



EMPLOY OUTSIDE THE BOX

The Business Case for Employing Indigenous Australians

CONTACT

Canberra Office
COMMERCE HOUSE
Level 3, 24 Brisbane Avenue
Barton ACT 2600

PO BOX 6005 Kingston,
ACT 2604 AUSTRALIA

T: 02 6273 2311
F: 02 6273 3286
E: info@acci.asn.au

Melbourne Office
Level 3, 486 Albert Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

PO BOX 18008
Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003
AUSTRALIA

T: 03 9668 9950
F: 03 9668 9958
E: melb@acci.asn.au
W: www.acci.asn.au



Recruiting and Retaining Indigenous Australians

One of the most challenging issues in workplace planning today is our country's ageing workforce. Even if we are successful in encouraging people to stay in the workforce longer, Australia's 'baby boomers' are now approaching retirement age and as many as 4.4 million workers may need replacing within 15 years¹. By 2050 almost one quarter of this country's population will be over 64 years old, almost double the figure today.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) recognises² that Indigenous Australians are a relatively untapped source of employment within our labour market.

This guide outlines to businesses how they can 'Employ Outside the Box' for Indigenous workers. The guide provides a common sense approach that can relate to managing a diverse workforce generally, with illustrations of success from some great case studies.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is much younger than the broader population on average, with 56%³ of the Indigenous population aged less than 25 years old. Additionally, the Indigenous population is growing much faster than the non-Indigenous population.

The ABS estimates the projected annual growth of the Indigenous population at 2.2% compared to a projected annual growth rate of between 1.2% and 1.7 % for the total Australian population³.

There is no time like the present to consider employing outside the box to expand your business.

In 2012, ACCI released 'Employ Outside the Box', to highlight the rewards and importance of a diverse workforce. A series of guides were also released to provide businesses guidance when working with a diverse workforce. This guide is part of that series, focusing on Indigenous Australian workers.

Being a smart employer

In an economic environment that can change rapidly, business must develop and implement competitive strategies for both the short and longer term.

In many industries skill and labour shortages are still with us and will become more apparent as the economy grows. Employers need to develop innovative strategies to attract and retain valued employees to meet the vital labour needs of their business now and for the future.

Indigenous Australians remain an underutilised source of labour. The high levels of unemployment experienced needs to be addressed through better partnerships between industry, government and the Indigenous communities.

ACCI recognises that employment growth is driven primarily through business, not through short term government led programs and initiatives that do not provide real job outcomes or sustainable community development.

Next time you have a vacancy consider some basic steps you can take to recruit and retain Indigenous Australian workers. Become a smarter employer.

¹Skills Australia (2010) Australian Workforce Futures, A National Workforce Development Strategy

²ABS Census 2011

³ABS Census 2006



Case Study 1

CFC Group leading the way – because it is the right thing to do

CFC Group which includes Cape Crushing & Earthmoving, Centurion, Underground Services & JCB Construction Equipment Australia are all part of the CFC Group. These businesses cover transport & logistics, crushing and screening, world-leading agricultural and mining equipment and underground services: four distinct but complementary businesses with one voice.

In February 2012, the first five Indigenous employees began working at Centurion's Hazelmere premises. Since then the CFC Group has provided up to eighty Indigenous people with employment opportunities. The type of jobs they do include being Freight Officers, Forklift Operators, Boiler Makers, Construction Workers, Pipe Layers and many more.

CFC Group outline how they attract and retain Indigenous workers

We offer a wide range of on-the-job training and qualification pathways. We found that by investing in our people through on the job training and creating career pathways for them, the benefits are that they are more efficient and stay longer in the job.

We place our candidates on a training plan. This gives them confidence that we want to invest in them and gives them a vision of where they could go in the company.

The types of roles we offer in the company range from Freight Officer in Off Site Receiving (OSR) to Line Haul or Heavy Haulage truck driver or from a Trade's Assistant to an Apprentice.

1

CFC Group also offers on the job training that leads to the employee gaining qualifications. This too is attractive to the employee and it gives us as employer's confidence that we have the right skills sets working for us.

