

**ADVANCING INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT-  
IMPROVING BUSINESS OUTCOMES  
A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE**



**Northern Territory Government**

Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment

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## MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Achieving Indigenous employment outcomes makes sense. It makes sense because it improves business outcomes and meets the challenges we face in terms of the economic and social costs associated with low levels of employment amongst Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.

The Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) provides services to a culturally diverse population and the Northern Territory Government affirms the importance of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the future of the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory Government is committed to achieving meaningful and sustainable improvements in Indigenous employment by focusing on the recruitment, career development and retention of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people. To achieve this, the Government emphasises the importance of pursuing realistic and measurable outcomes in increasing the number of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory Public Sector and that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people must have access to the necessary support in order to develop their true career potential. The challenge for agencies is finding what works for them and which strategies are the most cost effective in providing sustainable outcomes in Indigenous employment.

The time for action is now! The bottom line is that we cannot afford to view Indigenous employment as just another cost to bear. The Northern Territory Public Sector has a role to play in rectifying the low employment levels of Indigenous Territorians. Each Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander person unemployed and under-skilled adds to the overall and increasing cost we as a society must bear as a consequence of the ongoing cost that unemployment has on the health and welfare of Indigenous Australians.

As the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, I am one hundred per cent committed to advancing Indigenous employment outcomes. The Northern Territory Public Sector Indigenous Employment & Career Development Strategy 2002 - 2006 reflects this commitment and sets a new direction for Northern Territory Public Sector agencies to address our commitment of improving the economic, political, social and cultural position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Territory. The Framework for Future Action 2002 - 2006 will assist agencies to continue the development and implementation of innovative and effective strategies.

I fully support this Strategy and will take an active interest in its implementation. I expect Chief Executives to achieve positive and tangible outcomes in the short term. An interim review will be conducted in 2004 to monitor agencies effectiveness in implementing the Strategy. I also expect agencies to develop long term action plans to advance Indigenous employment outcomes and to achieve real and sustainable improvements in Indigenous employment throughout the Northern Territory Public Sector.

### **SYD STIRLING**

Minister for Employment, Education and Training  
November 2002

## **INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

The Northern Territory Government is committed to addressing Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander social and economic needs through self-determination. It is also committed to the promotion of understanding of these needs and ensuring that the process is based on the co-operative efforts of all levels of government involving active consultation with Indigenous people and their organisations. The Strategy will complement these commitments.

## **PRINCIPLES**

The Government has identified a set of principles on which progressive policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs should be based. The particular principles that underpin the Strategy are that:

1. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people play the major role in developing policies and decisions affecting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people;
2. The aspirations of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people are an integral component of the development of government policies and programs affecting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people; and
3. Government programs and services should, wherever possible, be delivered by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and reflect the needs and aspirations of the Indigenous community.

This Strategy is built on these principles and on the recognition that skilled and knowledgeable Indigenous people will be required in appropriate numbers at all levels of the Northern Territory Public Sector in order to realise the Government's policy.

## **REVIEW OF 1995-2000 ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Northern Territory Public Sector Indigenous Employment & Career Development Strategy 2002 - 2006 has been developed as a result of a review of the 1995 - 2000 Aboriginal Employment & Career Development Strategy which involved extensive consultation with agencies and the Northern Territory community to ensure that strategies targeting Indigenous employment are comprehensive. For the Strategy to remain relevant, and because it is a long term policy, it needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the vision contained in the Government's plan for building a better Territory.

The challenge is to build on the Indigenous employment and career development programs which have been successful in some agencies, and expand these successful strategies across the whole of the Northern Territory Public Sector. Innovative programs introduced by the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Departments of Health & Community Services, Community Development, Sport & Cultural Affairs and Justice have effectively demonstrated the potential for the Northern Territory Public Sector to achieve progressive outcomes in the Territory.

The review highlighted that information on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employment throughout the Northern Territory Public Sector is inconsistent and difficult to measure. A key priority of any future strategy must therefore be to develop adequate means of monitoring, evaluating and reporting of data. The review is a separate document and is available at [www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/indigenous.shtml/](http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/indigenous.shtml/)

## LEGISLATIVE BASIS AND REPORTING

*The Public Sector Employment and Management Act* (The Act) requires the development of Equal Opportunity Management Plans (EOMP) which set out an agency's strategies, objectives and measures to ensure equality of employment opportunity for all employees. Indigenous employment and development strategies are an integral component of an agency's general equal opportunity management initiatives and as such are bound by the following legislative provisions:

Section 28 of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act* requires Chief Executives to report annually on equal opportunity management programs and other initiatives designed to ensure that employees in an agency have equal employment opportunities.

