



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Strategy

2020 – 2022

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (the Society), and to provide sustainable and fulfilling employment and career progression.

We recognise that one of the most important reconciliation actions we can undertake as an organisation is to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. The direct provision of employment opportunities is one way in which we can contribute to efforts to close the gap economically.

We also recognise the importance of a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities in which we work and understand that the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is critical to the delivery of effective, person-centred services for First Nations peoples and communities.

This strategy therefore sets out how we will go about encouraging, increasing, and fostering the employment and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians at all levels of our organisation.

2. Context

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention strategy 2021-2023 has been developed to support **Action 8** of our Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2020 (RAP); that is, to “investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our workplace”.

This strategy will be incorporated in the Society’s new Innovate Plan 2021-2023, due to be developed between February-May 2021.

The Society recognises that increasing employment opportunities within our workforce requires a specific strategy to address employment inequality and overcome barriers to employment. A prerequisite for a successful strategy is that it is built on and informed by genuine relationships of trust the Society has and develops with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and in the wider spheres in which we operate.

We note that ensuring our workforce environment is culturally safe will be critical to the success of these actions. Work to achieve this will be supported by our *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework*. This strategy is also designed to support the Society’s:

- Reconciliation Action Plan ([available here](#))
- Cultural Protocols document (available on the Staff Portal [here](#))
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Strategic Plan
- Code of Conduct

3. Our Strategy

This strategy is a dynamic document which will be updated as required and formally reviewed annually.

The Society's goal is to increase the number of people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities working for the Society by:

- enhancing recruitment within the Society
- increasing retention levels
- increasing vocational skills and career development outcomes
- promoting greater awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and cultures within our organisation
- promoting leadership and management opportunities
- demonstrating how First Nations people genuinely participate, drive and guide our strategy
- embedding our commitment to cultural awareness across the organisation.

We will achieve these outcomes through three central actions:

- **Establish**
- **Attract**
- **Develop and Retain**

4. Central Actions

4.1. Establish

So that we can understand our progress, and to help us prioritise recruitment activities in key parts of our organisation, we will:

- Establish a baseline by:
 - conducting a Staff Diversity and Inclusion Census identifying the current number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed within the Society
 - documenting existing identified positions across the organisation.
- Conduct an analysis of our services (including member services) to determine priority locations and/or services for new identified or targeted positions. This will consider:
 - the location of our services against population demographics
 - current patterns of service usage.
- Work with Directors to establish agreed goals for:
 - identified positions – dedicated to working with and on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' issues; and/or
 - targeted positions – where 'weighting' is applied to mainstream positions identifying that Aboriginality and knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities is an essential requirement; specifically, in locations where large cohorts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are evident.

- Scope the opportunity to recruit identified/targeted positions to key parts of the Society to facilitate change i.e. Workforce Development; Policy; Learning and Development; Corporate Services; Retail Services.
- Scope the opportunity to recruit to dedicated positions that will engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to promote recruitment of members and volunteers.

4.2. Attract

We seek to attract candidates for positions across the whole of the Society, and to recruit colleagues who will find satisfying roles in our organisation.

To do this, we need to develop our internal capacity to support the strategy, identify key strategic relationships within communities, provide appropriate training, and incorporate inclusive selection practices free from bias.

4.2.1. Strategic Partnerships

Our capacity to successfully achieve the goals of this strategy will be founded on and informed by the relationships we build with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

This includes:

- Developing and maintaining genuine relationships and trust with local communities as the basis for collaboration and a source of advice at all stages of the development and implementation of the strategy.
- Developing strategic partnerships with established and respected Aboriginal employment providers. It is expected that a partnership with specialist Aboriginal employment providers will:
 - support effective, sustained and quality implementation
 - ensure the processes we follow and the actions we take are culturally sensitive and appropriate and meet the needs of the community
 - provide us with essential advice and guidance for all elements of our strategy
 - give credibility to our strategy and aims and align these with the Society's vision to give a 'hand up'.

4.2.2. Our Recruitment Process

In order to meet our goals, we will establish a recruitment process that eliminates bias and facilitates higher levels of participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Specifically, we will:

- Where appropriate, conduct 'Yarning Circles' in specific locations as a means of engaging authentically with local communities to explain and promote the Society's work.
- Invite the Society's First Nations Staff Network to provide input into the design and implementation of initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

- Review employment practices at the Society to ensure inclusivity and removal of employment barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4.2.3. Advertising

The Society will actively promote positions through available community networks, local councils, and community-based organisations as well as through recognised print and electronic media. We will also use culturally approved designs wherever possible in recruitment advertising.

We will use local, regional and national media streams to advertise employment opportunities, including:

- Koori Mail.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media and associated networks.
- Job Fairs/Events targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Strategic partners associated with the Bubulwul Baya Aboriginal Advisory Group.
- Associated Job Active Agencies i.e. Aboriginal Employment Service (AES).
- Aboriginal community groups and forums.
- Tertiary Education providers and other institutions and services.

