Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2021-2025

Evaluation Report



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

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Acronyms	Full form
AECD	Aboriginal Employment and Career Development
AEF	Aboriginal Employee Forum
AEMP	Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program
AEN	Aboriginal Employee Network
AEP	Aboriginal Employment Program
AIS	Aboriginal Interpreter Service
ALDP	Aboriginal Leadership Development Program (Kigaruk and Lookrukin)
ASCAP	Aboriginal Student Career Aspirations Program
CCTF	Cross-Cultural Training Framework
DCDD	Department of Corporate and Digital Development
DCMC	Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet
ELDF	Executive Leader Development Framework
MMDF	Middle Manager Development Framework
NTHACP	NT Health Aboriginal Cadetship Program
NTG	Northern Territory Government
NT	Northern Territory
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Sector
OCPE	Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment
PMS	People Matter Survey
SARG	Senior Aboriginal Reference Group
SMRP	Special Measures Recruitment Plan
The Strategy	Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2021–2025

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Introduction

This evaluation is an internal assessment of NTPS agencies and OCPE actions outlined in the Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2021-2025.

Key highlights and fast facts include:

- Aboriginal workforce representation increased by 331, reaching 11.19%
- Aboriginal representation in senior roles increased by 56, reaching 5.01%
- 95.4% of advertised vacancies (2021–22 to Q2 2025–26) were under Special Measures Recruitment Plan; 10% of these were filled by successful Aboriginal candidates.
- 87 Aboriginal employees registered for the Merit Selection Register (panel participation)
- 694 Aboriginal employees attended Aboriginal Employee Forums across Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine (average participation 86.75).
- AEMP delivered a total of 18 workshops (6 mentor and 12 mentee workshops), supporting 162 NTPS employees (61 mentors and 101 mentees)
- Aboriginal respondents represented 9.21% of 2025 People Matter survey respondents, Engagement 68%, Satisfaction 71% (up from 2023).
- 52% of Aboriginal respondents to the 2025 People Matter Survey reported having a current performance and development plan.
- Executive Leader Development Framework (ELDF) implemented October 2022.
- Aboriginal participation across OCPE leadership programs has been 7.88% and 5.17% in capability development programs.
- 38% of the NTPS workforce has completed the Foundations of Cross-Cultural Training eLearn module.
- National Days of Significance Calendar launched in 2023 (published annually).
- NT Regional Events & Days of Significance Calendar launched in 2024 (published annually).
- OCPE advertises NTPS vacancies (including remote roles) to the AEN weekly.
- Agency Expo Showcases incorporated into AEF to give Aboriginal employees direct access to agency representatives, programs and career pathways in a culturally safe setting.
- Two-day Remote Engagement Essentials workshops are delivered in Darwin, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, and Alyangula.

The NT Government remains committed to increasing Aboriginal workforce participation. In 2026, consultation for the NTPS Workforce Strategy 2027-2032 will be undertaken. Recommendations from this report, and the voices of Aboriginal employees, will inform strategic priorities and initiatives for Aboriginal employment, career progression, and retention.

Aboriginal workforce priorities

This report along with Aboriginal employee feedback, survey data, and consultation processes consistently identified a set of core workforce priorities focused on improving career pathways, workplace culture, and long-term outcomes.

Strengthen Career Pathways and Progression
- Clear demand for structured career pathways from entry to leadership, including secondments, mentoring, and development opportunities.
- Limited career progression identified as the primary reason employees consider leaving the NTPS (33%).
- Need to reduce reliance on formal qualifications and recognise skills, experience, and cultural capability.

Grow Aboriginal Leadership and Decision-Making Influence
- Priority to increase Aboriginal representation at senior and executive levels.
- Strengthen leadership development pathways and mentoring support.
- Increased visibility and recognition of Aboriginal cultural authority in leadership roles.

Create Culturally Safe and Inclusive Workplaces
- Ongoing need to address racism, cultural barriers, and lack of inclusion (12% reported experiencing racism in 2025).
- Improve respect, workplace behaviours, and cultural safety practices.
- Embed cultural safety into policies, leadership accountability, and physical work environments.

Improve Workforce Participation and Opportunities in Remote Areas
- Strong emphasis on place-based employment opportunities and local jobs.
- Need for flexible employment models.
- Expand school-to-work pathways and early career programs for remote communities

Strengthen Attraction and Entry Pathways
- Increase visibility of career opportunities, traineeships, and entry pathways.
- Improve school-to-work transitions and youth engagement.
- Position NTPS as an employer of choice for Aboriginal people.

Build a Culturally Capable Workforce
- Strong demand for mandatory, ongoing cultural capability training, including on-country delivery.
- Need to move beyond awareness to practical capability and behavioural change.
- Improve cross-cultural engagement to support better service delivery.

Strengthen Wellbeing and Support Systems
- High levels of stress, burnout, and cultural load, particularly in frontline and remote roles.
- Need for culturally safe wellbeing supports, flexible work, and stronger leadership support.

Improve Recognition, Equity, and Visibility
- Greater emphasis on recognising Aboriginal contributions, leadership, and success.

Strengthen Governance and Aboriginal Voice
- Reinforce mechanisms that ensure Aboriginal perspectives inform policy and decision-making.
- Strong support for Aboriginal advisory structures and culturally informed governance approaches.

Recommendations

Aboriginal Workforce Representation

1. Whole-of-sector Aboriginal employment targets and representation across senior roles is retained.
2. Quarterly agency-level reporting on Aboriginal workforce representation and related metrics is reinstated.

Attraction and Recruitment

3. Undertake targeted workforce planning to inform attraction strategies and pathways.
4. Develop an Aboriginal Employment Value Proposition
5. Expand the profile of Aboriginal employee career journeys on the Join the Territory and other agency led recruitment initiatives.
6. Continue Special Measures in recruitment and support flexibility in their application.
    a) Explore focused attraction opportunities using designated positions.
    b) Maintain the independent review of unsuitability reports.
7. Showcase the NTPS Merit Selection Register and encourage employee participation on across sector recruitment and selection panels.
    a) agencies to support increase of Aboriginal members on panels.
8. The NTPS should establish a sector-wide Aboriginal entry-to-practice pathway that strengthens school-to-work transitions, reinstates or replaces ASCAP with a contemporary, centrally supported program developed with the Department of Education, and improves access to early-career and employment programs with a particular focus on Aboriginal-designated roles and remote and regional participation.

Aboriginal Employee Stay Survey

9. The NTPS should retain the People Matter Survey as the primary mechanism for monitoring Aboriginal employee experience and trend analysis, supported by targeted pulse surveys as needed to undertake deeper exploration of specific issues such as racism, burnout and mobility.

Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program (AEMP)

10. Maintain delivery of an Aboriginal-specific mentoring program across the NTPS.
    a) Strengthen AEMP to enhance its quality, relevance, and impact across the NTPS
    b) Strengthen facilitation capability across the NTPS by training Aboriginal staff within agencies.

Aboriginal Employee Forums (AEF)

11. Maintain annual forums and continue regional delivery.

Learning and Development Framework

12. Create a structured, sector-wide framework/ pathways mapping career stages from entry to executive.
    a) Consolidate existing NTPS programs initiatives.
    b) Identify gaps in career progression opportunities.

c) Continue mobility initiative to identify pathways for secondments, lateral moves, skill development and leadership opportunities.

d) Strengthen supervisor/manager accountability for supporting development and career progression.

Aboriginal Employee Network (AEN)

13. Continue to leverage AEN as an ongoing engagement and communication medium.

Professional Development

14. Explore options to increase access to leadership development and career-planning support for Aboriginal employees in regional and remote locations.
15. Introduce targeted strategies to increase Aboriginal participation in leadership and executive programs, including preparatory programs that support progression from Diploma to Degree and readiness for ANZSOG pathways (or equivalent executive programs).
16. Maintain Kigaruk and Lookrukin as the flagship Aboriginal leadership development program, with continued investment to support cohort post-program growth.

Cultural Leadership

17. Engage with agency-level Aboriginal advisory groups as necessary to guide implementation of future Aboriginal workforce initiatives.
18. Formally recognise Aboriginal cultural knowledge, cultural authority, and community leadership as leadership capabilities within NTPS frameworks.

Leadership Growth

19. Implement systematic post-program tracking and impact assessment across leadership and management programs to monitor career progression and retention outcomes for Aboriginal participants.

Training

20. Strengthen NTPS-wide compliance with the refreshed Foundations of Cross-Cultural Training eLearn (from 38% baseline).
21. Increase delivery of Aboriginal cultural capability programs - moving beyond basic awareness.
    a) Agencies to determine and implement Aboriginal cross-cultural training tailored to their service context and workforce needs.

Aboriginal Affairs Framework

22. Promote the Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2026-2028 across the NTPS and align agency work programs to its priorities.
23. Ensure Cross-Cultural Training and broader cultural capability programs support Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2026-2028 priorities.
24. Integrate Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2026-2028 priorities into the NTPS Workforce Strategy 2027–2032.

Significant Dates and Events

25. Continue NTPS-wide NAIDOC events and expand opportunities for participation.

Workforce Cultural Uplift

26. Review workforce policies to better recognise and support cultural obligations and community responsibilities.
27. Explore options for NTPS-wide measures of cultural capability growth (beyond completion reporting) to track behavioural shifts, team maturity, and client experience.

School leavers / Transition to work

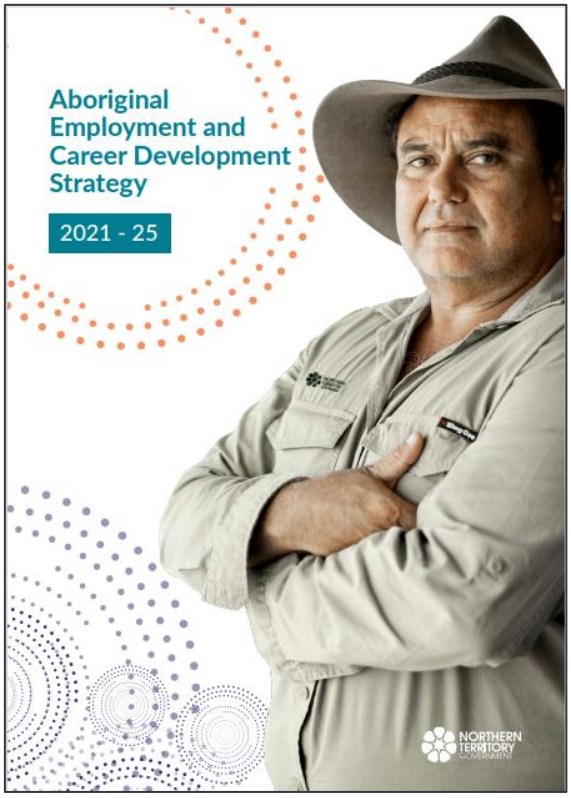
28. Determine availability work-readiness and school-to-work programs for remote areas.
    a) Partner with local schools, communities and youth programs to co-deliver workshops.
    b) Leverage improved digital connectivity to scale online career learning and virtual mentoring into remote communities.

Community engagement

29. Embed interpreter awareness and AIS access in agency induction and Aboriginal cross-cultural training.

The Strategy

The Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2021-2025 was launched in June 2021 to continue building a strong, highly skilled, and capable Aboriginal workforce across the NTPS with the goal of continuing to work towards a whole of sector Aboriginal workforce representation of 16% and 10% Aboriginal representation in senior roles.



The Strategy builds on the foundations established under the 2015–2020 Indigenuous Employment and Career Development Strategy. It set out a suite of programs and initiatives aimed at attracting, retaining, and developing Aboriginal employees across all levels of the NTPS.

The development of the Strategy was informed by a detailed evaluation of the previous framework, alongside extensive consultation with key stakeholders. Findings from the previous evaluation highlighted the NTPS's strong performance in attracting and recruiting Aboriginal employees, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen retention and career progression. The evaluation emphasised the need for an increased focus on leadership development, workplace culture, and remote employment pathways to achieve long-term, meaningful change.

