

# Media release

Friday, 8 May 2026

## First Nations views sought on tax system experience

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are invited to share their experiences of engaging with the Australian Tax Office as part of a national review underway.


The Tax Ombudsman, Ruth Owen, the independent watchdog of the ATO and tax system, has released her terms of reference outlining the scope and significance of this review – the first of its kind.

The Tax Ombudsman met with Aboriginal community organisations and peak bodies to inform the review terms of reference and heard first-hand the challenges First Nations people are encountering when trying to engage with the tax system.

**“We heard that a lack of targeted and appropriately designed education and engagement has meant the tax system can often feel alien, confusing and at times frightening for First Nations people,” Ms Owen said.**

Ms Owen said it was vital that all taxpayers understood how the tax system operates, what is required of them and how they can benefit from it.

“I am keen to hear directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander taxpayers around the country to help inform my review. People can contribute by attending a community yarning session in the coming months, completing an online survey or making a submission.”



As one of the largest Commonwealth government departments, Ms Owen also said that the ATO is expected to adapt its operations to meet the needs of all Australians, including First Nations people. This is set out in the Closing the Gap National Agreement Priority Reform 3 – transforming Government organisations.

**“We want to know what’s working and what’s not, and more importantly, we want to explore the practical improvements we can recommend to the ATO to better support First Nations taxpayers, businesses and the people who represent them.”**

To support the consultation process, the Tax Ombudsman has engaged Jindawayni, an 100% Aboriginal owned business managed by Kokatha woman Amy Rust.

**“The reality is the tax system wasn’t designed with our people’s cultures or lived realities in mind. On top of that, there are very real practical barriers, particularly in remote communities,”** Ms Rust said.

“There are benefits in tools like MyGov, but that assumes individual access. If you’re sharing a phone with family, the system just doesn’t fit how people actually live.”

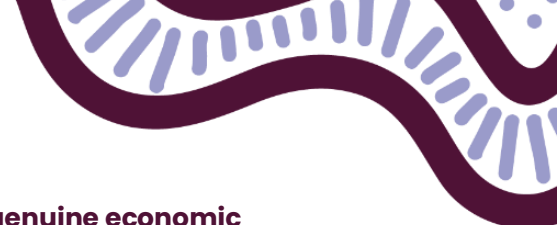
Community yarning sessions will be held across metropolitan, regional and remote locations over the next three months.

“We’ve made a real effort to get out to places that don’t always get visited. From Ceduna on Wirangu Country to Geraldton on Yamatji Country to Lismore on Bundjalung Country, I reckon we’ve got a pretty good spread. And if there’s not one in your town, or you don’t have time, we’d still love to hear from people through the online survey,” Ms Rust said.

“All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander taxpayers and businesses are welcome to have their say.”

Aboriginal businessman and founder and Director of We Create Print Deliver, Pat Caruso, whose organisation includes a business incubator supporting start-ups, said he hopes the review also considers how the tax system supports emerging Aboriginal businesses.

**“In many ways, we’re looking at the first generation of Aboriginal businesses. The potential is enormous, but for many, this is new territory as they find their footing. I’d**



**welcome stronger conversations around how we can create genuine economic opportunities within our communities,”** Mr Caruso said.

To access the Review terms of reference, a full list of yarning sessions and the survey, visit:  
[Review: ATO engagement with First Nations taxpayers – Tax Ombudsman](#)

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