A GUIDE TO SUPPORT
ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
for the
COMMUNITY SERVICES, HEALTH and EDUCATION INDUSTRIES
of
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
DISCLAIMERS

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Ian Andrews
Executive Director
Community Services, Health and Education

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have diverse languages, cultures, and communities, and live in urban, rural, and remote settings. Many of these groups seek to maintain their particular cultural identity and preferred names as distinct from others.

For the purposes of this Resource Guide, and in recognition of this diversity, we have used the term “Aboriginal” as a way of acknowledging all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups particularly as the intended use of this Resource Guide is for the Community Services, Health and Education industries of Western Australia.

Where other terms have been used, the authenticity of their words has been retained. We are however aware that this terminology has limitations.
Workforce development is a process that aims at building, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to ensure capacity and capability for continued success.

In short, it is about having the right staff in place and ready to perform at the right time.

In most Community Services, Health and Education agencies there are workers from diverse backgrounds working together. Responding appropriately to this cultural diversity whether within the agency, workforce or with the agency's clients is the key to establishing effective workforce practices.

This Guide to support Aboriginal workforce development through web based resources was developed by the Training Council in response to industry concerns about low retention rates, barriers to attracting the right staff, ensuring that staff are competent in their workplace, with the necessary foundation skills and access to professional development opportunities.

The Guide provides a range of sustainable workforce development resources that help address these problems. The resources have been sourced from a collection of "Guiding Documents" and examples of best practice from a variety of government and non-government organisations, at the national and state and territory levels.
The content of this resource builds on previous work conducted by a large number of contributors in the fields of workforce development in these industries and are referred to as the "Guiding Documents".

Western Australia

Commonwealth, States & Territories
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The Community Services, Health and Education Training Council is a community based not for profit organisation managed by representatives from the Community Services, Health and Education industries. The Training Council is committed to excellence in training to achieve a skilled, recognised and valued workforce for our industries.

The Training Council represents these three industries when providing advice to the government about workforce development needs and priorities and to promote training opportunities and initiatives to the government and industry.

The Training Council has provided leadership, advice, assistance, training accreditation and registration services in Western Australia since 1992. The Training Council has a strong record in research and workforce development projects and is strategically positioned to provide up to date, consistent and informed workforce planning and development advice at local, state and national levels.
The "Training Together – Working Together" Aboriginal workforce development strategy is aimed at assisting Aboriginal people to participate effectively in the workforce and to ensure that the development and application of their skill is within a workplace context. This strategy has been developed through the State Training Board (Western Australia) for industry, community and government.

The "Training Together – Working Together" committee recognised that an important element of its work was to identify examples of employers undertaking Aboriginal workforce development that lead to sustainable employment and/or labour market participation.

A set of case studies from companies currently committed to employing Aboriginal people was gathered from across industry sectors. Sectors include tourism, hospitality, media, communications, logistics, contracting support services, civil construction, engineering and mining. Key themes were distilled from these case studies resulting in the identification of eight critical success factors. Existing literature and research was also considered in developing the model presented as in the following.
Element 1: Commitment – senior management support
The most senior person in an organisation must visibly support and champion an Aboriginal employment strategy.

Burswood Entertainment Complex
‘It is absolutely crucial to have the support of the CEO and executive team in order to implement the Aboriginal employment program at Burswood. The Aboriginal program coordinator meets with the CEO every six weeks to brief him on a number of aspects of the program.’

Christine Ross, Aboriginal Program Coordinator
Compass Group Australia
‘A key factor in the sustained growth and success of our Indigenous Engagement Strategy is the management commitment and leadership shown by our Managing Director and his executive team. Executive support was particularly important when we launched our Indigenous Engagement Strategy in 1998 as we relied heavily on this support to quickly gain momentum.’

Bert Giancristofaro, General Manager – Human Resources
Element 2: Identified partnerships/relationships to develop a ‘talent pipeline’
Organisations must actively seek and build strong partnerships and relationships with local organisations in which Aboriginal people are involved. This could be any of the following: Aboriginal community organisations; Job Services Australia; Aboriginal service providers; sports clubs; charitable organisations; schools; and TAFE. Without this organisations find it difficult to engage with Aboriginal people who are potential employees.

Australia Post
‘Links are built at a local level with relevant organisations. In the Perth area Australia Post has an informal arrangement with Swan District Football Club to take on young people who are training with them. They are initially given a two week trial and if they like it they are offered a part time job. This works well for both organisations because Australia Post has a good number of part time positions available and for the boys and the football club because it means they still have time to train’.

Lennett Sandy, Aboriginal Employment Coordinator

GHL Contracting
GHL provides work experience for students from local schools in the Pilbara region. GHL, with Rio Tinto, has previously conducted a traineeship program for Indigenous people with them obtaining gainful employment as an end result.’

