



# SUPER SUMMIT **REPORT 2025**



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## Welcome to Country

Binowee Bayles, a descendant of Eora and Wonnarua Nations on her mother's side and Birri Gubba, Gungalu and Wulli Wulli Nations on her father's side, offered a Welcome to Country, sharing that it was delivered with the blessing of her Elders. Ms Bayles reflected on the importance of Welcoming to Country as an ancient diplomatic protocol.

“What that means is, we are raising the vibrations and we’re connecting with ancestors to say, ‘Look after us while we walk Country, ensure we get home to our families safely.’”

**BINOWEE BAYLES**





## From words to action: Opening address

### LEAH BENNETT

WIRADJURI WOMAN

DIRECTOR, FIRST NATIONS FOUNDATION (FNF)

In an opening address to the Summit, Ms Bennett reflected on First Nations peoples' view of wealth accumulation and how sharing has been embedded in Indigenous culture for 60,000 years.

"Yet modern financial systems often fail to recognise these cultural foundations," she said.

Ms Bennett commended the efforts of the Indigenous Super Working Group in advocating for ways to adapt the superannuation system to the cultural needs of First Nations people.

The FNF Director then challenged participants to find action they can take as a result of the discussions at the Summit – in their roles, organisations or at a broader advocacy level.

"I want you to ask yourself: What can I take away from this? What do I have the power to change?"

In closing, Ms Bennett remarked on how she does not like to approach changes through a "deficit lens".

"Awareness of problems is important, but solutions matter more," she said. "It's about making small, meaningful changes that ensure First Nations people have what they need to be self-determining, capable and prosperous."



# Priority One:

## Standardisation of forms

The panel discussed progress towards one of the key priorities from last year's First Nations Super Summit: Form standardisation in the superannuation industry. It heard from working group participants about the challenges First Nations people continue to face when it comes to super forms and efforts towards standardisation, with a specific focus on the working group's progress towards a hardship form template. The panel highlighted the key changes made and next steps to ensure forms are simplified and more inclusive.

### *The Panel:*

**UNAISI BULI**, Financial Counsellor, ICAN

**GREG LOCK**, Business Analysis Practice Manager, REST

**HANS VAN DAATSELAAR**, Chief Practice Officer, ASFA

**MODERATOR:** Binowee Bayles



**Progress Update:** The form standardisation working group met eight times in the past 12 months to discuss how to make their vision a reality. They will soon receive feedback on the preliminary guidance document for funds.

## Why form standardisation is necessary

### UNAISI BULI

FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR, ICAN

Ms Buli offered context to the discussion, sharing insights from last year's First Nations Super Summit and the working group's decision to advocate for form standardisation. She provided first-hand experience of the difficulties people on the ground face, particularly if they are in regional locations.

Some of the ongoing challenges in rural and remote communities Ms Buli highlighted, included:

- ✳ Black spots, which restrict mobile connectivity
- ✳ A lack of credit to make phone calls
- ✳ Insufficient support for forms and applications
- ✳ Inability to access identity documents
- ✳ Difficulty obtaining bank statements due to remoteness
- ✳ Poor understanding of forms and what's required from super funds.

"Mob on the ground are a bit wary of who to contact or they need extra support when contacting their super company, as they feel like they're under the firing squad when questioned about their own super accounts," she said.

# The working group's progress: A financial hardship template



## GREG LOCK

BUSINESS ANALYSIS PRACTICE MANAGER, REST

Mr Lock profiled the working group's approach to standardising its hardship form to better meet the needs of First Nations fund members. He said the group's efforts began by trying to get a thorough understanding of the needs of First Nations members and exploring the forms offered more broadly in the industry.

"Our collaborative effort then led to the development of a standardised financial hardship withdrawal form – I guess you can call it a template," he said.

"It features a reduced question set, still staying true to the requirement of superannuation legislation."

Key changes include simplification, user-friendly design and guidance notes for funds.

"These guidance notes are kind of guardrails for funds and recommendations about how you can customise the forms," Mr Lock said.

## The implementation phase

### HANS VAN DAATSELAAR

CHIEF PRACTICE OFFICER, ASFA

Mr van Daatselaar showcased the guidance document produced to help funds standardise their forms. He shared that the guidance document would be sent out to CEOs later that day for final consultation.

Mr van Daatselaar said webinar training sessions would be hosted for funds and financial counsellors to help them to easily navigate the standardised format.

Following the rollout of the forms, Mr van Daatselaar discussed plans for further engagement with financial counsellors and the super industry to hear feedback and refine the documents.





