

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2011–2013

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Community Services Directorate (CSD) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2011–2013*.

Employment makes a positive difference in the lives of families, and there is a particular need to improve the employment outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While the directorate values all our staff, the plan pushes us to be a leader in the ACT Public Sector and the community and go further than we have before in employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But it's not enough just to employ people — we need to retain our staff and provide opportunities for satisfying careers.

Accordingly, the plan's actions aim to create inclusive workplaces that attract staff and offer them professional recognition, career development and personal achievement.

The plan arose from the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services' *DHCS Reconciliation Action Plan 2009*. It builds on the directorate's work to address the disadvantaged circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families, and to reduce the socio-economic gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Canberrans.

The plan is a joint effort, developed by CSD staff through the Reconciliation Employment Action Plan Working Group, in consultation with the ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

The plan is consistent with the ACT Government's broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy, developed by the ACT Commissioner for Public Administration and launched by the Chief Minister on 12 April 2011. Both the plan and the strategy focus on inclusive workplaces, and attraction and retention of staff.

The plan's success will require the commitment of all our staff and our community partners, to improve the employment outcomes — and as a result — the socioeconomic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community.

Martin Hehir

Director-General

Community Services Directorate

Developmental context

The Community Services Directorate (CSD) is responsible for a wide range of human services in the ACT, which gives us a particular concern for the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our community. Given the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in ACT statutory services, an important way for the directorate to support our community is to grow our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

For the past few years, the CSD has been on its own journey of Reconciliation. It began in a formal sense on 13 February 2008, when the Hon. Kevin Rudd, MP, Prime Minister of Australia delivered a National Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly members of 'The Stolen Generation' in the Parliament of Australia.

During Reconciliation Week 2008, the Chief Executive of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) launched a *Statement of Commitment Towards Reconciliation*, which saw the Department establish a Reconciliation Committee and develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) over the next 12 months.

A key action item in the RAP, launched in Reconciliation Week 2009, was the need to develop an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Career Development Strategy*. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Working Group was formed to work on a strategy.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan* is based on the work of that group and the broader RAP Committee. The plan translates the intent of broader policy commitments into concrete actions for a Directorate context.

The plan complements the *DHCS Attraction and Retention Framework*, the *ACT Public Service Retention Framework* and the ACT Government's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy*. It also supports the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitment to advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the public sector and improving outcomes for the benefit of all Canberrans.

In November 2008, COAG signed a National Indigenous Reform Agreement, which established six targets for closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, one of which is to "halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade" (COAG Communiqué, November 2008).

Introduction

There is widespread support for government agencies to adopt employment strategies specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a means to achieving other important social outcomes.

COAG acknowledges that:

“being employed leads to improved wealth and asset creation for Indigenous families and communities, which in turn has a positive influence on health and the education of children. It also enhances self-esteem, increases opportunities for self development, influences interaction at the family and community levels and reduces social alienation” (COAG Communiqué, 29 November 2008).

A national government commitment to employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is contained in the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation*.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB), in its 2010 Estimates hearings, highlighted the critical role of employment in improving social outcomes:

“if, through employment, we get another ten people out there and they earn up to \$55,000 a year, the impact of that on the Indigenous family is astounding. Employment leads to a financial impact on the family, which is greater. It increases health and a whole range of different things — education and the whole box and dice” (*ATSIEB Estimates Report 2009–10* p.73).

CSD’s achievement of the plan’s targets and beyond into 2015 will more than double the positive impacts noted above by the Elected Body.

At the end of its deliberations, the ATSIEB recommended “that the ACT Government implements a public sector-wide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and development strategy”.

The ACT Government agreed to implement this recommendation and in 2011 the ACT Commissioner for Public Administration, through the Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate (CMCD), developed a whole-of-Government *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy*.

This CSD Action Plan responds to the issues raised by COAG and the ATSIEB, but to be successful, it will require a commitment right across the directorate. All business units have a responsibility for addressing the focus areas outlined in the Action Plan, with their resourcefulness and determination.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in CSD

There were 4282 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT in 2006 (Census), or 1.3 per cent of the Territory's population — half the national average of 2.6 per cent.

As one of the largest employers in the ACTPS, with over 1000 staff in a broad range of human services occupations, CSD is uniquely placed to contribute to improved social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans through increased employment levels.

The employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in CSD has remained constant in recent years. In June 2011, the number of employees self identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander was 37 (or 3.0 per cent).

This Action Plan seeks to raise the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in CSD between 2011–13 from 37 to 51 officers, or 38 per cent, with a further 10 officers by 2015, a total increase from 2011 of 64 per cent.

The plan aims to increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in CSD from the current 3.0 per cent to 4.2 per cent in 2013, and to 5.0 per cent in 2015.

					Target				
	June 2007	June 2008	June 2009	June 2010	June 2011	June 2012	June 2013	June 2014	June 2015
Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in CSD	16	31	33	30	37	44	51	56	61
Total number of employees in CSD	1062	1133	1158	1159	1226	1226	1226	1226	1226
Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in CSD	1.5%	2.7%	2.8%	2.6%	3.0%	3.6%	4.2%	4.6%	5.0%
Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in ACT Government*				176	200	233	283	341	407
Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in whole of ACT Government*				0.9%	1.0%	1.2%	1.4%	1.7%	2.0%

* Source: Commissioner for Public Administration 2011–15, *Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, ACT Public Service, 2011.

