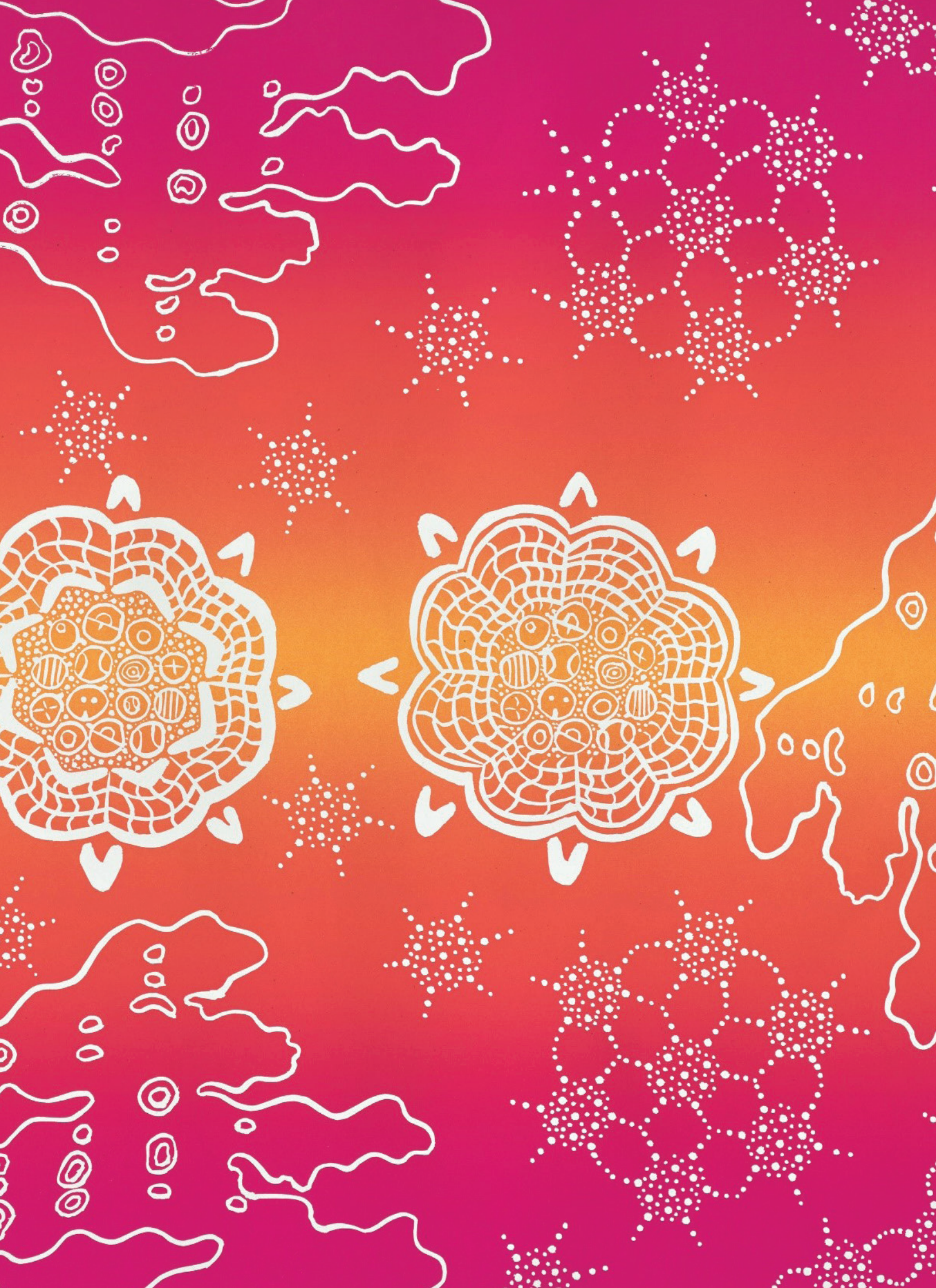


Tasmanian State Service

Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2026

Aboriginal Employment Strategy
State Service Management Office
Department of Premier and Cabinet



Acknowledging Aboriginal People and Country

Across the Tasmanian State Service, we respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of Country, Tasmanian Aboriginal People. We acknowledge and recognise their deep spiritual connections and relationships to Land, Sea, and Sky Country, since time began.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders, past and present, and acknowledge their important role in sharing knowledge and practices, keeping culture strong today.

