



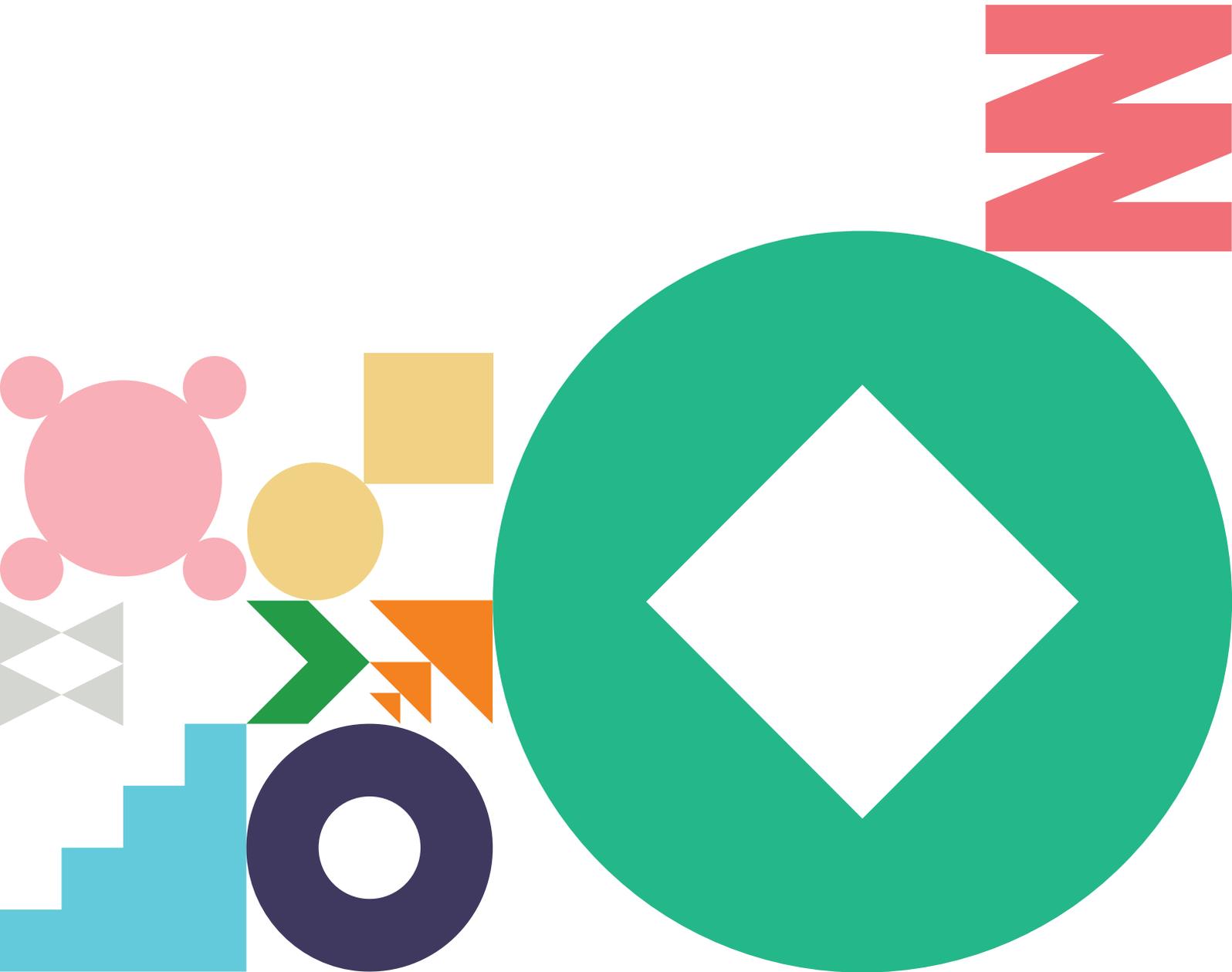
Public Sector
Commission

*We're working for
Western Australia.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Action Plan to Improve WA Public
Sector Employment Outcomes

2020–2025





We acknowledge the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay respect to their cultures, and to elders past and present.

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August 2020

PSC2064646

ISBN: 978-0-7307-0294-8

From the Minister

The Western Australian Government is committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to deliver real change.

The public sector, as the State's largest employer, can make a real and direct difference. It can close the gap and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to secure their own futures.

While we have made great strides in some areas, the representation of the nation's First Peoples in the public sector workforce has remained relatively static for a number of years. We must do better.

