

Paving the Way

Cultural Capability Resource

A guide for small and medium-sized
businesses to build cultural awareness
and establish culturally safe workplaces.



Queensland
Government

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and seas from across Queensland. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state.

A better understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures develops an enriched appreciation of Australia's cultural heritage and can lead to reconciliation. This is essential to the maturity of Australia as a nation and fundamental to the development of an Australian identity.

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Welcome

Building cultural capability within your organisation is a continual process, encompassing cultural awareness, cultural competence, and cultural safety.

This resource has been developed to help guide you and your business on its journey and should be considered as a starting point. Once you have begun to embed cultural capability, we encourage you to consider actions beyond what is contained in this resource, and those that might best suit your business.

The Cultural Capability Resource is a key action under the Queensland Government's *Paving the Way – the First Nations Training Strategy*. The Strategy includes actions that address First Nations-led training and workforce solutions, skills and training pathway opportunities, and cultural awareness skills and competency.

For more information on *Paving the Way – the First Nations Training Strategy* go to desbt.qld.gov.au/first-nations-training

Purpose

This Cultural Capability Resource has been developed for employers and employees within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Queensland. It provides practical tools and information to build awareness and cultural safety in your workplace, provide support to First Nations employees and help your organisation to be better positioned to respond to your workforce needs, now and into the future.

Please note that First Nations peoples, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and Indigenous peoples will be used interchangeably throughout this resource.

Quick Guide

Building a culturally safe workplace for all employees starts with good policies and practices and creating a supportive environment for your workforce. Developing the skills to build awareness, competency, and cultural safety takes time and is part of a journey.

Things you can do to help you get started:

- ✓ Know and acknowledge what Country your business is on.
- ✓ Include an Acknowledgement of Country on your website and/or in your office space.
- ✓ Review your employment practices and policies, with a focus on removing potential barriers and creating opportunities for First Nations peoples.
- ✓ Review your recruitment and selection processes to ensure they are inclusive for all people.
- ✓ Raise awareness of racism and unconscious bias in the workplace.
- ✓ Provide cultural awareness training for your staff to build an understanding of First Nations peoples.
- ✓ Get to know your employees, the way they work and how they like to communicate to help build trust and engagement.
- ✓ Consider developing a mentor program for First Nations employees to provide cultural support and guidance in the workplace.
- ✓ Educate your workforce on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- ✓ Share information about First Nations culturally important dates and encourage individuals to attend events such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week.
- ✓ Consider developing a First Nations engagement strategy and/or a Reconciliation Action Plan to demonstrate your commitment to reconciliation with First Nations peoples.
- ✓ Consider how you engage with First Nations people through your work, including your supply chain and subcontractors.

These actions are not exhaustive – rather, they are provided to help you start your cultural capability journey. This resource provides more detailed information on each of these activities, with suggested actions for your business.

First Nations Protocols

The protocols of providing a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country are not new practices. They have been part of First Nations cultures across Australia for thousands of years and are of great significance to many First Nations peoples.

Know what Country you are on

It is important to know and acknowledge the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Country you are on. To find out what Country your business is located on, you can:

- explore the Map of Indigenous Australia provided by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
- check in with local Elders/Traditional Owners/community
- check with the local land councils.

Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country is a protocol where First Nations Traditional Owners or Custodians welcome others to the land of their ancestors. The ceremony is carried out at significant events and formal functions involving people from other parts of the country or from overseas. This practice shows respect for the Traditional Owners and Elders of a particular area or region.

When is a Welcome to Country required?

A Welcome to Country should be conducted at major functions such as:

- openings of festivals
- award programs
- conferences
- significant community engagement forums.

A Welcome to Country should be incorporated into events where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander issues, programs or services are being promoted.

Is there a fee for a Welcome to Country?

Most Traditional Owner groups or representative groups will require a nominal fee to cover the cost of conducting the Welcome to Country ceremony. A Welcome to Country that includes a traditional dance or smoking ceremony will generally involve a more substantial payment.

What is an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Elders?

The Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Elders differs from a Welcome to Country in that it can be delivered by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

This practice demonstrates respect for First Nations cultures and recognises the importance of acknowledging Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and/or sea.

A master of ceremonies either introduces the Traditional Owner or Custodian representative to provide a Welcome to Country or makes an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Elders. Other key speakers and participants may wish to take the opportunity to also precede their discussions with an Acknowledgement.

A short pause should be taken after the acknowledgement as a sign of respect before proceedings continue.

An example of an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Elders is provided below.

We respect the traditions, values and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we acknowledge their role as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

We respectfully acknowledge the [Name of the Group if known] Traditional Owners of the land [and/or sea] on which this event is taking place and Elders both past and present.

We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, culture, and community.

Benefits of Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity fosters an inclusive and innovative workplace culture that can drive long-term success and growth for both your employees and your business.

A work environment that fosters cultural diversity recognises and respects the unique perspectives, experiences, and knowledge that employees from diverse backgrounds, including First Nations individuals, bring to the workplace. When employees with diverse cultural backgrounds collaborate, they can offer unique insights, approaches, and ideas that may not have otherwise been considered.

Employing First Nations peoples promotes cultural diversity in the workplace, contributing to a more inclusive environment. Cultural diversity promotes a broader perspective, encourages creativity, improves decision-making, and enhances a business's ability to connect with a diverse range of customers and stakeholders.

In addition to the benefits, employing First Nations peoples can have positive benefits of wellbeing as well as social impact benefits, supporting improved stakeholder relationships and engagement.

Benefits of employing First Nations people

- **Cultural diversity and inclusion:** First Nations peoples enrich the workplace by adding cultural diversity and fostering a more inclusive environment. The diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions, and ways of knowing of First Nations peoples bring different perspectives that can challenge conventional thinking and enhance problem-solving.
- **Community engagement and partnerships:** Employing First Nations peoples fosters stronger connections with local Indigenous communities. This engagement can lead to partnerships, collaborations, and mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous organisations and businesses, enhancing social responsibility and promoting cultural awareness.

- **Improved employee engagement:** Culturally diverse and aware organisations tend to have higher levels of employee engagement. When employees feel included, respected, and appreciated for their cultural identities, they become more committed to their work and the organisation's goals. Increased engagement leads to higher productivity, improved performance, and a positive impact on the bottom line.
- **Greater customer and stakeholder relationships:** In business sectors that work directly with Indigenous customers or stakeholders, such as service providers, labour hire, mining and resources, and construction, employing First Nations peoples can lead to improved relationships, trust, and cultural competency.
- **Reconciliation and social impact:** Supporting Indigenous employment aligns with the broader goals of reconciliation, equity, and inclusion. It also demonstrates a commitment to addressing historical injustices and working towards a more equitable society, while also creating positive social impacts and breaking down systemic barriers.

The benefits of cultural diversity are further enhanced when there is a focus on building cultural awareness across the workforce. These benefits are outlined in the section on [Cultural Awareness](#).

A culturally diverse organisation can have positive impacts on business performance. Cultural diversity can drive innovation, market expansion, decision-making effectiveness, employee engagement, and customer satisfaction. Embracing and leveraging cultural diversity can provide your business with a competitive advantage and contribute to long-term business success.

Racism in the Workplace

The [Diversity Council of Australia \(DCA\)](#) defines racism as “when an individual or organisation with race-based societal power discriminates, excludes or disadvantages a racially-based person because of their race, colour, descent, nationality, ethnicity, religion or immigrant status. Racism can be conscious or unconscious, active or passive, obvious or subtle.”

Racism can be:

- **interpersonal:** a person's beliefs, attitudes and actions that discriminate, exclude or disadvantage people from racially marginalised groups, and
- **systemic:** organisational policies, procedures and practices that directly or indirectly discriminate, exclude, or disadvantage people from racially marginalised groups.

The DCA provides a range of resources and videos to help organisations identify and address racism in the workplace.

Addressing racism

First Nations peoples have historically faced discrimination, dispossession, and marginalisation. This has led to ongoing disparities in employment and education opportunities. Racism in the workplace towards First Nations people is still a significant issue.

Racism can also be unconscious, where a person isn't aware that they have negative attitudes and stereotypes towards different racial groups, often without conscious awareness. These biases can influence perceptions, decisions, and actions, perpetuating systemic inequities and perpetrating unintentional harm. Understanding and addressing unconscious and overt racism is an important step toward fostering inclusivity, equality, and social justice in our societies.

Racism toward First Nations peoples

Many First Nations peoples report experiencing racism in the workplace, including:

- being overlooked for promotions
- receiving lower pay than their non-Indigenous colleagues
- being subjected to racist jokes or comments
- experiencing prejudice from customers/clients.

These experiences can have a significant impact on an individual's mental health and job satisfaction and contribute to ongoing cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

Businesses that are committed to providing a safe and inclusive workplace will actively address racism in the workplace towards First Nations peoples. To address racism in the organisation, leaders should:

- provide **training for leaders and supervisors** on how to address and resolve racism and exclusion in the workplace
- provide **training to all staff** on what constitutes racist behaviour and how to respond appropriately to a person raising concerns
- develop and promote **racism complaint procedures** and anti-discrimination compliance training.

