

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Framework

Business Plan 2008 - 2013

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## INTRODUCTION

In March 2004 the report of the Health Reform Committee, 'A Healthy Future for Western Australians' identified the benefit of an increase in the number of Aboriginal health professionals in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people<sup>1</sup>. The workforce in the public hospital and community health sector remains overwhelmingly non-Aboriginal even in regions where a significant proportion of the client base is Aboriginal. While the employment of more Aboriginal health service staff in regions with large numbers of Aboriginal people has been a government objective for many years, this has proven difficult to implement<sup>2</sup>.

**Recommendation 58 - Increased numbers of Aboriginal health professionals should be employed in the Western Australian public health system. Employment targets should be set in area performance agreements to achieve this.**

Reid recommended the greater use of Aboriginal health workers (a vocation in itself) in hospital wards and outpatient clinics and the need to recognise and address barriers to achieving this. He states that management teams in regional areas should be required to achieve specific employment targets for Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Framework is the beginning of a directed and consolidated focus by WA Health to target Aboriginal employment. The Framework has been developed to assist area health services to implement Aboriginal employment initiatives, which are sustainable over the long term.

The Framework supports the achievement of National and State strategic objectives to enhance the health outcomes of Aboriginal people and principles of equity and diversity.

It sets out five key result areas for Aboriginal employment, which are in line with the workforce reform areas documented in the Healthy Workforce Strategic Framework 2006 - 2016. These key result areas are:

- Attraction and retention
- Workforce skill development
- Workforce culture and environment
- Workforce design
- Workforce planning and evaluation.

The strategies incorporated within this framework are not stand alone options but are interlinked and require actions to be developed across all key result areas.

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1. If the term 'Aboriginal' has been used to refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

2. Health Reform Committee, 'A Healthy Future for Western Australians' Western Australia, 2004.

## ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Recognising the high use of health services by Aboriginal people, it is critical that efforts be made to ensure that the health workforce profile, in all professions and occupations, better matches that of the client group<sup>3</sup>.

WA Health needs to be deliberate and purposeful in efforts to attract and recruit Aboriginal workers. A comprehensive review of existing practices that support or inhibit recruitment of the Aboriginal workforce will assist in identifying areas where improvement can be made. The following initiatives promote attraction and retention of employees.

Initiative	Action
Establish Aboriginal specific positions.	Area Health Services will be encouraged to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise legislation to support the creation of Aboriginal specific positions.</li> <li>Identify positions in health which could attract "protected title" status.</li> <li>Include "Aboriginality" in Job Description Forms in either Essential or Desirable criteria for identified positions.</li> <li>Establish base line numbers of existing positions in WA Health that have exceptions under <i>the Equal Opportunity Act</i>.</li> </ul>
Use Substantive Equality statements in job advertisements.	WA Health will encourage the use of the following Statement in all position advertisements "WA Health is committed to achieving a diverse workforce and strongly encourages applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and people with disabilities".
Quarantine mainstream positions for Aboriginal specific positions.	The Health Networks "Model of Care" will be used as a guide to identify positions which should be Aboriginal specific. e.g. Renal Networks - skilling Aboriginal Health Workers to deliver support to Dialysis patients.
Develop and implement a specific purpose Aboriginal employment guidelines and recruitment strategies.	WA Health will provide educational resources and training for Human Resource personnel to develop potential initiatives.
Establish an employment register of Aboriginal individuals.	WA Health will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage the use of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Aboriginal Employment Program in the metropolitan area.</li> <li>Where identified Aboriginal positions are advertised encourage "Pool Recruitment" to establish an employment resource base.</li> </ul>
Establish partnerships in workforce skill development.	The Office of Aboriginal Health with the Workforce Education and Training Branch will work with Department of Education and Training, Vocational Education Training organisations and the Universities.
Utilise work experience programs.	The Office of Aboriginal Health with the Workforce Education and Training Branch will work with Department of Education and Training to develop strategies that encourage work experience programs across the professions and trades. One initiative will be to include a Certificate 2 in Aboriginal Health work in schools leading to employment opportunities in the health sector.
Utilise existing training programs and support mechanisms to achieve Aboriginal employment targets.	The Office of Aboriginal Health and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to work together in utilising the Structured Training and Employment Projects.
Establish and foster Aboriginal support mechanisms and networks to provide a coordinated health sector response.	The Office of Aboriginal Health with the Aboriginal Health Council of WA and Aboriginal Registered Training Organisations will establish an Aboriginal employee's reference network.

3. Office of Aboriginal Health, Western Australian Aboriginal Health Strategy, 2000.

## WORKFORCE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Existing Aboriginal employees will be provided with opportunities to develop new skills. Plans will extend to prospective employees and offer a range of options to develop skills enhancing entry to the workforce.

Strategies in this area aim to raise awareness of training and development opportunities maintain a system for identifying current skills, knowledge and experience and support the implementation of professional training plans.