This action plan outlines an aspirational target – but one that I believe is achievable and necessary for the betterment of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

By increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the public sector workforce, we will be able to bring decisions closer to communities, boost economic opportunities and build a wider understanding of culture and respect.

Together we can achieve this vital goal.

Ben Wyatt MLA
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



From the Commissioner

Workforce diversity is not only about everyone being treated with dignity and respect, it's key to improving productivity and innovation in organisations.

It's also important for our workforce – our people – to have diversity of thought. This means different and more expansive thinking beyond our worldviews.

To shift the focus of diversity from compliance to workforce imperative, we have to change gears. We must move from a singular focus on awareness raising to deliberate action and intervention – and see this move as both a personal and collective responsibility.

This action plan is part of the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020–2025. The twin goals of the strategy are to increase the representation of people from different backgrounds at all levels across our sector, and to ensure all staff in the sector experience a sense of belonging and inclusion in the work environment.

Like this action plan that focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there are also action plans for women, youth, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with disability and people of diverse sexualities and genders.

There is no suggestion that achieving greater workforce diversity and inclusion is easy. However, we must do more to take full advantage of the opportunities that having more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the sector represent in our work to deliver services to the community of Western Australia.



Sharyn O'Neill
Public Sector Commissioner

Aspirational target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

This plan aims to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in the public sector to 3.7% and support inclusive work environments.

While this target is aspirational – and ambitious – progress is achievable over time if it is driven from the top.

Current representation in public sector employment is at 2.7% and has been at this level for some time. In recent years, it was at its highest in 2013 at 3.0%.

The target of 3.7% is based on representation in the Western Australian working age population and is derived from two key data sets – the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census in 2016 and ABS population projections.

The 2016 Census shows 2.9% of the working age population in WA identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The trend from the past three ABS Census (2006, 2011 and 2016) shows a gradual increase in the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the working age population. If this trend continues, this is anticipated to reach approximately 3.1% by 2025 when this plan ends.

The ABS also prepares projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people population for WA by age. These indicate that the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the working age population is likely to increase to 4.2% by 2025.

Given the limitations inherent in forecasting population and workforce trends, the aspirational target of 3.7% is set midway between these two points.

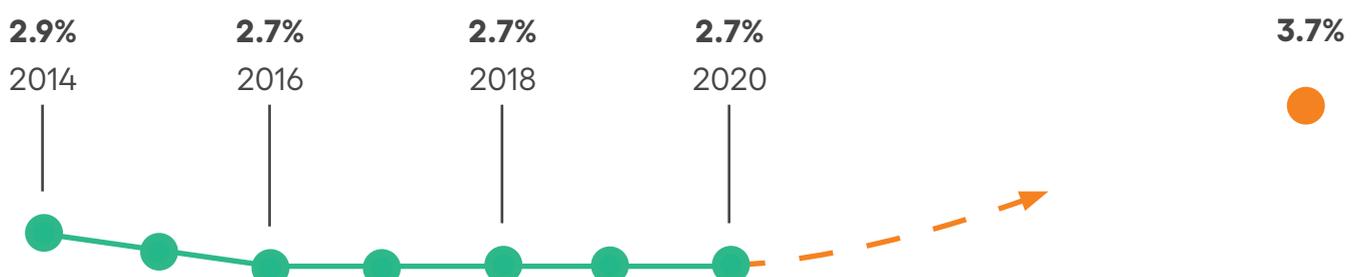
It is clear that representation in the public sector is not increasing in line with these projections. Concerted effort is needed to revitalise and improve this trend. It will take time to see an increase as actions are implemented and employment outcomes improve.

Data reform work across the sector (see the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for more details) includes reviewing collection, definitions and methods applied to diversity groups. This work will be used for the ongoing refinement and implementation of the strategy.

At the same time, the next ABS Census in 2021 will provide more contemporary population data and projections.

Workforce diversity targets, including the target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, will be reviewed in line with the data reforms and new Census data.

Such reforms are critical to develop a complete picture of the workforce and changes over time to better shape workforce strategy, policy and practice.



Key actions to achieve the target

Increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in the sector requires sustained effort, a different way of doing things and stronger accountability.

All agencies are responsible for working towards the aspirational target. Actions taken also require collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose ideas and participation are essential in making our sector as inclusive as possible.

Actions for the Public Sector Commission are described in this plan, together with a suite of actions for agencies to implement.

Most value can be gained by considering actions across the four improvement areas, rather than actions in just one or two areas.

As agencies have differing needs and contexts, they should adopt those actions appropriate to their circumstances in ways best suited to their needs.

