

# Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2011 - 2015

Building a diverse public sector workforce





Original artwork courtesy of Deborah Newenham, Mediator, Department of the Attorney General





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## Message from the Premier

*The traditional custodians of this land, of elders past and present and the contributions of Aboriginal Australians and non Aboriginal Australians in this country in which we live and share, are respectfully acknowledged.*

As the State's largest employer, the Western Australian Public Sector is in a strong position to make a significant contribution to the employment and career development prospects of Aboriginal people.

The unique skills and knowledge of Aboriginal Australians can add significant value in the workplace, building both the Western Australian Public Sector capability and contributing towards the economic growth of Aboriginal communities.

Collaboration, and a sustained effort on behalf of all public sector agencies, are imperative if we are to improve opportunities for Aboriginal people and close the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage in public sector employment.

This Aboriginal Employment Strategy has been developed in conjunction with public sector agencies and Aboriginal employees. It focuses on long term, sustainable employment opportunities and career pathways for Aboriginal people across the public sector.

It will contribute to the Council of Australian Governments' reform agenda to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians within a decade, and to increase Aboriginal public sector employment to reflect working age population by 2015. Accountability mechanisms and regular review will ensure the strategy remains relevant and effective.

Fundamental to the success of this strategy are the voices and opinions of Aboriginal people. These were heard through the Working Group which included Aboriginal employees with significant experience developing and implementing similar strategies, and an Aboriginal Reference Group comprising individuals from across the public sector.

The commitment of all those who participated in the development of this strategy, is valued and commended.



Colin Barnett MLA  
**PREMIER**



## Closing the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage

In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a new national target to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians within a decade.

This will be achieved through the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation which involves complementary investment and effort by the Commonwealth and the States and Territories to significantly improve opportunities for Aboriginal people to engage in private and public sector jobs.

The National Partnership consists of the following four key elements:

**Element 1:** Creating real sustained employment in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidisation.

**Element 2:** Strengthening current Government procurement policies to maximise Aboriginal employment.

**Element 3:** Incorporating Aboriginal workforce strategies into all new major COAG reforms contributing to the 'Closing the Gap' targets.

**Element 4:** Reviewing all public sector Aboriginal employment and career development strategies to increase employment to reflect population share by 2015.

The Department of Indigenous Affairs has overall responsibility for ensuring implementation of the WA Government's commitments under the Indigenous Economic Participation National Partnership Agreement.

The Public Sector Commission, working in consultation with public sector agencies, is leading the development and implementation of this strategy to support the implementation of Element 4 of the Agreement.

## Public sector workforce challenges

A major objective for the WA public sector is to continue to provide high quality services to the community of Western Australia. A positive economic outlook for the state, continued population growth driving increased demand for public services and an ageing public sector workforce present significant challenges for the WA public sector.

In order to effectively respond to these challenges, it is imperative for public sector agencies to work collaboratively to develop innovative workforce initiatives to build public sector capacity. The identification and development of alternative labour sources and emerging leaders is critical to ongoing service delivery.

Optimising opportunities for Aboriginal Australians to engage in public sector employment can both build the capability of the sector and contribute towards the economic well-being of Aboriginal communities.



