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Daniel Tucker

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business leader reaches
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Photo: Matt Jelonek



Indigenous business pioneer Tucker hits milestone

Carey Mining was one of the first private Aboriginal contractors to be established in Australia and it's still going strong.

VALUE: Daniel Tucker says the Indigenous Procurement Policy introduced by former prime minister Tony Abbott has created many positive opportunities.
Photo: Matt Jelonek



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"But to their credit, they gave us an opportunity to do something."

BHP executive Meath Hammond, who worked in the Goldfields at the time, said it was a very different time.

"The Goldfields in the mid '90s was quite chaotic around native title," Mr Hammond told a recent function celebrating Carey's 25 years in business.

"Both sides were trying to figure out their relationship with each other.

"Mining companies were scared this would mean a major slow-down and Aboriginal people had the right to negotiate for the first time ever.

"In that crucible, Daniel had the foresight to ask, 'How do I create something positive for indigenous people?'

"It took a great deal of leadership."

Determination and persistence paid off for Mr Tucker, whose company, Carey Mining, won its first contract in 1995 at Acacia's Sunrise Dam goldmine.

"If those early directors hadn't done that, we wouldn't be where we are today, and Aboriginal

“There are more Aboriginal people in business today than there ever was since the colonisation of this country” - Daniel Tucker

business wouldn't be where it is today," Mr Tucker said.

Carey is still working at Sunrise Dam, which has been owned by AngloGold Ashanti for the past 20 years.

Carey has gone from being the junior partner in a joint venture to a fully-fledged mining contractor in its own right.

That is a rare thing.

AngloGold Ashanti senior vice-president Michael Erickson commended Mr Tucker for his vision to create an indigenous business.

"It was a ground-breaking relationship that has gone on for a long, long time," Mr Erickson said.

As well as AngloGold, Carey has worked for most of the big miners, including BHP, Rio Tinto, and Fortescue Metals Group.

Mr Tucker has also established a civil contracting arm and owns a national training business.

Across all of these businesses, Carey employs more than 350 people, making it the largest company on the *Business News* database of indigenous businesses in WA (see list, page 9).

About 40 per cent of these people are Aboriginal, a high proportion for any contracting business.

Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt agreed Mr Tucker was a pioneer in indigenous business.

"He opened the door for others to look at as a role model," Mr Wyatt said.

Policy progress

Mr Tucker has seen enormous progress over 25 years but

recognises there is a lot that needs to change.

He credits much of the progress to a policy introduced by former prime minister Tony Abbott, who is often criticised by Aboriginal activists.

Mr Abbott personally invited Mr Tucker to join his indigenous advisory council in 2013 (he was the only Aboriginal businessperson on the council).

"I pushed for opportunities, because if there are no opportunities, nothing will change," Mr Tucker said.

"Out of those talks, to his [Mr Abbott's] credit, he set up the Indigenous Procurement Policy."

The IPP requires government agencies to award a set percentage of contracts to Aboriginal businesses.

Each state, including Western Australia, has followed that lead.

"The IPP has changed the shape of Australia," Mr Tucker said.

"There are more Aboriginal people in business today than there ever was since the colonisation of this country.

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DIG: Barron Bonney (left) and Mandy Boylan with Daniel Tucker at Sunrise Dam goldmine.

Milestone for Carey, Tucker

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"That came about by talking to a prime minister, Tony Abbott, who I believe has done more for Aboriginal people than a lot of other prime ministers."

Mr Tucker said this policy flowed through to more jobs, because Aboriginal businesses typically employed more Aboriginal people.

Early life

Mr Tucker grew up in Kalgoorlie, in a family steeped in the mining industry.

His father worked for Sons of Gwalia and did a lot of prospecting, and his grandfather and uncles were also in the industry.

"Every holiday we had was out in the bush, doing prospecting, pegging leases, selling leases, digging holes, dry blowing," he said.

Mr Tucker was the first person from his family to graduate from high school.

