



ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT IN PRACTICE

FOR THE NSW PUBLIC SECTOR



**NSW Premier's Department and
Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment**

2000



NSW Government Publication

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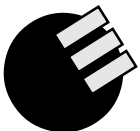
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Aboriginal Employment in Practice is informed by and contributes to important initiatives including NSW Social Justice Directions Statement; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; and the Reconciliation movement.

foreword

My Government is committed to empowering Aboriginal people and communities to achieve self-sufficiency. Economic independence is a key to self-sufficiency.

The Government and the NSW Public Sector are working with Aboriginal people in strengthening their communities through better and accessible services, greater participation in Public Sector planning and decision making and establishing secure employment and business opportunities.

Aboriginal Employment in Practice provides a new focus for Chief Executives in employing Aboriginal people. It strives to improve employment outcomes in differing ways, from contracting projects to local Aboriginal organisations to improving recruitment, developing Aboriginal staff and building partnerships with Aboriginal people within both the private and community spheres. The document also provides successful and innovative practices used by agencies to improve their outcomes.

I urge Chief Executives and managers to take a more innovative approach towards the employment of Aboriginal people. I expect Chief Executives to achieve positive tangible results in the short term. As well I expect a long term plan of action to achieve sustainable improvements in services and employment opportunities.

I commend *Aboriginal Employment in Practice* as my Government's plan for Aboriginal employment across the NSW Public Sector.

Bob Carr
Premier

introduction

Aboriginal Employment in Practice outlines a new approach and signals a revitalised commitment to the employment of Aboriginal people across the NSW Public Sector. It affirms the Government's commitment to social justice for Aboriginal People in NSW and equality of access to services and equality of economic opportunity.

The key principles underpinning this new approach are:


- recognition of the contribution that Aboriginal people's diverse knowledge, skills and experiences bring to achieving quality Public Sector services and products
- respect for and valuing the cultural diversity of Aboriginal people in NSW, and
- innovation to ensure best outcomes for the community and the Public Sector.

Aboriginal Employment in Practice was developed by a working party of Aboriginal employment specialists from a broad range of organisations. At all stages, the working party consulted with Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinators and human resource specialists, to ensure a practical approach.

As a result of this consultation process, the following three key result areas were identified to improve Aboriginal employment outcomes in NSW:

- 1 **Better and accessible services:** Deliver quality mainstream and Aboriginal-specific services through improved use of Aboriginal people's diverse skills, knowledge and experience.
- 2 **Careers:** Provide employment opportunities and career paths to improve long-term employment outcomes of Aboriginal people.
- 3 **Partnerships:** Establish partnerships to maximise employment of Aboriginal people in NSW.

This document outlines the three key result areas and provides strategies to guide agency action. Case studies are included to show how agencies can become smarter and more flexible in improving Aboriginal employment outcomes. Lastly, the document lists contact details of



organisations that can help agencies improve their Aboriginal employment outcomes. For brevity, the term 'Aboriginal people' has been used in this document and should be read to include Torres Strait Islanders.

Aboriginal Employment in Practice supports the NSW Government's commitment to Aboriginal people and its goal of making NSW a better place to live, work and do business for all members of the community.



7 quality service

K EY RESULT AREA

Deliver better and more accessible services through improved use of Aboriginal people's diverse skills, knowledge and experience

The employment of Aboriginal people has been crucial in working towards the Public Sector's goal of designing and delivering better services.

By using the knowledge, skills and experiences of Aboriginal people, the Public Sector is better able to meet the service needs of Aboriginal people in NSW. The diverse skills of Aboriginal people are also necessary to improve mainstream services.

Whilst employment of Aboriginal people has primarily been into Aboriginal-specific service areas, Aboriginal people require access to all Public Sector services. Agencies need to ensure that Aboriginal staff are involved in the design and delivery of mainstream services.

This can result in significantly improved, client-centred services and programs for the whole community.



STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Chief Executives can deliver better services and programs to the NSW community by:

- 1 **Including Aboriginal people and Aboriginal staff** in agency processes to identify, monitor, evaluate and review services and programs delivered by your agency.
- 2 **Appointing Aboriginal people** to agency boards and committees.
- 3 **Identifying Aboriginal people's service delivery needs and expectations** and **including** these in planning, design, development and delivery of mainstream services and programs.
- 4 **Reviewing Aboriginal-specific services** to identify current service gaps, emerging issues and critical success factors. Apply this information in assessing agency performance in Aboriginal-specific and mainstream service delivery.
- 5 **Contracting out** services to local Aboriginal communities or employers to improve service outcomes and local Aboriginal employment levels.
- 6 **Establishing positions to support Aboriginal-specific services.** The job descriptions of these positions should clearly state the skills, abilities and knowledge required to ensure quality service outcomes.
- 7 **Supporting and assisting Aboriginal community organisations** to be competitive in tendering for contracted services.

Department of Land & Water Conservation



Aboriginal people's unique relationship with the land and their expertise in various aspects of land management have provided the Department with a relatively untapped resource.

Using this resource through its Aboriginal employment strategy, the Department has achieved significant outcomes.

The Strategy aims to maximise Aboriginal participation in managing NSW land and water. The Department appoints Aboriginal people to local land and water management advisory groups and is

developing a program to ensure broader representation of Aboriginal communities on such forums.

For example, the Streamwatch Co-ordinator in Bourke, a position identified under the Strategy, has actively involved Aboriginal people and communities in water management throughout the area. The Co-ordinator has established innovative mainstream programs such as 'Outback Streamwatch' and water bug testing, and provides education programs on water management issues in the Far West of NSW.

Department of Juvenile Justice



In 1999, representation of Aboriginal people had increased to 11% of the Department's workforce in both mainstream and Aboriginal-specific positions.

Aboriginal staff take part in the design and delivery of the Department's culturally-sensitive services and programs. These are generally targeted at the Department's Aboriginal client base under court-ordered community supervision and within Juvenile Justice Centres.

The increase in Aboriginal staff was achieved through specific methods, including targeting some positions to be filled by Aboriginal people and regular advertising of all available positions in the *Koori Mail* newspaper.

Aboriginal communities have also taken an active role in establishing Department programs such as the Youth Conferencing Scheme. This mainstream scheme is being monitored by the Ministers for Juvenile Justice and Police to ensure positive outcomes for young Aboriginal people.

Department of Fair Trading



The Department undertook a research project to:

- identify Aboriginal consumers' experiences
- identify physical and cultural barriers to Aboriginal people accessing their rights as consumers and traders, and
- raise Aboriginal people's awareness of their consumer rights.

The project led to the establishment of a Senior Aboriginal Policy Officer position. The Officer is responsible for strategies to

integrate Aboriginal people's consumer needs and expectations into the Department's policies and practices.

An Aboriginal employment plan also resulted from the research project. This has entailed the employment of 14 Aboriginal customer service staff and two Aboriginal marketing staff in regional and metropolitan locations.

These strategies aim to ensure that services are delivered to Aboriginal people in a culturally sensitive and effective manner.

State Library of NSW



The State Library's rich Australiana collections are an important source of historical records of Aboriginal people. To improve Aboriginal people's access to the collections and general service delivery to Aboriginal people, the Library identified a need for Aboriginal library staff.

At the time, there were fewer than 10 qualified Aboriginal librarians in Australia. The Library recruited two Aboriginal Library Officers under the Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy for the NSW Public Sector – both are now fully qualified professionals.

The Library Officers design and provide a wide range of information, collection, conservation and communication services including:

- delivering reference and research services to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients
- researching and presenting the Library's resource collections about Aboriginal people and cultures
- helping Aboriginal people with family history research, and
- providing information on land claim applications.

