

NTPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Forum 2017

Alice Springs 31 May – 1 June 2017, Double Tree by Hilton

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) hosted the second NTPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Forum on 31 May and 1 June 2017 in Alice Springs. The Forum is a key initiative within the *NTPS Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2015-2020* and was based on a workshop style to allow participants to discuss current issues and challenges and contribute ideas on future employment and career development opportunities.

From the 81 nominations received, 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NTPS employees attended the Forum from a range of agencies across the Territory. The Forum facilitated a series of workshops on cross cultural training, career development, attraction and retention, special measures and work/life balance. Also included in the Forum were presentations showcased from the Departments of the Chief Minister, Housing and Community Development, Attorney-General and Justice, the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU).

In addition to the presentations showcased by various agencies, the OCPE showcased the new Inclusion and Diversity Campaign. This was an initiative of the EmployAbility Strategy 2018-2022 to increase workforce participation of people with a disability across the NTPS.

The Aboriginal Employment Opportunities (AEO) Register was launched at the Forum by Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS). The register is a key NTG initiative to assist with achieving the Aboriginal employment targets within the Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2015-2020. The register addresses two key themes within the strategy; to attract and retain Aboriginal people in the NTPS, and building capability to enhance career progression.

Forum Attendees:

81

Applications received

70

Total attendees
(23 Males & 47 Females)



Photo: NTPS ATSI Employee Forum attendees

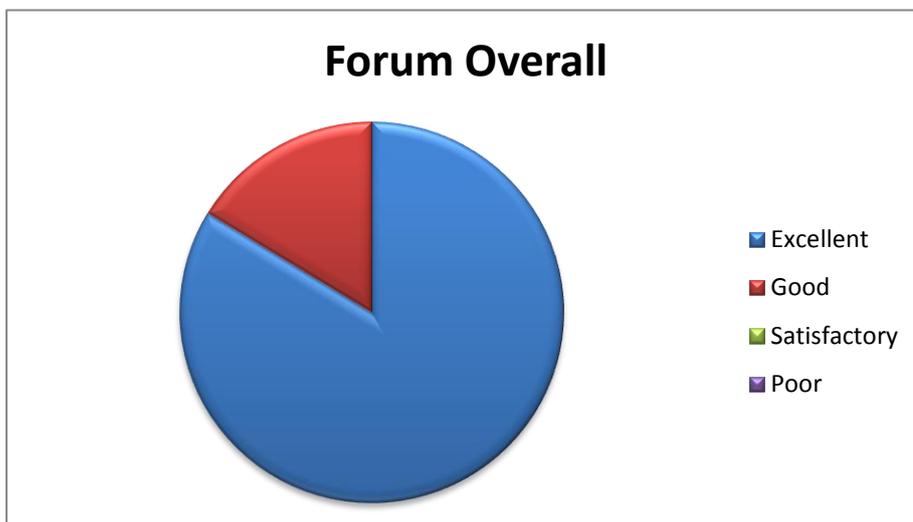
Evaluation Respondents:

61.4% Evaluations completed by (43) attendees

97.7% (42) attendees would be interested in attending the next Forum

There were a total of 70 attendees at the Forum; of these 43 completed the Evaluation Form. The majority of respondents (42 out of 43) said they would be interested in attending the next Forum.

Eighty three per cent of completed evaluations stated that overall, they found the Forum to be 'excellent' compared to seventeen per cent who found it to be 'good' as displayed in the following graph.