We value the contributions Aboriginal people working in the Tasmanian State Service make on a daily basis.



Table of contents

Acknowledging Aboriginal People and Country	3
Artwork	6
Message from the Head of the State Service	7
Message from the TSS Aboriginal Employee Network	8
An explanation of terms used	9
Review of the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy	10
Our vision	11
Principles	12
The Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy	13
How we will deliver on the priority focus areas	16
Appendix 1: What the previous Strategy achieved	18

About the artwork – Linking Journeys

The artwork featured in this Strategy (elements of which also appear throughout) is a printed Lino-cut design with each section and image representing Tasmanian Aboriginal people and culture.

The kelp is a reminder of the need to sustain and look after our valuable resources and the background design represents different Tasmanian Aboriginal groups. The first of the three central circles represents Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations, the second represents Government agencies connecting with Aboriginal organisations, and the third represents all coming together with a strong focus on sustaining Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and Country.



About the artist

Takira Simon-Brown is a Palawa woman born in Nipaluna (Hobart) in 1983 and resides on the Trumanyapayna area of Paradareme country.

The majority of Takira's family reside at Truwuna (Cape Barren Island).

Takira is a descendant of Chief Mannalargenna of the Plangermaireener nation, and her grandmother, Joan Brown, was a well-known and highly respected shell stringer from Cape Barren Island.

Takira's mother, June Brown, practiced the ancient and unique cultural practice of shell stringing. Takira is an advocate of Aboriginal mental health and firmly believes that art, music, healthy food and supportive family and friends are essential for everyone, particularly those who struggle with mental health issues.

Note: In 2019, the artwork was commissioned by the State Service Management Office for the TSS Aboriginal Employment Strategy and Action Plans, and its associated initiatives and programs.



Message from the Head of the State Service

The Tasmanian State Service is committed to building a workforce that truly reflects Tasmania. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy sets a clear, whole-of-service direction to increase employment, support development, and ensure Aboriginal voices are heard and influential across government.

Aboriginal leadership and perspective already enrich our organisation in powerful ways. Through cultural knowledge and practices, professional expertise, and everyday contribution, Aboriginal employees strengthen our work and deepen our connection to the communities we serve. Our responsibility is to recognise this leadership, make space for it, and value it in all that we do.

This Strategy outlines how we will remove barriers, create stronger pathways, and embed Aboriginal perspectives. It is a vital step toward a more inclusive, capable, and culturally informed Tasmanian State Service. It reflects our commitment to honour Aboriginal knowledge and to ensure Aboriginal people have a rightful place in shaping our shared future.

I look forward to working together to bring this vision to life.

Kathrine Morgan-Wicks
Head of the State Service

Message from the TSS Aboriginal Employee Network

As Aboriginal people working in the Tasmanian State Service, we bring with us our culture, our kinships, our history, and our deep connections to Country. These foundations shape who we are and define our obligations to one another.

We understand the value we bring — through cultural knowledge and practices, through our professional skills, and through the responsibility we carry for our people and our Country. Our contribution is not an add on; it is central to building a public service that truly understands and reflects the people it employs and the communities it serves across Tasmania.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy represents an important commitment to us. It acknowledges the barriers we continue to face and sets a clear direction for creating workplaces where we are respected, valued, supported, and able to lead. It recognises that our voices must not only be heard but be influential in shaping decisions across government.

This Strategy is led and written by Aboriginal people. That matters. It reflects our lived experiences, our aspirations, and our expectations for a public service that honours Aboriginal knowledge and leadership.

For us, this Strategy is about more than employment. It is about ensuring Aboriginal people have a rightful place in the Tasmanian State Service — a place where our culture is valued, our leadership is recognised, and our perspectives are embedded in the way government works. It is a step toward a more inclusive, capable, and culturally informed public service, and toward a future shaped with us, not for us.

