

# Case Studies of Success



Skills & Training for a Career



*“Sitting at the heart of participation in the economy is paid employment. Long-term Indigenous unemployment is at an unacceptably high level [17%<sup>1</sup>] and all the evidence points to the collateral social damage this causes. Understanding the paths to sustained employment is fundamental. Our hope is that the insights from these case studies will shed light on what it takes for those pathways to be created and encourage the kind of partnerships and engagement forward-thinking employers can take that will help them access a talented and loyal workforce and create needed social change.”*

*Michael Traill,  
CEO Social Ventures Australia*

<sup>1</sup> Approximately 17 % of very long-term unemployed job seekers are Indigenous people.  
Source: 'Investing to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians'  
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

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## Case Studies of Success in Transitioning Long-Term Unemployed Indigenous Australians into Sustainable Employment

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# Working it Out

## Case Studies of Success in Transitioning Long-term Unemployed Indigenous Australians into Sustainable Employment

### INTRODUCTION

Australia is wasting its talent. Throughout the country, but particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, competent and capable Australians who could take an active role in wealth creation and be economically productive are excluded by circumstances, history, or barriers that can potentially be overcome. In particular, Indigenous<sup>2</sup> Australians are over-represented in this group - they are three times more likely to be unemployed than other Australians and are more likely to be long-term unemployed<sup>3</sup>.

Taking actions to get long-term unemployed - including Indigenous Australians - into the workforce makes business sense for organisations that are struggling to fill vacancies with good people. Within this pool of potential recruits are people who, given the right training and support, can excel in employment. This report looks at six case studies of successful programs that have attracted long-term unemployed Indigenous Australians back into the workforce. It is intended to be detailed, grounded in practical reality and to personalise the experiences of the individuals involved so that others can learn from their experience.

Attracting and retaining long-term unemployed Indigenous Australians - or indeed anyone - isn't simple, however. The ingrained reasons for their disconnection from the workforce cannot be rectified overnight, or by addressing the solution from only one perspective.

It therefore necessitates programs that draw on a network of partners with existing expertise that have a commitment to achieve change. This takes determination from the leadership at the employer (who must want to increase the diversity of their workforce and must be able to clearly articulate the business benefits from doing so) to the people who make the program work each day: staff at the employer, trainers, Job Service Australia (JSA) providers, educational establishments, and community leaders. These people are critical!

A desire to encourage long-term unemployed Indigenous Australians back into the workforce is far from universal. But there are plenty of employers who want to do so. There are also significant resources available to do this work, in particular from government. Those wishing to be successful must ensure that:

- The program has the right elements
- A true spirit of partnership prevails in the entire 'system' within which the program is operating (i.e. the other organisations, communities and individuals who have a role to play)
- The employer is absolutely and resolutely certain that they want to be successful, and understands the business rationale
- All others within the system are equally determined
- Clear outcome targets are set and tracked

<sup>2</sup> Note that throughout this report, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are referred to as 'Indigenous Australians'

<sup>3</sup> ABS (2006)

- The right people are identified to run the program and throughout the local system; and they are supported to make their own decisions which are tailored to their local context and may be risky or challenging
- A long-term funding and resourcing approach is found and taken to support them.

While getting the right program elements is challenging, the greater challenge is ensuring that the right people with the right mindset are in place across the system and that they have the flexibility to do what they know are the right things that deliver employment results.

Many of the insights from these case studies may not only apply to long-term unemployed Indigenous Australians but are likely to be relevant to other groups excluded from the workforce for lengthy periods. We encourage those who are working in these arenas to test our insights.

## THE FRAMEWORK

Our enquiry was based on a set of overarching questions:

- How do you support long-term unemployed Indigenous people to be ready for work?
- How do you support work to be ready for them?
- How do you support them into work?
- How do you keep them in work and help them progress?

The answer to these questions involves three distinct elements: the program, the employer and the local system within which the program is running. Together these elements can create the conditions to support an individual into a sustainable career, but they all need to work in conjunction and in concert.

Our findings are presented through the lens of a key member of the system, generally the employer and the context in which they operate. We have chosen this approach for two reasons:

- 1) We believe that it will make greater sense for employers/businesses - our primary audience - who read this report
- 2) We have observed that when employers are driving the system, they can lay the foundation for a successful program aligned around real employment outcomes.

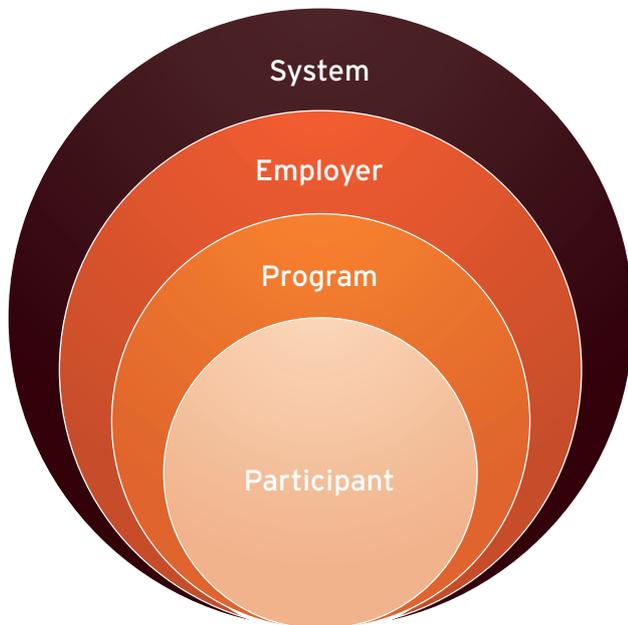
This does not discount the relevance of this framework to other partners working in the system, it is simply a lens through which to view our findings.

The employer is the organisation who has jobs available and is looking to fill them with high quality candidates, including or in particular Indigenous Australians.

Their system is made up of a group of organisations and individuals outside of the employer who contribute deliberately to the achievement of the employment outcomes. These include (but are not limited to): the Indigenous community and families; training organisations; JSA providers and other employment services; government agencies (e.g. housing); and other community service providers.

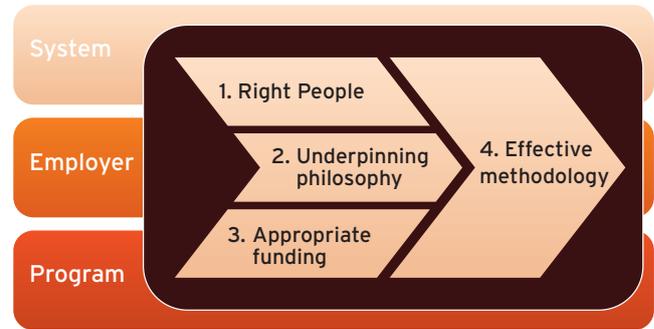
The program refers to the broad set of activities that occur from the first contact between an individual participant and the employer/system and continues post-employment until 'transition' is complete and they are making headway in a sustainable career.

While many individuals and organisations do not view their experience as a 'program', we use the concept here to distinguish the set of specific activities which contribute to the employment outcomes. In practice, some of these activities will be seen by the individual and organisation as 'business as usual'.



Within each element, we have found that a set of consistent characteristics underpin the models that lead to successful employment outcomes for long-term unemployed Indigenous people; these can be summarised under the headings of: right people; underpinning philosophy; appropriate funding and effective methodology.

- **Right people** refers to the need for people with the skills and capabilities required, in the right places and sufficiently resourced
- **Underpinning philosophy** includes the values and beliefs that underpin the approach and decisions of the people
- **Appropriate funding** refers to the budget and other resources available and how they are accessed
- **Effective methodology** is the activities, approach and processes deployed



Two things are particularly notable in this framework; the inclusion of system and philosophy. The system recognises that no single organisation can work in isolation and be successful in delivering employment outcomes. Instead it takes a network of interconnected individuals and the organisations they represent, aligned to a common purpose and working closely together. For our purposes then, developing an understanding of what creates an effective system within the context of Indigenous employment is critical.

Philosophy has been elevated to a core element of this framework because despite many differences in how they manifest, we have found that a consistent and pertinent set of beliefs and attitudes drive the behaviours and actions in successful programs, employers and systems.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

### Case Study Selection

To enable the widest range of insights from the set of case studies, our approach was designed to seek a spread of cases across different Australian contexts. This approach would enable us to determine those success factors that were consistent and those that were context specific. We anticipated that the contextual factors most likely to influence our findings would be geography (remote, regional, urban), employer size (small-medium, large), and industry.

Drawing on the networks of GenerationOne and Social Ventures Australia we initially cast a wide net to identify potential case studies. We then filtered these cases based on:

- 1) Whether they were working with long-term unemployed Indigenous people (many of the examples seen, and the cases, did not work exclusively with long-term unemployed, but they did make up a significant proportion of participants)

- 2) Whether they were understood to be delivering significant employment outcomes; and
- 3) Whether they could commit the time required to participate, their preparedness to introduce us to their partners and their ability to share data which demonstrated their outcomes.

