



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Training**
and **Workforce Development**

Aboriginal Employment Strategy

2025 – 26

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Training and Workforce Development (the Department) acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as the first sovereign Nations of Western Australia. We acknowledge their ancestral ties to the land and spiritual connection to Country. We acknowledge Elders both past and present, and value the contribution of Aboriginal people within our organisation. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and we embrace its invitation to walk alongside Aboriginal people, united in a movement for a better future for all Australians.

Language Statement

The term 'Aboriginal' is intended to include reference to Torres Strait Islander people throughout the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26*.

Accessibility Statement

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Kaartdijin (2023)

Brody Campbell

Artist Acknowledgement

In 2023, the Department undertook a project to update its corporate visual identity to reflect a more contemporary image and to display an ongoing commitment to reconciliation. Former North Metropolitan TAFE student and Noongar artist Brody Campbell was engaged to create an artwork for the Department that told a story about transforming lives, communities and enabling a thriving economy through vocational education.

The artwork named “Kaartdijin” (meaning knowledge in Noongar) seeks to foster growth and learning within our community by narrating a story of transforming lives. Each element within Kaartdijin holds a significant meaning that contributes to the overall narrative. The artwork provided inspiration for a new and distinctive visual identity for the Department.

Brody worked with Aboriginal owned and operated design agency, Nani Creative, to extract some visual elements for the new visual identity to ensure the new design was culturally appropriate with clear rules of depiction. Kevin Wilson, owner of Nani Creative, was the recipient of the WA Training Awards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year in 2021 and a former North Metropolitan TAFE student. This project is a celebration of the skills fostered at TAFE and the culture of the First Nations peoples of Western Australia. The Department is proud to have this reflected in its day-to-day operations as a clear reminder of how it works for the people of Western Australia.

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Director General Foreword

*Executive Champion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Peoples*



It is my pleasure to present the Department of Training and Workforce Development's new *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26* (the Strategy).

This Strategy represents the Department's continued commitment to advancing our ability to employ, and importantly, retain our Aboriginal workforce to continue building an organisation that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

This Strategy, alongside our *Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy*, supports the Western Australian Public Sector Commission's sector-wide approach to increasing workforce diversity and inclusion across the WA public sector, the State's largest employer. However, this Strategy alone does not lead to organisational change without an inclusive culture and strong leadership.

As the Executive Champion, I recognise the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Nations in Australia. I embrace the role of advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and ensure the voice of lived experience is amplified to achieve the employment outcomes we strive for, in an inclusive, culturally safe and informed way. This Strategy has been informed by the many talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our organisation, and I am proud that their experiences and views have informed the Department's new *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26*.

With increasing competition for talent, our Strategy has an elevated focus on retaining our existing Aboriginal employees by providing a culturally supportive workplace, professional development opportunities and opportunities to enhance personal and career growth. Employment and entry pathways continue to be a key focus area, and I look forward to seeing Aboriginal employees across several branches, and salary levels, as we implement the strategy.

It is incumbent on everyone in the Department to contribute to a culturally safe and inclusive workplace culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees by engaging in developing cultural knowledge, ensuring the team is welcoming and supportive for new Aboriginal employees and engaging with dates of significance or becoming a proactive member of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Champions Program.

Implementing the initiatives in the Strategy will lead to a stronger, more inclusive and capable workforce and assist the agency to perform our role to the highest standards in line with community expectations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jodie Wallace'.

Jodie Wallace
Director General

Background

In 2020, the Public Sector Commission (PSC) announced a new strategy to transform the WA public sector into a leader in diversity, and an inclusive employer where the qualities, contributions and perspectives of every individual are valued. Agency specific actions and aspirational targets are set out in the [*Workforce and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020-2025*](#). Aboriginal people were identified as one of the six diversity focus areas, with its own set of recommended actions for agencies.

The [*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes 2020-2025*](#) provides agencies with recommended actions to increase the representation of Aboriginal people across the public sector and within the agency. The Department adopted several of these actions into its [*Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy*](#) and *Action Plan*, which is underpinned by four pillars.

Building knowledge

Learning opportunities are provided to build awareness and knowledge of diverse groups and enhance workforce competency in inclusive practices.

