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Research Solutions for Small Indigenous Businesses in Desert Australia

Small indigenous businesses in desert Australia will get a chance to lift their bottom line this year by taking advantage of a \$10,000 research opportunity.

Curtin University economist, Professor Murray McGregor, announced today that the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has committed funding to help up to 10 outback operators, including indigenous enterprises, to increase profits by matching them with one of the centre's 28 research partners nationwide.

"Small indigenous businesses from Kalgoorlie to Broken Hill with a problem that could be solved through research have a lot to gain from calling Desert Knowledge CRC", said Prof. McGregor, who leads the centre's research and development projects supporting new and existing small businesses in desert Australia.

"We'd like to hear from businesses in indigenous Australia who have a problem that is stopping them from moving forward".

He said Desert Knowledge CRC can help them find solutions to issues such as how to:

- grow a marketable product
- manage tourist numbers in areas with little infrastructure (toilets, phones, etc)
- get the product into outside markets
- create partnerships that link up those who make the product with those who can market it and those who can do the book-keeping
- develop good supply chains - from the desert to the consumer
- handle goods so they last longer – coming into and leaving the desert
- design good management systems that balance family, culture and money making
- work out the "time" issues, so an enterprise can work with family.

Prof. McGregor, who specialises in agribusiness, farm management and regional development issues, said the centre's extensive network of partners in universities, government and non-government organisations excels in putting together the right research team to solve the specific problems of desert businesses.

"We link indigenous knowledge and local skills with cutting-edge Western science to improve the livelihoods of all desert people", he said. "Indigenous small business people are absolutely central to this. To apply, all they need to do is to pick up the phone and talk to Mike Crowe or me about their business problem".

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