In response, the Strategy was structured around six key focus areas: Targets, Attraction, Retention, Leadership, Workplace Culture, and Remote.

The Strategy's impact and innovation were recognised through its selection as a finalist in the 2022 Chief Minister's Awards for Excellence in the Public Sector, under the category Advancing Aboriginal and Community Development. This recognition reflected the former Government's broader commitment to building the capability of Aboriginal Territorians, strengthening regional and remote communities, and supporting sustainable social and economic outcomes.

Evaluation method

This internal evaluation drew on multiple sources of evidence, including workforce data, program and training records, survey responses, and qualitative employee feedback.

This evaluation adopts a combined process and outcome approach to provide a summative assessment of Strategy implementation and results from June 2021 to December 2025.

Identified data gaps and limitations have been acknowledged throughout the report, with proposed remedial actions to strengthen data collection, monitoring, and evaluation to be incorporated into the NTPS Workforce Strategy 2027–2032.

Focus Area 1: Targets

OCPE will:	
Key Action	Status
Distribute agency specific Aboriginal employment targets.	**Completed**
Support and monitor agencies' progress towards targets.	**Completed**
Work collaboratively with agencies to maintain commitment to the strategy.	**Completed**
Report on the strategy progress on an annual basis.	**Completed**

NTPS agencies will:	
Key Action	Status
Develop an agency specific Aboriginal employment action plan aligned to the whole of sector strategy, outlining their commitment to increase, retain and develop Aboriginal employees.	**Completed**
Nominate an executive sponsor to be responsible for setting the Aboriginal employment target for their agency in collaboration with OCPE, and work with managers and senior leaders to increase Aboriginal employment and representation in senior and executive positions.	**Completed**
Report the progress of agency action plans to the Commissioner for Public Employment on an annual basis.	**Completed**
Work collaboratively and collectively with OCPE and NTPS agencies to achieve successful Aboriginal employment outcomes across the sector.	**Completed**

Fast Facts

- Aboriginal workforce representation increased from 2,532 (June 2021) to 2,863 (December 2025), representing a net increase of 331 and representing 11.19% of NTPS workforce.
- Aboriginal representation in senior roles increased from 162 (June 2021) to 218 (December 2025), a net increase of 56 and representing 5.01% of senior workforce.

Aboriginal employment targets

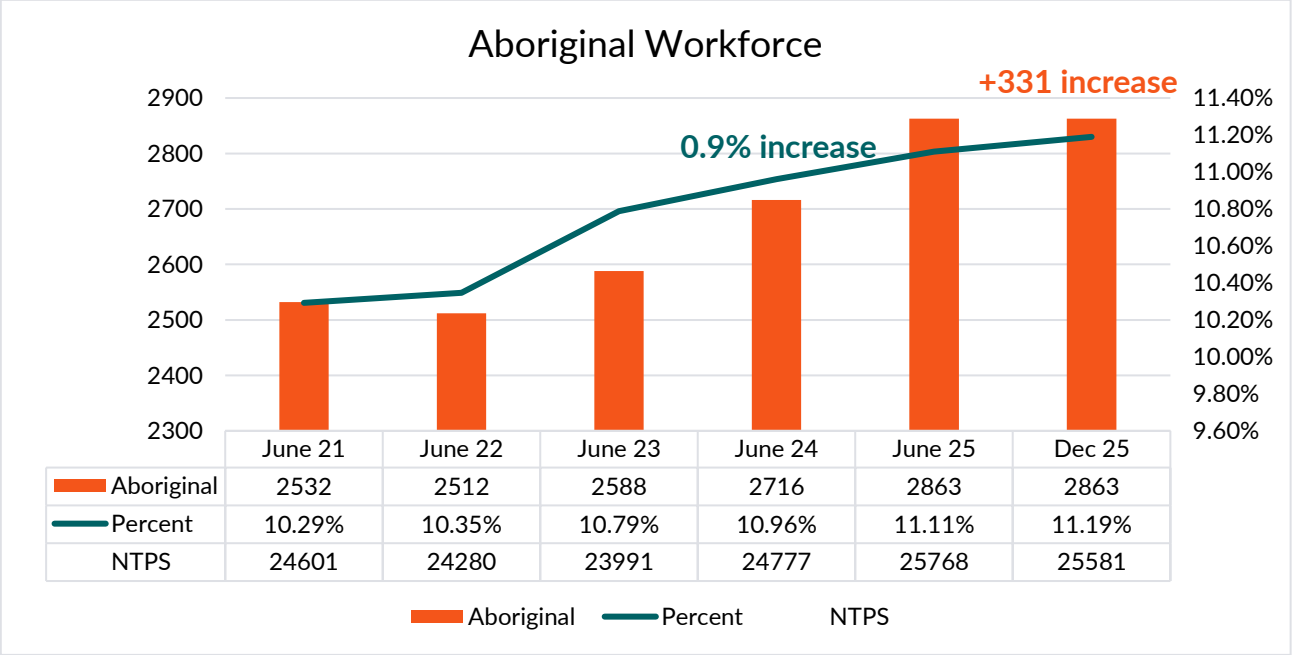
The Strategy aimed to support achievement of the whole-of-government aspirational targets of 16% Aboriginal workforce representation and 10% representation in senior roles, based on employee self-identification in the myHR system.

Agency-specific Aboriginal workforce targets were introduced in 2017 and subsequently recalculated in 2021 to reflect updated workforce data. All Chief Executive Officers (CEO) endorsed these revised Aboriginal workforce targets. Notably, NT Police set a more ambitious target of 30% Aboriginal employment in April 2024.

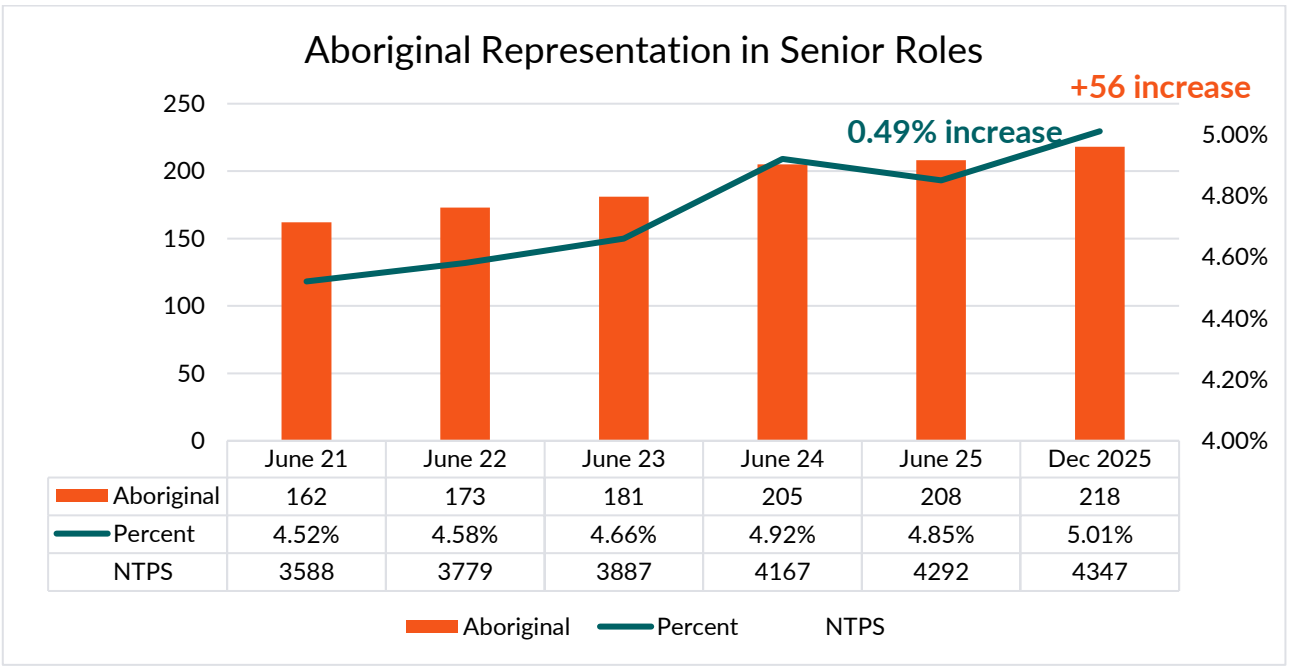
No targets were established for Aboriginal representation within the senior workforce. Senior roles are defined as positions at Capability Framework (CF) Level 8 or higher. Progress toward the overall senior leadership target is monitored at the whole-of-government level.

Aboriginal representation (whole of government and agency) was monitored quarterly through the OCPE004 BOXI report. This point-in-time report was based on the final pay period within each reporting quarter and counted paid headcount of employees who received salary or wages in the pay period.

Since the implementation of the Strategy, the NTPS has recorded a net increase of 331 Aboriginal employees, reflecting sustained progress toward the Strategy's employment and capability-building objectives.



	June 21	June 22	June 23	June 24	June 25	Dec 25
Aboriginal	2532	2512	2588	2716	2863	2863
Percent	10.29%	10.35%	10.79%	10.96%	11.11%	11.19%
NTPS	24601	24280	23991	24777	25768	25581



	June 21	June 22	June 23	June 24	June 25	Dec 2025
Aboriginal	162	173	181	205	208	218
Percent	4.52%	4.58%	4.66%	4.92%	4.85%	5.01%
NTPS	3588	3779	3887	4167	4292	4347

The NTPS is well positioned to grow its own leaders as the NTPS maintains a broad suite of leadership, management and development programs to build capability across the sector.

Supporting and monitoring agency progress

OCPE worked closely with agencies to identify opportunities for improving employment frameworks, policies, and industrial levers to better support employees. OCPE has provided advice, leadership, and support to agencies on Aboriginal employment and workforce reform initiatives and has actively participated in several cross-agency projects and initiatives.

To ensure Aboriginal workforce participation remained a priority across the NTPS, regular briefing papers on Aboriginal Employment in the NTPS were tabled at key governance groups, including the CEO Coordination Committee, Deputy CEO COORD, Regional COORD Committees, and previous workforce governance groups such as Champions of Inclusion and the Strategic Workforce Board. Through partnerships with the then Senior Aboriginal Reference Group (SARG) and Agency Executive Sponsors, OCPE has fostered shared accountability, exchanged insights, and identified opportunities for improvement in Aboriginal employment outcomes across the NTPS.

From 2021 until June 2024, OCPE issued quarterly reports to agencies outlining their progress against agency-specific Aboriginal workforce targets. 19 agencies submitted an Agency 2022/23 Aboriginal Employment Action Plan (AEAP), and 18 provided a progress report. Agencies were not requested to report against their 2023/24 AEAP due to Machinery of Government changes.

The Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD) has a role to work with agencies to develop strategic workforce plans that capture all workforce initiatives and projects. Moving forward it is intended that this process will explicitly capture agencies Aboriginal workforce initiatives and reporting against these will occur on a six-monthly and annual cycle.

OCPE did not produce annual specific Strategy progress reports or complete the midterm review for the Strategy, action continued on implementing initiatives that created opportunities to attract, retain, and grow the Aboriginal workforce within the NTPS. These actions were reported through Annual Reports and State of the Service reports, both of which are tabled in parliament.

Recommendations - Targets

It is recommended:

Aboriginal Workforce Representation

1. Whole-of-sector Aboriginal employment targets and representation across senior roles is retained.
2. Quarterly agency-level reporting on Aboriginal workforce representation and related metrics is reinstated.