The Aboriginal Employee Network

An explanation of terms used

- The term **Aboriginal** is used throughout this document and respectfully includes both Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **Indigenisation** is the process by which Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, doing and relating are centrally embedded in educational, organisational, cultural and social structures within institutions, environments and systems. (Adapted from various definitions)
- **Cultural load** is the (often invisible) additional workload borne by Aboriginal people at work, where they are the only Aboriginal person or one of a small number of Aboriginal people.

This is often done without any discussion or agreement (formal or informal), no agreed reduction or alteration to their workload, or paid more responsibility duties allowance.

There is a fine line between working with Aboriginal people and burdening Aboriginal employees with extra, unpaid work.

Cultural load takes its toll on Aboriginal people and needs to be recognised as a work health and safety issue and should be managed in the workplace as such.

Cultural load is often in the form of extra work demands, which often include, but not limited to, being asked to organise significant (NAIDOC) events, or being asked to deliver a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgment.

There is also an expectation to educate other colleagues on Aboriginal Culture and represent (speak for) all Aboriginal people.

Please note: This definition has been adapted from the Diversity Council of Australia and continues to evolve.

- **Cultural Safety** An environment where Aboriginal people are safe to be themselves and respected for who they are spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Aboriginal people have a right to bring their 'whole selves' (cultural identity) to the workplace and not experience any challenge or assault on their Identity or culture.

Please note: This is a general definition and a shortened version.

- The **Tasmanian State Service** is shortened to TSS.
- **Agencies** include all Government Departments and State Authorities as defined in the *State Service Act 2000*.



Review of the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy

The previous Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy was launched in June 2019. In 2022, the State Service Management Office (SSMO) facilitated the review to evaluate the success of the Strategy and determine the requirements for the new strategy.

To help shape the future of Aboriginal employment in the Tasmanian State Service, Statewide forums were held with key stakeholders to review the Strategy. Aboriginal employees led the first two forums followed by a further two agency forums, which included human resources managers, recruitment, diversity representatives and hiring managers.

An additional meeting was held with the Aboriginal Partnerships team in Community Partnerships and Priorities.

Aboriginal people were invited to participate in the review via Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across the State.

Key themes identified in the review are:

- Ensure culturally safe workspaces – identify and risk manage cultural safety and cultural load
- Recognise, acknowledge and value the unique skill set Aboriginal people bring to the Tasmanian State Service
- Demonstrate understanding and valuing the importance that Aboriginal people are best placed (qualified) to being employed (best placed) in areas that deliver services to Aboriginal people
- Create, design, develop, and implement employment pathways for Aboriginal employees, including training and development.
- The Aboriginal Employee Network continues to contribute to the development of new initiatives and projects, as well as identifying current themes, issues and employment barriers to ensure work under the Strategy remains current.
- Ensure accountability on the implementation of strategy priorities and actions within each agency and across the whole of the Tasmanian State Service.

This Strategy builds on the achievements made under the previous Aboriginal Employment Strategy. This Strategy resets the direction and refreshes the commitment as a whole-of-service approach to support and enhance Aboriginal employment outcomes.

See *Appendix 1* for further details on the review of the previous Aboriginal Employment Strategy.



Our vision

We envision a Tasmanian State Service where Aboriginal people thrive — supported by a culturally safe, inclusive and accountable workforce, and strengthened by Aboriginal leadership at all levels.

Aboriginal employees will experience the Tasmanian State Service as a place where they are respected, valued, and supported to build meaningful and rewarding careers. They will feel safe to bring their whole selves to work, and confident that their culture, identity, and perspectives are recognised as strengths.

Success means Aboriginal people are represented across all levels of the State Service, including leadership. They are supported and enabled to succeed through systems and structures that remove barriers, recognise cultural knowledge and lived experience, and value their contribution appropriately.

Workplace culture, systems, and decision-making will reflect genuine cultural understanding and respect. Aboriginal voices will be embedded in decisions that affect Aboriginal people, ensuring services and policies are informed by lived experience and community connection.

Over time, the Tasmanian State Service will be recognised as an employer of choice for Aboriginal people. We will be an employer that leads in best practice, builds capability, and reflects the diversity, strength, and aspirations of Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

Principles

Aboriginal employees shaped the following principles which guided the development of this strategy.

