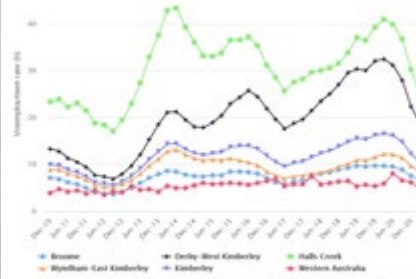


Case Study – Accelerating Indigenous-Led Enterprise

Enhancing Employment Opportunities in the East Kimberley



Background

The East Kimberley region is home to over 11,000 residents, most of whom live in the larger business hubs of Kununurra, Wyndham and Halls Creek, while the remainder live across 50 smaller communities including Kalumburu and Balgo.

According to 2016 ABS Census data, only ~38% of East Kimberley's Indigenous working-age residents (aged 15-54) are employed. Meanwhile, the demand for labour is at an all-time high in all industries across the region. Businesses can't find sufficient workers to meet demands as a result of limited numbers of local workers, as well as drastically reduced international and fly-in fly-out workers. These challenges need to be addressed to meet demand and improve opportunities for local people.

In October 2020, Jawun virtual secondee **Alexa Muratore** from **Boston Consulting Group (BCG)** contributed over 100 hours of support to the **Binarri-binyja Yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation (BBYAC)**. Alexa worked with BBYAC to launch the **Kimberley Employment Roundtable** project and address low Indigenous employment in the region. Her project built upon several past enterprise-focused Jawun briefs, which involved secondees from BCG, KPMG, Herbert Smith Freehills and NAB ([see 2014 Case Study](#)).

Approach

Alexa's project aimed to guide long-term economic development reform in the East Kimberley by combating the exclusion and disempowerment of Aboriginal people. It also explored how to bring more local people into sustained employment. As Alexa explained,

"In the East Kimberley, and in Kununurra in particular, we see unmet demand for labour now, from small businesses up to emerging industries (including sea farms and hydro businesses)."

Culminating in a full-day workshop in Kununurra on 29 October 2020, BBY invited employment-focused stakeholders to:

1. Explore the balance between supply and demand, now and emerging
2. Know and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the East Kimberley system
3. Determine where to from here:
 - a. Commit to three tangible system improvements for immediate action
 - b. Identify priorities and enablers for the future
 - c. Support an ongoing dialogue between decision makers across government, industry, and service providers

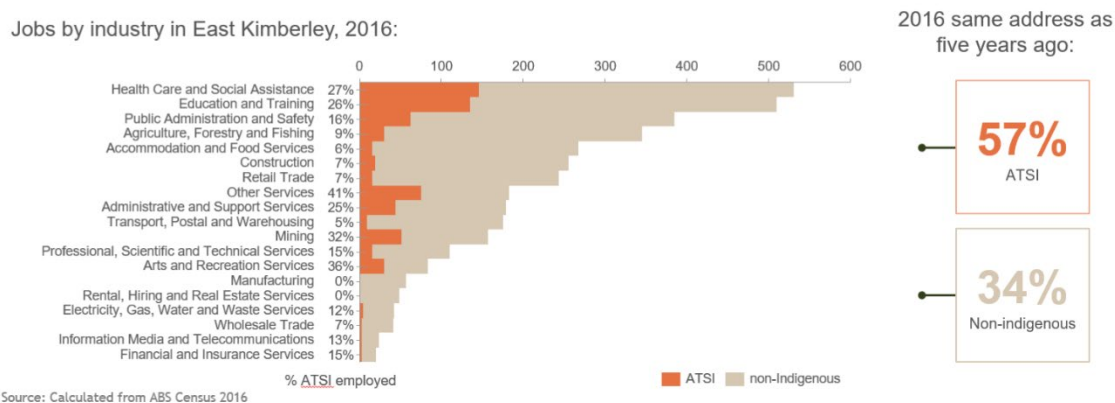
The Employment Roundtable was well attended by key local Indigenous organisations, business, training, and industry representatives, including a delegation from West Australian and Commonwealth Government agencies.

Guided by a strict full-day agenda assessing the central themes of operations, strategy, advocacy, policy and relationships, BBY addressed challenges of the current employment climate in the context

of COVID-19 impacts on travel and tourism, trade and retail, new businesses, job stimulus packages and competition for jobs from non-local workers.

With a 38-42% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) resident population, but an employment rate of only 33%, the group discussed barriers to motivation, job entry, qualifications and stable employment – including the perceived value of education and employment, family and community support and responsibilities, and cultural protocols/safety – acknowledging the complexity of the issue and the need for urgent change.

Employment rates of ATSI staff per industry showed they were a minority across all areas, including Health Care and Social Assistance (27%), Education and Training (26%), Accommodation and Food Services (6%), Construction (7%), Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (9%), Mining (32%) and Arts and Recreation Services (36%), though noting strengths in some of those areas (Mining and Arts).



Outcomes

Even with the pivot from in-place to virtual secondments in 2020, the benefits of successive secondments building upon prior outcomes were achieved. Alexa's secondment allowed for a variety of impactful tangible and non-tangible outcomes, such as:

1. *A shared understanding* of emerging employment opportunities was developed in the region, as a result of the BBY Employment Roundtable workshop held on 29 October 2020.
2. *Employment Roundtable 'takeaways'*. Lessons were taken from the roundtable workshop to support joint action amongst employment service providers in region (outcomes of this listed below).
3. *Longform analysis of the structure of the employment challenge, strengths and opportunities*. This enables BBY, as the Empowered Communities backbone organisation, to support collaboration around employment.

As a result of the successful delivery of Alexa's project brief, three priorities were established to improve employment in the East Kimberley.

Priority 1: "Hire Local". Create the banner under which the employment system stakeholders collaborate to improve outcomes, by providing the branding and 'glue' to unite focus, improve connectivity and promote better pooling of resources.

Priority 2: Embed mentoring across the system for employees, employers and employment service providers to increase connection and companionship through formal and informal networks and programs.

Priority 3: Develop system-specific changes to improve the connectivity and effectiveness of the whole system over the longer term.

Alexa and the BBY team then identified, in consultation with the roundtable collective, a comprehensive 6–12-month action plan. As a result of COVID-19, many aspects of this plan could not be actioned immediately. Priority 1, however, commenced in the East Kimberley among several roundtable

participants and local employment providers including EKJP, KWAC, Waringarri Arts, Wunan and MG Corp.

The group also identified small changes or culture shifts that could be practiced across the East Kimberley:

“We can deliberately and consistently use language that speaks to opportunities rather than road-blocks and an asset base of prospective employees rather than a liability of unemployed.”

We can educate people – employers and employees alike – on the importance of mentors and encourage people to seek out their own informal opportunities.

We can more regularly share with each other any information that we think may benefit the broader system, including current initiatives, meetings, and success stories.”

Next steps

While **Priority 1** has commenced in the East Kimberley, employers in the region have a long way to go to prioritise hiring local. As well as addressing the myriad of employment barriers, the next step in this process will be **Priority 2**: embedding mentoring across the system for employers, employees and recruitment services. **Priority 3**: develop system-specific changes also needs to be addressed, though, like **Priorities 1** and **2**, it is part of a long-term process and culture change.

To progress **Priority 2**, Jawun have assigned a 12-week in-place secondee from BCG, **Susanna Lees**, to the greater Employment Roundtable project, commencing in May 2021 and concluding in August 2021.