## Priority Two:

# Enable super funds to recognise individuals who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

At last year's Super Summit, advocates agreed First Nations people should be identified as such by their super fund, if they choose to be. For members, it promises to unlock more accurate representation, while for funds, it can help to address barriers to participation. Members of the working group provided a comprehensive update of where they are at to date.

### *The Panel:*

**MICHAEL JOYCE**, Social Impact Specialist, HESTA

**DR JUNE SMITH**, Deputy Chief Ombudsman, AFCA

**LEAH BENNETT**, Director, First Nations Foundation

**MODERATOR:** Binowee Bayles

**Progress Update:** The identification working group met six times in the past 12 months to discuss how to progress their long-term objectives.

## Behind the 'why'

### MICHAEL JOYCE

SOCIAL IMPACT SPECIALIST, HESTA

Mr Joyce discussed the 'why' behind enabling Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identification: helping funds to identify opportunities to offer better service.

He then talked about FNF engaging lawyers from Terri Janke & Co on behalf of the working group to produce a detailed report of governance issues and other matters which need to be considered before asking someone to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The report is currently in its draft stage and will be available in the coming months.







## Lessons from AFCA

### DR JUNE SMITH

DEPUTY CHIEF OMBUDSMAN, AFCA

Dr Smith began her discussion with a few key values that resonate for her in the context of the current conversation: Balance, courage, focus, leadership, commitment and will.

"Lawyers are always going to tell you what you can't do, what you have to do, but are not always on the 'why' you should do it," Dr Smith, a lawyer herself, said.

Turning to efforts to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification, Dr Smith reflected on how the Australian Financial Complaints Authority collects identification data to better tailor the service to the person they are dealing with. For example, whether there are language or location-based barriers that may need to be taken into consideration by AFCA.

"It's self-identification," she said. "We don't require people to provide that information."

Dr Smith made it clear the onus is on organisations to change, not First Nations people.

"This is about economic equity and power and how we ensure that First Nations people can have self-determination in this country. That's what it's really all about, right? And now we're just talking about the pieces underneath it."

DR JUNE SMITH





## Transparency is key

### LEAH BENNETT

WIRADJURI WOMAN

DIRECTOR, FIRST NATIONS FOUNDATION (FNF)

Ms Bennett shared that the super fund she previously worked for collected identification information from its First Nations members with the purpose of building relationships and improving transparency practices.

"Stepping away from it being transactional and a process, it was getting down to 'what does that specific person need?'," she said.

"Ultimately, at the end of the day, everything we had implemented came from a place of 'how will this strengthen our relationship with the First Nations community and financial counsellors,'" she added.

Ms Bennett said it's critical people know how self-identified information will be used. She shared the example of the super fund she worked for providing clear details to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members about how the fund would use self-identification details to benefit the member themselves.

"Ultimately, at the end of the day, everything we had implemented came from a place of 'how will this strengthen our relationship with the First Nations community and financial counsellors.'"

LEAH BENNETT



## Priority Three:

# Acknowledging the significance of Indigenous kinship structures

The panel acknowledged the complexity of the challenge at hand, with current legal and tax structures for super often at odds with Indigenous kinship structures. A key difficulty presents if First Nations people cannot easily prove they are administrators or beneficiaries.

**Progress Update:** The working group has met four times in the past 12 months. Given this is a long-term objective, progress is expected to be slower and ongoing.

### *The Panel:*

**EDDIE BULI**, Project Manager, Regional & Remote Servicing, First Nations Foundation

**MARK HOLDEN**, Senior Solicitor and Policy Advocate, Mob Strong Debt Help

**BINOWEE BAYLES**

**MODERATOR:** Destiny Dewis, Project Manager — On Country, First Nations Foundation

## The journey continues

### MARK HOLDEN

SENIOR SOLICITOR AND POLICY ADVOCATE,  
MOB STRONG DEBT HELP

Mr Holden discussed the communal wealth mentality in First Nations communities and how it runs parallel to the individualistic nature of the super system.

"When someone receives benefits, it's not benefits for one person, it's benefits for the entire community and for the entire kinship structure as well," he said.

Mr Holden said while the Royal Commission into Financial Services and a Treasury paper looked at the matter, "the journey continues because there are still many people who aren't able to access their funds or their loved ones' funds".

"So, how can we try to address that?" he asked.