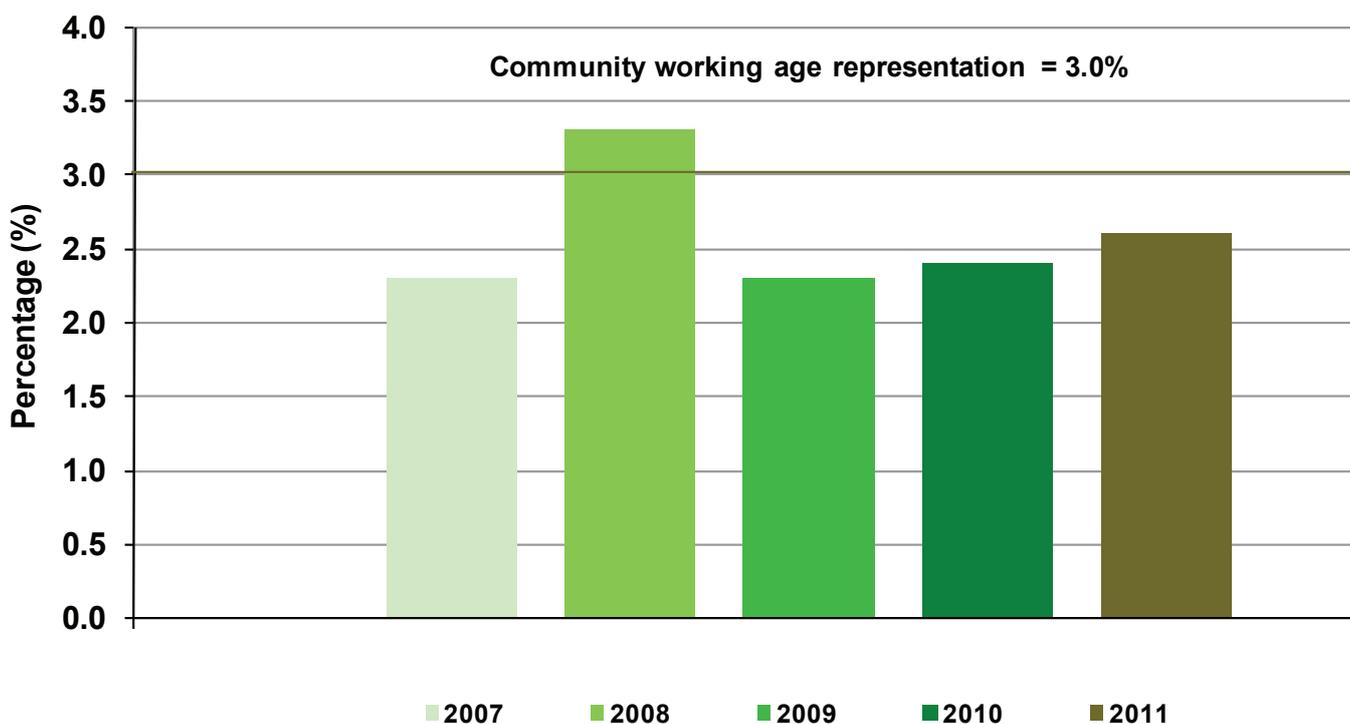
## Progressing Diversity in the WA Public Sector

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2006 there were 70,996 Australian Aboriginal people living in Western Australia. This equates to 14 per cent of the total Aboriginal population in Australia, and is the third largest Aboriginal population of all the States and Territories. Over 42% of the Aboriginal population in Western Australia is located in remote or very remote areas.

The 2011 Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report provides the following snapshot of Aboriginal employment within the Western Australian Public Sector.

### Representation

The representation of Indigenous Australians employed in public sector agencies and authorities increased slightly to 2.6% (2,533 employees) in 2011. This representation is lower than the representation of working age Indigenous Australians in the community (3.0%)



