

NTPS EmployAbility Strategy – Reference Group

Terms of Reference

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Acronyms	Full form
AECDS	Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy
SARG	Senior Aboriginal Reference Group
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Sector
OCPE	Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
SWPD	Strategic Workforce Planning and Development
COI	Champions of Inclusion
DERG	Disability Employee Reference Group

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1. Background / Context

The Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) must be responsive to the rapidly changing demographics of the community and adopt strategies to harness the skills of diverse groups that reflect the overall changes in the wider population.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) has responsibility for driving improvements in the employment and retention of people from diverse groups. The *EmployAbility Strategy 2023-2028* further supports a comprehensive, overarching approach to inclusion and aims to address workplace culture, systemic barriers and inclusive leadership, along with sustained efforts and initiatives focused at increasing employment outcomes for people with disability in the NTPS.

In 2018 an employee led Disability Reference Group was established to act as a support network bringing together disability advocates from across the NTPS to focus on issues and barriers which impact employees with disability in the workforce and report key matters to the Champions of Inclusion (CE group).

In 2024 and with the development of the NTPS EmployAbility Strategy 2024-2027 coupled with the need to have an action working group focus, the former Disability Reference Group is being re-formulated into the NTPS EmployAbility Reference Group responsible for progressing all actions identified in the Strategy.

2. Structure and governance

Three groups assist in driving the current strategies with the aim of increasing employment, participation, capability and retention at all levels across the NTPS for all diversity groups.

- Senior Aboriginal Reference Group (Darwin and Alice Springs) – which consists of senior Aboriginal employees – responsible for providing input/advice in relation to Strategy actions and implementation
- EmployAbility Strategy Reference Group – Which consists of representatives from OCPE, DCDD, Office of Disability (TFHC), Department of Education, NTPS staff living with disability, NTPS staff and disability advocates from across the sector – responsible for progressing all Strategy actions
- NTPS Strategic Workforce Board – overseeing Strategy implementation
- CPE – accountable officer for Strategy Implementation
- Disability Advisory Committee – providing expert advice/input to support the Reference Group

A flow chart illustrating the network relationships between the groups is attached in Appendix A.

3. Objective and Purpose

The purpose of the Reference Group is to provide a forum for NTG agency representatives, employees/advocates with disabilities to share their experiences and insights, as well as to advise and consult on disability-related matters that impact the workplace as well as ensure agencies responsible for progressing actions to have a well-informed perspective. The Reference Group will operate as an action group progressing Strategy actions.

4. Membership and Tenure

Membership consists of a maximum of 10 people:

- Chair (Office of Commissioner for Public Employment – Senior Director Strategic Workforce Planning and Development)
- Representatives from OCPE, DCDD, Office of Disability (TFHC), Department of Education
- NTPS employees with disability and/or disability advocates in the workplace
- A representative from the Disability Advisory Committee (by invitation)

Membership in the Reference Group will be open to all NTPS employees who self-identify as having disability or have an interest in advancing disability inclusion. Members must be endorsed by their agency CEO.

Membership tenure is for a minimum two year period. After this time, members can choose to leave the group or continue their placement until the end of the Strategy. A review of membership will occur during the first meeting of the calendar year. Existing members will guide and support the transition of new members.

Resignations by a member may be tendered during any period of their service. Replacement of members as a result of resignation will be considered by the Committee Chair and replaced as required.

4.1. Membership Protocol

A quorum shall consist of a minimum of 50% membership plus 1 member, which must include the Chair. If no quorum is present within 30 minutes of the scheduled meeting time, the meeting will be cancelled.

All members must:

- Discuss items in a professional and sensitive manner whilst ensuring confidentiality is applied.
- Actively contribute to the agenda, participate in discussions and be accountable for group decisions.
- Contribute to any events organised and managed by the group.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Reference Group will act as an action group for the NTPS EmployAbility Strategy

The NTPS Strategic Workforce Board will nominate an Executive Sponsor overseeing the Reference Group and Strategy progress. The Reference Group will:

- Progress all NTPS EmployAbility Strategy actions;
- Discuss actions to ensure they are informed and designed in a way that promotes the focus areas of the Strategy and contributes to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for employees with disabilities;
- Raising awareness of information, resources and assistance available for people with disability and workplaces; and
- Drive disability related initiatives via networking and stakeholder engagement within their respective organisations and across the NTPS.

The Chair will:

- Lead the meetings and encourage discussions on agenda items, maintaining focus on priorities.

- Ensure the group is operating within its purpose, delegations and budget, and in accordance with the terms of reference.
- Appropriately manage and resolve any conflicts that may arise between members.

The Executive Sponsor will:

- Provide leadership and advocacy for disability inclusion initiatives and Strategy actions.
- Ensure alignment between the Reference Group goals and the NTPS Employability Strategy
- Actively participate in Reference Group meetings and activities.
- Advise the NTPS Strategic Workforce Board of proposed policy changes to support fundamental employment matters and challenges for people with disability.

6. Administration

OCPE will serve as the Secretariat and assist with co-ordination and logistics of the group, including scheduling meetings, booking rooms, circulating the agenda, taking minutes and supporting papers to members 10 days prior to the next meeting.

7. Meetings

The Reference Group will meet bi-monthly, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. Members are required to attend a minimum of four meetings per year.

Minutes will be distributed to all members within 2 weeks of the meeting.

8. Conflicts of Interest

Reference Group members must declare real and perceived conflicts of interest and exclude themselves from decisions where real or perceived conflict may appear to impinge on their objectivity.

9. Monitoring and Reporting

The Reference Group will report to the Chair of NTPS Strategic Workforce Board and provide regular updates on activities and recommendations. The Reference Group will establish an annual work plan aligned to the Strategy to monitor progress against key initiatives and identified outcomes.

10. Confidentiality

All discussions and information shared within the Reference Group will be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality, in accordance with NTPS policy on privacy and confidentiality.

Appendix A: Reference Group Flow Chart

