

## New report puts Indigenous employees on the record

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National Australia Bank (NAB) and the Diversity Council Australia (DCA) today released a joint report that investigates employment initiatives from the perspective of Indigenous employees in the corporate sector.

Titled "Engaging Aboriginal Australians in the Private Sector: A Consultative Report into Aboriginal Employment Strategies and Initiatives", the research was drawn from a series of consultations with Aboriginal people across Australia, and a literature review of current leading Indigenous employment practices.

"Previous studies in this area have focused on the employer experience rather than what the actual Indigenous employees themselves experience - so this unique report is a real step forward in understanding what Aboriginal people have to say about employment in the corporate sector," said Nareen Young, Chief Executive Officer, DCA.

"As corporate Australia increases its engagement with Indigenous Australians, these important insights highlight a range of issues that companies can consider when they are working to attract, engage and retain Indigenous employees.

"We hope the report will inspire corporate Australia to follow NAB's lead and take a thorough and mindful approach to creating sustainable and successful career paths for Indigenous people," Ms Young said.

Richard Peters, Head of NAB's Community Finance & Development team said the report is essential reading for organisations looking to attract, engage and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

"This research is unique, in that it directly asked Indigenous Australians not just about their views and experiences of employment in contemporary Australian workplaces but also about how those experiences could be improved," said Mr Peters.

## Key findings

Key findings of the research highlighted the need for employers to develop genuine relationships with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations, in order to better understand the social and economic challenges experienced by Indigenous people and partner together to implement strategies to address them.

“The consultations identified a number of practical ideas that can help engage and build relationships with Indigenous communities, such as using informal networks to communicate job vacancies,” explained Mr Peters.

The consultations also highlighted that while leading diversity employers have made some good progress, there is room for improvement. Feedback included:

- Indigenous employment targets were seen as one way to address workplace underrepresentation, however, respondees urged companies to avoid creating short-term unsustainable jobs just to meet Indigenous employment targets.
- Indigenous specific positions were encouraged, such as school-based traineeships, to provide opportunities for entry into the job market. However, trainees need clear career pathways to avoid being “locked into” specific roles.
- A focus on young people is widely encouraged - programs that create pathways from school or TAFE or university into employment provide valuable training, work experience and employment.
- Like all workers, the reasons Indigenous employees leave their jobs are varied. Participants indicated that employers can improve the retention of Indigenous employees by developing mentoring schemes, addressing racism in the workplace, providing cultural awareness education, keeping people employed even after any wage subsidy period ends, providing career development and progression, and enabling flexible work practices.
- Participants also identified that there is an opportunity to promote the wide range of career options and different positions available within industries and generally raise awareness of role diversity and career paths.

DCA acknowledges the generous financial support of NAB towards this research. For a copy of the report written by Janis Constable, please [click here](#).

### **Network of Indigenous employment practitioners**

One of the high level recommendations of the report is that employers commit to sharing outcomes, both positive and negative, of Indigenous employment strategies and initiatives with other employers and sectors to generate a body of leading practice.

DCA is establishing a network of DCA member practitioners working in corporate Indigenous employment. This network will work cooperatively with networks supported by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. DCA members will be updated on meeting times, networking opportunities and research.

**DCA is resourced solely by member subscriptions, partnership projects and advisory services. Its infrastructure and capacity to produce this high level Australian business diversity research is enabled by its members, Australia's leaders in business diversity. For information about becoming a member of DCA, please visit [www.dca.org.au](http://www.dca.org.au)**