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Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs): Where they want to be in the future

PBCs are building from strengths in caring for country and culture and are open to expanding into new areas. The 2019 PBC Survey conducted by AIATSIS, CSIRO and the National Native Title Council identified key areas of potential growth in the next five years. These are farming and fishing, hospitality services, and financial services and investment. These development options may be seen as more compatible with existing activities focused on cultural and environmental services.

Farming and fishing

Only 10% of PBCs reported that they had undertaken fishing and farming work in the previous 12 months. This category covers services conducted directly by a PBC or an associated entity owned by them in the fields of pastoralism, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and bush food development. This is a major area of potential growth, with 43% of PBCs indicating their ambition to enter this sector within the next five years.

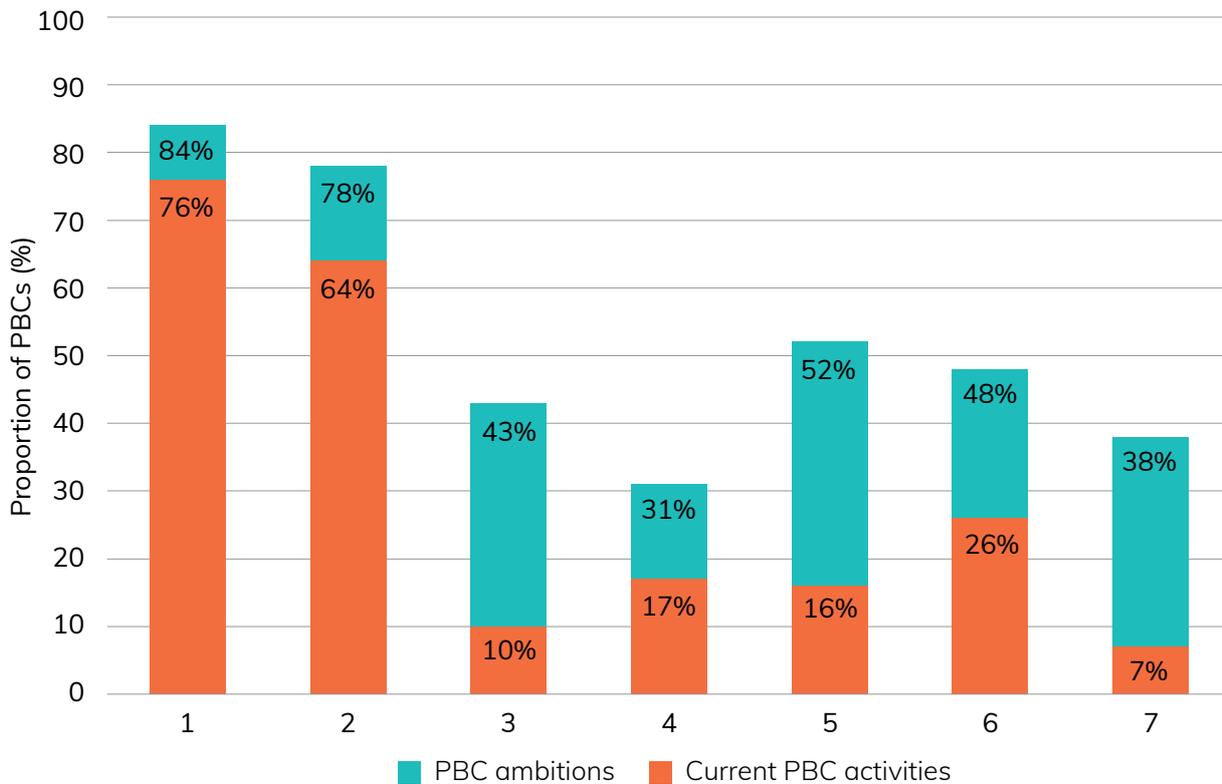
The Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation (ENAC) have begun successfully developing and trialling inland aquaculture practices for the production of the giant fresh water prawn, cherabin, for a commercial fishery market. The ENAC aim to further employ local Aboriginal people and expand economic participation in the region.¹

Hospitality services

Hospitality services of tourism, accommodation, catering and retail are also areas of potential growth for PBCs with 52% reporting that they would like to venture into the hospitality industry within the next five years.

The Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) is investing into their culture, communities and landscapes through tourism by establishing camping facilities, tour providers, and the Q festival. QYAC note in their 2018–19 annual report that these tourism endeavours must be sustainable and in direct consultation with and management by the Quandamooka People.²

Graph 1: PBC ambitions vs current PBC activities³



Legend: Industries PBCs are already working or want to work in

1. Cultural services (including cultural heritage, cultural programs, art production)
2. Environmental services (land and sea management, carbon farming, biodiversity)
3. Farming and fishing (including pastoralism, agriculture, aquaculture, horticulture, forestry, bush food development)
4. Mining, transport and construction services
5. Hospitality services (including tourism, accommodation, catering and retail)
6. Social services (including housing, employment, community, and education services)
7. Financial services and investments

Financial services and investments

The 2019 PBC survey found that only 7% of PBCs had established services within this field in the last 12 months. However, 38% of PBCs indicated that they hoped to enter this sector within the next five years. This sector could generate large volumes of capital for PBCs to invest in micro, small and medium sized enterprises whilst also providing opportunities to sustainably reinvest in community, country and people.

The Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation (FWCAC) are one of the PBCs adopting this form of business development. FWAC created multiple trust and investment entities beneath the umbrella of the PBC. In doing so FWAC has been able to provide \$1.1 million in microfinancing loans, scholarships and emergency funds to their members as well as supporting FWCAC cultural initiatives over the 2018–19 financial year.⁴

Where to go with this knowledge?

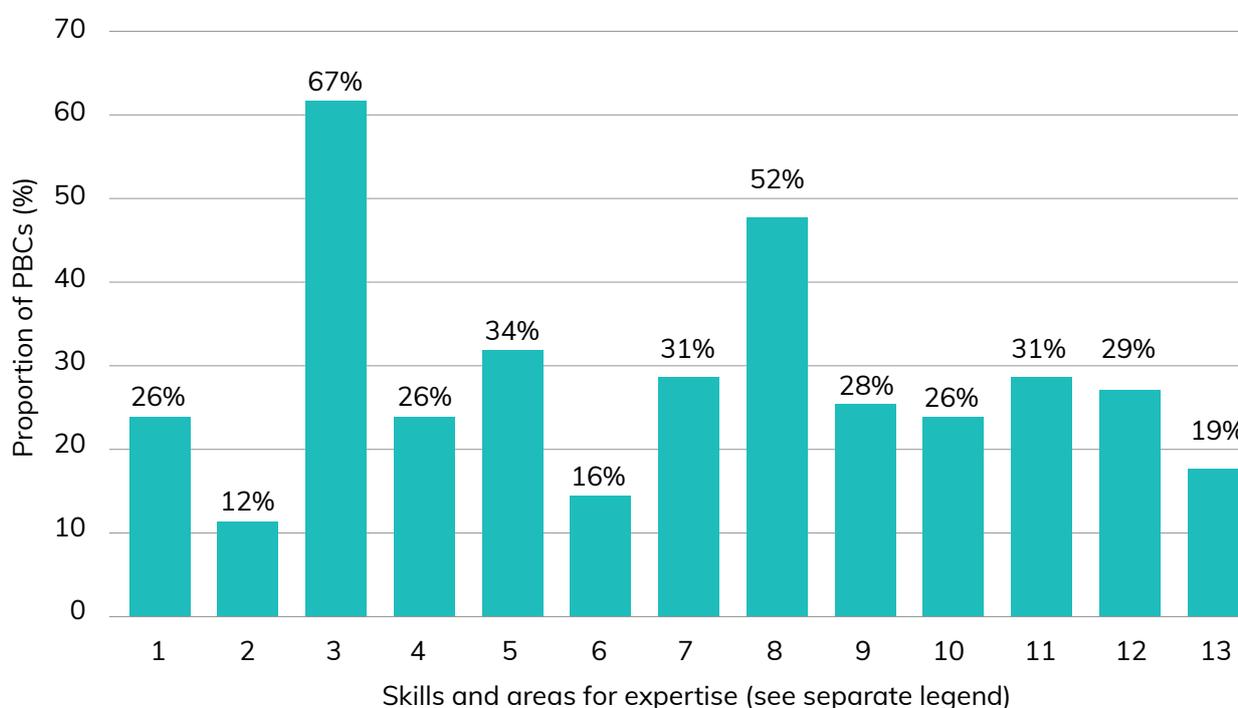
67% of PBCs indicated that filling the funding gap is a key challenge with a further 87% saying that more funding would help them overcome the challenges they face in implementing and delivering projects and services.⁵

Filling the knowledge gap is also important, as 52% of PBCs noted that they lacked some form of skills, expertise or knowledge to realise their ambitions.⁶

Part of this will involve providing new and already established PBCs with accessible and relevant information on corporate governance structures, sub-entities, and enterprise options. This would ensure that PBCs have the best systems, structures and advice that suits their goals and community.⁷

Investing in support for PBCs during the incorporation process and when scoping and identifying development options can enhance self-determination outcomes.⁸

