are experimenting with ways to keep young and low-income markets segments engaged with the product such as upcycling fabric scraps and offcuts to create low price products.⁷³

In the case of [Kaiela Arts](#) 'campfire' collection, buyers were offered an immersive slow fashion experience whereby they spent an evening around a fire with designers and artists, discussing design themes and principles. Coals from the fire were

then used to create dyes for textiles, which were then manufactured and provided to the buyer at a later date. Models of Aboriginal knowledge systems in fashion commonly include the use of natural pigments in dyes, campfire coals and iron ore or ochre. Culture and art are inseparable from Aboriginal fashion. In Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia, where [Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency](#) (Mangkaja) undertook a collaboration with Gorman clothing, this is particularly the case. A hugely successful collaboration, Mangkaja artists' works are worn frequently by community members in town with pride. In some cases, where artists have passed away, the clothing gains even more significance with community members clothing the passed artists in Gorman x Mangkaja garments for burial. Relatives continue to wear clothing post artists' passing as a form of cultural celebration, remembrance and honouring ancestors. Industry specialists also noted that Elders and older community members are constantly looking for innovative opportunities to engage young people in community and cultural practice – art and fashion is such an opportunity.

Promoting Aboriginal fashion

Aboriginal fashion and textiles can follow in the footsteps of Aboriginal art and gain international success. While Aboriginal art centres have been producing hand printed fabrics since before 2000, there has been a recent increase in requests received by art centres to source Aboriginal art for large scale fabric and garment production.⁷⁴ This represents an

opportunity to create job pathways and economic engagement opportunities for Aboriginal people nationwide. There has also been growth in industry popularity and interest evidenced by successful themed runway events (e.g. Country to Couture) and collaborations such as [Lisa Waup x Verner](#) and the Fork Leaf Project with [Warlunkurlangu](#) artists.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Clark, H, 2008

⁶⁹ Pookulangara, S & Shephard, A, 2013

⁷⁰ Cook, B, 2016

⁷¹ Fletcher, K, 2010

⁷² Tran, KTL, 2008

⁷³ Cook, B, 2016

⁷⁴ Ibid. page 14

⁷⁵ Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020; Cook, B, 2016

The importance of runway events in the fashion industry should not be understated.⁷⁶ Runways not only set and influence trends for fashion and retail, they also provide the networking platforms through which business partnerships are formed.⁷⁷ Australian Fashion Week, at which IFP has a runway and showroom, for example, has been described as Australia's 'window into the global fashion trade' rather than a consumer event. Visibility of Aboriginal fashion at runway events means visibility in the public as well as industry engagement with Aboriginal fashion narratives and culture.⁷⁸ In slow fashion, runways also provide the opportunity to coordinate sales and generate orders for manufacturing. IBIS World identifies that the key success factors for clothing retailing are attractive product presentation, on trend goods, a strong brand and proximity to markets.⁷⁹ Runways are critical to saleability and building a corporate and public customer base for premium products⁸⁰ yet they are often inaccessible to Aboriginal businesses due to the increased manufacturing costs of small collections and samples.⁸¹

Aboriginal specific runways are positive tools for cultural clothing and wearable art however there is a question of whether these showings are othering and perpetuate that Aboriginal brands are only appropriate for Aboriginal runways.⁸² Further questions have been raised about the 'what next' for Aboriginal designs on runways, without manufacturing support, designers are reporting a lack of commercial viability. There is an industry imperative to ensure that Aboriginal designers are supported to create high quality products for inclusion on mainstream runways, while retaining Aboriginal specific events. IFP and the [Cairns Indigenous Art Fair](#) (CIAF) are critical in brokering

access to major runway events,⁸³ Aboriginal fashion designers have also expressed that an Aboriginal voice on the Australian Fashion Council would support greater integration across runways, industry events and the broader sector.⁸⁴

The saleability of Aboriginal fashion is critical, creating social impact and cultural assets would not be possible if it was not financially supported by a strong business model. Research is showing that digital platforms and knowing your market are central to achieving sales, particularly for younger designers and market segments.⁸⁵ Another access point to sales is celebrity platform. This has worked on an international scale with African designers fast tracking their businesses through endorsement from movies like Black Panther and people like Michelle Obama.⁸⁶ We also see it domestically with Australian Football League players wearing Clothing The Gap products resulting in an explosion of sales.⁸⁷

In 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement has also boosted interest and focus on supporting Aboriginal fashion,⁸⁸ particularly, there was increased dialogue around digital representation with fashion brands having a large social media presence.⁸⁹ Industry stakeholders also reported that while Black Lives Matter had opened the space for successful collaborations, it is important that Aboriginal artists and designers do not get 'lost' behind non-Aboriginal brands. The combination of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter created a new digital market audience. However, it also uncovered issues with supply chain resilience, specifically manufacturing and distribution capabilities for Aboriginal fashion designers in Australia.

⁷⁶ Cook, B, 2016

⁷⁷ Fabusse, 2017

⁷⁸ Singh, N, 2017

⁷⁹ IBIS World, 2020, Women's and Girl's Wear Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Sleepwear, underwear and Infant Clothing Manufacturing; IBIS World, 2020, Footwear Manufacturing

⁸⁰ Saranya, 2017

⁸¹ Cook, B, 2016

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, page 15

⁸⁴ Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

⁸⁵ IBIS World, 2020, Women's and Girl's Wear Manufacturing; Cook, B, 2016

⁸⁶ Cook, B, 2016

⁸⁷ Ethical Clothing Australia, 2020, The Quick Unpick: Episode 4

⁸⁸ McGuire, N, 2020

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Global Indigenous fashion

Internationally, Indigenous South-East Asian designers collaborate and share ideas by building culturally safe networks where the collective is supported to explore traditional practices and experiment with contemporary design and manufacturing. In Indonesia, designers use native dyes and natural fibres, cloth is hand woven by local craftworkers enabling raw material production, design and manufacturing to co-exist closely.⁹⁰

In Africa, designers draw on traditional African prints as a celebration of cultural practice, African language also informs design. Digital printing

supports the transposition of artwork onto silks and cloths.⁹¹ African prints have been in use for a long time, there has also been a recent emergence of 'Afro Luxe' products that celebrate culture, heritage and traditions while retaining premium quality and a high price point. This new movement is also characterised by 'Luxe Ubuntu' values that support the elevation of the broader social group and community from the enterprise.⁹² There are also successful several African fashion social enterprises such as [YEVU](#) and [Global Mamas](#) that create employment opportunities and pathways for local community.⁹³

Aboriginal ethics in fashion

Collaboration features as a major priority throughout the research and stakeholder interviews.⁹⁴ Collaborations that bring together artists, designers and manufacturers are key to developing skills across arts, fashion and technologies – this leads to innovative and exemplary practice.⁹⁵ This type of collaboration supports innovative designers to be culturally strong will be competitive in the industry.⁹⁶ Aboriginal and international Indigenous designers also suggest that there's good opportunities for overseas collaborations.⁹⁷

The fashion industry is undergoing what some have called 'a reckoning'. There is a new wave of scrutiny on pollution, payment and production impact forcing designers and labels to orient themselves to meet a new consumer wish list and government regulation such as the Modern Slavery Act.⁹⁸ Aboriginal fashion designers have also noted this is a priority and aligns well with

Aboriginal cultural values.⁹⁹ The Aboriginal fashion sector developing premium products is well positioned to meet contemporary standards for ethical, sustainable and environmental practice.¹⁰⁰ Commercial scale practice of upcycling fabric scraps has also commenced with partnerships between HoMie and No Body Denim's 'Reborn' range, early versions of this have been seen with Aboriginal designer Lisa Waup who used cut-offs to create woven pieces of jewellery and accessory.¹⁰¹

Care needs to be exercised when holding commerciality and cultural values in tension to ensure ethical practice. Aboriginal entrepreneurs suggest that there is an allure of cheap offshore production however things like modern slavery and environmental degradation are a global problem which disproportionately effects Indigenous peoples.