# Connecting Communities

## EDDIE BULI

PROJECT MANAGER, REGIONAL  
& REMOTE SERVICING

Mr Buli reflected on the importance of bringing together First Nations people and advocates to find a solution that acknowledges Indigenous kinship structures.

"For me, it's about trying to find intelligent, passionate people who have the same sense of trying to do good for other people," he said.

"For us, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our present, our past and our future are one; we don't look at it as three different stages," he said.

Mr Buli advocated for more tailored support from super funds for Indigenous people, including dedicated financial counsellors and First Nations-specific member support.



## Respecting the cultural perspective

### BINOWEE BAYLES

Ms Bayles began by reflecting on what kinship means and shared that she has raised eight children in addition to those she gave birth to, who she considers her kin. She said they are not beneficiaries in the legal sense, but they will share in her wealth.

"Just because we can't understand some things in a Western perspective, in the Aboriginal worldview, it just is and it's not your job to understand why; it's your job to understand that that is a cultural perspective that must be respected."

Ms Bayles said the money super funds hold belongs to members and it's up to funds to abide by members' wishes.

As a starting point, she encouraged members of the super industry to visit communities to better understand kinship structures.

# Financial Wellness Week: Key updates and reflections

The panel shared outcomes from the past year after helping to deliver three Financial Wellness outreach programs across 10 communities.

## Key outcomes:

- ✱ 950 community members assisted with banking, super and government service
- ✱ \$1.9 million found in lost super and reconnected with Mob
- ✱ Over \$71,000 recovered in tax.

## The Panel:

**GEMMA KYLE**, Chief Risk Officer, REST

**GRAEME MARRINAN**, Member Outcomes Specialist, Australian Retirement Trust

**DEBRA MANSFIELD**, Corporate Relations & CSR Lead, AustralianSuper

**MODERATOR:** Destiny Dewis, Project Manager — On Country, First Nations Foundation



## Reflections from East Arnhem Land

### GEMMA KYLE

CHIEF RISK OFFICER, REST

Ms Kyle shared how her trip to five different communities in the Northern Territory gave her an appreciation of the importance of local services and support networks.

"There needs to be a better way," she said.

Ms Kyle also reflected on the importance of the industry coming together as one to find solutions to help people in rural and remote communities.

One of Ms Kyle's key takeaways was that superannuation systems are designed "for the people who need (them) least".

"That is, we design our products, our services and our communications with a white, middle-class person in mind, invariably male," she said.

"There needs to be a better way ... We need to completely rethink how we deliver our services and communications".

**GEMMA KYLE**





## What we've taken from Financial Wellness Weeks

### DEBRA MANSFIELD

CORPORATE RELATIONS & CSR LEAD,  
AUSTRALIANSUPER

While Ms Mansfield said she hasn't personally been on an outreach program, she noted she organises outreach for her team with First Nations Foundation and financial counsellors.

Ms Mansfield's key takeaways included:

- ✦ The need for funds to refer members to financial counsellors
- ✦ The need to modify pension income streams
- ✦ The need for more flexible ways of collecting ID information.

## The power of face-to-face connection

### GRAEME MARRINAN

MEMBER OUTCOMES SPECIALIST, AUSTRALIAN RETIREMENT TRUST

Mr Marrinan reflected on his experiences in the past few years travelling to remote parts of Queensland to help reconnect members with their super. He thanked the financial counsellors he's travelled with and those he's yet to meet for the work they've done in local communities helping people navigate the banking and finance systems.

"Financial Wellness Weeks have an absolutely wonderful impact on the community and community members. It makes an immediate difference because people get to talk to you face-to-face," he said.

Mr Marrinan noted having face-to-face conversations can build trust quickly.

He shared an experience of meeting several First Nations people who were still working past age 65 because they believed they could not access their super until they were 67 (the pension age).

"They were brought to tears knowing that they could make some financial decisions that was going to benefit their extended families," he said. "If we hadn't been in that community and had that conversation, that never would have happened."





## Peak bodies: What advocacy can contribute

The leaders of two of the country's peak superannuation associations shared progress updates from their respective organisations and the working groups. They discussed the guidance note on hardship and the progress towards a more accessible form.

### *The Panel:*

**MARY DELAHUNTY**, Chief Executive Officer, ASFA

**MISHA SCHUBERT**, Chief Executive Officer, Super Members Council

**MODERATOR:** Angus Crawford, General Manager — Economic Policy, Research and Government Relations, First Nations Foundation



# 'Structural inequities remain deeply embedded'

## MARY DELAHUNTY

ASFA

Ms Delahunty reflected on her commitment last year to work on a super form that's more accessible to First Nations communities. She said the guidance note is ready, but there's still work to do to put the form into practice.

