



Geoscience Australia

Indigenous Employment Strategy

2016-18

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Foreword from the General Manager, Corporate Services



Geoscience Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the traditional owners and custodians of Australia. We also acknowledge the special relationship Indigenous Australians have with the lands and seas which comprise the focus of our work.

I am pleased to present Geoscience Australia's first Indigenous Employment Strategy. This strategy sets out clear steps in demonstrating our strong commitment to improving employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for the mutual benefit of Geoscience Australia and the communities in which we operate.

We also commit to playing our part in advancing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by developing a Reconciliation Action Plan. We undertake, through this strategy and our Reconciliation Action Plan, to improve our knowledge of the culture and history of Indigenous Australians and promote a culturally competent workforce.

In my role as Executive Champion of the Indigenous Employment Strategy I look forward to working closely with our employees, our senior leadership team, community organisations and other Commonwealth entities to help realise our collective vision for reconciliation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trent Rawlings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Trent Rawlings
General Manager, Corporate Services

24 June 2016

1 Drivers for change

At Geoscience Australia we recognise the need to take action to improve the representation of Indigenous Australians in employment and contribute to reducing the gap in employment-related outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

In 2015 the Australian Government established a target of three per cent Indigenous employment in the Commonwealth by 2018, as set out in the *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy*¹. The Commonwealth target is expected to be achieved through specified targets reflecting each entity's current Indigenous representation and regional footprint; Geoscience Australia's target Indigenous representation is 2.5 percent of its total workforce. Geoscience Australia will progress toward its target through a range of purposeful actions and initiatives addressing attraction, recruitment, development and retention, as set out in this strategy.

Geoscience Australia also recognises the importance of diversity in building the high performance culture which will see us successfully deliver our strategic priorities and exceed the expectations of our stakeholders. Diversity is critical to increasing innovation, improving employee engagement and retention, and optimising our ability to attract the talent needed to deliver our programs. Indigenous employees, specifically, can add valuable perspective by drawing our attention to issues of importance to the Indigenous communities in which our programs operate.

2 Objectives

This strategy aims to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Geoscience Australia workforce to 2.5 percent by 2018 as well as strengthen foundations for greater Indigenous representation in the future. The initiatives cover the following areas of focus, which are aligned with the key action areas set out in the Commonwealth strategy:

1. Attraction and recruitment—to expand the range of Indigenous employment opportunities.
2. Retention—to invest in developing the capability of Indigenous employees.
3. Development and advancement—to increase the representation of Indigenous employees in senior roles.
4. Workplace Culture—to improve the awareness of Indigenous culture in the workplace

Figure 1 below shows the representation of Indigenous employees at Geoscience Australia from 2010 to 2016. As at June 2016, 0.5 percent of Geoscience Australia's workforce (three employees of a total 607) had self-identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. It is widely recognised that recording accurate diversity data is difficult due to the non-compulsory obligation on employees to provide this information, and the historical reluctance of Indigenous Australians to disclose their

¹ Australian Public Service Commission (2015). *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy*. Available online at <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/commonwealth-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-employment-strategy>.

heritage in the workplace. As at June 2016, Geoscience Australia has 63 employees who have either chosen not to provide a response or who have left the question blank when commencing employment. People and Culture will seek to refresh diversity data by seeking updated information from all employees during July 2016.

The reluctance to identify Indigenous heritage may be attributed to a range of cultural factors, however through the actions contained in the Workplace culture section of this strategy Geoscience Australia will continue to build and nurture an inclusive culture in which Indigenous employees are more likely to be comfortable identifying their cultural heritage.