Sigrid English, Human Resources Manager

Element 3: Merit based employment and career development
Organisations must be committed to providing ‘real jobs’ for Aboriginal employees and be clear that Aboriginal applicants will be successful in gaining employment on merit. Organisations may need to review their recruitment processes to ensure they are designed to allow Aboriginal people to prove themselves. Career development programs may range from on the job training and professional development to structured academic qualifications.

Carey Mining
‘Be genuine, don’t just employ an Indigenous person for “statistics”, you must ensure they are suitable for the position. Affirmative action needs to be balanced with merits of the job. Be prepared to take a risk sometimes, but don’t be deterred if that risk doesn’t always pay off.”

Daniel Tucker, Managing Director

Element 4: Mentoring/role models
Many organisations, either formally or informally, provide some sort of skills mentoring through career and skills development. It is also crucial that a form of cultural/life-skills mentoring is provided for new Aboriginal employees. The extent and length of this support will be dependent on the individual situation. The exact nature of the mentoring relationship will also vary, but mentors should be Aboriginal people and consideration must be given to the cultural relationship between the chosen mentor and the person they will be supporting.

BIS Industries Limited
‘Each Indigenous employee is supported by the Indigenous Development Team, also through formal and informal mentoring support, to empower Indigenous employees in the workplace, with their families and their community. Therefore, employment and training in BIS is addressing Indigenous unemployment in a variety of roles aligned to the industrial services domain using local labour resources which makes good business sense for a stable local workforce.’

Jill Abdullah, Indigenous Development Manager Western and South Australia
Element 5: Cross-cultural awareness training
This must be applicable to all employees with a focus on promoting two-way understanding of different cultures, which promotes a positive culture within the organisation. Where possible and reasonable, employers should try to accommodate Aboriginal cultural obligations. Expectations and procedures must be clearly agreed by the employer and employee when employment commences.

Burswood Entertainment Complex
The Cultural Awareness Program is vitally important for ensuring all staff employed at Burswood have an understanding of Aboriginal people and the culture. We cover historical as well as contemporary issues and working alongside Aboriginal employees and the positive aspects of employing Aboriginal people. Line Managers need to be aware of the challenges that are faced daily by Aboriginal people that they sometimes have no control over. Our Aboriginal employees are constantly reminded of the need for a strong work ethic and to demonstrate punctuality, attendance and participation in their respective workplaces.’

Christine Ross, Aboriginal Program Coordinator

Goolarri Media Enterprises
‘All non-Indigenous employees receive cross-cultural training when they start at Goolarri Media and they are also matched with senior Indigenous mentors from within the organisation. This relationship is about teaching the non-Indigenous staff members about Indigenous culture and ways, so that they are aware of, and appreciative of, the situation Indigenous people are coming from.’

Jodie Bell, Chief Executive Officer

Element 6: State/regional/area champions (if appropriate)
In large or multi-site organisations a champion should be appointed in each State/region/area with specific key performance indicators, to drive the Aboriginal employment process across different parts of the business. In small to medium enterprises, Government should play a role in driving Aboriginal employment strategies and promoting best practice.

ACCOR
‘...we have been able to secure a large amount of support from our Accor network. In order for us to maintain this support and ensure that the initiative is ‘front of mind’, we have identified five key State champions who are responsible for driving our commitment and supporting the region with various aspects’.
Element 7: Work readiness support
Aboriginal employees will be provided with the opportunities to develop the skills that they require to engage in the workforce. This will depend on the situation but may include additional tailored support to provide appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy, support to prepare resumes and to obtain birth certificates, police clearance and driver’s licences.

Rio Tinto (Argyle Diamond Mine)
‘In partnership with community stakeholders, the Argyle Diamonds’ Work Readiness team has implemented workplace preparatory training programs that bridge this [skills] gap. An innovative approach teaming vocational education, core curriculum subjects and close mentoring has seen an increase in youth retention at school and greater employment options.’

Kevin McLeish, Chief Operating Officer

Element 8: Realistic target setting and evaluation
Organisations must set a realistic target for Aboriginal employment, which is tied to the other elements in this model, which can be increased over time. Organisations should not expect a 100% success rate in retaining Aboriginal staff. Aboriginal employment strategies and models should be evaluated regularly to allow organisations to tailor and improve their processes to suit the individual organisation’s situation.

Sinclair Knight Merz
‘Due to the following two key factors, SKM’s ability to offer employment to Indigenous Australians is very limited; over 90% of SKM staff hold university degrees as we are a professional services organisation across all technical fields. Employment opportunities primarily require suitable tertiary qualifications and very low numbers of Indigenous secondary students achieve Year 12 completion to meet university entrance requirements. As a consequence, SKM’s longstanding commitment, as recently encapsulated in SKM’s Reconciliation Action Plan, is to take the two following key actions:

1. Work closely with Beacon Foundation to increase Indigenous school retention to Year 12.

2. Provide Indigenous students in tertiary education support through the company’s National Indigenous Cadetship Program. To date 34 cadets have accessed this facility across our Australian offices.’

