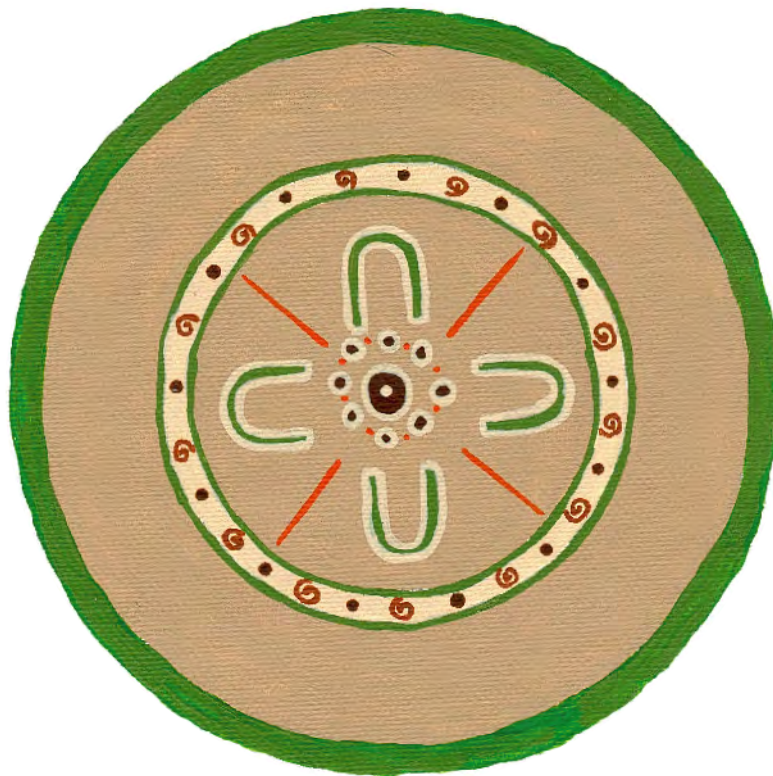


ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT PLAN



for the
Illawarra-South East
Regional Coordination Management Group

March 2007

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Acknowledgements

This Plan is the outcome of a project developed jointly by the Illawarra-South East Aboriginal Government Employees Network (AGEN) and the Illawarra-South East Regional Coordination Management Group (I-SE RCMG).

The Department of Premier and Cabinet, on behalf of the I-SE RCMG, gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the Working Group appointed by AGEN to develop this document:

- Philip Needham
- Darrell Brown
- Mark Bloxsome

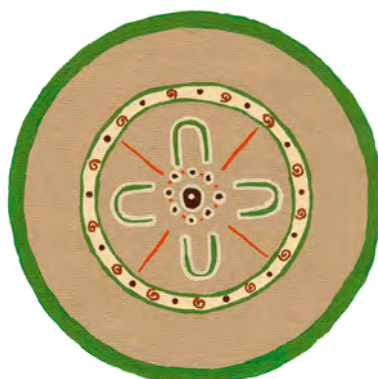
Very early in its endeavours, the Working Group identified that there had already been considerable work to explore issues around Aboriginal employment by NSW Government Agencies from the North Coast Region. This work had been co-ordinated through the North Coast Regional Coordination Program. The North Coast work has strongly informed this document and we have a debt of gratitude to Dawn Thornton, Julie Byers and Paul Dodd from the North Coast Regional Coordination Program for their help and support.

The Working Group liaised with the Public Sector Employment Office during the development of this document, and Katrina Morgan from that office provided help to ensure that the AGEN document was consistent with the broad NSW Government Aboriginal Employment Strategy, "Making it our Business".

In developing this Plan, it was circulated for comment to all members of the AGEN, and all members of the I-SE RCMG.

The Working Group was resourced by the Project Manager, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Illawarra, Denise McConnachie and the Project Manager, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Queanbeyan, Simone Dilkara. Dr David Crawford, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Illawarra, provided proof reading and editing of the document.

The AGEN logo was designed by Patricia Margaret Maurer. Sadly Aunty Pat passed away on 15 December 2005, however her support for establishing AGEN and her gift of the logo will always be remembered.



1.Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to provide the I-SE RCMG with a practical tool that will support NSW Government Agencies to effectively recruit and retain Aboriginal employees.

This Plan has been developed in response to two recommendations from the AGEN Gathering held in September 2005. The recommendations from AGEN were that:

Recommendation 1:

- RCMG in partnership with AGEN agrees to develop a Regional Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan that includes strategies for recruitment, retention, staff development, career development & mentoring; and

Recommendation 2:

- the Regional Aboriginal Employment & Recruitment Plan developed through this partnership be used to guide individual agency plans.

Both recommendations were subsequently endorsed by the I-SE RCMG at its meeting in November 2005.

1.2 I-SE RCMG & AGEN History

The AGEN was initiated in 2004 by the I-SE RCMG as part of its cross-agency commitment to enhance service delivery and community outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

The AGEN brings together Aboriginal employees of the NSW Government in the Illawarra and South East Regions. It aims to increase the support, networking, and opportunities for collaboration between Aboriginal workers.

The first major Gathering of Aboriginal workers was held at Murramarang in November–December 2004. This first meeting developed a framework for the establishment of AGEN as an annual event, supported by a working group to operate in between the annual Gatherings. Members of the working group, known as the Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP) are appointed each year at the AGEN Gathering.

The basic framework for AGEN and CAWP was presented to the I-SE RCMG meeting in March 2005 at Narooma, and endorsed unanimously. The agreed Terms of Reference for CAWP are detailed in Appendix 1.