In addition, to promote an understanding of First Nations peoples, organisations should:

- deliver **cultural awareness training** tailored to the needs of the industry and employees, to build cultural capability across the organisation
- implement **policies and procedures** that support diversity and inclusion
- promote diversity and inclusion through **acknowledgement of First Nations cultures**, development of [First Nations engagement strategies](#) and/or [Reconciliation Action Plans](#).

Unconscious biases are deeply ingrained stereotypes or prejudices someone can have without being aware of. These biases can influence attitudes, understanding, actions and decision-making, including those related to promotions and professional development opportunities.

Unconscious bias

Unconscious biases are often ingrained in our cultural and social upbringing and can influence our perceptions of certain groups of people, including First Nations peoples in Australia.

Examples of unconscious bias

Unconscious biases can affect our judgement and may cause people to make decisions in favour of one person or group to the detriment of others. Unconscious biases can reveal themselves in the workplace in different ways, such as:

- **Stereotypes and preconceptions:** First Nations peoples may face stereotypes that portray them as less competent, educated, or capable than their non-Indigenous colleagues. These stereotypes can lead to the perception that they are not suitable for certain roles or advancement opportunities.
- **'Like Me' bias:** People may have a natural tendency to gravitate towards people who are like them in terms of background, culture, or experiences. This bias can lead to a preference for promoting or supporting individuals who share similar characteristics, unintentionally excluding First Nations employees.
- **Lack of familiarity:** Unfamiliarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and perspectives can lead to biases based on ignorance or misunderstandings. Lack of awareness about First Nations traditions and values can create barriers and limit opportunities for First Nations employees.
- **Halo or horn effect:** Unconscious biases can also be influenced by an employee's overall perception of a person. For example, if a First Nations employee has made a mistake or received criticism in the past, it may lead to a negative perception that affects future promotion or development opportunities, overshadowing their other skills and achievements.

- **Tokenism:** Tokenism occurs when an individual or group is included or promoted to create an appearance of diversity or inclusivity without genuinely valuing their contributions. First Nations employees may face situations, where their presence is seen as a symbolic gesture rather than a true recognition of their abilities and potential for growth.
- **Assumptions about cultural commitments:** Unconscious biases may also lead to assumptions about First Nations employees' cultural commitments and obligations, which can create barriers to their career advancement. For instance, assuming First Nations employees will prioritise community responsibilities over professional development opportunities without considering their individual aspirations and goals.
- **Lack of role models:** Limited representation of First Nations leaders or mentors within an organisation can reinforce unconscious biases. If individuals do not have positive role models to observe and interact with, they may subconsciously question their potential for success and growth.

These biases can also affect employment and education opportunities, leading to a cycle of disadvantage and marginalisation. It's important to note that these biases are unintentional and often arise from societal stereotypes and historical contexts. Raising awareness about unconscious biases and implementing strategies to mitigate their influence is crucial for creating a fair and inclusive work environment.

How do I address unconscious bias?

Unconscious bias exists in everyone, what is important is to understand how it may impact the way you work, and the decisions you make. To address unconscious bias, businesses need to **raise awareness** about its existence and effects through education and training programs that assist leaders, employees and stakeholders recognise their biases and develop strategies to address them.

Ensure policies and practices are designed to be inclusive and culturally responsive to First Nations peoples' needs and perspectives. Businesses can take several steps to address unconscious bias and promote a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

Some effective strategies include:

- **Review and revise policies:** Review your policies in consultation with an external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subject matter expert to bring to light any potential unconscious biases in your work practices. Consider how policies related to promotions, performance evaluations, and professional development can be adjusted to minimise the influence of unconscious bias.
- **Education and training:** Provide comprehensive training on unconscious bias and its impact on decision-making processes. This training should raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and provide practical strategies for mitigating bias in the workplace.
- **Diverse hiring and promotions:** When implementing strategies to increase diversity in recruitment and promotion processes, establish clear criteria and evaluation methods that focus on skills and potential rather than relying solely on subjective judgements. Consider implementing blind recruitment techniques, such as removing names and personal information from resumes during initial screening.

- **Accountability and transparency:** Hold decision-makers accountable for recruitment decisions and addressing unconscious bias. Establish transparent and inclusive processes for promotions and development opportunities, ensuring that decisions are based on merit and fair evaluation criteria.
- **Diversity and inclusion committees:** Form internal committees or working groups focused on diversity and inclusion. These committees can develop initiatives, policies, and practices to combat bias, provide guidance to employees, and monitor progress toward inclusion goals.
- **Mentoring and sponsorship programs:** Establish mentoring and sponsorship programs that connect individuals from underrepresented groups, including First Nations employees, with senior leaders who can provide guidance, support, and advocacy. These programs can help break down barriers and provide opportunities for career growth.
- **Ongoing evaluation and improvement:** Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives and strategies implemented to address unconscious bias. Collect feedback from employees, measure progress, and adjust as necessary.

By actively addressing unconscious bias, businesses can create a more equitable and inclusive work environment where all employees have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Unconscious bias can be harmful and can lead to discrimination, disengagement and negatively impact the performance of First Nations peoples in the workplace.

Addressing unconscious bias is an important step towards promoting equity and social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

Lateral Violence in First Nations Communities

Lateral violence, also referred to as internalised colonialism, happens when people who have been oppressed for a long time feel powerless, and unleash their fear, anger and frustration against their own community members rather than against their 'oppressor'.

For First Nations communities, lateral violence is a part of a larger cycle of historical trauma, such as the impacts of colonisation, dispossession, and forced assimilation, which continue to play a role in perpetuating lateral violence. Additionally, social and economic disparities, limited access to resources and opportunities, and systemic racism also contribute to the frustration and power imbalances that can fuel lateral violence.

In practical terms, lateral violence refers to the harmful behaviours, such as bullying, gossiping, and undermining, that occur as a response to ongoing systemic oppression.

These behaviours can occur both in the community and in the workplace.

Impact of lateral violence

Lateral violence has severe consequences for individuals and communities, perpetuating cycles of violence and trauma. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), lateral violence undermines community cohesion, erodes trust, and hinders collective efforts toward empowerment and self-determination. For First Nations employees, lateral violence may impact their performance and wellbeing at work, this includes:

- **Decreased productivity:** Employees who experience or witness lateral violence may become demotivated, distracted, and less engaged in their work as their focus shifts from tasks and goals at work, to managing conflicts and navigating hostile interactions in the community or workplace.
- **Increased turnover and absenteeism:** Individuals who experience or observe lateral violence may choose to leave the workplace to seek a healthier and more supportive environment. This turnover disrupts team dynamics, recruitment and training costs, and impacts workplace morale.

- **Poor mental health and wellbeing:** Lateral violence takes a toll on employees' mental health and wellbeing. It creates a stressful and emotionally draining atmosphere, leading to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout. The negative impact on mental health can further exacerbate absenteeism and decrease employee satisfaction.
- **Impacted interpersonal relationships:** Lateral violence also erodes trust and damages interpersonal relationships among colleagues. It creates an environment of suspicion and hostility, hindering effective communication, collaboration, and teamwork. Employees may hesitate to seek support or share ideas, based on their experience at home, or in the community, leading to decreased innovation and problem-solving.
- **Decreased employee engagement and satisfaction:** Lateral violence undermines employee engagement and job satisfaction. When employees do not feel safe or respected at work or home, their commitment and loyalty may be affected. This can result in a lack of enthusiasm, decreased productivity, and a negative impact on the overall organisational culture.

Understanding and addressing lateral violence

Managing the impact of lateral violence begins by:

- Recognising lateral violence as a response to structural oppression and developing effective interventions.
- Developing community-led approaches to engagement, cultural healing practices, and trauma-informed frameworks that support your employees and stakeholders.
- Promoting culturally safe spaces, fostering supportive relationships, and providing workplace support to First Nations and non-Indigenous employees.

Benefits of addressing racism and unconscious bias

Providing a workplace that calls out racism and addresses unconscious bias in the workplace can have several positive impacts on the business including **employee engagement, productivity and staff attendance**.

By taking action to educate about racism and bring awareness to unconscious bias you will create a more inclusive and equitable work environment, boosting employee morale and engagement.

- Fostering an inclusive environment where all employees feel respected and valued can create a sense of belonging and psychological safety. When employees are free from the negative effects of racism, they can fully engage in their work, contribute their diverse perspectives, and collaborate effectively with their colleagues. This heightened engagement leads to increased productivity, improved teamwork, and a positive impact on the organisation's bottom line.
- When your employees feel valued, respected, and supported, they are more likely to be motivated, productive, and committed to their work. Addressing racism fosters a sense of belonging and encourages individuals to bring their authentic selves to the workplace.

- A by-product of creating a more inclusive and equitable work environment is a culture of respect and trust among employees and reduced turnover. When individuals feel safe to express their opinions, share ideas, and challenge each other constructively, collaboration and teamwork flourish. This leads to more effective communication, better decision-making, and improved overall performance.
- Efforts to address racism in the workplace also contribute to improved staff attendance and retention rates. When employees feel valued, respected, and supported, they are less likely to leave. Not only does this foster loyalty, but it can also increase productivity and performance. When employees feel supported and empowered to perform their best, productivity and overall performance tend to improve. Reducing turnover also saves recruitment and training costs and helps maintain corporate knowledge.