Inclusive recruitment

Inclusive recruitment practices and programs are embedded to support the active engagement of diverse jobseekers at all levels.

Development practices

Development practices enable diverse staff to broaden their knowledge, skills and experience, and work to develop their careers.

Organisational culture

Action is taken to foster an inclusive organisational culture where all people feel safe, experience a sense of belonging, and are treated fairly and respectfully.

Although our [*Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy*](#) and *Action Plan* includes broad ranging Aboriginal employment strategies, given our commitment to increasing the Aboriginal workforce, a stand-alone Aboriginal Employment Strategy is considered essential to meet our Aboriginal employment targets. These strategic documents should be considered in conjunction with each other.

In addition to being strategically aligned with broader public sector employment strategies, the [*Department's Strategic Plan*](#) priority to “**Lift the participation of First Nations People and under-represented groups in training and employment,**” calls for our continued effort to focus on attracting and retaining our Aboriginal workforce. We know that an increased number of Aboriginal people in our workforce will contribute to:

- improved access and outcomes for clients and the community;
- increased cultural competency in our policy development and service delivery; and
- stronger collaboration and relationships between government and Aboriginal people and communities.

This Aboriginal Employment Strategy, in conjunction with other supporting strategies, will serve as an important roadmap to guide our recruitment decisions, focus efforts on retention and development of our existing Aboriginal workforce, increase cultural knowledge and capacity, and enhance the overall workplace experience and cultural safety for Aboriginal employees.

Our workforce profile

Workforce Diversity Target

As at 7 November 2024¹, the Department employed 16 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. This represented 2.8% of the workforce with the majority employed in the Service Delivery directorate. Representation remains below the Department's Aboriginal Employment target of 3.7%.

DTWD Actual 2.8%

DTWD Target 3.7%

Public Sector Actual 2.8%

Equity Index Target

In addition to progressing towards the Aboriginal employment target, the Department aims to address the high representation of Aboriginal employees at salary levels below Level 6. Our [Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy – Mid Strategy Review 2023](#) now includes representation targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, and people from CaLD backgrounds at Level 6 and above and has set a representation target of 2.6%.

DTWD Actual 1.9%

DTWD Target 2.6%

The [WA Public Sector Census 2023 Insights](#) found that Aboriginal employees may be reluctant to share their identity information due to:

- having to prove they are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person;
- not wanting the pressure of addressing gaps in knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; or
- not wanting to be treated differently.

The Department continues to focus on creating a safe environment for staff to share their diversity information at various stages of employment in its [Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy](#).

¹Workforce Profile Report – 7 November 2024

Achievements and progress to date

The Department has developed and embedded several initiatives from the launch of its previous *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019*. Key achievements include:

- Establishing the Aboriginal Employee Network in 2011, evolving the initiative into the Aboriginal Employee Yarning Circle.
- Establishing the Aboriginal Policy Planning and Reconciliation (APPR) branch in 2020, to provide cultural advice and information to inform and support Aboriginal inclusion and reconciliation across the Department.
- Supporting two Aboriginal employees to undertake the Yorga Djenna Bidi – Aboriginal Women’s Leadership Program.
- Establishing the Diversity Traineeships Pathways Program (DTPP) in 2022 and utilising section 51 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (EO Act)* to appoint three Aboriginal young people to full-time and part-time government traineeships.
- Hosting trainees from the Public Sector Commission’s Solid Futures Aboriginal Traineeship Program.
- Introducing special measures to achieve equality under sections 50(d) and 51 of the *EO Act* and incorporating the statement ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply’ in all job advertisements.
- Utilising [*Commissioners Instruction 39: Interim Arrangements to Fill Public Sector Vacancies \(CI39\)*](#) to directly appoint three Aboriginal employees.
- Establishing Equity Index targets and representation targets at Level 6 and above.
- Increasing staff participation in workplace events including NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week.
- Mandating Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training for all staff. To date², 317 employees have completed face-to-face training, and 335 employees have completed the online PSC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Training.
- Introducing Cultural Safety Training and Gnalla Kaartdijin (Our Knowledge) Cultural Competency workshops.
- Supporting Aboriginal employees to undertake secondments, acting opportunities and special projects.
- Running a Career Development Week in partnership with South Metropolitan TAFE Jobs and Skills Centre in 2023 for staff participating in our Aboriginal Employee Yarning Circle and Department of Finance’s Indigenous Network.

