



Igniting the entrepreneurial spirit  
in Aboriginal Australia

Dream  
Discover  
Explore  
Develop  
Grow

**The ELP approach<sup>©</sup>**  
How it's changing the story  
of Aboriginal Australia

Vivian Long at Walparri Crossing  
Yarralin, NT

# Remote Aboriginal entrepreneurship



Enterprise Learning Projects (ELP) exists to ensure residents of remote Aboriginal communities have access to the support they need to explore, develop and grow their business ideas.

Until recently, support for community driven microenterprise has been unavailable in most parts of remote Australia. Remote Aboriginal Australians have traditionally been marginalised from economic development and characterised as being welfare dependent. With relevant and appropriate business support, we are seeing a wave of remote Aboriginal entrepreneurs emerging, bringing a range of exciting products and services to the market.

**These include:**

## Papulankutja Soap

a collective of over 20 soap makers from Blackstone (a community of over 1500km east of Perth) who are making a range of unique soaps using local bush plants.

## Ngalta Art

A family business from Ulpanyali, a small community situated within Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park. Ngalta Art's designs are inspired by the land, plants, animals and stories of the region and their products are being sold through the nearby resort.

## Sharratine Campbell (sole trader)

Sharratine is a role model for her community, demonstrating that her skills, knowledge and experience are valuable and she can make these available to a range of organisations on a fee-for-service basis.

## Doomadgee Op Shop

established and run by local women, the op shop provides affordable second hand clothes to a community that has only one other store.

At the same time, we are also seeing that wider Australia is looking for meaningful ways to connect with remote Australia. We see business as a way to facilitate this connection and ELP is in the process of developing an online store that will open access to worldwide markets for some of the most remote enterprises in the world.



Photo: Sharratine Campbell and her family at the Barunga Festival with Ngarinyman Bush Soap

# How we got here



## Timeline



## The situation today



### Aboriginal people remain Australia's most disenfranchised and marginalised people.

There are alarmingly high suicide rates – Aboriginal people are three times more likely to commit suicide than non-Aboriginal people. They are severely overrepresented in the justice system – Indigenous women are 23 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous women while Indigenous men are 16 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous men. There are persistently high levels of unemployment, chronic health issues and high incidences of domestic violence. The mortality rates for Indigenous Australians is on par with some of the world's most impoverished nations.

In response to this extreme disadvantage, there have been high levels of government expenditure in an effort to 'close the gap'. Aboriginal people have been subject to a vast array of schemes and programs, most of which have made things worst – at best, the system has simply maintained and imprisoned Aboriginal people in their current state of disadvantage. Rather than top down approaches, Aboriginal people have long been advocating for the support to develop their own solutions.

ELP has listened to this call and worked with Aboriginal people over the last 3.5 years to develop an approach that meets their needs.

Among the plethora of services designed to lift Aboriginal people out of poverty, many have failed to effectively address the extreme economic marginalisation.

Despite the obvious need to create new economic opportunities for Aboriginal people, there has been minimal investment in supporting Aboriginal people to engage in business development.

Aboriginal people, who for so long have had their lives managed by others, have long strived to become self-reliant. What people were not able to access was the support to help them understand and navigate the Western economic system so that they could create economic opportunities in their communities



From left to right – Elizabeth Dodd, Cheryl Johnny and Rebecca Rockland Doomadgee QLD



## The ELP journey since 2010

**ELP was founded in late 2010 to address the vacuum of support for community-driven enterprise. Taking best practice international approaches in microenterprise development and customising them to the Australian context, ELP has demonstrated that business can thrive in remote Aboriginal communities, when people have access to appropriate support.**

Over the last three and a half years, ELP has piloted the approach with some of Australia's most remote communities. Our partner communities have included very small communities (30 people) to large communities (1200+ people) across the NT, SA, WA and QLD. We came to understand that for Aboriginal people living in remote communities, the journey does not start with technical business knowledge, but with assisting people to understand how the market economy works. In order to effectively engage in the economy, one must first understand it. The vastly different cultural, social, historical, political and economic experiences of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people are commonly overlooked in the design of learning programs targeted to Aboriginal people. The knowledge acquired in a hunter-gatherer society is very different from the knowledge developed in a capitalist society.

Through working alongside Aboriginal people living in remote communities, we have co-created an approach that meets the learning needs of Aboriginal people. It meets people where they are at and uses culturally appropriate learning methodology to ensure people get to where they want to go. This creates lasting social and economic impacts including significant improvements in individual social and emotional well being, improved outcomes for children and greater self reliance through the creation of new income generation opportunities.



*Photo: Linda Clyne, Ngalta Art*



## The ELP Approach

**ELP supports people to build the skills, knowledge and confidence to achieve their aspirations through business. From the seed of an idea to piloting and facilitating specialist support, ELP partners with individuals and communities to bring their ideas to life.**

We journey side by side with people and support them to explore, develop and grow their ideas into sustainable enterprises.

