

Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission**From: Anonymous 1395****Dated: 22 November 2024****Submission:**

I have eight years of experience in government procurement and am currently focused on social procurement, implementing requirements, and advocating for our policy. Aboriginal business engagement is often approached indirectly, such as requiring head contractors to subcontract to Aboriginal businesses. However, there is a lack of support, resources, and processes to enable direct engagement—where Aboriginal businesses are directly contracted to deliver services or works etc.

I work in a large government department with a dedicated procurement operational and policy team. While the department has a social procurement strategy in place (as required under the Social Procurement Framework), its actions to promote social procurement and raise staff awareness have not been prioritised for years.

Other procurement policies and initiatives often take precedence, leaving social procurement—particularly Aboriginal business engagement—undervalued, despite the department’s strong focus on self-determination.

The Victorian Public Sector (VPS) must treat direct social procurement as a priority, leveraging its significant buying power. Establishing a VPS-wide target for engaging Aboriginal businesses through established contracts (not just engagement through the procurement process), along with a framework to monitor and ensure accountability, would help drive meaningful progress.

The VPS also has state purchase contracts (SPC) in place that can be a barrier to direct social procurement. A blanket exemption to engage with a social benefit supplier (outside of the SPC) could support uptake but there would be push back based on the cost savings etc. etc.. Attentively, the SPCs could be reviewed with the view to reduce the strenuous requirements to become a pre-qualified supplier.

END OF SUBMISSION