



**FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Reference Committee
INQUIRY INTO RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING IN THE APS**

Briefing paper from the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Commission

Introduction

In order to effectively carry out its functions, responsibilities and delegations, ATSIC needs the knowledge, skills, cultural values and perspectives of Indigenous people from across Australia. It is the belief of the Commission that no-one can better assess and express the aspirations, rights and needs of indigenous communities and individuals than Indigenous people.

As a Commonwealth Agency administering the Government's programs for Indigenous people, ATSIC should lead the way in setting the standard for the delivery of effective, high quality services tailored to address the needs of Indigenous people. It must also be creating employment opportunities for Indigenous people, and assisting in the development of their career in public administration. The Commonwealth Equal Employment Opportunity legislation and the Aboriginal Employment Development Plan places significant obligations on ATSIC to remove institutional barriers to indigenous recruitment and career development.

ATSIC works toward four key goals in its recruitment and career development framework:

- Create an environment favourable for Indigenous recruitment and development
- Increase employment opportunities for Indigenous people
- Increase Indigenous skills development
- Progress and promote Indigenous career development.

The National People and Development Office in ATSIC has a key role in achieving these goals. The purpose of the National People and Development Office is:

To provide HR services to enable the organisation to meet the outcomes and expectations of Government, the Board, Communities and the General Public in a culturally aware and professional manner.

The Office does this by:

- *Meeting the community's, the Board and the Minister's requirements*
- *Operating within APS framework and appropriate legislation*
- *Developing attractive employment conditions*
- *Delivering full HR services*
- *Focusing on the recruitment, retention and development opportunities for Indigenous workers*
- *Developing all staff*
- *Educating and supporting managers in people management issues*

Setting Targets

ATSIC is committed to achieving a target of 60% Indigenous people in its workforce. Currently the figure stands at 48%.

Concerted effort needs to be made to achieve this 60% and for this reason specific recruitment and career development strategies and programs have been put into place. These strategies include the development and enhancement of skills of current Indigenous workers as well as focusing on indigenous recruitment when vacancies occur in the Commission.

The challenge becomes even greater in relation to representation of Indigenous employees across all classifications.

It is important that ATSIC continue to reaffirm the corporate commitment to the 60% target because:

- Involving Indigenous people in all aspects of ATSIC's core functions of policy formulation, program delivery and administration assists to ensure culturally meaningful and appropriate services to communities
- The difficulty in sustaining a high target due to the competition for suitably qualified Indigenous people from other agencies
- Ensuring that the Indigenous perspective is always fully considered by providing a majority of Indigenous staff at each level of the organisation
- Ensuring ATSIC is well placed to contribute significantly to the provision of employment opportunities for Indigenous people who have generally been denied equity in the Australian job market. It can provide genuine career opportunities and set the benchmark for other public and private sector

employers, and in addition, target specific areas such as youth, women and people with disabilities.

Recruitment/Retention and Development Strategies

A number of initiatives are currently in place to assist to achieve the 60% target:

Selection Criteria

On all job specifications Selection Criteria 1 and 2 have now been standardised across the Commission:

The Standardised criteria are as follows:

- 1. A demonstrated knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and cultures and an understanding of the issues affecting Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in contemporary Australian society and the diversity of circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*
- 2. A demonstrated ability to communicate sensitively and effectively, including the requirement for proper negotiation and consultation, with Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders on matters relevant to the delivery of the Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders policies.*

Advertising Vacancies

As well as utilising the normal Media avenues for advertising vacant positions, ATSIC also advertises through other sources such as the Koori Mail and the Indigenous Times to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply. The Commission also advertises its Programs on ATSIC radio.

Focusing on Indigenous Recruitment

Other incentives that encourage Indigenous recruitment are the entry-level programs, these include:

- The Graduate Program
- National Indigenous Cadetship Program
- Operative Development Program
- Vocational Experience Traineeship

Once employed with the Commission, the ATSIC Human Resource Development Strategy provides a framework through which employees can develop a career plan.

The Human Resource Development Strategy operates in tandem with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Career Development Strategy, aimed at increasing the number of suitably qualified Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Whole of Agency Training

Whole of agency training to meet corporate needs has been provided in many areas including:

- Risk Management
- Professional Management and Development
- Negotiation Skills
- Effective Communication
- Proficiency in applying ATSIC's IT systems on the job.

ATSIC also promotes attendance at Cultural Awareness programs that are conducted at least twice per year. All ATSIC staff are asked to attend these programs every 2 years.

Retention and Career Development Initiatives

ATSIC has an ongoing Mentoring program that aims to provide new employees, particularly Indigenous staff, with role models who can assist and advise on career development and the APS code of conduct. This program is very much focused on supporting people in their growth and development as a successful ATSIC employee.

Other programs designed for career development and assisting in staff retention include:

- Study Bank
- Inter-Agency Placement Program
- Accelerated Experience Acquisition Program
- Senior Women in Management (SWIM)
- Australian Youth Ambassador Program
- Spring Board
- Inter-Agency Placement Program
- Undergraduate and Staff Sponsorship

Training and Development Generally

Each of the 11 Regional network offices are allocated an annual Training and Development budget which is co-ordinated by Senior Development Officers in each region. Regions develop their annual training and development plans which include

the corporate training needs, regional specific requirements and individuals development needs.

Through the annual Performance Management process individual's training and development needs are identified and individual training agreements drawn up..

NB: Within this documentation is a more detailed outline of the programs and initiatives developed by ATSIC for Indigenous workers.