1.3 Methodology

To develop the Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan, CAWP established an Employment Issues Working Group. This group gathered information on employment strategies currently developed by the NSW Government sector and considered other research that was available.

Based on this information the working group identified relevant strategies. The strategies were circulated to AGEN members for comment.

The Working Group consulted the Public Employment Office to ensure that the proposed strategies were closely aligned with broader public sector policy.

The Draft Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan was circulated to all members of the I-SE RCMG for comment in August 2006.

The Draft Plan was then presented again to AGEN members at the September 2006 Gathering at Bateman's Bay. It was endorsed by this Gathering and it was agreed that the Plan be presented to the November 2006 meeting of the I-SE RCMG.

The November meeting of the I-SE RCMG received the Draft Plan. It was agreed that the Draft Plan be considered by all managers and re-presented at the March 2007 RCMG Meeting.

The Plan was endorsed at the March 2007 meeting of the I-SE RCMG.

2. Aboriginal Employment in the NSW Public Sector

2.1 NSW Government and Aboriginal Employment

Aboriginal employment has been a priority for the NSW Government for many years.

In 2000, the then Premier, the Hon. Bob Carr MP, launched the 'Aboriginal Employment in Practice' initiative to promote the employment of Aboriginal people in the NSW public sector. In the forward to this document, the Premier urged Chief Executives and Managers to "take a more innovative approach towards the employment of Aboriginal people".

A subsequent document 'Good Job – Success with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategies' was produced for the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment as a reference guide to agencies seeking to establish their own Aboriginal Employment Strategies.

More recently in June 2006, Premier the Hon. Morris Iemma MP, issued a memorandum to all Ministers and Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) titled, 'Improving Outcomes for Aboriginal People and their Communities'. In this memorandum, the Premier states that the NSW Government is committed to improving the employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW in the private and not-for-profit sectors through the development of employment compacts. He also affirmed that the NSW Government will focus on improved public sector employment outcomes through the implementation of a new Aboriginal Employment Strategy 'Making it our Business'.

The 'Making it our Business' Framework has been developed by the NSW Public Employment Office (PEO) and was launched in August 2006. It sets out the NSW Policy Statement 2006-2008 on Improving Aboriginal Employment in the NSW Public Sector, and provides a detailed Strategic Framework and Resource Guide.

2.2 NSW Public Employment Office Data

The role of the PEO is to provide assistance to NSW public sector agencies regarding employee matters, workforce planning, workforce data, redeployment and relocation, and equity and diversity. This involves providing strategic advice on public sector reform and assisting agencies in resolving complex management and employee relations issues. The PEO has a statutory role as the employer of staff in the Public Service for the purposes of industrial proceedings.

The PEO is also responsible for monitoring and evaluating statutory requirements under Part 9(A) of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW).

Part 9 (A) covers all public sector agencies in NSW. The Act seeks to:

- eliminate and ensure the absence of discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, sex, marital status and physical impairment, and

- promote equal employment opportunity (EEO) for women, members of racial minorities and physically handicapped persons.

The PEO has collected data on the current status of Aboriginal employment in the public sector:

Table 1: EEO Snapshot: NSW Public Sector Trends in the representation of ATSI Groups in the Public Sector Workforce (%)

EEO Target Group	Government Benchmark or Target	2002	2003	2004	2005
ATSI	2%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%

*Table from NSW Premier's Department Public Employment Office
(PEO Illawarra South-East Cross Agency Working Party presentation March, 2006)*

In 2005, Aboriginal employees constituted 1.9% of the NSW Public Sector Workforce. Aboriginal representation in the State of NSW populations is 2%. Aboriginal people are therefore slightly under-represented in the public sector workforce.

Data compiled by the PEO shows that Aboriginal public servants are twice as likely as other public servants to have temporary, training, or casual jobs rather than permanent jobs.

Further, Aboriginal employees are very poorly represented in the Senior Executive Service – only 1.1% of this group identify as Aboriginal.

In 2005 many NSW Government agencies have been active in recruiting Aboriginal employees – representing 2.2% of all recruitment. However this effort at recruitment is offset by a significant separation rate of 2.5%. This means that Aboriginal people are leaving the public sector at a faster rate than they are joining.

In November 2004, the PEO surveyed CEO's of NSW agencies to establish the reasons for the difficulties in attracting Aboriginal staff. The main reasons given through this survey were:

- shortage of applicants with the required qualifications;
- poor public image of the agency/industry;
- few entry level positions;
- application/selection process may deter some applicants;
- short-term employment opportunities;
- awareness of work availability; and
- unattractive job advertisements.

The same survey investigated the reasons for higher than acceptable turnover of Aboriginal staff. The survey responses gave the following reasons:

- difficulty balancing work/life commitments;
- lack of career paths/few opportunities for promotion due to low turnover;
- organisational culture;
- lack of reward and recognition; and
- few training and development opportunities.

2.3 NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan: 'Two Ways Together' 2003-2012

Two Ways Together is the NSW Government's 10 year plan to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. It provides the foundation for a whole-of-government approach to the planning and delivery of services to Aboriginal people and communities in NSW.

This Plan will strengthen Aboriginal leadership and economic independence and build a partnership between Aboriginal people and the NSW Government.

Specific measures included in the plan include:

- ways to make Government more accountable to Aboriginal communities and people;
- an emphasis on Aboriginal culture and heritage; and
- strategies to improve key social indicators such as health, education, employment and economic development.