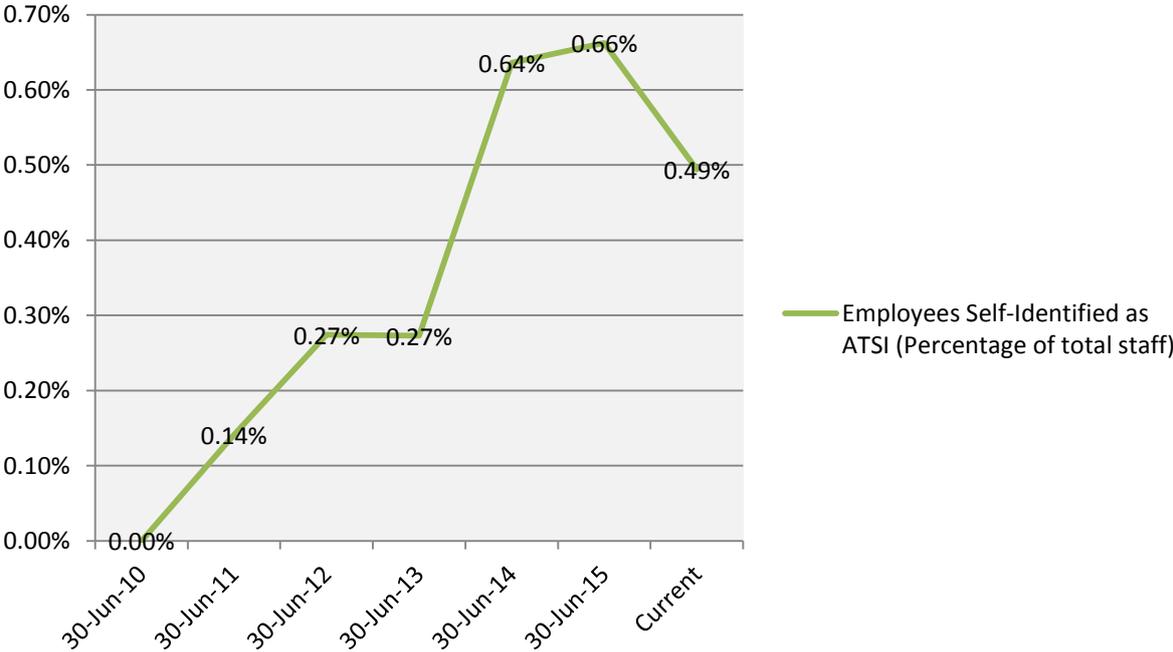


Figure 1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representation at Geoscience Australia (2010 to present)

3 Strategic Framework

This Indigenous Employment Strategy will be complemented by a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The Indigenous Strategy, together with a suite of other diversity strategies, forms part of the Inclusive Culture Program which is aligned with the Geoscience Australia Strategic Plan as shown in *Figure 2* below.



Figure 2 – Strategy link between the Inclusive Culture Program and Geoscience Australia’s organisational strategic plans

4 Consultation

Geoscience Australia recognises the importance of involving all staff, particularly its Indigenous staff, in issues which affect them. In 2016 Geoscience Australia established (by open invitation to all staff) a RAP Working Group, with its primary purpose to contribute to and advise on Geoscience Australia’s Indigenous initiatives, including the Reconciliation Action Plan and the Indigenous Employment Strategy.

In addition to the RAP Working Group, the Cultural Reference Group provides a mechanism for employee consultation on this strategy. The Cultural Reference Group provides input to the

development and implementation of the Inclusive Culture Program, including consulting with employees and representing their views on initiatives relevant to the program. Membership consists of the Chief Executive Officer, an Executive Champion, a representative from People and Culture, 12 internal members and two external advisors.

Due to the small representation of Indigenous Australians in the current Geoscience Australia workforce, input on specific recruitment and retention initiatives was also sought from representatives of Indigenous Employee Networks of a number of other APS agencies via the Inter-Agency Indigenous Employee Network. Geoscience Australia acknowledges this contribution and is grateful for the advice and information provided.

5 Reporting

The Geoscience Australia Advisory Board will review and monitor the implementation of the actions quarterly via the Cultural Reference Group reporting structure and directly through updates provided by the Director, People and Culture. The Cultural Reference Group will also provide regular updates and information on Indigenous strategies to staff through existing communication channels, in addition to formal updates provided by the Executive team.