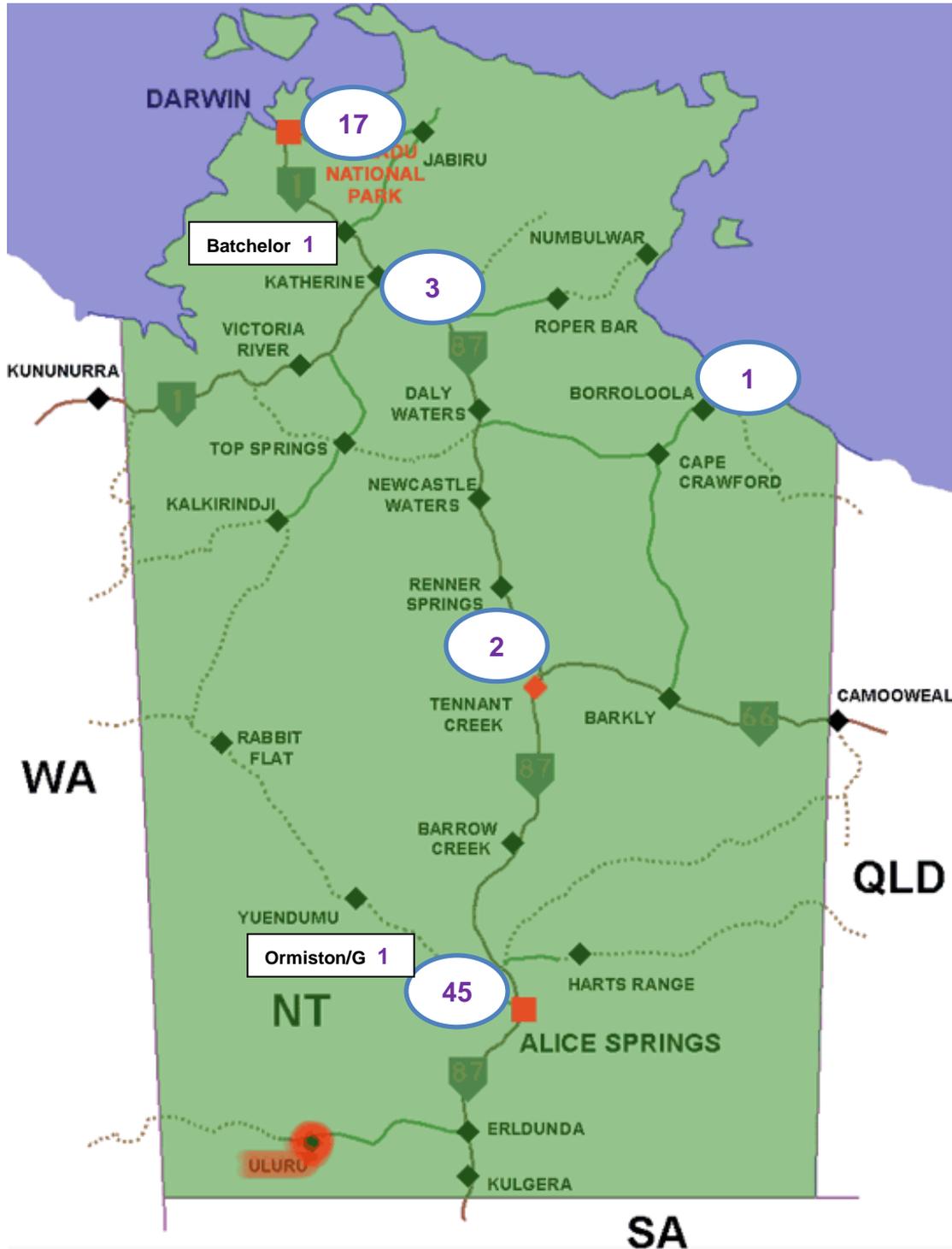
Some positive comments from the evaluations:

- *“Well done OCPE IECD Team. Fantastic you all should be proud”*
- *“I would like to thank organisers for the workshop it was very well organised and kept my interest for the whole period”*
- *“Particularly the commitment from the IECD team Camille, Ann, Terese, Brittany also Jason (excellent) and the Commissioner for his commitment”*
- *“Cannot give enough credit to the team that organised the forum”*
- *“Great work to your team for putting this together. Really enjoyable”*



