



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy and Implementation Plan

2015 - 2018



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Message from the Secretary

Increasing employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a high priority for the Department of Social Services (DSS). The contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can make, and have made, to the public sector is significant. It is important that we attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to join our Department and then support them to establish their careers once they are here.

The [Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2015](#) indicates there is still some way to go to close the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Australian Government is focused on building on previous work by increasing development and growth of Indigenous business and boosting Indigenous employment.

In response to the [Forrest Review – Creating Parity](#), the Australian Government, as a major employer, will lead by example by increasing its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative target to 3% by 2018.

To support achieving this target, a whole of Government approach has been agreed to develop and implement an Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Strategy and the establishment of agency level targets. In the meantime, DSS has set an aspirational target of 4% by June 2016.

The Department's 2015-18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy sets out initiatives to position DSS as an APS workplace of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Its actions focus on the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the Department and guides our approach to creating a thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that is integral to the effective delivery of our operations.

This Strategy builds upon the previous (former FaHCSIA) [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategies](#) and complements our Department's [2015-17 Reconciliation Action Plan](#). It has been developed through a comprehensive process of consultation, including endorsement by the Department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff National Committee.

The Strategy provides a framework to help us:

- meet and continue to exceed our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation target;
- assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to build rewarding career pathways;
- build a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society and issues; and
- establish the Department as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I am confident that the successful implementation of the Strategy will position DSS as an exemplar workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, and I call on all staff to embrace this strategy and put it into practice as part of our everyday work.

Finn Pratt AO PSM
Secretary
Department of Social Services
6 July 2015

Objective 1: Attract and Recruit

DSS will meet its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation target by employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across all business areas and at all levels in the Department.

Goal

To promote the Department as a workplace of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Actions

1. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment through the use of Special Measure provisions and Identified Positions.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- a departmental audit of Special Measures and Identified positions, to be completed by December 2015
- use of Special Measures Provisions and Identified Positions (where relevant) to increase the number of Special Measure Provisions and Identified Positions advertised by DSS, to be measured on an ongoing basis.

2. Advertise key vacancies through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media and networks.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- identification of appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media to advertise in, which has been completed
- circulating vacancies through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff networks, to be measured by the number of key vacancies circulated on an ongoing basis.

3. Collaborate with the Australian Public Service agencies including the Commission in their marketing and recruitment strategies.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- the promotion of DSS as an employer of choice in marketing, advertising campaigns and networking with universities and tertiary institutions, to be measured via participation in marketing and advertising campaigns as appropriate
- the development of facts sheets and marketing materials promoting support available to staff, to be finalised and loaded to STAFFnet as required.

Goal

To broaden existing recruitment avenues and selection processes.

Actions:

4. Provide career opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates, cadets, trainees and interns.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- contribution to the operating costs of the APSC's Pathways Programs, via an annual funding contribution
- participation in Department of Education's Indigenous Australian Government Development Programme (IAGDP), enabling access to graduates, cadets and trainees for further employment through Pathways Programs and IAGDP, with an offer of a minimum of 30 trainee/graduate positions each year
- annually accessing graduates, cadets and trainees for further employment through Pathways Programs and IAGDP
- implementation of the Indigenous Internship Programme, offering a minimum of 15 positions annually over a period of 3 years (2014/15-2016/17)
- participation in Department of Human Services' pilot for Indigenous Apprenticeships, with up to 10 apprentices on-boarded by September 2015
- promoting career opportunities through the annual Graduate Programme by providing promotional materials and information for the Graduate.

5. Set and maintain employment targets at the Group and State/Territory levels within the Department.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- establishing a baseline of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Staff numbers at the Group and State/Territory levels by December 2015
- setting employment targets to successfully achieve 4% in Departmental representation by June 2016.

6. Establish recruitment processes that effectively uses Special Measures and Identified Position criteria to attract and recruit suitable employees to their roles.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- incorporating protocols into the recruitment processes and guidelines, including the use by selection panels, all of which contain Indigenous representation, when assessing 'identified' criteria
- promoting the use of [Identified Position criteria](#) to attract suitable internal and external candidates to roles that have strong involvement in issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- promoting the use of Special Measures provisions to allow for strong career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The success of these deliverables will be measured in December 2015, with a goal of 100% of selection panels for Identified Positions and Special Measures Positions contain Indigenous representation.

Objective 2: Retain and Develop

DSS will work with staff to identify pathways and career building blocks that will provide opportunities to make meaningful contributions at work and encourage high levels of engagement.