⁹⁰ Cook, B, 2016

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Verdoolaege, A & Mutunku Datsha A, 2016

⁹³ Cook, B, 2016

⁹⁴ Ibid.; Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

⁹⁵ Ibid. page 16

⁹⁶ Cook, B, 2016

⁹⁷ Ibid.; Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

⁹⁸ Commonwealth of Australia, 2020

⁹⁹ Cook, B, 2016; Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Cook, B, 2016

Issues facing Victorian Aboriginal fashion businesses

Designers and labels identified the significant financial and knowledge barriers in establishing a collection, having samples and small collections made. Building momentum and transitioning from selling a few garments a week to 100 per month was a major challenge. Not only were manufacturing costs out of reach,¹⁰² there was very little knowledge about where to go or who to talk to arrange high quality manufacturing which could result in low quality product. Industry leaders expect the challenge of manufacturing 'small runs' to remain for the next 15-20 years.

Aboriginal designers currently use non-Aboriginal businesses to manufacture products¹⁰³ but note trepidation around the safety of designs.¹⁰⁴ Horror stories about stolen art being reproduced on tea towels and sold at gift shops without permission have seen the establishment of the Indigenous Art Code¹⁰⁵ which has supported intellectual property safety in the sector. Trust is essential to working with Aboriginal creatives and reputation is everything, Aboriginal fashion doesn't only create garments for wear, clothes are cultural artefacts that carry a moral imperative for protection. Other concerns in the industry are that mass-produced art or fashion (even Aboriginal owned and copyrighted) will undermine the value of premium handcrafted products. While this concern has validity, previous experiences of art centres like [Babbarra Women's Centre](#) in Arnhem land has shown that mass produced product sells to a different market segment and have concurrently maintained demand and saleability for handmade products.¹⁰⁶

Consultation undertaken through this study, IFP consultations and academic literature identified that Aboriginal designers operating in the fashion industry require specific skills to further grow in the sector:

- Social media and digital engagement skills to convey the narrative of the garment and business impact.¹⁰⁷
- Entrepreneurial skills such as collaboration development, innovative manufacturing and strategic marketing.¹⁰⁸
- Business acumen including management, intellectual property protection and financial literacy.¹⁰⁹
- Manufacturing knowledge and capabilities including digital print and screen making, fabric design, pattern making and quality textile sourcing.¹¹⁰
- Retail and marketing skills such as photography, retail partnerships and social media marketing.¹¹¹

Stakeholder interviews uncovered that mentoring is a common occurrence in the Aboriginal fashion industry and often goes deeper into sponsorship and advocacy. Mentors provide advice and industry connections but develop long term deep connections that they use to elevate opportunities for others. There are informal mentoring arrangements as well as formal structured programs such as the [Collarts Freshies First Nations Creative Lab](#) and IFP partnership with David Jones. Mentoring by industry specialists is key to building capabilities and developing businesses for Aboriginal designers.¹¹²¹¹³ Due to the different contexts and business needs, it's difficult for non-Aboriginal people to effectively mentor Aboriginal people on what an impactful and successful Aboriginal business looks like while avoiding colonial and paternalistic mindsets.

IFP consultations also identified that access to local manufacturing and co-working spaces will support industry growth, while supported pathways to traineeships and employment will develop individual capability.¹¹⁴

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.; Indigenous Art Code, 2019

¹⁰⁶ Cook, B, 2016

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, page 17; Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding fashion manufacturing

¹⁰⁸ Cook, B, 2016; Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.; Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding fashion manufacturing

¹¹¹ Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020; Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding fashion manufacturing

¹¹² Cook, B, 2016

¹¹³ Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation (DAAFF), 2020

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL MANUFACTURING HUB FOCUSING ON FASHION AND TEXTILES

The Hub should provide support for the Aboriginal fashion eco-system as well as Aboriginal employment, training and development. The Hub should have robust commercial outcomes and build capacity to take on large and non-Aboriginal commercial clients to offset the cost of manufacturing production for small and early-career Aboriginal entrepreneurs. Aboriginal design principles and values must be integrated into the manufacturing model and seek to elevate community prosperity through ethical, sustainable and environmental production and full circle economies that are authentic and resilient to industry changes and global upheaval.

Slow fashion

Slow fashion principles will emerge as the key to maintaining quality and viable price points, as well as help alleviate some of the pressures of stock management by encouraging pre-order and long lead times to enable in-time production. Quality is critical, while classic philanthropic funded social enterprises produce good garments, a dependence on philanthropic funding to achieve impact can reduce product quality. Impact and

viability must be held in tension.¹¹⁵ In order to achieve this, the Hub should draw from 'Luxe Ubuntu' and bespoke models of fashion that provide premium products and generate community outcomes¹¹⁶. Integrated models of design and production will work well with Aboriginal collectivist and intergenerational cultural values.

Scalability values

Scalability will be critical for the development of the Hub; it is recommended that a model be piloted with an outlook for growth. The Hub should not be put off by small contracts as business partners are generally risk averse, so it is important to have 'runs on the board'. In the early stages, building a culture will be critical to success, this includes ensuring that the right staff come on board from the beginning to set a high performing workplace that demonstrates thought leadership and Aboriginal excellence. This may mean employing highly experienced individuals with little need for employment supports in the first instance.¹¹⁷ For this same reason, it is critical to pay staff well to attract highly skilled employees.¹¹⁸ The Hub should also consider

moral focus areas such as elevating Aboriginal women in business and ethical screens. Stakeholders described situations where social enterprises were approached to manufacture uniforms for Victorian prison guards, the Hub would need to consider the ethics of accepting this job.

The Hub should explore the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge systems to eradicate barriers to cost-effective and environmentally sustainable business solutions.¹¹⁹ Practice and production should hold commercial viability and cultural values together and support new ways of doing business supported by millennia old Aboriginal knowledge systems.

¹¹⁵ Overall, J., Tapsell, P., & Woods, C., 2010

¹¹⁶ Verdoolaege, A & Mutunku Datsha A, 2016

¹¹⁷ Crook, M, Pearce, N & Howe, D, 2020

¹¹⁸ Tran, KTL, 2008

¹¹⁹ Colbert, C, Adkins, D, Wolfe, C & LaPan, Karl, 2010



Promotion and marketing

Having a clearly defined market segment (or segments) will provide the opportunity to specialise, acknowledging the Hub will not have capacity to 'do everything'. A focus should be maintained on buyers who are prepared to pay for a premium product, this includes the luxury, slow fashion and bespoke markets, but also government and private buyers who have a focus on corporate social responsibility. Environmental practice should be a focus of the Hub as it aligns to Aboriginal values, the Hub should provide a clearing house for exploration of sustainable practice and upcycling to engage socially responsible markets. Accreditation will also give access to markets. Stakeholders recommended seeking accreditation from Ethical Clothing

Australia in the first instance rather than seeking to transition operations to an accredited model post establishment. Ethical Clothing Australia accreditation is essential to reaching government procurement markets.¹²⁰ Social Traders, Kinaway: Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and Supply Nation accreditation can also open access to new markets and business introductions.¹²¹ Though caution was advised as some accreditation requirements are not readily compatible, for example, Social Traders require businesses to have 51% of profits going back into the business, whereas Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce requires businesses to be 51% Aboriginal owned¹²².

Collaboration

Supporting designers to build industry relationships with retailers like the National Gallery of Victoria and Melbourne Museum Shop are success factors for existing practice and will improve the saleability of designer products and in turn increase manufacturing demand. These relationships will build momentum for the Hub and create opportunities to service larger commercial contracts. The Hub will be required to invest in digital marketing and events to forge business relationships and commercial success. Industry engagement including runway events and the National Indigenous Fashion Awards will be critical but can be supplemented by cultural events such as NAIDOC and Reconciliation weeks. These will create forums for buyers, suppliers, commercial contractors and community to come

together and engage with the manufacturing and cultural story that forms the basis of the Hub.