His wife, Lynley, who passed away after 34 years of marriage, was the same.

"We both had a drive to do something and to get an education," Mr Tucker said.

"My goal was to finish school and I thought that would give us a good opportunity to get somewhere."

As soon as he finished school at the end of 1980, Mr Tucker got a job with Western Mining Corporation.

"Anything that would get me involved in mining, I would take it," he said.

"I was going for an apprenticeship and I wanted to show I was keen, so I took a job as a greaser cleaner."

Mr Tucker ended up getting an apprenticeship, as a mechanical fitter, but only on this third attempt.

He worked for WMC for 11 years until it shut down the Windarra

nickel mine and the nearby Lancefield goldmine.

With a scholarship from Dominion Mining, Mr Tucker moved to Perth and started studying geology at Curtin University.

He didn't finish the degree, however, because a bigger opportunity came along.

"Around about then there was a change in the wind, what we know now as native title; Eddie Mabo was going to the High Court," Mr Tucker said.

"We didn't know completely what it meant, but it meant there were possibilities and opportunities for us."

"That gave me the idea of getting back to Laverton to set up a business."

Mr Tucker said his family group was one of the first in Australia to lodge a native title claim.

"They discussed compensation, money payments, employment

and training, heritage, all those things," he said.

"In that whole bundle of opportunities, we focused on getting a business started."

"It wasn't easy."

"The inherent psyche of the nation was, 'That's impossible, it can't be done, and why should we do it anyway, we want to build a mine, go away.'"

In partnership with his two brothers and a brother-in-law, Mr Tucker established Carey Mining, naming it after Lake Carey, which is one of the main landmarks around Laverton.

"Something easy, something that doesn't offend anybody," he said.

The first breakthrough came at Sunrise Dam, after Acacia specified that whoever won the mining contract would only do 75 per cent of the work, and Carey would do the rest.

That led to the establishment of a fully incorporated joint venture with AWP Contractors.

1995 CAREY MINING WINS FIRST CONTRACT

"They didn't make it easy, but they knew what the rules were," Mr Tucker said.

On the basis of that contract, Carey raised \$6.5 million from banks to fund its share of the joint venture.

Carey's second contract was with Sons of Gwalia, led by the Lalor brothers, Chris and Peter.

"It was my persistent badgering," Mr Tucker said.

"Just getting on a tender list was hard."

"It wouldn't have happened unless Chris Lalor pulled rank."

It also won work early on for WMC.

Over the years, Carey started winning work in its own right, including at Sunrise Dam.

"We are still at Sunrise Dam, still working with AngloGold, and now we are doing all the surface works in our own right," Mr Tucker told *Business News*.

Carey took a major step last year when it was awarded the mining contract for the Golden Delicious satellite pit.

"We are a fully-fledged contractor doing load and haul, drill and blast, and we're doing it safely and professionally and at a price that AngloGold is happy with and we're happy with," Mr Tucker said.

Keys to success

Mr Tucker believes a key ingredient of his success has been having a vision and setting goals.

"The vision I had was to build a successful business, that was number one, and then number two, how do you help your people?" he said.

"If you're not a successful business, you can't do anything."

He also understands the value of patience.

"You need to bide your time and take small steps."

"Sometimes people want to get there quicker," he said.

Diversification

Mr Tucker diversified his business when he bought into a registered training organisation in Adelaide.

Data & Insights

WA's LARGEST INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

Company	Year est.	Staff	Indigenous shareholders
Carey Mining	1995	360	Daniel Tucker (100%)
Warrikal	2017	350	Amanda Healy (majority %)
IMC NEMMS JV	2013	225	Bruce Bung, Sue Bung, Frances Bung (50%)
Eastern Guruma	2004	200	Tania Stevens (50%), Samantha Connors (50%)
Pindari WA	1997	185	David Pidek (50%)
Brida	1974	172	Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation (100%)
GBSC Yurra	2016	149	Yurra (75%)
Wiru-Murra Enterprises	2011	135	Wiru-murra Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (100%)

FORMER INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

Ngarda Civil & Mining	2001	300*	Ceased operating in 2017
Indigenous Construction Resource Group	2010	168*	Liquidation in 2019

* Peak staffing before shutting down.