This action plan has four key areas for improvement that flow across the strategy and other action plans:

1

Educate and empower

A knowledge and capability uplift is a priority consideration in workforce planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

2

Attract and develop

Recruitment and development practices proactively identify and support the talent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

3

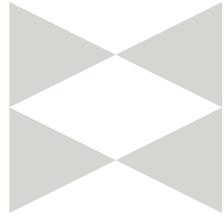
Lead and build

There is deliberate leadership to build organisation cultures where all people are treated fairly and respectfully.

4

Account and celebrate

Responsibility is taken for improving the representation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in public sector employment.



1 Educate and empower

Actions for the Commission

Provide tools

- 1.1 Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide evidence-based tools to increase knowledge of and confidence in inclusive recruitment and retention.
- 1.2 Supply agencies with equity index data, where available, to better understand their workforce profile.
- 1.3 Develop a guide to ensure managers and staff are aware of and promote the use of flexible working opportunities.

Encourage sharing of diversity status

- 1.4 Design safe and culturally appropriate ways to encourage staff to share information about their cultural identity.

Recruit for diversity

- 1.5 Provide guidance on the use of provisions in the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* to specifically target employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Use data analytics

- 1.6 Provide agencies with comparative data to support greater insight into performance and workforce planning.

Build cultural capability

- 1.7 Review and modernise the Aboriginal cultural awareness online learning tool and promote its use.

- 1.8 Investigate the introduction of mandatory cultural capability and diversity training for all staff.
- 1.9 Introduce cultural capability training as an essential criterion for CEO and SES recruitment.

Partner for greater impact

- 1.10 Support cross-sector forums to share innovative ideas and practices to improve employment and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 1.11 Partner with education institutions to provide opportunities to support progression through work experience, traineeships, internships and other career pathways.

Maximise immersion opportunities

- 1.12 Continue to support programs to promote cultural capability for senior staff in agencies.

Build employee networks

- 1.13 Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to connect and contribute to better ways of working with the community and across the sector.

1 Educate and empower

Actions for agencies

Make better use of data

- 1.1 Use public sector Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and community representation data to set specific agency targets, and inform recruitment and workforce planning.

Promote cultural capability

- 1.2 Implement cultural capability training and shared learning to improve awareness and understanding for staff, including mentoring programs.
- 1.3 Seek cultural immersion opportunities for staff.

Learn to target

- 1.4 Trial the implementation of section 51 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* to target recruitment and development opportunities to increase representation and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in public sector employment.

Encourage sharing of diversity status

- 1.5 Explore different avenues (such as inclusive messaging, induction and surveys) to offer regular opportunities for staff to provide information about their identities.

Establish agency networks

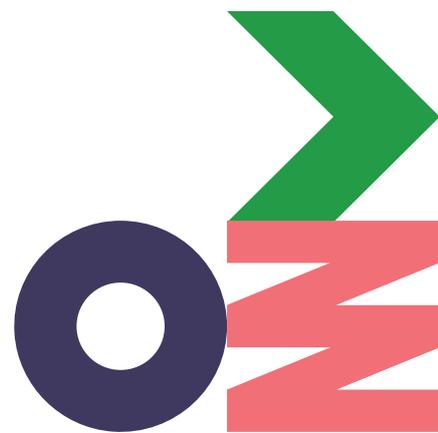
- 1.6 Consider establishing an agency network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff for collegial support, and to contribute to the review and design of practices that impact employment outcomes.

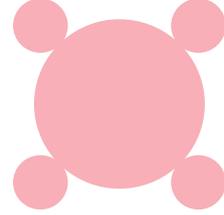
Establish community links

- 1.7 Consider establishing links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups to improve service outcomes.

Encourage co-design

- 1.8 Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the review and design of agency practices that impact employment outcomes.





2 Attract and develop

Actions for the Commission

Strengthen the rules

- 2.1 Remove opportunity for discriminatory practices to occur when reviewing recruitment, selection and appointment legislation, instruments and policies.
- 2.2 Provide agencies with information on inclusive practices to promote the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Partner to extend reach

- 2.3 Trial partnerships with specialist recruiters to attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates for senior leadership roles.
- 2.4 Raise the profile of Jobs and Skills Centres to assist agencies to attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers.

Work towards removing bias

- 2.5 Work with agencies to provide guidance on initiatives that name and remove bias such as de-identified job applications.

Set targets for talent pools

- 2.6 Ensure new sector-wide talent pools include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Strengthen talent pipeline

- 2.7 Expand numbers in vocational training (cadetship, traineeship, graduate and other employment based training pathways and programs) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through examination of alternative funding models.