By building a collective or 'college' of Aboriginal designers, and a subsequent alumni culture that includes intergenerational mentoring, the Hub will support the health and diversity of businesses in the sector. Mentoring should be provided by Aboriginal people in the first instance and by non-Aboriginal people with high levels of demonstrated cultural safety only if no Aboriginal people are available. The Hub should focus on collaboration for success by building an Aboriginal fashion collective where new and established designers can seek advice and understand the opportunities that exist in the fashion industry. While a focus on design and manufacturing is central to the Hub in establishment, there are opportunities to expand

¹²⁰ State Government of Victoria, 2018, Guide to procuring uniforms and PPE

¹²¹ Supply Nation, 2020; Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, 2020, 'Our Services'

¹²² Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, 2020, 'Membership'

focus to collaborate collectively with artists, photographers, models and other ancillary fashion sectors in future. Trust is essential for the effective functioning of the Hub and foundational to cultural safety. The Hub has a moral

imperative to provide a space that respects intellectual property and cultural intelligence, for creatives to push the boundaries of culture in contemporary practice.

Training and development

The Hub should provide enhanced supports to undertake training and professional development that meets individual aspiration and the latest industry needs. To upkeep this high level of technical capability, stakeholders recommended partnering with education institutions as an effective way of accessing cutting edge qualifications, technology and industry expertise. Support should be provided to employees wishing to undertake formal accredited qualifications. Provision of informal training in short skills, like pattern making and sewing, will also be effective

in nurturing Aboriginal people who are fatigued by the TAFE and university system. Teaching and coaching should be incorporated into design, development and manufacturing practice at all stages and complement formal traineeships. Training that should be made available to both designers and staff includes digital, commercial and financial literacy, strategic and digital marketing, manufacturing innovation, fabric and textile design and pattern making, retailing, Aboriginal knowledge systems and ways of being, cultural safety and intellectual property.¹²³

Premises

The premises for the Hub should seek to bring together manufacturing, training, storage, distribution, design and creative studio under one roof. While this may not be possible in the first instance due to heavy establishment costs, outsourced early production requirements, such as digital printing, should be sought within a 25km

radius of the primary location. Over time, efforts should be made to consolidate all parts of the production process, from design to distribution, into one centralised location. A garment creation library should also be stored at the Hub as a cultural asset.¹²⁴

Governance

The Hub will be community owned and self-determining. Establishment of a Steering Committee to guide the early development of the Hub will provide expertise and strategic guidance. A Steering Committee should also gather support from community leaders and learn from the success of the Aboriginal art centre model of community ownership over space and business. A

launch event will also provide further opportunity for community buy in. The function of the Steering Committee should change over time, and potentially transition to a Board of Directors. Strong governance of the Hub will ensure legal compliance but also open opportunities to new directions such as collaborations with Indigenous designers in Africa, Canada and South-East Asia.

¹²³ Bodle, K, Brimble, M, Weaven, S, Frazer, L and Blue, L, 2018

¹²⁴ Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding fashion manufacturing



Commerciality and impact

Impact should come first, not profit, but the Hub should be set up to make money and do that well. Striking this balance is essential to achieving impact, which would otherwise be impossible without a commercial outlook to grow the business. Investment in evaluation and impact measurement including a logic model and journey mapping will allow the tracking and

communication of commercial, social and environmental success. The Hub will also provide a transferable model for best practice collaboration and pave the way for satellite expansion into regional Victoria, as well as the establishment of similar models in other Aboriginal industries.

Broader application of the Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub model

The model of the Hub alleviates growing pains and builds supply chain capacity for Aboriginal businesses in Victoria, this could be transcribed to many industries. While outside of the scope of this study, the following industries could be examined for similar future initiatives.

Large scale native grain production (including Kangaroo Grass, native millet, flax and wallaby grass) – food and fibre is a major industry in Victoria and significant for Aboriginal businesses.¹²⁵ There are some efforts to produce native grain and an emerging focus on native superfoods and indigenous plants which provides the perfect opportunities to coordinate and upscale efforts.¹²⁶ Similar initiatives have been successfully implemented in the Americas with Indian rice grass.¹²⁷

Bush medicine – an emerging market around Australia, stakeholders identified that the

production of bush medicines in small communities is hindered by manufacturing challenges. There is limited access to large scale production capability, packaging, storage and distribution. Bush medicines are also being integrated into self-care, wellness and beauty products such as soaps, moisturisers, rubbing oils and aromatic candles. Native foods, bush honey, herbal teas are also worth exploration.

Ceramics and glass – Aboriginal art and design are used widely across a range of products to create aesthetically pleasing and practical expressions of culture.¹²⁸ Ceramics and glassware production ranges from boutique handmade artisan products to larger scale production of manufactured and printed home wears and custom manufactured glass wear such as kitchen splashbacks, signage, plaques and mirrors.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ State Government of Victoria, 2017, Tharamba Bugheen; State Government of Victoria, 2017, Advancing Victorian Manufacturing

¹²⁶ Bernasconi, A & Cloughton, D, 2020; University of Sydney, 2020; Outback Chef Wild Food Farm, 2017

¹²⁷ Barr, WW 2004

¹²⁸ Welcome to Country, 2020

¹²⁹ Wathaurong Glass & Arts, 2020

THE MODEL

FUNDAMENTALS

The research and stakeholder engagement findings laid out in the research chapter of this study are clear – an innovative, collaborative solution should be implemented to bolster the Aboriginal fashion industry, rejuvenate onshore ethical and sustainable manufacturing and provide economic prosperity for the Victorian community.

This chapter outlines a model for a Victorian Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub focusing on fashion and textiles (the Hub). The Hub is a fashion collective where Aboriginal creatives and entrepreneurs practise culture, thought leadership and excellence to produce high quality garments.

The Hub provides a collaboration model that is transferrable to other industries and for use in broader application throughout Australian fashion.

The Hub's economic model is business to business, while the focus is on servicing the manufacturing needs of Aboriginal fashion designers, non-Aboriginal designers and commercial entities can engage the Hub for their manufacturing supply needs. The logic model below demonstrates the key elements of the Hub, including how these articulate into medium term outcomes and long-term impact. The vision, mission and values provide the fundamental building blocks for a Hub that is grounded in culture and characterised by excellence and leadership.



Vision

Excellence in Aboriginal design, manufacturing, creativity and entrepreneurship. A Hub where culture, innovation and collaboration come together.

Mission

The Hub provides:

- Support for partner Aboriginal designers and creatives to establish and grow their businesses and push the boundaries of manufacturing practice
- Employment and training for Aboriginal people in the creative and manufacturing industry
- Access to Aboriginal manufacturing for supply needs, generating revenue to build robust commercial outcomes.

Hub Logic Model (Theory of Change)

A Theory of Change, or Logic Model as it is called here, demonstrates the relationships, cause, effect and impacts of activities, resources and outcomes, and how they lead to ultimate impact.¹³⁰ There are many ways to visually represent this chain of theory,¹³¹ or logic. This basic logic model simply articulates the model for the Hub. This logic model does not include externalities (e.g. global textile market costs, individual circumstances) but can be mapped to the broader Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Theory of Change to determine the influence of extraneous factors.¹³²

Input	Activity	Output	Outcome	Impact
Designer partnerships	Designers access low cost local manufacturing, designers engage in networking and events	Garment production, exposure, mentoring and support, collaboration	Strengthened business capacity, 'pay it forward' support, Income and personal capability growth	A collaborative and vibrant Aboriginal fashion industry
Aboriginal employment	Staff are paid, supported and trained	Staff build skills and capability, employment history, formal qualification potential for advancement	Income, career opportunity and personal growth for individuals	Economic prosperity for the whole Aboriginal community
Commercial networks and marketing	Buyers pay for premium quality commercial manufacturing	Income for the Hub, Aboriginal manufacturing used in buyer supply chain	Offset cost for Aboriginal partners, growth in Aboriginal manufacturing	A resilient local Aboriginal manufacturing industry

Table 3: Theory of Change

¹³⁰ Muir, K & Bennett, S 2014; Tschirhart, M, Bielefeld W 2012

¹³¹ Harries E, Hodgson L, Noble J., 2014

¹³² Deloitte, 2020

Values (adapted from ‘Blak Ethics’, Linda Ryle)¹³³

Blak Ethics are a way of being founded in cultural principles. Blak ethics transcend white, western European business practice and form the foundation for Aboriginal existence and sustainability. Blak Ethics embody authenticity and accountability and are the cultural principles that underpin Aboriginal surviving and thriving.¹³⁴