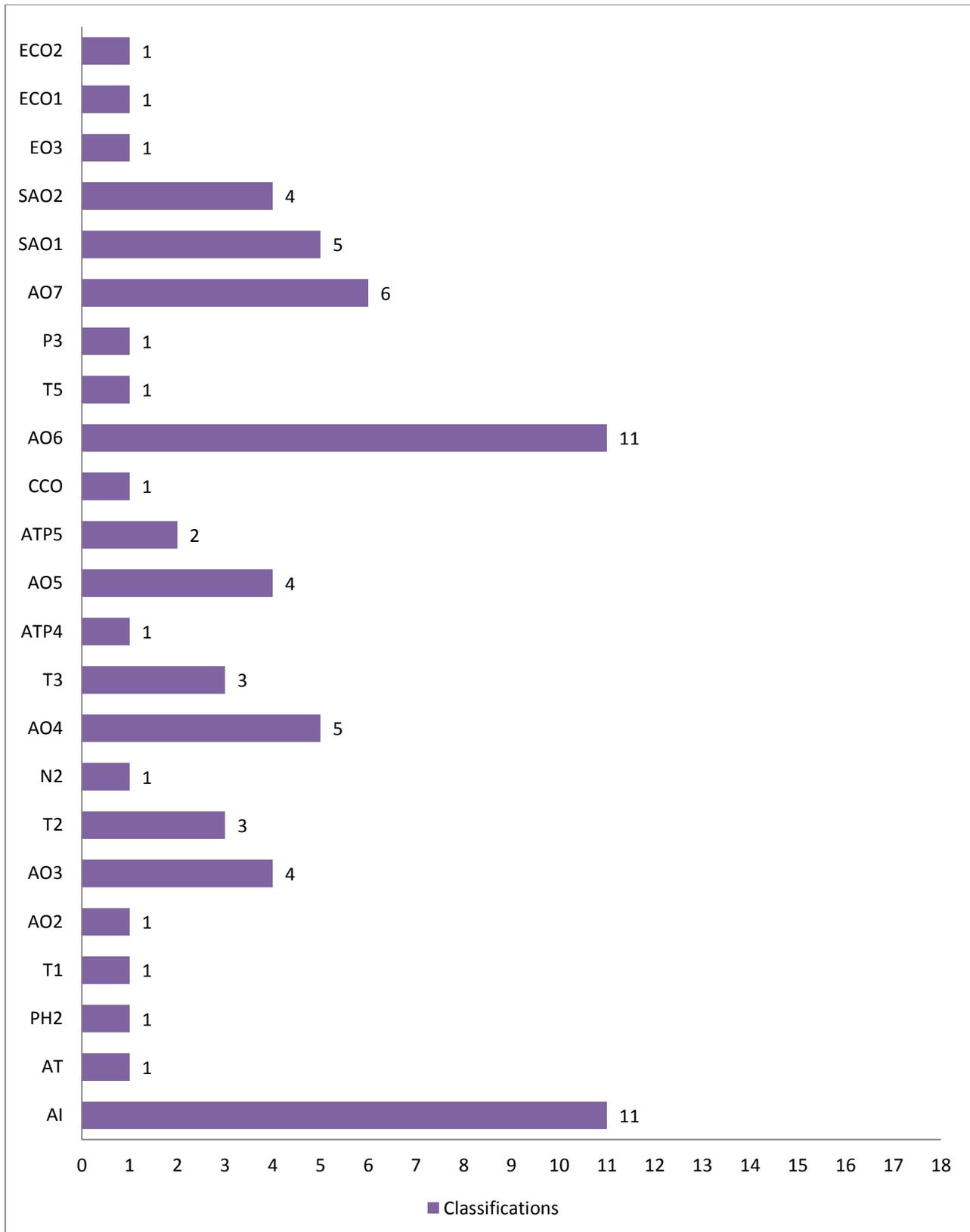
Attendees Workplace Location

Aboriginal employees who attended the Forum came from Alice Springs, Ormiston Gorge, Tennant Creek, Borroloola, Katherine, Batchelor and Darwin.