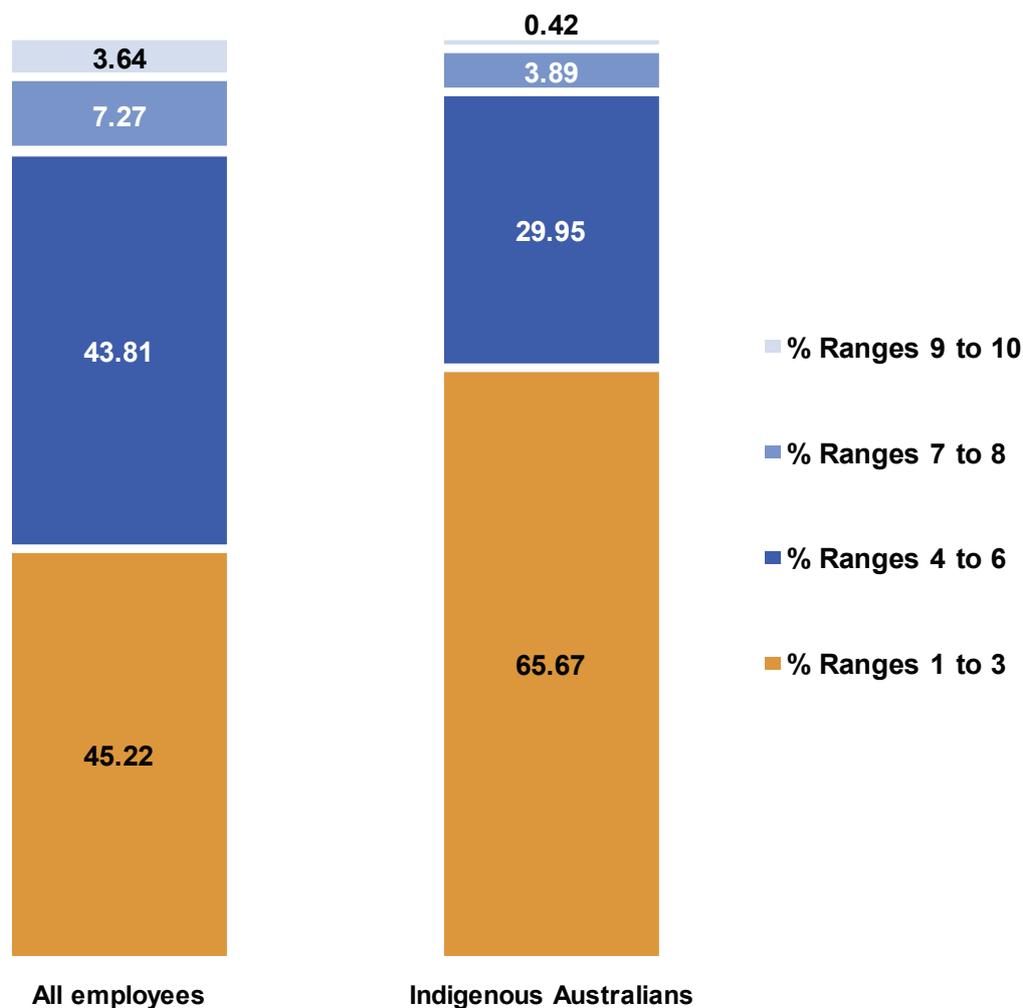
The number of Indigenous Australians in public sector agencies and authorities at salary ranges 7 to 10 has increased from 93 in 2009 to 110 in 2011. Overall, there is still a high concentration of this diversity group at lower salary ranges.

In 2011, of all Indigenous Australians in public sector agencies and authorities, 4.3% are at salary ranges 7 to 10 and 0.4% at salary ranges 9 to 10. This compares to 10.9% and 3.6%, respectively, for all employees. The representation of Indigenous Australians in salary ranges 9 and 10 has decreased from 1.0% in 2005 to 0.5% in 2008, and further down to 0.4% in 2011.



## Distribution

**Distribution of Indigenous Australian employees across salary ranges in public sector agencies and authorities in 2011**



The relatively low workforce representation of Indigenous Australians in public authorities means that small changes in distribution can cause large fluctuations in equity index scores.

The equity index for Indigenous Australians in public sector agencies and authorities reached its highest point of 63 in 2009. However, there has been a significant drop to 39 in 2011, indicating that Aboriginal Australians are still heavily concentrated at lower salary levels. This strategy aims to address this by attracting, retaining and developing Aboriginal employees at all levels in the WA public sector.



## Strategy Overview

### Objective

The Council of Australian Governments has set a national target of at least 2.6 per cent of public sector employment for Aboriginal employment across all classifications by 2015 to increase employment to reflect the expected national Aboriginal working age population share. Each jurisdiction must determine its contribution to that target taking into account the proportion of Aboriginal working age population (aged 15 – 64 years).

For Western Australia, we have agreed to a target of 3.2% by 2015, representing the estimated Aboriginal proportion of the total working age population in 2015.

### Consultation

Key to the success of this strategy are the voices and opinions of Aboriginal people. The Working Group comprised Aboriginal people who have significant experience in developing and implementing Aboriginal employment and development strategies within their own agencies.

Consultation was also undertaken with an Aboriginal Reference Group (Appendix A) comprising Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinators and Aboriginal employees from across the public sector, during the development of the strategy.

