



REGIONAL ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Main Report

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***Regional Aboriginal
Workforce
Development: A
Strategic Framework
for South Australian
Local Government
Main Report***

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KEY MESSAGES

This report outlines a *Strategic Framework for Aboriginal Workforce Development* referenced to a Local Government context. The Framework draws on the successful Marni Waiendi training to employment model which was developed in association with local Aboriginal leaders and managed by an Aboriginal governing structure, Aboriginal senior project staff and with the support of the City of Playford. The model demonstrates how Local Governments can work with the Aboriginal community and other regional stakeholders to address workforce development issues and improve social, training and employment outcomes for local Aboriginal people.

The Framework is based on a review of existing evidence on effective Aboriginal workforce development and examples of similar strategic frameworks developed elsewhere. Consultations were undertaken with key stakeholders in South Australian local government and others closely connected with the Marni Waiendi-ART Employment training to employment model used in the City of Playford. The training to employment model was explored in-depth, including detailed case studies of the Holden Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program and Garden Blitz project.

A number of key themes emerged from the research, feeding into eleven strategic focus areas for regional Aboriginal workforce development. The key themes included the following:

- Strong partnerships are central to the training to employment transition process, bringing together the complementary roles, skills and resources of a range of stakeholders including local Aboriginal community, leaders and organisations, social and community support services, industry and business, all levels of government, education and training organisations, and job service providers.
- Strong Aboriginal-centred mentorship is a critical success factor for training to employment ventures. Mentors play a key role in engaging people, developing meaningful bonds based on respect and trust, identifying participants' interests and barriers, connecting them to opportunities and support services, and maintaining support and encouragement across the whole training to employment transition process (including the provision of post-employment support).
- It is important to overcome the welfare-dependent mentality that is the frequent legacy of inter-generational unemployment. The Marni Waiendi-ART Employment model hinges on participants engaging of their own free will, and assuming personal responsibility for making the training to employment process work (even if they have to try a number of times). This is closely linked with aspiration and confidence building within participants and in the Aboriginal community more broadly.
- Local Aboriginal workforce development has to be pinned to real local employment opportunities (existing and emerging). There needs to be considerable behind the scenes work identifying developments and opportunities (employment, funding, policy drivers), and working with industries, employers and training providers to develop responsive Aboriginal specific training to employment programs.
- Aboriginal job-seekers need to commit, with support, to developing the skills and attributes required to successfully take up available employment opportunities; equally employers need to commit (similarly with support) to providing workplaces that welcome, nurture and sustain Aboriginal employees as valued members of the workforce.
- It is critical to adopt an integrated, holistic approach to Aboriginal workforce development, taking into account complex socio-economic barriers such as health, housing, transport, drug and alcohol, and criminal justice issues. It is unrealistic to expect training to employment ventures to succeed where these extraneous factors continue to undermine people's capacity to engage with, commit to and sustain education and work activities.

In line with these key success factors, the Marni Waiendi-ART Employment training to employment model involves the following components:

- Working with the local Aboriginal community, building awareness and engagement regarding local job opportunities, and maintaining a database of local job-seekers;
- Identifying local employers with workforce gaps or opportunities, advocating the case for Aboriginal employment, and building interest and confidence among employers in relation to supporting Aboriginal job-seekers into positions;
- Determining particular employer needs and requirements (skills and aptitudes);
- Identifying Aboriginal job-seekers with potential to fill the workforce gap;
- Providing mentorship and targeted support to participants across the training to employment transition;
- Working with job service and training providers to develop training to employment programs that are responsive to industry and participants' needs;
- Working with community service providers to get the right supports in place for participants; and
- Working with employers so they can provide a culturally inclusive workplace that is well-placed to sustain Aboriginal employees long-term (e.g. strong cultural engagement, flexibility to deal with cultural demands, and a focus on employee development and fulfilment at work).

While the Strategic Framework contains Aboriginal workforce development principles and actions that are applicable across a range of sectors, there is a particular emphasis in this instance on the role of local government, both as a prospective employer of Aboriginal job-seekers and in developing and supporting local conditions to support Aboriginal employment more broadly. It is intended for local governments to use the Strategic Framework to commence or progress a conversation within Council and across relevant stakeholders about what is needed in the region and how to plan a structured and collaborative response. Local governments can play a key role in pressing forward a local Aboriginal workforce development agenda, identifying partners and coordinating efforts, however a principle role is identified in providing relatively low cost council corporate support services (risk management, financial management, and human resource management) to enable grant funded Aboriginal workforce development programs to proceed in a cost-effective manner.

1 BACKGROUND

The South Australian Local Government Association and various Kurna Groups in the region have been negotiating since 2006 to establish a Kurna Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). A key objective of state-wide negotiations has been to ‘develop an Indigenous Land Use Agreement for the land and waters of the Kurna native title claim in respect of state and local government interests (not involving other parties) and for the participating Local Councils in that area and the South Australian Government’¹. One of the objectives behind the state-based negotiation process is the improvement of social and economic outcomes for Indigenous people.² Within the City of Playford context, it was considered that a *Strategic Framework for Aboriginal Workforce Development* would provide a foundation for future training and employment skills development for Aboriginal people and would support the work being undertaken by the Local Government ILUA Leadership Group. The Strategic Framework for Local Government responds to an area of interest identified by the Leadership Group relating to Council employment opportunities and programs for Kurna peoples.

The Strategic Framework for Aboriginal Workforce Development project was funded by the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA SA) with matching funding provided by Stretton Services/the City of Playford. The project brief involved outlining a Strategic Framework with specific application to local government, based on the Aboriginal training to employment model developed within the City of Playford in conjunction with the Director of locally based company ART Employment.

The development of the Strategic Framework has involved the following stages:

- Completing a literature review to identify relevant Indigenous workforce strategies being implemented in other jurisdictions;
- Completing an environmental scan of regional Aboriginal workforce initiatives and programs funded by Local, State and National Government, and local employment conditions and outlook in the North;
- Developing a profile of the Aboriginal population in the Playford LGA with particular emphasis on education, employment and training participation and opportunities;
- Consulting with key stakeholders and organisations to draw on their experience and develop a number of case studies of successful Aboriginal training to employment initiatives in Northern Adelaide; and
- Preparing a sector-wide Strategic Framework for Aboriginal Workforce Development in the Northern Adelaide region, and a second Strategic Framework for Aboriginal Workforce Development specifically referenced to the role of South Australia local governments.

The current Main Report outlines the Strategic Framework for South Australian Local Government. A literature review and environmental scan of existing initiatives and programs is published as a separate report (*Accompanying Report 1*). The City of Playford Aboriginal Population Profile also stands as a separate report (*Accompanying Report 2*), as does the Case Study report which provides illustrative case studies addressed to the Holden Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program and Garden Blitz project (*Accompanying Report 3*).

¹ SA Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) Statewide Negotiations: http://www.unley.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/att_1_item_241_csp_august_2009.pdf

² South Australian Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) Statewide Negotiations Strategic Plan 2006-2009: <http://www.atns.net.au/agreement.asp?EntityID=5268>

2 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 HOW TO USE THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Framework for Regional Aboriginal Workforce Development is designed to assist local government Councils to increase and enhance opportunities for Aboriginal employment in their region. In part this refers to Councils considering what they need to do to lift Aboriginal employment in their own sector however it also refers to the role of Councils in driving local conditions for Aboriginal employment more broadly.