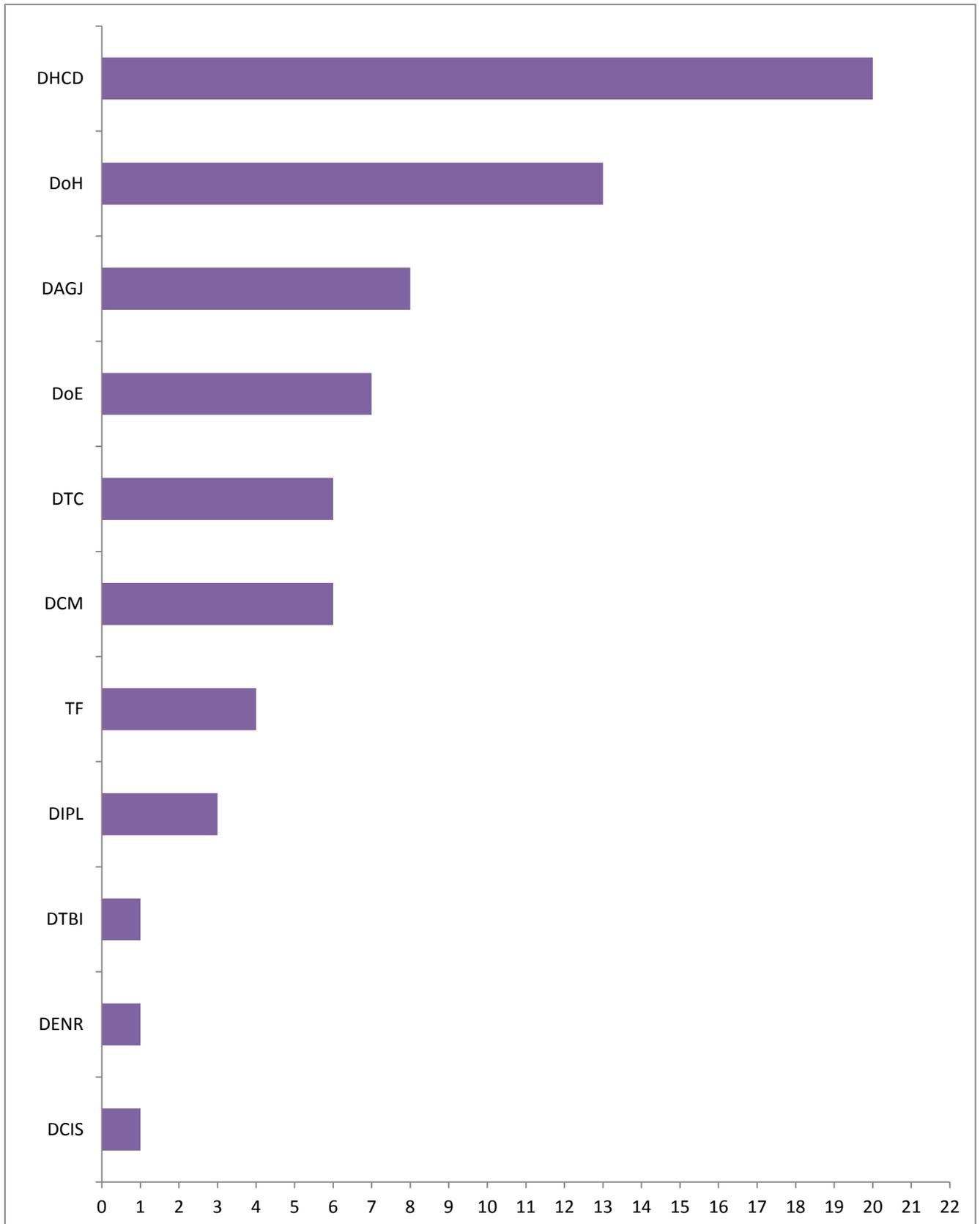
Attendees Classifications

The attendees who participated in the Forum ranged from AO2 to ECO2 and included various streams (Professional, Technical and Physical). The highest numbers represented by attendees were Aboriginal Interpreters (AI) and AO6.



Agencies Represented

The attendees who participated in the Forum were represented by 11 NT Government Agencies.

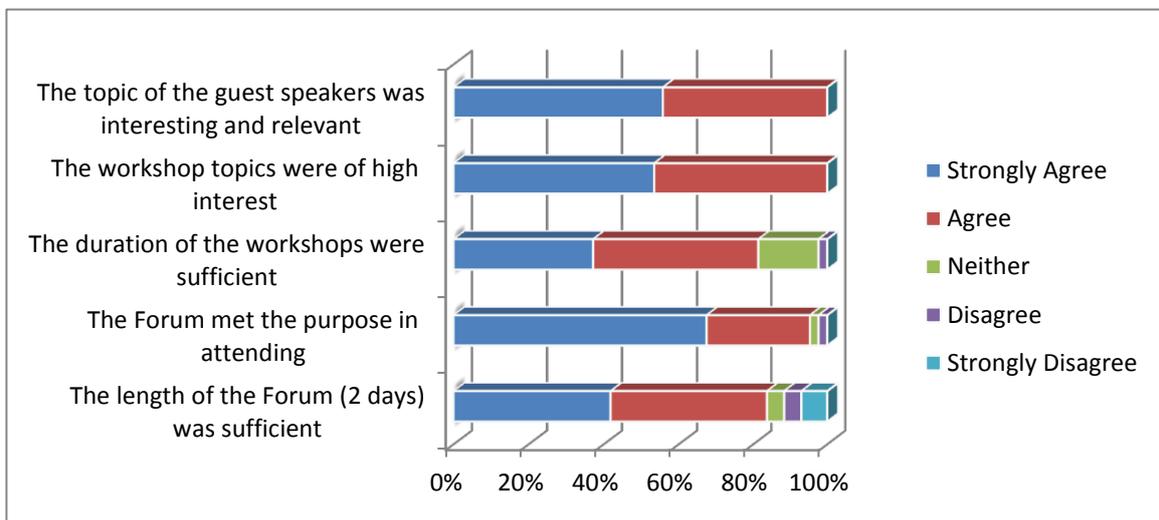


The 2017 ATSI Forum Experience

As illustrated in the graph below, evaluation respondents perceived an overall high quality of the Forum.