Fostering an inclusive workplace that addresses racism helps create a psychologically safe environment that allows employees to focus on their work without the added burden of discrimination or bias. This, in turn, positively impacts the business's bottom line by optimising efficiency and output.



What is First Nations Cultural Capability?

Cultural capability includes cultural awareness, cultural competence and cultural safety. It's a continuous learning process – it isn't achieved after a single training session.

In practical terms, cultural capability refers to the ability of individuals and organisations to effectively interact and work with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. It encompasses a range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable individuals and organisations to understand, respect, and appreciate the cultural differences of First Nations peoples, and to adapt their behaviour and practices to better engage with people from different cultures.

Cultural capability is a critical component of creating inclusive and respectful workplaces and communities that value and celebrate the unique cultures and histories of First Nations peoples. It is essential for promoting diversity, equity, and reconciliation in Australia.

Building cultural capability involves developing an awareness of one's own cultural biases, assumptions, and perspectives, and being open to learning about and understanding the cultural perspectives of First Nations peoples.

It also involves developing effective communication skills that can bridge cultural differences, such as active listening, asking clarifying questions, and using appropriate nonverbal cues.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence is an element of cultural capability and refers to the ability to understand, appreciate, and effectively interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. It involves having the knowledge, awareness, and skills to navigate and respect cultural differences and promote inclusivity.

Cultural competence is an ongoing process that requires continuous learning, self-reflection, and a commitment to fostering inclusivity. By developing cultural competence, individuals and organisations can enhance their ability to engage effectively and respectfully with First Nations peoples and employees from all cultural backgrounds.

What is cultural safety?

Cultural safety is about creating and maintaining an environment where all people are treated in a culturally respectful manner. It requires everyone to be aware of the impact of their own culture, cultural values and biases. By promoting cultural safety, employers can help to address historical and ongoing injustices, promote reconciliation, and build a more inclusive and equitable workplace.

For First Nations peoples, a culturally safe workplace:

- is safe, respectful and inclusive
- values, acknowledges and appreciates their cultural practices, beliefs and traditions
- does not challenge or deny their identity and experience.

Cultural safety recognises that First Nations employees may have experienced historical and ongoing discrimination, racism, and trauma, and that their cultural identities and values may differ from those of non-Indigenous employees.

“Cultural safety means being able to practise your culture free of ridicule or condemnation. It occurs when a workplace acknowledges, respects, and accommodates difference.”

Gari Yala report

Understanding the perspectives of First Nations peoples

Cultural safety is about creating a workplace culture that is supportive of First Nations employees, and that provides opportunities for their professional and personal growth. This can involve:

- offering flexible work arrangements to accommodate cultural obligations (such as sorry business)
- providing access to culturally appropriate health services and support (such as employee assistance programs)
- promoting First Nations leadership and mentoring programs.

Your approach to cultural safety may be dependent on your industry and the roles being performed by your First Nations employees.

At a minimum, all businesses should provide opportunities for their employees to undertake cultural awareness training to build an understanding of the history of First Nations peoples and the power imbalances that exist between First Nations and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia. This includes acknowledging and addressing the ongoing impacts of colonisation and discrimination on Indigenous peoples and working to create a safe and supportive workplace culture that empowers First Nations employees.

Did you know?

Creating a culturally safe workplace and promoting an inclusive workplace can lead to increased engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction for all, as well as improved organisational outcomes.

Key actions to create a culturally safe workplace

Cultural safety requires employers and colleagues to understand First Nations cultures, histories, and perspectives, and take steps to address any unconscious biases, stereotyping, or microaggressions (everyday subtle instances of racism) that may be present in the workplace. It also requires a recognition that cultural safety is a shared responsibility, and that all employees have a role to play in creating and maintaining a culturally safe workplace.

Some specific actions that businesses can do to help create a culturally safe workplace for their employees include:

- provide **cultural awareness training** for all employees to increase their understanding and appreciation of First Nations cultures and histories
- develop **policies and procedures** that reflect First Nations perspectives and values, and are designed to support and empower First Nations employees
- ensure First Nations employees are **represented at all levels of the organisation**, including in leadership positions. When first engaging with First Nations employees, be sure to communicate the career paths available to all employees, in addition to any First Nations specific mentor or support programs.
- provide **opportunities for First Nations employees to engage in cultural activities** and to contribute to the development of cultural programs and initiatives and encourage non-Indigenous employees to attend
- **involve First Nations employees in decision-making processes** that affect them (such as developing [Reconciliation Action Plans](#), [First Nations Engagement Strategies](#) and/or [First Nations employment programs](#))
- create a workplace environment that is free from racism, discrimination, and harassment through the **communication of workplace values**.

Creating cultural safety requires a collective effort and a commitment from all individuals within a business. By implementing these actions and embracing a culture of cultural safety, you can create a workplace environment that is welcoming, supportive, and empowering for First Nations employees.

Cultural Awareness

Building cultural awareness in the workplace can have significant benefits for both employee wellbeing and business performance.

Benefits for employee wellbeing

- **Increased sense of belonging:** Cultural awareness fosters an inclusive environment where employees from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other diverse backgrounds feel valued, respected, and included. This sense of belonging can reduce feelings of isolation, promoting a supportive network, and creating a positive work atmosphere
- **Reduced bias and discrimination:** Building cultural awareness helps combat bias, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices in the workplace. By promoting understanding and empathy, it contributes to a fair and equitable work environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees feel safe, appreciated, and free from discrimination. This fosters psychological safety and promotes overall wellbeing.
- **Enhanced emotional intelligence:** Cultural awareness helps to cultivate emotional intelligence by encouraging individuals to understand and manage their own emotions as well as recognise and empathise with the emotions of others. The development of emotional intelligence, or EQ, is crucial for building strong relationships, resolving conflicts, and creating a supportive work culture, leading to improved employee mental and emotional wellbeing.

Benefits for business performance

- **Diverse perspectives and innovation:** A culturally diverse and aware workplace encourages the inclusion of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes and problem-solving. By considering a wide range of viewpoints, organisations can foster creativity, innovation, and adaptability. This leads to the development of unique ideas, improved products or services, and a competitive edge in the market.
- **Effective collaboration and teamwork:** Cultural awareness facilitates effective collaboration among teams with diverse cultural backgrounds. Employees with cultural competency can navigate cultural differences, communicate effectively, and build strong working relationships. This promotes teamwork, cooperation, and synergy, resulting in higher productivity and the successful achievement of business goals.
- **Enhanced customer relationships:** Cultural awareness enables organisations to understand and connect with their diverse customer base more effectively. When employees are culturally sensitive and can adapt their approach to different cultural contexts, they can build stronger customer relationships, anticipate needs, and provide tailored solutions. Positive customer relationships lead to customer loyalty, repeat business, and increased revenue.
- **Attraction of global opportunities:** In a globalised business landscape, cultural awareness is vital for organisations seeking international expansion or partnerships. By understanding and respecting cultural nuances, organisations can navigate global markets successfully, establish fruitful collaborations, and seize international business opportunities.
- **Positive employer branding:** Businesses that prioritise cultural awareness and promote reconciliation create a positive employer brand that attracts top talent. When potential employees perceive a company as inclusive, respectful of diversity, and committed to cultural awareness, they are more likely to choose it as their preferred employer.

Implementing cultural awareness training in a small business can help create a more inclusive and culturally sensitive work environment. It is also a key element for building a culturally safe workplace.

Cultural awareness training

Cultural awareness training helps individuals and organisations to develop an understanding of the cultural differences that exist in Australian society, particularly those that relate to First Nations peoples. Cultural awareness training aims to increase knowledge and understanding of the different cultural practices, beliefs, values, and norms of First Nations peoples, and to promote respect, empathy, and understanding across cultural boundaries.

Cultural awareness training provides non-Indigenous employees and leaders with the opportunity to:

- understand the cultural differences of First Nations peoples
- understand the unique lived experiences and cultural identities of individuals, and families
- understand the impact of historical policies on First Nations peoples, identity, and their communities, and
- learn the best way to engage or build respect and relationships with First Nations peoples.

What cultural awareness training covers

Cultural awareness training can take different forms, depending on the specific needs and goals of the individual or organisation and can be delivered through in-person workshops, online courses, or other forms of interactive learning. The training may cover a range of topics, including:

- the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- stereotypes, biases, and cultural misunderstandings that can arise in cross-cultural interactions
- communication styles, nonverbal cues, and other cultural differences that can impact workplace relationships
- strategies for promoting cultural awareness and inclusion in the workplace.

It is often used by employers to help employees to work more effectively with colleagues and customers from diverse cultural backgrounds and promotes cultural understanding and respect. Cultural awareness training is a key component of efforts to build more inclusive workplaces for First Nations and non-Indigenous employees and to address issues of racism, discrimination, and social inequality.