The Framework has been informed by a review of existing evidence and examples of practice, and consultation with stakeholders about local experience, issues and responses. Drawing on the experience of implementing the training to employment model used by *Marni Waiendi* (based at the Playford Council) and developed further by *ART Employment* (a locally based Aboriginal owned and operated company), the Strategic Framework is designed to create a foundation for engagement, collaboration, investment and action across communities, industries and sectors to advance Aboriginal training to employment outcomes.

It is recognised that local governments and other stakeholders will approach the Strategic Framework from a range of starting points. Some will have had substantial prior experience in working with, and delivering services and programs to, Aboriginal communities, while for others it may be a relatively new journey. It is also recognised that local conditions, pressures and opportunities will vary greatly across and between regions. For this reason, the Strategic Framework does not offer a prescriptive approach; instead it outlines a suite of considerations, approaches and actions that can be drawn upon and tailored to inform locally applicable strategies.

Notably, the Strategic Framework focuses on Aboriginal workforce development rather than employment per se. This recognises that successful Aboriginal employment outcomes are supported by a holistic pathways approach spanning early engagement through to training and employment transition points. The Framework also explicitly recognises that responsibility for actions and outcomes is shared across participating partners; for example the onus is on training providers, employers and job-seekers alike to become informed, and to prepare and commit to making the changes necessary to support the training to employment process. Workforce development in this context involves developing the capacity and capability of communities, individuals, training, employment and support services, and employers - in concert.

The Strategic Framework presents a comprehensive suite of principles and strategies known to produce positive training to employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. Understanding what works and why is an essential starting point for Councils that want to develop a local workforce development strategy. Local Governments can use the Strategic Framework to commence or progress a conversation within Council and across relevant stakeholders about what is needed in the region and how to plan a structured and collaborative response. Drawing on the case study examples, the Strategic Framework assists organisations to recognise and overcome key stumbling blocks, for example:

- Designing **culturally accessible recruitment techniques** to overcome the lack of Aboriginal applicants for advertised positions (e.g. organising community information sessions about pending training to employment programs or job opportunities, using networks to promote opportunities, designing accessible job advertisements and interview techniques);
- Developing **culturally responsive training** that maximises Aboriginal participant engagement and retention (e.g. the Garden Blitz project found that integrated theoretical and practical components of training was a more successful model);

- Highlighting basic **‘preparation for work’ support and development opportunities** to address a lack of foundational skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy, driver education training, communication and presentation skills);
- Encouraging **persistence in the face of likely setbacks** (e.g. recognising that participants are likely to disengage and re-engage any number of times and making peace with that).

In addition to generating positive employment outcomes, the City of Playford experience has demonstrated that involvement in training to employment programs is an excellent way to increase Aboriginal community engagement, and engagement with other agencies and services. Moreover this can be achieved by way of relatively low cost provision of council corporate support services (risk management, financial management, and human resource management) to enable grant funded programs to proceed in a cost-effective manner. Through documenting the City of Playford-based model, it is intended for other local government Councils to be able to draw on the experience and learning to design their own localised approaches to Aboriginal workforce development.

It should be noted that the Marni Waiendi - ART Employment training to employment model uses comprehensive range of strategies to support local Aboriginal job-seekers, however *it is important to stress that Local Governments more broadly need not assume responsibility for delivering on each and every one of these components*. It is noteworthy that the Marni Waiendi model, which was developed in association with the Kurna elders and leaders and managed by Aboriginal project staff with the support of the City of Playford, was subsequently taken over and expanded by ART Employment to include the engagement of the Kurna Lands Trust, Aboriginal Health providers, Sport & Recreation, Housing, schools, making the model highly integrated, robust and representative of the Kurna people. While Council recognised the need for the model and was prepared to support an initial response, the delivery of training to employment services was not ultimately seen as part of Council or Marni Waiendi’s core business. At this point, Council stepped away from service delivery and reconfigured its role to supporting the training to employment activities of ART Employment in other capacities (e.g. funding applications and contract management). Other local government Councils are advised to note this experience and to think reflexively about ways the training to employment model might be seeded, developed and supported in their region.

2.2 STAKEHOLDERS IN ABORIGINAL TRAINING TO EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

There are a range of key stakeholders involved across the training to employment transition pathway, with various roles to play in supporting Aboriginal workforce development. These include the following:

- The local Aboriginal community and leaders who should be involved at all levels, ensuring that planned approaches and activities are in the best interests of Aboriginal job-seekers and are best-placed to deliver successful outcomes, tailored to local experience and need;
- Employers across all sectors with a dedicated organisational interest in increasing Aboriginal workforce participation;
- Pre-vocational and vocational training providers with demonstrated expertise in delivering Aboriginal training programs, and/or working in Aboriginal-centred partnerships to deliver appropriate, high quality training;
- Job services/career and transition services, with demonstrated expertise in mentoring Aboriginal clients and transitioning them into employment, and a preparedness to collaborate and develop skills and approaches required to meet local Aboriginal needs.
- State and Commonwealth governments, providing funding opportunities across a range of Indigenous employment programs and initiatives.
- Local government by virtue of its close connections with local communities, industries, businesses and services, its capacity to provide support, resources

and infrastructure, and capacity to play a key role in developing and maintaining consultative structures and strategy development processes across the range of partners.

2.3 THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK – KEY FOCUS AREAS

The Strategic Framework presented in this report outlines a series of recommended approaches and actions based on evidence of what works for achieving positive Aboriginal training to employment outcomes. These focus on developing opportunities, removing barriers, building capacity and sustaining outcomes, and are organised according to the following strategic focus areas:

- Assessing ‘organisational readiness’ by reviewing internal programs, activities and structures to support Aboriginal engagement and workforce development
- Developing partnerships between key stakeholders including Aboriginal leaders and community, Aboriginal support services, industry and business, government and community sectors, education and training organisations, and job service providers
- Linking to existing Commonwealth and State employment and training initiatives
- Supporting industry initiatives and increasing the proportion of companies taking a proactive approach to employing Aboriginal people
- Building employer workplace capacity to support Aboriginal employees
- Engaging the local Aboriginal community in pursuing employment opportunities (building employment aspirations)
- Connecting Aboriginal job-seekers with local job opportunities
- Preparing job seekers to be ready and able to meet the expectations, skills and aptitude demands of the workplace
- Developing culturally inclusive recruitment strategies
- Developing strategies to retain Aboriginal employees
- Providing holistic, wrap around support to Aboriginal participants

Table 1 presents the strategic focus areas with ideas about how an approach can be customised for particular regions. The sections that follow provide greater detail about the strategic focus areas to assist Councils to plan and/or support a partnership based strategic approach to local Aboriginal workforce development.