Bill Lawson, Manager – Indigenous Strategy
(WA) Office of Equal Employment Opportunity

*Strategies at Work*—contains articles that outline programs and strategies that have been developed by the Western Australian public sector agencies to enhance employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

(NT) Aboriginal Health and Community Services

*Workforce Planning and Development Project* - The purpose of the project is to develop a workforce planning and development strategy for Aboriginal workers in the health and community services sectors in the Northern Territory.

(SA) Early Childhood Workforce Development Project

The South Australian Health and Community Services Skills Board has been funded to conduct a 12 month workforce development project for the early childhood sector in light of the pending implementation of the new national standards for early childhood education.

(Qld) - The Health and Community Services Workforce Council’s *Integrated Workforce Development Strategy (IWDS)* provides a range of workforce development activities that are designed to support more than one thousand Queensland Department of Communities funded agencies (inc. staff, volunteers and management committees) to attract, develop and retain a skilled workforce capable of providing high quality services to meet client needs.

Resources

(Best Practice)
A Differential Diagnostic Model for Career Development was presented in the paper Working Indigenous Australians which also contained a number of key findings in how best practice needs to be viewed and approached.

The model presented has many similarities to that presented in the Training Together – working together strategy, though it also acknowledges the barriers, this is shown below:
Aboriginal people have often been overlooked as potential employees. Now an increasing number of organisations are recognising that a commitment to employing Aboriginal people makes good business sense.

The growth in the number of young working age Aboriginal people has produced an untapped and valuable employment source.

RECRUITMENT

Good recruitment practices are an integral part of successful workforce development. This section on recruitment provides information and examples of selection processes, orientation, job descriptions and performance management practices which steer and monitor these.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruiter’s Role</th>
<th>Recruitment Tasks</th>
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</table>
| Developing a job description and key selection criteria | review national competency standards relating to service type/job. Choose the relevant competencies to include in the job description.  
- review relevant industrial awards and legislation.  
- write job description and key selection criteria incorporating the relevant elements, performance criteria and range of variables from the identified competencies | |
### Recruiter’s Role

Develop an employment/marketing advertising strategy

### Recruitment Tasks

- Identify key elements from the relevant competencies and develop into an [employment advertisement](#).
- Provide [Applicant Information Package](#).
- Information of the location/area they will be working in.
- Advice on [Working with Children Check](#) (if required).
- Identify potential mediums for advertising [Application form](#).

### Additional Information

Methods of advertising a vacancy include:

- Regional and national press – The traditional way of recruiting staff. The circulation of the paper and the size of the ad will affect the cost. For example, there are a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander publications such as the [Koori Mail](#) and the [National Indigenous Times](#).
- Local radio – If you are short on time.
- Networks - Announce the availability of the position at networks including inter-organisation meetings.
- Employment and recruitment agencies.
- Career centres – Placing your job advertisements in university, school and higher education career centres.
- Online – As the Internet is being used more, advertising online has for many job seekers become their first point of searching for a position.

There are many different kinds of recruitment websites and these vary according to charges, regions and readership. The CSH&E TC website has a listing of positions vacant ([www.CSHEITC.org.au](http://www.CSHEITC.org.au)).

- Professional and Specialist publications – Check relevant publications and journals which carry advertising for positions.
<table>
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<th>Recruiter’s Role</th>
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<th>Additional Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess written applications for consideration</td>
<td>Match applicant’s experience and qualifications against the elements, performance criteria and range of variables which underpin the job description and key selection criteria</td>
<td>The assessment and interview panel should contain both male and female members. Members should preferably represent a variety of backgrounds. The inclusion of Aboriginal panelists is recommended especially when the position or background of likely applicants requires an awareness and appreciation of a particular community or communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop the interview questions</td>
<td>Develop questions with subject matter reflecting the National Competency standards (unit titles and elements) Questions should afford the interviewee the opportunity to demonstrate their experience and knowledge in relation to performance criteria and range of variables as outlined in the relevant units of national competency standards.</td>
<td>The benefit of having Aboriginal or trained, culturally aware interviewers on your panel is that they will be able to reword questions using plain English to suit individual applicants.</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
<td>Set interview times with suitable applicants. Distribute verbal questions to applicants prior to the interview – if appropriate</td>
<td>When Aboriginal applicants are interviewed, it is essential that all selection panel members are aware of culturally appropriate communication techniques and potential gender issues for Aboriginal applicants. For example, if the interviewee is an Aboriginal male, he may be uncomfortable shaking hands with female panel members, direct all responses to the Aboriginal or male panel members, and avoid eye contact when responding to questions. While these behaviours may appear disrespectful, they can in fact be cultural displays of respect or confusion as to the meaning of questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruiter’s Role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Interview</td>
<td>Eligibility List developed</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Referees contacted</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal Record Check conducted as necessary</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer of employment</td>
<td>Offer of employment drafted</td>
<td>Where possible new Aboriginal employees should be assisted through the organisations program by an Aboriginal colleague of the same gender where possible. This will enable the new staff member to be shown around the organisation while being introduced to culturally appropriate mentors. An added benefit of this is that new staff will begin their work in the organisation through a stress free, supportive process that supports their individuality, culture and personal needs. This will contribute significantly to the retention and productivity of the new employee.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offer of employment sent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Letter sent to unsuccessful applicants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Employment contract signed by employee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation and performance</td>
<td>Orientation process and performance review planed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>review planning</td>
<td>and in place.</td>
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There are many benefits of employing and retaining Aboriginal people. In general, these benefits include creating an environment where cultural diversity enriches the activities of the employer and having staff that are able to effectively communicate, consult and interact with their communities.