We pride ourselves on providing support and opportunities for disadvantaged people to gain employment and develop skills and experience that will help them in the future.

Our Program is not based on financial gain or achieving employment targets, it's because we believe it's the right thing to do.



Thanks to the CFC Group & Centurion for the opportunity. I was unemployed before but now work in the workshop and enjoy the challenge and learning off experienced tradesmen. I have recently had a home loan approved and am buying my first house.

Dennis, 20 Years of Age, Trades Assistant; Heavy Duty Mechanic at Centurion.



Benefits

With many industries experiencing significant skills and labour shortages, particularly in the regions, it is crucial that all sectors of the labour force be fully utilised to meet the skills needs of business and promote further employment growth. If businesses '*Employ Outside the Box*' and choose to recruit from the pool of Indigenous Australians then you will see benefits.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are a growing source of capable workforce.
- Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may open up a growing market for products and services.
- Pre-employment training provided for Indigenous workers can be beneficial to non-Indigenous workers as well.
- In regional areas, the connection with local communities can be strengthened and Indigenous Australians can be more committed to working locally.
- Respond to the changing ethnic profile of your customers and the need to reflect this in the workforce.
- Market your business as an employer of choice by promoting diversity in the workforce and enabling an inclusive and socially responsible work environment.
- Demonstrating strong corporate citizenship may assist in gaining a market edge with key clients and enhance the public reputation of your organisations.

- Organisations will gain new skills and knowledge from training and working with Indigenous employees.
- Youthful workforce with the potential to be long term employees.
- Build cultural diversity in your workforce.
- Access to government funding and assistance with regards to training, recruiting and retaining Indigenous employees.

Before you start Recruiting

Good business practice such as having a holistic human resource strategy of life-long education and remedial measures can be effective for avoiding intergenerational friction.

Implementing sound policies and practices can assist in the recruitment and retention of staff. Incorporating strategies to attract Indigenous Australian workers can also be advantageous.

Before commencing with any recruitment, take a moment to consider some questions about why you are recruiting. To help, a list of possible questions have been provided below. The list is not exhaustive and there may be others more specific to your business that you may need to include. The important element is that the employer has a clear understanding of your recruitment strategy. Time taken at the beginning of the process will save time elsewhere.



SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Why do you want to employ Indigenous Australians?

Which potential benefits, including from the list above, are most relevant to your business? You may be able to identify other benefits that are unique to your situation.

Have staff completed training in cross-cultural awareness?

Cross-cultural awareness can play a major role in developing better understanding among staff. It can build the foundation for workplace cohesion, and it can play a major role in managing cultural factors in the workplace.

Cultural Awareness Training can help your organisation:

- Understand issues that are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Develop a plan for increasing your organisation's effectiveness in recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Enhance your skills and knowledge needed to assist Indigenous people gain and retain employment.
- Recognise situations that could lead to discrimination.

How are you working with the local Indigenous communities?

Many people find it difficult to make those initial career path decisions. How your business and industry is promoted may have an influence on these decisions. Think about how you might inspire Indigenous Australians to want to work for your business.

Does the local school know about your business and in particular the Career Advisor?

Do you offer site visits so that potential employees or the community can see what your business is like and consider you as an employer and your industry as a career pathway?

What success have you already had in working with Indigenous Australians?

Reflecting on positive experiences is one way to build a foundation for further success. If you can identify the positives in your working relationships with Indigenous Australians until now, you can pave the way for further progress.



SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

What is your current capacity to provide support for Indigenous employees?

As with all employees, it is also important to make sure that new Indigenous employees have skills matched to the jobs for which they have been recruited and that, if necessary, they are given appropriate training. Sometimes this support may need to take account of cultural beliefs and obligations.

Do you have an employment strategy with set targets and goals?

Every business will make its own decisions about the strategies that are most appropriate given its size and circumstances. A documented strategy for Indigenous employment can help to identify goals and targets, and the actions that are needed to achieve them.

Consider reviewing your business plan to include workforce development strategies for working with Indigenous Australians. The possible inclusion of a buddy system, mentoring or succession planning. These strategies would be useful for any worker not just Indigenous people.