Ethic	Description	Application
Trust	We commit to transparent and honourable undertakings with buyers, suppliers, partners and staff. We give credit where it's due, follow through on our commitments and own our failings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge creation sources • All production commitments are met • Mistakes are examined and evaluated
Responsibility	We honour, value and engage with our community, families and each other. We care for country through ethical and sustainable practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hub is a compassionate and responsible employer • Production is ethical and sustainable
Integrity	We act under the observation, and in the company of our ancestors. We acknowledge that every day and every test is fertile ground for learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members of the collective are supported to grow • Elders are celebrated for their knowledge and wisdom
Respect	We have respect for ourselves, each other and all things. We value and empathise with the experiences and perspectives of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Hub staff and partners hold respect as a core value • Equipment and environment are cared for
Spirituality	We are alive to land, sea and sky country, and are strong in our rich and diverse culture and spirit. We honour ceremony and intuition by listening to our dreams, totems and nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and Country are celebrated and honoured • Deep listening and engagement with culture is central to production
Humility	We give patient consideration and have trust in the passage of time, we understand the limits of our knowledge. We are confident, calm and comfortable in the speed of our process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow fashion is a core principle for production • Learning, development and growth takes time • Support and advice is accepted
Mutuality	We nurture, sustain and contribute to community, when community is strong, we are all strong.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community comes first, profit second • We support community and it supports us
Reciprocity	We acknowledge the interconnectedness of all things as the foundation of sustainability and social equilibrium. We strive for mutual benefit from social obligations, individual standing and exchange of gifts and favour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact is mapped within the complex system of life • Stakeholder networks are maintained and nurtured • We thank and return favour to our supporters

Table 4: Values (adapted from ‘Blak Ethics’, Linda Ryle)¹³⁵

¹³³ Ryle, L, 2020

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIP

Aboriginal people and culture are at the heart of the Hub. Whether it is designers, staff, partners or downstream supply chain companies – the Hub is a collective that is greater than the sum of its parts. This section outlines key people or stakeholders and the Hub’s relationship to supporting growth, development and excellence for all. People, culture and creation are at the heart of the Hub’s social value proposition analysis outlined at Figure 1.

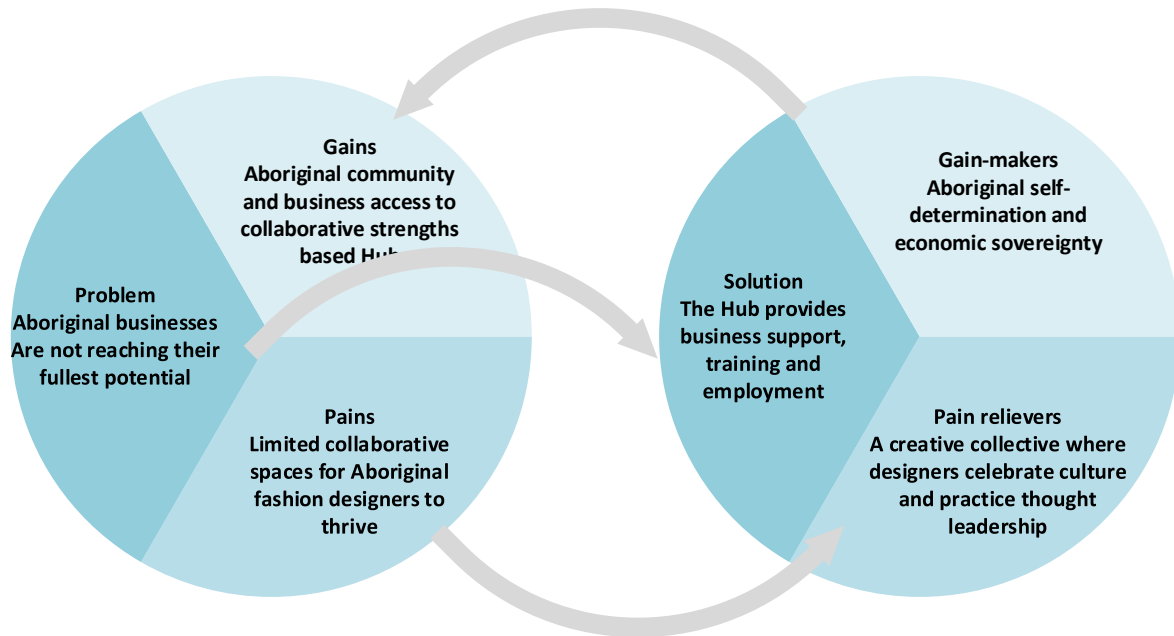


Figure 1: Social value proposition analysis¹³⁶

Aboriginal designer partners

The Hub enables Victorian Aboriginal fashion designers to access a centralised manufacturing capability. Designers have been identified based on their readiness to enter the manufacturing process. By selecting the Hub for manufacturing, designers are aware that they are joining a collective and so agree to share and receive advice, support and networks to other designers

and Aboriginal creatives. The following five designers have all expressed in principle support to centralise their manufacturing through the Hub, and to participate in a launch runway event in 2021. Designers also have standardised materials (woven) enabling the Hub to effectively service manufacturing needs with low diversity of machinery in the first instance.

¹³⁶ Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Centre for Social Impact Swinburne, 2020

ngali

Ngali, a women's wear label founded in 2018, seeks to support Aboriginal talent, mindful manufacturing and enduring style. Ngali has a focus on ethical fashion and supporting the Aboriginal fashion industry.¹³⁷ Ngali, meaning 'we' or 'us' envisions harmony and equity in the union between people and Country.¹³⁸



Kaiela Arts (Kaiela) is a regional Aboriginal art centre which first forayed into fashion through Country to Couture in 2018. Kaiela has exhibited their textiles at the National Gallery of Victoria Design Store through the successful 'Campfire' project.¹³⁹ Kaiela is moving to the new Shepparton Art Museum which will increase their customer base due to market proximity and extended opening hours.



Nathan McGuire has worked in fashion as a model, creative and industry commentator. Nathan is looking to start their own menswear label focused recycled and sustainable materials. Nathan's designs focus on a youth-oriented market with a priority for social impact and justice.

Amber Days

Amber Days is a Melbourne based children's wear label that connects Country to clothing. Amber days production focuses on natural fibres, ethical manufacturing and a revolution in fashion.¹⁴⁰



Daen Sansbury-Smith is a Victorian Aboriginal creative, musician, artist, designer and storyteller with strong links to heritage and the Victorian Aboriginal community-controlled sector. Daen is looking to articulate their art into fashion and streetwear.

¹³⁷ City of Melbourne, 2020

¹³⁸ Ngali, 2020

¹³⁹ Kaiela Arts, 2020

¹⁴⁰ Amber Days, 2020

Staffing

Providing flexible and meaningful employment opportunities to Aboriginal people is a core mission of the Hub. The Hub has a unique ability to provide a culturally safe workplace where staff are supported to meet their aspirations through employment support, training and development. Once established and experiencing growth, the Hub can employ trainees and new starters to the industry who are seeking exposure and learning. Staff will be paid well and receive, superannuation and high-quality employment conditions.

The bulk of the Hub workforce are machinists who undertake the physical manufacturing, production coordinators liaise with designers, clients and suppliers to ensure machinists have what they need to complete manufacturing. Both machinists and designers are employed on the Textile, Clothing, Footwear and Associated Industries (TCF) Award 2010 with Production Coordinators at Level 5 Skill level and Machinists ranging from Trainee to Level 4 dependant on experience.

Skill level	TCF Award Weekly rate	TCF Award Hourly rate	Suggested Hub rate
Trainee	\$753.80	\$19.84	\$20-28 per hour
1	\$775.40	\$20.41	
2	\$805.10	\$21.19	
3	\$832.80	\$21.92	
4	\$877.60	\$23.09	
5	\$932.60	\$24.54	\$70-90k per annum

Table 5: TCF Award rates¹⁴¹

The Hub model also identifies the need for a dedicated Engagement and Impact Lead to broker strategic partnerships, support community engagement and event planning, marketing and Impact analysis and communication. The Engagement and Impact Lead has been costed to be at the same level as the production coordinators. Line management of the machinists is managed by the production coordinators and line management of the production coordinators

is managed by the Engagement and Impact Lead in early stages. When the Hub establishes as its own legal entity, a director should be employed at executive rates to drive and oversee the project, and report to the Steering Committee or Board of Directors. It's recommended that machinists and production coordinators are paid well above the industry standard outlined at Table 5 to ensure that high quality staff are attracted and retained.