² As at 6 November 2024

Building on our progress

Despite the achievements to date, we acknowledge the continued learning and development that we need to do as an organisation to become an employer of choice for Aboriginal people. The *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26* allows us to continue to improve our retention and employment strategies for Aboriginal people, to meet and exceed the State's target of 3.7%.

The *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26* has been developed in consultation with members from the Department's Aboriginal Employee Yarning Circle, the Aboriginal Policy Planning and Reconciliation (APPR) branch and the RAP Human Resources Sub-committee. Their valuable contributions and feedback to shape this Strategy for success is acknowledged.

Aboriginal Policy Planning and Reconciliation

We acknowledge the Department's APPR branch who provide specialist Aboriginal cultural advice and leadership across the Department to inform key initiatives to achieve meaningful reconciliation with Aboriginal people.

APPR plays a critical role in supporting the delivery of this Strategy, in particular, providing new and existing Aboriginal employees with cultural safety, connection and support.

How we will get there

The key focus areas for the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26* are **retention** and **employment**.

The Department's vision is **"Transforming lives and communities and enabling a thriving economy,"** and our workforce is critical to achieving this. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy will maintain a focus on creating more **employment** opportunities and entry pathways for Aboriginal people and continue to increase Aboriginal representation across all business areas, and classification levels, throughout the Department. This will mean continuing to enhance our recruitment practices and diversifying pathways to employment.

In our [*Strategic Plan 2023-28*](#), one of our key enablers is to 'create value by caring about our people and developing individual and collective capacity.' As a Department, we understand that employees thrive with development and growth opportunities in a supportive environment, and recognise that for Aboriginal people, proactive management practices and culturally safe working environments makes a difference to employee retention. We value our existing Aboriginal employees and the contributions they make to the Department, and we will focus our efforts to ensure we provide a workplace that enables us to **retain** their talents in the organisation.

It is important to acknowledge that the experiences and feedback from our existing Aboriginal employee workforce informed the focus areas and several

of the actions and initiatives in the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26*. The Strategy is intended to be a focussed and concise set of actions to compliment the broader [*Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2023-25*](#) which includes:

- Increasing non-Aboriginal staff knowledge of culture, history, and rights through cultural learning professional development.
- Developing a *Cultural Development Framework* to increase cultural competency across the organisation.
- Developing culturally competent and inclusive leadership.
- Guaranteeing progression to interview for Aboriginal people found suitable at the shortlisting stage for all recruitment processes.
- Ensuring key policies are reviewed to ensure there are clear feedback mechanisms for staff to raise issues.
- Continuing to acknowledge, promote and celebrate diversity and inclusion dates of significance.

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the [*Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2023-25*](#).

All employees and supervisors have a role in living our agency's values, which means taking a proactive role to support the Department to achieve its Aboriginal employment and retention goals.

'We respect, trust and care for each other'

'We know diversity makes us stronger'

Our key focus areas

Key focus area 1: Retention

The retention of Aboriginal employees is strongly linked to how culturally safe and valued a person feels in the workplace. Initiatives and actions to strengthen Aboriginal employee retention include:

Induction and onboarding practices

First impressions are important. A well-structured induction and onboarding process ensures new employees feel welcome and supported and provides key information to effectively perform their role and navigate their team and workplace safely. It is particularly important to get this right for new Aboriginal employees. This Strategy seeks to enhance the Department's Corporate Induction process to better connect Aboriginal people with other Aboriginal colleagues and provide supervisors with cultural competency resources to enable Aboriginal people to feel culturally safe from day one.

Organisational culture

Aboriginal employees that feel culturally safe and supported in the workplace are more likely to remain within the Department. The Department will continue to support initiatives, including the Aboriginal Employee Yarning Circle, to promote connection, sharing and learning in a culturally safe space. Ongoing learning and development to increase non-Aboriginal staff cultural competency will also be a focus of this Strategy.

Opportunities for development

Aboriginal employees will be provided with learning and development opportunities including the

Department's professional development program, leadership programs and e-learning resources, as well as being encouraged and supported to apply for work related development opportunities such as secondments, acting opportunities and promotions.