To see the full list, go to: businessnews.com.au/bniq/wa-aboriginal-businesses

Carey has joined CPB-led consortiums that have been short-listed this year for the Armadale rail line upgrade and the Byford rail line extension.

"We haven't been successful yet, but we will keep trying, we're not in a rush, we will get there," Mr Tucker said.

"When it does happen, it will be the first time in history an Aboriginal company is sitting at the 'alliance' table level.

"The big consortiums win these jobs; and they might give some employment or training opportunities to people, but there is no Aboriginal party sitting at

the table, and we want to change that."

Mr Tucker said he had a very deliberate focus on who Carey worked with.

"If you can align your values with your partner's, that's part of the success, of longevity," he said.

"If you do joint ventures because you're forced to or told to, and your values don't align; that's where risks come, and things don't last that long."

He cites CPB Contractors as an example.

"Our relationship with them goes back 25 years through their mining arm, Thiess, which was one of our early partners," Mr Tucker said.

"We stay close to our trusted partners."

Competitors

Since Carey Mining started 25 years ago, many other Aboriginal businesses have been established.

None have achieved sustained growth like Carey.

The big players in this sector include Warrikal, established just four years ago.

Some contractors, such as Eastern Guruma and Ngarda Civil & Mining, have won very large joint venture contracts in the Pilbara.

Ngarda, which was half-owned by CPB Contractors, won the largest-ever mining contract awarded

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SPONSORED CONTENT

What is your idea of financial freedom?



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After the year that was 2020, many people, particularly those in the medical profession, are looking forward to a change of pace.

To take some time out, take a step back and reconsider their priorities. Career, spending more time with the family or just taking a break from the rat race. What was important in a normal year may have changed as people start to refocus.

Take the case of Dr Armstrong,

a 38 year old respiratory consultant. After five years working in public hospitals, he is now re-evaluating his priorities and looking to spend more time with his two young daughters. He is considering setting up his own private practice, as he believes this will give him more improved work-life balance.

But is this assumption correct? What about the additional commercial demands around running a business such as insurance, financials and tax compliance? Not to mention the time and effort involved in setting up and running a business; securing premises, leasing, hiring and managing employees, bookkeeping and administration. Whilst Dr Armstrong has extensive medical experience he has limited knowledge of how to set up and structure a business in the most

tax-efficient way.

Last year has also made him reconsider his financial goals and the need to ensure that his daughters are provided for.

When considering major life changes it is critical to get the right advice from professionals who are experienced and skilled in the area of advice required at that particular point in time. While Dr Armstrong already has an accountant, they may not have the specialist knowledge and appropriate licensing required to help him achieve his personal financial objectives.

Integro Private Wealth has recently partnered with BDO (WA) to launch BDO Private Wealth offering a complete suite of financial and business advice to clients with sophisticated needs. We work with medical professionals at various stages

of their careers and through this experience we recognise the need for additional support from other specialised advice professionals.

BDO Private Wealth has brought together a panel of dedicated advisers who understand the career journey of medical professionals. When required the members of this team could be introduced where external expertise on tax, general insurance, lending and legal advice is identified. We act as the conduit, knowing who can provide the right advice, for the right purpose and introducing them at the right time.

In the case of Dr Armstrong, we would work with BDO to set up and future proof the structures required. Ensuring an optimal balance of asset protection, tax-effective ownership and to allow for appropriate succession in

the future.

From a personal wealth perspective, we would work with Dr Armstrong on a wealth creation strategy. This will help him move the proceeds of his professional work into the most appropriate investments to meet his short, medium and long-term goals. If required we can also connect him with specialists to provide credit and legal advice.

