

## MEDIA RELEASE: SUPPLY NATION CONNECT 2017

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**DATE OF EVENT:** 3.05.17 and 4.05.17

### [Connect 2017: celebrating the growth of the Indigenous economic sector](#)

Connect is Supply Nation's annual supplier diversity event, held over two days (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017). Connect comprises a full day Knowledge Forum (conference), the largest Indigenous Business Tradeshow in Australia, and the annual Gala Awards Dinner at which the Supplier Diversity Award winners are announced.

#### **Knowledge Forum – 3<sup>rd</sup> May, International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, Major Sponsor: Staples**

This year's Connect Knowledge forum was attended by over 350 delegates and featured more than 30 speakers. The line-up included an opening keynote from multi-award winning author and journalist, Stan Grant; an address from the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion and a closing keynote from Australia's leading futurist, Bernard Salt.

Laura Berry, CEO of Supply Nation, welcomed the attendees and spoke about the theme of Connect 2017 *"Supplier Diversity is everyone's business – it's not only the theme of today's conference, it's also a fundamental driver for everything we do at Supply Nation. We believe that supplier diversity is not just the responsibility of a small section of the business eco-system, but a systemic, top-to-bottom way of doing business."*

She continued, acknowledging that whilst there is still work to do, the Indigenous business sector is growing *"There are more Indigenous-owned businesses than ever in Australia; Supply Nation registered Indigenous businesses collectively earn more than \$1 billion per year with revenues growing at an average annual rate of 12.5%; Indigenous businesses are far more likely to employ other Indigenous people – despite Indigenous people only making up 3% of the population. On Supply Nation's directory, Indigenous Business Direct, Indigenous employment averages 40%."*

Ms Berry concluded, urging each attendee to *"Use the lever of procurement to work toward a more inclusive and diverse Australia."*

Stan Grant discussed the history of Indigenous peoples as one of resilience, and success – and applied that concept to business. He spoke about his story and how he has been driven to succeed. Despite the fact that there are major social inequities still weighing on Australian society, his message was one of inspiration – that our stories define us, and that we need more stories of Indigenous success.

The Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion announced a broad consultation project that has the potential to change the way Indigenous businesses access finance, capacity building services and mentoring. He spoke passionately about the success of the Indigenous Procurement Policy and driving Australian corporate and government buyers to understand that doing business with Indigenous businesses is the new normal. The Minister also announced the 18 month results of the Indigenous Procurement Policy which show that \$407 million in contracts have been awarded to 708 separate businesses.

A panel of Australia's top CEOs spoke about their top-down commitment to supplier diversity, and the benefits they have seen from incorporating Indigenous businesses into their supply chains. The delegates

then broke into a series of workshops – each designed to address a specific concern or question about supplier diversity, either from the perspective of the supplier or the buying organisation.

The day concluded with a trademark energetic and engaging presentation from Bernard Salt. He used data to illustrate the growth areas in Australia – including China-focused tourism and developing businesses to serve our aging retired population.

**Indigenous Business Tradeshow - 4<sup>th</sup> May, International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, Major Sponsor: Compass Group**

Over 1,100 tickets were issued for the biggest ever Indigenous business tradeshow which showcased 143 successful Indigenous businesses. With demonstrations of rope climbing technology; a branded race car; presentations from members about opportunities for Indigenous businesses; a series of mini-training sessions by high-profile presenters including Creel Price and Kristal Kinsela; Google VR demonstrations and food and drink provided by sponsor Compass Group – the energy in the room was infectious.

Laura Berry, CEO of Supply Nation, commented *“Every year, we hear stories of business connections made at the Tradeshow that deliver contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The Tradeshow this year was the biggest exhibition of Indigenous businesses ever in Australia, with hundreds of motivated government and corporate decision makers and buyers who were there to connect with Indigenous businesses.”*

*“The success of the Federal Government’s Indigenous Procurement Policy – which saw an almost 5,000% increase in spend in one financial year - is an obvious driver in the sector. But it’s not the only factor.”* Ms Berry continued, *“The announcement by The Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion at the Knowledge Forum of the results from the Indigenous Procurement Policy over the last 18 months just shows that setting hard targets works – and we’re increasingly seeing state and local government and even large corporates setting their own Indigenous procurement targets to complement their RAP commitments.”*

**Gala Awards Dinner – 4<sup>th</sup> May, The Star Event Centre, Pyrmont, Major Sponsor: Commonwealth Bank**

Hosted by the effervescent Casey Donovan and Aaron Fa’Aso, the Connect 2017 Gala Awards Dinner attracted over 740 guests from Indigenous businesses and Supply Nation member organisations. The annual finale to Connect, the black tie event featured stellar Indigenous entertainment from the Muggera Dancers, and multiple Aria award-winner, Christine Anu, with Casey Donovan providing an impromptu serenade half way through the evening which brought the house down.