¹⁴¹ Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, TCF Award

Training

The Hub includes a higher than average training and professional learning budget to enable development of staff and partner designers. Training can be formal or informal acknowledging the unique career and education pathways that Aboriginal people experience. Staff and designers will be supported to pursue their aspirations whether related to the fashion industry or not, this includes through study leave, course fee payment, shadowing and secondment opportunities, coaching and mentoring. Mentoring and training where possible will be provided by Aboriginal people. Formal accredited training relevant to the Hub might include diplomas, certificates and degrees in:

- clothing and textile manufacturing
- fashion
- business management and entrepreneurship
- social impact
- marketing and communication.

The Hub also represents a gathering place for informal training that can be accessed by staff, designers or community members, these pre-accredited or accredited short skills include:

- sewing
- drawing and design
- pattern making and grading
- occupational health and safety
- building aspirations
- literacy and numeracy
- financial and digital literacy.

Ongoing cultural coaching and training will also characterise the development supports available through the Hub. This could include cultural safety training, Blak Ethics, cultural intelligence, cultural due diligence, executive coaching and Aboriginal professional peer support.

Once the Hub has established and built a robust operating model, its recommended to explore a 'Manufacturing School' approach whereby a defined cohort of 5-15 Aboriginal people are supported to undertake (for example) a nationally accredited Certificate III in Clothing and Textile Production, this approach could be established as a partnership with one of the major Victorian fashion schools such as RMIT. This is a similar model implemented with success by the Social Studio and HoMie.



Supporting partnerships

Partnerships have been described throughout this study. Additional partnership opportunities will support the Hub to scale and develop throughout the process of establishment and implementation.

Throughout stakeholder interviews, opportunities for fashion collaborations were identified with HoMie, IFP, Nobody Denim, The Social Studio and Clothing The Gap. The Social Studio also identified opportunities to nest early development or undertake collaborative training opportunities. Collarts Freshies First Nations Creative Lab could provide a pipeline for future designers, the Hub could also provide a good opportunity to expose Creative Lab mentees to the fashion production process.

Collaborations with TAFEs and universities are recommended to reduce costs across the Hub. Potential partnerships with major education institutions can provide:

- Access to space and machinery during peak production times.
- Supported formal and informal training and education delivered in partnership with Aboriginal education specialists (e.g. [Moondani Toombadool](#) at Swinburne University of Technology or [Ngarara Willim](#) at RMIT).
- Reciprocal arrangements whereby university or TAFE students can undertake applied projects focusing on the Hub, for example, a cohort of marketing students may put together a social media communications strategy for the Hub, free of charge. Similar arrangements would be possible for impact and evaluation services, project management planning, financial modelling.
- Access to labour markets as TAFE and universities will often know of suitable recent graduates who are looking for work or to enter the Aboriginal fashion industry.
- Access to cutting edge research and manufacturing capability information.

Partnerships with Adult, Community, Further Education providers can deliver short skills and community education workshops like sewing and basic manufacturing skills.

Partnerships are also recommended with IFP and CIAF and First Nation Fashion + Design (FNFD). These are critical stakeholders that require strong engagement to build partnership pathways with more Aboriginal creatives.

Other Australian reports have called for the establishment of an Australian Indigenous Fashion Industry Hub¹⁴² and 'The Make' a Victorian fashion manufacturing enterprise.¹⁴³ The Hub should seek to collaborate and grow with these initiatives as they emerge.

¹⁴² Cook, B, 2016

¹⁴³ Milani, A, Miles C & Conquest, S, 2020

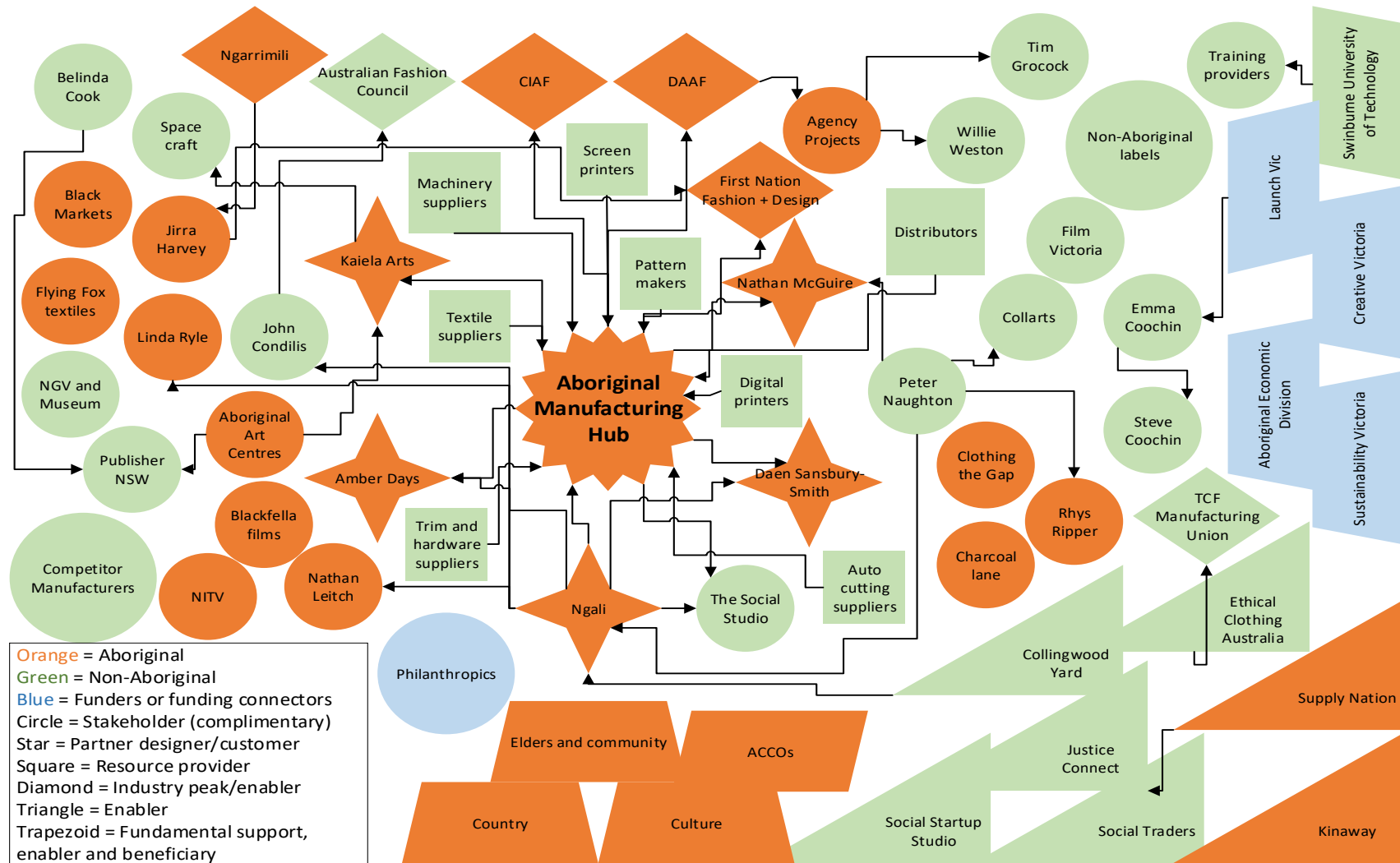


Figure 3: Stakeholder map¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Bloom & Dees, 2008

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing is the critical enabler for the Hub to achieve impact. Manufacturing is the core revenue builder from which the Hub generates creativity, employment, leadership, cultural assets and sustainability. Without manufacturing and commercial viability, the Hub will not be able to achieve its vision. Manufacturing is central to the Hub’s economic value proposition analysis, outlined at Figure 3.