Focus Area 2: Attraction

OCPE will	
Key Action	Status
Develop a marketing campaign to promote the NTPS as an employer of choice through strengthening networks with local governments, non-government organisations and Aboriginal communities.	**Completed**
Promote the aim and appropriate use of Special Measures in NTPS recruitment and selection processes.	**Completed**
Maintain the independent review of unsuccessful Special Measures applicants.	**Completed**
Identify and maintain a pool of Aboriginal employees who have completed merit and selection training to be available and increase participation on selection panels.	**Completed**
Provide advice, leadership and support to agencies in relation to Aboriginal employment and workforce reform initiatives.	**Completed**
In partnership with Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD):	
- Review and promote NTPS Career Pathways and leadership programs.	**Completed**
- Develop the NTPS Aboriginal Cadetship Program	**Closed**
- Deliver the Aboriginal Students Career Aspirations Program (ASCAP).	**Completed**
In partnership with agencies continue to deliver and report on the election commitment project to have 500 more Aboriginal people filling a role as a teacher, police officer or nurse by 2026.	**Completed**

NTPS agencies will:	
Key Action	Status
Build and strengthen networks to promote the various career opportunities available within their agency.	**Completed**
Continue to use and promote Special Measures.	**Completed**
Increase Aboriginal representation on selection panels.	**Completed**
Undertake workforce planning to:	
- Identify employment and career development opportunities.	**Completed**
- Participate in NTPS career pathways programs and provide employment opportunities on successful completion.	**Completed**
- Assist in succession planning.	**Completed**
- Work collaboratively with agencies to provide sustainable employment outcomes.	**Completed**
Provide Aboriginal school students with work experience opportunities to develop work readiness skills	**Completed**

Fast facts

- 25% of the NTPS workforce is eligible to sit on Recruitment and Selection Panels.
- 95.4% of advertised vacancies (2021–22 to Q2 2025–26) were under Special Measures Recruitment Plan; 10% of these were filled by successful Aboriginal candidates.
- 87 Aboriginal employees registered for the Merit Selection Register (panel participation)
- OCPE continues to support Aboriginal career development through leadership initiatives, mentoring, and cross-agency collaboration.

NTPS as an employer of choice

'Join the Territory' is the Northern Territory Government's (NTG) primary platform promoting employment, lifestyle, and learning opportunities in the NT. The site showcases a broad range of career pathways, provides practical guidance for job seekers, and highlights opportunities for professional growth. It also includes dedicated information on early entry and Aboriginal employment programs within the NTPS, featuring success stories that highlight the experiences and achievements of Aboriginal employees participating in these initiatives.

OCPE actively promotes careers in the NTPS through a range of engagement activities, including community events, internal forums, and professional networks. In 2023, OCPE developed and distributed the 'Grow Your Career in the Territory' resource aimed at Aboriginal jobseekers, highlighting career pathways and opportunities across the public sector and supporting efforts to position the NTPS as an employer of choice.

Recruitment and selection

OCPE has played a central role in driving sector-wide employment reform across the NTPS. Through ongoing collaboration with agencies, OCPE identifies and implements improvements to employment frameworks, policies, and industrial instruments to respond to evolving workforce needs and to promote equitable access to employment opportunities. OCPE is critical in maintaining integrity, fairness, and accountability across the NTPS by providing employees with access to independent and impartial review mechanisms.

A key focus during the reporting period has been strengthening recruitment and selection practices to ensure fairness, transparency, and adherence to merit principles. OCPE has responded proactively to agency feedback and recommendations from integrity bodies to improve system-wide processes.

In July 2024, OCPE gazetted an improved Employment Instruction 15, further updated in December 2025, and published revised Commissioner's Guidelines to strengthen support for Aboriginal employment. These changes introduced more flexible Confirmation of Aboriginality requirements and enabled local advertising of remote vacancies, improving accessibility for Aboriginal applicants, particularly those in remote communities.

Further reforms were implemented in June 2025 following the ICAC Operation Apollo investigation into recruitment practices. OCPE enhanced merit selection training and resources, including new mandatory requirements for selection panel members and delegates to formally declare any real, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest.

In December 2025, OCPE released a refreshed Special Measures Recruitment Plan template and enhanced all associated recruitment documentation to align with contemporary policy settings and improve practical application across agencies.

Key reforms implemented during the reporting period include:

- Gazettal of Employment Instruction 15 – Special Measures
- Published revised Commissioner's Special Measures Guidelines
- Transitioned to a single NTPS Statutory Declaration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants
- Introduced a refreshed Special Measures Recruitment Plan template
- Released the Designated Positions Guideline
- Updated Special Measures applicant information materials
- Expanded provision for local advertising of remote vacancies to attract community-based candidates
- Strengthened conflict-of-interest management through revised disclosure requirements and updated merit selection templates
- Introduced a Selection Panel Checklist to support procedural compliance
- Established a MyLearning register for staff qualified to participate in selection panels
- Released a pre-employment screening guideline

These reforms have strengthened the integrity of recruitment practices, improved transparency and accountability, and supported consistent application of merit principles across the NTPS, while enhancing access and employment outcomes for Aboriginal applicants.

Aboriginal leadership roles

NTPS agencies have demonstrated a clear and deliberate commitment to strengthening Aboriginal leadership at the highest levels of decision-making. This includes establishing senior roles that embed cultural authority, lived experience, and community connection into policy development and service delivery for improving governance, cultural safety, and outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.

Key appointments include:

- **Elder in Residence – Territory Families, Housing and Communities (2021–22):**
  Dr Christine Fejo-King, Senior Larrakia Elder, appointed to provide cultural leadership, guide policy and program design, and support implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework. The role strengthened culturally informed practice across child protection, education, and family support services.

- **Chief First Nations Health Officer – NT Health (2021):**
  An executive role leading the First Nations Health and Wellbeing Division. Responsible for integrating Aboriginal Workforce, Community-Controlled transition, policy, and engagement functions, supporting delivery of commitments under the Aboriginal Health Plan, Cultural Security Framework, and Closing the Gap Agreement.

- **Executive Director, Community Resilience and Engagement (Cultural Reform) – NT Police (2024):**
  Arrernte leader Leanne Liddle appointed to drive systemic reform, lead the Anti-Racism Strategy, and strengthen community trust through culturally responsive policing approaches.

Special Measure Recruitment Plans

Since 2014, Special Measures Recruitment Plans (SMRP) have been implemented across the NTPS to support the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as an identified Equal Employment Opportunity group.

These plans provide a structured mechanism for agencies to develop a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community, while creating targeted opportunities for Aboriginal people to access and progress within the NTPS. The plans enable the establishment of dedicated employment pathways, including priority consideration and designated roles for Aboriginal applicants, supporting both entry into the public sector and ongoing career development.

CEOs are responsible for determining how Special Measures are applied within their agencies. This includes identifying positions suitable for priority consideration and designation of specific roles for Aboriginal applicants, aligned with agency workforce needs and strategic priorities.

CEOs are currently reviewing and determining agency requirements to inform their agency's implementation of the refreshed Special Measures Recruitment Plan issued in December 2025.

Information on Special Measures provisions is embedded within Merit Selection Training, ensuring that panel members understand how these provisions are appropriately applied.

The following data provides an overview of vacancy activity and the application of SMRP across the NTPS. While SMRP were applied to the majority of advertised roles (over 95% overall), appointment outcomes remained relatively consistent at around 10%.

Metrics	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 (to Q2)	Total
Total number of advertised vacancies	5636	6349	6100	4785	1589	24,459
Number of vacancies advertised under SMRP	5231 (92.81%)	5941 (93.57%)	5873 (96.28%)	4722 (98.68%)	1569 (98.74%)	23,336 (95.4%)
Number of vacancies filled under SMRP	557 (9.97%)	546 (9.93%)	455 (9.69%)	454 (10.81%)	123 (9.06%)	2135 (10%)
Number of successful Aboriginal people not assessed under SMRP	10	11	10	1	0	32

Independent review of unsuccessful Special Measures applicants

OCPE continued to maintain the integrity and fairness of recruitment through independent reviews of unsuccessful Special Measures applicants.

In 2020, OCPE worked closely with SARG to strengthen this review process and as part of this collaboration, a rolling six-month developmental opportunity was introduced for Aboriginal employees at the AO6/AO7 level to work with OCPE to lead projects focused on Special Measures recruitment. As the Aboriginal Employment Pathways Project Officer they gain hands-on experience in handling employment grievances, contribute to improving Aboriginal employment outcomes and build skills in policy, analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

To date there has been 9 Aboriginal employees seconded to OCPE for this rotation. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting:

- Increased confidence in navigating complex HR and recruitment processes.
- Valuable exposure to cross-agency collaboration.
- Enhanced understanding of grievance handling and policy development.
- A sense of pride in contributing to a fairer and more inclusive NTPS.

Metrics	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 (Q2)	Total
Number of unsuitability report reviewed	205	1709	1582	1343	944	**5783**
Number of unsuitability reports returned to agency for further consideration	21	75	45	58	48	**247**

The data demonstrates the effective oversight and utilisation of review mechanisms across the NTPS. Although only a small proportion of reports were returned to agencies for further consideration, this highlights the role of the review process as a key quality assurance measure. It supports the consistent assessment of recruitment decisions against merit-based principles, while also reinforcing the appropriate application of Special Measures across the NTPS.

Aboriginal employees for recruitment selection panels

In 2025, OCPE partnered with the DCDD to streamline the process for NTPS employees to express interest in joining the NTPS Merit Selection Register and being available to participate on across government recruitment and selection panels.

There are currently 87 Aboriginal employees who have registered their interest on the NTPS Merit Selection Register. There are no indicators on eRecruit to provide details on selection panel composition.

Additionally, to support employees' understanding of recruitment processes and build capability for participation on selection panels, OCPE delivered targeted Appeals, Grievances, and Special Measures information sessions at Aboriginal Employee Forums (AEF) reaching 155 participants. In 2025, the half-day Merit Selection Training session was delivered prior to the Katherine and Alice Springs forums, with 53 attendees.

OCPE responded to agency demand by delivering the half-day training to 100 participants at the Territory Families, Housing and Communities All Aboriginal Staff Forum in Katherine in 2024. OCPE also delivered on-country training in Timber Creek, in partnership with the Department of Tourism and Hospitality, supporting Traditional Owners participating on selection panels for Parks and Wildlife ranger roles.

Aboriginal employment and workforce reform

OCPE continues to play a central role in supporting career development and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal employees across the NTPS. There are a range of Aboriginal workforce initiatives aimed at exploring and supporting career progression. OCPE continues to work collaboratively with agencies to promote these opportunities and ensure Aboriginal employees have access to meaningful career pathways.

Findings from the cross government working group, looking at 'Jobs in the Bush', and broader consultation with Aboriginal employees through mechanisms such as the AEF highlight that strengthening Aboriginal

attraction to the NTPS requires a clear focus on creating accessible, culturally responsive, and place-based career pathways, particularly for regional and remote communities. Barriers such as limited local job opportunities, access to training, and structured progression pathways continue to impact entry into and progression within the workforce. Effective attraction is closely linked to the visibility of genuine career opportunities, including entry-level pathways, traineeships, and defined progression into skilled and leadership roles. These findings reinforce the need for coordinated initiatives that connect attraction to long-term employment outcomes, ensuring Aboriginal employees are supported not only to enter the workforce, but to build meaningful and sustainable careers across the NTPS.

Aboriginal Students Career Aspirations Program (ASCAP)

The Aboriginal Students Career Aspirations Program (ASCAP) was a school-to-work transition initiative designed to support Aboriginal students to explore career aspirations, develop individual career pathway plans, and increase awareness of employment opportunities within the NTPS.

OCPE initially implemented the precursor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Aspirations Program (ATSIEAP) before transitioning program delivery responsibilities to DCDD in 2021. Between 2021 and 2023, ASCAP was co-delivered under a partnership arrangement, with DCDD leading delivery in the Northern Region and OCPE in the Central Region. The program was designed as a flexible, place-based model to align with regional contexts and school needs.

Between 2021 and 2024, ASCAP engaged a total of 233 students across Darwin, Alice Springs, and Tennant Creek, with participation declining over time and no program delivery in 2025.

This decline reflected a range of factors, including reduced student numbers in regional areas, lower engagement from partner organisations, and increasing overlap with other school-based career development initiatives.