Information linked to the outcomes of Geoscience Australia's diversity programs is accessible to external stakeholders in the form of employee representation data in each Geoscience Australia Annual Report, available on the Geoscience Australia web site at <http://www.ga.gov.au/about/corporate-documents/annual-report>.

6 Key Action Areas

6.1 Attraction and Recruitment

The delivery of Geoscience Australia's programs relies on a high level of tertiary education across the majority of its technical workforce. The Geoscience Australia graduate program has generally required a minimum of an Honours degree (or Masters or PhD) in an earth science, technology, engineering or mathematics related discipline. However with Indigenous students representing only 1.4 percent of total Australian tertiary graduates across all disciplines² this requirement would further constrain the pool from which Geoscience Australia can engage Indigenous employees.

The shift toward higher educational qualifications across the Australian Public Service (APS) has been identified as a key challenge³ requiring targeted strategies to support Indigenous students. Within Geoscience Australia, this strategy invests in supporting young Indigenous Australians to complete their studies in relevant areas as well as upskilling Indigenous candidates for general employment suitability and work-readiness. Unlike the broader graduate program, the consideration of engaging Indigenous graduates or employees should not be limited to post-graduate study or narrow technical disciplines.

The pool of skilled and/or tertiary qualified Indigenous candidates is highly sought after as a result of diversity targets established widely across the public and private sectors, hence the need for concerted efforts to attract these candidates and to provide rewarding and engaging career opportunities at Geoscience Australia for these candidates. This requires us to strive to become an employer of choice for Indigenous candidates through:

- an investment in building the profile of Geoscience Australia externally (particularly through partnerships with universities with Indigenous students in relevant courses)
- building a clear understanding of what Indigenous candidates expect and want from their employers over the course of their careers
- building cultural competency in Indigenous affairs across the broader Geoscience Australia workforce to foster an inclusive work environment.

Roles at Geoscience Australia are primarily based in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, with limited ability for staff to operate effectively on a permanent or long-term basis from other locations due to the specialised nature of the work and associated equipment and resources. The Australian Capital Territory has the smallest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians of all states and territories⁴, highlighting the importance of recruitment strategies with national reach and ensuring systems and structures are in place to support Indigenous employees who relocate from rural or remote areas to Canberra to pursue a career with Geoscience Australia.

² ANAO (2014). *Indigenous Employment in Australian Government Entities*. Report No. 33 2013-2014, p.19

³ Ibid.

⁴ Data (2011 census) retrieved from the Australian Bureau of Statistics site at <http://www.abs.gov.au> on 11 April 2016

Attraction and recruitment actions

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Outcomes/Measures</i>
Undergraduate		
<p>Sponsorship of 1-2 cadets per year under the Indigenous Cadetship Support (ICS) Program</p> <p><i>(Refer to Appendix A for program information)</i></p>	<p>Recruitment team and People Strategy to identify and establish connection with suitable candidates</p> <p>Section placements to be identified based on candidates' areas of study/interest, but will require commitment from Division and Branch Heads and supervisors once placement options are identified</p>	<p>2016 – Establish two cadetship positions and source suitable candidates</p> <p>2017 – One new cadetship commenced, plus continued sponsorship of 2016 cohort (if study program is not yet complete)</p> <p>2018 – One new cadetship commenced, plus continued sponsorship of existing cadets through to completion of their studies</p> <p>Target retention rate upon graduation of at least 50 percent, either into Geoscience Australia Graduate Program or other existing positions</p>
Graduate		
<p>Establishment of two positions in the 2018 APS Indigenous Graduate Program</p> <p><i>(Refer to Appendix B for program information)</i></p>	<p>People Strategy to coordinate initiative in cooperation with the Australian Public Service Commission Employment Strategy Group</p> <p>People and Culture (Recruitment and Development Team Leader) to liaise with candidates</p>	<p>Target commencement of two candidates in January 2018</p> <p>Program review/reorientation by end of 2018</p>