2 careers

K EY RESULT AREA

Provide employment opportunities and career paths to improve long-term employment outcomes for Aboriginal people

Aboriginal people, as with the rest of our community, live in rapidly changing times. Jobs are not the same as they were in the 1980s or before. Workers are increasingly encouraged to be multi-skilled and see themselves as service providers rather than just 'workers'.

The Public Sector can take a strong role in:

- assisting Aboriginal people to create their own long-term employment outcomes
- using vocational education, training and other opportunities to further develop the skills, knowledge and experience of Aboriginal people.

Some facts about Aboriginal employment in the NSW Public Sector:

- Aboriginal people are twice as likely as other NSW Public Sector employees to have temporary rather than permanent jobs
- Aboriginal people make up 1.6% of the NSW Public Sector workforce, and the Government target is 2%
- 60% of Aboriginal employees earn less than \$34,270, compared to only 36% of total staff earning below this level
- Aboriginal people are particularly highly represented in service and amenities occupations, and
- Aboriginal people are poorly represented in the Senior Executive Service, in specialist professional and in higher level clerical and administrative positions.

Some reasons for this are:

- positions for Aboriginal people are often created using external funding sources, with no allocation of agency funds for ongoing employment
- skilled Aboriginal people often don't apply for positions because narrow recruitment channels mean they don't know the jobs are available
- positions targeted to Aboriginal people are often designed without considering career progression options.

S TRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Chief Executives can provide on-going employment opportunities and career paths for Aboriginal people by:

- 1 **Clearly linking** Aboriginal employment and training initiatives to business goals and priorities in service delivery.
- 2 **Developing partnerships** with education, job skills and training providers who provide direct pathways to employment.
- 3 **Establishing traineeships, cadetships and/or apprenticeships** in professions/occupations where there is a limited market of suitably qualified Aboriginal people.
- 4 **Providing work experience** to help Aboriginal students and young people identify job prospects.
- 5 **Taking part in Commonwealth-funded work experience programs** that help identify job prospects, particularly for Aboriginal women, long-term unemployed Aboriginal people, those with disabilities and those either in or post-custody.
- 6 **Implementing career planning** programs for Aboriginal staff.
- 7 **Establishing networks** of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to support and mentor Aboriginal staff within your agency.
- 8 **Improving the skills** of all staff in working with or providing services to Aboriginal people.
- 9 **Establishing scholarship programs** to help Aboriginal staff undertake education and training.
- 10 **Recognising the long-term value** to business of trained and experienced Aboriginal professionals, by:
 - funding Aboriginal employment and training **within your agency's own budget**, and
 - ensuring **ongoing employment** of Aboriginal staff, reflecting the continuing need for their skills and experiences.

State Transit Authority



The Authority is committed to increasing the representation of Aboriginal people with professional skills and qualifications. To achieve their commitment, the Authority initiated an opportunity to employ Aboriginal people who had completed a VET course in an area relevant to their business.

The Guriwal Aboriginal Corporation, La Perouse, under a Community Development Employment Program, facilitated conduct of the Master Class V course. This 12-month classroom and experiential course equips participants with the competencies required for a Master Class V skipper licence.

In recognition of the commitment shown by course participants, the Authority negotiated employment for participants who had not already secured employment.

The course was a significant success as the La Perouse community through their own innovation achieved real jobs for community members. It is also a success for Aboriginal people generally. Through increased presence of Aboriginal people in service delivery areas, negative stereotypes can be gradually eroded. The project is also a significant success for the Authority as increased employment of Aboriginal people encourages access by Aboriginal people.

Premier's Department



In 1996 the Premier's Department developed the Aboriginal Employment Equity Plan, based on the premise that Aboriginal employment makes for good business practice.

The Plan is an agreement between 12 agencies to employ and train Aboriginal people. It also covers career planning, learning and development.

The Premier's Department undertook various initiatives including:

- staff participation in Aboriginal cultural awareness training
- recruitment of Aboriginal staff
- participation of Aboriginal staff on Departmental committees and working parties
- secondment opportunities, and
- work placements for participants in the Management Development Program for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment



The Office provides quality management training to Aboriginal people through the Management Development Program for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in the NSW Public Sector.