Whilst we sought case studies that could demonstrate outcomes, we have not limited ourselves to specific metrics or benchmarks because we appreciate that each program and the contexts within which they operate are different.

The study began with a pilot to test our ongoing hypotheses, framework and tools with the intent to refine these prior to rolling out the remaining case studies. The pilot was conducted with Crown and Burswood Entertainment complexes in Melbourne and Perth. Crown and Burswood were chosen because of their impressive results - which were known to the project team - and also because there was significant support from the executive team. They had data available that they were willing to share, and they were in major cities that were accessible to interviewers. Being sister organisations, we decided to do these two in parallel in order to compare and contrast them as part of the pilot process.



Findings from the pilot were then tested and the framework was refined through a workshop with a series of experts including government, JSA providers, community service providers, other relevant peak bodies and Indigenous employment experts. This group also helped to define the most useful criteria with which to choose the remaining cases. Their input was particularly useful in leading us to look at the Group Training Organisation (GTO) model as a case for small- to medium-sized employers.

The final set of case studies covered diverse situations:

- The program designer and/or manager/s
- Other employees that had a relationship with the program
- Current/former participants
- As many partners as possible from the system including organisations who refer individuals to the employer/program i.e. feeder organisations (e.g. JSA providers); organisations that design and deliver pre-employment and/or skill-based training (their management and trainers);

Context		Burswood	Crown	Woolworths	ISS	Skill360 Australia	Karen Sheldon
		WA	VIC	National	National	QLD	NT
Location	Urban	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Regional			✓	✓	✓	✓
	Remote			✓	✓	✓	
Size of organisation	Small - Medium					✓	✓
	Large	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Industry	Business					✓	✓
	Hospitality	✓	✓			✓	✓
	Construction					✓	
	Facility Services				✓		
	Retail			✓			✓
Participant workforce disengagement level	High	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Medium	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Low	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

✓ focus ✓ (white) covered but not focus

Clearly these case studies do not comprehensively cover all the situations in which there is a need for support for long-term unemployed Indigenous Australians. However, we believe that the common lessons act as a foundation from which those working in different contexts can build; identifying similarities and differences.

## Data Collection

For each case study a variety of individuals were interviewed to understand the program model in detail, the factors that led to success and the opportunities for further improvement. Interviewees included:

- Leaders from within the employer

organisations to which participants move after the initial program/employer; community service providers (e.g. housing); and government agencies

- Any other relevant partners that emerged during discussions.

Interviews were generally conducted one-on-one and face-to-face; where possible a second consultant would take written or typed notes. However, logistical considerations meant that approximately 20% of interviews were done over the phone. Interviewees were asked for candid and honest responses and were offered confidentiality and an opportunity to approve any reference to them or direct use of their comments. Interviews were not recorded.

### Number of interviews conducted per case study:

Interviewee	Burswood	Crown	Woolworths	ISS	Skill360	Karen Sheldon
Employer: leadership/staff	3	4	2	3	2	1
Program: leader/staff	2	1	1	2	1	2
Participants: current/past	9	5	3	4	5	3
Feeder organisations	2	5	1	0	2	1
Training organisations	2	NA	3	2	2	0
Community service providers	0	2	0	0	1	0
Pathway organisations	0	0	0	0	2	0
Government departments	0	0	0	0	5	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>

Case studies were reviewed and approved by the case study organisations, their employees who were referenced and others who were cited. The draft report was shared and tested with Indigenous and employment advisors.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have much to learn from the great work that is happening in Indigenous employment across Australia. We greatly appreciate the willingness of the leadership of the case study organisations to uncover and share their programs, their organisations and their partnerships to enable us to understand and document the details of what they are doing and how they are doing it; both their successes and their challenges.

The candid conversations and openness of all the people with whom we worked - those we interviewed, those who participated in workshops and those who provided informal advice from within the businesses, training organisations, JSA providers, community organisations and government - has ensured that we are able to present a rounded view of the cases and the context within which they operate. We appreciate the hospitality and flexibility with which we were greeted around the country in over 25 organisations, as well as the effort on the part of those wonderful people who coordinated interviews and logistics on our behalf.

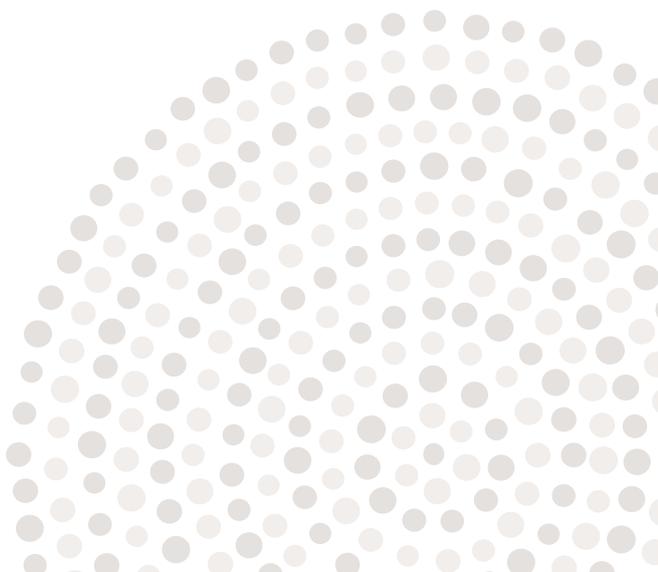
Thank you specifically to all the Indigenous people who are or have been active

participants in the programs we are exploring, who spent their time talking with us, often outside of their work hours, and were so open in sharing their personal stories, experiences and insights.

In general, in all those to whom we spoke we sensed a strong desire to share their experiences in order to support others to do this work well. Thank you to all those who contributed for making such learning possible.

## THE CASE STUDIES

The following six case studies represent programs that have had successful employment outcomes. They describe the people, philosophy, funding and methodology of the program, employer and system, integrating the stories and perspectives of the individuals involved. They can be read as discrete cases or can be compared and contrasted against each other. The final section of this report synthesises our observations and insights from this set of case studies and maps them back to the framework already introduced.





# Burswood

## Aboriginal Employment Program

Name	Burswood Entertainment Complex
Location	Perth, Western Australia
Type	Integrated entertainment precinct, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24-hour casino</li> <li>• Hotels</li> <li>• Restaurants and bars</li> <li>• Nightclub</li> </ul> <p>Burswood is owned by Crown Limited which also operates the Crown Entertainment Complex in Melbourne and a number of overseas operations. Each operation is largely autonomous.</p>
Workforce	Burswood is the largest single-site private sector employer in Western Australia, with more than 4,600 employees. The workforce is diverse, with a wide range of cultural backgrounds represented.
Industry	Entertainment, hospitality
Total Revenue	FY11: \$700.3m

## CASE STUDY

### Burswood, Aboriginal Employment Program



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    - Screening/Selection/Placement
    - Pre-employment Training/Preparation
    - On the Job Support
    - Career Progression/Retention
  - Featured story: Sharon Ninnette
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  - Key Learnings



## Case Study

### Burswood Entertainment Complex Aboriginal Employment Program

#### ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Burswood Entertainment Complex is owned by Crown Limited and operates a similar Aboriginal Employment program to the Melbourne-based Crown Entertainment Complex. This presents the opportunity to look at two programs with the same fundamental structure and philosophy, operating in different environmental contexts, and to therefore gain insights into which success factors are contextual and which constant.

Burswood is located in Perth, close to the CBD. At the 2006 Census there were 20,910 people living in the Perth-Mandurah region who identified as Indigenous Australians, representing 1.5% of the population of the region and 35.6% of Western Australia's total Indigenous population. Indigenous community members interviewed for this case study felt that, in spite of living closely together, relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the area are often fraught and negative stereotyping of Indigenous people is widespread. There was a reported perception of being 'under the spotlight' and 'having to justify yourself' and several reported leaving previous employment as a result of this.

Burswood Entertainment Complex is an attractive employer in the region, and a popular destination for leisure activities. Patrons are representative of the diversity of the region and its visitors, including the Indigenous population.

Crown Limited, comprising Burswood Entertainment Complex and Crown Melbourne, was the recipient of the Diversity@ Work 2010 Award for Employment and Inclusion of Indigenous Australians in Large Organisations.

#### PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

<b>Name</b>	Aboriginal Employment Program
<b>Number of years running</b>	3
<b>Number of participants</b>	Around 45 current participants
<b>Number of participants per cohort</b>	Placement is ongoing rather than in specific intakes. Size of intake therefore varies.
<b>Types of jobs offered</b>	Wide range of roles available including hospitality, security, cleaning and gaming.

## JOURNEY OF ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM

Burswood has a commitment to Indigenous employment dating back to around 2004, however the Aboriginal Employment Program in its current form was developed and launched in 2008.