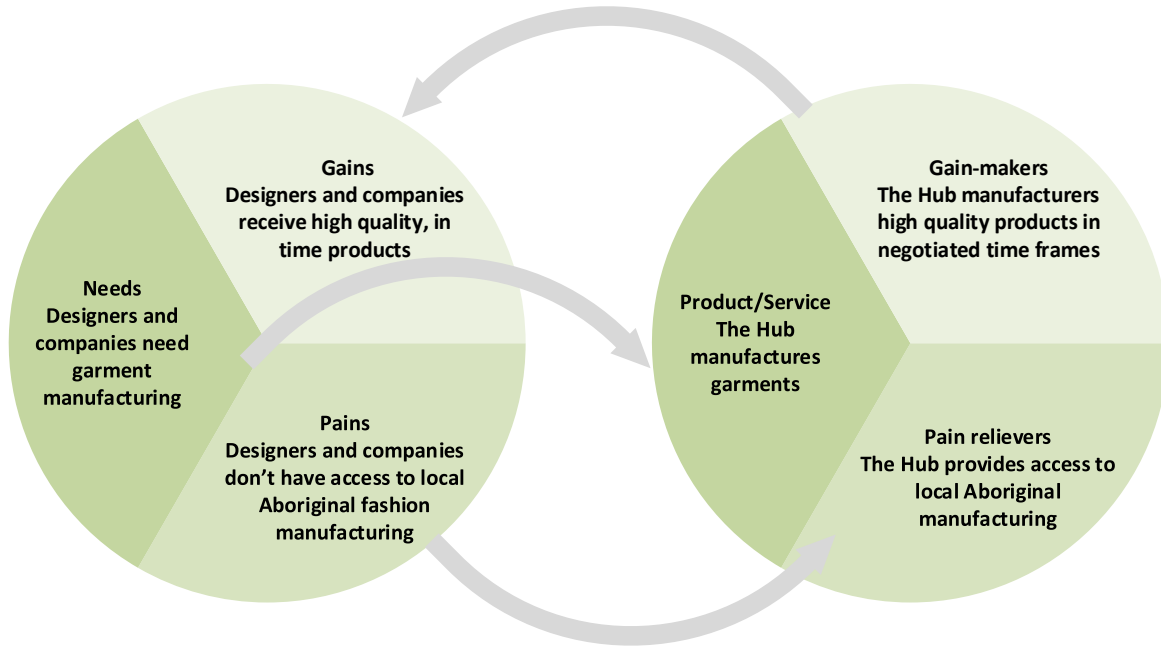


Figure 3: Economic Value Proposition Analysis¹⁴⁵

Production Details ¹⁴⁶

Each production phase involves set up or implementation costs either for machinery, equipment of key processes.

Designer	Materials
Ngali	Woven materials – silks and cottons
Kaiela Arts	Woven materials – linen, cotton, cardi cloth and silks
Nathan McGuire	Woven materials – cotton, linen
Amber Days	Woven materials and knits – linen, cotton, blends ¹⁴⁷
Daen Sansbury-Smith	Woven materials

Table 6: Designer materials

The Hub will standardise production by focusing on manufacturing woven materials only, this will reduce the diversity of machinery required to manufacture in the pilot phase of the project.

¹⁴⁵ Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Centre for Social Impact Swinburne, 2020

¹⁴⁶ Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding fashion manufacturing

¹⁴⁷ Amber Days, 2020

Design

Creatives will take care of the design; the Hub will ideally also have a design studio where creatives can work when manufacturing is underway. Having the ability to walk out of the design studio and up to a machine to see the garment in development builds innovation and a circular economy.

Pattern making and grading

The Hub will have a pool of casual contract pattern makers who can support designers to develop technical drawings and graded patterns. The Hub can also offer professional learning to support in house development of these capabilities.

Print (if required)

Designers may prefer digital or screen printing for their textiles or may choose to use unprinted fabric for garment creation. Digital printing is standardised but dependant on the type of fabric and ink being printed on. Screen printing is harder to calculate with high upfront costs associated with screen production and cost highly dependent on volume and type of art, fabric and number of colours. It is suggested that printing be outsourced in the pilot and initial phases of the Hub, with the view to purchase printing equipment and bring this capability in house once the necessary capital is available. Most screen printing happens offshore, however there are some Victorian screen-printing businesses that could provide commercial work (e.g. Nathan Leitch, Spacecraft). In house printing, capability has an estimated high return on investment given many Aboriginal art centres and enterprises are seeking textile production.¹⁴⁸ There has also been some suggestion of an Aboriginal screen-printing hub in Shepparton, though it is unknown if this will eventuate.

Textile cutting

Cutting is a critical aspect of the production process that requires time, skill and accuracy. Cutting requires marking, measuring checking to ensure alignment with patterns and if not done correctly can result in significant waste of fabric and poorly made garments. For small runs and samples, it is recommended that an electric handheld rotary cutter be used, for larger scale production The Hub will require access to industrial automatic cutting machines. An automatic cutting machine is a significant investment, this capability should be outsourced in the pilot phase of the Hub implementation.

Overlocking and sewing

Production requires a range of different machines including overlockers (four and five thread), sewing machines, blind stitch machines and button-hole makers. Sewing is the core of the Hub's pilot phase production capability.

Hardware and branding

Adding zips, labels with wash instructions and designer branding, these functions can generally be completed with sewing machinery via the Hub, but zips and labels may need to be manufactured by a third-party provider and sewn in at the Hub.

Wash and press

In line with the Hub's commitment to Country and environmental practice, industrial wash and treatment of garments will be discouraged and not provided as part of the Hub model. The Hub should invest in relative sized iron, garment steamer or press machinery in the pilot stage and industrial as the demand thresholds are met.

¹⁴⁸ Cook, B, 2016

Trim and ticketing

The final stage of production, trim such as rivets, clasps or embroidery are added to the garment. Tickets such as price tags or designer labels also need to be added at this stage. The Hub staff will be able to perform this function but would require tickets and trim to be sourced from elsewhere in the supply chain.

Quality control

Quality has been identified as essential to the implementation of the Hub. Production Coordinators and designers will review and test products to ensure they are premium quality, durable and aesthetically authentic to the original design. At this stage an example should be taken for the Hub Library.

Production Capability

Industry representatives advise that 1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Machinist could produce 16 to 20 garments a week. Stakeholders also provided advice that the Hub should also have a pool of casual staff that can increase manufacturing capability during peak periods. Staffing in the first instance should include individuals

Production Risk

Some suggest that while there is much consumer rhetoric about sustainability and slow fashion, they still often defer to fast fashion.¹⁵⁰ Securing an appropriate workforce may also represent challenges, Machinists are a thin market characterised by skills shortages, manufacturing requires highly specialised skills, however there is relatively small Australian workforce many of whom are close to retirement age.¹⁵¹

In securing premises for manufacturing, council permits can be hard to confirm. Industry players recommend seeking exemptions where possible and acknowledge that events and alcohol require additional permits.

Packaging and Distribution

Packing and freight can be arranged for mass loads or individual products as required, while the model of the Hub does not include a classic distribution centre, this function can be performed (at a cost) on request if capacity permits.

Sample making

Before deciding on the final manufacturing specifications, designs need to go through a prototyping development phase, typically there are two or three prototypes made prior to full scale manufacturing, each costs roughly twice the normal production cost.¹⁴⁹

who have high levels of experience and ability to solve technical issues.

Production times for garments on average are 12 weeks for luxury, bespoke commissions, 8 weeks for limited edition small collections and immediately for some pre stocked items from large runs.

There was also some concern that the piloting of the Hub as a 'program' of Kinaway reduces urgency to make profitable high-quality products. In slow fashion, businesses will not often produce any product until orders are confirmed thus reducing financial risk.¹⁵² However, this does not diminish factory and staffing costs.

Studies of Indigenous fashion enterprises worldwide confirm that there is a market for every approach, ultimately the product needs to be saleable at its price point and the market needs to share the perception of this value.¹⁵³ The story and narrative of Aboriginal fashion manufacturing is key to the success and commercial viability of the Hub.