In addition to the statement, “The St Vincent de Paul Society is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer”, we will ensure all job advertisements include the statement “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply for this position”.

4.2.4. Interviews and selection activities

The Society will assess current recruitment practices to identify and remove barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers.

We will:

- Develop culturally relevant selection practices and methods proven to have higher predictive validity and lower adverse impact (i.e. less cultural bias).
- Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in selection process, particularly for ‘identified’ and ‘targeted’ (weighted) positions.
- Ensure pre-employment checks are accessible and free of bias.
- Design job descriptions for the positions we identify so that candidates feel confident and safe in applying for the job, in the support they will receive from the Society, and in the value and relevance of the employment to their own goals and ambitions.
- Develop guidelines to support recruitment practices for targeted and identified positions, ensuring position descriptions are worded appropriately.

4.3. Develop and Retain

Our strategy seeks to ensure employees are well supported in their roles within the Society and have access to professional development strategies to enhance both their careers and job experience.

We will do this by:

- Creating a culturally intelligent onboarding process for new employees.
- Establishing provisions for ongoing coaching and mentoring, whether through internal sources or through external consultants.
- Developing a mentor or peer support initiative to guide new employees to develop and advance their career opportunities through the *People Potential and Growth* performance and development process.
- Ensuring employees are aware of the Leadership Program being scoped by Learning and Development, and potential opportunities for participation in the program once available.
- In consultation with the Learning and Development team, pilot a Traineeship program that is supported and opens potential pathways to permanent positions within the Society.
- Conduct appropriate and sensitive exit interviews to provide insight on reasons for leaving. Any concerning data and trends to be reviewed and addressed as appropriate with Executive support.

4.3.1. Our Onboarding Process

We will provide an onboarding process for new employees that considers the real issues and barriers that confront many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people moving into employment or into new workplaces.

The process will address onboarding from the perspective of the challenges that face the new employee and the perspective of our existing workforce who may be unaware of the barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees may face.

This process will ensure that where possible, new employees are informed about the Society's Aboriginal support services and have the opportunity to connect with the First Nations Staff Network. Where possible, we will also establish mentoring and buddy systems to support new employees.

Our strategy will demonstrate that the Society's onboarding processes are effective and inclusive.

4.3.2. Coaching and mentoring

We will explore opportunities to provide employees with access to coaching and mentoring opportunities as appropriate to their roles. This will include:

- Establishing a First Nations Staff Network to facilitate peer-to-peer mentoring.
- Determining where access to an external mentor is appropriate and facilitate this.
- Investigating opportunities to design and implement a dedicated mentoring/coaching program to be delivered across the Society.

4.3.3. Career Development

We will:

- Ensure that employees have access to the People Potential and Growth (PPG) process and that PPG development actions support career growth and realisation of potential.
- Identify and seek to remove any barriers to growth and career development of employees.
- Ensure that the PPG process is inclusive.
- Provide additional support and coaching to create pathways for career development.

4.3.4. Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship program

The Society will seek to identify traineeship opportunities within the Society for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all areas of the organisation and create the environment to support this.

We will:

- Provide people leaders with the opportunity to undertake a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness/education program to further support their role in managing trainees.
- Ensure the Aboriginal Engagement Partner plays an active role in supporting trainees, as well as offering support to their leaders throughout the term of their traineeship, linking in other support services as required.
- Work closely with Job Active agencies and educational institutions such as TAFE NSW and universities to identify suitable applicants who are currently completing relevant qualifications.
- Engage with government agencies i.e. State Training Services to access support programs such as 'The Way Ahead' mentoring program.
- Inform individuals of vacancies that arise within the Society, creating a pathway and transitioning them into permanent roles wherever possible and appropriate.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The key employees with responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the strategy are detailed in the following table:

Role	Responsibility
Executive Director, Corporate Services	Sponsor the implementation of the strategy to ensure recruitment and retention goals are met (and extended where possible). Facilitate ongoing Executive Leadership Team support. Have the responsibility and authority to approve and facilitate development and fostering of genuine relationships of mutual

	<p>benefit with appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations.</p> <p>Be directly responsible to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for implementing and reporting on strategy and outcomes.</p>
Aboriginal Engagement Partner	<p>Develop, implement and evaluate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attraction and retention strategies in collaboration with the Manager, Staff Recruitment and provide updates and reporting to the Executive Director, Corporate Services.</p> <p>Be involved in the welcome, induction and onboarding of new employees.</p> <p>Enable and support working relationships with strategic partners including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations.</p>
Managers	<p>Support the recruitment and selection process of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates by reviewing applications, selecting candidates for interview and being part of the interview panel.</p> <p>Assist in identifying positions that are either '<i>targeted</i>' or '<i>identified</i>'.</p>
Manager, Staff Recruitment	<p>Collaborate with the Aboriginal Engagement Partner to develop, implement and evaluate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attraction and retention strategies.</p>
Staff Recruitment – Corporate Services	<p>Enable the recruitment and selection process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by supporting the review of applications and coordinating the interview process, design of interview questions, setting up interviews and being part of the interview panel.</p> <p>Promote employment opportunities for applicants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds through recognised and emerging channels.</p> <p>Support the Aboriginal Engagement Partner in the provision of reporting and monitoring of strategy outcomes.</p>