*'Burswood were willing to take a leap of faith – not many are'*

*Noelene Mantellato  
Challenger Institute of Technology*

The initial motivation to invest in Indigenous employment came from a desire to better understand customer behaviour. Peter Coyne, Burswood's previous HR Director, explains that at that time the Indigenous community in Perth was seen as problematic with a range of social issues, alcoholism, etc. With a background in education in Victoria's Goulburn Valley, an area with a large Indigenous population, Peter was keen to find solutions to support the local community to overcome these issues and/or perceptions. His attempts to navigate and understand local support agencies made clear to Peter that, in spite of several organisations doing good work, there was a lack of structure which hampered progress. In spite of Peter's passion, and a supportive senior leadership team, Peter was unable to get a program off the ground at that point.

The catalyst which enabled the program to get up and running was Crown Limited's signing of the Australian Employment Covenant. Crown Limited was the first signatory and has committed to employing 2,000 Indigenous Australians across its Perth and Melbourne operations by 2021. This highly visible and tangible commitment, at CEO and board level, was cited as a key factor in the program gaining traction.

The appointment of Christine Ross as inaugural Program Coordinator, was the next vital step in the development of the

program. Christine took the lead in designing, developing and embedding the program, as well as building the wider community links and partnerships which are vital for the program's success. Around this time, local TAFEs (now RTOs) had joined together, pooling resources to develop a strong, employer-focused pre-employment program which became an integral part of the Burswood Aboriginal Employment Program. While Christine has now moved on, she maintains strong links with program staff and participants, continuing to informally mentor them and take a personal interest in their development. Her work at this stage continues to be acknowledged as one of the major elements leading to the program's success.

*'We needed someone like Christine to do this – it wouldn't have happened without her'*

*Barry Felstead  
CEO, Burswood*

Motivations for the ongoing prioritisation of the program within Burswood indicate a strong business case with several facets:

- 1) Do 'the right thing'
- 2) Be seen as a responsible employer with a strong commitment to the local community
- 3) Reduce anti-social behaviour at the venue through improving relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the area
- 4) Access a valuable, largely untapped talent pool

It should be noted that the business case has evolved over time, with increased recognition of the Indigenous community as a highly valuable talent pool, based on Burswood's experience of gaining reliable, high quality workers through the program, with above average retention rates and several examples where individuals have progressed into more senior roles.

*'The program works because they understand the grapevine and are proactive in going out and finding out what's out there and talking to people about what they want'*

*Noelene Mantellato  
Challenger Institute of Technology*

## THE SYSTEM

Burswood Entertainment Complex partners with a variety of external agencies to deliver the Aboriginal Employment Program. External training providers (TAFEs and RTOs) provide pre-employment training and ongoing development workshops, Job Service Australia providers (JSAs) and community organisations refer potential recruits to the program, and specialist providers support those working to overcome alcohol and drug dependencies, family violence, and other complex barriers to employment.

Burswood proactively seeks to engage with others who have specialist expertise or available resources to contribute to the success of the program. This desire to partner rather than duplicate effort has enabled the program to be successful in addressing complex barriers to employment from an early stage.

Strong partnerships are maintained largely through ongoing communication between key individuals employed by each partnering organisation. The capabilities, commitment and attitudes of these individuals, who often work very long hours, far exceeding their job requirements, are reported to be the key to success in the system. The Burswood system is slightly more complex than Crown's because they rely on more external partners, where Crown does more in-house.

## THE PROGRAM

The Burswood Aboriginal Employment Program is characterised by the investment of significant time and resources into pre-

employment development, personalised 'wraparound' support from a dedicated team from first contact, and a merit-based approach to employment with consistent treatment for all staff members but respect for individuals' contexts and needs.

## Resources - People and Funding

A dedicated team at Burswood runs the program autonomously, but with significant, visible senior management support. Resourcing has developed over the course of the program, starting with one Program Coordinator and growing to a team of three: the Program Coordinator, a Program Mentor and a Recruitment Assistant. The need for a cohesive team and dedicated office space to enable private conversations with participants became apparent during the program's initial growth phase.

*'At the start I was doing everything – setting up the program, mentoring, training the managers, fighting fires. It was exhausting...it was too much. We brought on Sharon to help with that '*

*Christine Ross  
Former Program Coordinator, Burswood*

While the Aboriginal Employment Program team is a distinct unit within Burswood, their roles require significant day-to-day interaction with the wider organisation. Team members work with the recruitment team to ensure they are reaching target audiences and that messages are compelling for these audiences. They invest in educating managers across business units about the program, the support available, and the talent being attracted through the program. Hiring decisions and line management happen within business units at Burswood, hence line management buy-in is vital to enabling participants to be placed.

The team require a range of skills due to the diversity of their job role and the stakeholder groups with which they engage. They are troubleshooters, educators, coaches, recruiters, confidantes, promoters, advocates,

mediators. As well as an ability to see and understand multiple perspectives, they daily demonstrate resourcefulness and creativity in problem-solving.

Senior leadership support for the program is apparent in various ways: the regular meetings between Burswood's CEO, HR Director and Program Coordinator, the presence of the Senior Leadership Team at Program events, and their advocacy for the program both internally and to external audiences. Barry Felstead, Burswood CEO, makes it his business to be up-to-date on key metrics surrounding the program, to engage on a personal level with program participants at training events, and to communicate program successes at internal and external communication opportunities.

Crown Limited receives funding from the federal government through the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) and previously accessed funding attached to the Structured Training and Employment Project (STEP) Program. In Burswood's system, the development of the Real Jobs pre-employment training program was made possible as a result of a group of local TAFEs (now RTOs) coming together to develop a framework, and pooling their resources.

As a result of the partnerships forged around Burswood's Aboriginal Employment Program, partners are able to access a wider range of funding sources than any of them would be eligible for independently.

*'Everyone gets on well together. People have their own groups but also mix well. There's respect for each other. It's one of Burswood's values and people actually take the values seriously here'*

*Jeremy Hunter  
Program Participant*

## Philosophy

Underpinning Burswood's program is a belief in maintaining consistent standards, but being resourceful, creative and patient in supporting individuals to be able to reach them. Burswood draws on the expertise of specialists from the surrounding system in order to do this, for example, linking participants to counsellors, health workers, specialist training opportunities, and ensuring they are tapping into support which is available more broadly but of which they may not be aware.

The focus is very strongly on the individual and empowering them to realise their potential. While each successful participant will eventually go through an interview with a manager for a specific role and be selected on the basis of being 'the best person for the job,' the work which goes into getting them to that stage is intense and often prolonged. This is acknowledged but accepted as a necessary investment, given the strong belief that the program is valuable and business benefits are compelling.

Post-placement, individuals' personal goals, aspirations and development needs continue to be at the core of interactions. Movement between and within business units is common and is supported by the program team who believe that progression is as important as retention, and indeed is often the key to achieving strong retention.

It should be noted that this direct, personal support is also extended to line managers of program participants to enable them to deal effectively with any issues which may arise and to lower the level of perceived risk they have to participation.



## METHODOLOGY

The program at Burswood is constantly evolving, based on ongoing conversations around what's working and where improvements can be made. One example of this is the relationship between Polytechnic West (the pre-employment training providers) and the Burswood team. Debrief sessions at the end of each training period, focused on cohort development, drive ongoing improvement with the participant at the centre and a clear view of the employer's needs.

### Employee Attraction

Burswood program participants come through to the program through a range of channels:

Partnerships with community organisations and JSAs provide access to candidates who are then engaged through visits to the complex and other 'taster' opportunities. Some may be referred directly to the 'Real Jobs' course and meet Burswood's program team at that stage.

Some candidates come to the program through traditional recruitment channels such as Burswood's website. The website features contact details for the program team and anyone coming through this channel will be connected to the team for an initial conversation about their skills, aspirations and development/support needs.

Another popular route through which candidates come to the program is via employee referrals. Program participants often encourage their families, friends, etc. to apply. This not only enables Burswood to access talent, but also contributes to the program's sense of 'family' and connection, and builds awareness within the community of the program's success.

*'Our recruitment looks at the potential of candidates. Our focus is all about can they do they job, rather than do they have previous experience in the role'*

*Angela Tassone*

*Indigenous Employment Program Coordinator*

## Screening/Selection/Placement

There are two distinct routes into employment at Burswood, depending on the identified training and development needs of the individual.

- 1) Direct placement - for those who are already equipped to go through the selection process and start work, the individual is supported to find an appropriate vacancy and prepare for interview if required, but this will be light touch.

The selection process may be slightly adapted to be more personal or involve family members, but the process is essentially the same as for anyone applying to a position and will culminate in the individual securing a position and going through Burswood's job-specific training before starting work.

*'There's lots of support available – not just to employees but also their families, e.g. counselling. There's follow-up even for people who are no longer working at Burswood'*

*Linda Loo  
Program Participant*

- 2) For those who require additional pre-employment support and development, they will go through the 'Real Jobs' training course, delivered by Polytechnic West, before going through the selection process outlined above for a specific role.

In each case, the candidate will have a consistent point of contact to support them through the process - a trusted staff member from either a JSA, TAFE or the core Burswood team. These key people form a virtual case-management team around the participant to minimise the chance of the participant disengaging. Where a participant may disengage for a valid reason (e.g. it is realised that Burswood is the wrong fit, a role elsewhere is more suitable, or the individual

needs to access specialist support in a longer term more intensive way), the staff member will support the participant to achieve the most positive outcome for him/her at that stage and may continue to stay in touch with a view to re-engaging them at a later stage.