Good retention strategies and incentives lead to an experienced and stable workforce where the quality of service is maintained by the workforce. This section on retention provides a number of examples in the areas of existing policies, legislative requirements and financial incentives.

Increasingly, policies, strategies and industrial awards and conditions are being negotiated to take into account the cultural needs of Aboriginal people from a work/life balance perspective.

These conditions include leave to meet the employee's customs, traditional law and to participate in cultural and ceremonial activities.

These strategies agreed to by employers and their employees ensures that the talents, skills and experience of employees are retained.

Work Life Balance
Work life initiatives are a key attraction and retention strategy for Western Australian businesses. The Western Australian Department of Commerce has a website that helps employers to implement flexible work strategies to improve work life balance and increase participation of groups such as women and mature age employees in the workplace.

Flexible work strategies can assist in retaining your current workforce and attracting quality new employees. The *Better Workplace Guide for Small Business* [PDF, 207 KB](#) outlines how creating a flexible workplace can assist in meeting your business needs, including useful checklists and notes.
Code of Conduct - Code of Ethics
Building respect and trust within an organisation is essential to retaining employees. By having these codes organisations and their staff understand what is appropriate behaviour and help build respect and trust with the community.

Occupational Health & Safety/Work Health & Safety
A good OHS/WHS practice not only provides a safer working environment but improves worker morale and productivity.

By pursuing good OHS/WHS practices businesses face fewer workplace injuries and benefit from higher employee retention rates and enhanced corporate image. This reduces the costs associated with production delays, recruiting new staff and replacing equipment, and avoids the resulting uncertainty and workload pressure placed on co-workers.

Salary sacrifice
There are a number of financial incentives available to the employee and employer. A primary benefit to the employee from the employers arrangements as a Public Benevolent Institution is the availability in varying degrees is salary sacrificing.

A salary sacrifice arrangement is also commonly referred to as salary packaging or total remuneration packaging. It is an arrangement between an employer and an employee, where the employee agrees to forego part of their future entitlement to salary or wages in return for the employer providing them with benefits of a similar cost (to the employer).

For more information about:
- making a donation through a salary sacrifice arrangement, see Fundraising - Tax basics for non-profit organisations - Salary sacrifice and gifts
- salary sacrifice arrangements, refer to Salary sacrifice arrangements for employees.

Other things to consider
- accredited training to improve skills and knowledge
- literacy and numeracy training
- communication training for supervisors
- provide external financial management and budgeting advice
- providing external mentoring services
Cultural competency is, at its core, about changing organisational and individual behaviour to respond to culturally diverse communities and their needs, so that services are inclusive, accessible and utilized by all members of the community (DHS 2008).

An understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their personal histories, beliefs and values, languages and lifestyles is important in many ways.

This section provides information on how to appropriately engage with Aboriginal people and their communities and introduces the history and diversity of Aboriginal people.

It is important for us to acknowledge and respect each others’ perspectives, our ways of seeing the world and to find that place where we can all meet, grow and learn. Perhaps the response to this is the creation of the third cultural space.

The “third cultural space” as a model recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have distinct and deep cultural and world views, views that differ from those found in most Western systems. When both systems are acknowledged and valued equally, the overlapping or merging views represents a new way of dealing with our cultures and ways of working.

The diagram depicts this visually, the black circle represents the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, and the red circle represents Western ways. The yellow overlapping circle is the third cultural space. (Model by J Davis 2008).

This model gives both cultures the opportunity to leave behind their share of “cultural baggage”; our assumptions about the “other”. Some of our histories are separate and culturally unique, while some of our histories are shared.
Before the Europeans came to Australia in 1788 it is now estimated there were approximately 600 Aboriginal groupings. These groups all had their own distinct dialects and individual cultural identities.

European settlement had profound effects on every Aboriginal group in Australia.

Many people believe that had they been permitted to remain as they were, these groups would have had status equivalent to individual countries with separate languages such as those that make up Europe. However their progress was terminated by the British attempt to incorporate Australia into the British Empire.

To the majority, 1788 marks the beginning of modern Australian history; however, to many Aboriginals it marked the beginning of the European invasion. Aboriginals were expected to integrate into the European ways swiftly and unquestioningly. With the Europeans came diseases to which they had no immunity and as a result many Aboriginals died.