The regional implementation of Two Ways Together is co-ordinated by Regional Engagement Groups (REGs). These groups operate as sub-committees of the RCMG.

NSW Government Agencies will be required to contribute to the achievement of outcome measures established through the Two Ways Together Plan. Agencies will be asked to report progress on the implementation of their responsibilities under this plan on a periodic basis.

The successful recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff will support Government Agencies in the implementation of Two Ways Together strategies.

2.4 Bilateral Agreement

The Australian and NSW Governments have signed the 'Overarching Agreement on Aboriginal Affairs between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of NSW 2005-2010'.

This agreement is intended to provide the foundation for co-operation between the two governments to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. The Bilateral Agreement upholds and complements the NSW Government's *Two Ways Together* Plan.

2.5 NSW Government Agencies and Aboriginal Employment Strategies

Many NSW Government Agencies have already developed and implemented Aboriginal Employment Strategies. These agencies include:

- Roads and Traffic Authority;
- Department of Fair Trading;
- Attorney General's;
- Department of Environment and Climate Change;
- Department of Housing;
- Department of Juvenile Justice; and
- NSW Police.

Other Departments have signalled that they are intending to develop, or are in the process of developing an Aboriginal Employment Strategy. These departments include:

- Department of Education and Training; and
- Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries).

Not all departments have made their Aboriginal Employment Strategies readily accessible on their Departmental websites. A survey of thirty NSW Government Department websites carried out in August 2006 found an Aboriginal Employment Strategy could be downloaded from only three websites.

2.6 Developing a North Coast Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy

In 2004 the North Coast Regional Co-ordination Management Group (NCRCMG) resolved to develop guidelines for an Aboriginal Employment Strategy that could be used by all NCRCMG Agencies.

Agencies contributed to a pool of funding, and using these funds a project consultant was employed to carry out research and develop best practice guidelines.

A sub committee from the NCRCMG was established to manage and support the project.

The Project Report from November 2005 presents a framework for an Aboriginal Employment Strategy, and recommendations as to how the development of these strategies can best be progressed.

The recommendations can be summarised as:

- NCRCMG member agencies to each develop an Aboriginal Employment Action Plan which will support, retain and increase the number of permanent full time Aboriginal employees;
- a Regional Aboriginal Employment Consultant (RAEC) to work with each agency to support the development of Action Plans;
- an Aboriginal Employees Network Forum to be organised to ensure Aboriginal employees have input into the development of the strategy;
- consideration be given to forming a Human Resource Managers Forum to ensure the critical input into strategy development and implementation;
- programs be developed with Job Networks, Indigenous Employment Centres and education and training providers to prepare Aboriginal people for employment in the public sector;
- each NCRCMG agency to develop a structured mentoring program and also a buddy system for new employees;
- each NCRCMG agency to have a designated Aboriginal person as the first point of contact for the Aboriginal Employment Strategy Support;
- community workshops to be held to develop common understanding of employees' roles and responsibilities;
- all agencies to provide cultural respect training for their staff; this training to involve local input and local presenters;
- strategy outcomes are to be realistic and achievable with an emphasis on retention, upskilling of staff and career planning. Aboriginal staff in identified positions to be supported to move to mainstream positions, freeing up the identified position for another Aboriginal person;

- an Aboriginal employment monitoring process to be established;
- the sub committee responsible for managing the Aboriginal employment project to meet prior to NCRCMG meetings;
- a traineeship model be adopted and implemented to provide a pathway to full time permanent work;
- where possible, trainees to be employed in groups to provide support for each other;
- each NCRCMG agency to identify possible cadetships and/or apprenticeships;
- agencies review recruitment practices in relation to new Aboriginal employees; and
- NCRCMG agencies develop partnerships with Aboriginal community organisations such as CDEP to create employment opportunities.

Work is continuing on the North Coast as agencies progress the development of Aboriginal Employment Action Plans.

The Illawarra-South East Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan has drawn very heavily on the work carried out by the NCRCMG. The Illawarra-South East Working Group acknowledges with gratitude the work carried out by the North Coast, and thanks the NCRCMG for making this information available to the Illawarra-South East.

3. Illawarra- South East RCMG Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan

3.1 Vision

The I-SE RCMG Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan will assist Agencies to prepare, employ, train and retain Aboriginal people in NSW Government employment by developing and providing a sustainable education and employment strategy for use by government Agencies.

3.2 Objectives

The objectives of this Plan are:

- promote best practice in Aboriginal employment in NSW Government Agencies;
- improve service delivery outcomes for Aboriginal communities in the Illawarra South East;
- strengthen support for Aboriginal employees in State Government;
- increase employee retention rates;
- enhance local partnership arrangements between community and government; and
- increase the number of Aboriginal employees in State Government agencies in the Illawarra-South East.

3.3 Key Strategy: Agency Specific Aboriginal Employment Action Plans

The I-SE RCMG Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan provides ideas and principles for best practice to use as a framework to support successful recruitment, retention and career development for Aboriginal employees.

The Plan sits alongside, and complements the NSW State Policy, *'Making it Our Business: Improving Aboriginal Employment in the NSW Public Sector 2006-08'*.

The key strategy of the Plan is the development of agency specific Aboriginal Employment Action Plans. Each member agency of the I-SE RCMG is encouraged to develop its own Aboriginal Employment Action Plan.

Aboriginal Employment Action Planning cannot be carried out on a one-size fits all basis. Each agency will need to carry out its own unique analysis, and develop agency specific action responses in accordance with business needs.

