

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN

2026-2028

KAURNA ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Adelaide acknowledges the Kurna People of the Adelaide Plains as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and gather. We acknowledge and honour their spiritual and cultural stewardship of this Country and recognise their deep and enduring relationship with its lands, waters, the sky, and all living things. We pay our respects to Kurna Elders past and present and recognise the important role of emerging leaders in sustaining and strengthening culture.

City of Adelaide tampinhi, ngadlu Kurna yartangka panpapanpalyarrinhi (inparrinhi).
Kurna Miyurna yaitya mathanya Wama Tarntanyaku. Parnaku yailtya, parnaku
tapa purruna, parnaku yarta, ngadlu tampinhi.

Yalaka Kurna miyurna ithu yailtya, tapa purruna, yarta, kawi, ngayirda kuma puru martinhi,
puru warri-apinhi, puru tangka martulayinhi.

Kumartarna yaitya miyurna iyangka yalaka ngadlu tampinhi.

DOCUMENT PROPERTIES

Contact for enquiries and proposed changes

If you have any questions regarding this document or if you have a suggestion for improvements, please contact:

Contact Officer: Surlinne Sims
Title: Manager People Experience
Program: People
Phone: 82037740
Email: Surlinne.Sims@cityofadelaide.com.au

RECORD DETAILS

Content Manager Reference:

Version History

Version	Revision Date	Revised By	Revision Description
1.0	2026	Surlinne Sims - Manager People Experience	Action Plan Creation

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OUR COMMITMENT

The City of Adelaide (CoA) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Nations people of Australia, possessing strong cultural values rooted in their enduring connections to culture, kin, and Country. We are committed to fostering the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees by developing workforce practices that demonstrate respect and integrate cultural values and understanding. This commitment translates into creating inclusive environments that are responsive to the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, empowering them as confident employees.

Our goal is to establish a culturally safe workplace where the environment, structure, policies, and processes enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to fully participate, feel valued, and receive support. This includes actively listening to and incorporating the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in decision-making processes and building awareness, understanding, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees throughout the organisation and developing the cultural competency of all employees to ensure respectful non-racist interactions. Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are expected to demonstrate understanding of First Nations culture in their daily practices and interactions, fostering a culture of mutual respect and inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

Employment is a key driver of socioeconomic opportunity, providing individuals and families with financial security, increased social mobility, and improved living standards. Beyond economic benefits, participation in work is strongly linked to positive physical and mental health outcomes, greater social inclusion, and improved developmental outcomes for children (Biddle 2013; Gray et al. 2014; WHO 2016).

There remains, however, a clear and compelling need to strengthen employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Persistent gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians highlight ongoing systemic barriers to equitable employment. These barriers are often rooted in historical and contemporary disadvantage, including both overt and subtle forms of racism and discrimination, which can limit access to education, training, and employment opportunities and contribute to intergenerational disadvantage.

Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment delivers significant economic and social benefits across individuals, families, communities, and organisations. Meaningful employment supports financial independence, builds confidence and wellbeing, and fosters stronger social and community connections. It also brings valuable and diverse perspectives into the workplace, enriching organisational capability.

Embracing this diversity supports innovation, strengthens cultural capability, and enhances engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Advancing employment outcomes is also a critical component of Closing the Gap and progressing Reconciliation. By creating meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities, CoA acknowledges its role in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander peoples across South Australia, while contributing to a more equitable and inclusive future.

The CoA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Action Plan outlines the CoA's approach to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and participation rates to 2% by 2028. The plan provides a roadmap to identifying and removing barriers in recruitment, retention, cultural safety, and professional development, ensuring ongoing and fulfilling careers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

The plan outlines three focus areas:

1. Focus Area 1: Attraction & Recruitment
2. Focus Area 2: Retention & Development
3. Focus Area 3: Cultural & Psychological Safety

In recent years, the CoA has taken deliberate and sustained action to strengthen employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across each of these areas. This includes establishing a dedicated Reconciliation Team to lead the development and delivery of reconciliation initiatives and creating a Coordinator Aboriginal Employment and Inclusion role within the People Program to embed inclusive employment practices across the organisation. We have also begun intentionally increasing the number of targeted roles to create meaningful career pathways and expand employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our approach to cultural capability and inclusion continues to evolve through refinement of the Aboriginal Cultural Learning Model, informed by best practice research and guided by Kaurna Elders through Panpapanpalya and the Reconciliation Committee. This is supported by the introduction of the Respectful Behaviours Policy and the Anti-Racism Operating Guidelines, which reinforce our commitment to a culturally safe, inclusive and respectful workplace.