Initiative	Action
Promote entry into career employment pathways.	The Workforce Education and Training Branch and the Office of Aboriginal Health will work with education and training providers to introduce specific streams within formal education and training.
Provide professional learning and development opportunities for current employees.	WA Health through the performance management process will identify development opportunities for staff.
Maintain and develop scholarships and traineeship programs.	The Office of Aboriginal Health will review existing scholarship arrangements to ensure they continue to be relevant. Continue working with the Department of Education and Training and other stakeholders to initiate and develop traineeships in Health including an Aboriginal Enrolled Nurse traineeship.
Develop Aboriginal (Health) Education Partnerships.	The Workforce Education and Training Branch with the Office of Aboriginal Health will develop a plan for WA Health to establish health education and training pathways. These will extend across schools, vocational education and training and higher education sectors to improve the participation and retention of Aboriginal people within the health workforce.
Utilise national competency standards/training packages to support career development and progression in occupational areas for workers.	<p>WA Health will continue to support implementation strategies for the rollout of the AHW national competencies and will support competency reviews and implementations for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enrolled nursing</li> <li>■ Information technology</li> <li>■ Laboratory technical work (PathWest)</li> <li>■ Business</li> <li>■ Trades</li> <li>■ Dental services</li> </ul> <p>The Office of Aboriginal Health will continue to support work being carried out on a scope of practice model for Aboriginal Health Work.</p>

## WORKFORCE CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

It is important to create a work environment where Indigenous employees choose to stay and further their careers in positions that serve Indigenous clients and the broader community<sup>4</sup>.

A workforce culture and environment that is culturally aware and sensitive to differences in work practices of Aboriginal people supports recruitment and retention practices.

This section focuses on improving the workforce culture and environment for Aboriginal employees. Actions in this area are aimed at increasing cultural awareness and sensitivity of non-Aboriginal people to improve interactions with Aboriginal people and enhance communication in the work setting.

Initiative	Action
Promote, implement, monitor and evaluate the WA Health Aboriginal Cultural Respect Implementation Framework.	The Office of Aboriginal Health will establish an evaluation model for the Framework to monitor its effect on system change with regard to improved access to services for Aboriginal people.
Develop and implement the WA Health Reconciliation Action Plan.	The Office of Aboriginal Health has developed the WA Health Reconciliation Action Plan and will monitor the implementation of the Plan and progress in achieving the outcomes required in conjunction with this Plan.
Ensure induction programs provide adequate information- with links for staff to learn more about Aboriginal resources and programs within the organisation.	The Office of Aboriginal Health will develop and incorporate a Cultural Maintenance program for inclusion into induction packages and the performance management process.
Encourage staff to participate in localized cultural awareness workshops as part of professional development.	WA Health through the Cultural Maintenance program will develop local cultural maintenance kits and have them delivered by Aboriginal staff such as AHW's and Liaison Officers.
Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events.	WA Health will continue to provide event information to staff via a range of communication strategies including Global and Intra emails worded to encourage staff to participate.
Support culturally appropriate work, life balance initiatives.	WA Health will incorporate information about Work Life Balance initiatives into induction packages and continue to maintain flexible work practices and/or leave provisions for staff to meet cultural obligations.
Develop and review peer support initiatives which provide mentoring and coaching strategies to assist individuals and targeted groups.	WA Health, through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Sub-Committee, will oversee the development of these strategies and initiatives.

4. Office of Equal Opportunity, Indigenous Employment in the WA Sector - Valuing Difference, 2002.

## WORKFORCE DESIGN

WA Health employees need to be able to adapt to the changing models of care and infrastructure resulting from health reforms in Western Australia. Flexible and responsive approaches are required to attract and develop members of a workforce that continues to experience skill shortages.

The workforce will benefit from the assessment of options that support new models of care and the implementation of strategies that clearly define roles and career path structures.

Initiative	Action
Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce National Strategic Framework.	<p>This Framework has been developed in cognizance of the National Framework.</p> <p>The partnership between the Office of Aboriginal Health, Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and the Aboriginal Health Council of WA will continue work on the "WA Implementation Plan" concurrently.</p> <p>WA Health through the Office of Aboriginal Health will continue to be a member of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group at the National level.</p>
Support and development of the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Worker Association.	<p>The Office of Aboriginal Health with the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health will continue to provide funding and support to the Association and remain active in the development of initiatives at the National level.</p>
Link career path structures to education and training frameworks.	<p>The Office of Aboriginal Health and the Workforce Education and Training Branch will undertake a mapping exercise to show alignments and potential usage of multiple entry and exit points to support multiple career options.</p> <p>A communication plan will be developed to disseminate this information to potential workforce participants.</p>
Enter into a formal agreement with Unions WA to work in collaboration on issues and concerns of common interest.	<p>This collaboration will assist in identifying intervention and supported initiatives that can be undertaken jointly which address employment pathways, reforms and opportunities to address emerging workforce needs in new and emerging models of care and service provision.</p>

## WORKFORCE PLANNING AND EVALUATION

To ensure improved delivery of health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, information is needed on three groups within the current, or potential, health workforce— Indigenous people in the health workforce (by discipline); health professionals working on Indigenous health; and Indigenous people undertaking health-related study or training<sup>5</sup>.

Evaluation, monitoring and reporting of Aboriginal employment should be supported by effective collection, storage and analysis of information of employees.

Initiative	Action
Establish baseline levels for Aboriginal employment.	This baseline will be established by the Office of Aboriginal Health using the Diversity survey and Health Corporate Network payroll data across the professions and trades.
Set Aboriginal employment targets.	The Director General of WA Health will establish targets for Area Health Services and Regions by profession through the analysis of the diversity demographics of the population in relation to Aboriginal people.
Establish and maintain Aboriginal workforce data systems.	Anonymous Individual Employee Record identifiers will be developed to be used through the Health Corporate Network payroll systems and the Diversity survey.
Establish regular workforce reporting and review processes.	Report and review mechanisms will be developed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Sub-Committee and provided to the State Health Executive Forum on an ongoing basis.
DOH Aboriginal Workforce Strategic Sub-Committee to involve Aboriginal people in the evaluation process.	The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Sub-Committee will develop strategies to be inclusive of Aboriginal people in the evaluation processes.

5. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2006. National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data: strategic plan 2006-2008. Cat. No. IHW 19. Canberra: AIHW.



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