'Making it Our Business' and the I-SE RCMG Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan both provide ideas and approaches that agencies can use as they develop their own Aboriginal Employment Action Plans.

3.4 'Whole of Agency' approach to Aboriginal Employment Action Plans

For best results, planning for Aboriginal employment outcomes needs to be done on a 'whole of agency' basis. All levels of the agency need to understand why the Action Plan is being developed; why the Plan is important to the business of the agency; the activities that the agency will undertake to develop and implement the Plan; and the roles that each person in the agency will need to play to successfully give effect to the Plan.

The Aboriginal Employment Action Plan needs to be integrated into the practices of each agency.

For long term success, the Plan should not be seen as a 'special initiative'. It is part of the way that the agency does business, because this is the best way to work with Aboriginal people and it is the way to improve service delivery to Aboriginal communities.

3.5 Developing Aboriginal Employment Action Plans

There are many resources available to support agencies in the development of their Aboriginal Employment Action Plans. These include but are not limited to:

- local Aboriginal people, such as Community Development Employment Programs and Land Councils;
- Aboriginal State Government employees of your agency, or another agency;
- Aboriginal Employment Plans developed by other agencies; and
- materials listed in Section 5 of this report.

3.6 Making the Plan easily accessible

A key purpose in having an Aboriginal Employment Action Plan is to attract and retain Aboriginal employees. Having the Plan easily accessible to existing employees and potential applicants will support this outcome.

The Plan could be posted on the agency's website. It could also be printed up as a culturally appropriate leaflet and included in the information packs that are sent to all job applicants.

When finalised, copies of the Plan should also be circulated to all regional staff of the agency, preferably by way of email, bringing it to their attention.

4. Framework for Aboriginal Employment Action Plans

The suggested components and guidelines for Aboriginal Employment Action Plans are as follows:

4.1 Recruitment

Identify positions and programs that would benefit from specific Aboriginal knowledge.

Every RCMG Agency is encouraged to carry out an assessment of all mainstream establishment positions to identify those where there will be benefits to the agency if the position is filled by an Aboriginal applicant.

This assessment should bear in mind the corporate business goals of the agency, and especially the objectives that each agency may have in relation to doing business with Aboriginal communities.

Success in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal employees is achieved by building alignment between the business needs of the agency, the culture of the agency, and the aspirations and needs of Aboriginal staff.

Some agencies are aware that they have a high proportion of Aboriginal clients. For example, the Department of Housing has established that people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent access 9% of the total housing stock managed by the Department of Housing. This type of information, if considered on an agency by agency basis, may inform decisions about which positions may be suitable for targeting to Aboriginal applicants.

Aboriginal identified positions are most useful when there are front line positions which have substantial direct client contact with Aboriginal people. This is especially important if clients are likely to be under stress. For example, Department of Community Services field officers; and Department of Juvenile Justice field officers.

It is important to understand that not all Aboriginal people will seek the services of Aboriginal government employees, or Aboriginal specific services. Where it is necessary for an agency to deal with issues that may be culturally sensitive, Aboriginal clients may prefer to be offered a choice of dealing with Aboriginal or non Aboriginal staff. A mix of staff will always be needed.

Public contact agencies may wish to consider targeting some positions for Aboriginal employees. For example, having Aboriginal employees in front counter positions, will improve Aboriginal access to their agency and bring benefits from having a culturally diverse workforce.

Natural resources agencies may benefit from targeting employment to Aboriginal people with traditional knowledge of country in order to improve connections with traditional knowledge holders, or to provide well informed “front of house” information to members of the public who may wish to understand issues of Aboriginal Heritage.

Ensure that job descriptions are user friendly, in plain English and written in a manner that will encourage potential Aboriginal applicants.

Job descriptions should specify the abilities and life skills that are relevant for the position. Many Aboriginal people underestimate their skills.

It may be helpful to review the essential criteria for the position. For example, to successfully recruit Aboriginal people it may be useful to establish whether formal qualifications are more important than first hand knowledge and experience of Aboriginal culture (ie Aboriginal cultural intelligence).

Job descriptions that place an emphasis on the experience, skills and competencies needed to do the job will be more attractive than those that emphasise formal qualifications.

Establish a system of advertising to ensure that Aboriginal people are made aware of career opportunities within your agency

In addition to usual placements, advertisements may receive more exposure to Aboriginal people if they are placed in the Koori Mail and the National Indigenous Times.

Using local Aboriginal networks (eg Koori interagencies) and Aboriginal organisations (eg Land Councils, Aboriginal Medical Services) is also a very successful way of getting the word around about employment opportunities. It is a good idea to produce a clearly written handout that is along the lines of the press advertisement. This can be electronically sent to organizations so that it can be distributed to their networks. It can also be printed and passed around by people who may know the kind of applicants that you are looking for.

Many areas have local Community Development and Employment Projects. These have a role in helping Aboriginal people find employment and may be able to help identify suitable applicants.

Job Network Members have a commitment to improving Aboriginal employment. Some Job Network Members perform this role better than others. It is worth asking if the particular Job Network provider has connections to Aboriginal communities and if they have special employment initiatives for Aboriginal people.

Depending on the position/s that you are offering, holding an information session in conjunction with an Aboriginal organization, CDEP, or Job Network provider may also help to get the message out.

Entry level recruitment strategies

Depending on the skills and abilities needed for a position, there may be a limited market of suitably qualified Aboriginal people. This shortage frequently underpins a lack of recruitment success.

