

Revised Cultural Learning Model and Aboriginal Employment Update

Wednesday, 25 February 2026

Reconciliation Committee

Strategic Alignment - Our Corporation

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Public

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks the Reconciliation Committee's feedback on a revised Cultural Learning Model (**Attachment A**). The revised Cultural Learning Model seeks to enhance the organisation's cultural capability, with the aim of continuing to foster a respectful, inclusive and culturally safe work environment and further grow and stretch engagement with Aboriginal employees and communities. Consultation feedback from Panpapanpalya in February 2026 has highlighted to the Administration:

- The draft model appears strong and aligns well with the Stretch RAP
- It is important that Cultural Learning is mandatory for all employees, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- Step 1 'Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity' should be delivered face to face, with refresher training being considered as more appropriate for an online format
- Consider additional learning requirements for managers and people leaders to support working with Aboriginal staff and engaging respectfully with the community
- Co-design to strengthen local and cultural authority and leadership is important
- It is important to integrate measurement of competency and accountability for applying learning into practice.

The City of Adelaide's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2027 and Strategic Plan 2024-2028 outline a commitment to achieving an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment rate of at least 2%.

An update on current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and recruitment at the City of Adelaide is also provided.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT THE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE

1. Notes the presentation to Panpapanpalya on the Aboriginal Cultural Learning Model as contained in Attachment A to Item 6.5 on the agenda for the Reconciliation Committee held on 25 February 2026.
2. Notes work undertaken to develop a new Cultural Learning Model and provides the following feedback:
 - 2.1. _____
 - 2.2. _____
3. Notes progress towards Council's commitment to Aboriginal employment.

IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Alignment – Our Corporation The report outlines progress towards the City of Adelaide's strategic target of achieving an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment rate of 2%.
Policy	The Aboriginal Employment Rate and the Aboriginal Cultural Learning Model align with commitments in the City of Adelaide's Stretch RAP 2024-2027.
Consultation	Following consultation with Aboriginal employees and engagement with Panpapanpalya, the CoA is consulting with the Reconciliation Committee on the design of a Cultural Learning Model.
Resource	The City of Adelaide will engage an external provider for the delivery of Cultural Learning.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	The development and implementation of a revised Cultural Learning Model provides an opportunity to enhance the CoA's cultural capability, with the aim of continuing to foster a respectful, inclusive and culturally safe work environment and further grow and stretch engagement with Aboriginal employees and communities.
25/26 Budget Allocation	0.8 full time equivalent (FTE) in the position of Aboriginal Employment and Inclusion Coordinator
Proposed 26/27 Budget Allocation	1.0 FTE Aboriginal Employment and Inclusion Coordinator
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Not as a result of this report
25/26 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

DISCUSSION

Aboriginal Cultural Learning Model

1. Action 7 of the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (Stretch RAP) 2024–2027 is “Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through Cultural Learning”.
2. Deliverables 7.1 to 7.5 of this action align with the development and implementation of an organisational approach to Cultural Learning:
 - 2.1. Conduct a review of the cultural learning needs within our organisation (deliverable 7.1)
 - 2.2. Consult local Traditional Owners and the Reconciliation Committee on the implementation of a Cultural Learning Strategy (deliverable 7.2)
 - 2.3. Implement and communicate the Cultural Learning Strategy to all employees (deliverable 7.3)
 - 2.4. All RAP Working Group members, HR Managers, senior executive group and all new employees to undertake formal and structured Cultural Learning (deliverable 7.4)
 - 2.5. 100% of employees undertake formal and structured face-to-face cultural learning training on commencement at the organisation and refresher within a 3-year period (deliverable 7.5).
3. The CoA currently delivers one-day, in person, Aboriginal Cultural Sensitivity and Respect training. There is very strong (92%) agreement from participants that the current program improves understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander history and culture. Feedback also suggests there is an opportunity to enhance the training through an additional focus on:
 - 3.1. How individuals can better support Aboriginal people in the workplace
 - 3.2. How to meaningfully advocate and be an ally for Aboriginal people.
4. In 2025, the Administration undertook a review of CoA’s existing Cultural Learning practices and researched the structure and design of Cultural Learning models embedded in other organisations including State Government, and councils both in South Australia and interstate. This work, alongside insights gained through engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees has resulted in a proposed new Cultural Learning Model aimed at further enhancing the CoA’s cultural capability and safety.
5. The proposed Cultural Learning Model aims to expand upon the existing training to create a more collaborative, blended learning approach for all CoA employees.
6. The proposed Cultural Learning Model is guided by the expertise of respected Adnyamathanha Elder Talitha Coulthard, former Director Aboriginal Strategy from the Office for Public Sector Employment, and Aboriginal Elders from differing language groups.
7. The proposed Cultural Learning Model has three key steps, which, in alignment with deliverable 7.5 of the Stretch RAP the Executive team has endorsed as being mandatory for all CoA employees:
 - 7.1. Step 1 - Online Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Program
 - 7.2. Step 2 - Face to face half-day workshop on Reconciliation & Allyship
 - 7.3. Step 3 - Face to face half-day workshop on Cultural Refresher every three years
8. To uphold the principles of self-determination and cultural empowerment, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees will have the choice to voluntarily participate in Cultural Learning activities. This approach ensures that cultural education is a personal and empowering journey, respecting individual autonomy and cultural identity.
9. In February 2026, Administration sought feedback from Panpapanpalya on a series of questions relating to the proposed Cultural Learning approach (**Attachment A**):
 - 9.1. What are the most important capability gaps Cultural Learning should address?
 - 9.2. Are there common topics that are overlooked when developing Cultural Learning?
 - 9.3. What would successful Cultural Learning look like from your perspective?
 - 9.4. What elements would you consider as being critical in the design and structure of effective Cultural Learning?