- Aboriginal people bring their cultural, family and community knowledge and connections, their skills and their experiences to the workplace noting:
 - there is a cultural difference in Tasmanian Aboriginal people
 - there are Aboriginal people from other mobs across Australia working in the Tasmanian State Service
- Invasion has an impact on the everyday lives of Aboriginal people. Provide Aboriginal employees the space to have conversations with each other and with non-Aboriginal colleagues for a better understanding of Aboriginal lived experience
- Aboriginal employees navigate a range of cultural values, and political and personal challenges where their own values and expectations may not align with workplace policies, practices, and expectations.
- Aboriginal employees experience cultural load and family and/or community obligations impact this beyond standard work hours. Support must be provided when Aboriginal employees identify cultural load, family, and community obligations.



The Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy

The strategy focuses on five priority focus areas:

- 1. Retain and develop Aboriginal employees**
- 2. Attract and recruit Aboriginal people**
- 3. Provide culturally respectful (safe) workplaces which are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people**
- 4. Employ Aboriginal people to deliver culturally informed services and programs, with and for Aboriginal people**
- 5. Improve data collection, reporting, and sharing**

Focus Area 1 – Retain and develop Aboriginal employees

The Tasmanian State Service encourages and supports Aboriginal employees in the Tasmanian State Service to have rewarding, valued and fulfilling careers.

By providing meaningful career support and development opportunities, we aim to create a workplace that champions growth and progression of Aboriginal employees at all levels. We aim to create, develop and implement tailored initiatives that will facilitate connections to empower Aboriginal employees and nurture their professional journey.

We are also dedicated to enabling mobility across agencies and beyond, offering Aboriginal employees diverse pathways to broaden their skills and experience.

Furthermore, we will actively identify and address barriers to career development and advancement to ensure that Aboriginal employees are supported in fulfilling their professional aspirations.

Focus Area 2 – Attract and recruit Aboriginal people

The Tasmanian Government remains committed to increasing employment of Aboriginal people into the Tasmanian State Service through creating a workforce that is representative of the wider Tasmanian community, and acknowledges Aboriginal people bring value, unique expertise, knowledge and skills to all Tasmanian State Service agencies, service delivery and program areas.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CTG) has national socio-economic targets across areas that have an impact on life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The CTG target outcomes significant to the Strategy include:

- increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education, or training.
- increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed.

Focus Area 3 – Provide culturally respectful (safe) workplaces which are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people

The Tasmanian State Service recognises Aboriginal employees are important and valued members of its workforce.

In developing and maintaining culturally respectful (safe) workplaces, the Tasmanian State Service acknowledges that when Aboriginal people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, better outcomes are achieved.

We will continue to show our commitment to the process of indigenisation across all Tasmanian State Service workplaces and service delivery to ensure they are culturally respectful (safe) and culturally responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, are welcoming, respectful and culturally representative of Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

We will continue to grow and support membership of the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employee Network.

We will continue to promote and deliver Aboriginal Cultural Respect Training across the whole of the Tasmanian State Service to ensure all employees are culturally informed, respectful and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal employees and Aboriginal people impacted by TSS services and programs.

Focus Area 4 – Employ Aboriginal people to deliver culturally informed services and programs, with and for Aboriginal people

The Tasmanian State Service recognises that Aboriginal employees are best placed to ensure informed, culturally credible and respectful service provision to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people bring to the workplace unique historical, cultural and social perspectives based on their collective experiences that they can draw on to inform policy development and advice on service delivery and programs for Aboriginal people across the Tasmanian State Service.

While this priority area focuses on ensuring culturally informed services to Aboriginal people, as in Focus Area 2, we also must recognise that Aboriginal employees should work in diverse roles across a range of Tasmanian State Service agencies and services, to help ensure all programs and services are culturally informed, acknowledging the unique voices and culture of Aboriginal people across Tasmania. Opportunities for Aboriginal employment in the Tasmanian State Service are not limited to those working in areas providing services to Aboriginal people.

Focus Area 5 – Improve data collection, reporting, and sharing

Improving data collection, reporting, and sharing enables informed decision-making and targeted action. Accurate and comprehensive data about Aboriginal employee's representation, progression, and engagement within the Tasmanian State Service allows for a better understanding of workforce demographics, revealing challenges and opportunities for meaningful change.