*'I would've pulled out of the process without Sharon, maybe even before the interview'*

*Tania Jackson  
Program Participant*

### Pre-employment Training/Preparation

Burswood invests a substantial amount of resources into pre-employment work to attract potential recruits, develop them to be able to compete in a merit-based selection process, and prepare them to be successful at Burswood. The opportunity to visit the site, talk to employees and see what it's like

to work at Burswood is considered important in attracting people who will be successful in applying to and taking up work at the venue.

Potential recruits to the Indigenous Employment program, in need of pre-employment support, are referred to the 'Real Jobs' program. Run by Polytechnic West, this program was developed in partnership with Burswood to ensure the program meets the employer's needs and there is a clear line of sight to a job on successful completion.

The course develops a range of general employment and personal skills, as well as confidence, awareness of the range of opportunities available to them (and a chance to explore these) and some general qualifications required for employment at Burswood, e.g. Responsible Service of Alcohol. Placement in a specific role occurs after pre-employment training is completed and job-specific training is provided at this stage.

*'You can make friends and have a support network which is important because Indigenous people often find it difficult to open up to non-Indigenous people'*

*Kyle Ingram  
Program Participant*



## On the Job Support

Program members are supported throughout their time with Burswood and potentially beyond. The primary support mechanism is the 'mentor' role who intensively supports new employees to ensure they make a successful transition and continues to be available to troubleshoot and to regularly check in to catch problems before they escalate.

The mentor also provides support to the manager of the program participant as a troubleshooter. Support for the wider organisation also includes cultural sensitivity training which is delivered to managers and available to the wider workforce.

Burswood endeavours to build a sense of cohort through the delivery of workshops to program participants at regular intervals. By bringing them together regularly it helps to build a support network and sense of belonging which can be challenging in a context where shift-work is the norm and workers in different areas of the organisation may not actually come into contact unless this is deliberately engineered.

These workshops also give participants the opportunity to build additional skills, gain exposure to other aspects of Burswood life, and meet with senior management who attend the sessions to show their support. In the case of some participants, it's also a chance to re-engage with the Indigenous community and learn more about their own cultures.

## Career Progression/Retention

Progression within Burswood can be between different areas of the company or within a business unit. Sometimes a participant will be placed in a role with the understanding that they may move to another role in a specified area of interest should a role become available or on completion of their probationary period.

Program staff continue to talk to participants about their ambitions throughout their employment and flag opportunities as they arise. They play an advocacy role within the organisation to ensure they get access to opportunities, and encourage participants to put themselves forward.

*'I wanted a role which had a future. I'd been in 'dead end' jobs without any progression prospects'*

*Tania Ugle  
Program Participant*



## Sharon Ninnette

### Mentor, Aboriginal Employment Program

### Former Program Participant

'Before I came to Burswood I had been out of work for two years, looking after my six children. I came to Burswood because of the range of careers available and was one of the first people to come through the 'Real Jobs' program at Polytechnic West. With Christine's support, I ended up in a Responsible Service of Alcohol Officer role. It was a good fit with my experience and the qualifications I'd achieved over the course.

After around seven months I was offered the Mentor role, working alongside Christine. I'd been naturally supporting my fellow participants, listening to them and trying to help and Christine had noticed this. Until then Christine had been doing everything by herself. She was working with 37 employees at the time, managing day-to-day situations with them and their managers, coordinating the program, doing all recruitment. When I moved over there were two of us. Now there are three - we have a recruitment role as well.

The support I give people is often very practical. I worked with a girl who was having trouble getting to work on time. It turned out she didn't know how to deal with public transport and had been getting on the wrong bus and not making the train. I sat down with her and made her a map with all the details on it. I'll also work with JSAs to sort out taxi vouchers for people who haven't been given that support. I get phone calls from people who want to talk about working at Burswood. We invite them in and have a chat. It's all about getting to know them and if we see someone who's really good we'll flag that with the managers.

Our most important role is around retention. We have no problem getting them in but we need to look at sustainability and think in terms of career progression. I work with people who want to move into supervisor or manager roles. I'll talk to their manager and let them know the employee wants to do that and feels ready. I'll get them training if there's a skills gap or put them into other roles to build up their experience. People are keen to move on and up and why not? They've got the skills and experience.

I used to sit in an office on my own and Christine had her own office. It's much better now that we have our own space. We can communicate between ourselves and interact with participants. It's very important that people can come in and talk to anyone in the team; we're a real unit. Confidentiality is also important; you've got to gain their trust.

I think it's important that these positions are filled with Indigenous people. Participants will open up and feel comfortable with people from the same background. It means you can talk about anything. Often you'll find out you're related and then you can get to know each other really well. Community networks are really important - we all know each other.

I love that we get to know all the employees and managers. The relationship element is the most important part of the role and it's a good fit for me. I recommend the program to others and have family and friends who've come into the program from my referrals.'

## OUTCOMES

Burswood has employed approximately 45 participants over three years. Retention of program participants is high. In fact, the high level of retention and loyalty amongst Burswood's Indigenous employees has been recognised as a real business case for continuing to invest in this program.

Multiple participants have progressed into roles such as supervisor and mentor.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Whilst this case study includes examples from all elements of the framework, three particular learnings, insights or distinctive features stand out:

	1. Right People	2. Underpinning philosophy	3. Appropriate funding	4. Effective methodology
System	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Effective methodology: Pre-employment training which leads to real jobs

Successful completion of the Real Jobs program has the strong potential to deliver a job with Burswood. This is a very powerful promise and one which is only possible because of the effective partnership and significant level of trust between Burswood and the Real Jobs team at Polytechnic West. This is characterised by:

- The co-creation of the training program to meet Burswood needs, drawing on Polytechnic West's expertise
- Clarity of expectations around what 'successful completion' means, both between partners and with participants

- A clear, shared sense of purpose focused on effectively developing the participant to be successful

*'The training is developed in partnership with Burswood and we also work closely with the Job Network Providers for referral of clients. We stay in touch throughout the training and even provide an after program follow up.'*

*'On successful completion of the course, there's a commitment that Burswood will find work for participants. 99% of the successful trainees do end up being placed in jobs'*

*Shelley Halse,  
Polytechnic West*

### Right people and appropriate funding: The level of resources required to run a successful program

The program team at Burswood has grown from a single person to three over a short period of time. This has been important for the program's health and sustainability as the level of work required to personally support growing cohorts of participants and their managers, without losing connection with the growing cadre of Indigenous employees, is enormous.

Across case studies we have seen that these roles are highly stressful due to the day-to-day exposure to trauma and likelihood of working very long hours. We have also seen however that they are central to the success of programs of this sort and hence need to be adequately supported and resourced.

### Effective methodology: Indigenous cultural awareness within the context of other diversity

While there is widespread acknowledgment that 'cultural awareness' training is important to ensure a workplace is ready to support Indigenous employees, over the course of this study we have found that it is even more effective when Indigenous cultural awareness training is a part of wider education on many forms of diversity.

Where training, HR policies and practices, promotional imagery, etc. is supportive of broader diversity within the workforce, across ethnic background, religion, gender, disability, etc., this was felt to be more appropriate and helpful for workplace culture.

The fact that the workforce at Burswood is highly diverse proved helpful in reducing the perception that this was a special program, and meant that the participants never felt that they were 'under the spotlight'. This, along with the strength of the internal 'Burswood company culture,' based around company values, helps create a sense of internal identity, which is complementary rather than opposing employees' own personal cultural and community connections.



# Crown

## Aboriginal Employment Program

Name	Crown Melbourne Entertainment Complex
Location	Melbourne, Victoria
Type	<p>Integrated entertainment precinct, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24-hour casino</li> <li>• 3 hotels</li> <li>• Over 50 restaurants and bars</li> <li>• Nightclubs and other entertainment venues</li> </ul> <p>Crown Melbourne is owned by Crown Limited, which also owns the Burswood Entertainment Complex in Perth and a number of overseas operations. Each operation is largely autonomous.</p>
Workforce	<p>With over 6,500 employees, over 3,300 contractors and an annual payroll of over \$350 million, Crown Melbourne is one of Victoria's largest single-site private sector employers. The workforce is diverse, with over 30 cultural backgrounds represented.</p>
Industry	Entertainment, hospitality
Total Revenue	FY11: \$1,714.1m

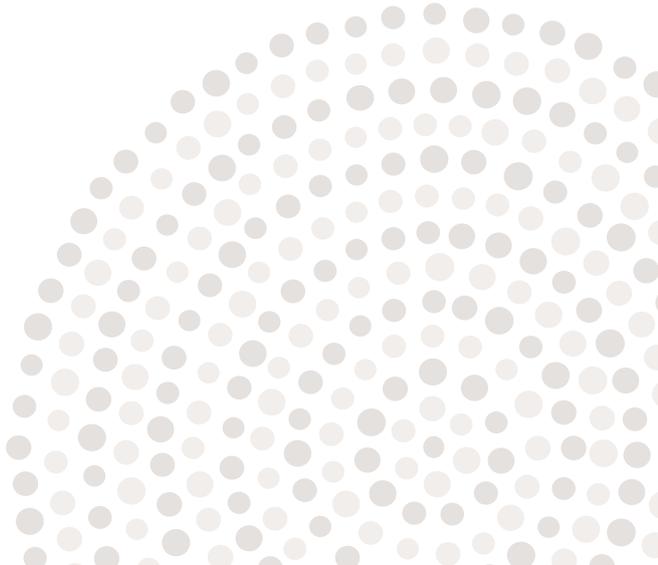


## CASE STUDY Crown, Aboriginal Employment Program



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## Case Study

# Crown Melbourne Entertainment Complex Aboriginal Employment Program

### ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Crown Melbourne is owned by Crown Limited which runs an Aboriginal Employment Program at both of its Australian sites – Crown Melbourne, and the Perth-based Burswood Entertainment Complex. This provides an opportunity to look at two programs in different environments that have the same fundamental structure and philosophy, enabling us to gain insights into which success factors are contextual and which are constant.