	2021			2022	2023		2024		TOTAL
	ASP	DWN	TNCK	DWN	ASP	DWN	ASP	DWN	
Year 10 Clontarf				16	10			16	**42**
Year 10 Stars	9	31		19	9	15	3		**86**
Year 11 Clontarf	6	1	4		9			2	**22**
Year 11 Stars			4	3	2	2	2		**13**
Year 11 Girls Academy	3								**3**
Year 12 Clontarf	10	22	2		3			1	**38**
Year 12 Stars	11	11			4		1		**27**
Year 12 Girls Academy	2								**2**
Total	**41**	**65**	**10**	**38**	**37**	**17**	**6**	**19**	**233**
Year Total	**116**			**38**	**54**		**25**		

Despite early success in supporting students to explore career pathways, sustained delivery was impacted by declining demand and engagement, as well as competition from alternative programs and services.

OCPE has continued to support and promote initiatives that strengthen school-to-work transitions for Aboriginal people, including programs such as the OneNTG Aboriginal Employment Program (AEP). Lessons from ASCAP highlight the importance of aligning career pathway initiatives with existing education and employment services, maintaining strong stakeholder engagement, and ensuring programs are responsive to local demand and emerging workforce needs.

OneNTG Early Careers Programs

The NTPS offers a suite of early career programs designed to attract, develop, and retain emerging talent across a range of professions and skill levels. These programs provide structured entry pathways into the workforce and support participants to build qualifications, skills, and experience aligned to long-term career opportunities within government.

Key programs include:

- Work Experience – short-term placements designed to provide practical exposure to government roles and support informed career choices.
- Traineeships – entry-level pathways combining paid employment with nationally recognised qualifications across various occupational areas.
- Aboriginal Employment Program – a targeted pathway supporting Aboriginal participants through paid employment, training, mentoring, and transition into ongoing roles.
- Vacation employment - Provides short-term paid employment for university students during semester breaks.
- Graduate Development Program – a structured 12-month program for university graduates, offering rotations, professional development, and exposure to NTPS roles.
- Cadetships and Scholarships – programs supporting students to complete tertiary study while gaining work experience within the NTPS.

The table below outlines Aboriginal participation in the programs:

	2021/22 to 2024/25	Active Participants 2025/26	Total
School Based Trainee	96	10	**106**
Trainee	129	23	**152**
Aboriginal Employment Program	89	26	**115**
Vacation Employee	20		**20**
Graduate	12	1	**13**
Work Integrated Learning Scholarship	8	1	**9**
Total	**354**	**61**	**415**

The data reflects a solid foundation in attracting Aboriginal participants into early career programs, with participation particularly strong in school-based and adult traineeships, followed by the Aboriginal Employment Program. In contrast, more advanced pathways, such as graduate programs and scholarships, show comparatively lower participation, indicating an opportunity to strengthen initiatives and pathways into professional roles within the NTPS.

Aboriginal Employment Program

The OneNTG Aboriginal Employment Program (AEP) is a structured, 20-week paid employment pathway delivered across Darwin, Palmerston, and surrounding areas to support Aboriginal people to enter the NTPS. The program combines formal training with practical, on-the-job experience in government roles, enabling participants to build workplace skills, confidence, and capability while completing a nationally recognised qualification in Workplace Skills.

The AEP provides a comprehensive support model, including mentoring, personal and professional development opportunities, and access to NT Government employment conditions and benefits. Participants gain hands-on experience in a government environment, supported by structured learning and workplace engagement. Importantly, the program is designed as a pathway initiative, with a strong focus on supporting participants to transition into ongoing employment or further development opportunities upon completion. Beyond employment outcomes, the program contributes to building confidence, strengthening job readiness, and supporting long-term career progression for Aboriginal participants.

The AEP represents a key attraction and entry pathway into the NTPS, demonstrating a practical, supported approach to increasing Aboriginal workforce participation and creating accessible opportunities for individuals to commence meaningful careers in the public sector. For the period between 2021/22 to present there has been 115 participants who have undertaken the program.

Aboriginal Cadetship Program

The NT Health Aboriginal Cadetship Program (NTHACP), implemented in 2020, is a targeted initiative designed to support Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (NT) to complete higher education and transition into professional health careers. The program focuses on increasing Aboriginal representation in identified health workforce shortage areas by supporting students undertaking a Diploma of Nursing (Enrolled Nurse), undergraduate, or postgraduate health-related studies.

The cadetship provides a structured support package that combines financial assistance with practical experience. Participants receive a study allowance while undertaking full-time study, annual book allowances, and incentive payments, along with up to 12 weeks of paid work placement with NT Health each year. These placements provide on-the-job experience and strengthen participants' readiness to transition into employment upon completion of their qualifications.

The program represents a key pathway initiative, supporting Aboriginal students to gain professional qualifications and transition directly into the health workforce. It also provides a scalable 'entry-to-practice' model that could be expanded across the public sector to increase the number of Aboriginal professionals.

Increase number of Aboriginal employees in education, health and police

A range of programs were implemented in agencies focused on attracting and retaining Aboriginal employees into frontline service delivery roles.

As at December 2025, there were 330 Aboriginal people employed in teaching, police officer or nursing roles in the NTPS. The point in time reporting suggests there was an overall net increase of 15 (headcount) in the reporting period.

Aboriginal staff in specified teacher, police officer or nurse positions

Agency/Classification	2021-22 (Q1)	2025-26 (Q2)	Difference
DoE - Teachers (classroom and senior)	151	146	**-5**
DoH - Nurse	65	64	**-1**
NTPFES - Police Officer	99	120	**21**
Specified Occupations Total	**315**	**330**	**15**

Aboriginal workforce entitlements

OCPE has maintained and strengthened a range of employment entitlements and policy settings to better support Aboriginal employees, with a focus on recognising cultural obligations, improving workplace flexibility, and enhancing participation in the workforce. This has included continued access to provisions such as cultural and ceremonial leave, community language allowances, and flexible work arrangements, alongside ongoing reviews to ensure entitlements remain accessible, equitable, and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal employees, particularly in regional and remote contexts.

To support employees' understanding of their entitlements, OCPE delivered presentations on 'Demystifying Enterprise Agreements' through the AEF, reaching a total of 219 attendees. These sessions aimed to improve awareness of what an enterprise agreement is along with what employment conditions and entitlements are available.

Recommendations - Attraction

It is recommended to:

Attraction and Recruitment

3. Undertake targeted workforce planning to inform attraction strategies and pathways.
4. Develop an Aboriginal Employment Value Proposition
5. Expand the profile of Aboriginal employee career journeys on the Join the Territory and other agency led recruitment initiatives.
6. Continue Special Measures in recruitment and support flexibility in their application.
    c) Explore focused attraction opportunities using designated positions.
    d) Maintain the independent review of unsuitability reports.
7. Showcase the NTPS Merit Selection Register and encourage employee participation on across sector recruitment and selection panels.
    b) agencies to support increase of Aboriginal members on panels.
8. The NTPS establish a sector wide Aboriginal entry to practice pathway that strengthens school to work transitions, reinstates or replaces ASCAP with a contemporary, centrally supported program developed with the Department of Education, and improves access to early career and employment programs, with a particular focus on Aboriginal designated roles and remote and regional participation.

Focus Area 3: Retention

OCPE will	
Key Action	Status
Deliver a 'stay survey' project in collaboration with DCDD to be used as a retention tool.	**Completed**
Develop and deliver initiatives to recognise and celebrate successful NTPS Aboriginal employees.	**Completed**
Promote, market and expand the AEMP across the sector.	**Completed**
Continue to host the NTPS Aboriginal Employee Forums (AEF)	**Completed**
Develop an Aboriginal employee career learning framework (entry level through to executive).	**Closed**
Review and redevelop the Aboriginal Employee Network.	**Completed**
Review, redesign and promote the NTPS Aboriginal Employment Opportunities Register (AEOR) in collaboration with DCDD for agencies to use as a mechanism to provide employment and career development opportunities.	**Closed**

NTPS agencies will:	
Key Action	Status
Work with Aboriginal employees to provide a culturally safe and welcoming workplace.	**Completed**
Ensure all Aboriginal employees have a career development plan in place and implement systems to monitor this.	**Completed**
Once developed, use the Aboriginal career learning framework in conjunction with other tools and information to develop the capability and progress the careers of Aboriginal employees.	**Closed**
Support professional development opportunities and access to training.	**Completed**
Promote and support Aboriginal employees to participate in the AEMP.	**Completed**
Support participation in the NTPS Aboriginal Employee Forums.	**Completed**
Enable the mobility of Aboriginal employees across agencies through planned developmental rotations including short-term secondments and higher duties placements to develop a broad range of skills and experience in different aspects of the NTPS.	**Completed**
Encourage staff to participate in stay and exit interviews	**Completed**
Promote and use NTPS flexible work arrangements to assist Aboriginal employees in managing cultural responsibilities and work life balance	**Completed**
Develop and promote professional and peer support networks in the agency.	**Completed**

Fast Facts

- 694 Aboriginal employees attended Aboriginal Employee Forums across Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine (average participation 86.75).
- AEMP delivered a total of 18 workshops (6 mentor and 12 mentee workshops), supporting 162 NTPS employees (61 mentors and 101 mentees)
- Aboriginal respondents represented 9.21% of 2025 People Matter survey respondents, Engagement 68%, Satisfaction 71% (up from 2023).

- 52% of Aboriginal respondents to the 2025 People Matter Survey reported having a current performance and development plan.

Aboriginal Employee Stay Survey

The stay survey was implemented to assist understand why employees remain in the NTPS, what influences job satisfaction, and where improvement is required. The inaugural NTPS Aboriginal Employee Stay Survey was conducted in 2022, followed by a second survey in late 2023, the participation response to these surveys was 23% (524 employees) and 17.5% (339 employees) respectively.

Findings from both surveys were highly consistent, highlighting the need for tangible action to strengthen career progression opportunities, improve workplace culture, and better recognise the unique skills Aboriginal employees bring - particularly in service delivery and remote contexts.

To improve efficiency in collecting employee feedback and reduce survey fatigue, the stay survey was consolidated into the 2025 People Matter Survey (PMS) with Aboriginal employee data set providing a reliable capture of employee perceptions which can be used as trend over time analysis.

People Matter Survey 2021 to 2025

PMS Cohort	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander			NTPS
Survey Years	**2021**	**2023**	**2025**	**2025**
Participation	962 (10.04%)	876 (9.57%)	1103 (9.21%)	11,976
Employee Engagement	67%	66%	68%	66%
Employee Satisfaction	71%	66%	71%	71%

Results from the 2025 PMS show Aboriginal employee engagement and satisfaction rates have improved since 2023 outcomes, increasing to 68% and 71% respectfully, indicating positive progress in inclusion, workplace culture, and employee voice. Employee Engagement indicates how connected employees are to their organisation and in helping it to achieve its goals. It includes the emotional connection and commitment employees have working for their organisation.

Aboriginal employees' key drivers of engagement show large gains, as outlined below:

Comparison of Key Drivers of Employee Engagement

Aboriginal respondents' key drivers of Employee Engagement	2023	2025
I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work	61%	66%
I am proud to tell others I work for my organisation	66%	71%
I feel a strong personal attachment to my organisation	53%	60%
My organisation motivates me to help it achieve its objective	58%	62%
My organisation inspires me to do the best in my job	57%	63%

Other highlights which show notable gains of +5% since 2023, are:

- Manager's behaviour at work is guide by the NTPS values
- Bullying/sexual harassment is not tolerated in my organisation
- It is safe to speak up and challenge the way things are done
- Given the support I need to deliver a high level of service to clients/customers/stakeholders
- Agency does a good job of promoting health and wellbeing
- Workplace has flexible approach to work
- Manager deals appropriately with people who performance poorly
- Receive regular and timely feedback from manager
- Manager discusses career intentions
- Receive adequate recognition for doing a good job
- Overall, satisfied with my job

Opportunities for improvement include:

- Behaviours/attitudes for others are a barrier to my success (-10% from 2023, -13% variance from 2025 NTPS)
- People in my workgroup treat each other with respect (while up 1+ from 2023, -5% variance 2025 NTPS)
- Personal background is not a barrier to success (-3% from 2023, -8% variance from 2025 NTPS)
- 12% had experienced racism in the NTPS in the last 12 months (new question in 2025, -6% variance from 2025 NTPS).