The strategy also drew upon the extensive consultation undertaken with Aboriginal people by the Training together – working together Committee.

The strategy itself contains initiatives which will ensure that consultation with Aboriginal public sector employees is an ongoing process.

### Governance

This strategy is a collaborative effort between central and line agencies. It is being overseen by a Governance Group (Appendix A) comprising senior members of key public sector agencies, whose role is to provide advice and guidance, endorse recommendations made by the Working Group and the Strategy, and to champion the implementation of the Strategy across WA Public Sector agencies

A Working Group (Appendix A) comprising representatives from a wide range of public sector agencies, has identified opportunities and strategies to increase Aboriginal employment and career development in the public sector, made recommendations to the Governance Group and is championing the implementation of the Strategy across WA Public Sector agencies.





## Principles

There are fundamental principles which have emerged as essential components of a successful Aboriginal employment and development strategy. These principles are:

**Collaboration:** The strategy must be based on active, respectful and responsive collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees.

**Innovation:** We must take calculated risks, commit to achieving targets and find new ways of working if we are to make a long term difference.

**Commitment:** The commitment to improving Aboriginal employment must be sustained and ongoing and needs to come from all levels of the organisation and across the sector.

## Key Themes

This strategy aims to meet the 2015 COAG target and the workforce challenges faced by the sector, by optimising the opportunities for the public sector to attract, retain and develop the careers of Aboriginal Australians.

This will be achieved through a range of interconnected initiatives, focussed on the following themes

- Create culturally inclusive workplaces
- Attract Aboriginal people
- Build capability and careers
- Foster Aboriginal leaders
- Be accountable

## Implementation

The success of the sector in improving Aboriginal outcomes and meeting the 2015 target is the responsibility of all public sector agencies.

This strategy is an overarching document which outlines key principles and outcomes. It identifies the role that agencies (line and central) play in implementation and contains a range of recommendations and initiatives that can be implemented by agencies. It outlines the role that the Public Sector Commission will take in conjunction with relevant line and central agencies, to facilitate the implementation of those initiatives and recommendations.

The Public Sector Commission will also provide advice and guidance to assist agencies to determine which initiatives will best assist them to contribute to improved Aboriginal employment outcomes.

Our intention is to work collaboratively with public sector agencies to develop a range of comprehensive resources, practical guidelines, programs and initiatives to complement and ensure successful implementation.



## Key themes and initiatives

### Theme 1: Create a culturally inclusive workplace

Fundamental to the success of this strategy is the need to create a supportive working environment, where Aboriginal people feel valued and included, and are encouraged to pursue a public sector career.

Feedback from Aboriginal public servants strongly emphasises the absolute necessity of culturally inclusive workplaces. The need for workplaces that are supportive of Aboriginal people was a key message arising from a Chief Executive Officer Forum addressing Aboriginal employment issues and has been identified through both the Governance Group and Working Group. The extensive consultation conducted for the Training Together/Working Together strategy, the WA State Training board also emphasised the necessity of supportive workplaces and, in particular, the importance of mentoring.

#### Encourage cultural learning and develop cultural competency

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central and/or line agencies will:

- Implement cultural awareness programs including an accredited unit of study in cultural awareness
- Develop guidelines to assist agency managers to understand and manage Aboriginal employees' cultural, family and leave issues
- Facilitate short term secondments into Aboriginal organisations as part of leadership development programs for non-Aboriginal participants.

Line agencies should:

- Build cultural awareness and competency in all employees by:
  - Including cultural awareness training/information in induction packages or programs
  - Providing training in the prevention of discrimination, bullying, harassment
  - Encouraging employees to undertake further study in Aboriginal culture
  - Build awareness in managers regarding cultural leave entitlements.



## Connect and support Aboriginal employees

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central and/or line agencies will:

- Develop and implement options for agencies to manage cultural leave and work-life balance and potential cultural conflicts of interest
- Establish regular cross-sector Aboriginal Employee Networks for support and sharing of experiences
- Identify and publicise ways in which to celebrate Aboriginal culture
- Provide a portal on the Commission's website where individuals and agencies can access information related to Aboriginal employment within the WA public sector.