¹⁴⁹ Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding fashion manufacturing

¹⁵⁰ Johansson, E., 2010

¹⁵¹ Milani, A, Miles C & Conquest, S, 2020

¹⁵² Cook, B, 2016

¹⁵³ Ibid. page 33

Ethical, Sustainable practice

The Hub will be a leader in innovation as well as ethical and sustainable practice, Aboriginal values and knowledge systems have an advantage here. The Hub aims to create a circular economy where everything from design to dispatch can happen under the one roof. Where this is not possible, the Hub aims to engage suppliers that are Aboriginal, local, ethical and sustainable.

Ethical Clothing Australia (ECA) accreditation is a rigorous voluntary process that involves an audit of supply chain information by union specialists and ECA. ECA confirm wages and entitlements align with award rates and ensure safe working conditions for workers across the supply chain, the entirety of which need to be compliant to achieve accreditation. ECA provide significant support to become accredited and work closely with businesses.¹⁵⁴ Recommendations from ECA accredited businesses suggest that seeking to build ECA accreditation into the business model from the outset is far preferable to establishing the business

then seeking to transition supply chain to compliance.

ECA accreditation will support access to new markets including government procurement. In 2018, the Victorian Government made it a requirement to have, or be in the process of obtaining ECA accreditation in order to undertake government procurement (e.g. the manufacturing of uniforms for tram drivers).¹⁵⁵ The nature of ECA accreditation, in that it needs to cover the whole supply chain, also means that if another company wants to use the Hub in its manufacturing supply chain for a government job, or any job, the Hub will need to be ECA compliant. ECA have a specific category for new and establishing businesses.

ECA accreditation does not cover sustainable and environmental practice, some potential accreditation frameworks for exploration include:

- [Cradle to Cradle Certified](#)
- [Forest Stewardship Council](#)

Creation Library ¹⁵⁶

A Hub Library should be established as a cultural asset to maintain a record of garment production. It's recommended that one garment per collection from Aboriginal designers be 'purchased back' for

addition to the Hub Library, and non-Aboriginal designs and generic manufacturing examples should be retained for showing purposes on an as needs basis.

TIMELINES, BRICKS & MORTAR

This section outlines the implementation and phasing plan for the Hub, as well as practical elements, such as where it will be located and the required features of the building. Recommendations outlined in this section are scalable for the needs of the Hub: timelines and growth requirements are indicative only and can be expanded and contracted dependent on circumstance and business needs. The social enterprise business model canvas included at Figure 4 describes the full business model for the Hub.

¹⁵⁴ Ethical Clothing Australia, 2020, The Quick Unpick: Episode 1

¹⁵⁵ State Government of Victoria, 2018, Guide to procuring uniforms and PPE

¹⁵⁶ Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding fashion manufacturing

Social purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal creatives to establish and grow their businesses Employment and training for Aboriginal people in the creative and manufacturing industry Access to Aboriginal manufacturing for supply needs 		Beneficiaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal designers and small businesses Aboriginal communities Government Fashion industry Non-Aboriginal communities 		
Partners' skills & assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training provision Some manufacturing capability Community as partners Elders and artists cultural knowledge Designers 	Activities & required people, skills and assets Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manufacturing Training Creation Library Mentoring People and skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Machinists Production management Impact management Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Machinery Premises 	Economic value proposition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of high-quality garments manufactured in a social enterprise/Aboriginal business model Social procurement capability 	Communication channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social procurement markets Introductions through networks Alumni and college of designers and creatives Runway events Industry networks 	Customer segments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal designers Non-Aboriginal designers Companies for generic production High quality and ethical garment producers
Expenses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing Assets Premises Multiple other 		Income <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manufacturing income Government grants Philanthropic funding Impact investment 		

Figure 4: Business Model Canvas for social enterprise¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010

Implementation phasing

Phasing outlined below is by no means prescriptive. The intent of the modelling is to describe the Hub's potential journey and impact, and to provide a solid argument for establishment.

Phase 1: 0-6 months – Hub Establishment

Staffing profile	Production capability	Key milestones
0.6 FTE Machinist 0.4 FTE Production Coordinator	<i>Volume:</i> roughly 300 garments in 6 months <i>In house:</i> hand cutting, sewing, hardware, press, trim, quality control, packaging and distribution <i>Outsource:</i> Pattern making and grading, print, auto cutting	Manufacture Aboriginal designer samples Launch event and runway Scaled manufacturing

Phase 2: 6-18 months – Scaling up production

Staffing profile	Production capability	Key events
3.5 FTE Machinists 1.0 FTE Production Coordinator 1.0 FTE Engagement and Impact Lead	<i>Volume:</i> 3,500-3,700 garments per annum <i>In house:</i> Pattern making and grading, hand cutting, sewing, hardware, press, trim, quality control, packaging and distribution <i>Outsource:</i> Print, auto cutting	Scaled manufacturing Grow Aboriginal designer partners Commence Non-Aboriginal and generic manufacturing Invest in small scale digital printing machine and roll to roll press at end of phase Community and industry events Staff training and support

Phase 3: 18 months-3 years – Independence and growth

Staffing profile	Production capability	Key events
9 FTE Machinists 2.0 FTE Production Coordinator 1.0 FTE Engagement and Impact Lead 1 Director	<i>Volume:</i> 9-10,000 garments per annum <i>In house:</i> Pattern making and grading, print, hand cutting, sewing, hardware, press, trim, quality control, packaging and distribution <i>Outsource:</i> Auto cutting	Establish commercial viability Establish as independent legal entity Scale up total manufacturing machinery and capability Grow Aboriginal designer partners Grow commercial manufacturing Community and industry events and partnerships Staff training and support Establish alumni events

Phase 4: 3-5 years – Expansion

Staffing profile	Production capability	Key events
15-18 FTE Machinists 3.0 FTE Production Coordinator 1.0 FTE Engagement and Impact Lead 1 Director	<i>Volume:</i> up to 20,000 garments per annum <i>In house:</i> Pattern making and grading, print, hand cutting, sewing, hardware, press, trim, quality control, packaging and distribution	Expand industry reach Explore national partnerships Establish two satellite Hubs in regional Victoria Community and industry events and partnerships Staff training and support Grow alumni and mentoring programs

To guide the scaling of the enterprise, the Hub Steering Committee should consider the 5 ‘R’s:

- Readiness, if the skills and systems are in place
- Resources, if the Hub has enough financial and staffing capability
- Receptivity, if there’s community desire for a scaling up
- Risks, if the Hub will fail if it does – or does not – grow and expand
- Returns, financial revenue and growth in social impact.¹⁵⁸

Premises

Premises with consolidated Hub functions provide a foundation for innovative practice where design and manufacturing come together and ease to rapid prototyping, collaboration and learning.¹⁵⁹ Similar social businesses or social enterprises have up to 2,5000 square metres for manufacturing, training, storage, distribution and creative studio.¹⁶⁰ The Hub could explore options to share space with another social enterprise like the Social Studio to reduce costs in the pilot phase.

Collingwood Yard was explored as an option for the Hub’s premises. Located in in Melbourne’s inner north, Collingwood Yard have spaces of 40, 60 and

150 square meters. Collingwood Yard suggested in the first instance after the Hub may require a space around 150 square meters but recommended it was important to confirm minimum area requirement, plus needs for road access prior to securing a premises. The needs of the Hub will change with growth and development.

A custom premises should be designed and developed in partnership with Aboriginal fashion designers. The building should be designed to incorporate major elements of culture and Country including Aboriginal art and design, native gardens and outdoor space.

Launch event

The Hub should host a runway event showcasing the designs of the five partner models and introducing the Hub to the community, government and potential funders. All contributors who were interviewed for this study should be invited to the

launch event as a gift of thanks in line with the Hub’s value of reciprocity. Industry specialists, community members and potential buyers should be invited to the event to promote the designers works and generate saleability for Hub made products.

¹⁵⁸ Dees, J.G., Anderson, B.B., Wei-Skillern, J, 2002

¹⁵⁹ Ethical Clothing Australia, 2020, The Quick Unpick: Episode 4

¹⁶⁰ Ethical Clothing Australia, 2020, The Quick Unpick: Episode 5

GOVERNANCE

Strong governance to ensure cultural authenticity, mission alignment, financial accountability and prudent responsibility will protect the Hub from commercial distress and ensure it is working to achieve its vision at maximum capacity.