Effective data sharing fosters collaboration, enabling insights that can lead to tailored initiatives that address specific needs or challenges faced by Aboriginal employees.

Transparent reporting on progress of Aboriginal employment initiatives holds the Tasmanian State Service accountable and promotes trust. Moreover, sharing results and achievements publicly helps to showcase the Tasmanian State Service's commitment to improving the increasing representation and improving the experience of Aboriginal employees.

How we will deliver on the priority focus areas

Delivering on the Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy priority focus areas will require an ongoing commitment from all agency employees to involve, work with, and listen to Aboriginal colleagues and Aboriginal people in the implementation of the Strategy and its associated objectives and actions.

Regular and consistent Aboriginal input, feedback and advice relating to the Strategy and its actions will continue to inform and shape current and future initiatives.

The State Service Management Office, in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, will lead the Strategy's implementation and will collaborate across all Tasmanian State Service agencies.

Through the development and implementation of the strategy, a key priority of the State Service Management Office will be to work with agencies to set targets, implement measures and develop reporting processes and timeframes to track the progress under each of the key strategic focus areas and objectives.

The Strategy is ongoing and driven by three-yearly Action Plans. The Strategy and associated action plans will be formally reviewed annually.

Governance

On behalf of the Employer, the Head of the State Service has overall responsibility for implementing the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Heads of Agencies are responsible for supporting the initiatives, championing and implementing actions within their agency and supporting initiatives across the Tasmanian State Service.



Implementation

The State Service Management Office (SSMO) will lead whole-of-service implementation of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy in collaboration with agencies, the TSS Aboriginal Employee Network and community. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy references five key focus areas to inform key objectives and actions in three-yearly Action Plans.

Monitoring

SSMO will monitor the progress of the application of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy through a range of measures, including by requesting information of agencies through the annual Agency Survey and conducting a Stakeholder Survey, which will ask community and agency stakeholders for their comment on the progress and effectiveness of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Reporting

Agencies will report quarterly on matters as determined by the HoSS, and this information will be included in the Tasmanian State Service Annual Report. An interim progress report will be prepared each year to monitor progress in the five priority focus areas to the relevant objectives and actions. The interim reports will inform the development of a full report at the end of each three-year period of the Action Plans.

Evaluation

SSMO will undertake an evaluation of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and associated action plan annually to inform future whole-of-service Aboriginal Employment Strategy Action Plans.

Acknowledgment of contributions to this strategy

We thank and acknowledge the valuable contributions from Aboriginal employees in the Tasmanian State Service, other Tasmanian State Service employees, and Aboriginal people outside the Tasmanian State Service in the development of this strategy.



Appendix 1: What the previous Strategy achieved

It is important to acknowledge that the previous Aboriginal Employment Strategy was a critical whole-of-service approach to Aboriginal employment in the Tasmanian State Service.

We had established an ambitious task to deliver on all the objectives initially set out over the three-year period of the Strategy. We are proud to report on what we have achieved as a whole-of-service approach.

In the spotlight:

- The Strategy's target was to increase the number of Aboriginal people working in the Tasmanian State Service from 3.0% in 2016 to 3.5% by 2022. The TSS Employee Survey (June 2024) revealed 3.65% of survey respondents self-identified as an Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Aboriginal Cultural Respect Training was delivered state-wide covering all TSS agencies and government authorities. From 2019 to 2025, 60 sessions have been delivered with 1087 TSS employees attending.
- In 2025 training was extended to include ARCH workers as part of their onboarding program.

Although training is specifically tailored for TSS employees, training content including culturally informed policies, practices as well as cultural safe spaces and the employment of Aboriginal people in this space is fundamental to work undertaken as part of the Commission of Inquiry recommendations. This was an opportunity for ARCH workers to participate in the same training as their state service colleagues ensuring consistency of learnings.

Please note: Arch is services and organisations that support people affected by sexual harm work together under the one roof to provide coordinated and collaborative, trauma-informed and victim-centred support.