A **factsheet** with a sample Indigenous Employment Strategy is available from www.acci.asn.au in the publications section under 'Employ Outside the Box'.

Recruiting Indigenous Australian workers

Recruiting new staff can be both time consuming and costly for a business. Finding the right person with relevant skills and experience, a good work ethic and ensuring that they are likely to stay with your organisation are all important considerations when hiring. In many cases, Indigenous Australian job seekers would fit the bill in any workplace.

Make sure job advertisements and position descriptions are written so they have the best chance of attracting interest from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. For example, you may want to talk about the abilities needed to do the job, rather than specifying qualifications.

It is important not to forget the influencing power of your existing workers and what they tell other people. Word of mouth is a strong recruitment technique and being an employer of choice is especially important in regional and remote areas where the workforce is limited.

If you establish good work practices, taking into consideration the local workforce needs, it can lead to reduced recruitment costs and time as potential workers approach you for work.

You may also want to consider working with other organisations in your industry or region to promote opportunities for Indigenous Australians. An example of a situation where it has worked well is provided in Case Study 2.



Case Study 2

2

South Australian businesses are leading the charge in thinking 'outside the box' when it comes to recruitment and retention strategies.

In mid-2010 a number of industries got together, with the Government, to talk about the workforce issues they are experiences and work out how to improve their ability to hire more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.

Supported by seven 'clusters' in retail, community services, energy and water, professional services, sport and recreation, advanced manufacturing and hospitality, each cluster aimed to address the under-representation of Indigenous people in their respective workforces.

The Aboriginal Employment Industry Cluster (AEIC) model looked at identifying where the job openings and skills requirements in their industry were, then reviewed their training plans to ensure they could develop the skills workers needed to fill those vacancies and address any skills gaps.

The AEIC model works across industry to provide opportunities at all levels (entry level, professional and management) and provides multiple pathways to access employment such as traineeships, apprenticeships, cadetships and direct employment.

In taking industry-wide approaches to Indigenous employment, the AEIC model provides a number of benefits to employers.

The model:

- provides a single entry point for industry to access State and Australian Government services and members of the Indigenous community.
- supports small employers to partner with larger companies with similar skill needs to achieve scale and deliver cost efficient pre-employment programmes.
- provides an avenue for employers to share and promote best practice, including in developing culturally-safe recruitment and retention strategies.
- provides advice for permanent change to everyday recruitment practices to ensure Indigenous people are employed outside of specific projects.

From June 2011 to December 2013, the AEIC has facilitated the employment of 378 Indigenous people. This success includes employment in sectors where previously there was no Indigenous employment. For instance, 35 Indigenous people are now working in the area of professional services, a sector that previously did not employ any Indigenous people.

"The Cluster concept has enabled companies (many of whom are competitors, or completely removed from others) to share information and experiences whereas previously they tried to do it alone or frequently decided not even to bother because of the perceived difficulties. Opportunities across the industry have emerged which, from a single company perspective, were too difficult or expensive for a single company to consider. Risks can be shared and lessons learnt in a collaborative and non-threatening environment".

Lew Owens, Chairperson
Energy, Water and resources Industry
Cluster



How to retain workers



A key to success in retaining any worker, including Indigenous Australians, is to recognise that a one-size approach does not fit all, and that retention comes from offering strong career paths, recognition of good work and a sense of personal achievement. The steps below will assist you with improving your overall staff retention rate including that of Indigenous employees.

Business Plans that incorporate Reconciliation Action

Business Plans are critical to the future success of any business. Good business practice would be to incorporate a Reconciliation Action within your exiting Business Plan. This will ensure that reconciliation is embedded in your business culture and not an additional Plan.

Incorporating Reconciliation Action in your business plan can be a start to building relationships and respect between Indigenous peoples and other Australians as well.

An example **factsheet for a Business Plan** can be found on ACCI webpage www.acci.asn.au

Importance of an induction process

A robust induction process is an important opportunity to clearly communicate your expectations and to advise new staff of their responsibilities. Inductions should also cover:

- occupational health and safety;
- wages and conditions of employment;
- introducing new staff to others in the workplace;
- identifying mentors and workplace buddies; and
- explaining any training and employment options available to new staff.