Line agencies should:

- Provide a comprehensive introduction to the workplace and to the public sector for all new Aboriginal employees
- Develop peer support networks and/or programs to link Aboriginal employees to support people
- Promote the use of flexible work practices to assist Aboriginal employees to balance work and cultural issues.





## Theme 2: Attract Aboriginal people

Traditional Public Sector recruitment practices can act as a barrier to employing Aboriginal people. We must adopt more innovative and culturally appropriate recruitment strategies if we are to tap into the substantial pool of skilled and enthusiastic Aboriginal potential employees.

Agencies that have adapted their usual practices to cater for the needs of Aboriginal people have reported great success. The initiatives outlined below provide a range of options for, and approaches to, attracting Aboriginal people to the Public Sector.

### Connect Aboriginal people to public sector employment

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central and/or line agencies will:

- Develop and implement a centrally coordinated and funded traineeship program which encompasses an integrated employment, training and mentoring support service
- Develop and/or promote a range of Aboriginal specific entry level strategies targeting all age groups including
  - an Aboriginal Cadetship program
  - public sector government and school based traineeships and internships; and
  - work experience placements
- Provide guidelines for agencies on strategies to attract Aboriginal employees to public sector jobs
- Develop relationships with local Aboriginal communities, employment organisations and educational institutions to promote the Public Sector as an attractive employer
- Promote public sector Aboriginal employment and success stories under a unified brand

Line agencies should:

- Tailor advertising strategies to reflect the needs of Aboriginal job applicants, by adopting a pro-active approach to seeking out Aboriginal applicants by:
  - using Indigenous Jobs Australia, local media and word of mouth to advertise positions
  - using Aboriginal employee networks to promote advertised vacancies, and
  - conducting briefing sessions for Aboriginal people promoting careers within the agency



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- Offer work experience placements to build work readiness skills and a potential pool of applicants
  - Target Aboriginal students through graduate programs and scholarships
  - Actively engage in entry level employment programs facilitated by the Public Sector Commission

### Conduct culturally inclusive recruitment and selection processes

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central or line agencies will:

- Develop guidelines regarding the intent and appropriate application of sections 50d and 51 of the Equal Opportunity Act
- Establish and facilitate networks for HR professionals and Aboriginal Employment Coordinators to share knowledge and experience
- Develop guidelines and tools which utilise the flexibilities enabled by the Public Sector Reform Act 2010 to assist agencies to undertake a culturally appropriate recruitment and selection process,

Line agencies should:

- Review recruitment policies and practices to ensure they are culturally inclusive
- Ensure application and selection methods are culturally sensitive
- Provide comprehensive information to assist Aboriginal job applicants
- Offer an Aboriginal point of contact and include Aboriginal representatives in selection processes if possible

### Identify and address regional specific needs

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central and/or line agencies will:

- Facilitate a working group to research, identify and develop initiatives to address regional-specific Aboriginal employment issues
- Collaborate with the Department of Training and Workforce Development regional Aboriginal Workforce Development Centres to increase employment opportunities in regional areas.



### Theme 3: Build capability and careers

Encouraging Aboriginal employees to access training and development opportunities and providing assistance to identify meaningful career pathways will have a significant impact on the ability and willingness of Aboriginal employees to build careers in the WA Public Sector.

Simply attracting Aboriginal people to our organisations will not be sufficient for meeting our targets, making a difference in our organisations or impacting the lives of Aboriginal people – agencies must build the capabilities of their people by facilitating learning opportunities, providing mentoring, and assisting employees to identify and achieve their aspirations.

#### Build capability through mentoring programs

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central and/ or line agencies will:

- Develop a model mentoring program for new Aboriginal employees
- Provide mentoring guidelines for agencies

Line agencies should:

- Extend agency peer support/mentoring programs to include a specific focus on supporting Aboriginal employees

#### Plan and develop career pathways

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central and /or line agencies will:

- Provide guidelines and tools to assist individuals and agencies to utilise Public Sector capability frameworks to plan development and career paths
- Promote a range of career pathways and related training and development opportunities for Aboriginal employees

Line agencies should:

- Actively assist Aboriginal employees to identify career paths and aspirations
- Utilise public sector capability frameworks as development and career planning tools
- Encourage and facilitate mobility within agencies and across the sector, through acting opportunities, job rotations, secondments.