We want to make sure our clients are getting access to a team of professional advisers acting with their best interests in mind.

Contact me for a confidential discussion to see how we help you manage the financial side of your medical practice and personal finance, leaving you to concentrate on what matters to you.



HISTORY: Daniel Tucker (centre) with Acacia Resources managing director Michael Foley (left) and AWP Contractors chief executive Laurie Freedman in the mid 1990s.

Milestone for Carey, Tucker

From page 9

to an Aboriginal company in 2008, when it began a five-year, \$300 million contract at BHP's Yarrie mine.

It had more than 300 staff at its peak but was quietly wound up in 2017.

Indigenous Construction Resource Group, which had backing from investment bank Azure Capital when it started, was another group that seemed poised for long-term success.

However, it went into liquidation in 2019.

Privately owned Eastern Guruma continues to be a significant player with a handful of long-term contracts but is no longer winning the big project work like it did a decade ago.

As well as the privately owned indigenous contractors, there is a growing number of indigenous

businesses that are owned by Aboriginal corporations.

These include the likes of Brida, Yurra and Wirru-Murra Enterprises, which benefit from the big miners preferencing contractors that are aligned with native title holders.

An Aboriginal mine

One of Mr Tucker's big goals over the past five years was to develop Australia's first Aboriginal-owned and operated mine.

The vehicle for this was Australian Aboriginal Mining Corporation, which had been aiming to develop the Womunna iron ore mine in the Pilbara.

Despite negotiating funding deals and signing an offtake agreement with Fortescue Metals Group, AAMC was unable to get the project over the line.

“I love the mining game and we want to grow our business; we want to elevate Aboriginal business to a new level - Daniel Tucker

Its plans came to an end last year, when a majority of directors voted to sell the project to Mineral Resources.

Mr Tucker was disappointed but says he has moved on.

He recognises he could not control AAMC, where he was one of three directors and one of 21 shareholders.

“In business, you have to be ready for anything and everything, especially in businesses you don't control,” he said.

“Instead of getting chewed up with hard feelings, they can eat you

up and destroy your vision, just take it as an opportunity to learn.”

Mr Tucker still aspires to establish the first Aboriginal-owned and run mine.

“I've got a dream that we will do it, we will do it another way,” he said.

“We will just take our time, set the right steps in place, and we will get there.”

More generally, he aims to expand Carey and win more acceptance of large Aboriginal-owned businesses.

“I've still got a lot of drive and a lot of focus,” Mr Tucker said.

“I love the mining game and we want to grow our business; we want to elevate Aboriginal business to a new level.”

He noted that running a business was not easy, saying it was a tough physical and mental game.

“Some people thrive in that space, and luckily enough I think I'm one of those people, I enjoy it.”

He has mentored many other Aboriginal businesspeople over the years

In doing so, he said advice from other people had been important to his journey.

“One of the key things I do is talk to people who have been there and done it.”

Mr Tucker has seen the emergence of many small Aboriginal businesses and startups, and numerous joint ventures.

He hopes the business sector's mindset will shift to supporting larger companies.

“There are not many Aboriginal businesses like ours,” Mr Tucker said.

“Having a big Aboriginal company doing work in their own right is still new.”

Black cladding

Amidst many positives, Mr Tucker remains concerned about the issue of 'black cladding', where joint ventures and businesses purport to be indigenous but are really run by or deliver most of the benefits to the white partners.

“That's very significant and a big problem,” he said.

“That's still happening today and to some degree it will always be there.”

Mr Tucker called on businesses to watch carefully for instances of black cladding and to call it out when they see it.

He agreed the certification process run by Supply Nation was helping to address this problem.

Supply Nation has built a database of thousands of certified Aboriginal businesses across the country.

Mr Wyatt said these businesses were able to bid for \$2.3 billion of Australian government procurement contracts, with Carey being one of the pioneers that provided a model that proved it could work.