It is also a time to inspire new staff to work with you. First impressions are important.

Like other new employees, new Indigenous workers may not necessarily be familiar with the workplace practices and culture of your business.

Give people time to settle in and see how things are done. The human factor is often the key to retaining Indigenous employees and helping them to make their contribution to your business.



How to retain workers

Clarify work expectations

Most importantly, be up front about what is expected of your new employees.

Many of the following suggestions make good sense for all employees, irrespective of culture.

- Build good working relationships and two-way communication.
- Have realistic expectations and communicate them clearly.
- On occasions, an Indigenous employee may experience cultural obligations that impact on work. Be aware of these factors and incorporate them in your Business plan or have a contingency strategy in place. Some enterprises also develop strong connections with local communities and Indigenous support structures, such as families and elders. An employer that is currently using this technique successfully is Rio Tinto.
- Make it as easy as possible for staff to ask questions and learn from one another.
- Always ensure that staff have had sufficient training and support to allow them to perform their duties to the level you expect.
- Show an interest in the work that is being performed and provide regular feedback and praise. Celebrate success.
- Be flexible.

Mentoring

Establishing mentors within the workplace has assisted many organisations to improve the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Mentoring is a partnership that supports development and learning in the workplace by the sharing of experience and knowledge. This often includes helping staff to identify their own learning needs and ways of meeting them through a more experienced person.

Some enterprises adopt a workplace buddy system, providing hands-on practical support to Indigenous employees.

Six Easy steps to successful recruitment and retention.

Before any business starts recruiting they often know the number of people needed and the required skill sets to completed the job. The same is useful when recruiting Indigenous Australians.



How to retain workers



Here is a quick summary of the steps you could take to successful recruitment and retention.

- 1 Develop a business plan with clear recruitment and retention strategies for Indigenous employees.**



- 2 Outline the jobs and skills you need for your business. Ensuring all employees are aware of work expectations – including when you interview potential new employees.**



- 3 Provide a workplace that is positive, innovative and flexible.**



- 4 Have induction and on-the job training updated and reviewed regularly. Include cross cultural training as part of business as usual.**



- 5 Review the workplace and offer open and honest feedback.**



- 6 Seek out feedback and remember to reward and recognise good work.**



Where to go for help



Your first port of call should be your local Chamber of Commerce or Industry Association. These organisations may already have specific programs in place to provide assistance to **employers** or may be able to link you to other programs.

Some ACCI members undertake industry-specific initiatives that may also benefit employers wanting to diversify their workforce. A specific example is AMMA skills Connect designed to connect Indigenous job seekers to employers.

The AMMA Skills Connect Indigenous program has successfully trained and placed 30 Indigenous job seekers in resource industry service roles, including site security and hospitality. Employers can partner with groups like AMMA Skills Connect to broaden the talent pool of Indigenous potentials.

Visit the ACCI website (www.acci.asn.au) for the contact details of your State or Territory Chamber of Commerce or relevant Industry Association.

Your local government funded **Employment Service Provider** can help you in recruiting new staff as well as providing information on training options and some of the funding and incentives available to support employers.

If you are located in remote parts of Australia the local **Remote Jobs Community Program** providers are the equivalent in the community.

ACCI and its member industry associations have made some recommendations to government to make the task easier for you. See '*Employ Outside the Box*' for more relevant information relating to the broader aspects of taking advantage of the talents of a diverse workforce.

Depending on specific needs, businesses seeking to employ Indigenous Australians, as a first step may be able to access support services and funding.

Service providers may include:

- **Employment agencies** – some specialise in Indigenous employment.
- **Group Training Organisations** - recruitment of apprentices and trainees, including Indigenous Australians.
- **Training Providers** – help with work placements of Indigenous Australians in training, and recruitment of those who have completed accredited training.