Implementing cultural awareness training

Building the cultural capability of the business starts with the business leadership. Therefore, to effectively implement cultural awareness training, ensure training is provided to all levels of the organisation. At a minimum, cultural awareness training should be delivered to:

- Leadership (including Board level if your business has one)
- Management / supervisors / front line team leaders
- all staff.

It should be supported by workplace policies, such as a code of conduct, anti-discrimination and anti-racism policies, and grievance or complaints procedures.

Where possible, engage an Indigenous business and/or local First Nations community to help design and deliver your training. This ensures the tone and content of the training is culturally appropriate.

Cultural awareness training delivered in person, and on Country where possible, is likely to have a greater impact on your employees. Consider the way to engage your staff and the best approach for their needs. Subject to the size and location/s of your business, you may need to consider a combination of training styles to meet the needs of the business.

There are many First Nations businesses that can assist with designing and implementing a training program to help build the cultural awareness and cultural safety of your workplace.

Cultural awareness in induction programs

If just starting out, including cultural awareness within your workforce induction program. Cultural awareness induction training introduces your workforce to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and can provide a better understanding of cultural heritage for those organisations working on Country such as those in the mining, resources, and construction industries.

A cultural awareness induction program should include, as a minimum:

- a Welcome to Country video from a Traditional Owner/ Elder or Acknowledgement of Country
- important information about the local Traditional Owners of the land/Country
- what the Traditional Owners expect from the visitors who are working on their land/Country.

Additional information that may be included in a cultural awareness program may include:

- why cultural awareness is important
- details on a Welcome to Country vs Acknowledgement of Country
- Indigenous history and heritage
- cultural customs, values, and beliefs including
 - Country / Land
 - Elders / Respect
 - Kinship
- modern impact and effects of past policies
- key issues affecting Indigenous peoples
- important dates and historically significant dates
- the benefits of inclusion for all staff.

When considering the type of cultural awareness training that meets the needs of your business and employees, consider your business culture and where you are on your cultural capability journey, from just beginning to develop cultural awareness or enhancing cultural competence, to developing a culturally and psychologically safe workplace.

Consider:

- the delivery method of your training, such as online, in person, or on Country
- involvement of local First Nations communities in the development and delivery of your training
- the type of activities that may be needed to support the training, such as events that showcase First Nations cultures (e.g., through art, language or food), policies and other practices
- the investment required to enable the fullest participation of your employees.

Cultural awareness is about providing your employees with an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, values and beliefs.

If you are working on Country, be sure to include an element of cultural heritage provided by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge holder/Elder or representative.

Working with First Nations employees

While this resource highlights the need to be aware of, and accommodate for, the cultural differences of First Nations peoples in the workplace, it is important to remember that each First Nations person is an individual.

Challenges experienced by First Nations employees

The experience of First Nations employees in the workplace can vary widely depending on their geographical location, occupation, and other factors. Based on general trends and information, challenges, may include:

- **Cultural barriers:** This includes a lack of understanding or respect for their cultural values, practices, and traditions. This can create feelings of isolation and exclusion.
- **Discrimination:** Unfortunately, this is still a pervasive issue in many workplaces, and First Nations employees may experience discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, or culture.
- **Lack of representation:** First Nations employees may feel underrepresented in their workplace, particularly in leadership positions. This can contribute to feelings of marginalisation and exclusion.
- **Limited access to resources:** Many First Nations employees work in rural or remote areas where access to resources like training, networking, and professional development opportunities may be limited.
- **Historical trauma:** First Nations employees may carry the weight of historical trauma with them, which can affect their mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Employers should be sensitive to this and provide resources and support as needed.
- **Work-life balance challenges:** First Nations employees may face unique challenges in balancing work and family obligations, particularly if they are caregivers for elderly relatives or children.

These challenges for First Nations employees can result in:

- assumptions about their performance or capability
- lack of opportunities to ask questions or to engage in professional development
- feelings of shame that they don't know how to do parts of the job that others can do, and shame about asking questions
- uncertainty about who to ask, or talk to, about the role
- feeling isolated and lonely at work.

Situations described above can result in First Nations employees being exposed to unconscious bias, and racism. It may also lead to unsafe practices or underperformance by the employee. These arise when workplaces are not prepared to work with diverse people and where the organisation lacks cultural awareness.

Workers who face these circumstances are more likely to injure themselves and experience mental ill-health, than workers who are more comfortable and confident in their workplace. It is crucial to prepare your workplace to understand and support First Nations employees.

Communication

First Nations peoples may communicate in ways that differ from non-Indigenous Australians. Be aware of this, to develop mutual respect and understanding and create a positive and supportive work environment.

When engaging with First Nations employees in everyday communication, including at meetings and when interviewing First Nations peoples, be aware that verbal and nonverbal cues may have different meanings for First Nations employees.

Language

When engaging with First Nations employees, especially if they are new to your industry, they may not be aware of industry jargon or technical language relating to the role. To overcome potential communication and language barriers:

- avoid using complex words and jargon
- when providing tasks or directions, check your employee's understanding of what you have said
- check that you understand the meaning of words the employee has used, and if you need to ask questions, explain why
- when introducing concepts, instructions, and terms, use diagrams, images, or videos to support the discussion where appropriate.

Silence

Silence does not necessarily mean a person does not understand. For First Nations peoples, silence may signal they are listening and thinking about what the other person is saying and may wait to hear ideas from others before expressing their own views.

Allow for periods of silence in interviews, meetings, and general conversation, and invite the First Nations employee to respond in their own time.

Avoid using First Nations or traditional language, or colloquialisms unless you have a clear understanding of the context and use of the words and have permission from the employee and/or community Elders or knowledge holders.

Eye contact

Making direct eye contact can have different meanings depending on the individual, community, or cultural practices. In some First Nations cultures, avoiding direct eye contact is a sign of respect, while in others, it is a sign of honesty and trustworthiness. When speaking with First Nations employees, be aware of their cultural context and do not apply a negative interpretation when eye contact is avoided.

The best way to navigate eye contact is to respectfully ask the person (or community where appropriate) about their cultural protocols and expectations regarding eye contact. It is important to approach this conversation with an open mind and a willingness to learn and respect their cultural practices. Be sure to show a genuine interest in their culture and traditions.

Distance and personal space

When working with First Nations employees be aware of the distance to which you are standing near a person. People from diverse backgrounds, First Nations employees, and those from the opposite gender, may feel uncomfortable or threatened if you stand too close or stand over them when you are talking.

Remember to seek permission if you need to touch an employee, and always explain the reasons why.

Tips for communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

- Don't mimic Indigenous speech patterns or attempt to speak Indigenous English as a way of encouraging a First Nations person to be more open.
- Think about the language you use in written, verbal, and nonverbal communication. Don't overcomplicate your communication.
- Respect the use of silence and don't mistake it for misunderstanding a topic or issue.
- Always wait your turn to speak.

Build Relationships

Relationships and connections are key to working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Building positive relationships with First Nations employees can help to create a more inclusive and welcoming workplace. You can do this through:

- regular communication, recognition and respect for their cultural values
- encouraging open and two-way communication with First Nations employees
- providing opportunities to share their ideas and opinions
- providing feedback on their work.

In general, First Nations peoples want to get to know you as a person, not just as their boss. The kinds of things a First Nations employees consider when deciding to work for your organisation are:

- Is this someone who will respect me and the different cultural understanding I bring?
- Is this someone who will support me without judgement?
- Is this someone who values my contribution to the organisation?

When developing a relationship:

- building trust and honesty is important to relationship-building
- being part of something and developing collective efforts helps build a connection with the work
- put in the time and be patient
- be interested in them. Chat with your employees to understand their backgrounds, family, and experience. Be sure your engagement is genuine.

Do not assume cultural knowledge

When working with First Nations employees, be careful not to assume all First Nations peoples have an in-depth knowledge of their culture or history. For various reasons, including separation from community and family, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been isolated from learning about their community and culture.

Asking questions about such things can often make First Nations peoples feel uncomfortable. Take the time to get to know the individual before making any assumptions about their knowledge or expecting them to share their experiences. First Nations peoples may wish to share their knowledge as they become more comfortable in the workplace.

Be respectful

Regardless of the cultural norms, it is always important to be respectful and mindful of the individual's comfort level.

Attracting and recruiting First Nations employees

After preparing your organisation to work effectively with First Nations employees, the next step is to understand how to attract and recruit First Nations candidates.

First Nations recruitment should follow a culturally inclusive recruitment process that acknowledges cultural diversity and aims to enable all candidates to demonstrate their capabilities. A culturally inclusive process not only helps you to strengthen your capability to identify the best person for the role, but it will also help you build a more diverse workforce.

Preparing job advertisements

Consider what the job requires: the tasks, skills, knowledge, and experience required for the position. To reach a wider range of potential applicants, and attract First Nations candidates, instead of solely focusing on formal qualifications, which may not always be necessary, emphasise the responsibilities and required skills of the role.