Section 57 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act* makes provision for special measures designed to promote equality of opportunity for groups of people who are disadvantaged or who have special needs. Chief Executives are encouraged to access the special measures provision through consultation with the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner.

## **AIM OF THE STRATEGY**

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people make up 28% of the Northern Territory population and represent an even higher percentage of the major users of government services. However, their representation as employees within the Northern Territory Public Sector is estimated to be approximately 4.6%. In order to meet the fundamental principles set by Government in its Indigenous Policy, the Northern Territory Public Sector needs more Indigenous people at appropriate levels to be involved in decision making processes, policy development and service delivery to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.

The aim of this Strategy therefore is to address the critical under representation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people within the Northern Territory Public Sector workforce by providing a range of appropriate recruitment, career development and retention initiatives.

## **OUTCOMES**

The intended outcomes of the Strategy are to achieve:

1. Increased numbers of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander men and women recruited into the public sector;
2. Adequate representation of Indigenous people at all levels within the Northern Territory Public Sector to enable effective contribution to policy and decision making affecting Indigenous people;
3. Effective evaluation and reporting systems developed to assist in the implementation of the Strategy; and
4. Increased cultural diversity throughout the Northern Territory Public Sector.

## STRATEGIES

There are four key levels for advancing Indigenous employment outcomes in agencies:

- **the work unit level**, to ensure Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employees are encouraged to participate in the development and implementation of relevant practices and programs;
- **the regional level**, to encourage Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employees to plan and prioritise. This can be achieved through ensuring representation and involvement on regional committees and forums;
- **the community level**, to encourage negotiation between the government, non government sector and Indigenous community organisations on developing strategies for the effective delivery of services; and
- **the national level**, to ensure a more effective and strategic delivery of programs and services between jurisdictions.

The strategies within the Framework for Future Action have been formed from the findings and recommendations of the review of the 1995-2000 Aboriginal Employment & Career Development Strategy. They have been developed to assist agencies to implement the Northern Territory Public Sector Indigenous Employment & Career Development Strategy 2002-2006. The strategies and actions contained in the Framework should be considered the minimum generic requirements of all agencies. Those agencies which interface with Indigenous people on a regular basis should implement specific programs to meet their individual business needs. The Commissioner for Public Employment, through the auspices of the Northern Territory Public Sector Consultative Council and its standing committee, the Indigenous Workforce Issues Working Party (IWIWP), will monitor the implementation of the Framework.

## FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE ACTION

**OUTCOME 1:** Increased number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander men and women recruited into the public sector

STRATEGY	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
1.1 Establish and maintain a comprehensive range of entry level programs targeted specifically at Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apprenticeship programs</li> <li>STEP programs.</li> <li>Cadetships.</li> <li>Scholarships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult with Indigenous organisations, DEET and tertiary institutions to develop appropriate programs.</li> <li>Market opportunities through job and youth expos and appropriate media channels.</li> <li>Manage and coordinate program intakes.</li> <li>Identify suitable placements and commit to minimum annual intakes.</li> </ul>	<p>DCIS in conjunction with DEET</p> <p>DCIS in conjunction with agencies</p> <p>All agencies</p> <p>All agencies</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>3rd &amp; 4th quarters of each year</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p>
1.2 Market the Northern Territory Public Sector as an employer of choice for Indigenous youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in job and youth expos.</li> <li>Establish work experience and vacation employment programs targeting Indigenous youth.</li> <li>Ensure Indigenous people are represented on interview panels.</li> </ul>	<p>DCIS in conjunction with OCPE</p> <p>DCIS to coordinate placements in agencies</p> <p>All agencies</p>	<p>As required</p> <p>March 2003</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
1.3 Create a pool of potential Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander applicants for vacancies in the Northern Territory Public Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a voluntary job search register for Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander people wanting to work in the Northern Territory Public Sector.</li> <li>Provide pre-recruitment assistance to Indigenous applicants for the register.</li> <li>Agencies access the register to screen for potential applicants</li> <li>.</li> </ul>	<p>DCIS</p> <p>DCIS</p> <p>Agencies</p>	<p>July 2003</p> <p>July 2003 and ongoing</p> <p>July and ongoing</p>
1.4 Improve coordination and communication in the Northern Territory Public Sector in relation to Indigenous employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an Indigenous Employment Task Force with representation from agencies and Indigenous organisations</li> <li>Develop a recruitment strategy focusing on Indigenous employees in the rural and remote locations.</li> <li>Review the types of training courses offered by tertiary institutions to increase the number of skilled Indigenous staff in remote locations.</li> </ul>	<p>CPE in consultation with IWIWP</p> <p>OCPE, DCIS</p> <p>DEET</p>	<p>December 2002</p> <p>2003</p> <p>2004</p>