Case Study 3

Type of assistance

3

Illawarra Retirement Trust working with Campbell Page to 'Employ Outside the Box'

Illawarra Retirement Trust (IRT) worked in partnership with Campbell Page – a not for profit Employment Service Provider to source, train and place Indigenous candidates in its Kangara Waters facility in the ACT. The approach has been to identify skills gaps and labour shortages within the facility and structure a candidate sourcing, training induction and recruitment program for aged care traineeships.

Campbell Page has strong links with the local Indigenous community, and was able to source candidates both through word of mouth referrals and through collaboration with its own and other Employment Service Providers.

IRT staff participated in "a day in the life of IRT" information sessions that gave candidates direct experience of what the jobs involved and included site visits as well as the opportunity to talk with existing Indigenous staff at the facility.

Candidates were then enrolled into traineeships with the IRT training arm, and mentoring support was provided both by IRT with the establishment of a buddy system, and by Campbell Page staff.

The result was 32 Indigenous people were employed in long term jobs with the Kangara Waters facility (over a two year period) in positions such as in direct care, cleaning, hospitality and grounds maintenance.



Government assistance

Both Federal and State Governments have programmes to encourage the employment of Indigenous Australians, that include wage subsidies, support for training and mentoring assistance, and, in some instances post placement assistance (where assistance can be provided to a worker whose job may be in jeopardy of being lost).

The Federal Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), which commenced in August 2014, has five flexible broad-based programmes designed to assist Indigenous people and communities. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) manages these programmes and is implementing them through its PM&C Regional Network. One of these programmes is outlined below.

The Jobs, Land and Economy Programme

The objective of this programme is to get Indigenous Australians into work, foster Indigenous business and assist Indigenous people to generate economic and social benefits through the use of their land and native title rights.

The assistance that can be offered to employers through this programme includes:

- Activities to support employment outcomes for Indigenous jobseekers.
- Activities to provide employment, training and participation services and build the skills and work readiness of Indigenous jobseekers.
- Development of Indigenous businesses and community enterprises.
- Activities that support jobs in sea and land management.

Please note that these are just suggested activities to demonstrate the flexibility of the Jobs, Land and Economy Programme. You should contact your PM&C Regional Network office to assist you with more details on how to apply for and access IAS programmes.

For more information about these programmes please contact **1800 079 098** or visit the website **www.dpnc.gov.au**

CAMPBELL PAGE

ACCI has partnered with Campbell Page to assist members and industry in creating direct links between industry needs and the workforce. For more information contact ACCI on **03 9668 9950**.



ACCI MEMBERS

ACCI CHAMBER MEMBERS: ACT AND REGION CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY BUSINESS SA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NORTHERN TERRITORY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY QUEENSLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY WESTERN AUSTRALIA NEW SOUTH WALES BUSINESS CHAMBER TASMANIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY VICTORIAN EMPLOYERS' CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

ACCI MEMBER NATIONAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS: ACCORD – HYGIENE, COSMETIC AND SPECIALTY PRODUCTS INDUSTRY AIR CONDITIONING & MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIAN BEVERAGES COUNCIL AUSTRALIAN DENTAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS & INDUSTRIES AUSTRALIAN FOOD & GROCERY COUNCIL ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES OPERATIONS GROUP AUSTRALIAN MADE CAMPAIGN LIMITED AUSTRALIAN MINES & METALS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIAN PAINT MANUFACTURERS' FEDERATION AUSTRALIAN RETAILERS' ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIAN SELF MEDICATION INDUSTRY BUS INDUSTRY CONFEDERATION CONSULT AUSTRALIA HOUSING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION LIVE PERFORMANCE AUSTRALIA MASTER BUILDERS AUSTRALIA LTD MASTER PLUMBERS' & MECHANICAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA NATIONAL BAKING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION NATIONAL ELECTRICAL & COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION NATIONAL FIRE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION NATIONAL RETAIL ASSOCIATION OIL INDUSTRY INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION PHARMACY GUILD OF AUSTRALIA PLASTICS & CHEMICALS INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION PRINTING INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA RESTAURANT & CATERING AUSTRALIA VICTORIAN AUTOMOBILE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
www.acci.asn.au | info@acci.asn.au | (02) 6273 2311 | twitter: #ACCIBIZVoice