Aboriginals also encountered social attitudes they could not understand. They were also introduced to firearms, alcohol, tobacco and other devices that bought premature death.
This is an overview of groupings within Western Australia.

**Noongar** – occupying the area of the South West.

**Yamatji** – occupying the area of Geraldton and the Pilbara.

**Wongai or Wankai** – occupying the area of the Goldfields.

**Kimberley** - occupying the area of the Kimberley

**Ngaanyatjarra** – occupying the Central Desert region.

National Native Title Tribunal map of Western Australia

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**Ancestors & Demographics**

**Significant Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Events**

**May - National Sorry Day** is a continuing effort to achieve appropriate education, reconciliation and recognition for the Aboriginal stolen generation.

[www.nsdc.org.au](http://www.nsdc.org.au)

**May/June - Reconciliation Week** celebrates the rich cultural heritage of Australia's Aboriginal, and aims to continue reconciliatory efforts

[www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)

**June - Mabo Day** commemorates the anniversay of the 1992 High Court decision in the case brought by Eddie Mabo and others which recognised the existence in Australia of native title rights.


**July - NAIDOC Week**

Celebrations are held around Australia in the last full week in July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The week is celebrated not just in the indigenous community, but also in government agencies, schools, local councils and workplaces.

[www.naidoc.org.au](http://www.naidoc.org.au)
Extended family
Understanding structures and concepts that exist in Aboriginal families and communities is important in building relationships.

Aboriginal people have strong family values. The family system has an extended family structure, as opposed to the nuclear or immediate family structure which is common in Western society. This extended family concept is rarely endorsed or understood by government authorities so it is important to have an understanding of this when working with Aboriginal communities.

For example, the concepts of extended family and ‘community as family’ in Aboriginal communities encompass the idea that children are not just the concern of the biological parents, but of the entire community. The raising, care, education and discipline of children are the responsibility of everyone — male, female, young and old.

An extended family structure is based on:
- blood-related (mum, dad, brother, sister, grandmother/ father, cousin, aunty, uncle)
- marriage (aunty, uncle, cousin)
- community (Elder, neighbour, friend, organisation)
- kinship system (aunty, uncles, cousins or Elders)
- non-related family (Elder, friend, community member)
- mutual respect
- a sense of belonging
- acceptance and knowledge of Aboriginal kinship ties
- mutual obligation and support.

Kinship
Kinship systems define where a person fits into the community.

Kinship systems may vary across communities and nations but the principle is the same across Australia. Kinship defines the roles and responsibilities for raising and educating children and structures systems of moral and financial support within the community.

The family structure is linked with the community and with this knowledge comes a complex system of roles and obligations within the community. Aboriginal children learn at an early age the kinship ties that exist within their community and subsequently their place in the community.
Men’s and Women’s business
In Aboriginal culture certain customs and practices are performed by men and women separately, often referred to as Men’s and Women’s Business. These practices have very strict regulations attached and penalties for breaking these rules can be severe.

Some Aboriginal communities that continue to practice their traditional customs will also continue these segregated practices and it is important that this is understood when working with Aboriginal people.

An example of Men’s and Women’s Business in modern circumstances is when Aboriginal specific courses and conferences are held. It is common to see Men’s and Women’s Business on the agenda. In this context the group will split by gender and discuss issues separately.

Beliefs
Aboriginal groups lived all around Australia and as a result of their geographical differences they lived according to the resources available to them. For example coastal inhabitants lived different lifestyles to those who lived inland in the more desert areas.

Every Aboriginal group has a separate identity and it would be incorrect to say that all Aboriginals lived a certain way. In fact some groups prefer to be called by their individual groups names rather than just "Aboriginal".

The Dreaming is equivalent to other religions around the world. Various Aboriginal groups all have different names for the Dreaming. Dreaming stories and characters vary among Aboriginal groups. Although they may share many of the same beliefs, the messages and the characters in the stories are different.
Respect and sensitivity

Respect is very important in every social structure in Aboriginal communities. Respect for Elders, the land, animals and ancestors are fundamental aspects of Aboriginal culture.

Following a death in some communities, people may find it disrespectful to say the deceased person’s name or to refer to the deceased person in general conversation. Where this occurs, different names may be used to refer to the deceased person. This practice may last for months or even years, until all relevant ceremonies have been concluded.

Generally, it is unfavourable to display pictures or images of deceased people. This is particularly the case when the images may be seen by the family or community of the deceased. You should seek appropriate permission from the family and local community before broadcasting names or images of deceased people. Family and communities will be able to advise of the appropriate practice.

A familiar term used by many Aboriginal people is ‘Sorry Business’ which indicates that there has been a death within a community. If a community is dealing with Sorry Business, it is respectful not to make any requests (e.g. for a community meeting or consultation) for a period of at least two weeks or as advised by the community. During Sorry Business you should ensure you are respectful at all times.