In 1997-8 an independent review of the Program found that 80% of program graduates had since been promoted.

Many of the participants believed their promotions were a direct result of the skills they gained in the program.

Other key findings included that:

- 100% of participants graduated from the Program
- 46% of graduates were Aboriginal women and 42% came from country areas, and
- the Program added value to Aboriginal communities through graduates' participation on various community organisations, boards, committees and activities.

Department of Education and Training



The Department has a strong commitment to its Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Program. Strategies include:

- priority employment and transfer for Aboriginal teachers
- mentor and career pathway programs for Aboriginal staff
- networking and training conferences for Aboriginal Education Assistants, Community Liaison Officers, Aboriginal Development Managers and Aboriginal teachers and staff in TAFE
- the Aboriginal School Leadership program for Aboriginal teachers
- special leave for Aboriginal school staff to attend university for teacher training
- sponsorship of Aboriginal school staff to train as secondary teachers
- cadetships for Aboriginal teachers in Special Education or School Counsellor Training Programs
- a structured training program for qualified Aboriginal tradespeople to become teachers in TAFE NSW, and
- participation of Aboriginal staff and community organisations in agency policy, strategic planning, development, implementation and review.

3 partnerships

K EY RESULT AREA

Establish partnerships to maximise employment outcomes of Aboriginal people in NSW

Partnerships are proving a successful strategy in improving Public Sector and community outcomes. Rural community development, regional service delivery and policy development have demonstrated the benefits in taking a whole-of-community response.

Aboriginal employment initiatives are succeeding where agencies work together with Aboriginal communities.

Therefore, **agencies need to work with Aboriginal community organisations, other agencies and other sectors to plan, design, deliver and evaluate Aboriginal employment initiatives.** This approach is especially needed in regional areas to achieve long-term, locally-based employment for Aboriginal people.

Partnerships are successful in Aboriginal employment because they:

- provide a framework for a whole-of-community response to employment outcomes at a local level
- increase ownership and commitment from everyone involved
- ensure the strategies connect with other initiatives, including NSW Government policy, community initiatives and agency directions
- draw on the skills, knowledge and experience of others, particularly Aboriginal people from other organisations

- increase agency staff's understanding and expertise
- will align service outcomes with Aboriginal ways of doing business, with the result that Aboriginal stakeholders are more likely to endorse the service
- improve relationships between agencies and the community, and
- achieve the reconciliation principle of involving Aboriginal people in directing their own futures.

S TRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Chief Executives can maximise employment outcomes for Aboriginal people, particularly those in regional areas by:

- 1 Consulting with local Aboriginal organisations** to plan Aboriginal partnership/employment projects. Methods can include contracting work out to Aboriginal organisations or creating traineeships and interchange programs to allow employment in public, community or private sectors.
- 2 Including Aboriginal people** in developing, implementing and evaluating partnership/employment projects.
- 3 Involving organisations and central agencies** that facilitate Aboriginal employment and training across agencies and sectors.
- 4 Developing locally-based project maps and programs** to involve all parts of the local community in securing long-term employment for Aboriginal people.
- 5 Establishing partnerships with appropriate industry groups** to increase employment and training in the community and private sectors.
- 6 Publicising successful regional, state and national partnerships.**
- 7 Sponsoring skills transfer** between the agency and mainstream and Aboriginal community-managed organisations.
- 8 Sponsoring** activities and showcase initiatives that build mainstream community pride in reconciliation.

Department of Land & Water Conservation



The Department established a partnership with the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation to carry out conservation and construction work on the culturally important Windang Island.

This was the first major contract work undertaken by the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation's community development employment program.

As a direct result of its successful completion and the skills developed during the process, the Corporation won a contract to undertake similar work with BHP.