- Consider whether job qualifications that are listed as mandatory can be substituted with relevant life or work experience and practical knowledge.
- When creating job advertisements, use plain and inclusive language and avoid technical jargon.

When recruiting First Nations employees, ensure the organisation follows its usual recruitment processes, adding in additional steps or making changes only where required. This helps minimise any unconscious bias regarding the success and/or suitability of First Nations employees.

Advertising your roles

Consider where and how your prospective candidates may find your advertisement. That is, are they seeing your vacancy notice on a job board, your business's social media pages, on an online job search website, or in the paper?

If you are committed to attracting First Nations peoples to your organisation, it may be worthwhile to consider First Nations focused platforms when advertising your roles in addition to your usual attraction strategies. Examples may include:

- community social media pages
- Koori Mail
- Indigenous Employment Australia
- Word-of-mouth
- First Nations job fairs
- Torres News and Cape News (Weipa)
- First Nations Telegraph.

When preparing your job advertisement include:

- a clear description of the role
- leave entitlements including [cultural leave](#)
- hours of work and potential for flexible working arrangements
- reference to your [Reconciliation Action Plan and/or First Nations engagement strategy](#) (if applicable)
- a statement encouraging First Nations peoples to apply, such as *“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are encouraged to apply for this job”*
- images of First Nations members working in your organisations (with their consent).

When setting time frames for responses, ensure they are long enough to allow potential candidates to hear about the position through word-of-mouth.

Remove unconscious bias

Be aware of potential unconscious biases.

- Consider how you can simplify and standardise your process to reduce the effect of personal bias in the decision making. Understand what hiring prejudices are and how they operate.
- Consider the wording you use in your job advertisements, including the use of neutral or positive language.

Assessment

When using an assessment centre as part of your recruitment and selection process, be sure to demonstrate a genuine respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and understanding that some candidates may not understand or have experience with an assessment centre.

- Communicate the purpose of the assessment centre, and expectation of the candidates, including dress code, attendance, behaviour, and timing of the day.
- To avoid misunderstanding, provide these details in writing, and check in with candidates before the day to ensure they have understood the information provided.
- Provide candidates with examples of the type of activities that may be included to help them prepare. Be sure to include a variety of activities to accommodate different personalities and communication styles.
- Recognise verbal and nonverbal communication styles when developing the assessment centre activities. For example, it is common for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to use storytelling as a way of sharing knowledge, experiences, and conveying messages indirectly.

When assessing candidates consider that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communication often emphasises indirectness, where messages may be conveyed through stories, metaphors, or subtle cues.

Silence and pauses can be meaningful in providing time for reflection and contemplation. It can be seen as a respectful way of acknowledging the significance of a topic or allowing space for others to contribute.

Body language, such as gestures, postures, and hand movements, can be significant in communication. Be aware of eye contact, facial expressions and nonverbal cues that may convey meaning and emphasis.

Be aware that some people may choose to bring a support person to their interview with them. Some organisations, in fact, encourage this.

When screening applications from First Nations candidates, be aware that some applicants may not have experience in preparing a resume. To assist First Nations candidates, when advertising the role be clear on the information you require in the resume, such as personal information, work experience and/or hobbies.

Be mindful of the potential barriers and unconscious biases when preparing job advertisements or reviewing applications. Focus on the minimum requirements required for success, such as behaviours and attitudes, rather than qualifications (if appropriate).

Interviewing

Various approaches should be considered when interviewing First Nations candidates or employees to help make the process less intimidating.

- Be conscious of **differences in communication styles**. Allow time for the candidate to think through questions and their answers. Silence does not always mean they do not understand.
- **Explain the role clearly** and what is expected of the successful applicant, as well as the interview and appointment process.
- **Be clear on the type of answer you are looking for**, e.g., simple answer, or detailed example of their experience. Remember, a brief response may not indicate the candidate does not know any more, but that they are shy or feel ‘shame’. When seeking more detailed answers, do this in a conversational manner.
- **Make the environment relaxed** with some general welcoming conversation and be genuinely interested in the person. Seek to build rapport and trust before embarking on probing questions.
- Include a **First Nations person on the selection panel**, whenever possible.
- Ensure **interview panel members have undertaken cultural awareness and/or capability training**.

You may consider:

- **examining recruitment and hiring procedures**
- **promoting equal opportunities**
- **reviewing your performance evaluation processes to ensure they are fair**
- **developing policies, such as an anti-discrimination, anti-racism, and workplace behaviour policies.**

Review your employment practices and policies

Reviewing your employment practices and policies is an essential step towards building a culturally safe workplace for all employees. By ensuring that your policies align with diversity, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity, you create an environment where individuals from various backgrounds can thrive and feel valued.

The Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) has developed a series of guides to assist with recruitment processes and provide practical tips and tools to support employers to develop an inclusive recruitment and selection process. The [ORIC](#) resources can assist with the recruitment process, drafting job advertisements and selection criteria, sample interview questions and selecting suitable applicants.

Onboarding First Nations employees

Providing a safe and respectful workplace for First Nations employees goes beyond providing an inclusive recruitment process. Once a First Nations candidate is recruited it is important to onboard them well to ensure they are supported during the first few months of the job.

Onboarding a new First Nations employee into a job provides a great opportunity to establish a positive and inclusive workplace culture. Below are some steps you can take to onboard a First Nations employee in a respectful and culturally appropriate way.

- **Welcome and orientation session:** Take the time to welcome the new employee to the organisation and provide an overview of the company culture, policies, and procedures, including [cultural leave](#) and provisions for [Sorry business](#). Set clear expectations regarding hours of work, uniform, breaks and behaviour. Provide regular feedback and support to help them achieve success. Make sure the employee is aware of the company's policies and procedures, as well as their rights and responsibilities as an employee. This can include information on workplace health and safety, employee benefits, and any specific policies that are relevant to their role.
- **Mentoring and support with their role:** Assign a mentor (e.g., a peer or supervisor) to support the First Nations employee during their first 90 days. For many First Nations peoples or those new to the industry, your workplace may seem foreign and daunting. A mentor or buddy will help them navigate the organisation, learn the job, and build relationships with colleagues.

- **Connection to other First Nations employees and community:** To support the development of an inclusive culture and reduce the risk of the First Nations employee feeling out of place and experiencing culture shock, provide opportunities for the employee to engage with other First Nations staff and community members, attend cultural events, or participate in community activities.

Where appropriate, provide access to cultural resources. Offer resources such as First Nations-specific support services or cultural advisors to help the employee connect with and access cultural resources they may need, such as culturally appropriate and/or First Nations Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. A range of services can be found by searching key words online, such as 'First Nations Employee Assistance Programs.'

These services can help First Nations employees manage workplace shock, or challenges and potential responsibilities of family, community, and the responsibilities of the role.

- **Ensure the work environment is culturally appropriate and respectful:** Providing cultural awareness training to all employees to help them understand the importance of cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity in the workplace.

Cultural awareness training can be provided in various ways, but may include education on the values, beliefs, and traditions of First Nations peoples, First Nations culture including art, language and food, history, and ways of being, including communication styles.

Consider the inclusion of First Nations mental health training to ensure First Nations employees are supported.

- **Recognise and respect the employee's cultural obligations and values:** First Nations employees may have family and cultural obligations that may impact their work. During their onboarding get to know your employee to understand what their commitments may be.
- **Communicate your organisation's policy regarding taking time off for cultural events or ceremonies, such as sorry business, and be clear if this time is paid or unpaid.** Where possible, offer flexible work arrangements to accommodate requests for cultural business.
- **Encourage the employee to ask questions and provide feedback throughout the onboarding process:** This can help to build trust and establish a positive working relationship. Be patient and flexible, recognising the employee may take some time to build trust and may require additional support and guidance as they adjust to their new job and workplace culture.

Supporting First Nations employees

In addition to building a culturally safe workplace, there are simple things you can do to support First Nations employees. Provided below are examples of actions you can take to help your employee feel safe and productive in the workplace.

- Promote and support cultural connections with all employees and local First Nations communities and Elders.
- Prepare the workplace and managers by providing cultural awareness training that builds their understanding of the history of First Nations peoples in Australia.
- In addition to regular or formal supervision, provide opportunities for informal discussion, conversation, and check-ins with employees, focusing on building a relationship and getting to know them.
- Ensure your employees are aware of First Nations specific support networks and/or employee assistance programs that are available to them.
- Remember First Nations employees may also have experience of issues such as grief, loss and trauma and will be at various stages in their journey to healing.

Building good relationships at work takes time and requires mutual respect and understanding. Be sure non-Indigenous employees understand that First Nations peoples are not experts on all aspects of culture and community life and don't speak for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ask the employee first if they wish to comment or share their experiences.

First Nations mental health training

First Nations mental health training refers to specialised programs and initiatives designed to support the mental wellbeing of First Nations peoples. This type of training empowers individuals with knowledge and skills to assist First Nations peoples who may be experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis until appropriate professional help is received or the crisis resolves.