Steering Committee

On establishment, Kinaway should institute a Steering Committee to oversee the development of the Hub and eventual transition to become its own legal entity. Steering committee members should be paid a sitting fee where appropriate.

The Steering Committee will review and accept, amend or reject the Hub model as proposed in

this study. From time to time the Steering Committee may invite specialist representatives to attend meetings to support decision making. The Steering Committee may also engage consultancy to support business development for the Hub.

Legal Structure

It is recommended that the Hub establish as a nested commercial 'arm' of Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce (Kinaway) with a view to establish as a separate entity within 12-24 months of operation.

There are two key structures commonly used to establish social enterprises, Incorporated Associations and Public Companies Limited by Guarantee. As Kinaway is a Public Company Limited by Guarantee, there are few requirements of the Hub's operation as an offshoot of the broader company. While Incorporated Associations used to be the common approach for social enterprises in Australia, organisations are moving to use Companies Limited by Guarantee

as they are understood much more widely. Public Companies Limited by Guarantee have previously had governance and reporting requirements which have since relaxed and when coupled with Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission status have minimal reporting requirements. Public Companies Limited by Guarantee also have obligation for directors to act with prudence and require one member or shareholder.¹⁶¹

Incorporated associations can only operate in Victoria, not nationally.¹⁶² If the Hub was seeking to expand satellite operations to New South Wales, for example, it would need to convert its legal status or set up a separate entity.

FUNDING

While the proposed Hub model is a social enterprise that would generate income, covering initial establishment and early implementation costs will require additional investment. Bespoke, hybrid capital will be important to adequately support the Hub,¹⁶³ it's recommended that Kinaway draw on diverse networks to seek financial capital. The time for an Aboriginal Manufacturing Hub is ripe, with a national focus on local and ethical manufacturing, it is important the opportunity is seized, and Kinaway tap into the current appetites of government and funders.

¹⁶¹ Farrar, J & Hanrarhan, P, 2016

¹⁶² State Government of Victoria, 2020, Incorporated Association Rules

¹⁶³ Ward-Christie, L, 2015

Securing establishment funding

A key barrier for innovation in Australia is lack of access to early start capital.¹⁶⁴ There is also a well-documented danger of ‘mission-drift’ for social enterprises where a focus on income and covering costs may lead businesses away from the purpose¹⁶⁵ – to provide employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people, and to support Aboriginal cultural expression and business establishment through supports for emerging fashion designers.

The Hub requires bespoke, hybrid funding to establish and succeed as a leader and centre for excellence for Aboriginal fashion manufacturing. The Hub is seeking a range of grants and investments from government and philanthropic sectors to support effective implementation of the model, this includes:

- Seed funding to support a first run of manufacturing and launch event in the first 6 months
- Establishment funding to support scaling up purchasing of equipment and securing premises
- small reflexive grants to support emerging projects
- impact investment loans and grants throughout the first 5 years to boost capability and grow commercial viability.

There are strong opportunities for government collaboration on the Hub given the alignment between priorities for Aboriginal employment, small business development, innovation, local manufacturing, circular economies, sustainability and social procurement.

Income streams

There are three income streams for the Hub, commercial revenue, government and philanthropic funding.

Commercial revenue has a further layer of complexity in that commercial rates differ depending on the client. Market costs for non-Aboriginal buyers’ offsets costs for Aboriginal clients who are establishing and growing their businesses. There are four scenarios to accessing commercial revenue.

- An Aboriginal designer approaches the Hub and requests production of garments. The Hub supports the design and development of patterns and minimizes the price and only charges what’s necessary to cover production and management costs.
- A non-Aboriginal designer approached the Hub with a fully formed idea and associated patterns. The Hub charges an at market rate to offset costs for Aboriginal designers and support impact investment in the business.
- A commercial business (e.g. a corporation wanting uniforms) approaches the Hub with an idea but no design or patterns. The Hub facilitates an introduction to one of the partner designers – who may then involve an Aboriginal artist for the print design – and the Hub supports the development of design and associated patterns. The designer charges the commercial business a rate of their choosing, the Hub charges the designer the reduced rate as described above.
- The Hub is approached about generic production not requiring design or specialty (e.g. tote bags, tea towels, aprons). The Hub charges a full vertical margin rate and recoups costs to offset business and impact related costs.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, National Innovation and Science Agenda Report

¹⁶⁵ Ethical Clothing Australia, 2020, The Quick Unpick: Episode 9

¹⁶⁶ Naughton, P, 2020, Decoding Fashion manufacturing

IMPACT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will support excellence and continuous improvement at the Hub. It's recommended that evaluative practice be built into the Hub from establishment with a key metrics annual measurement plan. Collecting data will support a full-scale independent evaluation after three years of operation to confirm the following questions:

- Has the Hub has been implemented as intended?
- To what extent has the Hub achieved its vision?
- What improvements could be made to enhance the impact of the Hub?
- What are the unintended impacts of the Hub?

To support the evaluation of the Hub, ongoing measurement of the Hub's Logic Model, vision, mission and values should all be undertaken to provide in-time data analytics and available multi-year data sets for the evaluator to draw upon. In order to ensure measurement encompasses an Aboriginal definition of success, it's recommended that the evaluation framework align to the Blak Ethics and to Kinaway's broader Theory of Change.¹⁶⁷ Reporting should also consider externalities that may drive positive or negative impact, and assumptions that link Hub action and change.¹⁶⁸

Baseline data collection

The Hub should request data from all new partner designers, creatives and staff to confirm business health and aspiration as well as expectations from Hub engagement.

Output measures

Key metrics include:

- Garments in the Creation Library
- Amount of business network connections built through Hub engagement
- Amount of mentoring being received by Aboriginal creatives and staff
- Staff professional development feedback
- Average staff tenure
- Formal and informal training received by staff
- Hub income
- Amount of non-Aboriginal businesses procuring through the Hub.

Outcome measures

Key metrics include:

- Level of growth of Aboriginal businesses
- Amount of mentoring being given by Aboriginal creatives and staff
- Career and progression destinations for Aboriginal staff
- Costs and experiences of Aboriginal designers
- Hub production numbers and growth levels.

¹⁶⁷ Deloitte, 2020

¹⁶⁸ Integrated Reporting <IR>, 2018

Impact measures

Key metrics include:

- Fashion and design collaborations, locally, nationally and internationally
- Number of Victorian Aboriginal fashion labels and designers
- Level of Aboriginal employment and business ownership in the fashion and manufacturing industry
- Establishment of satellite Hubs and Hubs for other industries

Measuring Blak Ethics

Key questions for measurement include:

- Trust – Have there been any intellectual property breaches? To what extent have production commitments been met? How have mistakes been examined?
- Responsibility – What is the staff opinion of the Hub as an employer? Has the Hub maintained ECA accreditation?
- Integrity – Are all staff, creatives and designers reporting personal and professional growth? How are Elders, their knowledge and wisdom celebrated at the Hub?
- Respect – Do Hub staff and partners report respect as a core value? Is the Hub a positive physical environment that is well kept and maintained?
- Spirituality – To what extent are culture and ceremony honoured and celebrated at the Hub? Does the Hub celebrate significant days, display the flags, provide cultural leave? How do designers and manufacturers engage with culture together? How much time do Hub staff and partners spend engaging with Country?
- Humility – How is slow fashion supported at the Hub? How are all learning and development pathways catered for? How do mutual relationships of feedback and advice support everyone to develop practice?
- Mutuality – How are community engaged in Hub activities including training and development opportunities? How are Elders and young people supported to engage in a way that is meaningful to them? How does the Hub support community strength and opportunity?
- Reciprocity – What are the unintended impacts of the Hub? What is the impact of the Hub on non-Aboriginal stakeholders and community members? How are funders, advisors, contributors and allies celebrated?

Collection methods

Metrics should be collected via:

- Staff professional development plans
- Exit surveys when ending employment
- Annual surveys of alumni and current creatives and designers
- Annual surveys of staff
- Stakeholder surveys
- Cultural audits of Hub activities and implementation of values
- Focus groups and interviews where appropriate.

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