Crown Melbourne Entertainment Complex is one of the largest integrated resorts in the southern hemisphere with a casino; bars, restaurants and retail outlets; and three hotels that together have approximately 1,600 guest rooms. The complex has over 40,000 visitors per day, and approximately 16 million visitors each year. Since 1997, Crown has also operated its own training facility, Crown College, which has inducted more than 25,000 new employees, trained more than 10,000 employees, and delivered 75 apprenticeships and 3,342 traineeships. The College has also taken on the responsibility of conducting Crown's pre-employment and employment training for employees who have come on board via their Aboriginal Employment Program.

Crown Melbourne is located in the centre of Melbourne. This is an area that does not have a large visible Indigenous community: in the 2006 census, only 0.4% of Melbourne's population was identified as Indigenous Australian.<sup>1</sup> Participants in Crown's Indigenous Employment Program tend to live in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, and many have relocated from elsewhere in the state or country. This has several implications for the

program: it has increased non-indigenous Melbournians' awareness of Indigenous culture and contexts, particularly when compared to other locations where Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities live much closer together, and in the vicinity of the employer (e.g. in Perth or Cairns); it presents practical challenges for Crown in terms of building and maintaining strong networks and relationships with the Indigenous community; it presents practical challenges for individual employees if they need to work late shifts but don't have personal transport.

Crown has a strong reputation in the local Indigenous community, and their program is also held in high regard by other practitioners and operators in the sector. Given the context in which they operate, this reputation is particularly impressive and interesting.

In 2010, Crown Limited, comprising Burswood Entertainment Complex and Crown Melbourne, was the recipient of the Diversity@ Work 2010 Award for Employment and Inclusion of Indigenous Australians in Large Organisations.

### PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

<b>Name</b>	Aboriginal Employment Program
<b>Number of years running</b>	3
<b>Number of participants</b>	Over 50 placed through the program to date
<b>Number of participants per cohort</b>	Placement is ongoing rather than in specific intakes. Size of intake therefore varies.
<b>Types of jobs offered</b>	Wide range of roles available including hospitality, security, cleaning and gaming.

<sup>1</sup>ABS National Regional Profile: Melbourne (2010)

## JOURNEY OF ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM

The catalyst for creating Crown Melbourne's Aboriginal Employment Program was Crown Limited's signing of the Australian Employment Covenant in 2008. This highly visible and tangible commitment, at CEO and board level, drove the development of the program and, vitally, the appointment of Charles Williams, their Indigenous Employment Program Manager and the 'driving force' behind its success. An internal key champion was Peter Coyne, who is Crown Melbourne's Executive General Manager - Human Resources. Before moving to Melbourne, Peter was heavily involved in setting up a program for Indigenous employment at the Burswood Entertainment Complex.

Crown's first step was to try to understand Melbourne's employment landscape: what it looks like, who was missing out, how Crown Melbourne sits within that landscape, and how it could help improve things. Crown Melbourne made a conscious decision to start small with its program, and increase numbers slowly after they were sure the model was working. They determined that their workforce needed an increased awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture before placing any indigenous employees. Many employees were unaware that a substantial Indigenous community even existed in Melbourne, and there was some initial resistance from business managers who expressed concern about the impact on profitability and other performance metrics.

*'Top level support is vital: it can mandate action. The exec become accountable – it's written into their KPIs. It also means that they are able to take some risks to discover what works'*

*Charles Williams  
Indigenous Employment Program Manager,  
Crown Melbourne*

From the start, there was a strong focus on retention and ensuring that participants were able to be successful in their role, rather than on employing a particular number of participants. Notably, their vision of success - retention in the workforce - is so strong that they consider employment outside of Crown Limited to be an equally positive outcome, which is fully supported by the program's staff and champions.

The program continues to have high priority within the business, because of several motivators:

- 1) To do 'the right thing' by communities
- 2) To be seen as a responsible employer with a strong commitment to the local community
- 3) To access a valuable, largely untapped talent pool
- 4) To increase skills and capacity of the broader workforce

This business case has evolved over time, and now includes the recognition that the program is having positive effects on the skills and culture of the broader workforce.

There is a sense that the program is, after two years, now reaching a tipping point with a critical mass of positive employment role models, strong traction in the community and throughout Crown, and appropriate support mechanisms in place.

*'There are some smart people doing good things and for the right reasons and, through Charles, we've been able to make contact with them'*

*Peter Coyne  
Executive General Manager - HR, Crown*

## THE SYSTEM

In contrast to its sister organisation at Burswood, Crown Melbourne runs much of its program in-house. This is largely due to the belief that a network of support organisations does not exist in Melbourne to the same extent that it does in Perth.

This self-sufficient approach is particularly apparent in the area of training. Crown College, a Registered Training Organisation which operates within Crown Melbourne, delivers the majority of pre-employment, job-specific and professional development training for the program's participants, as well as for other Crown recruits.

Relationships and partnerships between the program's staff and local Indigenous communities are particularly important – and strong. This is largely driven by Charles, the Program Manager. Charles grew up as a member of Melbourne's Indigenous community, and he and his family remain very involved in the community. He is seen as a very positive role model who generates considerable trust, because he consistently delivers on promises, acts with integrity and respect, and represents the community positively. The gradual roll-out of the program, building on success, helped to build a positive perception of Crown's program in the Indigenous community.

*'Retention is the key measure of success... We talk about it needing to be a mile deep and an inch wide. Some programs perpetuate participants' lack of confidence by taking them on and then finding reasons to filter them out. We don't want to do that.'*

*Peter Coyne*

*Executive General Manager - HR, Crown Limited*

Crown Melbourne works with a number of Indigenous service providers and community groups in order to identify candidates for the program and to ensure that they receive sufficient and appropriate support throughout the transition to employment. In addition, Crown engages specialist providers to support those working to overcome alcohol and drug dependencies, family violence, and other complex barriers to employment.

Sarina Russo, a Job Service Australia Provider, performs one of the program's vital functions: that of supporting candidates through the sometimes lengthy application process at Crown, and supporting them to become job-ready during that period.

*'They're [candidates] happy to do forms, tests, etc. but they lose momentum over time. They need reassurance while they wait to be taken on'*

*Liz Allen*

*Former Employment Consultant, Sarina Russo*

## THE PROGRAM

Crown Melbourne's Aboriginal Employment Program is characterised by the investment of significant time and resources into pre-employment development, personalised 'wraparound' support from first contact by a dedicated team, a merit-based approach to job placement, consistent treatment for all staff members, and respect for each individual's contexts and needs.

### Resources - People and Funding

There is a dedicated but small program team at Crown Melbourne that runs the program autonomously, with support from Senior Management. This team currently comprises two members who work very long hours to support participants and the broader workforce and to drive the program's success.

Crown Limited receives funding from the federal government through the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) and previously accessed funding attached to the STEP Program. Crown Melbourne is also seeking additional funding to deliver work-readiness training at Crown College.

Crown Limited is looking to expand and deepen the support they offer to the program's participants, and requires additional funding in order to adequately cover anticipated program expenses, including the team (they need additional coordinators) and support (such as housing, and hosting events).

Charles points out that he has about 60 people currently on their files who aren't yet work-ready, but Crown is not currently in a position to support them into employment.

### Philosophy

Crown Melbourne's program is all about sustainable jobs and retention in the labour force, whether within Crown or beyond. To achieve this, they give participants access to support for as long as they need it, even after their time on the program.

All employment at Crown, including of those involved in the program, is merit-based. Individuals receive tailored, intensive support to reach the bar, and there is flexibility around processes to remove barriers (e.g. group interviews, rather than one-on-one, may be preferred). Crown does not have any 'Indigenous-specific' roles. If unsuccessful, candidates are supported to continue to develop and reapply or reconsider their area of work - standards remain consistent. Candidates are meeting existing needs and taking up 'real jobs' that will not cease to exist after a short period. This consistency of treatment is vital to avoid other employees feeling resentful because of perceived 'special treatment' given to the program's participants.