The main purpose of the Gala Awards Dinner is to announce Supply Nation’s Supplier Diversity Award winners. Celebrating the best in Australian Supplier Diversity, these awards recognise the organisations and individuals that are delivering outstanding results in the space, and excellence in Australian business.

This year there was a 25% increase in nominations, again illustrating the growth, maturity and dynamic nature of the sector.

The 2017 award winners are:

**Supplier Diversity Advocate of the Year, sponsored by Westpac:**

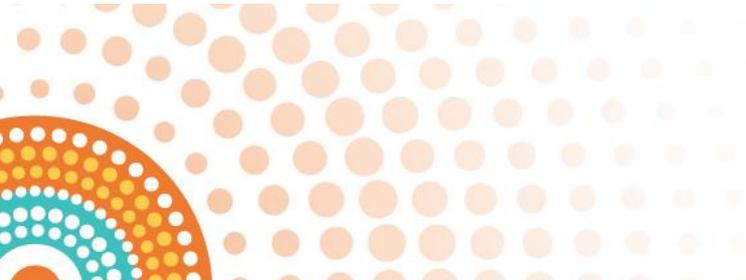
- Kristal Kinsela, Indigenous Professional Services

**Registered Supplier of the Year, sponsored by Laing O’Rourke:**

- Jabin Project Management

**Supplier Diversity Partnership of the Year, sponsored by ANZ:**

- Cox Inall Ridgeway & Marcus Lee Design



**Corporate Member of the Year, sponsored by Kulbardi:**

- Fortescue Metals Group

**Government Member of the Year, sponsored by Wesfarmers:**

- Department of Defence

**Procurement Professional of the Year, sponsored by BP:**

- Shaun Hodgins, Compass Group

**Indigenous Businesswoman of the Year, sponsored by IAG:**

- Julie Okely, Dilkara

**Young Indigenous Entrepreneur of the Year, sponsored by EY:**

- Brock Hunter-Hebberman, HGH Developments

**Certified Supplier of the Year, sponsored by Telstra:**

- CMC Indigenous Services

**Outstanding Impact Award, sponsored by Lendlease:**

- Fortescue Metals Group

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**DETAILS ABOUT: [Connect 2017](#)**

**Knowledge Forum – Wednesday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 8.30am – 5pm, International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour**

**Indigenous Business tradeshow - Thursday May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 9am-3pm, International Convention Centre**

**Gala Awards Dinner – Thursday May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 6pm – late, The Star Event Centre, Pymont**

Over 2,600 tickets were sold across the two days of Connect.

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**FOR EDITORS:**

For more information about Connect 2017:

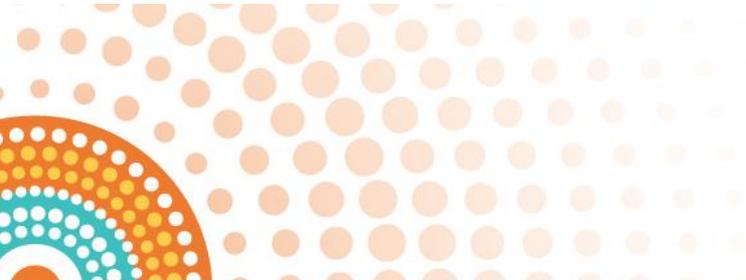
[www.supplynationconnect.com.au](http://www.supplynationconnect.com.au)

For more information about the Knowledge Forum speakers:

<http://supplynationconnect.com.au/connect-2017-knowledge-forum-speakers/>

For more information about the Knowledge Forum program:

<http://supplynationconnect.com.au/knowledge-forum-full-schedule/>



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## ABOUT: SUPPLY NATION

Supply Nation is the Australian leader in supplier diversity, established in 2009 to connect our membership of Australia's leading brands and government with Indigenous businesses across the country.

Supply Nation registers and certifies Indigenous businesses so that our members can be confident of Indigenous ownership. With Indigenous businesses active in every state and territory, in every industry sector, Supply Nation has been central to the growth of a new economic force.

Supply Nation is proud to be the first and pre-eminent supplier diversity organisation in Australia. To fulfil targets in the Indigenous Procurement Policy, government has mandated that buyers consult Indigenous Business Direct (Supply Nation's directory of over 1250 suppliers) to access Indigenous-owned businesses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [www.supplynation.org.au](http://www.supplynation.org.au)

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**To arrange an interview or to be connected with award winners, please contact us.**

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Interview available with:

**Laura Berry, CEO of Supply Nation**

To book an interview, please contact Sybil Williams, below.

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