"Although that takes 12 months, there's an economy of scale that comes from that process, which means the next one and the next one will take a shorter amount of time," she said.

Ms Delahunty said by the next First Nations Super Summit, she expects the group will have progressed further on the form.

**"The impetus comes from the members wanting to change the outcomes for First Nations people."**

MARY DELAHUNTY



She also shared research that showed "while superannuation for First Nations members is improving, structural inequities remain deeply embedded".

Ms Delahunty said attention also needs to turn to First Nations women's super balances, which are still well behind their male counterparts.

# 'The next spur of action'

## MISHA SCHUBERT

SUPER MEMBERS COUNCIL

Ms Schubert shared an update on the Super Members Council's work with First Nations Foundation to formalise kinship recognition at a policy level.

She said it will be an important priority in the 2025 calendar year.

Ms Schubert also shared reflections on the day and lessons from conversations with other panelists and attendees.

**"I always see this as a catalyst for the next spur to action and the next part of mapping the shared work program together."**

MISHA SCHUBERT





# Regulatory update:

## A year of change

### SIMONE CONSTANT

COMMISSIONER, ASIC

Ms Constant began her update by sharing she's hoping to see a step-change in superannuation in 2025.

"What do I mean by that? Well, I'll start with the fact ASIC superannuation is front and centre, one of our top corporate priorities," she said.

Ms Constant discussed a forthcoming report, with a chapter about First Nations customers' challenges, including death benefits, claims, end-to-end processing and support.

"Like with all of our work, it's not just about calling out where things aren't going well, it's trying to drive industry, all of us in the system to make it better."

Ms Constant also shared the regulator's efforts to get funds to share updates and information in plain language and offer translation services.

"Think of it from that First Nations customer's perspective and really listen," she said.

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## The next 12 months

The 2025 First Nations Super Summit identified several important areas of reform for the Indigenous Superannuation Working Group to focus on over the next 12 months.

### *Common themes from the day*

- ★ There's a need for greater recognition of financial counsellors and capability workers for the work they do
- ★ The industry needs further buy-in from super funds to standardise forms
- ★ Funds and the industry at large must commit to providing plain language updates to their members.

### *Priorities for the year ahead*

- ★ Industry-wide adoption of the AUSTRAC guidance on alternative forms of identification
- ★ Improve cultural competency of member servicing staff through industry specific training and resources
- ★ Enable Financial Counsellors to certify documents for superannuation matters
- ★ The standardisation of forms (continuation from 2024)
- ★ Enable super funds to recognise individuals as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (continuation from 2024)
- ★ Acknowledge the significance of Indigenous kinship structures (continuation from 2024).



# An opportunity to lead with purpose

**LEAH BENNETT**

WIRADJURI WOMAN

DIRECTOR, FIRST NATIONS FOUNDATION (FNF)

The responsibility for improving superannuation outcomes for First Nations peoples must be led by industry. First Nations communities have long advocated for better access, support, and outcomes, but real progress will only come when the sector itself takes ownership of the changes that are needed. This is not a challenge for communities to solve alone, it is an opportunity for the industry to lead with purpose, ensuring that superannuation works for all Australians, including First Nations members.

We must be committed to progress that is tangible and lasting. We cannot find ourselves regrouping in 12 months to revisit the same issues without meaningful action. Now is the time to embed lasting reform, to set clear goals and to measure success in a way that drives real impact.

"This is not a challenge for communities to solve alone, it is an opportunity for the industry to lead with purpose..."

**LEAH BENNETT**

Each step forward should bring us closer to a system that is accessible, culturally safe, and responsive to the needs of First Nations peoples.

To achieve this, leadership within the superannuation sector is essential. While government has a role to play, the most effective and enduring change will come from industry driven solutions. By championing this work independently, superannuation leaders can ensure that reforms are fit for purpose, sustainable, and deeply embedded in the values of financial inclusion and equity. The opportunity before us is not just to make commitments, but to drive action that delivers meaningful, long-term outcomes for First Nations communities.

I would also like to acknowledge the incredible work of the First Nations Foundation staff in bringing this event together. A special mention to our COO Emma McCashney and to Cassie Baldini, whose dedication and leadership continue to create spaces for these important conversations and drive real change in the sector.

We look forward to working with our partners on this journey and seeing the progress that is made over the next 12 months.