The 2025 PMS results also indicated the main reasons why Aboriginal employees would leave the NTPS being limited career progression (33%), job satisfaction (12%), manager (10%) and health and wellbeing (9%), these reasons are similar to the results of the 2023 Aboriginal Employee Stay Survey, with both health and wellbeing and limited career progression in the top 4 reasons.

Overall, the Aboriginal responses show improvement with higher engagement and satisfaction driven by gains in pride, motivation and organisational support, while highlighting ongoing improvements around cultural safety and inclusion.

Deeper dive – employee consultation

OCPE facilitated a workshop at the November 2025 Alice Springs AEF to unpack what physical environment means to staff as well as addressing responses related to health and wellbeing.

Physical Environment

Aboriginal respondents	2023	2025	NTPS
Physical environment is a barrier to my success	28%	38%	23%

The 2025 response shows decline in Aboriginal employee's perceptions of their physical environment in comparison to 2023 and whole of NTPS.

Forum participants were asked to:

- describe physical barriers as including workplace environments, infrastructure, resources, systems, and cultural safety.
- Identify actions to address physical barriers.

Participants identified several physical and structural barriers impacting their success at work, including workspaces, resources and infrastructure, remote-work challenges, cultural safety in physical environments, and systems and governance.

Participants recommended practical actions such as upgrading workplace design and amenities, ensuring reliable IT, equipment and vehicles, strengthening WHS and leadership accountability, embedding cultural safety, improving support and development for staff, and better planning for remote work.

Health and Wellbeing:

Aboriginal respondents	2023	2025	NTPS
Burned out always or often	42%	39%	41%
Stressful always or often	38%	36%	41%

The 2025 response shows improvements for Aboriginal employees in comparison to 2023 and whole of NTPS: however, the rate emphasises a need for whole of sector focus on health and wellbeing.

Forum participants were asked to:

- Describe what stress and burnout is; and
- Actions to support Aboriginal employee wellbeing.

Participants described burnout as ongoing physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that negatively affects wellbeing, engagement, decision-making, and service delivery. Forum discussions showed that stress and burnout are driven by workload pressures, cultural load, support, and vicarious trauma, particularly in frontline and remote roles. Employees emphasised the need for stronger leadership support, resourcing, culturally safe wellbeing systems, and more flexible, balanced work practices.

An overview of the workshop summary is provided in Attachment A.

The findings from the November 2025 Alice Springs AEF workshop demonstrate that the physical environment, health, and wellbeing challenges experienced by Aboriginal employees are systemic and interconnected.

Physical barriers, ranging from ineffective infrastructure and resourcing to cultural safety and governance constraints, directly affect staff wellbeing, productivity, cultural integrity, and retention, particularly in frontline and remote settings. High levels of reported stress and burnout further reinforce that these issues cannot be addressed in isolation or through personal resilience alone.

The feedback highlights the need for coordinated, practical action that strengthens workforce planning, leadership capability, cultural safety, and wellbeing supports, while ensuring physical environments are safe, fit for purpose, and culturally responsive. Addressing these barriers is critical to supporting Aboriginal employee success, improving retention, and enabling the delivery of safe, effective, and culturally informed services across the NTPS.

Celebrate Aboriginal employees

The Strategy identified specific actions for OCPE to promote and celebrate NTPS Aboriginal employees' achievements and career journeys, including those in remote communities.

During the life of the Strategy, OCPE implemented a range of initiatives to promote and celebrate Aboriginal employee achievements. This included showcasing career pathways and success stories through AEF youth and senior panels, engaging Aboriginal speakers in Emerging and Senior Leaders Programs, and sharing positive stories across the Aboriginal Employment Network (AEN). These efforts contributed to increased visibility of Aboriginal excellence, strengthened role modelling, and enhanced recognition of Aboriginal leadership across the NTPS.

Agency-led initiatives also played an important role in recognising Aboriginal employee contributions:

- NT Police host annual NAIDOC Recognition Awards to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. These ceremonies celebrate the leadership, cultural knowledge, and day-to-day contributions of Aboriginal Community Police Officers (ACPOs) and Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs).
- NT Health host the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Practitioner Excellence Awards, recognising the critical role these professionals play in delivering culturally safe, holistic health care and bridging traditional and western health systems. The awards also acknowledge students undertaking primary health care qualifications, supporting recognition of the future workforce.
- The Northern Territory Chief Minister's Aboriginal Leadership Medal recognises outstanding Aboriginal leaders who have made significant and sustained contributions to their communities and the Territory, highlighting the importance of leadership in driving positive outcomes.

While these initiatives demonstrate strong commitment to recognising Aboriginal employee contributions, there remain opportunities to strengthen and better coordinate these efforts across the NTPS. Recognition activities are often delivered at an agency level and are not consistently shared or promoted more broadly. Greater visibility of these initiatives at a whole-of-sector level would support stronger recognition, role modelling, and cultural value.

There is merit in developing a more coordinated approach to understand agency recognition practices and sharing good practice across the sector to enhance impact and reach.

Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program

The Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program (AEMP), established in July 2019, is a structured 12-month mentoring initiative designed to support Aboriginal employees across the NTPS in achieving their personal and professional goals. The program paired Aboriginal mentees from all classification levels with experienced NTPS mentors at the AO5 level (or equivalent) and above, fostering culturally appropriate, supportive, and development-focused mentoring relationships.

Over the evaluation period, the program supported 162 participants, including 101 Aboriginal mentees and 61 mentors, through structured workshops and a 12-month mentoring model. Participation data demonstrates strong engagement, with 88 mentees successfully matched to mentors and consistently high satisfaction ratings, with between 95% and 100% of participants rating workshops as good or excellent.

The table below summarises participation across this period by location and year.

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		TOTAL
	DWN	ASP	DWN	ASP	DWN	ASP	DWN	ASP	DWN	ASP	
Mentees Trained	11	18	21	5	10	1	21	14	No Program	No Program	101
Mentee Workshops	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	No Program	No Program	12
Mentors Trained	19	7	18	8	6	3	No Program	No Program	No Program	No Program	61
Mentor Workshops	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	6

The AEMP evaluation findings indicate that the AEMP was highly effective in building confidence, strengthening cultural identity, and supporting both personal and professional growth. Mentees reported improved goal setting, decision-making, and career readiness, while mentors enhanced their leadership capability, communication skills, and cultural awareness.

The program also contributed to broader organisational outcomes, including strengthened cross-agency networks, increased cultural capability, and the creation of more culturally safe and inclusive workplaces.

While the AEMP demonstrated strong impact and sustained demand across the sector, the AEMP evaluation identified opportunities to further strengthen delivery. Key areas for improvement include design of program structure, increasing post-workshop support to enhance goal attainment, improving data collection to measure long-term outcomes, and expanding facilitation capability to address delivery risks and improve access, particularly in regional and remote locations.

Overall, the AEMP delivered clear and measurable benefits for participants and the NTPS, demonstrating its value as a strategic, culturally responsive initiative that supports workforce capability, leadership development, and Aboriginal employment outcomes.

Aboriginal Employee Forums

Since 2016, OCPE has delivered Aboriginal Employee Forums (AEF) to bring together Aboriginal employees from across the NTPS - urban, regional, and remote - for connection, learning, and leadership development. The annual forums support the NTPS objective of building a stronger, more inclusive workforce by providing a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal voices to be heard and valued.

The forums offer a combination of workshops, guest speakers, activities, and career development opportunities, strengthening inclusion and ensuring participants are informed about key government priorities, policies, and workforce initiatives.

Between June 2021 and December 2025, OCPE delivered eight forums (three in Darwin, four in Alice Springs, and one in Katherine), with a total of 694 participants and an average attendance of approximately 87 participants per forum. To support access for regional and remote employees, OCPE provided 102 sponsored registrations over the period.

Forum Participation Rates

Region	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 (01/07 to 31/12)	Total	Average participation
Darwin	-	78	204*	-	-	**282**	94
Alice Springs	43	72	-	107	116	**338**	84
Katherine	-	-	-	-	74	**74**	74
Total	**43**	**150**	**204**	**107**	**190**	**694**	**86.75**

*2 forums delivered in Darwin with 112 and 92 participants attending respectively.

Participant feedback demonstrates that the forums are highly valued as a mechanism for engagement, connection, and capability building. Key strengths consistently identified include networking opportunities, culturally safe environments, inspiring speakers, and access to relevant and practical information about career development, policies, and programs.

Importantly, AEFs also function as a key consultation mechanism, informing the development and refinement of NTPS workforce policies and initiatives, including the Cross-Cultural Training Framework, the OneNTG AEP, merit selection processes (including Special Measures), the People Matter Survey 2025, and Aboriginal career mobility initiatives.

Feedback highlights ongoing demand for greater focus on career progression pathways, improved understanding of employment policies and entitlements, and increased support for wellbeing and resilience. These insights have directly influenced forum design, with recent forums placing greater emphasis on social and emotional wellbeing and culturally appropriate support.

Overall, the AEF provides a valuable platform for engagement, policy insight, and workforce development. However, there is an opportunity to further strengthen its impact by improving accessibility for remote participants and strengthening participant insights into systemic workforce improvements.

Aboriginal employee career learning framework

A sector-wide Aboriginal Employee Career Learning Framework has not yet been developed.

There are several Aboriginal specific programs that currently exist and provide valuable opportunities for skill building, mentoring, and leadership growth however these programs operate independently. A consolidated framework would bring these initiatives together to enhance the capability uplift of Aboriginal employees, offering clearer development pathways and creating a more supportive environment for career progression across the NTPS.

An Aboriginal Employee Career Learning Framework could clearly map out the stages of career progression, from foundational positions through to executive roles, and outline the targeted learning, development, and support mechanisms required at each stage. This structured approach would strengthen leadership capability, improve visibility of opportunities, and increase Aboriginal representation across all levels of the NTPS.

Such a framework would also help employees visualise their career journey and support more meaningful and informed myPerformance and career development conversations with their managers and mentors. With a clearer roadmap, employees would be better equipped to complete their career development plans, pursue learning opportunities, and confidently progress their careers.

Aboriginal Employee Network

OCPE has strengthened connectivity and communication across the NTPS Aboriginal workforce through the introduction of a more modern and scalable engagement approach. In October 2023, OCPE launched the SubscribeMe NTPS Aboriginal Employee Mailing List, replacing manual Outlook distribution lists and improving the reach, efficiency, and sustainability of communication with Aboriginal employees.

The mailing list provided a central platform to share targeted information, including training and development opportunities, success stories, employee entitlements, policy updates, NTPS vacancies, events, and key cultural dates. This supported improved access to information and increased visibility of opportunities and achievements across the sector.

As of December 2025, the mailing list had grown to over 2,600 subscribers, with more than 200 articles distributed, demonstrating strong uptake and ongoing engagement. The model has also influenced broader adoption across the NTPS, with five agencies - NT Health, DCDD, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, and Power and Water Corporation - implementing similar Aboriginal employee mailing lists.

The AEN has contributed to improved communication and enhanced visibility of Aboriginal workforce initiatives. The expansion of agency-led mailing lists further reflects growing recognition of the importance of targeted and culturally relevant communication channels to support Aboriginal employees.

Aboriginal Employment Opportunities Register

The Aboriginal Employment Opportunities Register (AEOR), established in 2017 and managed by DCDD was designed to support Aboriginal NTPS employees by enhancing career development, increasing workforce mobility, and improving retention. The register facilitated short-term internal opportunities (under six months) at AO3 to SAO2 levels through the NTG eRecruit system.

