



Strategies at Work

Enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians

The articles below outline programs and strategies that have been developed by Western Australian public sector agencies to enhance employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

Department of Education and Training

“*Culture strong and career proud*” is the motto of the Department of Education and Training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2008–2010, which has been designed to increase the representation of Indigenous Australians in the workforce at the department.

The strategy focuses on the following three key areas.

1. Recruitment and retention

Increasing the number of Indigenous Australians employed by the department at all levels and occupations. Strategies include the following.

- Provision of final year teaching scholarships and teaching conversion course places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- Establishing and implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce support program that provides mentoring, coaching and career development opportunities for existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- Reviewing and monitoring selection processes to ensure that they are culturally appropriate by ensuring that:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are included as panel members for identified s.50D positions in accordance with the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*; and
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and equal employment opportunity training is embedded into the selection panel training.

2. A supportive work environment

Creating a work environment that welcomes, supports and recognises the skills and experiences that Indigenous Australians bring to the workplace. Strategies include the following.

- Implementing and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training programs for all department employees.
- Identifying and supporting opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees undertaking teaching studies to access pre-service teaching experience in schools with high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments.



3. Career pathways

Provide Indigenous Australians with access to information about career pathways and opportunities for professional and career development. Strategies include the following.

- Developing, implementing and promoting leadership and coaching opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers.
- Developing and promoting an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career pathways program including the following three initiatives:
 1. Teacher Assistant (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Certificate III and IV for Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers.
 2. Expanded Bachelor of Education Conversion Course to enable para-professional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officers to attain a teaching qualification.
 3. Professional development program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, which incorporates:
 - graduate teacher coaching and mentoring;
 - coaching and support for experienced teachers to help them progress within the department's teaching career structure and achieve senior teacher and Level 3 classroom teacher status;
 - leadership and coaching opportunities for Aboriginal school administrators; and
 - Teachers and Administrators' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Conference.

The strategy forms a key part of the department's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.

Department of Treasury and Finance

The Department of Treasury and Finance has established a comprehensive traineeship program, specifically targeting Indigenous Australians. Participants study a Certificate II or III in Business Administration over one year and work in the areas of treasury, government procurement, state revenue and corporate services. A specific induction and training calendar has been developed to meet their needs.

Given that many of the participants have never worked in Perth before, the traineeship program contains a range of support features as outlined below.

- Department employees are invited to participate in a buddy system in which they provide guidance and support to trainees on peripheral issues such as how to catch public transport to and from work, where to buy lunch and where to find services.
- Employees from the traineeship arm of the Australian Medical Association act as external mentors and visit the trainees to keep them on track, share information and provide positive feedback.
- Half a day each week is provided to trainees so they can work on their study units.
- One complete uniform is provided to trainees.
- A SmartRider is provided to trainees to use on public transport during the first fortnight of their traineeship.
- Cross-cultural training is provided to managers involved in the program.
- CabCharge vouchers are provided for trainees to attend external training.

This strategy is one initiative for improving employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians listed in the department's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.

Department of the Attorney General

Reducing the over-representation of Aboriginals as victims and offenders in the justice system is a challenge for government agencies and Aboriginal communities. It is this challenge that drives the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy at the Department of the Attorney General.

Key focus areas of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy include creating an inclusive work environment; attraction, recruitment and retention of Aboriginal employees; and building workforce capability and representation.

Specific strategies include the following.

- Actively recruiting and developing employees who have the capability to effectively engage with Aboriginal communities and individuals.
- Consulting with and/or being represented on decision-making bodies for equity groups.
- Adapting recruitment practices to encourage Aboriginal people to apply for employment with the department.
- Recruitment of Aboriginal trainees.
- Training and professional development to help staff understand and appreciate Aboriginal culture.
- Identifying career paths and encouraging training for Aboriginal staff to gain employment in management positions and mainstream positions across the department.

This strategy is aimed at improving employment and career development opportunities for Indigenous Australians and is a key initiative of the department's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.

Rottnest Island Authority

In recognition of the cultural significance of Rottnest Island to Indigenous Australians, the Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) has established an Indigenous cadetship program.

The Rottnest Island Authority implemented a Reconciliation Action Plan and, as part of this plan, has employed an Indigenous Heritage Projects Officer, sourced from the Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation. The current Indigenous Heritage Projects Officer is studying a degree in Aboriginal history and working part time with the Rottnest Island Authority. Funding for the cadetship is provided by the Federal Government.

Indigenous remains and artefacts are frequently unearthed during works on Rottnest Island. A key role for the Indigenous cadet is to ensure the protection of these items. Other projects being undertaken by the cadet include overseeing a study of Indigenous heritage, organising bus tours to culturally significant sites, developing Indigenous business on the island; and co-ordinating visitor activities in relation to Indigenous heritage.

This initiative is a positive outcome for the Rottnest Island Authority and is highlighted in their Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.

More information

If you would like further information on strategies for enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians contact a senior consultant at the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity by phone on (08) 9219 6000 or email at deope@opssc.wa.gov.au



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