Many Aboriginal people have extensive work experience however for a variety of reasons they have no formal educational qualification. Recognition of prior learning and recognition of current competencies are legitimate strategies and an effective way to attract capable and experienced staff.

Another lateral approach would be to establish traineeships, cadetships, and /or

apprenticeships with a view to achieving a more skilled Aboriginal labour pool through planned and deliberate longer term career development.

Alternatively, agencies could develop positions that clearly state that pre-employment training, or on-the-job training, will be provided.

Position descriptions that explain how work can be combined with formal study leading to qualifications may be an attractive option for some. Where specific skills are needed, recruitment may take the form of scholarships or other incentives to encourage potential applicants to study in the relevant field.

These approaches will all have the effect of increasing the available pool of potential applicants.

Offer positions above entry level

Aboriginal people seeking career development are interested in the full range of employment options. There is a pool of Aboriginal people with professional qualifications. Professional and paraprofessional positions can also be targeted to Aboriginal applicants. Recruitment of these positions can be approached with the understanding that first hand knowledge and experience of Aboriginal culture brings unique and valuable skills to every level of an organisation, complementing skills held by non Aboriginal staff.

Undergraduate/graduate work experience program

The progression of Aboriginal people into public sector positions can be assisted through the development of work experience programs for Aboriginal students.

Progression to Permanency

The PEO has noted that Aboriginal public servants are twice as likely as other public servants to have temporary, training, or casual jobs rather than permanent jobs.

Agencies can individually consider the barriers to permanent appointment for Aboriginal employees, and develop plans to overcome these barriers.

Unfortunately it was common practice in the past for some agencies to over-utilise subsidised short term training positions to overcome staff shortages. This practice has been to the detriment of Aboriginal employees.

Trainees and apprenticeships are of most value when they offer progression from temporary employment to permanent employment.

Statements about the current or future permanency of positions will make an advertised position more attractive to Aboriginal applicants.

Have Aboriginal representation on selection panels

For identified positions, the panel composition should include a majority of Aboriginal representation, if possible.

An Aboriginal person should be on every panel where it is known that there are Aboriginal applicants, regardless of the classification of the position.

4.2 Support and Retention

Induction packages and buddy systems

Induction packages could be developed which welcome the new Aboriginal employee, and used to establish clear and direct communication from the outset. Induction can be used to positively value the contribution that the new worker will be able to make to the agency. It can also be used to prepare Aboriginal people for the issues that they may face whilst they are working between the agency and the community, and to support the new worker's understanding of the agency's requirements.

The very early establishment of an informal "buddy system" between new Aboriginal employees and more experienced, "job-wise" Aboriginal workers, can be a very effective way of teaching and learning for Aboriginal people.

Formalised mentoring programs

Formal, structured, mentoring programs can help identify and solve problems, and evaluate the results of employee efforts.

Mentoring may support new, and/or existing, Aboriginal employees to develop a career plan which identify specific learning goals and set strategies for the achievement of these goals.

Mentoring also can provide a role model and offer personal and cultural guidance. This may be especially valuable if the employee is young and is living away from home for the first time.

Recognise that Aboriginal staff may experience tension between workplace and community expectations, and provide support to manage these issues.

Aboriginal employees experience very specific pressures from the wider Aboriginal community that have no clear equivalence for non-Aboriginal employees. This is intrinsic to Aboriginal culture and the family based nature of Aboriginal society.

When tensions and conflicts arise between employees and community, these can be very stressful. Aboriginal employees may need to draw on the support of experienced Aboriginal mentors to develop strategies to handle these situations. They may also need supervisors to show sensitivity to these issues and provide support for the employee.

Non Aboriginal supervisors may show support by recognising the unique opportunity for Aboriginal employees to discuss these issues with experienced senior Aboriginal staff in other agencies, and/or respected community elders.

Zero tolerance of racism

Agencies need to adopt a policy of zero tolerance of racism and ensure that this policy is frequently communicated to all staff at every level.

The policy should include simple and accessible strategies that staff can use if they consider they have suffered from racism, or have observed racist treatment of another employee.

Ongoing cultural respect training for all

Racist comments or behaviours may sometimes arise from a simple lack of knowledge about cultural appropriateness. When this happens it is very damaging to Aboriginal

workers and also very upsetting for non Aboriginal colleagues, especially when no offence was intended. The chance of a lack of knowledge causing misunderstanding can be significantly reduced if cultural respect training is extended to all staff. If all staff cannot receive this training in specified period, priority must be given to training for managers and supervisors who have responsibility for Aboriginal staff.

Cultural respect should not be seen as something that can be “learned” quickly in a once-off session. After initial training, follow up is needed to nurture a growing awareness and maintain commitment.

Agencies should not assume that Aboriginal employees do not need to be offered access to Aboriginal cultural respect training. Aboriginal people come from diverse backgrounds and family experiences. Individuals may welcome the chance to deepen their understanding of Aboriginal history and culture.

Aboriginal participation in cultural respect training alongside non Aboriginal colleagues may offer a special opportunity for a deepening of mutual understanding and respect.

Similarly, agencies cannot assume that all Aboriginal employees are qualified to carry out cultural respect training. Agencies can support those Aboriginal employees who wish to become cultural respect trainers to gain the necessary qualifications.

Ideally, cultural respect training programs should be provided perhaps on a regular or annual basis to all regional agency staff. The 'I-SE RCMG Cultural Respect Training Framework' provides more detailed information for agencies around the delivery of cultural respect training.