First Nations mental health training aims to address the unique historical, cultural, and socio-political factors that impact the mental health of Indigenous communities and promote culturally appropriate care, and typically covers:

- historical and cultural context
- traditional healing and cultural practices
- trauma-informed care
- cultural competency and respectful communication
- the importance of community engagement and collaboration in addressing First Nations mental health needs
- First Nations mental health models and best practices.

First Nations mental health training can assist in building a supportive and culturally safe environment and the provision of respectful care to First Nations individuals and communities. It helps bridge the gaps in understanding and improves access to quality mental health services for First Nations peoples, contributing to overall wellbeing and resilience.

Managing difficult conversations

Managing or navigating difficult conversations can be challenging for both the employer and employee. These conversations with First Nations peoples in the workplace bring further complexity and should be implemented with careful consideration for the specific needs and preferences of the individuals involved, and the workplace context.

- **Acknowledge the imbalance of power:** Recognise there may be an inherent power imbalance between non-Indigenous individuals and First Nations peoples due to historical and systemic factors that extend beyond a role or organisational position. Approach conversations with respect, and a willingness to listen and learn. Acknowledge the historical context and the impact it has on the dynamics within the workplace.
- **Engage an external consultant:** To assist the management of difficult conversations, you may consider hiring an external consultant with expertise in First Nations cultural competency and workplace dynamics to provide valuable guidance. Consultants can help create a safe space for dialogue, facilitate conversations, and provide insights and support to managers and supervisors into the unique challenges faced by First Nations peoples. This approach may also help to demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive and culturally sensitive workplace environment.
- **Establish mentoring relationships:** Pairing employees with First Nations mentors within the organisation can foster understanding, cultural exchange, and relationship-building. Mentors can provide guidance on cultural protocols, values, and perspectives, helping non-Indigenous individuals navigate difficult conversations with sensitivity and respect. Mentoring relationships should also be considered for leaders and supervisors to help build their cultural awareness and pro-actively build their capability to manage First Nations employees. Mentors also contribute to mutual learning and bridge the gap between different worldviews.

Any practices or strategies to support leaders, supervisors and First Nations employees manage difficult conversations should be implemented with careful consideration. It's crucial to foster an environment where open communication, respect, and cultural understanding are valued and promoted.

Managing expectations

Performance management requires an environment free of ambiguity, where both the manager and employee feel comfortable providing feedback. When performance managing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, it's important to approach the process with cultural sensitivity and respect. Below are five considerations for employees to ensure they maintain a respectful relationship with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

- **Establish clear performance expectations:** Communicate performance expectations, goals, and objectives to your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Take the time to have open and honest discussions about what is expected from them and ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities. This clarity can help guide their performance and provide a foundation for effective performance management.
- **Provide ongoing feedback and support:** Regularly provide constructive feedback to your employees, focusing on their strengths and areas for improvement. Be mindful of different communication styles and preferences, as well as any cultural nuances that may influence how feedback is received. Offer support and resources to help employees enhance their skills and address any performance gaps.
- **Consider cultural perspectives and values:** Recognise and respect the unique cultural perspectives and values that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees bring to the workplace. Understand that cultural obligations and community commitments may occasionally impact work performance. Be open to discussing these matters with empathy and flexibility, seeking ways to accommodate cultural responsibilities while maintaining productivity and performance standards.
- **Cultivate a culturally inclusive work environment:** Foster an inclusive workplace culture that acknowledges and celebrates the cultural diversity of your employees. Encourage open dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This can help create a safe and supportive environment where employees can perform at their best.
- **Seek cultural guidance and collaboration:** Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, subject matter experts and/or organisations to seek guidance and collaboration on cultural matters. Consider partnering with cultural advisors or Elders who can provide valuable insights and support. Involving these stakeholders can help develop strategies for effective performance management that align with cultural protocols and practices.

Managing performance

Despite best efforts to build a strong relationship and provide support for your employees, sometimes you will find yourself in a position where you need to manage the performance of your employees.

When managing the performance of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee, there are additional considerations to keep in mind. These considerations are essential for promoting cultural awareness, ensuring equitable treatment, and maximising employee engagement.

- **Respect cultural protocols and communication styles:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures often have specific protocols and communication styles. Be aware of these cultural nuances and adapt your communication approach accordingly.

Some people may prefer indirect communication, storytelling, or nonverbal cues. Understanding and respecting these cultural preferences can foster effective communication and enhance performance management.

- **Consider flexible work arrangements:** In some cases, your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees may have cultural obligations or community commitments that require flexibility in their work arrangements. Where possible, explore options for flexible scheduling or leave arrangements to accommodate cultural responsibilities early in the working relationship. Establishing the boundaries of work early can reduce potential issues later.

Flexibility can help alleviate potential conflicts and support employees in balancing their work and personal obligations – however any request should be balanced with the operational needs of the business.

To ensure all employees understand if, and when, flexible working arrangements are possible in their role, develop a clear policy that outlines how an employee may request to adjust their work arrangements, and the circumstances where this may not be available to them.

- **Consider career progression and advancement opportunities:** Ensure equal access to career progression and advancement opportunities for all employees, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Implement strategies to identify and address any barriers that may hinder their advancement. Provide mentorship, skill-building initiatives, and access to development programs to support their professional growth.

- **Engage in consultation and collaboration:** Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in decision-making processes that directly impact their roles and responsibilities. Consultation and collaboration can promote ownership, inclusivity, and a sense of empowerment. Actively seek their input, value their perspectives, and incorporate their insights into performance management practices.
- **Include a First Nations mentor in discussions:** Provide First Nations employees with the option of having a First Nations mentor support them in performance management discussions to ensure cultural safety. A mentor can assist your employee in responding to any concerns and can help you understand and address issues and flow on impacts that may arise from the discussion.

By considering these additional factors, you can create a performance management framework that aligns with the cultural values and needs of your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace. Remember, these are a starting point. It is essential to adapt your approach based on the unique needs and circumstances of individual employees. Building strong relationships and demonstrating cultural respect will contribute to a more positive and productive work environment for everyone involved.

Communication styles can differ between individuals and communities, so it's crucial to approach each person as an individual and be open to learning and adapting your communication style based on their preferences and cultural norms.

Respectful communication, active listening, and a willingness to understand and appreciate different communication styles will contribute to effective communication and relationship-building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Engage and be consultative with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees when developing procedures and policies. However, also note that there is a fine line between taking the time to include diverse voices in your decision-making and burdening certain employees with extra, unpaid work.

Don't expect your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to want to be involved in all consultations. Always ask first, and make it clear it is not expected that they participate.

Mentoring

Mentoring and support programs are widely used to support First Nations employees during the first 90 days of employment, and beyond. Mentoring provides the opportunity for employees to connect with an experienced member of your business that can help them navigate the workplace culture, practices, and expectations of the role.

Mentors can be a peer or manager, and the relationship may be formal or informal. When seeking to pair a First Nations employee with a mentor, be sure to ask what type of support the employee may need. This will determine the level and experience of the mentor selected.

A mentor does not have to be a First Nations employee; however, where a non-Indigenous person is identified as a mentor it is important that they are culturally aware and sensitive to the histories and cultures of First Nations peoples.

The benefits of mentor / mentee relationship for First Nations employees include:

- providing opportunities for the employee to learn and share experiences with someone who may have a similar working path, knows the company and is known in the company. Mentors can act as a champion for the less experienced individual, advocating for them when needed.
- allowing the employee to identify and share workplace and family challenges and pressures they may experience and have opportunities to develop strategies to address these.
- Mentors can help employees build the cultural understanding and capability of First Nations and non-Indigenous employees and can play a role in helping First Nations employees manage cultural load and help build the cultural capability of the workplace.
- Mentors can help connect First Nations employees with local communities and other First Nations employees, helping to build a community of support.

Cultural Load

The term cultural load refers to the weight or burden that an individual (or community) carries due to their cultural identity and the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism and systemic oppression. For First Nations peoples, cultural load can refer to:

- intergenerational trauma
- loss of land, language, and culture
- ongoing discrimination and marginalisation experienced by First Nations peoples since colonisation.

In the context of the workplace, cultural load is the term that refers to the additional workload often carried by First Nations peoples in the workplace. This often occurs when the First Nations employee is either the only Indigenous person or one of a small number of Indigenous people in the workplace. Additional workplace demands may include:

- expectations to educate non-Indigenous colleagues about First Nations peoples, share personal stories relating to culture and history, or to educate people about racism
- expectations to talk on behalf of all First Nations people, on matters relating to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples
- being asked to deliver an Acknowledgement of Country, organise cultural events or undertake community engagement, whether or not it is part of their role.

Businesses need to understand cultural load and recognise and reward it in job descriptions. This provides First Nations employees with the opportunity to spend time on and be fairly compensated for this important aspect of their work. For full time or permanent employees, this may be time in lieu, additional payments for their time, or recognition for the additional work. Always ask your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees if they want to be included.

Cultural Leave and Recognition of Cultural Events

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees providing cultural leave or acknowledging significant cultural events and celebrations demonstrates respect for the cultural practices and customs of First Nations peoples and allows them to actively participate in community activities. Included in this resource is a list of [culturally important dates](#) for First Nations peoples.