A team of Aboriginal trainees carried out construction for Windang Heritage Park Stages 2 and 3 under the supervision of Wollongong City Council. The Federal Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business funded these trainees under the Training for Aboriginals Program, part of the Certificate II course in Australian Land Conservation and Restoration.

As a result, two Aboriginal Field Officers doing the Horticultural and Land Management Course are now responsible for general maintenance at Windang Heritage Park and Windang Island.

NSW Health



The NSW Minister for Health, the Aboriginal Health Resource and Medical Co-operative Ltd and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission are working together to 'achieve health outcomes which are equitable with those of the broader community'.

This Health Partnership is built on a shared understanding of the co-operative and sustained effort required by all partners to achieve their aims.

The Partnership guides policy, planning and delivery of services, in order to:

- improve access to both mainstream and Aboriginal-specific health and allied programs
- increase allocated resources, reflecting Aboriginal people's higher level of need, and
- ensure full participation by Aboriginal people in decisions and determination of priorities.

Department of Sport and Recreation



To carry out an Aboriginal Student Career Tour, the Department established a partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Network, the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, the Premier's Department and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group.

The Career Tour was an innovative project that case-managed year 10 and 11 Aboriginal students from the Mt Druitt and Penrith districts into careers. The 12-month project involved face-to-face training and work experience to complement school studies.

Students identified their broad life and career goals, analysed their current positions and developed action plans to achieve personal goals. They were supported in taking the first steps of their plans.

The Commonwealth Departments of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business and Education, Training and Youth Affairs funded the project. A further 50 organisations participated, representing State, Federal and local government, the community and the private sector.

Ministry for the Arts



The Ministry aims to improve Aboriginal employment in the NSW arts industry. It is looking beyond individual agencies' own employment practices for an industry-wide view of Aboriginal employment.

For example, the Ministry has established an Aboriginal Cultural Officer position based at the NSW Community Arts Association in Western Sydney. The Cultural Officer helps Aboriginal artists, art workers and communities to plan projects and raise awareness of the Ministry's cultural grants programs. This has been very effective in increasing employment for Aboriginal artists.

The Ministry also helps community organisations to employ Aboriginal Cultural Officers, significantly strengthening the Aboriginal arts infrastructure throughout NSW.

The Ministry has also established the Indigenous Arts Reference Group to advise the Premier on Aboriginal issues.

The Reference Group's long-term objective is to increase Aboriginal artists' access to programs, in order to aid the long-term employment of Aboriginal arts workers.

Sydney Water



Sydney Water has employed Aboriginal people for many years, both through its Aboriginal employment plan and in mainstream areas. The Aboriginal employment plan has been central in increasing Aboriginal people's representation in professional positions.

To integrate Aboriginal people's needs and aspirations into water catchment management, Sydney Water established a partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service for professional training of Aboriginal Catchment Protection Officers. These staff now work directly with Aboriginal Land Councils to address their expectations.

Another move was the contracting of work to the Blacktown Aboriginal Corporation, an Aboriginal Community Development Employment Program. Recognising the significant unemployment rate among Aboriginal people in Western Sydney, Sydney Water contracted the Blacktown Aboriginal Corporation to help identify potential employment opportunities. Sydney Water then contracted out the identified works at Warragamba Dam to the local CDEP.

Outcomes included awarding landscaping certificates to Aboriginal employees, and a significantly improved relationship between Sydney Water and local Aboriginal communities.

Department of Corrective Services



A partnership between the Department and the Western Region Business Innovation Centre Inc has been established to offer small business training to pre-release Aboriginal inmates.

On their release from prison, graduates of the training program will be mentored, guided and supported by the Western

Region Business Innovation Centre Inc and affiliated organisations to further develop and establish their business plans and ideas.