The increase to the Forum duration from one day to two days was well received with sufficient time for presentations, workshops and networking. The workshop topics were of high interest and the additional workshop Work/Life Balance and the separate Special Measures workshop were valued.

- *“What I enjoyed most about the Forum was the networking, Work/Life Balance Workshop, Celeste and Mischa’s presentations”*
- *“The workshops I enjoyed the most. I learnt a lot and something I will take back to my workplace”*
- *“Good that it was in Alice Springs”*
- *“Could be three days”*



Presentations:

Two Alice Springs employees; Paul AhChee Ngala, Department of Tourism and Culture and Celeste Brand, Department of Health shared their individual journey in the NTPS by presenting ‘Sharing My Story’.



Photo: Paul AhChee Ngala (DTC)



Photo: Celeste Brand (DoH), sharing

The following presentations were delivered by representatives from various agencies and organisations providing information on their respective areas:



Photo: Mischa Cartwright (DCM)

Mischa Cartwright - Acting Executive Director, Office of Aboriginal Affairs in the Department of the Chief Minister presented an update on the agencies roles and responsibilities, including information on programs and initiatives that will contribute to the economic development of Aboriginal communities in the NT.

Leanne Liddle - Director ATSI Justice Unit, Department of Attorney- General and Justice presented information on the NTG Law and Justice matters being addressed by the establishment of the Aboriginal Justice Unit. In addition information and packages were handed out on 'Do you want to be a Justice of the Peace for the NT'.



Photo: Leanne Liddle (DAGJ)



Photo: Colleen Rosas (DHCD)

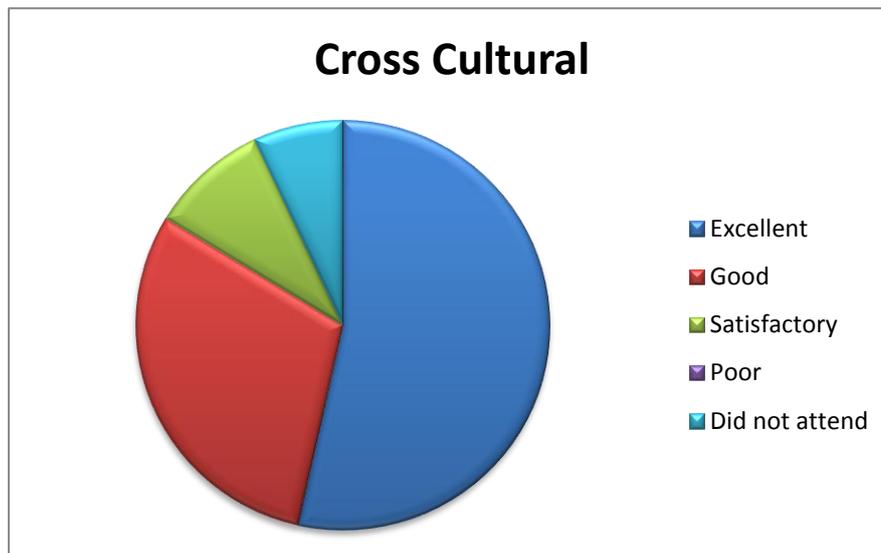
Colleen Rosas – Director, Aboriginal Interpreter Service, Department of Housing and Community Development presented information on the background, structure and achievements of AIS, how critical the role of an interpreter is and her personal journey and vision.

Kay Densley – Regional Secretary, Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) presented information on the roles and responsibilities of CPSU, Enterprise Bargaining Agreements and negotiations and the importance of becoming a union member.



Photo: Kay Densley (CPSU)

Workshop Ratings



Eighty three per cent of completed evaluations stated the Cross Cultural Training workshop was excellent/good as displayed in the above graph.