*'So far we've placed over 50 people through the program, because each one was the best person for the job. Decisions need to be based on merit, and need to be defensible'*

*Marcus Maccora  
Recruitment Manager, Crown*

The personal growth of the program's participants is taken very seriously - for Crown, real success is about getting someone into employment and having them thrive in employment, particularly those who would otherwise have been unable to do so. And Crown wants to provide this service for anyone: long-term unemployed, single mothers, mature-aged, and those with disabilities. The Aboriginal Employment Program is just one facet of this, and they also have a similar program for the employment of people with disabilities.

Crown also wants their Indigenous employees to reconnect with their communities and deal with any wider issues they may be facing. This is done in a non-judgmental, but honest, way: 'these people have barriers to employment, otherwise they would be working.' The goal is to have Indigenous employees engaged with their family, community, and culture, particularly as some may not have a

strong support network to help them with employment-based issues. Because Crown is such a large place, an essential element of the program is the building of a sense of cohort and family within the broader workforce at Crown.

Amongst the non-Indigenous employees at Crown Melbourne, there is widespread awareness that this program is important. Crown's broader training has been adapted so that employees understand the program and its objectives, and receive cultural awareness training. They also receive training in disability awareness and the employment program run by Wise Employment, a non-profit community service organisation and JSA provider. This broader change in Crown's culture at all levels of the workforce is a key aspect of the program.

Following the success of their program, Crown now wants to broaden the impact of the program by sharing best practice with others and mobilising suppliers to support Indigenous employment.

## METHODOLOGY

### Employee Attraction

Attracting employees was initially a challenge for Crown Melbourne. Although Indigenous community members saw Crown as an attractive place to work, they didn't initially feel that it was within their reach. Because of the success of the program, and an increased awareness of the benefits of working at Crown, this perception has started to change.

Crown now uses a number of different channels to increase awareness of recruitment possibilities, including online advertising and social media (such as LinkedIn and twitter), as well as their normal advertising channels, such as their website. In addition, Charles works hard to identify and recruit potential candidates via community networks. By maintaining a presence in community, hosting

and attending events, and so on, Charles is able to reach many potential recruits.

One example of a successful recruitment event was a workshop run in partnership with Melbourne Aboriginal Youth, Sport and Recreation (MAYSAR) and several other stakeholders. The workshop delivered work-readiness skills that the local community had identified as gaps, and also addressed very practical barriers to completing an application, such as how to get 100 points of ID. Charles's participation raised awareness of the program and demonstrated Crown's supportive approach. This event generated a large number of applications.

Employee referrals are now one of the biggest sources of new participants and there is widespread agreement amongst participants that they would recommend the program to a friend. To further encourage this, Crown offers incentives for those who refer someone who gains employment at Crown.

### Screening/Selection/Placement

Crown's initial selection of participants focuses on mindsets and attitudes, rather than skills. The most important criteria are that the individual wants to work, knows what role they want to work in, and understands what that entails. This basic understanding may be enhanced through visits to Crown, tours, informal conversations with HR team members or other workers, opportunities to try roles out, and so on.

*'We're more welcoming and accepting at the initial stages than previously.. and not just for people coming through the program'*

*Marcus Maccora  
Recruitment Manager*

While Crown has a strong commitment to work with people to get past barriers, they accept that they are not counsellors or healthcare specialists. Therefore, where there are barriers to employment that require specialised

support, the team's role is to advocate for individuals and direct them to networks that can provide the required support, e.g. in housing, money management, substance abuse, and mental health. Where these types of issues are identified in pre-employment, the team will maintain contact and encourage the individual to reapply when appropriate.

*'The difference is Charlie is there – someone from your mob in a position like that, it means it's OK to work there. It means there is strong support and awareness in a place that is generally seen to be out of reach for most Aboriginal people'*

*Glenda Thorpe  
Maysar*

Charles and his team work with participants before interviews to get them 'application-ready'. As soon as an applicant is identified as Indigenous, regardless of the route through which they apply, they are connected with Charles so he can offer appropriate support. The exact nature of the support will vary widely depending on the individual, but will focus on raising the quality of the application and ensuring that the applicant is applying to an area that aligns with their interests and skills. This is done by building their understanding of each relevant role, of the environment in which the role sits, and the business requirements from someone in that role. This enables the candidate to better present themselves for the role.

### Pre-employment Training/Preparation

Training is delivered by specialised trainers within Crown College, based on assessments of need developed by Charles and the candidate during initial conversations.

*'Training is all about identifying needs and overcoming them. You always want people to succeed, not fail, and it feels good to see people being successful after you've trained them'*

*Josco Dasic  
Security & Services Officer, Security Trainer, Crown  
Melbourne*

While the aim is to identify training needs before the participant begins employment, to enable adaptation of delivery methods, sometimes additional needs are identified during the training period, and these are consequently addressed. The skill, adaptability, and attitudes of the trainers involved are vital to the success of this element of the program.

Training at Crown College is aligned to the job the candidate will be taking up, and program participants will often train alongside other candidates moving into the same business area. Flexibility within the training framework allows for tailored support to meet individual needs.

Alongside the training at Crown College, Charles will continue to engage with candidates and drive their development. His focus is less job-specific, focusing instead on building trust, confidence, and tailored support.

Participants undergoing training at Crown are paid, and this was identified as a vital success factor in terms of retention.

### On the Job Support

On the job support at Crown is highly differentiated, based on individual support plans. These support plans are developed by the program team, working with the participant and their supervisor, and commonly include buddying and mentoring. The aim is to create an internal family for each participant, and to ensure that participants are supported to be successful and meet their manager's needs. Charles also seeks to support participants in being proud of their culture.

*'There's a lot of goodwill but they [Managers] don't always know how to actually do this. They need the program and support to make it work'*

*Charles Williams  
Indigenous Employment Program Manager,  
Crown*

Although Charles may not always personally deliver the direct support at this point, he is the contact point for everyone involved in the program: participants, managers, and colleagues. External agencies are also brought in to provide additional support as required.

Charles is involved in all discussions about a participant's performance if any concerns have been raised.

## Career Progression/Retention

Crown's target is that the retention of Indigenous employees be in line with that of the broader population. As this is currently at around 70% and normal turnover within Crown is around 25%, this target is close to being achieved.

While retention has always been the focus of the program, career progression is also strongly supported. Movement within a business unit is common and those seeking to move either sideways or upwards are supported through development plans that identify training needs and mechanisms to meet them.

Sometimes a new position may require a candidate to go back into the recruitment process, competing against other candidates. When this occurs, Charles acts as mentor, advising on timing and likelihood of success.

*'We look at retention within the workforce as well as within Crown specifically – other destinations are important to consider where they better suit the individual and their aspirations'*

*Peter Coyne  
Executive General Manager - HR,  
Crown Limited*

While Crown can provide a wide range of employment opportunities, there are job categories that are not available at Crown. When there is not a suitable position for a

candidate, Charles and the broader team will use their networks beyond Crown to seek potential opportunities for that candidate. Twelve examples of this were reported.



## Wayne Pearne

### Finance Manager Crown Melbourne

'When an opening came up in my team, I wasn't specifically looking for an Indigenous person but I'd heard about the program and thought I'd give it a go. I like the fact that it gives people opportunities they might not have had otherwise.

Maria is a single mother of two and had been out of work for a while. I straightaway thought she would be a great fit. I particularly liked how expressive she was and was hoping she would influence the wider team to be more that way. I was a bit nervous about how to make it work but I knew Charles was there to support me so was very happy to take Maria on.

We had one issue which came up. Someone made a rude comment and I knew we had to deal with it quickly and sensitively. I just said 'we don't talk politics' and went to Charles for support. We talked it through, talked to Maria about how she'd like it handled, and then had a good conversation with the person involved about the apology, what it meant, etc. We talked through the issues and sensitivity so he really understood.

Later on, we had a session with the whole business unit about Indigenous issues. It was important that Maria was consulted around what she was comfortable with but it was good that we had a chance to educate them a bit.

I think it was handled really well - there was support for all concerned. I don't know what would've happened without the program and the knowledge, expertise and sensitivity within the organisation which has come from it. We need guidance and education in the workplace and in society more generally.

Maria ended up leaving. I would've loved to keep her but there were external pressures. There were additional costs in rent, childcare, etc. Running a car was unfeasible. All the costs went up in a week so she wasn't able to deal with it and adapt. We tried changing the roster to eliminate childcare costs, even looked at reducing her hours so her salary was below the housing threshold - we worked really hard to enable her to stay. We set up financial counselling to help but they actually told her the work at the Casino was bad for her financially. She was better off financially if she wasn't working!

There's a happy ending to the story: Maria's actually starting work again - her kids told her they liked it better when she was working so she's returning to work.

Maria was a real benefit to the team - a positive personality who contributed to the team. We're diverse with a good cultural mix which makes things more comfortable. Experience she had at Crown helped her to get to where she is. Both Maria and management learned from the experience.'