Traineeships / Entry Level / APS1-3		
Involvement in Indigenous Australian Government Development Program and/or the Indigenous Trainees Program within the APSC Pathways initiative <i>(Refer to Appendix C for program information)</i>	People Strategy to coordinate external program involvement People and Culture (Recruitment Manager) to liaise with candidates	Establish up to two traineeship positions to be recruited in partnership with these programs Upon conclusion of the programs, suitable ongoing positions should be identified in consultation with trainees
General Recruitment and Building Future Candidate Pool		
Develop a policy and/or framework for assessing (in conjunction with business areas) the suitability of positions for Affirmative Measures <i>(Refer to Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2013, cl. 2.15)</i>	Recruitment Manager	Special Measures suitability assessment of positions is incorporated as business as usual practice by December 2016
Review recruitment methods and processes to identify and address barriers to Indigenous employment and continuously adopt best practice on Indigenous attraction and recruitment strategies Engage specialist Indigenous recruitment/placement services where appropriate.	Recruitment Manager and People Strategy Manager	Ongoing initiative Initiatives to be reported to the Cultural Reference Group annually commencing December 2016
Research and develop high school outreach program to promote scientific career options, including Geoscience Australia work experience program	Led by Recruitment and People Strategy, with practical support from across Geoscience Australia as required	Program designed and implemented by June 2017 Assessment of outcomes and program review by Dec 2018

6.2 Retention

Initiatives aimed at the retention of Indigenous employees are critical to ensure that the outcomes of any successful intake/recruitment programs are not diminished by an inability to retain existing or new Indigenous employees. Geoscience Australia recognises the importance of engaging meaningfully with its Indigenous employees to ensure that their individual needs are being met through workplace diversity (and other) programs, and that any barriers to full and rewarding participation in our workforce (perceived or actual) are being actively addressed.

In addition to the range of employee support, health and wellbeing, and networking programs currently operating for the benefit of Geoscience Australia employees, initiatives to support the unique needs of Indigenous employees will be explored. Until Geoscience Australia has sufficient Indigenous representation within its own workforce to enable an Indigenous Employee Network to be set up, it is valuable to establish connections with the networks of other APS agencies to facilitate this peer-to-peer support between Indigenous employees. This will enable sharing of common experiences and provide additional support for Indigenous employees who have left their home location to take up employment with Geoscience Australia.

In addition to meeting the needs of individual employees, Geoscience Australia will work to increase the visibility of Indigenous culture across the organisation through its RAP and the related activities and celebrations. It is hoped that respectfully acknowledging Indigenous traditions and adhering to appropriate protocols, with the involvement of Indigenous staff, will improve Indigenous retention rates as well as increase the willingness of employees to identify their Indigenous heritage by building an inclusive workplace culture.

Retention actions

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Outcomes/Measures</i>
Establish a Geoscience Australia Indigenous Peer Support Program	Structure to be researched and informed through Cultural Reference Group and RAP Working Group Initial setup/management by People and Culture, ongoing program management to be transferred to Indigenous Employee Network once established	Program structure established, communicated via Intranet and Induction Program Peer support contact offered to new Indigenous employees from January 2017
Provide access to external support programs and networking	People Strategy	External resources and support network contacts to be collated and provided on the Geoscience Australia intranet by July 2016

6.3 Development and advancement

Data shows that Indigenous employees are more commonly employed at entry level and rarely progress at the same rate as non-Indigenous employees across the APS, resulting in underrepresentation in senior management levels. While this reflects long-standing differences in access to education and employment opportunities, Geoscience Australia is committed to ensuring its Indigenous employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge to progress their careers at the same rate as their non-Indigenous colleagues, with equal opportunities to demonstrate their suitability for promotion up to and including the levels of senior management.

Geoscience Australia has a comprehensive Learning and Development framework and through the range of programs already on offer, as well as tailored development plans, Indigenous employees will continue to be supported to build the skills and experience necessary for career advancement.