While this progress is significant, we recognise there is more to do. We will continue to take a bold, innovative and aspirational approach, underpinned by clear targets, accountability, and regular monitoring to deliver on the objectives of this Workforce Action Plan.

All employees are expected to contribute to the success of this Plan and to actively support and advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across South Australia.

FOCUS AREA 1

Attraction and Recruitment

Effective attraction and recruitment strategies will position CoA as a genuine employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, built on trust, visibility and cultural respect. By removing systemic barriers, promoting targeted opportunities, and engaging directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community partners, CoA will increase awareness of employment pathways and encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply for and secure roles.

These actions will lead to a stronger, more diverse candidate pool, improved cultural capability in recruitment practices, and sustainable increases in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across all levels of the organisation, contributing to a workforce that better reflects and serves the community.

No.	Key Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
1.1	Establish meaningful and visible presence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	Identify and participate in community Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and early career events, including (but not limited to) NAIDOC Family Fun Day and career fairs.	Year 2	People Services team Marketing & Communications team Creative City team Reconciliation team
1.2	Communicate and promote an employee value proposition that resonates with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Promote CoA's commitment to reconciliation by showcasing the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees through culturally relevant, strengths-based storytelling across internal and external communication channels.	Year 1	People Services team Marketing & Communication team Reconciliation team
		Identify additional avenues for advertising identified and targeted roles to broaden community reach (in addition to those used within CoA's standard recruitment approach).	Year 1	People Services team
		Demonstrate the CoA's commitment to celebrating and	Year 2	People Services team

		supporting cultural diversity and inclusion through employee branding and value proposition.		Marketing & Communications Team
1.3	Enhance employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Implement workforce data reporting processes to establish baseline Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and employment measures and support ongoing trend analysis to inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment decisions and actions.	Year 1	People Services team
		Implement a talent pool to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers and existing employees with the CoA job opportunities.	Year 1	People Services team People Experience team
		Embed unconscious bias training into recruitment processes to support fair and culturally informed hiring decisions.	Year 1	People Services team People Experience team
		Proactively identify positions for identified and targeted recruitment within each portfolio to create employment and development opportunities.	Year 1	People Services team Executive and Senior Leadership teams
		Provide guidance to recruiting leaders to ensure clear and accurate language is used to describe roles, responsibilities and expectations during recruitment processes.	Year 2	People Services team People Leaders
		Introduce a commitment to interview Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants meeting minimum selection criteria.	Year 2	People Services team People Leaders
		Engage and build partnerships with tertiary institutions and employment agencies to	Year 2	People Services team

		develop connections and promote employment pathways.		People Experience team
		Review the CoA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment toolkit to ensure it provides appropriate guidance and support in removing barriers and improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Year 2	People Services team
		Ensure completion of cultural learning training by all non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interview panel members.	Year 3	People Leaders
		Develop an apprenticeship and traineeship program as an entry-level pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Year 3	People Experience team

Measures:

- Percentage of the workforce identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander >2%.
- An increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people applying for positions compared to baseline employment measures.
- An increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people shortlisted for interview compared to baseline employment measures.
- Conversion of people registering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent pool to employment.
- An increase in the number of positions advertised as identified or targeted compared to baseline employment measures.

FOCUS AREA 2

Retention and Development

The overarching outcome for CoA is the establishment of a sustainable, self-determining career environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are retained, supported and empowered to thrive. Through stronger engagement, clear career pathways, targeted development, leadership opportunities and access to learning, we will strengthen the capability and confidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to progress into higher-level and emerging roles.