## OUTCOMES

Crown has demonstrated impressive outcomes since beginning its Aboriginal employment program:

- Retention of program participants at Crown is around 70%.
- Retention in the labour force more broadly is believed to be around 83%, but is difficult to track.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Whilst this case study includes examples from all elements of the framework, three particular learnings, insights or distinctive features stand out:

	1. Right People	2. Underpinning philosophy	3. Appropriate funding	4. Effective methodology
System	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Right people: The importance of senior level support, and the right coordinator

The success of Crown's Melbourne program was attributed throughout interviews to unwavering senior management commitment coupled with an exceptional individual running the Program.

While senior management's support created an imperative for action, required managers to prioritise development of Indigenous employees, and gave the team license to take risks and learn from them, the skills of the individual in the manager role were equally vital to the program's success.

This individual effectively acts as a bridge between all aspects of the business and the local Indigenous community: the program's participants consider him to be both a personal advocate and mentor, and his colleagues consider him to be an effective manager. He has established strong links with a network of other individuals who are equally passionate about Indigenous employment, in organisations that play a key role in the program's success - JSAs, community organisations, etc.

### Underpinning philosophy: There is strong business logic for workforce diversity, including Indigenous employment

Crown seeks and has achieved a highly diverse workforce, which management sees as critical to ensuring that all members of the public feel welcome, regardless of their cultural, religious, or language background. The Indigenous cohort is just one group amongst a highly ethnically diverse workforce.

Diversity at Crown is seen as an opportunity for everyone to learn from each other, and therefore become better employees.

### Effective methodology: A warm, personal connection can overcome barriers, and can be achieved in a large organisation

Crown's commitment to providing a welcoming and personal experience for all employees is a good fit for Indigenous employees, and can be achieved with careful thought and investment, even within organisations the size of Crown.

Apart from buddying, mentoring, and the opportunity to connect with each other through social and celebration events, key features that appeal to the Indigenous workforce include the provision of meals, flexible working arrangements, free laundry service, and advances on pay.



# Woolworths

## Indigenous Employment Program

Name	Woolworths Limited
Location	Australia and New Zealand. Head office, Sydney NSW. Case study focus, Kempsey NSW
Type	Large public company operating in urban, regional and remote areas
Workforce	More than 191,000 people, one of the largest private sector employers in Australia
Industry	Retail: food & grocery, liquor, petrol, general merchandise and consumer electronics
Total Revenue	FY11: \$54,505.7m



## CASE STUDY

### Woolworths, Indigenous Employment Program



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# Case Study

## Woolworths Limited Indigenous Employment Program

### ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Woolworths Limited has a portfolio of retail businesses which extend throughout Australia, from established businesses such as Woolworths Supermarkets and Big W, through to new ventures such as the Masters home improvement business. Hundreds of branches operate across urban, regional and remote areas of Australia and New Zealand. Woolworths is one of the largest private sector employers in Australia, employing almost 200,000 people across Australia and New Zealand.

This case study investigated Woolworths' Indigenous employment program, but focused on the experience of one store, Big W in Kempsey NSW, in which the program has been running successfully for more than a year. Kempsey is in regional NSW, where approximately 10%<sup>1</sup> of the population of 28,000 is Indigenous. Rates of Indigenous unemployment are high and participants commented that 'getting a job as an Indigenous person in Kempsey is very difficult'.

The Indigenous Australians from the Kemspey area are the Dunghutti people. Most of the Indigenous people in the area today are still Dunghutti.

### PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

<b>Name</b>	Indigenous Employment Program
<b>Number of years running</b>	1 in Kempsey; 2 across Woolworths
<b>Number of participants</b>	6 placed in Kempsey; 350 placed across Woolworths
<b>Number of participants per cohort</b>	10 in Kempsey; 20 - 25 cohorts across Woolworths, approximately 18 per cohort.
<b>Types of jobs offered</b>	Range of retail roles including checkout, store greeters, night fill, restocking. Typically casual and permanent part-time.

<sup>1</sup>ABS (2006)

## JOURNEY OF ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM

In the past, Woolworths had made efforts to integrate more Indigenous Australians into their workforce, but had found retention to be poor. In 2009 Michael Luscombe, as CEO, made a commitment on behalf of himself and Woolworths Limited to rectify this. The work was part of Woolworths' broader commitment to increase diversity in the organisation, illustrated by the creation of the National Diversity Manager position, currently held by Estelle Olstein; and a Diversity Steering Committee comprised of senior members from all parts of the business. As part of the drive towards greater Indigenous employment, and in recognition of the broader obligations of the business, a Reconciliation Action Plan was launched in June 2011.

In addition to wanting to achieve good social outcomes, business imperatives play a large part in driving Woolworths' commitment to achieving higher levels of indigenous employment. Woolworths recognises that by matching the faces of the employees in their stores to those in their local communities, families will be more likely to shop at their local Woolworths store. In addition, Woolworths stores are continually in need of high quality part-time employees, and recruits coming through pre-employment training tend to be 'more prepared for what is expected of them and more work ready'.

Woolworths has not tried to do everything in one go and has taken a staged approach to rolling out an Indigenous employment program. They started with one store and have grown with those where there was already an interest and partners who were able to deliver successful outcomes. They have found appropriate models and continue to review these for continuous improvement.

As each business has the autonomy for strategic decision making, Estelle worked tirelessly to educate HR management and teams across the businesses on the benefits

of the program, utilising every opportunity to communicate through leadership meetings, including one with 200 attendees. As they started working across the businesses to deliver diversity outcomes, Woolworths found that this was not only beneficial for the program but increased cross-divisional activities. Now, across the organisation, Woolworths leaders are strongly committed to this work, leading to the belief that the program is sustainable beyond the current team.

The program continues to be implemented into new stores where there is commitment from store managers; and in some locations it has been repeated (in Dubbo five programs have taken place: three in Big W and two in supermarkets). Diversity Dimensions is now recognised as the National Partner amongst a number of other successful regional partners in this work, as outlined below. Many challenges are associated with driving best practice outcomes, all of which are being overcome through collaboration and tenacity.

## THE SYSTEM

Woolworths partners with other organisations to deliver the majority of the program, drawing on a variety of different delivery models. Diversity Dimensions (DD), the largest and national partner, focuses predominantly on 'ready now' candidates returning to the workforce, where other partners focus on long-term unemployed people, offering more intensive 10-week programs.

Diversity Dimensions sources potential employees, designs and delivers training for the potential employees and organises training for store management. It also provides mentors to successful employees for an extended period after they start employment (often for over a year). DD is therefore central to the delivery and success of those Woolworths programs targeting work-ready candidates.

Having recognised that a gap exists between the JSA system and corporates, DD sees themselves as the pathway to meeting corporate expectations. DD has the ability to walk in both worlds. DD believes that for the program to work, it needs to be seamless for the employer and therefore the design is client-led to suit the employer's processes. DD has been partnering with Woolworths for 20 months and Woolworths is now one of their major clients. The CEO of DD and the National Diversity Manager at Woolworths have worked hard to develop a trusted relationship, and they cite having 'very honest discussions' as a vital element in the development of that partnership.

DD draws on partnerships with JSAs to access potential employees, but they also seek to develop strong relationships with the Indigenous community, looking for referrals from community leaders and from previous program participants. DD works extremely hard to develop an understanding of each system the program is operating in and to adapt their program accordingly. They tend to rely on JSAs to screen participants as they have access to the candidates and continue to build partnerships with those JSAs who meet their expectations. Diversity Dimensions takes a very hands-on approach to accessing other training providers (e.g. Central West Community College).

*'We were eager to throw as much support as we could behind this fantastic program – knowing that it provided such a valuable opportunity for our clients'*

*Julia Cole  
Job Services Coordinator, Kempsey Office of  
Central West Community College*

## THE PROGRAM

The Woolworths program is based around each specific environment: to date there have been programs across all Woolworths brands. Approximately 350 placements have been made and we estimate that there have been 25-30 individual programs (some stores have run more than one program).

For a branch to be eligible to take part in the program they must meet three criteria:

- 1) The store must have real jobs to fill (most entry level jobs in stores commence as part time roles)
- 2) Store management must demonstrate strong commitment to the program
- 3) Local managers must take part in a two-and-a-half hour cultural competence program

## Resources - People and Funding

The Woolworths program is run under the management of Estelle Olstein, National Diversity Manager. Estelle reports to the Retention and Engagement Manager who reports to the Director of HR of the Woolworths Group. The dynamism, commitment and determination of the National Diversity Manager are repeatedly cited as being central to the success of the program. Estelle has been supported by highly committed leadership at senior levels across the organisation.

*'Estelle truly understands diversity, injustice, big employers and good business decisions...she doesn't give up easily'*

*Carolyn Gallaway  
CEO, Diversity Dimensions*

Store management commitment is an imperative: only those stores where the manager can demonstrate a definite personal commitment to the program are included in the initiative. Where that has not been present, a program will not proceed. Cultural competency training, coupled with committed teams in all partnerships, is one of the key success factors of this program.