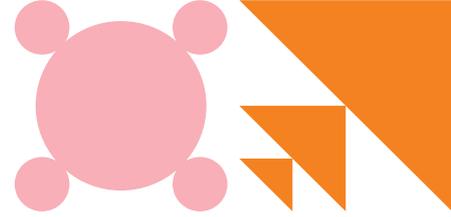
Move towards direct employment

- 2.8 Explore direct employment pathways into agencies for graduates of traineeships and other programs.

Promote the sector

- 2.9 Promote the public sector as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

2 Attract and develop



Actions for agencies

Identify barriers and develop solutions

- 2.1 Examine agency job applicant data and information to identify and address any barriers to the recruitment and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 2.2 Co-design recruitment with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that is culturally appropriate and appealing.

Work towards removing bias

- 2.3 Develop initiatives to remove unconscious bias in recruitment, training and workforce practice.

Support and recognise culture

- 2.4 Work with employee assistance program providers to ensure programs are culturally appropriate.
- 2.5 Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to co-design culturally appropriate protocols such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.

Advertise opportunities broadly

- 2.6 Distribute all advertised positions through Jobs and Skills WA and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment providers, networks and on social media.
- 2.7 Establish career pathways and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers by targeting secondary schools, training providers and universities.

Expand opportunities

- 2.8 Proactively give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people opportunities to participate in mobility and development programs such as peer mentoring, university placements, secondments, internships, work experience and projects.

Help create jobs

- 2.9 Build Commission Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees into workforce plans including commitment to providing permanent employment opportunities once qualified.
- 2.10 Identify places on traineeship and graduate programs to increase participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Showcase the workplace

- 2.11 Host open days and forums in regional and metropolitan centres for the community to learn about employment opportunities.

Focus on regions

- 2.12 Examine regional workforce profiles and direct recruitment efforts to increase the representation of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 2.13 Explore rotational employment opportunities between metropolitan and regional areas.

3 Lead and build

Actions for the Commission

Lead from the top

- 3.1 Conduct an annual review for the Public Sector Leadership Council to consider progress against the aspirational target.

Target executive decision making

- 3.2 Increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on boards, committees and other decision making forums.

Build diversity into planning

- 3.3 Provide model workforce and diversity plans for agency use that feature strong measures for increasing employment and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Model flexibility

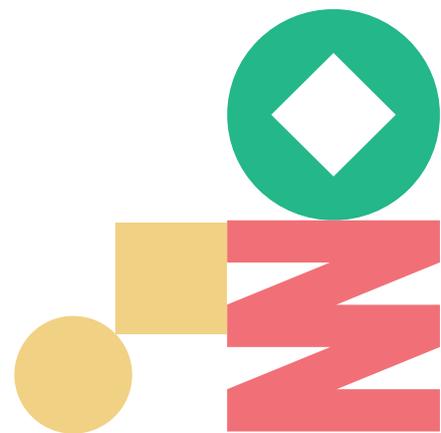
- 3.4 Give guidance to agencies on contemporary workplace flexibility practices that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to observe their cultural traditions and obligations.

Improve culture

- 3.5 Crowdfund innovative ideas for improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Promote respect

- 3.6 Explore the development of a respectful relationships program to support the sector.



3 Lead and build

Actions for agencies

Lead change

- 3.1 Deliberately plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in workforce and diversity planning activities, and link strategies to business and operational plans.
- 3.2 Reinforce zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment, and provide a clear complaints pathway for staff to feel confident in raising issues.

Challenge inappropriate behaviours

- 3.3 Ensure senior leaders act as role models, demonstrating respectful behaviour and challenging inappropriate language and attitudes.

Target executive decision making

- 3.4 Increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on boards, committees and other decision making forums.

Respect culture

- 3.5 Take action to recognise and acknowledge culture in a respectful and informed way.
- 3.6 Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to observe cultural traditions, and community and family obligations.

Sponsor

- 3.7 Identify executive champions to promote the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and employment, and give visibility to the commitment of executive.

Review policies and practices

- 3.8 Ensure policies and practices do not discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and published materials are inclusive.
- 3.9 Ensure contracted service providers meet Aboriginal procurement policy requirements.

Support staff

- 3.10 Ensure access to flexible work arrangements for all staff, including those returning to work and those with family and carer responsibilities.
- 3.11 Support managers to have the capability and confidence to manage flexible working arrangements.
- 3.12 Implement actions in the Safe Spaces guide for staff who may be experiencing family violence, and ensure an adequate number of staff are trained as contact officers.