Sorry business

Sorry business is a term used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to describe the rituals and customs surrounding mourning and grieving the loss of a loved one. It is a complex and deeply important cultural practice that varies among different First Nations groups and communities.

Sorry business is a way for individuals, families, and communities to express their sorrow, support one another, and pay tribute to the deceased.

Key aspects of sorry business may include:

- **Mourning Period:** This can last days, weeks, or even months, depending on cultural traditions and kinship ties. During this time, family members may wear mourning attire, engage in specific behaviours, and observe restrictions related to social activities.
- **Ceremonies and Rituals:** These are performed to honour the deceased and guide their spirit in the afterlife. Ceremonies may include smoking ceremonies, dances, songs, storytelling, and other cultural practices specific to each community.
- **Community Support:** Sorry business is not only about the immediate family but also involves the wider community. People come together to provide emotional support, assistance with funeral preparations, and participate in mourning rituals. Community members may offer condolences, share stories, and provide practical help during this time.
- **Cultural Protocols:** These will vary among different First Nations groups. They may include specific rules for behaviour, responsibilities of family members, and obligations to observe cultural traditions during the mourning period.
- **Healing and Closure:** Sorry business provides an opportunity for individuals and communities to grieve, find healing, and seek closure after the loss of a loved one. It allows for the expression of emotions, the sharing of stories and memories, and the strengthening of social and cultural bonds.

It is important to recognise that sorry business is specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia. It is a deeply meaningful and sacred practice that varies among different communities, so it's essential to approach sorry business with respect, sensitivity, and cultural understanding.

To understand local cultural practices relating to sorry business:

- work with your First Nations employees and/or connect local communities (e.g., through the local council, Aboriginal Land Council or Torres Strait Regional Authority) to check the specific protocols (for example, in some communities all businesses shut down)
- reach out to your local community and/or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Land Council to get on their distribution list to be notified of when sorry business is taking place or stay connected through their websites or Facebook pages.

It is also recommended that you engage with your supply chain and subcontractors to ensure they understand the impacts and requirements of sorry business when engaging in communities on your behalf, or when working with your First Nations employees.

First Nations Engagement Across the Business

Improving engagement with First Nations peoples in all aspects of a business, including your supply chain and subcontractors, will help build your organisation's cultural competence.

Developing stronger community relationships and identifying opportunities to undertake meaningful consultation and engagement takes time and is only part of the organisation's journey towards building a culturally safe and diverse environment.

Simple ways to engage First Nations peoples across all aspects of your business are provided below.

- **Actively seek out opportunities to engage in meaningful consultation:** By understanding the perspectives, priorities, and needs of First Nations peoples, businesses can develop strategies and initiatives that align with their values and aspirations. Consultation should involve open dialogue, active listening, and mutual respect. Consider working with local First Nations communities to help educate your employees about Reconciliation week, NAIDOC week or other [culturally significant events](#).
- **Develop partnerships and collaborations:** This can involve subcontracting agreements, or supply chain partnerships. By including First Nations businesses in the value chain, businesses can support economic empowerment, create employment opportunities, and promote capacity building within First Nations communities.
- **Develop and implement First Nations procurement policies:** Establish targets or preferences for the use of First Nations businesses. These policies can contribute to economic development, job creation, and a more inclusive supply chain.
- **Make your cultural awareness and sensitivity training available to subcontractors, and supply chain partners:** This training should focus on fostering understanding, respect, and appreciation for Indigenous cultures, histories, and protocols. By enhancing cultural competency of your supply chain, you can create a more inclusive and respectful work environment that values and celebrates the contributions of First Nations peoples.

- **Engage in community investment and reinvestment practices:** This can include financial contributions, sponsorships or partnerships with community development projects, educational initiatives, or cultural preservation programs. By supporting community development, businesses can foster long-term relationships based on shared values and mutual benefits.

Improving engagement with First Nations peoples involves building relationships and partnerships, promoting inclusion and diversity, and supporting economic empowerment. Many businesses are choosing to formalise these activities through the development of a First Nations engagement strategy and/or Reconciliation Action Plan. These are outlined in the section below.

Developing a First Nations Engagement Strategy

To demonstrate a commitment to engaging with First Nations people and reconciliation, your organisation may consider developing a First Nations engagement strategy and/or Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

An engagement strategy can help ensure First Nations people and community stakeholders have a genuine say in decision-making processes that affect their lives and wellbeing. First Nations engagement strategies can assist in building trust and relationships with communities, improves the effectiveness of your community engagements and provides a framework for the business to actively engage in the community, and ensure that First Nations voices are heard and respected.

What is included in a First Nations engagement strategy?

A First Nations engagement strategy (the strategy) is a plan for how an organisation will engage with First Nations communities. It should be tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the business and the communities it is working with. Some common elements should be included, such as:

- **Vision and goals:** Start with a clear vision for how the business wants to engage with First Nations communities. It should be based on the principles of respect, partnership, and self-determination.
Your strategy should also set specific goals for engagement, such as increasing the employment and participation of First Nations peoples, working with First Nations businesses, improving outcomes for First Nations communities, or building trust and relationships with First Nations communities.
- **Approach:** Outline the specific approach the business will take to engagement. This may include:
 - using culturally appropriate methods
 - building relationships with community leaders
 - developing First Nations employment and/or supply chain programs
 - providing opportunities for First Nations peoples to participate in decision-making.
- **Timeline and resources:** Include a timeline for implementation and a plan for how the business will allocate resources for engagement. This will help to ensure engagement is a priority and that it has the resources it needs to be successful.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Plan for how the business will measure success through monitoring and evaluating its engagement efforts. This will ensure the business is meeting its goals and making progress in building trust and relationships with First Nations communities.

In addition to these common elements, there are several other factors that should be considered when developing a First Nations engagement strategy such as:

- **Cultural context:** It should be sensitive to the cultural context of the First Nations communities that the business is working with. This includes things like understanding the community's values, traditions, and protocols.
- **History of engagement:** The strategy should consider the history of engagement between the business and First Nations communities. This will help to identify any challenges or barriers that may need to be addressed.

- **Needs and priorities of the community:** It should be based on the needs and priorities of the First Nations communities that the business is working with. This will help to ensure your engagement is both meaningful and productive.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Reconciliation Australia has developed a reconciliation framework to support businesses wanting to demonstrate a commitment to First Nations peoples and reconciliation. It is based on five interrelated dimensions: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance.

A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is a strategic document that sets out how an organisation is committing to contribute to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is a tool that organisations can use to embed reconciliation into their culture, policies, and practices. Like a First Nations engagement strategy, a RAP should be tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the business and the communities.

The RAP Framework, developed by Reconciliation Australia, provides a structured approach to developing a RAP. The Framework outlines four different types of RAPs: Reflect, Innovate, Stretch, and Elevate. These types of RAPs are designed to suit organisations at different stages of their reconciliation journey.

Some of the benefits of having a RAP:

- **Increased awareness of First Nations culture and history:** It can help to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history among employees, customers, and stakeholders. This can lead to greater understanding and respect for First Nations peoples.
- **Improved relationships with First Nations communities:** A RAP can help to build stronger relationships between organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This can lead to more effective partnerships and collaboration.
- **Increased opportunities for First Nations peoples:** It can help to increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in employment, education, and business. This can help to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
- **Improved outcomes for First Nations peoples:** A RAP can help to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in areas such as health, education, and employment. This can help to build a more just and equitable society for all Australians.

If you are interested in developing a RAP, [Reconciliation Australia](#) provides a comprehensive guide to developing a RAP.

Culturally Important Dates

Promoting a workplace of inclusion for First Nations peoples can start with being aware of and promoting attendance at significant First Nations events and celebrations. Provided below is a list (not exhaustive) of culturally important dates for First Nations peoples.

It is important to remember that not all First Nations peoples will seek to celebrate these events, and that each community may have their own culturally significant dates that may be important for First Nations employees to attend.

The following is a list of culturally important dates that celebrate or recognise significant events and/or the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

13 February – Anniversary of National Apology Day

On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the National Apology to Australia's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the injustices of past government policies, particularly to the Stolen Generations.

16 March – National Close the Gap Day

National Close the Gap Day is an annual event that raises awareness and seeks to close the gap with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, educational and employment outcomes between Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and non-Indigenous Australians.

5 April – The Bringing Them Home Stolen Generations report was released in 1997.

The Bringing Them Home Stolen Generations report, details the systematic removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families in Australia. It provides a comprehensive account of the lasting impacts of forced removals.

26 May – National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day provides an opportunity for people to come together and share the journey towards healing for the Stolen Generations, their families, and communities.

27 May – 1967 Referendum

The 1967 Referendum was a landmark achievement following decades of activism by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people, where more than 90 percent of Australians voted in favour of amending two sections of the Australian Constitution.

27 May to 3 June – National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week celebrations commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 Referendum and the High Court Mabo Decision.

3 June – Mabo Day

On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia overturned the principle of “terra nullius” or “nobody’s land” as claimed by the British when they first arrived in this country. The decision has paved the way for Native Title legislation.