Development and advancement actions

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Outcomes/Measures</i>
Participate in APS mobility programs for high performing Indigenous employees	People Strategy to coordinate involvement	Assess ability to participate based on employee representation and the maturity of the APS mobility program by June 2017
Mentoring program	Learning and Development Team to engage directly with new Indigenous employees to encourage access to the mentoring program	Mentoring program promoted to all new identified Indigenous employees within three months of commencement of employment

6.4 Workplace culture

Geoscience Australia will continue to foster an inclusive workplace culture that allows all employees to feel respected and valued in the workplace. Particular emphasis will be placed on the education and awareness of all employees on Indigenous culture and heritage, in addition to the establishment of programs that support the specific needs of Indigenous employees.

Workplace culture actions

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Outcomes/Measures</i>
<p>Mandate an acknowledgment of Country for all formal meetings, conferences and events.</p> <p>Include a script for Acknowledgement of Country in the Raggatt Theatre and Scrivener Rooms to encourage usage and awareness.</p>	<p>People and Culture</p> <p>GA Executive</p>	<p>Acknowledgment of country becomes usual practice for formal meetings, conferences and events.</p> <p>This will include at a minimum the Annual General Meeting and mid-year employee forum.</p>
<p>Improve the profile and visibility of Geoscience Australia's commitment to Indigenous employment through Executive leadership participation in cross-agency initiatives to promote and facilitate collaboration.</p>	<p>Indigenous Champion (with support from People and Culture)</p>	<p>Nominate for inclusion in the Indigenous Senior Management Champions Network commencing in 2016.</p>
<p>Integrate Indigenous cultural awareness into development and orientation programs and/or provide cultural awareness training for general staff</p>	<p>Learning and Development Team</p>	<p>Training to be progressively rolled out from July 2016</p>

<p>Comprehensive cultural competency training for supervisors and employees.</p>	<p>People and Culture</p>	<p>Regular training and education provided to employees to drive workplace culture</p> <p>Cultural awareness training to be provided to Senior Leaders in June 2016 and at least every 18 months thereafter</p> <p>Cultural awareness session to be conducted annually with invitation to all employees.</p> <p>An e-learning module to be made available for all employees by September 2016</p>
<p>Finalise a Reconciliation Action Plan that includes actions to implement a range of activities within the workplace to promote awareness of Indigenous culture and create an inclusive environment for Indigenous employees</p>	<p>People Strategy</p>	<p>Reconciliation Action Plan formally agreed by March 2017</p>

7 Further Information

For further information on this strategy, contact the program owner:

Director, People and Culture, Geoscience Australia or contact HRstrategy@ga.gov.au.

Appendix A

Indigenous Cadetship Support Program Overview

Program Owner	Department of Employment
Summary	<p>The Indigenous Cadetship Support Program (ICS) links Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in a cadetship arrangement with employers who provide them with work placements that complement their course of study, and offer ongoing employment once they complete their studies.</p> <p>The aim of the ICS Program is to assist students develop the skills to transition into work at the conclusion of study, and to assist employers source Indigenous tertiary students who, at the conclusion of study, are work-ready and already acquainted with the organisation. The expectation is that a full-time, ongoing role will be offered to the student at the completion of their studies.</p> <p>The student is employed under the applicable Enterprise Agreement.</p> <p>Employers are responsible for the recruitment process, however support is provided by the Department of Employment via a database of eligible students.</p> <p>Geoscience Australia is currently a registered employer in the ICS Program.</p>
Structure	The program is based on full-time study load and negotiated work placements of 12 weeks per year for the duration of the student's study program
Costs	<p>Salary costs of 12 weeks per annum at the APS 1-3 rate, to be paid during the work placement or spread across the year</p> <p>\$10,368 - \$15,570 per student per annum⁵</p>
Subsidies	<p>\$6,500 (excl GST) per semester study allowance and books/equipment allowance (allocated to the student through the employer's payroll system).</p> <p>\$500 per semester paid to the employer to cover administrative costs</p> <p>The employer is required to invoice the Department of Employment each semester.</p> <p>No wage subsidy is provided.</p> <p>The Department may approve (in advance) a subsidy to the employer to assist with the cadet's travel and accommodation costs. This is considered on a case-by-case basis.</p>
Further Information	https://www.ics.employment.gov.au/ or ics-mailbox@pmc.gov.au

⁵ Estimate based on Geoscience Australia Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019, APS1-3 rates upon commencement of the agreement. Cost includes superannuation.