TABLE 1 CUSTOMISING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO YOUR COMMUNITY – A SNAPSHOT OF LOCAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Strategic focus	Local considerations
Assess ‘organisational readiness’ to support Aboriginal engagement and workforce development	Gauge the level of strategic leadership support within Council, the availability of individuals to champion the process, and existing structures and processes with an Indigenous focus that can be linked with workforce development (e.g. Reconciliation Action Plans).
Developing partnerships between key stakeholders including Aboriginal community/leaders, support services, industry/business, government & community sectors, training providers, and job service providers	Identify where useful partnerships exist and where additional partnerships need to be developed, particularly with the Aboriginal community. Use these partnerships to identify challenges in your region and potential responses. Establish governance structures to support the focus and accountability of collaborative agendas; also establish effective communication processes based on mutual respect and recognising the talents and strengths of different partners.
Linking to existing Commonwealth and State employment and training initiatives	Monitor commonwealth, state and local Indigenous (and related general) employment programs/funding opportunities, link these to Aboriginal training and employment partnership ventures.
Supporting industry initiatives and increasing the proportion of companies taking a proactive approach to employing Aboriginal people	Identify where industries in your region are supporting Indigenous employment (build on this) and where there is potential to seed and develop a proactive approach among employers. Actively promote the case for employing local Indigenous people in the region; be honest about the challenges, be realistic and persist with the process.
Building workplace capacity to support Aboriginal employees	Identify the kinds of assistance, training and support workplaces need to develop a culturally inclusive workplace, and where these can be sourced. Talk through local Indigenous workforce issues, what are employer/employee perceptions; look at how to reconcile varying needs and expectations; develop support mechanisms (e.g. suitable mentors for Aboriginal recruits).
Engaging the local Aboriginal community in pursuing employment opportunities (building employment aspirations)	Explore local Indigenous community perceptions about working in the region – are there locally-specific barriers? Work with local leaders to build interest and confidence in gaining local employment. Are there local industries or businesses that people are particularly attracted to for work (e.g. Holden had particular appeal in the North)?
Connecting Aboriginal job-seekers with local job opportunities	What are the developing industries in your region; are there workforce/skills gaps that Indigenous employees can train to fill? Explore opportunities (for Council or assist other partners) to work with businesses to set up specific programs supporting Indigenous people into employed positions.
Prepare job seekers to be ready and able to meet the expectations, skills and aptitude demands of the workplace	Identify education and training providers in your region that have a proven track history working with Indigenous people and who are able to work flexibly with industry around workplace requirements. If skills are lacking, consider options for developing capacity in designing and delivering culturally attuned training (e.g. fostering relevant partnerships, using local Indigenous expertise). Identify/develop quality mentoring opportunities for job seekers – these are critical to success.
Develop culturally inclusive recruitment strategies	Look at your Council’s own recruitment strategies, consider how these can be adapted to encourage Indigenous applicants. Promote the importance of culturally accessible advertising, application and interview processes.
Develop strategies to retain Aboriginal employees	Investigate ways to source suitable mentors to support newly engaged Indigenous employees. Recognise and affirm the value of Indigenous employees, utilise their skills, provide meaningful career paths and leadership opportunities, and flexibility to accommodate cultural commitments.
Provide holistic, wrap-around support throughout the process	Identify and engage local support services that can provide wrap around services for Indigenous participants in training to employment: are there local Indigenous health and community support services in your region similar to Muna Paiendi and Nunkuwarrin Yunti in the North? Can these assist with developing mentoring processes?

2.3.1 REVIEW INTERNAL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL ENGAGEMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A useful starting point for local government is to assess their experience and capability to engage the local Aboriginal community and support workforce development activities. This can be done on an individual council basis where there is strategic leadership support to drive the process, but would also be a useful LGA-driven process across South Australian local government for a more comprehensive picture. The process might usefully be modelled on recent work undertaken by Reconciliation Victoria³.

In 2012 Reconciliation Victoria conducted a Victorian Local Government Aboriginal Engagement and Reconciliation Survey to capture a snapshot of local government activity, identify good practice to share across the sector, and provide an evidence base to support an enhanced focus and investment in improving local Indigenous outcomes. Results showed that Indigenous employment had increased over the past decade from 37 known employees in 2001 to 76 in 2012; 27 councils were actively encouraging Indigenous employment, and six had a specific Aboriginal Employment Policy or similar in place. There was no apparent correlation between council size and level of funding, with some small councils allocating more funding than many larger councils.

The survey spanned a wide range of council domains relevant to Aboriginal engagement including protocols and community participation in planning and decision-making; employment and corporate culture; Aboriginal history, arts and culture; planning and cultural heritage; service provision; economic development; and challenges and opportunities. The employment section of the survey sought information on the following areas:

- Whether Council collects data on the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander background of appointments;
- Number of employees who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI);
- Areas of Council where Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees work;
- Level of employment;
- Whether council employs an Aboriginal liaison officer or similar role; whether this role or other positions in council are designated ATSI positions; whether role/s shared across municipalities;
- Whether council's general employment strategies encourage employment of ATSI people;
- Whether council has a specific Aboriginal employment policy or strategy; whether this includes a target for ATSI employment; what the target number or percentage is;
- Whether council provides Aboriginal cross-cultural training to employees/councillors; how it is delivered by staff categories (e.g. compulsory, ad hoc etc); who delivers cross cultural programs; other ways that Aboriginal cross-cultural training happens at the council;
- Whether council has a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), Aboriginal Action/Inclusion Plan or similar, Aboriginal engagement/consultation policy or protocols; other commitments to reconciliation or ATSI peoples;
- Whether council provides funding for ATSI specific programs; amount expended on Indigenous specific programs in last financial year, whether allocation from internal revenue or sourced from external funding; which program areas received Indigenous specific funding (workforce development not a specific item).

³ Reconciliation Victoria 2011, Victorian Local Government Aboriginal Engagement and Reconciliation Survey Overview Report. Can be downloaded from <http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au/pages/local-government.php>.

These questions are useful from an audit point of view, but also in prompting Councils and other organisations to think about areas that may need to be developed in order to support Aboriginal engagement and workforce development.

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program is also of key significance to Local Governments with an interest in building Indigenous workforce participation. The Program supports organisations to develop business plans and document practical actions to build strong relationships and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians, and improved opportunities for Indigenous participation across a range of spheres. RAPs are a dynamic tool insofar as organisations are required to regularly review and report annually on progress against the plan. More detail, including available support and resources, is provided on the Reconciliation Australia website.⁴

2.3.2 DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT ABORIGINAL TRAINING TO EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION PATHWAYS

Aboriginal workforce development needs to be supported by partnerships that bring together the complementary roles, skills and resources of a range of stakeholders, including Aboriginal leaders and community, Aboriginal support services, industry and business, government and community sectors, education and training organisations, and job service providers.

Bottom-up community involvement and a focus on maintaining the centrality of Aboriginal people in the process are critical to community buy-in. Collaboration with Aboriginal leaders and/or organisations provides invaluable connections with and pathways into the community, and underpins the development of respectful interaction and relationships with community members. These relationships and forms of collaboration can take a long time to develop. In this context it is useful to:

- Identify if/where Aboriginal workforce development is being done well in the region, and link into this;
- Identify and build relationships with respected local organisations/groups/leaders with powerful links to the Aboriginal community;
- Actively recognise and value what Aboriginal representatives bring to the table in terms of cultural expertise and community resources;
- Be prepared to communicate openly about what different stakeholders want and need from the process, listen respectfully to the community perspective, and work in concert to achieve an agreed agenda and plan.
- Establish governance structures and processes to support the energy, focus and accountability of collaborative agendas and activities; to set milestones and measure progress toward identified goals.