- Aboriginal employees have access to new Aboriginal Cultural Leave provisions – effective from December 2022.
- Aboriginal Family Relationships are now recognised across all leave types – effective from December 2022.

Notable highlights:

- In 2025 writing draft guides on Aboriginal Cultural Safety and Cultural Load and Recruiting Aboriginal People to the TSS – A Culturally Informed Best Practice Guide
- In 2025 commenced research into Aboriginal Leadership Programs and Aboriginal Mentoring Programs to support retention and career development of Aboriginal people working in the TSS.
- In 2025 and 2024 video resources were produced to support the TSS Aboriginal Cultural Respect Training. Personal stories shared by Aboriginal people working in the TSS, providing deep insight into Aboriginal family and life experiences which are a critical element of the Training.
- In conjunction with the development of video resources, additional resources were developed for utilisation during NAIDOC Weeks 2025 and 2024. A 30-minute film showcasing Aboriginal employees collectively sharing their stories acknowledging NAIDOC Week. Both productions were viewed by over 1000 employees and feedback was overwhelmingly positive, empowering fundamental change in work practices.
- Since the beginning of 2025 Aboriginal women have representation on both the WSW Steering Committee and the Working Group. This was an outcome from the second Yarn on Country held in December 2024. The Yarn on Country was attended by women from the TSS Aboriginal Employee Network, the Women Supporting Women in Leadership Program Steering Committee and Working Group.
- The Tasmanian State Service Aboriginal Employee Network of 100+ members, contributing to a range of cultural and professional initiatives, practices and learning opportunities. In 2024 the Network's Terms of Reference was endorsed by members.
- The TSS Aboriginal Employment e-newsletter continues to regularly receive positive feedback from subscribers. Subscriptions have significantly increased, close to 1000 TSS employees. Training, learning and development opportunities, Aboriginal employee profiles as well as promoting cultural safety, culturally informed practices and acknowledging the strengths and successes of Aboriginal employees are regularly featured.
- Youth employment focus with four Aboriginal graduates recruited to the TSS Graduate Development Program and two Aboriginal trainees commenced in the Tasmanian State Service School-Based Traineeship Program across 2021 to 2025.
- Increase of Aboriginal Identified roles across the Tasmanian State Service from 70 in 2019 to 110 in 2022.
- The initial TSS *Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country and the Welcome to Country* Guide released in November 2021. Updated in 2025.
- The Calendar of Aboriginal Significant Dates and Events, promoting local and national Aboriginal events and commemorative days launched in 2021.
- The Aboriginal Employment Portal, launched in 2019, provides cultural and resource support to Aboriginal people to assist in gaining and maintaining employment in the Tasmanian State Service.

What we learned from the review process

Feedback from the previous Strategy review workshops indicated change has been across some key action areas. In order to attract and recruit Aboriginal people to the Tasmanian State Service we need to better support and develop the careers and aspirations of Aboriginal employees. We need to create and implement training opportunities and be creative in pathway design such as mobility and secondments within and outside the Tasmanian State Service.

We need to identify barriers impacting career progression as we continue to see low numbers of Aboriginal people occupying management and senior leadership positions.

We have more work to do to ensure every Aboriginal employee is working in a culturally safe and responsive environment. We need to better understand cultural load, the impact it has, and what actions we need to take to reduce the load on Aboriginal employees and be accountable for our own learnings, thinking and actions.