Like all genuinely mutual and productive relationships, engagements with Aboriginal communities need to be based on respect. We need to offer and earn respect, particularly in dealings with community Elders and leaders.

Elders and community leaders not only hold key community knowledge but they also have a great deal of influence over when, how and if a community will work with those from outside. This is also true for other representatives of the local community.

An Elder or leader may not necessarily be an older person. They may also be a younger person who is well respected within their community and holds significant community knowledge. Many Aboriginal people acknowledge Elders and leaders as Aunty or Uncle, even if that person is not blood-related or kin as this is a sign of respect in Aboriginal culture.

Always be aware of the need to consult Elders and treat them with respect. The same courtesies accorded to dignitaries should be applied to Elders. Where extensive consultation is required, ensure that Elders are paid at the same rates as professional consultants. It is unreasonable to assume that consultation can be undertaken with Aboriginal people and communities at no cost.

If the intended consultation is not expected to take a long time, then remuneration may not be required. However, it may be appropriate to supply morning or afternoon tea or refreshments. Transport to and from the venue may also need to be arranged.
Challenges facing the Aboriginal Community

**Proving land ownership**
Today, the issue of land ownership is still an important one. Ancestral land is a vital element in maintaining Aboriginal culture. It is also used by Aboriginal people to determine their economic worth in their community.

**Remoteness**
Although most Aboriginal people live in country towns and cities there is still a large percentage that live in rural and remote areas of Australia. This remoteness creates many challenges for them as it limits access to necessary services, like health services and educational institutions. It also reduces employment opportunities, which results in high unemployment.

**Health**
Most Aboriginal people have the same access to health care as the rest of the population. Yet, they still have the highest rates of poor health. Remoteness, lack of trust towards the medical industry and negative social attitudes are some of the reasons identified for this poor health.

**Education and employment**
Although statistically there have been improvements to Aboriginal education, Aboriginal people still have the lowest statistics (attendance, retention, continuing their education) when compared to other groups in Australia. Today the major concerns in regards to Aboriginal students are low retention rates and high rates of absences. There are also negative views from older Aboriginal people who are wary of European education, due to their own past experiences.

**Social attitudes**
One of the major challenges that unfortunately still faces the Aboriginal community today are the negative social attitudes that are still common. Much has been done recently to create an understanding amongst non-Aboriginal people about their past and how it still affects them today. Reconciliation has become important in creating better understanding of Aboriginal culture and building stronger relationships within the whole community.
Aboriginal employees are often faced with greater personal, social and cultural pressures than no-Aboriginal employees. These pressures place the Aboriginal employees at a higher risk of not achieving the same development opportunities.

Early intervention through a structured mentoring relationship may give the Aboriginal employee the tools and support to deal effectively with these pressures and to increase the likelihood of remaining in employment.

Presented in this section of the Guide are a number of examples on the different forms of mentoring available, included also is information on mentor training providers and mentoring training courses being delivered in Western Australia.

Types of Mentoring

Mentoring can provide benefits to Indigenous employees, these may include contributing to breaking down the barriers between Aboriginal employees, their employers and work colleagues and addressing cross-cultural communication issues.

There are a range of different mentoring styles or types that organisations may use to improve workplace performance or simply to support employees. The most often used mentoring approaches are outlined as follows.

Informal Mentoring
Informal mentoring is where two people form a mentoring relationship without facilitation by a third party and without the signing of formal agreements. This form of mentoring is informal and unstructured and often begins spontaneously between colleagues or friends and then evolves into a mentoring relationship over time. This approach to mentoring is voluntary and develops without the benefit of proper mentoring training programs or organisational support structures.

Formal Mentoring
The most typical and popular approach to mentoring is a formal arrangement that creates a one-to-one relationship between the mentor and mentee and is facilitated by a third party. This form of mentoring nearly always includes a formal agreement between the mentor and the mentee (mentoring agreements). The agreement sets out the details of the mentoring process and specifies the expectations or objectives of the relationship.

Small Group Mentoring
Mentoring in small groups may be effective in some situations. Usually small group mentoring occurs within the same organisation so there is a common interest or goal between mentees and the mentor.

E-mentoring
E-mentoring uses email as the primary communication method between mentors and mentees. While e-mentoring can limit the depth of the relationship shared between the mentor and mentee, it also offers advantages in terms of time commitment and flexibility.

Professional Mentoring Services
Professional mentors have substantial personal experience in the industry in which they are mentoring and use a combination of coaching and mentoring to achieve high levels of results with their clients.
Language, literacy and numeracy skills equip people with the ability to communicate and problem solve in a variety of workplace settings. These skills are essential for work, learning and life.

This section of the Guide provides information on the programs and resources that are available through the Commonwealth, State governments and industry skills councils.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations’ (DEEWR) Language, Literacy and Numeracy Section manages the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP). The LLNP contributes to building Australia’s productivity and inclusiveness by providing high quality LLN training to assist job seekers address LLN barriers to obtaining sustainable employment and/or undertaking further education and training.