Career growth

Aboriginal employees will be given the space to discuss their career goals and understand the development needed to achieve their goals. Managers are vital to an employee's performance and wellbeing in the workplace, and should use formal performance development tools and processes, in conjunction with regular check ins, and supervision to:

- Genuinely listen and understand their employee's development goals and aspirations.
- Understand any potential or perceived barriers raised by their staff.
- Provide honest feedback and use a coaching approach to find solutions.
- Discuss professional/leadership development and support job opportunities that increase capability and competency within the business (e.g. acting opportunities).

Key focus area 2: Employment

Employment of Aboriginal people is crucial to ‘closing the gap’ and increasing the representation of Aboriginal people in the workforce. Initiatives to improve employment outcomes are:

Entry level programs

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is much younger than the broader population on average, with the median age of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population being 24 years of age³. To encourage Aboriginal young people to enter the workforce the Department offers pathways and opportunities through the Diversity Traineeship Pathways Program (DTPP) and the PSC Solid Futures Traineeship Program.

Human Resources will connect with Universities, TAFE's and schools to promote the Department's entry-level programs and will continue to explore other entry-level opportunities for Aboriginal people, that provides support and structured learning and can provide employment upon completion.

Flexible workplaces

Culture is at the heart for Aboriginal people. It is important that Aboriginal employees, and their managers, understand the workplace flexibilities and leave entitlements available to meet family

and community obligations, including attending events of significance and cultural celebrations. The Department provides options for flexible work arrangements and access to cultural leave entitlements to accommodate cultural responsibilities of Aboriginal staff. The Strategy will increase manager awareness on how best to support staff needing to attend to Aboriginal family, community and cultural obligations.

Inclusive recruitment

There is no “one size fits all” approach when it comes to recruiting Aboriginal people. It is important that we apply flexibility to all aspects of the recruitment process to address cultural and social aspects that are unique to Aboriginal people, eliminating barriers for Aboriginal people to best demonstrate their capabilities when applying for our vacancies. The recruitment process should be flexible and co-designed with Aboriginal staff where appropriate to ensure that the recruitment process is culturally informed and inclusive.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021

Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2025-26

Action Plan

The following pages set out the Strategy’s initiatives and activities to contribute to achieving employment outcomes and increasing Aboriginal workforce representation in the Department.

Focus area 1: Retention		
Induction and onboarding practices: Practices are implemented to build trust and provide a positive experience from day one.		
Action	Responsibility	Timeframes
Introduce new staff to the Aboriginal Policy Planning and Reconciliation (APPR) business area as part of the Corporate Induction Program.	Human Resources / APPR	Ongoing
Provide buddy/partnering opportunities to new Aboriginal employees, including trainees and graduates.	Managers	April 2025
Customise the Corporate Induction Program communication for Aboriginal new starters to include cultural supports, connections with other Aboriginal employees and guidance for supervisors.	Human Resources	April 2025
Investigate an Aboriginal employee induction feedback mechanism to obtain qualitative feedback and identify opportunities for improvement in the induction process at a corporate and local level.	Human Resources	June 2025

Organisational culture: Action is taken to foster an inclusive organisational culture where Aboriginal people feel safe, experience a sense of belonging and are treated fairly and respectfully.

Action	Responsibility	Timeframes
Continue to support Aboriginal employee participation in the Aboriginal Employee Yarning Circle to connect, share, develop and learn in a culturally safe space.	Managers Human Resources / APPR	Ongoing
Establish a program that offers Aboriginal employees cultural and professional mentorship with an existing senior Aboriginal employee.	Human Resources / APPR	September 2025
Provide ongoing cultural learning opportunities in the Professional Development Program to enhance ways of working and engaging with Aboriginal employees.	Human Resources / APPR	Ongoing
Develop an Aboriginal employee 'stay' interview process to identify what is working well and where improvements can be proactively explored.	Managers / Human Resources	December 2025
Develop a resource for managers on how to support Aboriginal employees with cultural and family obligations to minimise cultural pressures.	Human Resources	June 2025

Development opportunities: Development opportunities enable Aboriginal staff to broaden their knowledge, skills and experience and work to develop their careers.