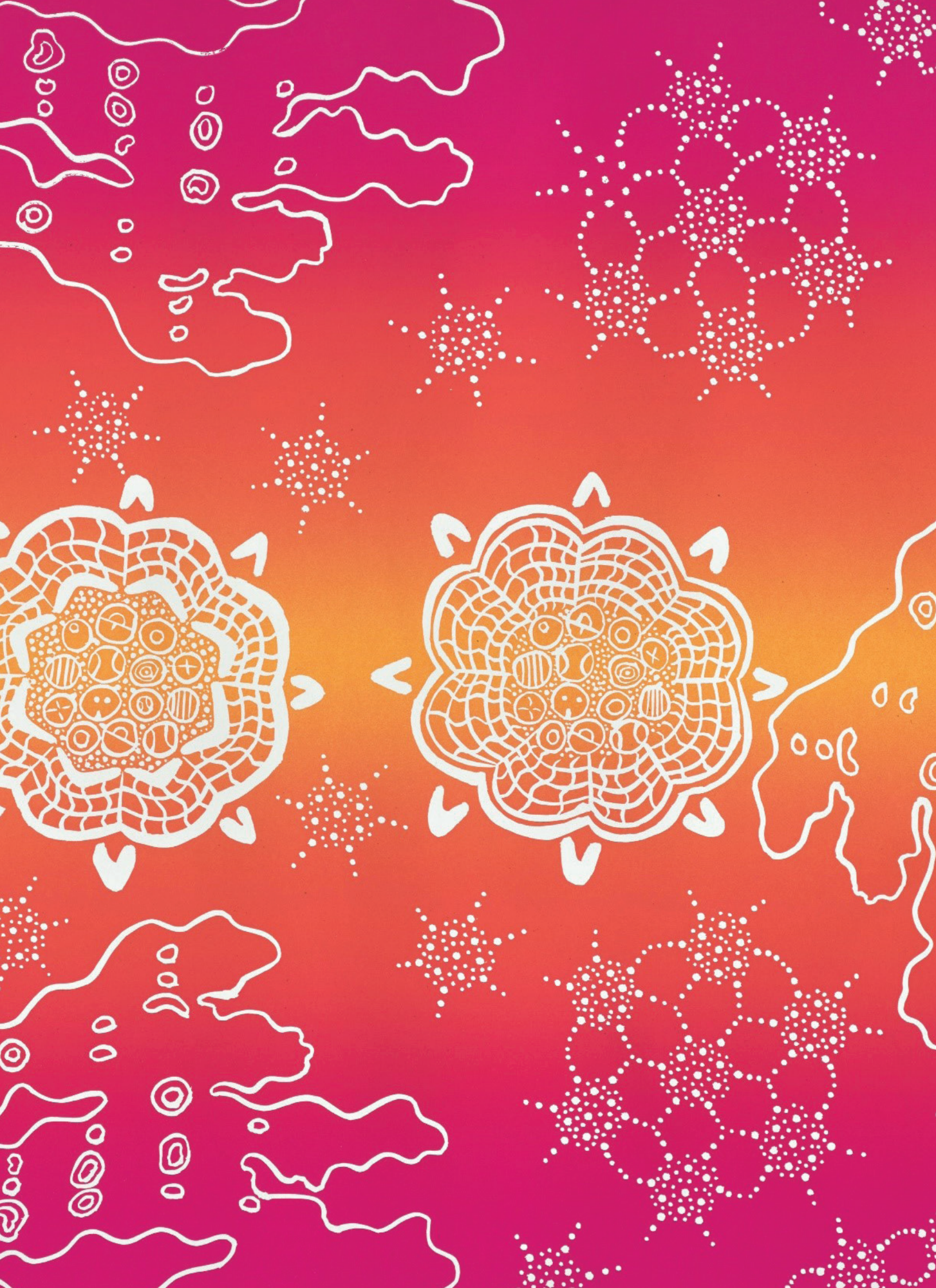
The review process identified:

- The need for a clear and agreed reporting process for accountability and implementation of actions and initiatives for each agency.
- The need to set targets and implement measures to track progress under each of the key strategic focus areas and objectives
- To have a culturally appropriate, accessible and supportive recruitment process, including easy to read position descriptions to attract and recruit Aboriginal people into the TSS.
- The need to increase understanding across the Tasmanian State Service of Aboriginal cultures, including:
 - The additional pressures, expectations and challenges faced by Aboriginal employees of 'walking in two worlds' while maintaining their cultural integrity, cultural identity and obligations to family and community.
 - The additional pressures of cultural load placed on Aboriginal employees; and
 - The value in, and recognition of the essential qualifications of Aboriginal Identified positions including Aboriginal lived experiences, Aboriginal leadership, cultural knowledge, skills, community and family connections, knowledge of issues and aspirations.
- Recognition of how the challenging relationship between the Tasmanian Government and Aboriginal people in Tasmania impacts Aboriginal people working in the Tasmanian State Service, as well as attracting and recruiting Aboriginal people.

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