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**NORTHERN TERRITORY PUBLIC SECTOR**

**OUTCOME 2:** Adequate representation of Indigenous people at all levels within the public sector to enable effective contribution to policy and decision making affecting Indigenous people

STRATEGY	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
2.1 Increase the number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people progressing through middle and senior levels within the Northern Territory Public Sector through professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish personal learning and development plans for Indigenous employees.</li> <li>• Participate in work exchange and mobility programs for Indigenous employees.</li> <li>• Promote participation by Indigenous employees in Tertiary study assistance programs.</li> <li>• Groom high potential Indigenous employees for management positions.</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies</p>	<p>Plans developed by March 2003 and ongoing</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
2.2 Establish relevant career pathways that facilitate the advancement of Indigenous employees into policy development and decision making roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas where participation of Indigenous employees will enhance policy and service delivery outcomes.</li> <li>• Provide appropriate career counselling to Indigenous employees.</li> <li>• Implement appropriate succession planning for work units that will benefit from Indigenous participation.</li> <li>• Establish mentorship programs within agencies.</li> <li>• Develop specific strategies to ensure Indigenous people are employed to assist in the implementation of key policies in the Northern Territory Public Sector, eg. Health Boards and Learnings Lessons Review.</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies, OCPE</p>	<p>Career pathways identified by June 2003 and ongoing</p> <p>As required</p> <p>Feb 2002</p> <p>May 2003</p> <p>June 2003</p>
2.3 Increase retention rates of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employees through fostering appropriate peer support mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an “Indigenous Network” which meets regularly for development and networking purposes.</li> <li>• Maintain electronic “Indigenous Network” for Indigenous employees.</li> <li>• Access existing (and develop as necessary) short courses, skills development and management programs targeting Indigenous employees throughout the Northern Territory Public Sector.</li> </ul>	<p>OCPE</p> <p>OCPE</p> <p>OCPE &amp; DCIS as appropriate</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>As required</p> <p>As required</p>

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**OUTCOME 3:**      Effective evaluation and reporting systems developed to assist in the implementation of the Strategy

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
3.1 Establish effective mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the success of the strategy in improving employment and career development outcomes for Indigenous people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish benchmarks and targets for Indigenous employment outcomes.</li> <li>• Review data collection systems to enable the collation and analysis of data related to Indigenous employment and career development.</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies &amp; DCIS</p>	<p>March 2003</p> <p>2004</p>
3.2 Incorporate Indigenous employment outcomes in Equal Opportunity Management Plans (EOMP).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update EOMPs to address the strategy.</li> <li>• Report progress and outcomes in annual reports.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, establish IECDs sub committees of EOMP Committees to focus on Indigenous issues.</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies</p> <p>Agencies</p> <p>Appropriate agencies</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>July 2003</p>
3.3 Establish Partnership Performance Agreements within agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As required, agencies to develop internal Agreements to achieve Indigenous employment outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies</p>	<p>July 2003</p>
3.4 Promote, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy at the sector wide level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report outcomes quarterly to IWIWP</li> <li>• IWIWP to monitor and report to PSCC on a quarterly basis.</li> <li>• Interim review of effectiveness of the Strategy</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies</p> <p>CPE</p> <p>CPE</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>2004</p>

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**OUTCOME 4:** Increased cultural diversity throughout the public sector leading to improved understanding and respect for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage

STRATEGY	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
4.1 Promote understanding of Indigenous culture and heritage within the Northern Territory Public Sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct cross cultural awareness programs.</li> <li>• Develop awareness programs that will assist agencies to identify opportunities to benefit from increased Indigenous employment levels.</li> <li>• Develop workshops for HR practitioners and managers on good practice in employing and retaining Indigenous people.</li> </ul>	OCPE OCPE  DCIS	December 2002 September 2003  September 2003
4.2 Promote understanding by Indigenous employees of procedures and processes within a bureaucracy framework..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective induction and orientation programs..</li> <li>• Ensure all Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander employees have access to these programs.</li> </ul>	Agencies& DCIS Agencies	December 2002 Ongoing

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Members of the Reference Group included:

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Clare Anderson (Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance, NT), and  
representatives from the Department of Employment & Workplace Relations (DEWR).

For further information on the Strategy, please contact the Indigenous Employment Consultant in OCPE by phone on **8999 4108**, by fax on **8999 4148** or by email at **ocpe@nt.gov.au**

Or visit the website at:

**[www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/indigenous.shtml](http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/indigenous.shtml)**