Job service providers play an important role in linking individuals to local training and job opportunities, however these services need to have specific expertise, due diligence in process and demonstrated success in working with Aboriginal clients. Similarly, education and training organisations require demonstrated cultural competencies to work with Aboriginal job-seekers, or a willingness to engage and learn in this area. In each of these instances, linking with specialist Aboriginal career and transition services can play a key role in building workplace cultural understanding and competencies, and bridging different cultures, perceptions and expectations about training, work and the workplace.

Local government has a key role to play in providing strategic support for local, innovative Aboriginal employment programs. This support can usefully take the form of liaising with state and federal government departments on behalf of Aboriginal-driven initiatives, applying for funding and providing technical and governance support, and providing

⁴ <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/raphub/>

access to council resources and training facilities. Securing the support of the mayor, elected members and CEO is of critical importance in developing and sustaining a productive local government-Aboriginal community partnership. It is also important to have a small number of dedicated people within local government to champion or drive the process forward, and to keep the partnership dynamic.

BOX 2: LEARNING FROM THE CITY OF PLAYFORD-MARNI WAIENDI EXAMPLE

The Playford Indigenous Transition Pathways Centre (Marni Waiendi) was established in 2004 in partnership with the local Aboriginal community and local agencies including Aboriginal Education, training bodies, industry and governments as a 'whole of government model'. The Centre exists within the City of Playford to provide Aboriginal young people with opportunities to engage in learning pathways leading to successful employment outcomes and positive social and economic participation. The primary goal is to achieve 'sustained well-being, learning and employment outcomes for Aboriginal young people, thereby halting intergenerational poverty'. Fundamentally, the model is about life-long learning from early childhood to sustained employment. The model was developed in association with the Kurna elders and leaders and managed by Aboriginal project staff with the support of the City of Playford.

A particular strength of the Marni Waiendi model was the strategic partnership formed between the City of Playford and the local Aboriginal community. The Council had the resources and expertise to assume legal entity status, provide corporate support, manage bureaucratic and governance arrangements, liaise with various government departments to link into and administer available state and commonwealth funding and fulfil intensive reporting requirements. Council was able to provide necessary infrastructure and enabled Marni Waiendi to procure Aboriginal staff to deliver training to employment programs. The synthesis within Marni Waiendi of Aboriginal community involvement and ownership, and local government capabilities was seen to produce a powerful complement in furthering the social and economic interests of local Aboriginal people. Key successes of the Marni Waiendi training to employment model included the development of a strong cohort of Aboriginal staff channelled into State government, and recognition in Canberra as a project of national significance.

Once the training to employment model was established, the City of Playford formed the view that it could feasibly be delivered independently of Council. At this point the Council stepped away from delivering the service and this function was taken up by ART Employment. ART expanded the model to include the engagement of the Kurna Lands Trust, Aboriginal Health providers, Sport & Recreation, Housing, and schools, making the model highly integrated, robust and representative of the Kurna people. It is seen as a positive development that the training to employment model seeded within Council by way of Marni Waiendi had reached a stage where it could meet the needs of community independently of Council, and that ART Employment was able to take it to this next level.

ART Employment (Aboriginal Recruitment Training and Employment) is an Aboriginal owned and managed company, established to develop and implement innovative and unique community based Aboriginal training and employment models of national significance. ART Employment's expansion of the Marni Waiendi model is geared toward providing the life-long learning services required to ensure Aboriginal communities participate in Australia's workforce.

2.3.3 LINK TO EXISTING COMMONWEALTH AND STATE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING INITIATIVES

It is recommended that local government conducts regular monitoring of available commonwealth and state Indigenous (and related general) employment programs and funding opportunities, in order to be able to link these to Aboriginal training and employment partnership ventures. Local government is considered to have the connections, knowledge and language to negotiate contract terms and requirements, signalling a valuable skill set they can bring to officially funded partnership ventures.

The following list outlines a range of currently listed services and programs that offer potential avenues for sourcing Aboriginal workforce development support and resources, noting that this is subject to ongoing policy developments at state and commonwealth level.

- **Job Services Australia** provides job seekers with flexible and tailored support to help them find a job. Employers are able to use Job Services Australia to find staff to meet their recruitment needs.
- **Local Employment Co-ordinators** have been engaged by the Australian Government to work in 21 Priority Employment Areas across Australia identified as needing extra assistance. Local Employment Coordinators work in collaboration with employers, community groups and all levels of government to help develop local solutions to meet local labour market needs.
- **Indigenous employment program (IEP)** provides support for employers, businesses and other organisations for activities or projects that help increase employment outcomes and economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- **Industry and Indigenous Skill Centre Program** is a national program providing grant funding for capital infrastructure and/or equipment to establish VET facilities for Aboriginal people.
- **Indigenous Cadetship Support** links full-time Aboriginal students undertaking a diploma, advanced diploma or their first undergraduate degree with employers who can offer work placements and ongoing employment when they finish their studies.
- **Indigenous Wage Subsidy** is a Commonwealth incentive paid to eligible employers who employ Aboriginal people on an ongoing basis.

DFEEST Aboriginal workforce participation programs:

- **Aboriginal Participation Brokers** work in regions to facilitate and broker strategic and operational solutions to local learning, training and employment needs, and in particular to prepare Aboriginal people for local jobs identified by employers.
- **Aboriginal Apprenticeship and Mentoring Program:** assists Aboriginal people into trade-based apprenticeships and traineeships in the private sector.
- **Aboriginal Job Ready Program:** builds the capacity of Aboriginal job seekers, particularly those who face barriers to participation in the workforce, to access learning, skills development and employment opportunities.
- **Aboriginal Leadership Program:** promotes opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate on South Australian Government boards and committees, providing information about and assistance to participate in leadership development training and opportunities for Aboriginal public sector employees to apply for senior positions.
- **Aboriginal Pathways to Excellence Traineeship Program:** provides career development, mentoring, training pathways and employment placement for young people through the South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy.
- **Aboriginal Public Sector Program:** assists South Australian Public Sector agencies to source Aboriginal applicants from an Aboriginal Employment Register to fill their employment vacancies. Concurrently, Aboriginal jobseekers are recruited to join the Aboriginal Employment Register where they are referred to short term public sector vacancies (up to 12 months).
- **Connecting Aboriginal People to Resource Industries Program:** increases training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in the resource industries sector.

