



Australian Government
Indigenous Business Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

IBA Chairman Challenges Native Title Conference Participants

Chairman of Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), Mr Joseph Elu, has challenged participants at the Native Title Conference in Cairns not to focus solely on negotiating access to native title lands but to also consider the means where Indigenous Australians can provide for the future by way of sustainable economic development.

He stressed the importance of exploring new economic horizons to make use of land for the prosperity of future generations. Mr Elu stated he was *'concerned that there seems to be limited connection between regaining land rights and the ability to develop lands for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren and, when compared to Indigenous Canadians, Americans or New Zealanders, we are well behind.'*

He continued, *'It often distresses me when I see opportunities being ignored or when the communities are not even told of the opportunities available to them. I don't believe that our future is dependant on what governments hand out to our people.'*

Mr Elu added that he wasn't trying to undermine the achievements to date and he pointed to a number of existing business opportunities available to Indigenous people. IBA currently assists Indigenous people to participate in a wide range of sectors including cultural tourism, provision of services, creating and selling art & crafts, transport, aquaculture and horticulture activities, providing labour to construction and mining industries, retail and wholesale ventures, bush tucker and land and water management.

"The Australian economy is booming and yet the statistics on our people in terms of poverty, employment education and health decline. I don't believe it is anyone else's responsibility but our own to start to identify the ways we can provide for the future. The goodwill that exists in the private sector is strong and I believe this is the time to plan and build for our futures." he said.

There is a common misconception in the business community regarding issues like remoteness and the lack of local industries. Mr Elu's response to those who doubt the viability of joint venture partnerships is simple, *'if I can do it in my home community of Seisia, which is one of the remotest parts of the country, and IBA can do it in other remote parts of Australia, then it is possible to develop opportunities in most other parts of the country.'*

Indigenous Australians have just celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the 1967 which recognised our rightful place in Australian society. It also triggered opportunity and choice. Mr Elu asked the participants the burning question: *"will we all work together on this challenge or will we be discussing this very issue at the 80th anniversary of the referendum in 2047?"*

For a full copy of Mr Elu's address to the Native Title Conference go to www.iba.gov.au

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