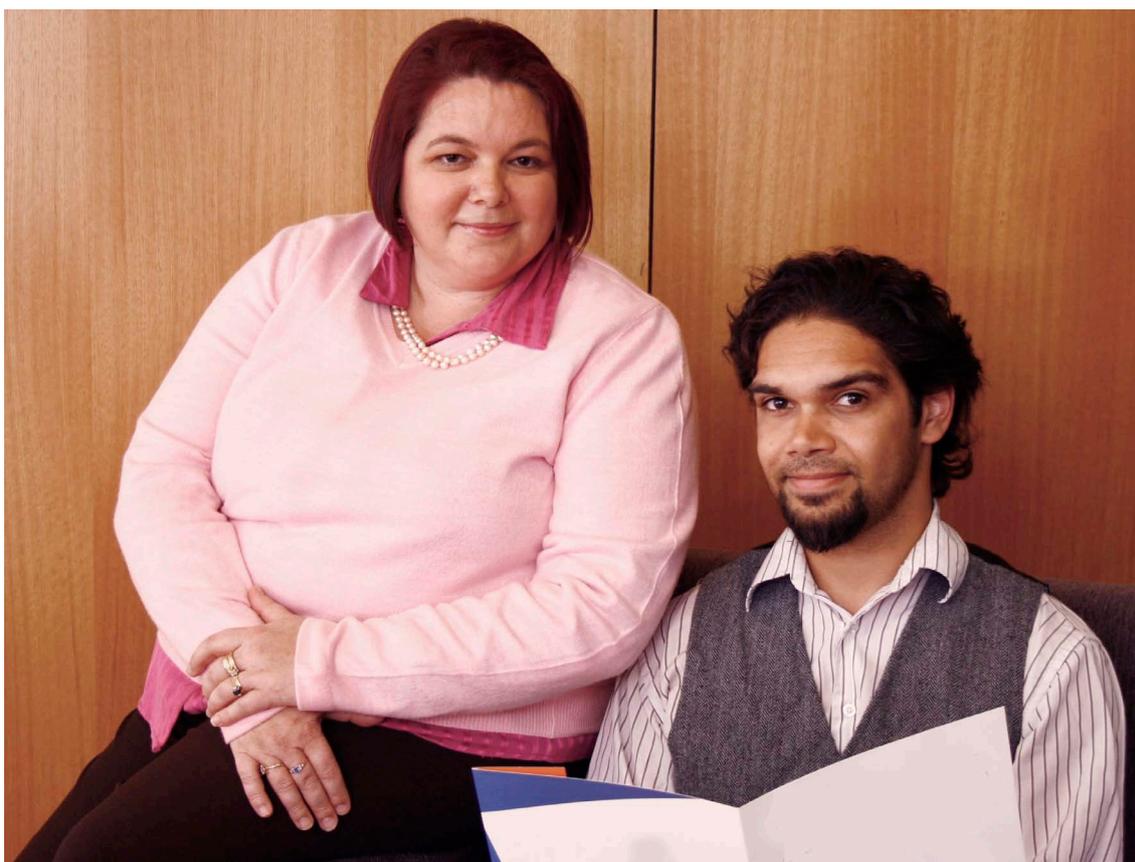
## Develop skills and qualifications

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central and/or line agencies will:

- Develop and implement the Public Sector Training Package with a particular focus on Aboriginal participation

Line agencies should:

- Provide professional and personal development activities that will build skills and confidence
- Actively encourage and provide opportunity for Aboriginal employees to engage in further study, which may include making scholarships available to Aboriginal employees
- Identify capacity development opportunities for Aboriginal employees to participate in the delivery of cultural awareness training





## Theme 4: Foster Aboriginal leaders

Recognising, developing and supporting current and potential Aboriginal leaders is essential to building sustainable, equitable public sector employment for Aboriginal people. For new entrants to the public sector, the presence of strong and successful Aboriginal leaders is important to demonstrate the opportunities offered by the public sector, and to show them what can be achieved.