DFEEST programs for employers include:

- **Aboriginal Apprenticeship and Mentoring Program:** assists private sector employers to support Aboriginal people in trade-based apprenticeships and traineeships.
- **The Connecting Aboriginal People to Resource Industries Program:** funding for programs to train and employ Aboriginal people in the resource industries sector.
- **Aboriginal Employment Industry Clusters Initiative:** builds the capacity of South Australian employers across a number of targeted industries to provide long term, meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Skills for All Aboriginal support and programs:

- **Aboriginal Access Centres** assist Aboriginal job seekers to identify what training or education they need to get a job. The Centres are based on TAFE campuses across South Australia, with team members well equipped with an understanding of vocational education and training.
- **The Aboriginal Programs Unit** directs people to services for training and assistance with finding work.
- **Tauondi College** is an Aboriginal Community College in Port Adelaide offering accredited and non-accredited courses and Adult Community Education (ACE) programs.
- The **Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program (AAP)** connects employers with Aboriginal people who are looking to do an apprenticeship or traineeship in South Australia. AAP can also assist with cultural competence in the workplace.
- **Aboriginal Workforce Participation Coordinators** are located across the state. They provide information and advice to Aboriginal people seeking work or training, employers seeking Aboriginal workers, employers who have Aboriginal staff, and training providers.

2.3.4 SUPPORT A PROACTIVE INDUSTRY APPROACH TO EMPLOYING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

The Northern Adelaide experience shows that a number of local employers across public and private sectors are indicating an increased interest in tapping into the underutilised Aboriginal labour force. Strategic partnerships at this level are crucial for building organisational confidence and capacity to translate intention into action. In this context, it is important for local employers to know where they can go for advice and support about how to connect with the Aboriginal community and best methods of engaging, supporting and sustaining Aboriginal recruits.

At the same time it is important to foster interest among yet to be engaged businesses in order to expand the pool of employers extending employment opportunities to the local Aboriginal workforce. There are a range of recommended actions to increase employer demand for Aboriginal employees:

- Work with local industry and employer groups to recast how Aboriginal employment and employees are viewed. This involves countering prevailing stereotypes and drawing on good practice examples of well-coordinated, partnership-based training to employment programs that have achieved strong outcomes (particularly in the local context).
- Establish a sound business case for employing Aboriginal workers. This can speak to a range of factors including:
 - The good business sense of targeting an ‘untapped labour force’, and in the process tapping into skills and perspectives particular to the local Aboriginal community (i.e. value-add that they bring to the workplace), and providing insights into untapped niche markets and opportunities;
 - Securing a competitive advantage, presenting to the Aboriginal community as an employer of choice, building employee loyalty,

- growing the skills and diversity of the current workforce, and taking advantages of Government incentives;
 - Realising a pathway to building a sustainable, local, dedicated workforce; employing locally leads to greater longevity;
 - Introducing greater cultural diversity and principles of equity to the workplace; meeting legal obligations and managing risks (i.e. taking steps to comply with anti-discrimination legislation and Substantive Equity Principles);
 - Demonstrating corporate social responsibilities and objectives of Australian business, and responding to Closing the Gap commitments in government sectors.
- Encourage employer groups to reflect on the following: why they might want to employ Aboriginal workers and how this would benefit their business; how the business is promoted to the local Aboriginal community and what might inspire them to work for the business; what success the business has had to date in terms of working with Aboriginal employees; and assessing current capacity for supporting Aboriginal employees.
 - Prompt employing organisations to consider implementing formal policies to support cultural diversity and equal opportunity in the workplace, for example setting Aboriginal employment targets, establishing formal grievance procedures, and/or flexible leave and roster arrangements (acknowledging that may not suit all cases e.g. large as opposed to small enterprises).

BOX 3: CASE STUDY EXAMPLE – PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPED BY ART EMPLOYMENT TO SUPPORT ABORIGINAL TRAINING TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

ART Employment has developed (and is continuing to develop) a range of partnerships to support Aboriginal training to employment activities. The examples provided here show the types of industry relationships and outcomes that can be achieved as well as government, training provider, service and community partnerships.

- **Woolworths** – delivered several training programs and have achieved up to 20 Aboriginal jobs to date.
- **Primo Smallgoods** – delivered a training program and achieved several job outcomes. A few participants were offered positions but were unable to accept due to transport difficulties and a lack of public transport alternatives. This highlights the need to focus not only on the skills and attributes of individual employees but the role of surrounding infrastructure to support employment outcomes.
- **Rock Solid** – several construction positions achieved to date and with opportunity for additional job outcomes if a further IEP Proposal is funded by the Commonwealth.
- **Coates Hire** – national project, 40 jobs in the logistics industry. Awaiting IEP Proposal outcome.
- **Campbell Page** – ART was contracted to deliver ACCESS training programs to Indigenous job seekers. Two programs delivered to date.
- **RTO's** – Civil Construction, B J Networking, Tauondi College, HETA, ARO, TrainMe4Work, TAFE.
- **Workabout Centre, DECD** – career transition pathways from school to work and referral of participants to training programs.
- **Kurna Nation Cultural Heritage Association** – facilitator for Kurna Workforce Development Strategy and the Local Government Employment Project.
- **Wyatt Benevolent Society** – program funder.
- **White Lion** – project partner in Woolworths and other projects.
- **Anglicare SA** – program partner.
- **JSAs** including Campbell Page, Boystown, Workskil and APM and OSTARA (Disability Employment Service Providers).
- **Nunkuwarrin Yunti** – healthy lifestyle program partner and potential Youth Hub partner.
- **Muna Paiendi** – as above.
- **DFEEST** – the main funding provider but more importantly having both Northern Futures CE and the Regional Coordinator as advocates.

2.3.5 BUILD WORKPLACE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES

By building organisational capacity -

To support an organisational culture with a proactive Aboriginal employment agenda, organisations need a strong strategic vision endorsed by senior leadership and monitoring targets to keep the focus and momentum going forward. In this context, organisations need to set realistic goals and be prepared to weather some setbacks along the way. Employing organisations need to have trust in the process, be prepared to take risks, and feel supported to do so. It is useful for organisations to collaborate and share their experience and insights with other companies engaged in a similar process.

Organisational capacity is also strengthened by awareness of, and the ability to link to, available support services and funding from providers such as employment agencies and job service providers, training organisations, Indigenous-specific services, and industry associations. For example, financial assistance might be sought for: on-the-job training (which includes training provided by the employer); licences, uniforms and equipment for new employees; mentoring and other workplace support; employing apprentices and trainees; and wage assistance.

By building workplace cultural competency -

Cultural competency is a vital workplace component of employing organisations, both to attract and retain Aboriginal staff. It is useful to engage in workplace-based cultural competence training to prepare for receiving Aboriginal staff, and for this training to extend across different organisational levels. It is recommended for the training to address cross-cultural *awareness*, focusing on developing an appreciation of Aboriginal history, culture, and issues; and cross cultural *skills*, focusing on language, behaviours and interpersonal interactions to actively discourage applied racism and discrimination in the workplace.

2.3.6 BUILD EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS AND CONFIDENCE IN THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

An identified barrier to Aboriginal employment involves low employment aspirations within the community. These stem from the experience of intergenerational unemployment and perceptions of workplaces as culturally unaware and/or insensitive to the broader experience and needs of Aboriginal employees, particularly as these pertain to binding cultural and community responsibilities. At the same time, it is anecdotally observed that younger Aboriginal people of the North are showing increasing interest in breaking the cycle of intergenerational unemployment and poverty affecting their families and community. To maximise opportunities for increased Aboriginal employment, there needs to be a focus on shifting negative perceptions and attitudes to enable people to embrace emerging possibilities.

