



Government of **Western Australia**
Department for **Child Protection**

Aboriginal Employment and Learning Strategy 2009-2014

Aboriginal business
is everyone's business

A message from the Director General

The Department for Child Protection is committed to attracting and retaining Aboriginal people as a vital part of our diverse and talented workforce. This Aboriginal Employment and Learning Strategy has been developed to guide our commitment.

Our workforce needs to better reflect our client base to ensure that the services we provide are responsive and appropriate to their needs. The strategy sets out ambitious targets for Aboriginal employment across the Department.

To achieve these targets, we will seek to attract Aboriginal people to the Department through a range of entry points and offer employment pathways geared to successful performance. We will support people through a range of learning and development opportunities.

The responsibility for implementing the strategy rests with all branches working with Human Resources to achieve the employment targets, and with the Learning and Development Centre to support the performance and development of individual staff. It is also up to all staff, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to build on our strength of being a workplace that values Aboriginal people and the contribution they make in delivering our critical community services.

Terry Murphy
DIRECTOR GENERAL

May 2009

What is the strategy about?

The Aboriginal Employment and Learning Strategy outlines specific activities that will assist in attracting and increasing the number of Aboriginal workers within the Department, and improve the retention of Aboriginal staff through the development, implementation and evaluation of key workforce and learning activities.

The strategy is intended to enable the Department for Child Protection to further develop its commitment and support to Aboriginal people, both as employees and as clients.

To ensure that service delivery is appropriate for Aboriginal children and families, the number of Aboriginal employees must be increased to more closely reflect the population that is receiving services from the Department.

This strategy aims to improve Aboriginal staff representation by developing a range of workforce and learning activities aimed at establishing the Department as an employer of choice for Aboriginal people seeking to work in the human services field, and wanting to make a contribution to their communities.

Aboriginal staff are a key focus area under *Strategic Priority One* within the Department's *Strategic Plan 2008–2010*. Consistent with this priority, the strategy has been established as an extension of *Child Protection Reform Project 9 - Learning and Development*, *Reform Project 10 - Workforce Development*, and the *People Development Framework*.

Whose responsibility is it?

The strategy is the responsibility of all business areas within the Department.

Service delivery directorates need to ensure that leadership teams are well informed and actively engaged in the implementation of the strategy, monitor its implementation and initiate and support cultural learning opportunities for all staff.

This will be supported by Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination, the Learning and Development Centre, and Human Resources.

What are the key initiatives and projects?

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Increase the Aboriginal employment rate

- Develop a marketing toolkit to support directorates in attracting Aboriginal staff and having additional attraction strategies in areas heavily populated with Aboriginal people.
- Ensure each service delivery area establishes appropriate targets of Aboriginal staff.
- Identify a range of local employment entry points and recruit Aboriginal people to a diverse range of roles in the Department by implementing targeted recruitment processes, local employment initiatives, head-hunting and networks, contracts, and secondments.
- Conduct research to determine the viability of an Aboriginal Cadetship Program and/or Aboriginal Traineeships.
- Review, monitor and report quarterly on the numbers of Aboriginal staff by directorate, district and unit.
- Undertake an evidence-based research project to identify the difficulties in the recruitment of experienced child protection workers in communities with significant Indigenous populations.

Reduce the number of Aboriginal staff leaving the Department

- Establish a mentoring and support program.
- Promote the use of flexible work practices.
- Ensure effective use of *Reaching Forward* with Aboriginal staff.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Learning and development requirements for Aboriginal staff

- Ensure that the learning needs of Aboriginal staff are included in the *People Development Framework*.
- Develop a strategy, in partnership with the Learning and Development Centre, to meet the major training needs of Aboriginal staff, and ensure that it is effectively targeted, promoted and supported.

Learning and support programs to assist Aboriginal staff in gaining tertiary qualifications

- Develop partnerships with TAFE for child care, residential care and community services qualifications.
- Develop pathways between TAFE and identified, established courses.
- Develop a range of viable, flexible options for appropriate courses that Aboriginal staff can access, such as the *Aboriginal Community Development Course* and distance field work qualifications.
- Promote a block release course that enables relevant qualifications to be obtained.
- Review the Aboriginal Scholarship Program to determine if existing resources can be applied to enable more staff to use more flexible approaches.

Cultural learning strategies within business areas

- Establish local and directorate specific cultural learning strategies utilising key Aboriginal staff.
- Ensure all learning opportunities consider the Aboriginal context.

Where are we now?

Forty-three per cent of the children in the care of the Department, and 38 per cent of people accessing the Department's services, are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. In some areas of the State, particularly in the northwest, these percentages are much higher and in some instances approach nearly 100 per cent.

As at May 2009, the Department had a 9.2 per cent Aboriginal workforce. In the six months to 31 December 2008, the attrition rate for Aboriginal staff was 5.06 per cent and the overall attrition rate for the Department was 4.4 per cent.

Where do we want to be?

VISION

Attracting and retaining, and providing learning and development opportunities for Aboriginal staff.

GOALS

- An attrition rate no greater than five per cent by 2014.
- 20 per cent representation of Aboriginal staff by 2014.
- Learning and development opportunities that lead to tertiary qualifications.

MECHANISMS

- People Development Framework
- Reaching Forward
- Aboriginal Service framework

OWNERSHIP

Shared responsibility of all directorates in partnership with Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination, Human Resources, and the Learning and Development Centre.

Key targets for increasing attraction and retention

Target	Business Area
10 per cent	Service delivery support directorates
20 to 30 per cent	Accommodation and Care Services
20 to 50 per cent	Pilbara, Murchison and Goldfield Districts
50 per cent and above	Aboriginal Engagement and Coordination, and the Kimberley Districts
10 to 20 per cent	Other Districts

“It’s great to work for a Department that supports us with our continued studies, which we are able to do with flexible working hours and we’re supported by the Department and our colleagues.”

Katy and David

“My passion is protecting children and being able to facilitate Protective Behaviour Workshops with the Department supporting me to do so. Working for the Department has given me the experience and skills to work with the community to make a difference especially with the Aboriginal community.”

Kat

“Working for this Department has allowed me to combine my passion for working with children and my thirst for knowledge through developmental opportunities and training, always allowing me to improve myself as a person and employee.”

Tanya

MORE INFORMATION

Further information about the Aboriginal Employment and Learning Strategy can be obtained by contacting Human Resources Strategic Services

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