While Aboriginal leaders act as role models and mentors to others, they also benefit from support and guidance themselves. Networking, mentoring and development opportunities are important tools for developing our Aboriginal leaders.

### Identify and develop Aboriginal leaders

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with central or line agencies will:

- Facilitate Aboriginal participation in Public Sector Commission leadership development programs
- Provide Aboriginal scholarships for Public Sector Commission leadership development programs
- Establish an Aboriginal-specific leadership development model

Line Agencies should:

- Identify aspiring Aboriginal leaders and provide appropriate training and professional development opportunities
- Encourage Aboriginal leaders to act as mentors and role models for Aboriginal employees

### Connect and support Aboriginal leaders

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with relevant agencies will:

- Develop and implement a sector wide mentoring program for Aboriginal leaders
- Establish and facilitate a regular Aboriginal Senior Management forum to allow for networking and development





## Theme 5: Be accountable

Ongoing commitment and leadership is essential, if we are to make a long term commitment to closing the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage and reaching our goal of increasing and achieving sustainable Aboriginal employment in the WA Public Sector.

It is also important that this strategy be pursued in an integrated, collaborative fashion, to prevent fragmentation of effort and an inconsistent approach. A range of accountability measures will help drive commitment and collaboration.

The Public Sector Commission, in collaboration with relevant agencies will:

- Establish five positions within the Public Sector Commission to implement the initiatives contained within the strategy and provide consultancy and support to agencies
- Establish a regular CEO Forum to maintain commitment and momentum
- Establish an Aboriginal Reference Group to monitor and advise on employment issues
- Develop an evaluation process to determine the success of the strategy
- Report bi-annually on progress towards the 2015 target

Line Agencies should:

- Align outcomes in CEO Performance Agreements with attraction and retention strategies and workforce diversity objectives in Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plans
- Determine and implement initiatives that will contribute to meeting targets identified in EEO Management plans, and to improving outcomes for Aboriginal Public Sector employment
- Set targets that reflect the Aboriginal client base, and/or set local level or business unit specific targets
- Ensure data collection methods accurately capture information related to Aboriginal employment
- Report on initiatives and progress towards determined targets to support the Aboriginal Economic Participation National Partnership in CEO Performance Agreements



## Information and Resources

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Department of Indigenous Affairs

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Web: [www.dia.wa.gov.au](http://www.dia.wa.gov.au)

### Employment

Public Sector Aboriginal Business Traineeships

[www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/workforce/employment/traineeship-programs/aboriginal-traineeship-program](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/workforce/employment/traineeship-programs/aboriginal-traineeship-program)

Indigenous Jobs Australia User Guide

[www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/document/rams-indigenous-jobs-australia-user-guidelines](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/document/rams-indigenous-jobs-australia-user-guidelines)

Indigenous Jobs Australia Website

[www.indigenousjobsaustralia.com.au/](http://www.indigenousjobsaustralia.com.au/)

Department of Training and Workforce Development, Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre

[www.trainingwa.wa.gov.au/awdc/detcms/portal/](http://www.trainingwa.wa.gov.au/awdc/detcms/portal/)

### Workforce Planning and Demographics

Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2010

[www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/workforce/workforce-planning-data/equal-opportunity-public-employment](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/workforce/workforce-planning-data/equal-opportunity-public-employment)

Public Sector Commission Workforce Planning and Diversity Toolkit

[www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/workforce/workforce-planning-data/workforce-planning-toolkit](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/workforce/workforce-planning-data/workforce-planning-toolkit)



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Governance, Working and Indigenous Reference Groups

#### **Governance Group Members**

Dr Kim Schofield (Chair), Deputy Commissioner, Public Sector Commission  
Cliff Weeks, Executive Director, Department of Indigenous Affairs  
Michael Palermo, Acting Director, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity  
Sue Lapham, Executive Director, Department of Training and Workforce Development  
Michelle Conroy, Public Sector Commission (Executive Officer)