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

The Society will monitor the progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees on a quarterly basis. Where appropriate the Society will take advice from leaders within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. Our Key Performance Indicators will include:

- the number of applicants who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed within the Society
- the number of employees engaged as Mentors/Buddies/Peers

- the average length of service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

We will also:

- promote best practice stories through yarning circles and Society communication channels
- seek feedback from the annual diversity survey
- seek feedback from exit interviews to be analysed by Team Leaders/Managers to address any concerns

7. Implementation Plan

Actions and objectives:

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
2020		
Appoint Aboriginal Engagement Partner	Director, People Strategy and Development	July 2020
Establish a First Nations Staff Network to facilitate peer-to-peer mentoring	Aboriginal Engagement Partner	September 2020
Conduct Staff Diversity and Inclusion Census to establish baseline measurement	Recruitment and Retention committee	December 2020
2021		
Establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Strategy	Recruitment and Retention committee	February 2021
Record existing identified positions across the organisation	Manager, Staff Recruitment/Aboriginal Engagement Partner	February 2021
Host discussion forum with respondents from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention strategy survey	Recruitment and Retention committee	February 2021
Develop process to ensure diversity information is collected during onboarding process and up-to-date records maintained	Manager, Staff Recruitment	March 2021
Develop process to ensure best practice advertising strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media i.e. Koori Mail • Inclusion of 'diversity' and 'encouragement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply' statements • Use of culturally approved design Embed language in job advertisements (where appropriate)	Manager, Staff Recruitment/Aboriginal Engagement Partner	December 2020

Create culturally inclusive intelligent onboarding process for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	Aboriginal Engagement Partner/Manager, Staff Recruitment	March/April 2021
Review Employment and Retention Strategy (including inviting feedback on real and perceived employment barriers via the First Nations Staff Network)	Recruitment and Retention Committee/First Nations Staff Network	March/April 2021
Ensure processes are in place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise positions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media channels, as appropriate • Include appropriate diversity statements in all job advertisements • Use culturally approved designs as appropriate 	Manager, Staff Recruitment/Aboriginal Engagement Partner	March/April 2021
Establish strategic partnerships with established and respected Aboriginal employment providers	Manager, Staff Recruitment	March 2021
Conduct review of current recruitment processes to ensure they are free from cultural bias and barriers to employment are eliminated	Manager, Staff Recruitment/Aboriginal Engagement Partner	April 2021
Analyse service footprint to determine priority locations and/or services for new identified and targeted positions	Recruitment and Retention Committee	April 2021
Work with relevant Directors to agreed goals for identified and targeted positions	Recruitment and Retention Committee /approved by ELT	April 2021
Develop process to support recruitment of identified and targeted positions (including steps to promote engagement – e.g. identifying likely candidates and yarning circles, and to ensure best practice selection process)	Manager, Staff Recruitment/ Aboriginal Engagement Partner	April 2021
Scope a dedicated ‘Mentoring Program’ to be implemented for all new appointees; investigate accredited and non-accredited options through internal or external sources	Aboriginal Engagement Partner/Learning and Development	June 2021
With the support of Learning and Development, explore dedicated Traineeship positions within the Society for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples	Aboriginal Engagement Partner/ Staff Recruitment/L&D Manager	July/August 2021
Scope opportunity to recruit to dedicated identified positions to key parts of the Society as endorsed by ELT	ELT/Manager Staff Recruitment/First Peoples Staff Network	October/November 2021

Support Regional RAP Working Parties to develop and maintain genuine relationships and trust with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	Aboriginal Engagement Partner	Ongoing
Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recruitment and Retention Strategy into new SVdP Innovate Plan 2021 -2022/23	Aboriginal Engagement Partner/RAP Working Party	Feb-May 2021
2022		
Conduct census on numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recruited during 2021	Manager, Staff Recruitment	February 2022
Evaluate agreed targets for identified and targeted positions and adjust accordingly for 2022	ELT	March 2022
Analyse recruitment processes, gauging both successes and areas for improvement	Manager, Staff Recruitment	March 2022
Appraise Mentoring Program on numbers completing program and engaged in mentoring roles	Aboriginal Engagement Partner/Learning and Development	September 2022
Review Employment and Retention Strategy half yearly. Provide Report on actions implemented. Scope potential on design and implementation of new strategy for 2023 onwards	Recruitment and Retention Committee/First Nations Staff Network/Aboriginal Engagement Partner	Sep 2021, Mar 2022, Sep 2022