The LLNP has operated since January 2002 when the LLNP and the Advanced English for Migrants Program amalgamated to provide a more integrated management approach to addressing language, literacy and numeracy needs among job seekers at the national level. Among other disadvantaged groups, this program also targets job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds needing language-only training.

In 2009 a full Request for Tender (RFT) was conducted for the 2010-13 contract period. As a result, 38 Training and Assessment (TA) providers were contracted on 1 July 2010 to offer face to face and distance training across more than 380 sites for 3 years to June 2013. One Independent Verifier was also contracted to check education claims of job seeker outcomes and offer professional development.

In May 2009, the government allocated an additional $3 million for the delivery of LLNP to assist Indigenous people needing assistance with LLN skills that are located in identified Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) communities.

The main aim of the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program is to assist organisations to train workers in English language, literacy and numeracy skills. This funding is available on a competitive grants basis to organisations for English language and literacy training linked to job-related workplace training and is designed to help workers meet their current and future employment and training needs.

Australian Government Skills Connect is a new service designed to help link eligible Australian enterprises with a range of skills and workforce development programs and funding. It brings together funding from six different training and workforce development programs to better target industry and worker training. Australian Government Skills Connect will allow employers to address their overall workforce development needs, and the Workplace English Language and Literacy program can be accessed via this new service. Further information and a Request for Assistance form can be found at: http://www.skills.gov.au/SkillsConnect

The aim of the Australian Apprenticeships Access Program is to support vulnerable job seekers facing barriers to skilled employment to overcome those barriers and gain the necessary skills to find and keep an apprenticeship or other skilled employment or further education or training.
Foundation Skills Training Package
In Australia, the term Foundation Skills has appeared recently in a number of policy environments, including in COAG targets, Victorian Skills Reforms and federal budgets. The term has not been clearly defined and has at times been used interchangeably with other terms including: Core Skills, Basic Skills, Generic Skills, Essential Skills and Language, Literacy and Numeracy.

In the development of the proposed national Foundation Skills Strategy it is anticipated that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) will adopt a definition of Foundation Skills that encompasses the skill described by the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and those included in Employability Skills. Together these are:

ACSF
- Learning
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Numeracy

Employability Skills
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem solving Initiative and enterprise
- Planning and organizing
- Self-management
- Technology

In April 2011, the National Quality Council agreed to develop a Foundation Skills Training Package as part of a national, systemic approach to developing foundation skills units of competency, qualifications and skill sets. The package will align with agreed principles and look at how streamlined Training Packages can improve foundation skills.

A systemic national approach will provide:
- National standards for foundation skills training
- More pathways into vocational qualifications
- Options for foundation skills units that can be used across Training Packages or embedded within qualifications
- Options to mix and match products and training practices to suit individual learner needs.
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DEEWR has funded the Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) to undertake the development of a nationally endorsed Foundation Skills Training Package.

IBSA will develop Foundation Skills qualifications at AQF Certificate I and II level that can be integrated with existing vocationally oriented units to provide training relevant to each industry. The qualifications will encourage the development of the underpinning skills that are required for undertaking further vocational training, and will be clearly designed as learning pathways, not for specific occupational outcomes. Enabling and preparatory pathways provided by these qualifications will assist young people, adults without any post-compulsory qualifications and those who have had a long break from learning or formal training.

This comprehensive and easy-to-use Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) resource kit is mapped up to Level 3 against the Australian Core Skills Framework, it is contextualised to the Community Services and Health industries, but flexible enough to be used in other industries.

The resource is ideally suited for supporting Core Skills in the workplace without the specific need for a Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) expert.

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council WELL Resource Kit is fully self-contained in a sturdy plastic outer case with a rubber handle for easy carrying. The kit includes five smaller plastic satchels, each containing the printed resources.

Each smaller plastic satchel contains training and practice cards for each Core Skill: Learning, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication and Numeracy.

- **Audience**
  - Workplace trainers
  - Supervisors
  - Managers
  - Mentors
Aboriginal people often face barriers to taking up opportunities in further education or employment. These barriers are multiple and varied.

This section contains information from National, State and Territory sectors on training initiatives and mechanisms that are available to support successful transitions into further study, training or employment.

TRAINING, QUALIFICATIONS & PATHWAYS

General Information

Training incentives and assistance schemes

The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme for VET (2009-11) provides funding to support up to 2 hours of targeted tuition per subject per week to Indigenous students enrolled and studying Australian Qualifications Framework accredited VET courses at eligible non-government VET institutions.

Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (2009-11) provides supplementary per capita assistance to eligible non-government VET Institutions with a minimum Indigenous enrolment of 20 full time equivalent students to assist them to accelerate educational outcomes for their Indigenous students.

The Training Initiatives for Indigenous Adults in Regional and Remote Communities Program (2007-11) provides funding to attract, engage and support Indigenous adults in regional and remote communities to access vocational education and training opportunities, including the Australian Government’s additional training places as part of Skilling Australia for the Future policy.

