



**MEDIA RELEASE – 27 June 2022**

## **"Making space" — First Nations' innovations**

Deliberate pathways are required for First Nations' academics to explore, design and deliver research projects unhindered by traditional western-styled academic practices. Through "making space", important reflexive practices occur and First Nations' led innovations and solutions are realised.

Community First Development's Inaugural First Nations Research and Evaluation Fellow, Ms Donna Stephens, is set to present how to create these important spaces for innovation at the Fellow's Oration this coming Wednesday. She will draw on her experience as a Community First Development Fellow, where she took a lead role in a participatory action research project with 11 communities across Australia.

Ms Stephens, a proud Murran/Iwaidja woman from the Coburg Peninsula, comments on her experience.

**"THE CONVERSATIONS THAT WE HAD ALLOWED ME TO GROW AND ALLOWED ME TO ENGAGE IN RESEARCH IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY FROM THE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC SPACE. ONE OF THE SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS WAS THE WAY IN WHICH THE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE THAT I HELD WAS VALUED AND PRIVILEGED."**

The challenges faced by First Nations' people have often been described as "wicked" complex or unsolvable problems. Entrenched inequalities have persisted for far too long for First Nations' people. It is through a shared commitment that we can achieve change within our lifetimes and it is only through First Nations' leadership and expertise that we can succeed.

At Community First Development, 'research success' is research that is requested, led and delivered by First Nations' people and communities. It is undertaken through deep listening and strives to achieve the outcomes that communities have set out to achieve. Community First Development's 'hands-on' partnership approach to delivering economic and community development and research projects works. Ms Stephens will shed light on why Participation, Community Development and Change Organisations have an important role to play in sector wide change.

Improving how support for First Nations' communities is delivered is vital, and continual improvement is something that Community First Development is committed to. The Fellowship is an important part of that commitment. As Ms Stephens commented,

**"HOW DO WE BUILD STRENGTH ACROSS THE COMMUNITY AND HOW DO WE INFORM COMMUNITY ABOUT WHERE THE STRENGTHS**



COMMUNITY FIRST  
DEVELOPMENT

ARE AND WHAT THE GAPS ARE. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART  
OF THE FELLOW'S ROLE."

**Community First Development's Inaugural Research and Evaluation Fellow's Oration will be webcast live from Charles Darwin University on Wednesday 29 June at 4.00pm.**

Register for the event [HERE](#)

Learn more about the research [HERE](#).

To interview Donna about her Fellowship, please contact us at the details below.

**Communications Manager**

**Lauren Rogers**

[communications@communityfirstdevelopment.org.au](mailto:communications@communityfirstdevelopment.org.au)