#### **Working Group Members**

Paul Stewart, (Chair), Public Sector Commission  
Michelle Conroy, Public Sector Commission  
Melody Jenkins, Public Sector Commission  
Pamela Lewis, Department of Indigenous Affairs  
Tiffany Vale, Department of Indigenous Affairs  
Dr Chris Stansbury, Office of the Public Sector Standards Commission  
Regina Hill, Department of Training and Workforce Development  
Angela McIver, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity  
Jonathon Woolfrey, Department of the Attorney General  
Dennis Taaffe, Department of Housing  
Allison Woods, Department of Housing  
Christine Porter, Department of Education  
Bruce Loo, Department for Child Protection  
Mike Rowe, Department for Regional Development and Lands  
Lindsay Bridge, Department for Regional Development and Lands  
Louise Weaver, Department for Child Protection  
Josephine Kennedy, Department of Corrective Services

## Indigenous Reference Group Members

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Ingrid Cummin, Central Institute of Technology

Collene Castle, Polytechnic West

Patrick Egan, Department of Housing

Lindsay Bridge, Department of Regional Development & Lands

Carol Williams (Scribe), Public Sector Commission

Ms Marion Chalker, Landgate

Ms Tanya Daly, Department of Agriculture and Food

Mr Kevin Cox, Department of Health

Ms Wanita Bartholomeusz, WA Police

Ms Pearl Clarson, Department of the Attorney General



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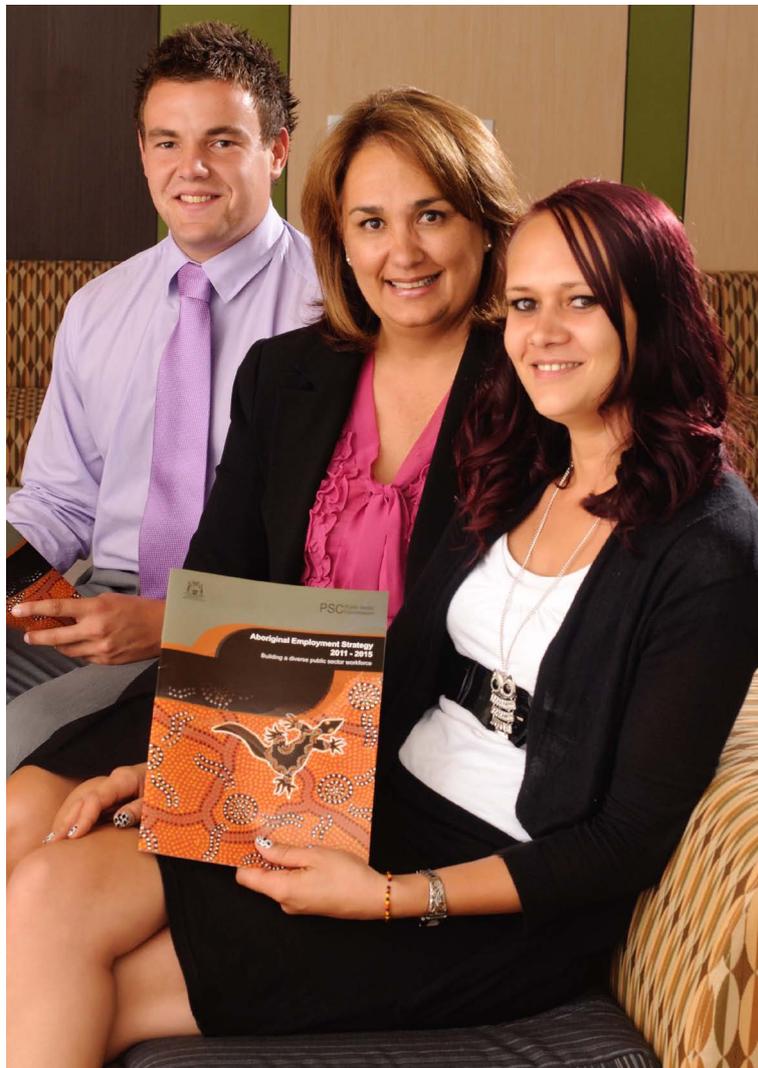
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