Significant partnerships with Aboriginal leaders are pivotal to gaining access to communities and building the relationships and trust that are critical to changing how people think about employment and work. Utilising mentors and role models that are well known and respected in the community is the key to making connections and promoting the message that intergenerational unemployment and poverty can be overcome. A valuable resource in this context is the SA Aboriginal Sports Training Academy, where ‘the kids are fliers’ and rich opportunities present to develop aspiration, confidence and ability at a key early intervention point.

For many Aboriginal people coming from a background of intergenerational unemployment, the prospect of employment does not present as a viable option. In this context, aspiration building is vital to producing an engaged labour force, particularly among young people. A pathways approach is vital in this context, starting with early intervention programs in schools designed to capture and develop the interests of young Aboriginal students, and providing them with post-school opportunities and career pathways. It is important to emphasise the range of opportunities available, from trades through to professional careers, by way of apprenticeships, cadetships and university pathways, and educating young people about what is required to progress their chosen path (e.g. what subjects are required, and what TER is required). Councils can play a key role in providing cadetships to support young Aboriginal people to progress in diverse fields such as design, technology and the like, with potential benefits to the organisation.

More broadly, building blocks for aspiration and opportunity include:

- Communicating how employment can transform people’s lives, socially and economically. This is particularly useful if driven from within the community, so that benefits are attached to wider community development and prosperity, not just that of the individual;
- Demonstrating that industry, government and service providers are prepared to work closely with the community, and have a commitment to developing culturally inclusive, respectful and supportive workplaces;
- Building self-belief and confidence in people’s ability to access and navigate viable training and employment opportunities. This is vitally connected to the involvement of community leaders, mentors and Aboriginal specific support services.

Capitalising on the strong profile and reputation of key local businesses can assist greatly in engaging local community interest. This was evident in the Holden Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program where a high number of candidates expressed interest and competed for available positions, and where motivation was high to complete the program because people wanted to work for the locally significant organisation.

BOX 4: CASE STUDY EXAMPLE - THE HOLDEN ABORIGINAL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The Holden Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program was developed to create opportunity for local Indigenous people to qualify and apply for apprenticeships within General Motors Holden, with potential to lead to subsequent employment with the company. Recognising that not all program participants would secure ongoing employment with Holden, a secondary aim was to increase participants' technical skills and wider employability through the program training.

The Holden Program was developed and implemented by General Holden Motors at the South Australian Elizabeth plant, in partnership with ART Employment, the SA Department of Further Education, Employment and Training (DFEEST) and the City of Playford. As a member of the IEP Employment Panel, the City of Playford played a key role in accessing Indigenous Enterprise Program funding for the project. This extended to signing the funding agreement with the funding body (i.e. the City of Playford was the accountable entity), administering project finances, releasing milestone payments to ART Employment, and collating documentation to show employment outcomes upon which release payments were contingent.

Participants were recruited and underwent a pre-employment training phase. 20 successful candidates participated in Cert 1 Engineering course provided by TAFESA Elizabeth and were supported with additional health and lifestyle assessments and services. At the conclusion of the training program, participants underwent a final, formal selection process to ensure they met GM Holden recruitment standards. The process resulted in 12 participants successfully gaining an Apprenticeship with Holden, commencing in July 2012. The six non-successful applicants were provided with alternative training and employment opportunities.

Critical success factors for the program included:

- *The **high level of participant motivation to work at Holden**, which was seen as a locally significant industry, and an organisation they could relate to and wanted to be part of. The level of enthusiasm was noted at the community information session, and underpinned the preparedness of participants to commit to the lifestyle and education challenges posed by the project.*
- *Holden's high-level **organizational commitment to and engagement with the project** ('making it their business to make the program work'), e.g. supervisors attended pre-employment training and Cert I training sessions, actively interacted with and formed early connections and relationships with participants.*
- ***Mentor support** was crucial in providing support, encouragement and motivation for participants, in particular using mentors that participants respected and looked up to, and who they knew would be honest with them and maintain confidentiality.*
- *The '**whole of person perspective**' used, combining personal and professional skill development, and a strong health and lifestyle focus. It was noted that there is little point putting people through training if they are physically, socially or psychologically unfit to do the work – this highlights the critical nature of providing holistic services in tandem with training.*
- ***Maintaining wrap around services and mentoring support** across the training to employment transition and **for a period post-employment**, to support apprentices to stay engaged with work and to balance work demands and competing family needs and personal circumstances.*

2.3.7 CONNECT ABORIGINAL JOB-SEEKERS WITH LOCAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

A Regional Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy needs to be underpinned by a sound understanding of the local employment market in order to connect Aboriginal job-seekers to areas existing and emerging labour force demands. Local government is well

positioned to perform ongoing monitoring of trends in local industry and to facilitate the flow of this information to relevant stakeholders in Aboriginal workforce development. Local government should also facilitate the development of linkages between industry and Aboriginal training and employment and support services. Box 6 below provides an example of a strategy to scan local employment conditions and industry developments.

A local government role in industry and job surveillance would assist in supporting the work done by organisations such as ART Employment in the North, which follows a process of identifying arising job positions, negotiating with employers about how best to target these to local Aboriginal job-seekers, and then informing targeted training and development matched to need. This approach puts jobs and job-seekers at the centre of the process and has a better chance of achieving successful training completion rates and subsequent employment outcomes.

The process involves:

- Canvassing the job requirements in terms of required employee attributes and skills;
- Conducting a process to identify potential candidates for the job;
- Coordinating job-specific training and development, supported throughout with wrap around services;
- Encouraging employer involvement at all stages of the process.

The training to employment model developed by ART Employment works on the premise of liaising with industry and business to identify job opportunities, engaging the local community and identifying candidates for the positions, providing pre-vocational and vocational training to equip job-seekers with the capability and skill requirements of employers, and supporting them across the training into employment process. Various partners are brought in along the way, to provide resources and support as required, for example Muna Paendi to provide health services and Nunkuwarin Yunti to provide healthy lifestyle programs.

More generally, tapping into local organisations with links to the Aboriginal community (e.g. JSAs, Aboriginal service providers, sports clubs, charitable organisations, schools, TAFE) can be an effective strategy for developing a ‘talent pipeline’.

Box 5: SCOPING REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: THE NORTHERN ADELAIDE EXAMPLE

A baseline survey of employers was recently undertaken in Playford and Salisbury to gauge current and future employment and skill requirements of employers in the area (Ranasinghe, Hordacre, & Spoehr, 2014). Identified employer needs included:

- Up-skilling people over the next 12 months in 'hard-to-fill' occupations including skilled trades, technical/associate professionals and professionals (most commonly technicians and tradespersons, professionals, and machinery operators).
- Specific skills needing improvement included technical, practical or job-specific skills, general IT user skills and problem solving skills.

DEEWR labour market forecasts indicate that a large share of the jobs created in South Australia over the next few years will be in health care and social assistance, construction, and mining, whereas manufacturing is forecast to lose close to 7,000 jobs over the next few years to 2016/17 (Australian Industry Group, 2013).