The AEOR was closed in April 2022 pending a review. In 2024, DCDD determined that the register was underutilised and delivered limited outcomes. Key challenges included low awareness, system usability issues, and minimal engagement from hiring managers. At the time of closure, the register had not been accessed for a six-month period, indicating limited uptake across the sector. While these findings highlight challenges in the design and implementation of a centralised mobility tool, the intent of supporting career mobility remains highly relevant.

In response, OCPE has continued to progress broader career mobility and development initiatives for the NTPS workforce, including targeted approaches to support Aboriginal employee progression. In November 2025, OCPE facilitated sector-wide discussions through the Alice Springs AEF, workshopping career mobility to build a shared understanding of its scope, identify barriers, and explore opportunities to strengthen development pathways.

Consultation findings reinforced that career mobility extends beyond promotion to include lateral movement, skill development, secondments, and access to leadership opportunities. Feedback also highlighted a range of persistent structural and cultural barriers affecting Aboriginal employee progression across the NTPS, including:

- Leadership and management practices, including inconsistent support, perceived favouritism, and limited recognition of employee capability
- Limited career development opportunities, including a constrained number of senior roles, underutilised career planning processes, limited access to training and study support, and an over-reliance on formal qualifications rather than demonstrated skills and experience

- Geographic and resource constraints, particularly in remote locations, which limit access to opportunities and investment in workforce development

Participants also identified practical actions to strengthen career mobility outcomes. These included improving workplace culture, strengthening onboarding processes, and ensuring timely and meaningful MyPerformance discussions and career planning. There was also a clear need for workforce policies that better reflect cultural obligations and enable flexible, culturally responsive employment practices.

Importantly, participants emphasised the role of OCPE in advocating for greater recognition, equity, and visibility of Aboriginal employees across the NTPS. This includes promoting consistent approaches to career development and ensuring that Aboriginal employees are actively supported to access and progress through opportunities at all levels of the workforce.

Recommendations – Retention

It is recommended to:

Aboriginal Employee Stay Survey

9. The NTPS should retain the People Matter Survey as the primary mechanism for monitoring Aboriginal employee experience and trend analysis, supported by targeted pulse surveys as needed to undertake deeper exploration of specific issues such as racism, burnout and mobility.

Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program (AEMP)

10. Maintain delivery of an Aboriginal-specific mentoring program across the NTPS.
    a) Strengthen AEMP to enhance its quality, relevance, and impact across the NTPS
    b) Strengthen facilitation capability across the NTPS by training Aboriginal staff within agencies.

Aboriginal Employee Forums (AEF)

11. Maintain annual forums and continue regional delivery.

Learning and Development Framework

12. Create a structured, sector-wide framework/ pathways mapping career stages from entry to executive.
    a) Consolidate existing NTPS programs initiatives.
    b) Identify gaps in career progression opportunities.
    c) Continue mobility initiative to identify pathways for secondments, lateral moves, skill development and leadership opportunities.
    d) Strengthen supervisor/manager accountability for supporting development and career progression.

Aboriginal Employee Network (AEN)

13. Continue to leverage AEN as an ongoing engagement and communication medium.

Focus Area 4: Leadership

OCPE will	
Key Action	Status
Promote the aim and appropriate use of Special Measures to increase Aboriginal representation in senior leadership roles.	**Completed**
Develop the Executive Leader Development Framework (ELDF).	**Completed**
Continue to promote the Capability Framework (CF) and Middle Manager Development Framework (MMDF).	**Completed**
Promote the AEMP to middle and senior managers.	**Completed**
Develop NTPS Aboriginal Leadership Development Program.	**Completed**
Continue to promote and support the SARG and ensure regional and remote representation in membership.	**Completed**

NTPS agencies will:	
Key Action	Status
Continue Special Measures in recruitment to increase Aboriginal representation in senior leadership roles.	**Completed**
Identify and support Aboriginal leaders by providing professional development and higher duties opportunities.	**Completed**
Encourage and support eligible employees to participate in the NTPS Aboriginal Leadership Development Program.	**Completed**
Once developed, use the Aboriginal career learning framework in conjunction with other tools and information to develop leadership and management capability.	**Closed**
Encourage middle managers to engage a mentor through the AEMP to assist in their career development to senior positions.	**Completed**
Promote and support senior Aboriginal employees to nominate and be a member of the SARG, with a focus on regional and remote areas	**Completed**

Fast Facts

- Executive Leader Development Framework (ELDF) implemented October 2022.
- Aboriginal participation across OCPE leadership programs has been 7.88% and 5.17% in capability development programs.

Executive Leader Development Framework

OCPE launched the Executive Leader Development Framework (ELDF) in October 2022. The Framework forms the foundation for developing our executive leaders across the NTPS. It adopts a human-centred approach that acknowledges the challenges of leadership and places the leader at the core of their development journey. ELDF offers a suite of contemporary development options, including discovery sessions, professional coaching, leadership events, and programs. These resources enable executives to build a personalised and meaningful development plan.

Participation Rates in Leadership Programs from June 2021 to December 2025

Course Title	Total participants	Aboriginal Participants (self-declared myHR)	Aboriginal participation rate
Foundations of Public Sector Governance	300	8	2.67%
ALDP - Kigaruk and Lookrukin	56	56	100%
Leadership for New Managers	489	18	3.68%
Emerging Leaders Program	261	20	7.66%
Public Sector Management Program (PSMP)	234	13	5.56%
Senior Leader Program	70	2	2.86%
Mini Master of Business Administration (MBA)	110	5	4.55%
ANZSOG - Executive Master of Public Administration	11	1	9.09%
ANZSOG - Working with First Nations: Delivering on the Priority Reforms	31	1	3.23%
ANZSOG - Deputies Leadership Program	9	1	11.11%
Delivering in Partnership with Government and Community	29	1	3.45%
TOTAL	**1600**	**126**	**7.88%**

Capability Framework and Middle Manager Development Framework

The NTPS Capability Framework (CF) outlines the capabilities and associated behaviours expected of all NTPS employees. It provides a common language for describing the capabilities needed for effective performance across all classifications, occupations and agencies. The Framework supports the NTPS to build and sustain a workforce that is highly capable, adaptable, future-focused and aligned with organisational needs. The CF comprises 13 levels that correspond to NTPS classifications and employment streams.

The Middle Manager Development Framework (MMDF) builds on the Capability Framework and is designed to support employees moving into management roles for both new and experienced managers. It identifies the core requirements for managing self, managing the business, and leading others to achieve high performance, as well as outlining key policy and strategic essentials.

OCPE actively promotes both frameworks, along with relevant training and development opportunities, to the AEN, AEF participants, and in response to ad hoc enquiries and stakeholder engagement.

Participation Rates in Capability Development programs from June 2021 to December 2025

Course Title	Total participants	Aboriginal Participants (self-declared myHR)	Aboriginal participation rate
Neuro-Inclusive Workforces	64	1	1.56%
Boss of Busy	38	3	7.89%
Communicate with Influence	382	19	4.97%
Dealing with the Tough Stuff	43	3	6.98%
Emotional Intelligence	74	6	8.11%
Executive Ethics	21	1	4.76%
Innovative Thinking and Strategic Alignment	47	5	10.64%
Practical Public Policy Design in the NTPS	216	10	4.63%
Project Management Fundamentals	361	21	5.82%
Reflections on Team Leadership	7	1	14.29%
Results through people - Getting great performance	414	14	3.38%
Strategic Workforce Planning	47	3	6.38%
Values and Ethical Leadership	9	1	11.11%
ANZSOG - Public Leadership in Digital Age	4	1	25%
ANZSOG - Public Policy Skills Masterclass	53	3	5.66%
TOTAL	**1780**	**92**	**5.17%**

Aboriginal Leadership Development Program

The Aboriginal Leadership Development and Career Pathways (ALDCP) initiative was launched in December 2021 to strengthen leadership capability and career progression opportunities for Aboriginal middle managers within the NTPS. The initiative provided three structured development pathways for employees at CF5 to CF9 (or equivalent) levels. The three pathways were:

- Short Courses
- Kigaruk and Lookrukin Aboriginal Leadership Development Program
- On-the-Job Assessment (Recognition of Prior Learning / Micro-Credentialing)

Career Planning Sessions

In addition to structured career pathways, the provider UNE Partnerships, provided one-on-one career planning sessions for NTPS Aboriginal middle managers. These two-hour virtual sessions with a dedicated career consultant supported participants to clarify career aspirations, identify professional development needs, and explore tailored development options aligned to their skills, goals, and preferred learning approaches.

While the sessions offer targeted and personalised career development support, uptake has been limited. In response, OCPE introduced sponsored places from 2024 to improve accessibility for Aboriginal employees, with eight employees completing the session.

The career planning session represents an individualised support mechanism for career progression; however, the low participation highlights an opportunity to strengthen promotion, accessibility, and alignment with broader career development pathways across the NTPS.

Kigaruk and Lookrukin Aboriginal Leadership Development Program

The Kigaruk and Lookrukin Aboriginal Leadership Development Programs commenced in 2003 as pathways to support Aboriginal employees to progress into senior roles. The programs originally included a residential component delivered separately for men and women. *Kigaruk* is a Kungarakan word meaning "adult male" and *Lookrukin* means "adult female." In 2017, following a review of program design and delivery, the inaugural combined program was introduced.

OCPE manages the combined Kigaruk and Lookrukin Aboriginal Leadership Development Program. The program is nationally accredited and designed for Aboriginal middle managers (CF5–CF8) to strengthen leadership capability and support progression into senior leadership roles.

Participants undertake the BSB50420 Diploma of Leadership and Management through a structured and supported learning model comprising online learning, workshops, webinars and four intensive training blocks delivered over a 24-month period.

The program aligns with the MMDF and focuses on four core themes:

- Managing Self – emotional intelligence, leadership behaviours, communication
- Managing the Business – operational planning, risk management, project delivery
- Building a Strong Team – workplace relationships, team effectiveness, professional development
- Planning and Policy Essentials – continuous improvement, sustainability policy, critical thinking

Graduates gain a nationally recognised qualification and enhanced leadership and management capability.

Across previous iterations of the program, 76% (157 of 204) participants have successfully completed and attained an accredited qualification from the Business Training Package:

- 63 with a Diploma of Business (Front Line Management) (2003, 2005)
- 82 with a Diploma of Management (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015)
- 12 with a Diploma of Leadership and Management (2017)

Under the current program model, 28 participants from cohort one completed the program in 2024, and the second cohort of 28 active students who finalising assessments in preparation for scheduled graduation on 1 May 2026.



Senior Aboriginal Reference Group

The implementation of the 2015–2020 Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy, established three advisory groups to provide advice, guidance and support on Aboriginal employment and career development across the NTPS. These groups included the Champions of Inclusion, comprising several Chief Executives; the Resource Group, consisting of agency Human Resource Directors and Senior Executives; and the Senior Aboriginal Reference Group (SARG), comprising senior Aboriginal employees.

SARG's intent was to provide high-level strategic advice, cultural guidance and advocacy on matters affecting Aboriginal employment and career development and ensuring NTPS policies, programs and initiatives upheld the rights, traditions and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples. As one of the most culturally authoritative advisory bodies in the NTPS, SARG ensured Aboriginal voices genuinely informed decision-making, offering cultural insight and strategic advice that strengthened trust, mitigated cultural risk and assisted agencies to meet their commitments under the Strategy.

SARG was comprised of experienced Aboriginal employees from across the NT and played a central role in guiding the implementation of the Strategy. Its functions included advising on employment initiatives; promoting culturally appropriate engagement; embedding Aboriginal perspectives and cultural protocols into NTPS activities; and identifying emerging issues and opportunities to enhance Aboriginal wellbeing, self-determination and economic participation.

From June 2021 to 2024, two SARG groups operated

- Northern – with members from Darwin, Ngukurr, Nhulunbuy, Groote Eylandt
- Southern – with members from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Yuendumu.