This project is also supported by the Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business and Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council.

achieving & reporting

Aboriginal Employment in Practice does not require new reporting requirements. Progress will be monitored through equal employment opportunity (EEO) annual reports to the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment and service outcomes data reported to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

C O - O R D I N A T I O N

The Premier's Department will convene a committee, called the NSW Aboriginal Employment Working Group, to monitor Public Sector performance. Members of the Working Group will be three Aboriginal employment specialists (as nominated by the Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinators Forum) and representatives of:

- Premier's Department
- Department of Education and Training
- Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and
- The Cabinet Office.

The Working Group will:

- investigate all possible opportunities for employing and training Aboriginal people
- provide strategic and practical advice and assistance to agencies
- co-ordinate Public Sector approaches to Aboriginal employment, and
- provide information on successful initiatives.

R E P O R T I N G

The Working Group will analyse information provided in agencies' EEO annual reports to the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment and service outcomes data to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. This information will form an annual report to the Premier, outlining agencies' performance in meeting the key result areas outlined in *Aboriginal Employment in Practice*.

contacts

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (State Office)

Level 20, Westpac Plaza, 60 Margaret Street
Sydney NSW 2000
ph (02) 9256 6100, fax (02) 9252 0379
web site <http://www.atsic.gov.au>

Provides information and resources on community consultation, employment, cultural awareness and issues facing Aboriginal people generally.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Network (ATSIEN)

PO Box 2315 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

A group of about 50 Aboriginal employment specialists working in the public, private, community and local government sectors. The Network works in partnership with employers and education/training providers to facilitate employment for Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

37 Cavendish Street Stanmore NSW 2048
ph (02) 9550 5666, fax (02) 9550 3361
email aecg@ozemail.com.au

Provides opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate in decision-making on education and training and promotes recognition of Aboriginal learning and teaching styles. It seeks the inclusion of Aboriginal studies and perspectives in all levels of curriculum.

Department of Aboriginal Affairs

83 Clarence Street, Sydney, NSW 2000
ph (02) 9290 8700, fax (02) 9262 2690
web site <http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au>

Provides information and assistance to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people with particular focus on cultural heritage, community consultation and infrastructure program management.

Department of Education and Training

1 Oxford Street Darlinghurst NSW 2010
ph (02) 9266 8085, fax (02) 9266 8505
web site <http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/eas/>

The Adult and Community Education and Education Access areas of the Department fund and administer the:

- Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Program
- Local Government Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Program
- New Careers for Aboriginal People Program
- Aboriginal Enterprise Development Officer Program
- Aboriginal Registered Training Providers Program, and
- Koori Youth Program.



Department for Women

Level 11, 100 William Street
Woolloomooloo NSW 2011
ph (02) 9334 1160, fax (02) 9334 1023
email dfw@women.nsw.gov.au
web site <http://www.women.nsw.gov.au>

Consults with Aboriginal women throughout NSW to identify their needs, aspirations and expectations.

NSW Aboriginal Land Council

33 Argyle Street, Parramatta NSW 2150
ph (02) 9689 4444, fax (02) 9687 1234
web site <http://www.alc.org.au>

Provides a contact for all regional and local Aboriginal Lands Councils throughout NSW. The Council provides information on all issues affecting Aboriginal people with particular expertise in land rights, community consultation and community management.

Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment

Level 17, Bligh House, 4–6 Bligh Street Sydney NSW 2000
ph (02) 9248 3555, fax (02) 9248 3500
TTY (02) 9248 3544
email eeo@eeo.nsw.gov.au
web site <http://www.eeo.nsw.gov.au>

Advises and assists planning, development, implementation and evaluation of Aboriginal employment and training initiatives throughout the NSW Public Sector.

Premier's Department

Public Sector Management Office, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney
ph (02) 9228 5952, fax (02) 9228 3121

Provides advice and assistance to agencies on all aspects of Aboriginal employment and training initiatives, in particular, partnership initiatives. The Public Sector Management Office also maintains a database of Aboriginal people seeking Public Sector employment. The database is particularly effective in facilitating recruitment of Aboriginal people under Clause 10 of the Public Sector Management Act.