- 9.5. What delivery methods have you found most and least effective for Cultural Learning, and why?
- 9.6. What mistakes have you seen organisations make in the design and delivery of Cultural Learning?
- 10. Panpapanpalya provided rich insights and guidance on the recommended content and format of Cultural Learning. Key themes reflected in the feedback included:
 - 10.1. The draft model appears strong and aligns well with the Stretch RAP
 - 10.2. It is important that Cultural Learning is mandatory for all employees, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
 - 10.3. Step 1 'Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity' should be delivered face to face, with refresher training being considered as more appropriate for an online format
 - 10.4. Consider additional learning requirements for managers and people leaders to support working with Aboriginal staff and engaging respectfully with the community
 - 10.5. Co-design to strengthen local and cultural authority and leadership is important
 - 10.6. It is important to integrate measurement of competency and accountability for applying learning into practice.
- 11. The Administration invites any further feedback from the Reconciliation Committee to inform the design and implementation of a revised Cultural Learning model.

Aboriginal Employment update - current employment

- 12. The City of Adelaide (CoA) has a target to achieve an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment rate of 2%, inclusive of hosted apprentices and trainees. The target of 2% currently equates to 18 employees.
 - 12.1. As of 31 December 2025, eight of 876 employees identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
 - 12.2. As of 31 December 2025, one of 28 trainees and apprentices identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
 - 12.3. CoA's overall Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment rate as of 31 December 2025 was 1%.
- 13. Of the CoA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
 - 13.1. Three identify as female and five as male.
 - 13.2. Four are engaged on a permanent full-time basis, two are engaged on a permanent part time basis, one is engaged on a fixed term full time contract, and one is a casual employee.
 - 13.3. The average length of service is 8.9 years, with one employee having commenced within the last 12 months. The average length of service for all CoA employees is 8.8 years.
 - 13.4. Excluding casuals, based on a full time equivalent, the average base salary of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees is \$93,856 per annum with the average full time equivalent base salary for all CoA employees being \$105,192.

Aboriginal Employment update - recruitment

- 14. To increase reach and promote employment opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, all external CoA vacancies are circulated to CoA's Reconciliation Officer, Tauondi Aboriginal Community College, Job Prospects Senior Aboriginal Employment Mentor, Turkindi, Workskil's Specialist Employment Mentor, and Adelaide University Indigenous Employment Officer. This is in addition to usual advertising mechanisms including SEEK and LinkedIn.
- 15. Unfortunately, to date in 2025/26 two Aboriginal employees have resigned from CoA. Of these, one individual was employed in an identified position, and one individual was employed as part of a targeted recruitment initiative.
- 16. CoA has had an offer of employment accepted by an Aboriginal candidate for a position commencing in early February 2026, and recruitment to the vacant Coordinator Aboriginal Employment and Inclusion position commenced in January 2026.
- 17. Whilst the position of Coordinator Aboriginal Employment and Inclusion is vacant, the Administration is continuing to progress Aboriginal employment actions, with particular focus on a review of Cultural Learning and the development of an Aboriginal Employment Action Plan.
- 18. Engagement on a draft Aboriginal Employment Action Plan will occur with the Reconciliation Committee later in 2025/26.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Presentation to Panpapanpalya on the Aboriginal Cultural Learning Model

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