Graph 2: Key challenges faced by PBCs in achieving their goals⁹



Legend: Key challenges

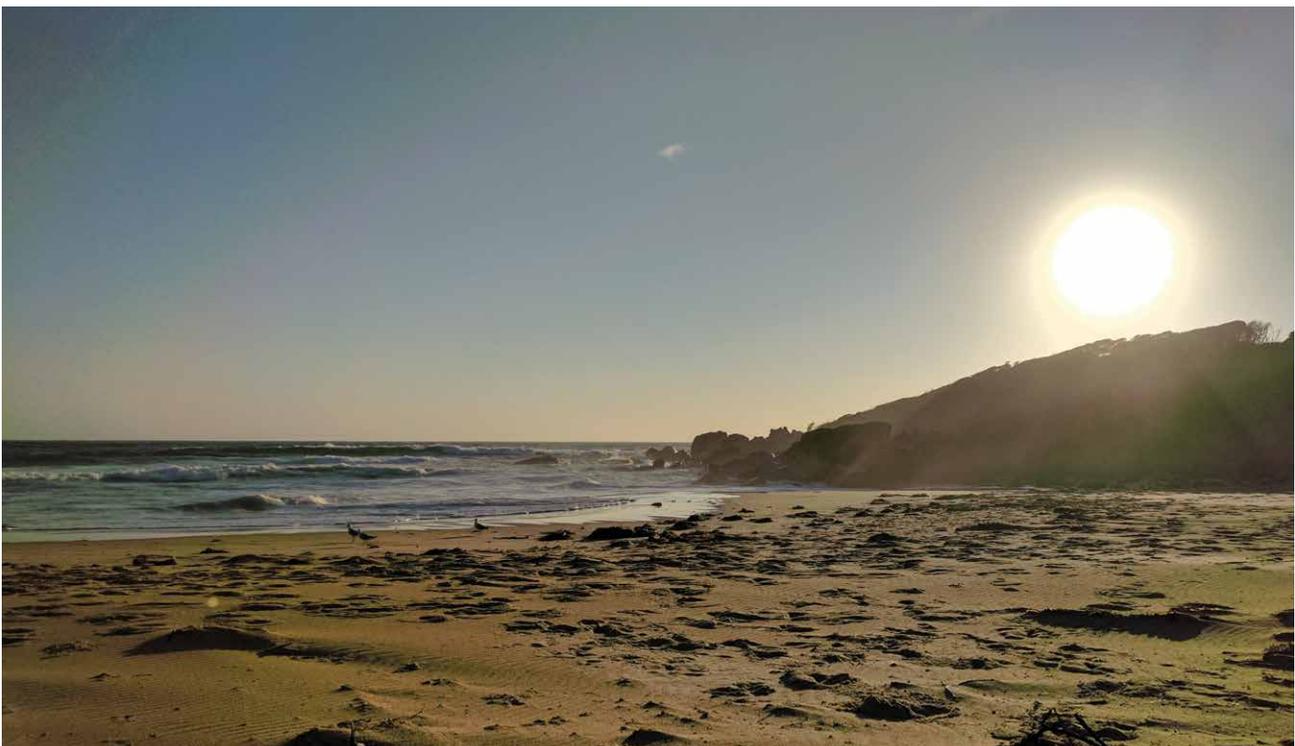
1. Not sure where to start
2. Don't know where to find out about opportunities
3. No funds, or not enough funds
4. Too many responsibilities and obligations (e.g. reporting)
5. Uncertainties or issues with land tenure
6. Obtaining permits or licences for activities and business ventures
7. Recruiting or keeping staff
8. Lacking certain skills, expertise or knowledge
9. Disputes or lack of agreement between PBC members
10. Lack of collaboration with other key organisations
11. Difficulty attracting government investment
12. Difficulty attracting private investment
13. Agreeing on a clear vision or plan for the future

Want to know more?

Find more information about the 2019 PBC survey (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/current-projects/prescribed-bodies-corporate>) and read the full report (https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/research_pub/AIATSIS%20-%20PBC%20Survey%20Report%20-%202021.pdf).

References

- 1 Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, 'Aboriginal Cherabin breeding project set for Australian first', ILSC, 18 October 2019, viewed 2 December 2020, <<https://www.ilsc.gov.au/home/news/cherabin-breeding-project/>>.
- 2 Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, Ngaliya Maguydan – Annual Report 2018–2019, Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, n.d., pp. 39–43, viewed 30 November 2020, <<http://www.qyac.net.au/docs/18-19AnnualReport.pdf>>.
- 3 B Burbidge, M Barber, TM Kong & T Donovan, Project report: 2019 survey of Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), AIATSIS, Canberra, 2021, pp. 23, 34, viewed 2 February 2021, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/research_pub/AIATSIS%20-%20PBC%20Survey%20Report%20-%202021.pdf>.
- 4 Far West Coast Aboriginal Corporation, 2018–2019 Annual Report, 2019, viewed 2 December 2020, <<http://www.fwcac.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019-FWCAC-Annual-Report-Booklet.pdf>>.
- 5 Burbidge et al., Project report: 2019 survey of Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), p. 47.
- 6 Burbidge et al., Project report: 2019 survey of Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), p. 47.
- 7 A Lawrie, P Miller & B (Jack) Johncock, 'The Far West Coast Experience', 2016, presentation at National Native Title Conference, 1 June, Darwin.
- 8 Lawrie et al., 'The Far West Coast Experience', National Native Title Conference, Darwin, 1 June.
- 9 Burbidge et al., Project report: 2019 survey of Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), p. 28.



Bingi Beach, NSW, Yuin country. Credit: Levi Lee, AIATSIS.