The ELP approach is a proven model that enables Aboriginal Australians to confidently engage in the market economy, dramatically altering their position in Australian society. From one of extreme marginalisation and disenfranchisement to one where Aboriginal people's contribution is valued and celebrated.



*Photo: Ruth Darby, Childcare Worker  
with Managing Director Laura Egan*

# The ELP approach<sup>©</sup>

## Phase 1 Dream

### Key principles

- Ideas & aspirations
- Building on assets

### Impact



People bring their family along for the journey, so the impact is multiplied.

### Objective

Ask and learn  
"What do you want for your life?"

"What do you dream of?"  
(It's often the first time people have been asked what their hopes and what their aspirations are).

ELP uncovers common themes such as provide for my family, to share cultural knowledge, the ability to travel to other Aboriginal communities and something positive to do with their lives and time.

ELP shows how business can be a vehicle to facilities this.

### Lasting legacy

"Business is possible, I understand that something I have, can do or create is of value to others and can be exchanged for money."

## Phase 2 Discover

### Key principles

- You can learn as you go
- It's good to start small and grow

### Objective

Explore realistic and grounded business ideas that reflect the individual and communities' belief system and values.

Create frames of reference for Aboriginal people. Show them past success relevant to them.

Show that business can look like many things, and is shaped by what you can do, what you enjoy.

Broaden thinking with questions like "what might business look like for you?"

Bring the subject of business to life with ten examples, using video, stories and introduce role models.

### Impact



More people have become interested, so the core group increases.

### Lasting legacy

"Business is a possibility for me, for us."

"These are the business ideas I could try"

"I understand that there are many steps to have a good business"

"I know we can travel and learn as I go"

## Phase 3 Explore

### Key principle

- Community members make and own decisions

### Objective

Create opportunities for people to trial and test a business idea. It's a sort of 'hands on feasibility study'.

This stage includes enterprise projects, pop up shops, and time spent on product development. Business concepts such as income, expenditure and profit are a feature of this stage. People experience aspects of business management such as producing, selling, staffing, promotion, and customer service.

### Lasting legacy

"I have the foundations on which I can build a business"

"Business is a possibility for me, for us."

"There are various businesses I could try and I've decided to try out this one"

### Impact

The Local Community sees a real life business in action, run by local people they know.



Typically, the whole community gets behind this stage and participate as consumers.

## Phase 4 Develop

### Key principles

- Low start up costs
- Rapid prototyping

### Objective

To support the emerging entrepreneurs to formalise their businesses through business incubation support.

This includes access to the Aboriginal Business Academy, involving mentoring opportunities with successful entrepreneurs, marketing trips to capital cities and access to intensive and targeted business support to manage legal, tax and financial aspects of the business.

### Impact



### Lasting legacy

"Business is a reality for me/us"

"I understand that business is driven by the decisions you make."

"There are a lot of aspects to manage and I know where I can access support".

## Phase 5 Grow

### Key principles

- Commercially sound and stable

### Objective

The growth in the business creates new jobs for the community and more people become involved in the business as employees.

### Lasting legacy

"My products and/or services are valued in the market"

"The business is making enough money to pay me and for me to start employing others to help me"

"I have the skills to take on new opportunities as they present themselves"

There is a change in national consciousness, as Australians see the growth of Aboriginal led business.



## Results of The ELP approach<sup>®</sup>



### We're increasing the quality of life for people in the following areas:

- Social inclusion
- Health
- Economic participation
- Social and emotional wellbeing
- Education



### This results in

- Lower suicide rates
- Stronger families
- Improved outcomes for children
- Lower crime rates
- Lower Incarceration rates
- Lower rates of domestic violence
- Reduced dependence on welfare
- Increased life opportunities
- Increased life expectancy

## We need you



There is a huge demand for ELP's grassroots business development support. We are regularly approached by communities who see that enterprise has the potential to address the high levels of social and economic disadvantage they experience.

Business can be the vehicle where we are able to share in the wealth of knowledge, creativity and wisdom held by the original custodians of the land we now call Australia. Grassroots enterprise is providing a vehicle for this to be shared with wider Australia and the world, and we all stand to benefit.

ELP is walking alongside Aboriginal Australians to create a drastically different future for Australia. A nation where people living in remote Aboriginal communities are economically independent and thriving through running their own businesses.

The ELP approach is a proven model that enables Aboriginal Australians to confidently engage in the market economy, dramatically altering their position in Australian society. From one of extreme marginalisation and disenfranchisement to one where Aboriginal people's contribution is valued and celebrated.

With your help, we want to ensure that an Aboriginal child born today, has a drastically different future to look forward to when they turn 16. Instead of a life inhibited by poverty, together we can ensure they face a path full of opportunities and possibilities.

**Let's create this future together.**

Laura Egan CEO and the ELP family.



## Contact

If you would like more information about Enterprise Learning Projects or would like a meeting to discuss your potential partnership with us, we'd love to hear from you:

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Clyne Family, Ngalta Art  
Ulpanyali, NT