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WA First Nations Roundtable Shapes Federal Economic Reforms

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On August 7, 2025, a First Nations Roundtable was held in Boorloo (Perth), Western Australia (WA), as part of a series of consultations to inform the Australian federal government's Economic Reform Roundtable, scheduled for August 19-21 in Canberra. The event, hosted by the Department of the Treasury, gathered First Nations business leaders, academics, and community representatives to discuss strategies for boosting productivity, economic resilience, and budget sustainability, according to *Mirage News*. The discussions aimed to ensure Indigenous perspectives shape national economic policies.

The Boorloo roundtable emphasized the economic contributions of First Nations businesses, which generate over \$16 billion annually and employ 116,000 people, as

stated by Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy in a press release on August 5, 2025. Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) highlighted the potential of the “Indigenous demographic dividend” to drive productivity through increased labor force participation and innovation, per their submission reported by *IBA Media*. IBA Chair Darren Godwell noted that First Nations’ ownership of over 50% of Australia’s landmass positions them as key players in economic development, emphasizing the need for policy clarity to unlock this potential.

Critics, including Opposition finance spokesperson Jane Hume, argued that the Albanese Government’s approach risks becoming a bureaucratic exercise without concrete outcomes. Hume, speaking to *The Australian Financial Review* on August 7, 2025, called for measurable reforms over “endless talkfests,” pointing to the 900 submissions received for the national roundtable as evidence of over-consultation. The Productivity Commission’s 2024 report underscored that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses contribute \$42.6 billion in social value annually, yet face barriers like limited access to capital, which the government’s recent Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) legislation aims to address by enabling borrowing and investment partnerships.

The Boorloo event followed similar roundtables in Darwin and other regions, with insights feeding into Treasurer Jim Chalmers’ agenda for the Canberra summit. National Farmers’ Federation President David Jochinke, quoted by *NFF Media* on August 6, 2025, stressed the importance of including regional voices to ensure reforms benefit all sectors. As the government navigates economic challenges, with inflation at 3.8% per the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the roundtable’s outcomes will be scrutinized for their ability to deliver tangible results for First Nations communities and the broader economy.