

# Review of the Aboriginal Procurement Policy

**Investing in our youngest generation for a skilled  
future**

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20 February 2024



Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is the trade association representing electrical contractors recognised by industry, government and the community as the electrical industry's leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. You can visit our website at [www.masterelectricians.com.au](http://www.masterelectricians.com.au)

Given our position as an electrical industry advocate, our response is focused primarily on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) industries. The scope of consultation questions are beyond MEA's direct expertise, however we believe our below response will provide fresh perspective in achieving more meaningful results from the Aboriginal Procurement Policy.

### **Aboriginal Procurement Policy**

While MEA commends the NT Government's ambition to award more government contracts to Aboriginal Enterprise Businesses (AEB), we propose that the five per cent target implemented through the Aboriginal Procurement Policy is limited in efficacy without addressing an underlying issue; namely insufficient diversity within STEM trades. If this was improved then the pool of people who could run successful AEB would increase and provide opportunities for a larger cohort of Aboriginal Australians. To this end, MEA advocate for improved Vocational Education Training in Secondary Schools (VETSS) is a likely sustainable key solution towards Government inherently improving its utilisation of a skilled pool of AEBs.

We strongly advocate for VETSS to be integrated into the secondary school curriculum with an equal weighting to Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) to expose all students, regardless of cultural background or geographical location, to opportunities in developing STEM skills and incentivise those students to work towards a prosperous STEM career. MEA argue that improved VETSS programs will create the necessary systemic and societal change to significantly increase the number of Aboriginal career participants, better positioning their communities across the country to be at the forefront of successful Australian businesses. Government needs to address the cultural diversity issue within our skills shortage crisis immediately through our youngest generations utilising procurement policies merely as ancillary tools.

VETSS is likely to be a long-term sustainable solution to skills shortages amongst Aboriginal communities, especially those living in rural and remote areas. It is time to change the narrative and begin emphasising the benefits and inclusiveness of STEM trades. Without cultivating this change at a young impressionable age where VET participation is normalised, we cannot expect the low rates of aboriginal diversity within STEM trades resolved. Once diversity amongst STEM trades is improved, increasing the pool of AEB STEM based trade businesses, we can expect these procurement policies to have a more meaningful impact, likely achieving higher per centages than the 4.5 per cent Government contracts awarded to AEBs in FY23.

We look forward to the future of the Aboriginal Procurement Policy and hope to be part of any further discussions.