Across both groups, 15 meetings were held prior to all NTPS advisory groups being disbanded in August 2024.

Regional representation on SARG ensured that diverse community perspectives, from major centres to remote locations, were incorporated into decision-making, strengthening cross-agency relationships and enabling the identification of issues and opportunities that may not otherwise be known.

Since the 2024 machinery of government changes, several agencies have established their own SARG groups. OCPE has engaged and will continue to engage with these agency-based groups to assess interest in, and the relevance of, Aboriginal specific programs, initiatives and policy proposals.

Recommendations - Leadership

It is recommended to

Professional Development

14. Explore options to increase access to leadership development and career-planning support for Aboriginal employees in regional and remote locations.
15. Introduce targeted strategies to increase Aboriginal participation in leadership and executive programs, including preparatory programs that support progression from Diploma to Degree and readiness for ANZSOG pathways (or equivalent executive programs).
16. Maintain Kigaruk and Lookrukin as the flagship Aboriginal leadership development program, with continued investment to support cohort post-program growth.

Cultural Leadership

17. Re-engage with agency-level Aboriginal advisory groups, as necessary to guide implementation of future Aboriginal workforce initiatives.
18. Formally recognise Aboriginal cultural knowledge, cultural authority, and community leadership as leadership capabilities within NTPS frameworks.

Leadership Growth

19. Implement systematic post-program tracking and impact assessment across leadership and management programs to monitor career progression and retention outcomes for Aboriginal participants.

Focus Area 5: Workplace Culture

OCPE will	
Key Action	Status
Develop an NTPS induction program that is culturally appropriate in collaboration with DCDD for new employees.	**Completed**
Ensure all agencies support and encourage employees to participate in cross-cultural and unconscious bias training.	**Completed**
Promote cultural safety and cross-cultural learning outcomes through the NT Government's Cultural Responsiveness Framework in collaboration with DCMC.	**Closed**
Promote, encourage and celebrate days of Aboriginal cultural significance.	**Completed**
Promote and utilise the Aboriginal Interpreter Service across the sector.	**Completed**

NTPS agencies will:	
Key Action	Status
Work with Aboriginal employees to provide a culturally safe, welcoming and supportive environment for new employees.	**Completed**
Ensure new employees complete an induction program upon commencement.	**Completed**
Ensure all staff who haven't participated in cross cultural and unconscious bias training are identified and training completed.	**Completed**
Provide supervisor training for new managers.	**Completed**
Promote and encourage appropriate use of cultural protocols such as the Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.	**Completed**
Promote, encourage and celebrate days of cultural significance.	**Completed**
Provide opportunities for staff to participate in significant cultural events such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC.	**Completed**
Promote and utilise the Aboriginal Interpreter Service.	**Completed**

Fact Facts

- 38% of the NTPS workforce has completed the Foundations of Cross-Cultural Training eLearn module.
- National Days of Significance Calendar launched in 2023 (published annually).
- NT Regional Events & Days of Significance Calendar launched in 2024 (published annually).

Aboriginal Cross-Cultural Training

The NTPS is committed to developing a culturally competent workforce capable of operating effectively in multicultural and multidisciplinary environments. Delivering services in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner is essential to meeting the needs of the NT's diverse communities. Aboriginal cross-cultural training plays a critical role in achieving this, equipping employees, teams, and leaders with the knowledge, skills, and tools required to communicate effectively, build culturally informed relationships, and navigate cultural differences with confidence and sensitivity.

NTPS Cross-Cultural Training Framework

The NTPS Cross-Cultural Training Framework (CCTF) establishes a consistent, whole-of-sector approach to building cultural capability, defining clear learning outcomes across different capability tiers and setting a common standard for the NTPS workforce.

Originally introduced in 2013 and revised in 2018, the framework was refreshed in 2025 following staff consultation to ensure it remains contemporary and responsive to workforce needs. The CCTF provides structured Aboriginal Cultural Capability Tiers to guide learning and development, while allowing agencies flexibility to tailor delivery to their specific roles, services, and regional contexts. The CCTF includes an Implementation Guide to support agencies to incorporate culturally appropriate training across their workforce.

Foundations of Cross-Cultural Training eLearn

The OneNTG Essential Training module, 'Foundations of Cross-Cultural Training', provides baseline cultural awareness for all NTPS employees and complements agency-specific programs. Completion is mandatory for all new employees within their first three months of employment and must be refreshed every three years. The module also serves as a prerequisite for agency-delivered, face-to-face cultural training.

A review of the module identified gaps in content and opportunities to enhance relevance, strengthen learning outcomes, and improve the overall user experience. In response, OCPE is progressing a review of the training to ensure the module remains contemporary, accessible, and fit for purpose while future-proofing content delivery.

As at 31 December 2025, 38% of the NTPS workforce had completed the module, indicating moderate uptake and an opportunity to improve reach and compliance across the sector.



There is currently no central mechanism to record or report completion of Unconscious Bias Training across the NTPS.

OneNTG Orientation for Remote Employees

OCPE, in collaboration with members of the former SARG, contributed to the development of the OneNTG Orientation for Remote Employees. This module provides regionally relevant induction for staff working in remote communities. The training ensures that employees entering remote settings are better prepared to work safely, respectfully, and effectively within local cultural contexts.

Aboriginal Affairs Framework

Aboriginal Partnerships and Reform, DCMC is finalising the Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2026-2028 to guide government priorities. The proposed Framework will outline an overarching vision and strategic priorities for how the NTG will deliver for Aboriginal Territorians alongside the three priority pillars: Reducing Crime, Rebuilding the Economy, and Restoring the NT Lifestyle.

The development of this Framework has been prioritised ahead of a Cultural Responsiveness Framework.

Days of Aboriginal cultural significance

Promoting and celebrating days of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural significance is an important component of strengthening cultural understanding, respect and inclusion across the NTPS.

National Days of Significance Calendar

Since 2023, OCPE has released Key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Days of Significance Calendar annually

This resource supports agencies to plan for and participate in culturally significant events throughout the year. It highlights major observances such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.



NT Regional Events Calendar

In addition to the national calendar and at SARG request, OCPE has developed and published a NT Regional Events and Days of Significance Calendar from 2024 onwards.

The calendar raises awareness of community-led events across regions and encourages agencies to connect with and support local Aboriginal communities in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways.

Both calendars are publicly available on the OCPE website, ensuring visibility and ease of access across the NTPS.

NAIDOC Week – NTPS Community Events



➢ **2023: "For Our Elders" – Fashion Runway**

In 2023, OCPE and DCMC partnered to deliver the inaugural NTPS NAIDOC Community Event, a Fashion Runway held at Goyder Square, Palmerston.

The event celebrated the vital role of Elders in families and communities. NTPS Elders modelled contemporary Indigenous fashion, agency uniforms and attire from local Aboriginal designers.

The event also featured NTG agency marquees that showcased services and provided opportunities for meaningful community engagement. NTG staff and community members were encouraged to attend.

➢ **2024: "Keep the Fire Burning: Blak, Loud, Proud" – Flame Tree Ceremony**

In 2024, OCPE and DCMC partnered again to deliver a Flame Tree Ceremony in the Palmerston City Centre, honouring First Nations culture and connections to Country.

A Poinciana (Flame Tree) was symbolically planted, reflecting the NAIDOC theme through its striking red blooms that represent fire, a central element in Aboriginal life, used for cooking, storytelling, warmth, healing and ceremony.

The event featured a Welcome to Country, fire and smoking ceremony, traditional dance, speeches, refreshments and NTG agency marquees. NTG employees and the public were invited to participate in this celebration of First Nations identity, resilience and cultural pride.

➢ **2025: "The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy" – Youth Yarning Panel**

In 2025, OCPE partnered with the Department of Education and Training and the Department of People, Sport and Culture to host a Youth Yarning Panel at Library & Archives NT.

The event commenced with an overview of the exhibition 'A Territory Story' by Mr Don Christopherson, First Nations Education and Engagement Coordinator, encouraging participants to reflect on how the past informs a better future.

The event attracted 20 senior executives and more than 80 online participants, fostering meaningful dialogue and generating commitments from leaders.

The Youth Yarning Panel provided a platform for young people to share their perspectives on the 2025 NAIDOC theme. Key actions included:

- prioritising women's health education
- expanding mentoring and onboarding programs to attract and retain young people in the NTPS
- strengthening Aboriginal representation in executive decision-making forums



- **2025: "The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy" – Staff Message**

Additionally, in 2025 Aboriginal staff from OCPE, DCMC and Power and Water Corporation collaborated to produce a short NAIDOC Week video message reflecting the 2025 theme, shared across the NTPS.

"This NAIDOC Week, we celebrate The Next Generation –
Strength, Vision and Legacy.
Our strength is carried in the stories of our ancestors.
And our vision is shaping the future we deserve.
I am the next generation.
We honour those who walked before us — and light the path ahead.
Legacy isn't left behind. It lives in us, every day.
Through art, language, land and culture — we carry it forward.
This is a time to listen, learn and walk alongside.
Our voices are powerful. Our future is unstoppable.
We are strong. We are proud. We are the next generation."



The video can be access through OCPE LinkedIn Official Site-
https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7347863262085947392

Aboriginal Interpreter Service

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS) plays a vital role in ensuring equitable access to government services for Aboriginal Territorians who speak languages other than English. With over 100 Aboriginal languages spoken across the Northern Territory, AIS is essential in bridging communication gaps, promoting cultural safety, and supporting informed decision-making for Aboriginal clients.

AIS provides professional interpreting services in over 30 Aboriginal languages. It ensures that Aboriginal people can communicate effectively with government agencies, legal services, health providers, and other essential services in their first language. This is critical for upholding the principles of equity, access, and culturally responsive service delivery.

OCPE has actively promoted AIS and their services through multiple channels:

- **AEN**: AIS articles have been sent out to the AEN highlighting their services and the importance they play to support culturally safe workplace practices and support our Aboriginal clients. AIS employment opportunities have been promoted across the network.
- **AEF**: Guest speakers from AIS share insights and/or promoted interpreter services at this cross-agency event.
- **People Matters Video in Kriol**: A Kriol-language version of the "People Matters" video was developed to support broader understanding of workplace values and expectations. This initiative not only promotes AIS but also demonstrates the value of Aboriginal languages in internal communications.
- **Community Language Allowance**: The promotion of the Community Language Allowance (CLA) encourages staff to develop and use Aboriginal language skills, complementing AIS services.

Recommendations – Workplace Culture

Training

20. Strengthen NTPS-wide compliance with the refreshed Foundations of Cross-Cultural Training eLearn (from 38% baseline).
21. Increase delivery of Aboriginal cultural capability programs - moving beyond basic awareness.
    a) Agencies to determine and implement Aboriginal cross-cultural training tailored to their service context and workforce needs.

Aboriginal Affairs Framework

22. Promote the Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2026-2028 across the NTPS and align agency work programs to its priorities.
23. Ensure Cross-Cultural Training and broader cultural capability programs support Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2026-2028 priorities.
24. Integrate Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2026-2028 priorities into the NTPS Workforce Strategy 2027–2032.

Significant Dates and Events

25. Continue NTPS-wide NAIDOC events and expand opportunities for participation.

Workforce Cultural Uplift

26. Review workforce policies to better recognise and support cultural obligations and community responsibilities.
27. Explore options for NTPS-wide measures of cultural capability growth (beyond completion reporting) to track behavioural shifts, team maturity, and client experience.