Aims

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2011–2013* aims to:

increase the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in CSD, across all occupational groups, levels, locations and employment arrangements

retain and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within CSD

create a workplace that values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Through leadership and the engendering of cultural respect, CSD will improve the recruitment, retention and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, enhancing the directorate's service delivery capabilities and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Key focus areas of the strategy

The strategy has three key focus areas with priority actions against each area:

- 1 workplace environment
- 2 attraction
- 3 retention.

Performance indicators

The following performance indicators will measure the effectiveness of the strategy:

an increase in the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in CSD to at least 51 officers by 2013

an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in CSD to at least 4.2 per cent by 2013, rising to 5.0 per cent by 2015

an increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed across all employment occupational groups, levels, locations and employment arrangements within CSD

a reduction in the attrition rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in CSD.

Principles and related frameworks

This Action Plan should be seen in the context of the ACT Government's broader efforts to 'Close the Gap' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Canberrans.

Other relevant frameworks and agreements include:

National Indigenous Reform Agreement

Indigenous Service Delivery Principles

National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Delivery Framework

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy

DHCS Service Delivery Platform

Community Services Directorate Reconciliation Action Plan.

1 Workplace environment

CSD supports welcoming and culturally inclusive workplaces for all employees, in line with the ACT Government's *Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People 2011–2015* and the *Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework (2010)*. In particular, CSD recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and promotes the importance of cultural identity, cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect. The respect shown by all CSD staff for the needs and expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will greatly enhance the directorate's reputation as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The initiatives in this focus area are designed to equip CSD business units to welcome and support all their staff members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, leading to higher retention rates.

Initiatives / actions	Responsibility	Progress
1.1 Identify positions that undertake significant work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, policy or program development relating to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people or programs.	Executive Directors	December 2011
1.2 Where possible, have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member on panels where the position requires significant work with or policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or where an applicant has self-identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.	Managers	As required
1.3 Encourage access to training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on Recruitment and staff selection processes.	Managers	As required
1.4 Facilitate attendance at cultural awareness training to new and existing CSD staff.	Managers	All new staff to complete induction program within 6 months of joining CSD
1.5 Ensure that cultural competency training is made available to all supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.	Executive Directors	April 2012 as required
1.6 Identify champions to drive the plan.	Executive Directors	Identified by August 2012

2 Attraction

In addition to attracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into entry level positions, it is also desirable to attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to middle and senior manager levels.

Business areas are encouraged to ensure their recruitment processes are culturally appropriate and effective. Word of mouth is a proven communication method of reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers.

Initiatives / actions	Responsibility	Progress
2.1 Employ a minimum of six trainees each year from the ACT Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship Program and other traineeship programs.	OMATSIA; Executive Directors	Assess every 6 months
2.2 Advertise in culturally appropriate media, positions that involve significant work with or policy or program development relating to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Managers	Ongoing
2.3 Promote CSD as a potential employer to graduating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in ACT and other tertiary institutions. Identify and establish work experience opportunities for secondary students.	Graduate Program Coordinator; OMATSIA	June 2012
2.4 Promote CSD as an employer of choice at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events and during Government campaigns such as 'Live in Canberra'.	RAP Committee	NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, International Indigenous Day
2.5 Collect and monitor data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.	Human Resources	June 2012
2.6 Collaborate with other agencies to increase employment pathways to CSD.	Deputy Director-General	June 2012
2.7 Identify relevant positions in CSD as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions	Executive Directors	June 2012

3 Retention

Good retention stems from strong career paths, professional recognition, opportunities for career development and a sense of personal achievement. Participating in learning and development programs contributes to an employee's sense of being valued by the agency.

Initiatives / actions	Responsibility	Progress
3.1 Implement a buddy scheme partnering new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees with experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ACTPS employees.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network	June 2012
3.2 Explore career development options specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Executive Directors	June 2012
3.3 Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to gain or upgrade their qualifications, using the Performance Management Framework.	Managers; Study Bank	June 2012
3.4 Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in learning and development opportunities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network meetings.	Managers	Ongoing
3.5 Promote leadership training opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to assist their promotion to more senior CSD positions.	Managers	Ongoing
3.6 Complete performance management and development plans for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officers.	Managers	June 2012

Implementation monitoring and reporting

The implementation of this strategy will be monitored quarterly by the CSD Board of Management with assistance from Human Resources and Workplace Relations, Policy and Organisational Services.

As a community of practice, CSD regards the Action Plan as a basis for committing to employment outcomes but expects it to reflect the lessons we will learn over time.

CSD will collect and monitor data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment trends.

Reporting on this Action Plan will be included in the CSD Annual Report and annual RAP Report. These reports will be available publicly and may be reviewed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed within CSD, the ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

CSD will also report on this Action Plan to the Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate as part of the reporting arrangements for the whole-of-Government *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy*.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the many people who contributed to developing this Action Plan.

CSD Reconciliation Action Plan Committee

7 July 2011