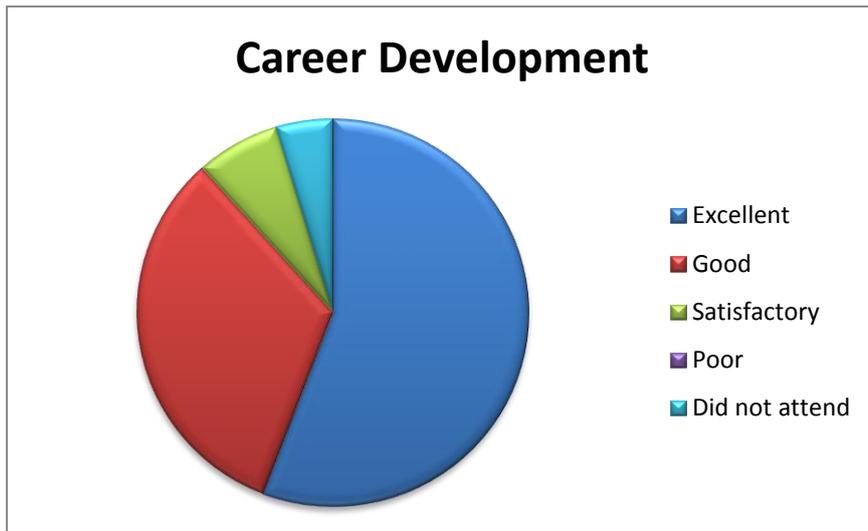
- *“In regards to the workshops, “Cross Cultural Training” it was mainly discussions. I would have liked to take an action plan/information away with me as for my workplace this is a hot topic”*
- *“ACAP we are still trying to create something for all but in a 3 tier stage. It would have been great to know what items would be a priority”*



Photo: Jason Elsegood (Cross Cultural Consultants)



Photo: Cross Cultural Training workshop



Eighty eight per cent of completed evaluations stated the Career Development workshop was excellent/good as displayed in the above graph.

Out of the 81 applications received the following statistics is information on employee numbers who have a current Career Development Plan in place:

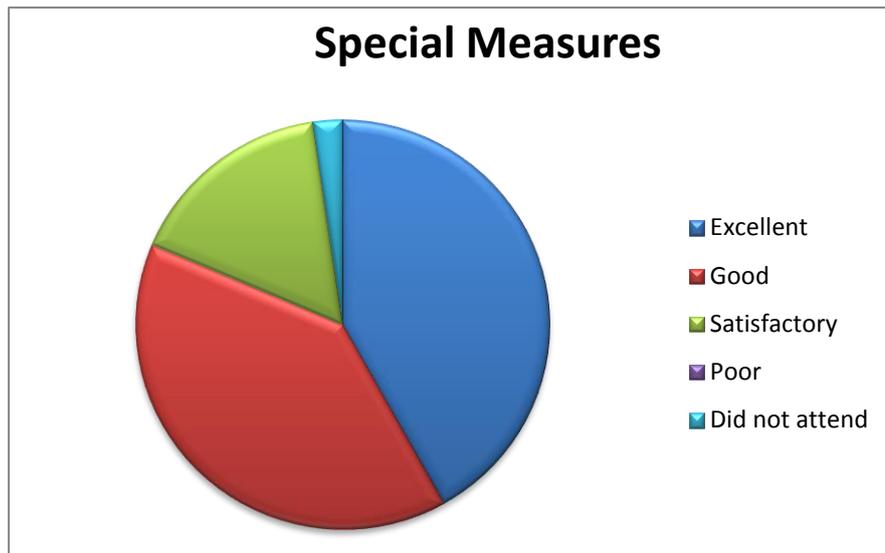
- 23 - Yes
- 32 - No
- 3 - Unsure
- 23 - Did not say

It is quite clear from these numbers that more work needs to be put into ensuring every Aboriginal employee has a Career Development Plan. This will contribute and enable Aboriginal employees to professionally develop and enhance their career progression within the Public Sector. Some comments were made to support this:

- *“Consistent naming of Development Plans across all Departments within NTPS – uniform approach”*
- *“More support for remote staff to develop career pathways”*



Photo: Career Development workshop



Eighty one per cent of completed evaluations stated the Special Measures workshop was excellent/good as displayed in the above graph.