Goal

To encourage continuous learning and support staff to access quality training and development opportunities

Actions

7. Develop and implement a framework to support the career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- developing and implementing an annually measured Mentoring Framework
- providing access to professional coaching provided to no less than 10% of staff, measured on an annual basis
- developing and implementing culturally appropriate Career Planning Tools and guidelines that are measured on an ongoing basis to all staff.

8. Designate places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on training and development programmes.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- identifying the appropriate/relevant ongoing programmes for designated placements which will be measured by placements designated
- promoting programmes through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff network, with success measured by the percentage change in number of staff completing development programmes, on an ongoing basis.

Goal

To provide staff with the tools they need to focus on their current job as well as advance their career.

Actions

9. Create a strong appreciation of DSS's Work Level Standards as the basis for measuring current performance and determining career development needs.

This will be led by People Branch and Individual business areas, and delivered through:

- promoting the Work Level Standards Assessment tool as a guide for self-assessment during their performance cycle
- one-on-one conversations occurring between staff and supervisors to discuss Work Level Standards during Performance Planning meetings, resulting in 100% of staff have IPDA in place.

10. Ensure all entry level participants from programmes without the requirement of an IPDA have a comprehensive work/training plan in place for placements.

This will be led by People Branch and intern supervisors, and delivered by:

- working with individual interns to develop work plans, with a goal of 100% interns having a work plan for their placements.

Objective 3 - Build an inclusive cultural environment that leads by example

DSS sets the benchmark for attracting, recruiting and developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and works with staff at all levels to build mutual awareness and appreciation of the expertise and cultural contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff bring to the Department.

Goal

The Department's Cultural Appreciation Programme is available for all new staff, and business areas as required.

Actions

11. Implement the Department's [Cultural Appreciation Programme](#) (CAP).

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- providing a CAP course over the life of the current [Reconciliation Action Plan](#)
- [encouraging all](#) new staff and DSS business areas to apply for a CAP course.

12. Develop a guide to support supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This has been led by People Branch and delivered by:

- promoting the guide and making it available via the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Portal and in the Manager's Toolkit.

13. CAP training (or refresher) be undertaken by any supervisor managing an Indigenous staff member (unless completed it in the previous 12 months).

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- the provision of CAP training for all supervisors of Indigenous staff who require it, to be measured on an ongoing basis.

Goal

To maximise the unique knowledge and skills of the Department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff

Actions

14. Position the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff National Committee](#) as the primary source of advice on issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This will be led by People Branch, with input from DSS Executive, and delivered by:

- ensuring a member of the Executive participates in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff National Committee meetings on a bi-monthly basis
- circulating meeting outcomes to the People and Communication Committee (PCC) and the Executive Management Group, as action items progress and are completed.

15. Appreciate and acknowledge the valuable contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff provide to the department and the community.

This will be led by People Branch, with input from DSS Executive, and delivered by:

- ensuring staff are provided with networking opportunities as required during departmental events, for example: Yarning Circle, Lunch Boxes, National Committee representation and Focus Groups.

- Providing the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to be recognised for their contribution through the Rewards and Recognition Scheme, for example: through an annual NAIDOC Secretary’s awards ceremony.

16. Ensure that the Department’s [Workplace Harassment and Bullying Policy](#) appropriately reflects the diversity of all staff, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered through:

- encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to nominate to be Diversity and Harassment Contact Officers, measured by establishment and promotion of contact officers
- provision of relevant ongoing training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Diversity and Harassment Contact Officers on an ongoing basis.

Goal

To provide governance structures to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and promote the implementation of the Workforce Strategy.

Actions

17. Ensure management structures are in place to oversee implementation, promotion and progress of Workforce Strategy.

This will be led by People Branch, with input from DSS Executive, and delivered through:

- the appointment of a member of the Executive as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Champion. As of 2013, this position has been occupied by a DSS Deputy Secretary
- providing ongoing opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff National Committee to have input into Human Resources (HR) initiatives and impacting policies, to be measured by the level of consultation offered by HR initiatives and policy.

18. Ensure SES Performance Plans include mandatory deliverables to create opportunities to increase or improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This will be led by People Branch and delivered by:

- maintaining mandatory deliverables in agreements that are measured by the inclusion in Performance Plans, which are currently in place
- measuring reports from SES on opportunities created to increase or improve employment outcomes, to be carried out during the mid and end agreement cycle.