While GM Holden is set to close in 2017, remaining key industries include the Commonwealth Defence Science and Technology Organisation and RAAF Edinburgh in Edinburgh and Elizabeth South. Newer industrial developments include Edinburgh Park and Greenfields development. The Outer North Region is of particular interest to the transport and logistics sectors due to new infrastructure including the Northern Expressway, Port River Expressway and associated rail links and intermodal terminals. The North is being posited as the 'location of choice' for logistics companies servicing the online shopping sector, with construction of 84 000m² of new space, including facilities for Costco and Aldi (Propell, 2013).

2.3.8 PREPARE JOB SEEKERS TO BE READY AND ABLE TO MEET WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS, SKILLS AND APTITUDE DEMANDS

A recommended strategy for preparing Aboriginal job-seekers for employment involves delivering tailored pre-vocational and vocational training focused on:

- Building job readiness in terms of basic core skills – presentation, communication skills, understanding the nature and expectations of paid employment; and language, literacy and numeracy skills.
- Developing the higher level skills required to fulfil job specifications.

A partnership-based approach is recommended to establish a shared agenda and set of expectations on the part of employers, training providers and job-seekers. This can involve developing new ways of thinking on each front, and can be greatly assisted by incorporating an Aboriginal organisation with a jobs and career focus to act as intermediary. The ideal scenario is for training providers to design learning programs that specifically target required skill sets, in a learning format that best suits Aboriginal learners. For example, work integrated learning (WIL) (e.g. internships, industry placements, apprenticeships and live site training) has been observed to engage and sustain Aboriginal trainees better than purely classroom based education. The added advantage of WIL is participants' accruing work experience and referee contacts as part of the training process, as a lack of relevant work experience is often cited as a barrier to Aboriginal employment.

It is highly important at this preparatory stage to address gaps in job seekers' knowledge about how different sectors operate and what is specifically required of them to meet the particular demands of the workplace. Hence, while there is a focus on building workplace capacity to accommodate Aboriginal employees, there is an equal requirement for employees to acknowledge certain workplace expectations.

Box 6: CASE STUDY EXAMPLE - THE GARDEN BLITZ PROJECT

The idea for the **Garden Blitz Project** grew out of previous work undertaken by ART Employment, which was contracted by the SA Aboriginal Elders and Community Care Services Inc. to provide garden maintenance for 60 properties inhabited by Aboriginal residents. Noting a widespread problem of poorly maintained yards in Aboriginal communities, ART Employment approached Housing SA and DFEEST about developing a landscaping program that involved recruiting, training and supporting Aboriginal job seekers. The City of Playford played an instrumental role in project administration, reporting and acquittal of funds. This included signing the funding agreement with DFEEST – thereby assuming full accountability for the project - managing the funding, and dispersing payments to ART Employment as milestones were met. Funding was sourced from Skills For All for training in Cert II Horticulture, with payment contingent on participants achieving the certificate.

The project was promoted through various networks such as job service providers, the Turkindi Network, schools, Aboriginal organisations, correction services and CentreCare with the aim of recruiting 15 to 20 participants. Applicants were selected by means of a face to face interview process and put through an induction process that explained the project expectations and conditions in detail. Candidates participated in an accredited training program in Cert II Horticulture that was held over 13 weeks. Culturally responsive training was designed and provided by the participating RTO in partnership with ART Employment, while a live tenanted site for the practical component of the training was sourced and coordinated by Housing SA. Additional one on one literacy and numeracy learning support was provided by ART Employment as part of the broader training support and health checks were provided by Muna Paiendi including dental, eye testing, diabetes testing, podiatry; coordination of agencies as to address health and social issues as required (in collaboration with ART Employment).

Critical success factors for the Program included:

- Having in place a **case manager/mentor** to liaise with participants, who is experienced in working with Aboriginal people and aware of training and employment issues in this context. Garden Blitz mentors working in this capacity built strong relationships with clients and were able to troubleshoot and follow them up where necessary. They also advised JSAs on attendance rates on a daily basis, which was appreciated by the agencies.
- Maintaining an **integrated focus on practical and theoretical learning**. There was consistently good turnout at the landscaping site, but less so for theoretical lessons at the training venue. What appeared to work well was incorporating as much theory as possible into the practical, hands on sessions. It is important therefore to use a trainer who is an experienced builder/supervisor with a solid focus on industry standards; who has experience in 'live work-training' (i.e. not limited to classroom-based instruction); and who is flexible enough to incorporate theoretical training into the practical setting.
- The **live site practical training element** of the project was considered to be one of the project's key strengths, however it also presented key challenges. The main issue involved coordinating the demands and schedules of different parties on site (i.e. the tenant, trainers, trainees and suppliers of material goods).
- Engaging an **RTO committed to high quality training standards and securing completions for students** (e.g. Heta was seen as a highly motivated and organised RTO, partly because it was in their pecuniary interests to secure completions for trainees).

2.3.9 DEVELOP CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

An identified barrier to Aboriginal employment is a lack of exposure on the part of the community to locally advertised positions, coupled with inaccessible application and interviewing processes. Culturally inclusive recruitment methods - which should be established in HR policy and practice –might usefully include developing a multi-pronged communication strategy in collaboration with Aboriginal community representatives to identify how best to disseminate information about available job opportunities to the local community, and present opportunities in a way that engages people's interest in applying, and gives them confidence that they can successfully navigate the process.

Methods to access traditionally difficult to reach Aboriginal employees might include:

- Building formal or informal networks, partnerships and relationships to develop a 'talent pipeline' – using JSAs, Aboriginal service providers, sports clubs, charitable organisations, schools, and TAFE as pathways.
- Developing a Web portal, showcasing personal success stories (role modelling), and organising face to face contact with employers in dedicated Aboriginal road shows.

Methods to improve the accessibility of the job application process include:

- Using user-friendly wording for Job and Specification Statements;
- Including Aboriginal membership on selection panels,
- Using less formal interview techniques to encourage Aboriginal applicants to express themselves and their job-related strengths.

2.3.10

DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO RETAIN ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES

Following the successful recruitment of Aboriginal employees, ensuring there is sufficient support to sustain and retain recruits in the workplace is of key importance. In the first instance, it is essential to provide an adequate staff orientation process to ensure that Aboriginal recruits have a good understanding of their role and the expectations of the organisation. This includes providing clear and consistent work and community boundaries for Aboriginal staff, within a framework of recognising work-life balance challenges specific to Aboriginal culture.

Linking recruits to an independent mentor who respects the employee and has skills to negotiate for both parties if needed is also recommended. This may not always be practicable on site, in which case mentoring services might be procured off site (e.g. from an Aboriginal-centred organisation or service skilled in workforce development and support). A key observation in this context is that mentors are often required to be available virtually around the clock to account for the complexities and vulnerabilities of participants, and on a more practical level to accommodate shift work arrangements.

It is also noted that Aboriginal employment is sustained by having a 'critical mass' of Aboriginal co-workers to reduce isolation and alienation in the workplace, which is important to consider early in recruitment planning. Broader support for those in employment can also be provided by way of linking people into a structured Aboriginal networking process, where this exists. Having a general cultural diversity focus within an organisation can also strengthen the cultural safety net for Aboriginal employees (i.e. employing across a range of cultures) by playing down the sense of a single, predominant workplace culture.