The Indigenous Regional Projects element of the Industry Training Strategies Program provides support for a range of innovative projects and initiatives that assist key stakeholders to improve the participation of Indigenous Australians in nationally recognised training and skills development programs, specifically Australian Apprenticeships and training packages which lead to sustainable employment.

The Australian Apprenticeships Access Program (2008-13) provides vulnerable job seekers that experience barriers to entering skilled employment with nationally recognised pre-vocational training, support and assistance.
Financial support

A range of general financial support programs are available to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertake further study. Each program has a specific set of eligibility criteria.

**ABSTUDY** provides living allowance and supplementary benefits to assist students to complete secondary schooling and go on to further education.

The **Financial Management Program** (2009-10 to 2010-11) provides money-management training and support to remote communities.

The **Commonwealth Scholarship Program** aims to facilitate choice in higher education and increase higher education participation for Indigenous students. There are two main types:

- Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships which are generally to assist with education costs
- Indigenous Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships which are generally to assist with accommodation costs.

The **Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program** (2010-13) provides funding to universities to undertake activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low SES backgrounds and improve their retention and completion rates.

**Away from Base for ‘mix-mode’ delivery** provides funding to cover travel costs (including fares, meals and accommodation) for eligible Indigenous students studying approved ‘mixed-mode’ courses when they are required to travel away from their permanent home for a short period of time to undertake approved activities.

The **Pensioner Education Supplement** helps with some of the ongoing costs of education to assist recipients to gain qualifications to make them competitive in the labour market.
Employment - Indigenous-specific programs
The reformed *Indigenous Employment Program* began on 1 July 2009. The Australian Government has committed over $750 million over five years to make the program more responsive to the needs of Indigenous job seekers and employers. It includes:

- The Indigenous Capital Assistance Scheme which offers Indigenous businesses access to commercial finance, and culturally appropriate professional and mentoring support services.
- The Indigenous Wage Subsidy which provides financial assistance to employers who employ Indigenous Australians.
- The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Work Experience Subsidy which provides wage subsidies to employers who offer paid work experience to new CDEP participants who are on income support.
- Indigenous Cadetship Support which links Indigenous students undertaking diplomas, advanced diplomas and undergraduate degree courses and employers in an arrangement that involves full-time study and work placements.
- The *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* which provides individually tailored assistance to help Indigenous job seekers prepare for, gain and retain jobs.

The *Australian Employment Covenant* initiative marks a commitment between Australian Employers, the Australian Government and Indigenous Australians to break the cycle of unemployment and poverty by adopting a "learn or earn" policy. It aims to secure 50,000 sustainable jobs for Indigenous Australians, and 50,000 workplace mentors.

The *Indigenous Opportunities Policy* (2010) aims to promote employment, training and business opportunities for Indigenous Australians, where Commonwealth projects involve expenditure over $5 million ($6 million for construction) in regions where there are significant Indigenous populations.

*Creating real jobs for Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) participants in Australian Government Service Delivery* aims to strengthen the Australian Government’s capacity to deliver services to Indigenous communities by converting CDEP positions delivering Australian Government services into real jobs.

Qualifications & Pathways
The Australian Apprenticeships Pathways website contains many links to assist the employee and employer.

**ApprentiCentre**
The Department of Training and Workforce Development's ApprentiCentre registers training contracts and gives advice and support to employers, apprentices and trainees, parents and guardians, through every stage of the apprenticeship and traineeship process. ApprentiCentre has staff who can help with all aspects of apprenticeships and traineeships. Call 13 19 54 or visit the website.

**Guide for Employers**
The Western Australian Government service 'ApprentiCentre' publishes information about employing apprentices and trainees.

**Employing People**
"Small Business WA" provides general information on employment issues and practices.

**Training WA**
If you run a business or employ workers in Western Australia there are a number of different ways that training can help your business grow and be more competitive. Visit the 'Training WA' website for more information.
Financial support

**ABSTUDY**

Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program

Financial Management Program

Away from Base for 'mix-mode' delivery

Commonwealth Scholarship Program

Pensioner Education Supplement

Indigenous Employment Programs & Initiatives

Indigenous Employment Program

Indigenous Opportunities Policy

Aboriginal Employment Strategy

Creating real jobs for Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) participants in Australian Government Service Delivery

Australian Employment Covenant

Mainstream Employment Programs & Initiatives

Local Employment Coordinators

New Employment Services

Job Services Australia

Myfuture.edu.au

Health specific Programs & Initiatives

Rural Primary Health Services Program

Central Australian Remote Health Development Service

Indigenous Australian Government Development Program

Indigenous Professional Associations

Australian Indigenous Doctors Association

Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association

Indigenous Allied Health Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Registered Training Organisation National Network

Indigenous Dentists Association of Australia
General Enquiries

Phone: 9445 1511  
Fax: 9445 1611

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PO Box 1738, Osborne Park WA 6017

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