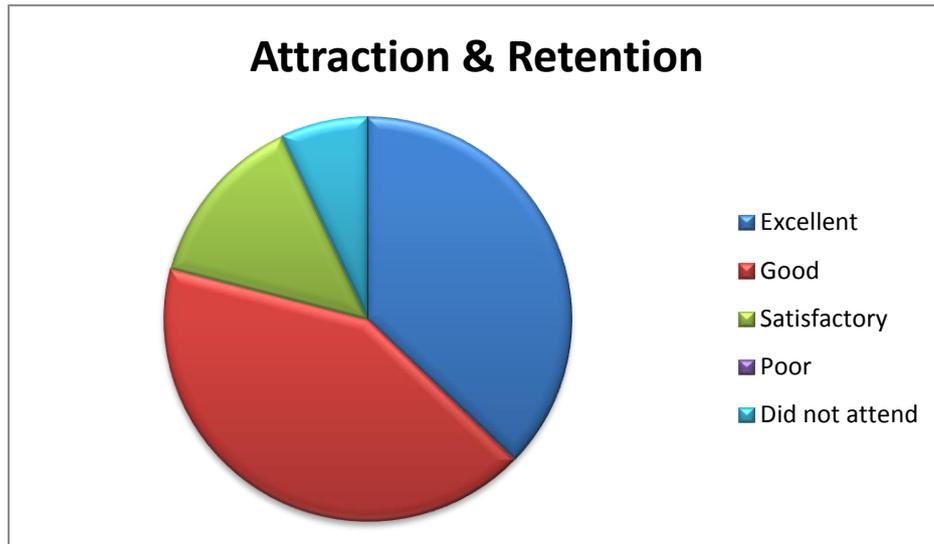
Special Measures was incorporated in the Attraction and Retention workshop in the 2016 Darwin Forum and was considered a 'Hot Topic'. Various comments were made that Special Measures needed a little more in depth conversation and should be at the next Forum, hence being a standalone workshop at this Forum.

Some of the comments that came through were the following:

- *“Extend special measures into justice area, remote education and remote health”*
- *“Still not having a clear understanding of how the process of Special Measures work as too much time was taken discussing other issues and the workshop ran out of time”*



Photo: Courtney Mabey (OCPE – Special Measures Workshop)



Seventy nine per cent of completed evaluations stated the Attraction and Retention workshop was excellent/good as displayed in the above graph.

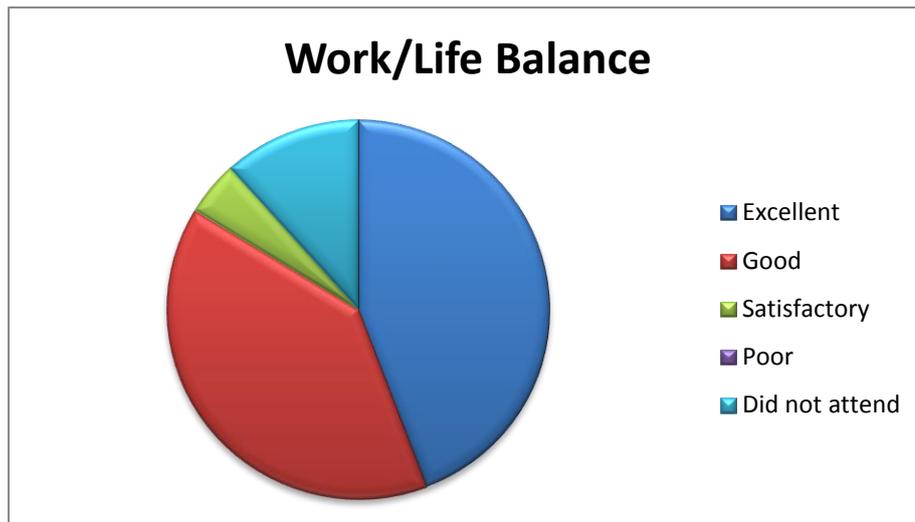
One of the topics discussed in the workshop was 'Cultural Leave'. The feedback from the evaluations sparked an interest in 'Cultural Leave', which was the main discussion point.

Comments received about this workshop:

- *“Leave for NAIDOC day (one day off during NAIDOC week to participate in an activity)”*
- *“Cultural leave provisions for staff”*
- *“Leave for NAIDOC week and Cultural and Ceremony Leave”*
- *“One day off paid – for the week of NAIDOC”*
- *“1 week Cultural Leave separate from leave – staff option to get paid 92% of wage to cover culture leave”*



Photo: Various (Attraction and Retention Workshop)



Work/Life Balance is a new workshop incorporated in this year's Forum and was perceived well with eighty three per cent of the completed evaluations stating it was excellent/good.

The main area covered in this workshop was individuals completing an activity based on their wheel of life (areas of life, what you value, what you need, priorities, commitments). This led into defining work/life balance and exploring how agencies help or hinder work/life balance and how agencies could support/assist in order to improve work/life balance. The final part was providing information on Flexible Work Agreements (FWA), with some staff sharing their FWA experience with the group.

Some of the comments that came through were the following:

- *“Learning about working in NTPS, the workshop and people sharing their stories on FWA”*
- *“Enjoyed the new workshop topic”*
- *“Enjoyed the Work/Life balance workshop and suggest more information on Flexible Work Arrangements”*



Photo's: Various (Work/Life Balance Workshop)

What did you enjoy most about the Forum?