Utilising and developing knowledge, skills and leadership qualities of Aboriginal employees is also important for retention. At the most basic level, it is important to build the confidence of Aboriginal staff, and this requires people to feel they are participating in a 'real' rather than a 'token' job. This is supported by drawing the connection between the day to day activities of staff and the broader organisational outcomes achieved as a direct result of their work and recognising achievements, for example when work is performed well or milestones are accomplished. Encouraging Aboriginal staff to work across all areas of the organisation if desired, not being restricted to Aboriginal specific programs, is also recommended.

It is important for the morale and productivity of Aboriginal employees to ensure the work is interesting and fulfilling, and makes optimal use of their skills and capabilities in the workplace. Opportunities to develop their capabilities through ongoing employment opportunities, career paths, work based opportunities for study and career development, and promotion opportunities is also recommended. Professional development can be supported by developing links with training organisations with Aboriginal training expertise, and making provision for study leave and flexible hours where required.

More broadly, organisations can encourage Aboriginal staff by sending them to leadership programs, conferences, other information or development forums; holding regular staff meetings and conducting staff surveys to gauge how employees are faring; cultivating special interest groups looking at best practice; and developing a buddying system to team new and experienced staff. The focus in this context should be on building understanding and rapport across the whole staff structure. Using entry and exit surveys is a useful exercise for identifying barriers to retention in the workplace, as is succession planning.

BOX 7: CASE STUDY EXAMPLE – UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY (2003)

The University of Sydney's Indigenous Australians Employment Strategy (2003) has a strong focus on culturally inclusive recruitment. Strategies include –

- *The provision of Information Forums by the University's Indigenous Employment Officer working with local Aboriginal Australians Job Network Providers to educate job seekers in applying for positions at the University. The forums include information on how to prepare an application, resumé and covering letter, on the interview presentation and the selection process.*
- *The provision of Information Packages for Aboriginal applicants that consolidate verbal information given at the Forums.*
- *The conducting of mock interviews by the Indigenous Employment Officer for applicants who are not familiar with the interview process.*
- *Where appropriate, a tour of the University campus, including where the interview will take place.*
- *The establishment of a database of Aboriginal people with qualifications suitable for appointment to potential vacancies within the University, together with a mailing list and network of employment contacts to whom information on vacancies is disseminated.*
- *The interview process itself is designed to be culturally inclusive. Where Aboriginal applicants are expected to apply for a position, the Interview Panel is provided with guidelines that highlight relevant cultural issues. Selection panels are informed about diversity management and culturally inclusive questioning, and are provided with guidelines on what to expect from Aboriginal Australian applicants in terms of cultural and behavioural factors that need to be taken into account.*
- *An Induction Package for new Aboriginal employees provides a range of information about the University and includes personal orientation by the Indigenous Employment Officer.*
- *Culturally friendly duty statements, selection criteria and advertising.*
- *Targeted entry level recruitment – an affirmative action initiative that commits each academic college and administrative unit to identify of a minimum of five entry level mainstream general staff positions per year for Aboriginal Australians.*

The Strategy is also designed to enhance the retention of Aboriginal employees and includes these strategies –

- *Cross cultural awareness training to enable non-Aboriginal employees to develop the skills and knowledge needed to work in a culturally inclusive way with Aboriginal employees. This is available to all staff and facilitated by the Indigenous Employment Officer.*
- *Encouraging Aboriginal staff to participate in training relevant to enhancing their career development. The Indigenous Employment Officer, Aboriginal employees and their managers to meet regularly to identify the training and job rotation required for career development.*
- *Indigenous Australian Employee Networks – support networks facilitated quarterly by the Indigenous Employment Officer.*
- *A skills based Mentor for all new recruits, facilitated by the Indigenous Employment Officer. An academic mentoring program based on pairing junior Aboriginal academic employees with senior academic staff.*
- *Peer buddying system facilitated by the Indigenous Employment Officer to provide emotional support rather than work or career oriented support.*
- *Flexible work policies to enable balancing of career and family promoted to Aboriginal employees.*

Sourced from Equity Works: Achieving the Target of 2% Aboriginal Employment in the South Australian Public Sector - Main Report, AISR November 2007.

2.3.11 PROVIDE HOLISTIC, WRAP AROUND SUPPORT

A consistent message is that training to employment programs for Aboriginal people must be housed within a wider, wrap around support model that attends to the holistic needs of participants. It is recommended that as part of the process, individualised assessments are undertaken to identify critical health, housing, transport, drug and alcohol, criminal justice, safety and security issues that are likely to impact upon participants' ability to transition successfully across training to work.

Linking participants to the appropriate services and support mechanisms is critical in order to provide them with the best chance of succeeding, both with their training and employment outcomes. Moreover, support services received as part of the training to employment transition process might usefully extend for a period beyond gaining employment rather than cutting out at this point, to assist people to adjust to workplace expectations and settle into the new routines of work.

The role of mentoring in the context of holistic, wrap around support has been demonstrated to good effect by the Marni Waiendi-ART Employment training to work transition model. ART Employment mentors establish a key connection with their job-seeking clients, based on communication, respect and trust. Mentors make it their business to understand the issues, needs and interests of their clients; connect them to networks of support and services; assist and upskill them in areas such as writing job applications, and presentation and communication skills; provide follow up when clients miss appointments or training/work commitments; and provide advocacy and crisis management roles as required. These relationships are characterised by commitment and continuity, and have been identified as a crucial success factor in all ART Employment workforce development programs.

3 CONCLUSION

The foundational principles of the Marni Waiendi – ART Employment training to employment model include developing powerful partnerships across local government, the Aboriginal community, human service sectors, training providers and public and private sectors as potential employers of an Aboriginal workforce. The model involves building capacity across this spectrum to recognise and address the barriers to Aboriginal employment, to engage interest and enthusiasm among participants, and to embed policies and structures to sustain positive outcomes for the Aboriginal workforce.

The Strategic Framework emphasises the value of making local industries and employers central to the process, so they are committed and involved at each step of workforce development. The goal is to train and develop an Aboriginal workforce equipped with the skills and aptitudes required by employing industries, and equally to prepare workplaces to receive, nurture and maximise the potential of Aboriginal employees. In addition, the process is overlaid by culturally inclusive and responsive mentoring for Aboriginal job seekers as outlined in the ART Employment approach, which extends for a period beyond placement in a job to ensure the best possible outcome for participants.

While the Strategic Framework contains Aboriginal workforce development principles and actions that are applicable across a range of sectors, there is a particular emphasis on the role of local government, both as a prospective employer of Aboriginal job-seekers and in developing and supporting local conditions to support Aboriginal employment more broadly.

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The seventeenth year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

The eighteenth year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

The nineteenth year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

The twentieth year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

The twenty-first year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

The twenty-second year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

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The twenty-fifth year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

The twenty-sixth year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.

The twenty-seventh year of life is also a critical period for the development of the brain and the nervous system.