

## CHARLES STURT: INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEUR SCALE UP PROGRAM

### CASE STUDY: CHOCOLATE ON PURPOSE

Fiona Harrison is a proud Wiradyuri woman, an artisan Chocolatier and founder of Australia's first Indigenous Chocolate company **Chocolate on Purpose**. Chocolate on Purpose aims to raise awareness of First Nations and environmental issues and continue the 'women's business' of sharing the traditional use of native plants through storytelling with chocolate.



#### CHOCOLATE ON PURPOSE

Fiona founded Chocolate on Purpose twelve years ago during her recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder. It was during this time she discovered the healing power and cultural importance of Australian native botanicals and learnt how to become a chocolate professional in order to fuse a love of chocolate with social good.

By combining the knowledge she learnt from studying aromatic medicine and her chocolate making course, Fiona with the help of Jo, her mudyibang (Wiradyuri language for 'very good friend') create a range of beautiful handmade chocolates that celebrate Australian native ingredients sourced from Indigenous businesses around Australia blended with the finest couverture made from sustainably sourced cacao.

The beautiful chocolate produced by Fiona is sold online direct to consumers and B2B to large corporate businesses. Their products can also be found via a variety of supplier directories such as Supply Nation and Social Traders.

Chocolate on Purpose became a certified Social Enterprise in 2023 - their goal is to build an Indigenous led and owned supply chain, aimed to increase the participation of Indigenous people in the Australian native food and botanical supply which currently stands at less than 1%\*. Fiona's dream is also to help older Indigenous women through provision of employment opportunities as women over the age of 45 are the fastest growing population of homeless in Australia.

The legacy they aim to leave is "Chocolate For Good™".

\* Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2019-01-19/low-indigenous-representation-in-bush-food-industry/10701986>



"My mentor has been an anchor and a light for me, assisting me in breaking down my vision into chunks that feel real and achievable. This was evident in my accepting the invitation from UNSW Business School to kick start their Wellbeing program. I had the confidence to know I could do it, and to re-engineer the Indigenous Chocolate Tasting program I have written into a 20-minute bite to be enjoyed by a group seated in a less than ideal theatre seating configuration, yet still providing them with a profoundly meaningful experience. I now know how to apply this skill and confidence to other areas of my business."

**Fiona Harrison**

Founder, Chocolate on Purpose

#### COMING INTO THE PROGRAM

Before the program, Fiona had participated in the Food Futures Harvest Program and had identified that she needed to upscale her operations and to be able to supply in bulk to commercial customers. To facilitate this growth Fiona needed to purchase automated production machinery to grow the business' capacity to meet demand.

Fiona and Jo have recently moved off Wiradyuri country to a new house in Moss Vale (Gundungurra Country) to collaboratively address their personal financial struggles to keep roofs over their heads as older, single women in this current economic climate, and have found a property that has a large garage able to be converted into a small commercial production facility. To enable her business to meet commercial demand (such as Woolworths and corporate customers for seasonal occasions), Fiona has identified she needs to raise a capital investment of \$300,000 to fit-out the production space & acquire productive assets to increase her output ten-fold. Coming into the program Fiona had leveraged social enterprise crowdfunding to raise capital and continues the journey toward her goal.

"My challenge is that I need to overcome barriers to increased capacity, so I can grow revenue and improve margins and start to make a real difference".

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#### PROGRAM JOURNEY

The roadmap at the start of the program was initially focussed on scaling the business ten-fold. This was rather overwhelming and so a decision was made to look at what the costs and benefits would be of a more modest growth of two-three times current production volumes. By scaling at a more modest rate, Fiona would be able to manage continuing to grow the business in a sustainable way - whilst demonstrating and building credibility for non-equity investment such as low-interest loans or grants to fund the equipment purchase. One area for further exploration was to leverage local TAFE students to assist with the fit out of the new production facility once funding has been achieved.

Key achievements during the program were:

- Building the start of an annual production, sales and marketing calendar - to identify where the key opportunities for growth exist in Seasonal occasions, especially in Corporate gifting and to build in a regular schedule to build every year to enable planning of production more efficiently, as well as getting as many seasonal pre-orders as possible.
- Selected to attend the Woolworths Expo (through her participation in the Seedlab Australia) where Chocolate on Purpose will have the opportunity to be stocked in premium stores.
- Applied for an AMP Foundation IGNITE Grant to help fund the first stage of their capacity expansion.
- Refreshed approach to marketing to Corporates with the aim of increasing revenue in 2024 back to 2022 levels.
- Running a Guided Chocolate Tasting 'winhanga-duri-ngidyal' (Wiradyuri language for 'meditation') with the UNSW Business School staff.



*"I am Wiradyuri grateful to be welcome on Gundungurra. The local Aboriginal Community has been inclusive from my arrival, inviting me to participate in the collaborative process to develop the local Bowral Hospital and Moss Vale Railway Station, and are supportive of my employment vision for local older Aboriginal women. I have been interviewed on local radio about my mission and vision, and formed a collaboration with Petrea King of the local Quest for Life Centre, to assist with the work she does with women experiencing domestic violence. I hope to grow my contribution to the wellbeing of my Community, and advocacy to improve the wellbeing of my Suppliers and Customers"*

**Fiona Harrison**

Founder, Chocolate on Purpose

#### IMPACT

Whilst the growth plans have been scaling back to be a little less overwhelming, the impact that Fiona and her social enterprise are having on the community she lives in is clearly starting to be seen. Their recent guided chocolate tasting 'winhanga-duri-ngidyal' (meditation) with the UNSW staff was well received. Customer reviews on their website for their products are highly complementary with 5 star reviews received.



#### WHAT'S NEXT?

Fiona and Jo have really started to settle into their new community in Moss Vale and be recognised as business leaders. Fiona has been asked to speak at the International Womens' Day Breakfast hosted on Gundungurra Country by [Wingecarribee Shire Council](#) to be held on the 8th March.

What's the next 6-12 month roadmap  
Over the next six months the goal is to renew focus on outreach and marketing to corporate clients to help regrow revenue in the latter part of the year and to scale so we can financially absorb the retailer margin required to be ranged in the premium Woolworths stores.

*"I have a schedule in place to seek feedback of my customers, and reach out to new customers, with the goal of increasing my customer base and sales"*