Career path planning

Agencies that develop clear career plans with their Aboriginal staff will increase the likelihood of retaining their staff.

The career plan needs to start with a skills audit. The plan then sets goals and strategies for learning and development, and identifies opportunities for career development for each individual Aboriginal employee.

Career development is important for Aboriginal employees in identified positions. Many identified positions currently do not allow for career progression beyond a certain level. Employees may feel somewhat “trapped” in a narrowly defined role.

Some, but not all, workers in identified positions may welcome the opportunity to progress to a mainstream role. Through doing so, an opportunity is created for another Aboriginal person to enter the employing agency through the vacant identified position.

Building support through Aboriginal Networks

By setting up, and maintaining, local and statewide support networks for Aboriginal staff, agencies can provide an opportunity for Aboriginal staff to discuss their employment and professional development needs in a supportive environment. Similarly, participation by Aboriginal staff in cross agency networks, such as the Illawarra-South East Aboriginal Government Employees Network, provide opportunity for Aboriginal employees to identify issues that may be systemic to NSW Government, and to develop culturally appropriate responses that may be communicated to the RCMG as a whole-of-government management structure.

4.3 Career Development

Effective career development recognises the values of Aboriginal employees to the organisation/agency

Aboriginality - that is first hand knowledge and experience of Aboriginal culture arising from cultural heritage, brings unique perspectives into the mix of employee skills and abilities that an agency may have. This special knowledge is of value to agencies, many of whom may need to draw on diverse and creative approaches to overcome the challenges involved in delivering government services for whole communities.

Currently, the proportion of Aboriginal people with year 12 and post secondary qualifications is well below that for the total population. This does not mean that Aboriginal people do not possess a high level of skills – just that their skills may be different.

By valuing the skills that Aboriginal people bring to the agency and supporting Aboriginal employees to further their training and education, agencies can support Aboriginal workers to move from positions of lower skill level to be able to participate at every level, including middle and senior management.

Create “stepping stones” which give Aboriginal people the opportunity to develop to their full potential

Agencies need to have open discussion about training opportunities with their Aboriginal staff. Training must be practical and useful from the Aboriginal worker’s perspective. Ideally, training and development opportunities may be jointly planned in such a way that they open up clear career pathways for those employees who have such aspirations. Aboriginal people do not necessarily all aspire to work in identified positions. Aboriginal people need access to the full range of career options.

Ensure training content and delivery methods are suited to the learning styles and needs of Aboriginal staff as well as other employees

Many Aboriginal employees respond well to training that has the following characteristics:

- is action focussed and participatory, rather than passive (eg lectures, presentations);
- recognises adult learning styles;
- brings together collective groups of Aboriginal people;
- is discussion based;
- uses collective decision making; and
- is practical, and directly related to jobs skills and interests

Provide opportunities for Aboriginal staff to attend relevant workshops and conferences at the local, regional, state and national level.

This is a very achievable way to extend the knowledge and skills of Aboriginal employees.

Ensure that all Aboriginal employees have the opportunity to attend networks, including the annual I-SE AGEN Gathering

These networks provide a support mechanism for Aboriginal employees. They are a safe and culturally appropriate environment for Aboriginal people to communicate and share information.

Network Gatherings that offer cross-agency engagement provide the opportunity for employees to consider Aboriginal policy, program and service delivery issues that may be

systemic across the NSW Government. The outcomes from such discussions may provide constructive feedback to managers and CEOs.

Provide opportunities for secondments to other agencies for a period of time to undertake a particular job or project.

This can help to broaden the skills and experience of Aboriginal employees, and support career development. It is not necessary to restrict Aboriginal employees on secondment to positions that are Aboriginal identified.

Provide opportunities for job rotation within the employing agency.

Job rotations may help to strengthen employees' skills and experience. Temporary "job swaps" may bring mutual benefits to the employees involved and develop insights for the agency.

Sometimes Aboriginal employees in identified positions may be exposed to stress and burn out, due to the pressures of balancing the expectations of the community with those of the employing agency. This stress may be reduced by offering employees in identified positions the opportunity to work in mainstream positions. The timing of such an offer is a matter for each agency to negotiate with their respective Aboriginal employees, however as a guide, employees in identified positions may need a "change" after about two years.

Provide opportunities for acting in higher duties within the employing agency

Many Aboriginal employees would greatly value the opportunity to broaden their experience by acting in higher duties from time to time. The higher duties positions do not need to be Aboriginal identified, as many Aboriginal workers are happy to work in mainstream positions.

Aboriginal employees who seek career development report feeling frustrated when agencies restrict their career movement to Aboriginal identified or targeted positions. Opening opportunities in mainstream positions for these employees will enhance career development and bring benefits to agencies by deepening the agency exposure to Aboriginal perspectives in positions that are not traditionally targeted to Aboriginal people.

Sponsorship of Aboriginal staff to gain formal qualifications so that they can compete for, and enter mainstream positions.

Opportunities for formal education could be offered to all Aboriginal employees. This will help to offset the disadvantage that the Aboriginal community currently has in relation to post school qualifications, relative to the non Aboriginal community.

4.4 Cultural Respect

The role that zero tolerance of racism and cultural respect training has in building connectivity between Aboriginal employees and their employing agencies has already been touched on in the earlier discussion.

However the importance of cultural respect cannot be over-emphasised. Regardless of how much cultural respect training has been completed, it is the behaviour of people in the work place and the ability of the employing agency to work with the needs and aspirations of their Aboriginal employees that will make the difference in the long run.

