

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 13 January 2025

EMPOWERING ASPIRING FIRST NATIONS DIRECTORS TO TAKE THE LEAD

First Nations leaders are being supported to reach their potential as directors, as recipients of the second round of the First Nations Director Scholarship Program 2024-2026.

The program, run by the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) in partnership with the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) and The Observership Program, is funded in part by the AICD and a \$1 million grant from the National Indigenous Australians Agency, and aims to develop a cohort of First Nations directors to contribute to both First Nations and non-Indigenous boards across Australia.

It demonstrates the Australian Government's commitment to building a strong and sustainable First Nations community-controlled sector that delivers high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across the country, alongside supporting the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The First Nations Director Scholarship Program Round 2 (2025) will provide 56 scholars with one of the following opportunities:

- The AICD's [Foundations of Directorship](#) for Indigenous Organisations course; or
- The AICD's [Company Directors Course](#) for Indigenous business Leaders; or
- A 12-month placement on [The Observership Program](#)'s 2025 program.

The 2025 cohort of highly skilled and experienced First Nations scholars is drawn from a diverse range of leaders working in the First Nations community-controlled sector who have been nominated for their potential to transition into senior leadership roles including executive, c-suite and board positions.

Participants will gain access to world-class governance education and join practical mentoring and workshop programs to build their network and professional skills as a director.

The Program is also aligned to AICD's Innovate Reconciliation Plan commitment to developing a pipeline of First Nations directors.

The first round of the First Nations Director Scholarship Program 2024-2026 saw scholars awarded with 34 scholarships. Altogether, 135 governance scholarships are expected to be awarded through the program over a three-year period.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors is committed to strengthening society through world-class governance. We aim to be the independent and trusted voice of governance, building the capability of a community of leaders for the benefit of society. Our membership of more than 53,000 includes directors and senior leaders from business, government and the not-for-profit sectors

Quotes attributable to Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy:

"This director scholarship program supports and empowers emerging First Nations leaders, to help meet the needs of people in their communities and beyond.

"Congratulations to the recipients, who will grow in their roles, becoming strong examples and inspiration for future generations.

"This program demonstrates the Albanese Labor Government's commitment to building a strong and sustainable First Nations community-controlled sector."

Quotes attributable to AICD Managing Director and CEO Mark Rigotti:

"The AICD is committed to providing pathways for more First Nations business leaders to join boardrooms across Australia.

"I'm pleased that we have this opportunity to collaborate with the AIGI and The Observership Program to provide effective and relevant training to deliver world-class governance education and mentoring."

The Australian Institute of Company Directors is committed to strengthening society through world-class governance. We aim to be the independent and trusted voice of governance, building the capability of a community of leaders for the benefit of society. Our membership of more than 53,000 includes directors and senior leaders from business, government and the not-for-profit sectors