When employees were asked what they enjoyed most about the Forum, networking always seems to come out the winner. There was a variety of comments that employees made on the specific areas on what they enjoyed which were the following:

- *"I enjoyed the networking, meeting new people who have different views and ideas around aboriginal employment"*
- *"Networking and discussion. MC was amazing"*
- *"I loved that we met so many Aboriginal leaders and that we had the opportunity to meet with the Commissioner who made us all feel welcomed as part of the NTPS"*
- *"Agencies sharing and providing information on their previous and current business/practices. Having the opportunity for individual and group interaction"*
- *"Meeting different staff from other agencies, the new workshop topics"*
- *"Networking, work/life balance workshop, Celeste and Mischa's presentations".*
- *"The workshops I enjoyed the most. I learnt a lot and something I will take back to my workplace"*
- *"Aboriginal guest speakers"*
- *"Career Development and Work/Life Balance"*
- *"Learning about the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and what they do"*
- *"Speakers and environment to speak freely"*
- *"The information provided in each session, networking, group discussions, guest speakers and their journeys"*
- *"Having Commissioner here to talk to"*
- *"Hearing that everyone here had mainly the same issues/challenges"*
- *"Guest Speakers – also listening to wealth and knowledge of attendees"*
- *"Networking, finding out about Inclusion and Flexible Work Arrangements"*



Photo: Craig Allen, Commissioner (OCPE)

What did you least enjoy about the Forum?

There was minimal comments made under this question, however the workshop duration has come up again stating the time period is too short:

- *“BBQ clashed with State of Origin”*
- *“Lack of attendance at BBQ – it was cold”*
- *“That there wasn’t enough time to gather more information”*
- *“Workshop time period too short”*
- *“Just the waiting between group work – walls to be broken down”*
- *“The food, excellent but needed afternoon nap”*
- *“Not being present 100%”*
- *“Not anything really. The acronym ATSI still grates”*

Since receiving email advice from the Department of the Chief Minister in May 2017, the Aboriginal Affairs Sub Committee of Cabinet has recently passed a direction, which was ratified by Cabinet that the term “Aboriginal” should be used in preference to Indigenous and the term is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will now alleviate the issue raised about the acronym ATSI.

What topics would you suggest for the next Forum?

Many topics were suggested for the next forum and from the following comments; there is a definite need to touch on the same topics for the workshops as per the following:

- *“Mentoring Program”*
- *“The same; very important topics”*
- *“Performance Management/Transition to Retirement, Unconscious Bias / Work/life balance”*
- *“Attraction and retention workshop”*
- *“Self-care, mentoring, available education, and career development plans”*
- *“Work/Life balance”*
- *“Career Development”*
- *“Change management, grievance process and support”*
- *“Leave for NAIDOC week and Cultural and Ceremony leave”*
- *“Recruitment and Retention”*
- *“A session devoted to explaining the roles of the different departments and their action plans”*
- *“More speakers from NTPS – share work experience”*
- *“Flexible Work arrangements”*
- *“Performance Development (WPP)”*
- *“Same topics with addition to agency alignment and connectivity”*

Recommendations for Future

There was a range of comments/suggestions to take into consideration for future Forums and they are as follows:

- *“Invitation forwarded to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within NT Govt to allow all staff to have input and involvement in next Forum and be included”*
- *“Perhaps some PowerPoint presentations that were shown to be emailed out as well as the short films”*
- *“Length of the Forum could be three days”*
- *“Continue to have Senior Management included – Commissioner Craig Allen was great, approachable and friendly”*
- *“There was not enough time to provide feedback at workshops”*
- *“A session devoted to explaining the roles of the different departments and their Action Plans”*
- *“Very good to attend – Gunner should have been here or a stand in”*
- *“Next time you get lanyards is it possible to get the OH&S ones – that will break under stress”*

Participants Recommendations to OCPE:

1. Continue to hold Aboriginal Employee Forum biannually (1 x Alice Springs and 1 x Darwin).
2. Keep the duration of the Forum to two days.
3. Allow longer allocated times to cover the workshops.
4. Email the future Forum nominations to all staff on our Aboriginal Employee mailing contact lists and to all HR areas to filter the information.
5. Invite the Chief Minister or Minister for Public Employment to open and address each Forum.
6. Invite 1-2 Chief Executives per Forum to share information about how their agency is leading the way by showcasing their initiatives or programs that support the IECDs.
7. Invite Aboriginal guest speakers to share their journey/career in the NTPS.
8. Continue to complete the Forum with a networking dinner.



Photo: NTPS ATSI Employee Forum attendees