Action	Responsibility	Timeframes
Promote the Expanded Professional Development (PD) Program to Aboriginal staff, leadership development programs and pathways to attain relevant formal qualifications.	Human Resources / Managers	Ongoing
Promote Professional Development opportunities focussed on career development to Aboriginal employees (e.g. optimising job applications and interview performance).	Human Resources	Ongoing
Promote the Public Sector Commission's Learning and Development Prospectus to Aboriginal employees and their managers for consideration in performance conversations and development planning.	Human Resources / Managers	Ongoing

Career growth: Support is provided to Aboriginal staff to grow their careers and achieve career goals.

Action	Responsibility	Timeframes
Explore and develop career planning and pathway mapping resources to support proactive performance and career conversations.	Human Resources	December 2025
Promote and support Aboriginal employees to apply for acting opportunities, secondments and advertised vacancies including vacancies advertised using sections 50(d) and 51 of the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1984</i> .	Managers	Ongoing
Ensure Aboriginal graduates and trainees are provided with career planning advice during their employment program and are proactively supported by their supervisors to progress into career opportunities with the Department.	Human Resources / Managers	Ongoing

Focus area 2: Employment

Entry level programs: Providing entry-level opportunities to Aboriginal people to achieve positive employment outcomes.

Action	Responsibility	Timeframes
Explore targeted graduate opportunities for Aboriginal university graduates.	Human Resources	July 2025
Explore participation in the Public Sector Commission's Vacation Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students.	Human Resources	September 2025
Explore cadetship programs for Aboriginal university students.	Human Resources	July 2025
Develop and maintain a work experience program for Aboriginal youth.	Human Resources	September 2025
Continue the Diversity Traineeship Pathways Program (DTPP) and prioritise suitable Aboriginal candidates under section 51 of the <i>Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)</i> .	Human Resources	Ongoing
Connect with Universities, TAFE Colleges and schools to raise awareness about the Department's entry-level programs and suitable vacancies.	Human Resources	March 2025
Review and improve the employment and training experience for Aboriginal trainees in the Department including supporting flexible placement opportunities to expose trainees to diverse business areas.	Human Resources	September 2025
Connect Aboriginal youth and young professionals with the Department's Young Professionals Program.	Human Resources / Managers	Ongoing

Flexible workplaces: Cultural leave and flexible working arrangements support Aboriginal staff to attend cultural events and provide access to cultural leave entitlements to balance other commitments.

Action	Responsibility	Timeframes
Communicate the Department's flexible workplace practices through the <i>Practice Direction – Working from Home</i> .	Human Resources / Managers	Ongoing
Support staff to meet their cultural obligations through utilising <i>Practice Direction – Ceremonial/Cultural Leave and Cultural Leave for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</i> .	Managers	Ongoing
Increase manager awareness of the Department's flexible work practices and leave entitlements for Aboriginal staff.	Human Resources	Ongoing

Inclusive recruitment: Inclusive recruitment practices and programs are embedded to support the active engagement of Aboriginal people at all levels.

Action	Responsibility	Timeframes
Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Opportunities Register 12-month pilot to provide hiring managers a database of internal and external Aboriginal candidates who have expressed interest in working for the Department.	Human Resources	December 2025
Continue promoting the application of special measures in the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1984</i> to increase applications and appointments for Aboriginal people.	Human Resources / Managers	Ongoing
Explore co-design of relevant recruitment processes with Aboriginal staff to enhance cultural appeal and safety throughout the recruitment and selection process.	Human Resources	June 2025
Update the Department's Aboriginal artwork and standard wording in all job advertisements.	Human Resources	August 2025

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The Department will monitor workforce data, equity index data, and recruitment outcomes and compare performance to sector-wide results. Effective governance and monitoring will ensure accountability is maintained and that progress is being made through regular reporting. We will do this through our:

- **Corporate Executive** – Progress against the action plan will be reported to Corporate Executive on an annual basis. Periodic updates may also be integrated into existing workforce diversity profile reporting, diversity and inclusion reporting and Reconciliation Action Plan reporting.
- **RAP Steering Group** – Periodic updates will be provided as part of the reporting schedule to the Department's RAP Steering Committee.
- **RAP HR Sub-Committee** – Periodic updates will be provided, and ongoing feedback will be collected from committee members.
- **Aboriginal Employee Yarning Circle** – Aboriginal employees will continue to provide feedback on the implementation and outcomes of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Contact Us

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