Focus Area 6: Remote

OCPE will	
Key Action	Status
Promote the NTPS as an employer of choice for Aboriginal people in remote communities through strengthening networks and working in partnership across government regions and with local governments, non-government organisations and Aboriginal communities.	**Closed**
Work collaboratively with agencies to identify and promote employment opportunities in remote communities.	**Closed**
Report to DCMC through the Everyone Together Strategy performance and reporting framework on the number of Aboriginal employees in the NTPS by employment status and region.	**Completed**
Increase regional and remote participation in the NTPS Aboriginal employee forums.	**Completed**
Work in collaboration with agencies to develop initiatives to recognise and celebrate successful remote NTPS Aboriginal employees through a marketing campaign, employee profiles and testimonials.	**Closed**
Promote work readiness programs and school to work transition learning activities in remote communities to assist and prepare Aboriginal people for the transition into the workforce.	**Closed**
Promote the RECS across the sector.	**Completed**

NTPS agencies will:	
Key Action	Status
Identify and promote employment opportunities in remote communities.	**Completed**
Expand advertising and promotional methods to include advertising in local communities and in local Aboriginal media, radio and networks including local council and school newsletters.	**Completed**
Ensure there is at least one Aboriginal representative on the selection panel for positions based in remote communities.	**Completed**
Be innovative in creating and developing training and professional development opportunities, including the provision of mentoring, job shadowing, and job sharing in remote communities to assist with career progression for local employees and agency succession planning.	**Completed**
Ensure staff participate in local Aboriginal cross-cultural training specific to the region to increase awareness, assist in open communication, address racism and inequality in the workplace.	**Completed**
Promote and use NTPS leave entitlements and flexible work arrangements to assist Aboriginal employees in managing cultural responsibilities and work life balance.	**Completed**

Fast Facts

- ❖ OCPE advertises NTPS vacancies (including remote roles) to the AEN weekly.
- ❖ Agency Expo Showcases incorporated into AEF to give Aboriginal employees direct access to agency representatives, programs and career pathways in a culturally safe setting.
- ❖ Two-day Remote Engagement Essentials workshops are delivered in Darwin, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, and Alyangula.

Remote employment

Cross Agency Working Group – Remote and Regional Jobs

Between March and August 2024, a cross-government working group was established to examine the challenges facing remote NTPS employees, identify barriers to remote employment, and explore opportunities to strengthen workforce participation in remote and regional communities. OCPE co-chaired the working group, providing leadership and coordination across agencies to identify practical solutions that streamline service delivery and create sustainable pathways for Aboriginal employment.

As part of this work, a site visit to Ntaria (Hermannsburg) was undertaken, offering valuable first-hand insights from Aboriginal entrepreneurs, local service providers, and community members. These engagements highlighted the importance of culturally responsive employment models and locally driven workforce solutions.

The working group identified three priority focus areas where the NT Government could take targeted action to improve remote employment outcomes:

1. **Jobs in Government**
   - Increase the number of NTG and NTG-funded roles based in remote communities.
   - Enhance employment entitlements and incentives to attract and retain remote residents within the NTPS.
   - Strengthen cultural responsiveness across the NTPS to ensure remote Territorians experience inclusive and safe workplaces.
2. **Economic Development**
   - Support remote residents to establish and grow local businesses and enterprises.
   - Promote whole-of-community planning approaches, ensuring economic activities reflect local priorities, aspirations, and strengths.
3. **Transition to Work**
   - Expand early career, training, and job-readiness programs in regional and remote areas.
   - Strengthen foundational skills—including literacy, numeracy, digital capability—and increase access to mentoring and pre-employment support.

The working group concluded in August 2024, with its findings consolidated into the Jobs in the Bush paper. The paper outlines 35 actions that could significantly enhance remote employment outcomes, strengthen Aboriginal workforce participation, and build long-term capability across remote communities.

Promoting employment opportunities

OCPE supports agencies to identify and promote employment opportunities by advertising roles at varying classifications and locations through the AEN every Wednesday. Agencies regularly engage with OCPE to highlight their specific vacancies and employment programs, ensuring broad visibility across the NTPS Aboriginal workforce. AEN recipients are encouraged to share these opportunities with their families, networks, and communities, helping extend reach beyond formal NTPS communication channels. This approach increases awareness of employment pathways for Aboriginal jobseekers, strengthens entry points into government employment, and supports agencies to build a more locally based, culturally responsive workforce.

In response to feedback from AEF participants, an NTPS Agency Expo Showcase was incorporated into the 2024 forum agenda. This session provides Aboriginal employees with firsthand insights into agency services, programs, and career pathways. The showcase creates a culturally safe and inclusive space for direct engagement, enabling agency representatives to share information about current and future roles, promote their work, and build connections that support ongoing career development and mobility.

Everyone Together Strategy

OCPE fulfilled its reporting obligations under the Everyone Together Strategy by providing annual data to DCMC against the Strategy's performance and reporting framework.

This included reporting on four whole-of-government measures, one of which, Measure 10.8 required the NTPS to report the number of Aboriginal employees by employment status (ongoing, part-time, casual) and region.

OCPE collated and supplied this information each year, alongside contributions to measures on cultural celebration, Aboriginal leadership development, and support for staff delivering services to Aboriginal Territorians (Measures 1.5, 1.6 and 6.7).

The final request for reporting occurred in 2023, and the Everyone Together Strategy formally ceased in August 2024.

Work readiness programs and school to work transition learning

OCPE promoted work-readiness initiatives and school-to-work transition activities that support Aboriginal people to enter the workforce; current programs are largely delivered in urban and regional centres rather than remote communities. Programs such as ASCAP provide valuable exposure to determine career pathways, yet opportunities for remote students to participate remain limited.

Recent improvements in remote digital connectivity, particularly since COVID-19, present a growing opportunity to enhance remote access to online career learning, virtual mentoring, and digital work-readiness resources. Leveraging these advancements will be essential to strengthening employment pathways for Aboriginal jobseekers living in remote communities.

Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy

The NTG Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy (RECS) aims to strengthen the way government services are coordinated and how NTPS employees engage with regional and remote Aboriginal community members. By improving the cultural appropriateness and consistency of engagement across agencies, RECS supports better service delivery outcomes and more respectful, meaningful relationships with the diverse Aboriginal peoples and cultures of the Northern Territory.

A key component of the strategy is the Remote Engagement Essentials Workshop, available to all NTPS employees. This two-day accredited program is delivered by the Remote Information and Engagement unit, DCMC, in partnership with Engagement Plus and the AIS. The workshop builds practical capability in culturally responsive engagement, communication, and service coordination. In 2025, workshops were delivered in Darwin, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy and Alyangula, enabling broad regional participation.

OCPE has actively promoted RECS and encouraged staff participation in the Remote Engagement Essentials Workshops through the AEN and AEF.

Recommendations – Remote

It is recommended to

School leavers / Transition to work

28. Determine availability work-readiness and school-to-work programs for remote areas.
    a) Partner with local schools, communities and youth programs to co-deliver workshops.
    b) Leverage improved digital connectivity to scale online career learning and virtual mentoring into remote communities.

Community engagement

29. Embed interpreter awareness and AIS access in agency induction and Aboriginal cross-cultural training.

Attachment A - 2025 People Matter Survey AEF workshop

Physical environment

Participants highlighted the following barriers as having the greatest impact:

- Inadequate and poorly designed workspaces, such as overcrowded office spaces, lack of private or quiet areas, unreliable air-conditioning, poor lighting, insufficient amenities, and buildings not purpose-built for service delivery.
- Limited access to resources and infrastructure, such as shared or insufficient IT and equipment, unreliable internet and phone connections, vehicle shortages, lack of shade or covered parking, and insufficient storage and safe spaces.
- Challenges associated with remoteness and travel, including weather-related disruptions, lack of accommodation, delayed approvals, and inadequate contingency planning for remote work.
- Lack of cultural safety, including workplaces that do not understand or respect Aboriginal culture, limited culturally appropriate spaces, confidentiality concerns, and office layouts that hinder culturally respectful engagement.
- Restrictive systems and governance, including excessive red tape, micromanagement, and policies that prioritise compliance over safety or employee wellbeing.

Participants linked physical barriers to reduced success at work, reporting impacts such as:

- Increased stress, fatigue, and safety risks, particularly during extreme heat, long travel, or high-pressure service delivery.
- Reduced productivity and service quality due to difficulty accessing systems, resources, clients, or confidential spaces.
- Reduced cultural integrity and engagement with Aboriginal clients and communities.
- Lower morale, disengagement, and higher turnover, reinforcing existing workforce pressures.

Participants proposed several practical actions to address physical barriers:

- Improve workplace design and infrastructure, including access to quiet and private spaces, culturally safe areas, ergonomic furniture, reliable air-conditioning, adequate amenities, and purpose-built facilities.
- Ensure access to essential resources, including dedicated IT and equipment, improved internet connectivity (particularly in remote locations), sufficient vehicles, shaded parking, and safe storage.
- Strengthen WHS and governance, with clearer accountability for leadership, improved duty-of-care practices, and policies that support safety, fatigue management, and flexibility.
- Embed cultural safety in physical environments, including culturally appropriate artwork, spaces for yarning and reflection, autonomy for staff to personalise work areas, and inclusion of cultural advisors in planning and design.
- Support workforce capability and retention, through improved mentoring, structured support for new staff, clear pathways for career progression, and better coordination across agencies.
- Improve planning for remote work, including travel contingencies, appropriate accommodation, satellite communication options, and realistic scheduling aligned to weather and community conditions.

Burnout and stress

Burnout was commonly linked to:

- Understaffing and excessive workloads, resulting in long hours, unpaid overtime, limited breaks, and unrealistic deadlines.
- role overload with Aboriginal employees frequently asked to work outside their job descriptions, including providing cultural expertise and emotional support, often without recognition or adequate support.
- cultural pressures, including managing cultural obligations alongside work expectations
- lack of leadership support, poor communication, micromanagement, limited supervision, and unresolved workplace conflict.
- vicarious trauma and emotional fatigue, particularly in frontline and remote roles, heightened by limited opportunities to debrief.

Participants identified several actions to support Aboriginal employee wellbeing, including:

- Strengthening leadership and supervision, with clearer communication, regular check-ins, and greater understanding of cultural obligations.
- Investing in the team, such as team-building activities, celebrating achievements, and improving workplace environments.
- Embedding wellbeing supports, including structured debriefing, access to counselling services, and culturally safe support systems.
- Enhancing flexibility and work–life balance, through flexible working arrangements, fatigue management, and designated breaks.
- Increasing cultural capability across the workforce, particularly through face-to-face, region-specific cultural awareness training.
- Improving recruitment and retention to address staffing shortages and reduce workload pressure.

Attachment B - AEF staff feedback on strategic priorities

Feedback received from 2025 Katherine AEF participants ranked Aboriginal strategic priorities

1. **Workforce Representation**
    - Increase Aboriginal representation across all levels and sectors.
    - Actions: Employment expos, mandatory career pathways, simplified job descriptions, flexible employment rules, Aboriginal representation on panels.
2. **Aboriginal Leadership**
    - Grow and support Aboriginal leaders to influence decision-making.
    - Actions: Mentorship programs, cultural supervision, leadership training, KPIs for managers to support Aboriginal staff development.
3. **Culturally Competent Workforce**
    - Build capability to understand and engage with Aboriginal cultures.
    - Actions: Mandatory and refresher cultural training (preferably on-country), assessment of competency, funding for community involvement.
4. **Strengthen Workforce Participation in Remote and Regions**
    - Increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in remote areas.
    - Actions: Career pathways starting in school, housing support, flexible work agreements, remote placements.
5. **Culturally Safe and Inclusive Workplaces**
    - Foster environments where Aboriginal employees feel respected and included.
    - Actions: Celebrate cultural days, embed cultural safety in policies, leadership accountability.
6. **Additional Priorities**
    - Recognition**:** Value Aboriginal contributions and histories through incentives and storytelling.
    - Transition School to Employment: Clear pathways for youth from education to NTPS roles.
    - Governance: Embed Aboriginal perspectives in policy and planning; establish Aboriginal HR units.
    - Closing the Gap PR3: Reform government systems to be more responsive to Aboriginal peoples.
    - Employer of Choice: Position NTPS as culturally respectful and aspirational.
    - Other Suggestions: Sustainable programs beyond political cycles, budget allocation for Aboriginal staff development.