In addition to supporting cultural respect training for all employees, agencies can demonstrate cultural respect through:

Acknowledging Aboriginal cultural practices and observing welcome to country protocols at all public events

Agencies can communicate Aboriginal cultural practices to the broader community and promote respect and understanding. These practices show that Aboriginal people hold a unique position in Australian communities and that Aboriginal culture is continuous through time – past, present and future.

Acknowledging and making flexible provision for the participation of Aboriginal employees in cultural, community or related activities.

Community and family are very important elements of Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal employees are culturally obliged to support community and family at all times, ahead of pursuing what some people may consider to be in the best interests of the employee as an individual. If they do not meet their cultural obligations, Aboriginal employees risk causing damage to community connectedness.

Through participating in community events Aboriginal employees are demonstrating connectedness to their Aboriginal communities. This connectedness builds community trust and rapport. It directly influences the effectiveness that the employee may have in working with community. It is in the interests of employing agencies to understand that building community connectedness delivers mutual benefits for community and for agencies. It is a core work responsibility for Aboriginal employees.

Agencies should support employees in carrying out this work. Further, agencies can demonstrate cultural respect by understanding the importance of family and community connections, and providing flexible working arrangements when demands from family or community intrude on agency business expectations.

4.5 Community Partnerships

Successful outcomes for recruiting and retaining Aboriginal employees cannot be achieved without understanding and responding to the community context for these employees. If the expectations of agencies do not consider community, tensions may arise which may undermine the stability of Aboriginal staff.

Aboriginal communities collectively hold the deep understanding and knowledge that is needed before any service planning and development can be effectively carried out. Communities are therefore the natural partners for government agencies seeking to achieve improved service outcomes.

The *Two Ways Together* Plan recognises that Aboriginal people have the best knowledge of the needs of their communities, and the past policies and practices used by governments have not always worked. There is a focus on involving Aboriginal people in decisions about planning, implementation and evaluation as a new way for Government to work with community.

Successful community partnerships depend on the development of trust and rapport. Government agencies are able to develop these qualities by showing genuine effort that is sustained over a long period of time.

Some of the strategies to build community trust and rapport might be:

- engage Aboriginal community participation in the development of an Aboriginal Employment Action Plan;
- establish linkages and partnerships with job networks, CDEPs, education and training providers;
- encourage Aboriginal representation on any committees and working parties that are established to carry out normal agency business;
- engage with Aboriginal organisations such as Land Councils, Cultural Groups, Traditional owners groups, health services, community working parties. Where appropriate, agencies can develop memorandum of understandings with local organisations, for example to set out agreed communication practices;
- ensure that both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal employees are able to participate in NAIDOC week activities;
- consider hosting a NAIDOC week activity or sponsoring an activity that the community would like to organise;
- become actively involved in events organised by local Aboriginal communities eg Touch Football matches, Rugby League Knockout, Art exhibitions;
- look for opportunities where your agency could be a good corporate neighbour;
- support any positive initiatives that may be community initiated eg Community Based Working Groups; and
- be mindful that some Aboriginal communities are geographically remote (eg Wallaga Lake). These communities should not be over looked.

4.6 Exit Interviews at the conclusion of employment

Well executed exit interviews provide an opportunity to evaluate the performance of the agency in relation to Aboriginal employment issues. They may provide learnings that can be used to drive continuous improvements in Aboriginal employment policies and practices, and agency culture.

To make the most of these opportunities a formal exit interview process must be developed. All Aboriginal employees leaving the agency should be interviewed, if they so wish.

5. Implementation Plan for the Illawarra- South East RCMG Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Plan

This Plan was endorsed by the I-SE RCMG at its meeting on 6 March 2007. At this meeting it was agreed that the Plan would be implemented as follows:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet will distribute the Plan to all RCMG Agencies;
- I-SE RCMG Agencies each to separately develop their own Regional Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment Action Plan, consistent with the Aboriginal Employment Plans developed centrally by that agency;
- each agency to report back to the RCMG meeting in March 2008, outlining the Regional Plans that they have developed and the outcomes that they have achieved; and
- AGEN Members to monitor progress in agencies around Aboriginal employment and recruitment issues and identify systemic issues that require further work at annual AGEN Gatherings.

6. Resources and References for further information

Organisation	Public Employment Office, NSW Premier's Department
Resource Name	"Making it our Business" Improving Aboriginal Employment in the NSW Public Sector Strategic Framework and Resource Guide
Publication date	August 2006
Description of Resource	"Making it our Business" is the NSW Government's plan to improve the representation of Aboriginal people in the NSW Public Sector. It provides a comprehensive outcomes framework, case studies of successful initiatives and an extensive list of resources. There is a high degree of congruence between this Plan and the I-SE RCMG Employment and Recruitment Plan.
Contact details	Public Employment Office NSW Premier's Department Phone: (02) 9228 3572 Fax: (02) 8243 9491 Email: peo@dpc.nsw.gov.au
Website	www.dpc.nsw.gov.au www.daa.nsw.gov.au

Organisation	Public Employment Office, NSW Premier's Department
Resource Name	"Aboriginal Employment in Practice" for the NSW Public Sector
Publication Date	2000
Description of Resource	Presents Strategies to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal people and case studies of successful initiatives
Contact details	Public Employment Office NSW Premier's Department Phone: (02) 9228 3572 Fax: (02) 8243 9491 Email: peo@dpc.nsw.gov.au
Website	www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