No.	Key Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
2.1	Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination at heart of the CoA decision making.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to guide and provide advice on policies, strategies and programs, ensuring culturally relevant decisions are shaped by their knowledge, perspectives and self-determination.	Year 1	People Services team People Experience team People Safety & Wellbeing team Reconciliation team
2.2	Provide ongoing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to enable growth and development.	Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network to strengthen ongoing connection, peer support and belonging, and provide a trusted forum for seeking cultural feedback and guidance.	Year 1	People Experience team
		Connecting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to encourage participation in culture surveys and pulse checks to inform targeted and culturally responsive initiatives.	Year 1	People Experience team People Leaders
		Develop and implement culturally appropriate and tailored onboarding and induction processes for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Year 2	People Services team People Experience team People Leaders

		Develop an internal website that provides culturally tailored information and guidance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and their leaders.	Year 2	People Experience team
		Ensure that employee support services and programs such as the CoA's Employee Assistance Program provide services which are culturally safe, appropriate and tailored to support the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Year 2	People Experience team People Safety & Wellbeing team
2.3	Provide meaningful development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait employees.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are provided opportunities to explore professional development and career/progression pathways in addition to Performance and Development Conversations (PDCs).	Year 2	People Experience team People Leaders
		Provide tailored cultural mentoring program opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Year 3	People Experience team

Measures:

- An increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in senior and leadership positions compared to baseline employment measures.
- An increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in CoA leadership and development programs compared to baseline employment measures.
- Participation and attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee network group.
- Turnover of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is equal to or lower than that of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The average length of service of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is equal to or higher than that of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

FOCUS AREA 3

Cultural and Psychological Safety

CoA is committed to establishing a workplace that is both culturally and psychosocially safe, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are active partners in decision-making and where both professional expertise and cultural knowledge are respected and valued. Cultural safety is underpinned by a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination, recognising the significant psychosocial risks these behaviours pose to the mental, emotional and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

No.	Key Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
3.1	Establish and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and across the CoA worksites to celebrate Kaurna roots.	Continue to share stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and reconciliation achievements in ways that are authentic, culturally respectful, and highlight their lived experience through storytelling.	Year 1	People Experience team Marketing & Communications team
		Deliver at least one opportunity during both NAIDOC and Reconciliation Weeks for employees to engage in activities that build cultural knowledge and allyship, with visible participation from executive and senior leadership.	Year 1	People Experience team Reconciliation team
		Commissioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artwork is proudly displayed and incorporated within the CoA worksites and communications.	Year 3	People Experience team Creative City team Marketing & Communications team
		Rename selected conference, meeting and training rooms with co-names to honour significant Aboriginal and	Year 3	People Experience team

		Torres Strait Islander leaders in South Australia.		Reconciliation team
		Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees on the development, implementation and communication of an Anti-Racism Operating Guideline.	Year 1	People Services team People Experience team People Safety & Wellbeing team People Leaders
3.2	CoA leadership shows strong support and accountability for cultural safety, and anti-racism and competence initiatives.	Ensure People policies and practices remove barriers and encourage participation in NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week events and other significant cultural events.	Year 1	People Services team People Experience team People Leaders
		Ensure executive leadership participate in promoting and supporting anti-discrimination initiatives, including increased visibility through regular, formal or informal engagement.	Year 1	People Experience team People Leaders
		Enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee access to, and awareness of, Cultural Leave through a review of its scope.	Year 2	People Services team People Experience team People Leaders
		Develop and implement the revised cultural learning model, in consultation with CoA's Reconciliation Committee.	Year 2	People Experience team Reconciliation team
		Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to create an organisational statement to define cultural safety at CoA.	Year 2	People Experience team People Safety & Wellbeing team

		Introduce mandatory requirements for all employees to complete cultural learning, ensuring learning goes beyond awareness to building capability in culturally safe behaviours.	Year 2	People Experience team
3.3	CoA recognises that cultural competence can only be achieved by developing working environments based on acknowledging the importance of empowering its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Introduce a 'Cultural Immersion' experience for senior leaders so they have first-hand experiences (on Kurna Country) of the uniqueness of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.	Year 3	People Experience team
		Improve connection to Kurna Land through cultural activities and other learning opportunities.	Year 3	People Experience team

Measures:

- One employee engagement activity or event is provided within both NAIDOC and Reconciliation weeks.
- Cultural learning is included within employee mandatory training requirements.
- 100% participation in mandatory cultural learning within first year of employment.