Build an inclusive workplace

- 3.13 Build a safe environment so staff can identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

4 Account and celebrate

Actions for the Commission

Listen and respond

- 4.1 Introduce a requirement for agencies to include staff perceptions of workplace inclusiveness in annual reports.

Set targets

- 4.2 Establish targets to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and monitor sector and agency progress.

Aim higher

- 4.3 Require agencies to set goals to shift the equity index for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to ensure they are increasingly represented in mid to high salary groupings.

Account for progress

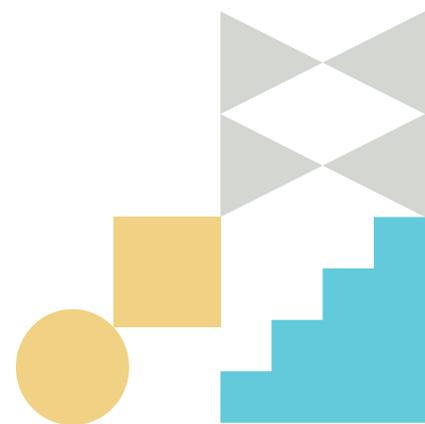
- 4.4 Add diversity targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff into the CEO Delivery and Performance Agreement and annual reporting guidelines.
- 4.5 Identify opportunities for agencies to report on innovative initiatives that promote the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff such as the use of flexible working arrangements.

Improve use of data

- 4.6 Review qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies to ensure the best information about the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is gathered and used to inform improvement.

Share good stories

- 4.7 Publish stories and share initiatives about better employment and inclusion outcomes across a range of communications channels.



4 Account and celebrate

Actions for agencies

Work towards targets

- 4.1 Set explicit expectations across the agency to work towards the aspirational target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 4.2 Set a target to improve the equity index, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are increasingly represented in mid to high salary groupings.

Report progress

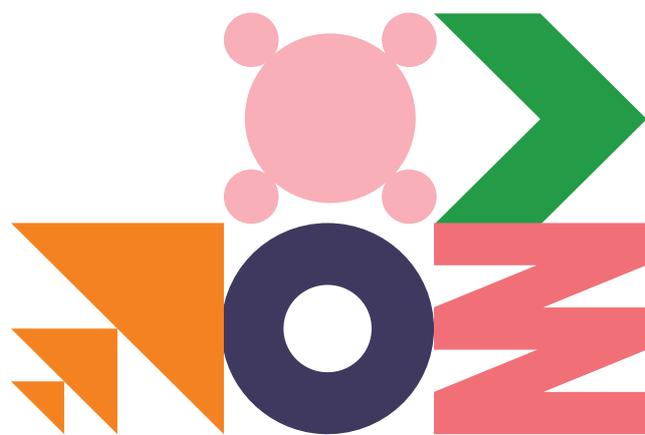
- 4.3 Monitor and report progress against the aspirational employment target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including in the CEO Delivery and Performance Agreement.

Celebrate

- 4.4 Celebrate reconciliation, inclusion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture during key events such as NAIDOC Week.
- 4.5 Commit to proactively seeking nominations for State and national awards to acknowledge the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Share success

- 4.6 Highlight positive stories and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff through internal and external communications, including annual and other reports.



Principles, monitoring performance, data and definitions

Principles

Sustainable improvement in workforce diversification is driven by four principles guiding agency actions.

Leadership

Public sector leaders are visible advocates who take strong and deliberate action to drive improvements in workforce diversification, and lead a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment.

Collaboration

Public sector agencies work together to improve diversity employment outcomes and share best practice.

Accountability

The head of each public sector agency is accountable for improving workforce diversification.

Cultural inclusion

The public sector has culturally inclusive workplaces where staff are supported and valued for their contribution, and where managers are diversity aware.

Monitoring performance

Equal employment opportunity and diversity related information collected by the Commission will continue to be used to monitor progress against the targets and action plans. Outcomes will be reported through the state of the sector report and other workforce reporting.

Under the strategy, the Commission will work with key stakeholders to identify and refine reporting obligations currently required across multiple agencies for identified diversity groups.

Data

All public sector data used in this strategy and the supporting action plans are based on the March point in time series.

There are further [data definitions and methods](#) on our website.

Definitions

The terms used in this strategy and the action plans are defined below.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

People who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Culturally and linguistically diverse people

People who are born in identified countries which are not mainly English speaking.

People of diverse sexualities and genders

People of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.

People with disability

People who have a mild or moderate core activity limitation.

Women in the SES

Women who are part of the Senior Executive Service.

Youth

People who are aged 24 years and under.