Organisation	Public Employment Office, NSW Premier's Department
Resource Name	"Good Job" – Success with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment
Publication Date	
Description of Resource	Presents successful Aboriginal employment strategies developed by various agencies
Contact details	Public Employment Office NSW Premier's Department Phone: (02) 9228 3572 Fax: (02) 8243 9491 Email: peo@premiers.nsw.gov.au
Website	www.premiers.nsw.gov.au

Organisation	North Coast Regional Coordination Management Group
Resource Name	North Coast Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy – Project Report 2005
Publication Date	August 2005
Description of Resource	Describes the process undertaken by the North Coast RCMG to develop a regional Aboriginal Employment Strategy; the recommendations that have emerged from carrying out this work; and the next steps to be taken. Project is ongoing.
Contact details	Julie Byers Regional Coordinator North Coast Phone: (02) 6648 7239 Fax: (02) 6648 7232 Email: Julie.byers@dpc.nsw.gov.au

Organisation	Sydney Area Consultative Committee - GROW
Resource Name	GROW's Indigenous Employment Strategy: 'Getting it Right'.
Publication Date	Unsure – after 2005
Description of Resource	Includes a series of practical publications that aim to assist employers, Indigenous community organisations, Indigenous jobseekers and employment organisations to develop “common ground” between work place practices and values, and those of Indigenous communities.
Contact details	GROW Employment Council Suite 102, Level 1 460 Church Street NORTH PARRAMATTA 2151 Phone: 9890 7804 Fax: 9890 7814 Email: info@grow.org.au
Website	www.grow.org.au/indigenous

Organisation	Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group
Resource Name	Illawarra Guide to Recruiting Aboriginal People into Employment
Description of Resource	This is a Kit which includes a Recruitment Guide; a directory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services in the Illawarra; and other resource material
Contact details	Economic and Education Cluster Group of the Illawarra Community Based Working Group c/- June Lowe Phone: (02) 4224 5787 Fax: (02) 4224 5797 Email: JUNE.LOWE@housing.nsw.gov.au

Organisation	Institute of Public Administration Australia NSW
Resource Name	Improving Aboriginal Employment Outcomes in the Public Sector
Publication Date	June 2006
Description of Resource	Reports the proceedings of a Seminar held in Sydney in June 2006. Presentations from DAA, the PEO, North Coast RCMG, I-SE AGEN, Moree Plains Shire Council, Country Energy, and DEC
Contact details	Phone: (02) 9228 5225 Fax: (02) 9241 1920 Email: info@nsw.ipaa.org.au
Website	www.nsw.ipaa.org.au

Organisation	Department of Environment and Conservation
Resource Name	Aboriginal Employment and Development Strategy (includes Action Plan for 2004-2006)
Description of Resource	A comprehensive plan covering strategies, outcomes, key results and indicators. Is due for revision in 2006
Contact details	Manager, Workforce Planning Department of Environment and Conservation Phone: (02) 9585 6627

Organisation	Department of Housing
Resource Name	South Eastern Area Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2005-2009
Description of Resource	Plan identifies outcomes, strategies, Actions and responsibilities. There is also a support document providing demographic information for the South East Region and specific statistical information about Aboriginal households in State Housing (demand data)

Organisation	Department of Juvenile Justice
Resource Name	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Employment and Career Development Strategy 2002-2005
Description of Resource	Document is a response to earlier report "Aboriginal Over-representation Strategic Plan" (Sept 2001) and part of an Equity Action Plan. Covers off on 4 key outcomes areas of Recruitment, Training, Retention/Support, Career Development

Organisation	Roads and Traffic Authority
Resource Name	Aboriginal Action Plan 2001-2006
Description of Resource	Identifies a specific range of actions to be taken to improve employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Organisation	Workcover
Resource Name	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Development Strategy 2003-2006
Description of Resource	Plan covers ATSI OHS Performance, ATSI Partnerships, ATSI representations and development, and organisational culture.

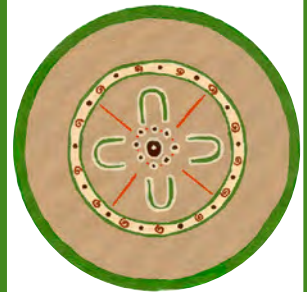
Organisation	Department of Fair Trading
Resource Name	Aboriginal Employment Strategy
Description of Resource	Very brief document committing the Department to keeping the proportion of Aboriginal staff to 3%; also includes other actions to be taken.

Organisation	Attorney General's Department
Resource Name	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy
Description of Resource	Very brief document (2 pages). Covers Recruitment and Selection; identified positions; cadetships; Norimbah Unit –established specifically to support Aboriginal staff; staff support and career development.

Appendix 1

Illawarra-South East Aboriginal Government Employees Network (AGEN): Cross Agency Working Party

Cross Agency Working Party (CAWP)



The role of the CAWP is to:

- report back to the Illawarra-South East Regional Coordination Management Group on the outcomes of each AGEN Gathering;
- follow through tasks identified in AGEN Action Plans;
- work with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to organise AGEN Gatherings; and
- report back to AGEN Gatherings.

Participation on CAWP should be a 2 year commitment.

A Chairperson will be elected at the first CAWP meeting after each AGEN Gathering.

The Chairperson is the key link between the Department of Premier and Cabinet and CAWP.

The CAWP's key role will be to implement the Action Plan. CAWP members need to be willing to carry on the work that the AGEN outlines in the Action Plan.

Leadership and Secretariat support will be provided by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs or the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