1 July – Coming of the Light

The Coming of the Light is celebrated annually by Torres Strait Islander peoples. It marks the adoption of Christianity through island communities during the late nineteenth century.

2 July to 9 July – NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia to celebrate history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4 August – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about the crucial impact that community, culture, and family play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.

9 August – International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

On this day, people from around the world are encouraged to spread the United Nation's message on the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

6 September – Indigenous Literacy Day

Indigenous Literacy Day is a national celebration of culture, stories, language, and literacy. This day raises awareness of the disadvantages experienced in remote communities and advocates for more access to literacy resources.

13 September – Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007.

Glossary and FAQs

Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, First Nations and Indigenous

- The terms **Aboriginal person** and **Torres Strait Islander person** are not interchangeable and refer to specific groups of Indigenous Australians. When referring to someone, do so correctly. If uncertain, it may be best to ask so you do not offend by using the incorrect terminology.
- An **Aboriginal** is a person who:
 - is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia
 - identifies as an Aboriginal person and
 - is accepted by the Aboriginal community in which the person lives.
- **First Nations and Indigenous.** The terms First Nations peoples and Indigenous people are both used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While there is some overlap in their meanings, they are not entirely interchangeable, and their usage can depend on various factors such as regional context and cultural preferences.
- **First Nations peoples** is a term that is commonly used to recognise the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who have inhabited the continent for thousands of years. It acknowledges the unique cultural and historical identities of these various nations and tribes.

- **Indigenous people** is a broader term that encompasses the original inhabitants of a particular geographic region, regardless of the country. In the Australian context, it is often used as a global term to acknowledge the shared experiences of native populations worldwide, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Acronyms such as ATSI, TI, TSI or other abbreviations such as ‘Abos’ should never be used as they are offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Are all indigenous people called Murri? The following terms are used by Aboriginal people to describe their ‘home state’. These names can vary, based on where the individual has grown up, or their community practices.

Koori/Goori New South Wales / Victoria

Murri Queensland

Nungah South Australia

Yolngu Northern Territory (Arnhem land)

Palawa Tasmania

Noongar Western Australia (Noongar means ‘a person of the south-west of Western Australia’).

For more on Torres Strait Islander culture, see the next page.

When discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, be sensitive to the specific preferences and cultural protocols of each community.

Some groups may have specific tribal or language group names that they prefer to be called by, while others may be comfortable with terms like “First Nations” or “Indigenous” as inclusive identifiers. Respecting and using appropriate terminology helps foster cultural understanding, respect, and recognition of the rights and identities of Australia’s native peoples.

Torres Strait Islanders

A Torres Strait Islander is a person who is a descendant of an Indigenous inhabitant of the Torres Strait Islands. The Torres Strait Islands are located between the northernmost tip of Australia and Papua New Guinea. Torres Strait Islanders are of Melanesian culture and heritage and are not mainland Aboriginal peoples. The Torres Strait Islanders have a unique identity – distinct from Australian Aboriginals – shaped by thousands of years of history, deep-rooted traditions, and a strong connection to the land and sea. The Torres Strait Islanders comprise of several distinct communities and language groups, each with their own customs and traditions, which sharing a collective heritage that is steeped in resilience, spirituality, and a profound respect for their environment.

There are five traditional island clusters in the Torres Straits and two Torres Strait Islander communities found on the mainland of Australia, in the Northern Peninsula area. The clusters and communities are shown in the table below.

Top Western Islands
Boigu
Dauan
Saibai
Western Islands
Badu
Mabuaig
Moa
Central Islands
Iama (Yam)
Masig (Yorke)
Warraber (Sue)
Poruma (Coconut)
Eastern Islands
Mer (Murray)
Ugar (Stephen)
Erub (Darnley)
Inner Islands
Hammond
Muralug
Ngurupai
Waibene (Thursday or TI)
Northern Peninsula
Bamaga
Seisia

When working with Torres Strait Islanders, it is important to acknowledge the challenges they faced and continue to face because of the impacts of colonisation, forced displacement, and the erosion of cultural practices.

Torres Strait Islander culture, customs and practices differ from mainland Aboriginal peoples. The Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) has developed a [cultural protocols guide](#) to assist people when engaging with the communities of the Torres Strait region.

Community

For First Nations peoples, community includes Country, family ties and shared experience. Community is about connectedness and belonging and is central to the identify of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. First Nations peoples may belong to more than one community.

Elders

Elders are custodians of cultural knowledge. Elders are chosen and accepted by their communities and are highly respected.

Shame

Shame (deeply felt feelings of being ashamed or embarrassed) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may result from sharing private or personal information, cultural beliefs and from breaches of confidentiality. To reduce the risk of shame being experienced:

- take a discrete approach and avoid discussions in open or public spaces
- build trust and rapport to help people feel safe and comfortable with you and in their surroundings
- ensure confidentiality and consider Men’s and Women’s Business.

Protocols

Protocols are ways of behaving, communicating, and showing respect for First Nations cultures. This includes acknowledging the knowledge, standing and status of people within the local First Nations community. Protocols will vary between communities, and between people within communities.

Men's and Women's Business

In First Nations communities, men and women have traditionally held distinct but equally important roles, performing specific tasks that benefit the whole community. This separation of responsibilities by gender is determined the cultural lore (traditional knowledge or beliefs) and practices of the community, ensuring balance of work underpinned by a strong sense of cooperation. The roles performed may change across nations and regions.

In many First Nations cultures, women were responsible for gathering water and bush foods such as fruits, seeds, vegetables, berries, and subject to their location, honey ants. Women may also have hunted small food animals like goanna python, rabbit, echidna, and possum. Men were responsible for making tools and hunting larger game such as kangaroo and emu. Children also had an important role to play in gathering and hunting. They accompanied their parents and other adults to collect bush food, playing, digging, and working with the adults while watching and learning.

Men's and women's business in First Nations communities extends to cultural practices and ceremonies. In First Nations cultures, there are certain places and practices just for women or for men as apart of ancestral lore. The tradition of this lore would be passed down from Elders to the community through generations to help protect sacred sites and ceremonial practices and events.

Women's and men's business can also relate to health, upbringing, ceremonies, and maintenance of culturally significant places and sacred sites. For example, some sites are for men only because they are used for special initiation ceremonies to support young males to grow into men, and women's business involves practices and sacred places to nurture young girls to become women, so they can provide the same role to the next generation of girls.

In First Nations cultures, men are not to know what happens in women's business and women are not to know what happens in men's business.

External Resources

Paving the Way – the First Nations Training Strategy
desbt.qld.gov.au/first-nations-training

Explore Map of Indigenous Australia
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia

Welcome to Country
Queensland Government
qld.gov.au/firstnations/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/welcome-to-country

Diversity Council Australia
dca.org.au/research/project/racismatwork

Lateral Violence
Australian Human Rights Commission
humanrights.gov.au/our-work/publications/chapter-2-lateral-violence-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-communities

Gari Yala (Speak the Truth) Report
Diversity Council Australia
dca.org.au/research/project/gari-yala-speak-truth-centreing-experiences-aboriginal-and-or-torres-strait-islander

Communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
Queensland Health
health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/151923/communicating.pdf

Office of Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
oric.gov.au

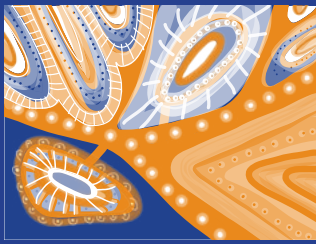
Intergeneration Trauma
Healing Foundation
healingfoundation.org.au/intergenerational-trauma/

Reconciliation Australia
reconciliation.org.au

Culturally Important Dates
Queensland Government
qld.gov.au/firstnations/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/dates

Torres Strait Island Regional Council
tsirc.qld.gov.au/our-communities/culture-protocols-heritage

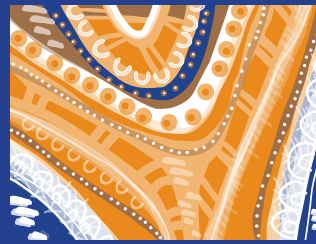
Charles Sturt University
cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/851415/Working-with-Indigenous-Australian-Staff.pdf



The Training Landscape



The Learning Journey



The Uplifting Effect
for Community

The embodied design '*Paving the Way*' was created in 2022 for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training by Iscariot Media's artistic team.

The artists have represented the landscape of cultural connection and opportunities from a bird's eye view. Linework represents expanding pathways of growth, where each pathway explores the various touchpoints of both education and training.

The embodied design is broken up into three key segments (known as triptych). Each segment explores its own representations of growth and capability building. Within the series, each design can exist separately and as a collective, which speaks broadly to building and growing capability and community capacity.

Also incorporated into the design of *Paving the Way* is artwork from Jessie Mordey nee Ketchell. The storyline of this design draws on totems that keeps our communities connected to ancestors. The drum and headdress is about getting together and celebrating cultural heritage.



Connect with us

📞 1300 654 687

🌐 business.qld.gov.au

Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

desbt.qld.gov.au

PO Box 15033, City East, Brisbane QLD 4002

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