Appendix B

Indigenous Graduate Program Overview

Program Owners	Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) and Geoscience Australia
Summary	<p>The APSC Indigenous Graduate Program provides support in sourcing and selecting suitable candidates for placement in Commonwealth entities. The program complements the attraction and selection strategies already in place for the Geoscience Australia Graduate Program.</p> <p>Participants in the APSC Graduate Intake are also provided with additional support to build personal and professional networks across the APS.</p>
Structure	The Geoscience Australia graduate program is a one year program for university graduates providing structured learning and exposure to Geoscience Australia's programs through three rotations across key priority areas and a range of other formal and informal development activities.
Costs	<p>Ongoing salary costs starting at Graduate Broadband (\$61,939 per annum as at June 2016 plus superannuation and on-costs)⁶</p> <p>Relocation assistance and temporary accommodation may be paid in some circumstances.</p>
Subsidies	Not applicable
Further Information	APSC Indigenous Liaison Officer - indigenous@apsc.gov.au or 1300 656 009

⁶ Based on Geoscience Australia Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019

Appendix C

Indigenous Traineeship and Apprenticeship Programs Overview

1. Indigenous Australian Government Development Program (IAGDP)

Program Ownership	Department of Employment, Department of Education and Training
Summary	The IAGDP Program is targeted at Indigenous Australians interested in working in the APS. The program combines a diploma level qualification with full-time work experience, on-the-job training and other learning and development opportunities.
Structure	The program runs for 15 months with candidates employed at the APS3 level whilst completing a Diploma of Government, progressing to APS4 level upon completion. (choice of specialist streams including Project Management, Procurement, Contract Management, Frontline Management, Statistics, Investigations or Community Capacity).
Costs	Ongoing salary costs starting at APS 3 level (\$54,994 p/a plus superannuation and oncosts) ⁷ Relocation assistance and temporary accommodation, if applicable
Subsidies	Not applicable
Further Information	https://www.education.gov.au/indigenous-australian-government-development-programme-iagdp iagdp@ssc.gov.au or 02 6240 3737

2. Indigenous Apprenticeship Program (IAP)

Program Ownership	Department of Human Services
Summary	The IAP is an apprenticeship program specifically developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates wishing to enter the APS and provides a tailored approach to learning based on academic and cultural requirements. The program combines full-time work in an entry-level position with study toward a nationally recognised certificate or diploma qualification.
Structure	The apprenticeship program consists of 12 months of full-time work in an entry-level position in the field of policy/program development, service delivery or

⁷ Based on Geoscience Australia Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019 upon commencement of agreement

	<p>administration. The apprentice concurrently studies toward a Certificate IV (Government, Project Management or Service Delivery) or Diploma level (Government, Project Management or Community Engagement) qualification.</p> <p>The apprentice commences at the APS2 or APS3 level (dependent upon on the role and a candidate assessment), progressing to APS3 or APS4 level upon completion of the program.</p>
Costs	<p>Ongoing salary costs starting at APS2 or APS3 level (\$48,274-\$54,994 p/a) plus superannuation and oncosts⁸</p> <p>Relocation assistance and temporary accommodation, if applicable</p> <p>Approximate cost of \$5,000 per student for the Cert IV training delivery</p>
Subsidies	Not applicable
Further Information	<p>https://www.humanservices.gov.au/corporate/careers/indigenous-apprenticeship-programme</p> <p>IAP@hudson.com or 1300 856 993</p>

⁸ Based on Geoscience Australia Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019 upon commencement of agreement