## Funding

Woolworths go beyond 'business as usual' to make the program happen by investing management time to support successful employment and retention, and to develop partnership relationships and cultural competence. Diversity Dimensions accesses government funding to enable the delivery of its programs for Woolworths. Woolworths is actively encouraging DD to become an Indigenous Employment Program panel member in order to access further and flexible funds.

## Philosophy

Underpinning Woolworths' approach is the deep belief that diversity is valuable and should be celebrated. The Indigenous employment program is therefore one of a range of investments in encouraging and supporting diversity.

Woolworths and their partners make a point of delivering on their promises. One planned store that had promised employment opportunities had a delayed opening so in order to avoid the disillusionment of training without the hope of a job, an existing store created 10 part-time positions as an interim measure.

The training for managers, which is delivered by an Indigenous facilitator, focuses on creating understanding, empathy and respect for the Indigenous employees, rather than guilt. Time is spent on understanding the depth and longevity of Indigenous culture, but given that many participants themselves come from very diverse backgrounds, the focus is on the strength and value of diversity, specifically Indigenous diversity.



## METHODOLOGY

### Employee Attraction

Woolworths targets all Indigenous people from within the local community of each store, consequently they may be long-term unemployed, transitioning from school into work, recently unemployed or returning to the labour market. In South Australia, however, the program specifically focuses on people who are long-term unemployed.

*'Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have not traditionally looked to retail as a career option'*

*Carolyn Gallaway  
CEO, Diversity Dimensions*

Candidates are sourced through multiple channels, including JSA providers, TAFE, community organisations and increasingly (in areas where more than one program has taken place) through relationships with elders and others in the Indigenous community. Their partners typically develop and nurture the pipeline of potential employees.

Existing employees are seen as a valuable source of referrals, and the extended mentoring relationships with DD ensure that these potential recruits are encouraged into the program.

### Pre-employment Training/Preparation

Pre-employment training is provided by DD and Woolworths (for 'ready now' candidates) in two stages:

- 1) DD deliver an intensive 3-4 day program, 'Resourcing the Future', to assist potential employees through providing them with an understanding of employment (including, 'why work?'), set expectations, equip them to manage difficult situations and importantly introduce them to the potential employer, Woolworths. Woolworths' management attend the final day of the training to meet the

participants and to provide them with an overview of Woolworths as a workplace and the opportunities available. No program commences without real jobs available. All candidates who successfully complete training are made job offers, all jobs are merit based.

During the training, facilitators have the capacity to spend one-on-one time coaching individual participants (although this is not built into the agenda). The facilitators will flex the program to meet specific needs of a particular cohort: they do not do it 'by rote'.

- 2) Participants are then offered the opportunity to try a range of roles within Woolworths Limited.

This is hands-on work experience from 10am - 2pm for 10 days; it is unpaid. Participants identify their role preferences and then rotate between roles to get a broad understanding of the range of roles available and to determine what they most enjoy.

During this work experience period someone from DD or the JSA will go into the store every day and show them support and encourage them as well as addressing any concerns they may have.

During this time the program seeks to shift the mindset of participants from work being casual and irregular (being caught in the system - in and out of employment) to seeing themselves as long-term employed.

Similarly in the 10-week programs for the long-term unemployed, Woolworths provides individuals with the opportunity to determine whether retail is for them. This is important because in many cases they have not worked before. Candidates have standards to meet during the 10 weeks and if these milestones are not met they will not progress into employment. Candidates are supported throughout this time to work through any barriers.

## Screening/Selection/Placement

Diversity Dimensions vet potential employees actively. At each stage in the process they focus in on those people that they believe match the requirements of the business and show a keen interest in retail. Employment decisions are based on merit.

At the conclusion of the work experience placement, depending on the number of jobs available, Woolworths will offer jobs to those employees who have demonstrated commitment and potential. The work experience opportunity is a deliberate mechanism to filter potential recruits, who do not then need to go through an interview process. This is found to be a fairer way of recruiting than through traditional interview methods. In the work with DD, most of those who complete work experience have been offered a job.

Participants are placed in a role where there is a business need; often this will be where they have already demonstrated potential and interest during the work experience phase.

The jobs offered in-store typically begin as part-time, however, they tend to progress their hours once employees have proved themselves reliable, and depending on the store needs. This also enables Indigenous people to transition back to work and to manage their hours, as many are primary carers. This is consistent with the hiring and progression processes for all employees.

## On the Job Support

Once the person is placed in a role, significant investment is put into mentoring participants. Participants have at least two assigned mentors: one in the store (a designated manager), one through the partner (e.g. Diversity Dimensions) and frequently one at another partner organisation (e.g. Central West Community College or a JSA). Having this variety of touch points for the

participant ensures there are multiple trusted relationships that can address different issues for the individual; it means that the employer and the community are more likely to be engaged, and that any need for professional or specialised support is identified early and made available.

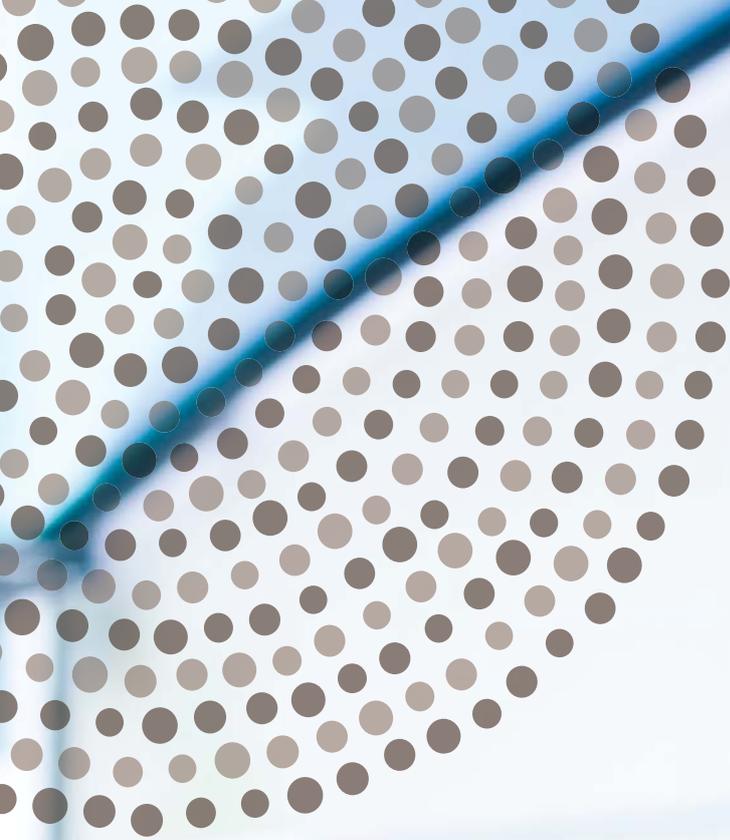
DD mentors are Aboriginal people; they work with the individual participant to define their goals and to navigate 'working in two worlds', the Indigenous and the commercial worlds. The amount and style of mentoring will be unique to the individual. They also support the store manager and are seen as a neutral party who can work to connect or mediate between the two.

*'Issues may occur with people in the community rather than the workplace, for example, when they know that people are doing things in the store that they shouldn't. We support them to navigate this'*

*Amanda Jolley  
Deputy Store Manager, Big W Kempsey*

Mentoring does not 'run out' after six months, but continues as long as it is required. Woolworths determine this to be one of the key contributors to successful retention and an area that requires focus from all by business, partners and government.

By offering jobs to a 'cohort' of employees who have come through the training together, the group is also able to set up their own support structures within the cohort.





## Career Progression/Retention

Progression within Woolworths can mean different things:

- 1) Moving horizontally into a different role
- 2) Moving into permanent employment
- 3) Moving into a team leader or management role

Participants are treated consistently with other employees; they need to prove themselves in a role before they are provided with an opportunity to move horizontally (work experience has meant that the role they start in should be appropriate initially) and they can apply for job openings when they become available. Mentors will work with the employee and the store management when the employee has an interest in moving roles.

*'I would like to go into management in what I am doing now – night fill. I might be moving to Tweed Heads and Sally (DD) is going to help me get a transfer'*

*Amelia Daley  
Participant, Big W Kempsey*



## Janice Thaidy Program Participant Big W Kempsey

Janice is a Dunghutti woman from the Kempsey area. She has a background of varied employment including a traineeship with DOCS, Cert 2 and 3 in Aboriginal Education and is a qualified tutor for homework centres. After returning to Kempsey from 15 years living in Sydney, Janice found it difficult to get back into the local job market.

'Through Central West Community College I heard about a course with Sally and Mark (Diversity Dimensions). I had never tried retail but had done other work and thought I would give it a try. Six of us got offered a job; it was casual but I think everyone was just happy to have a job. That was a year ago.

I always did admin; retail was something different and I tried it and loved it. I love the contact with customers and people in the community. I'm out there in the community meeting everyone. I'm a single mum with three teenage boys so being casual helps me because it is flexible.

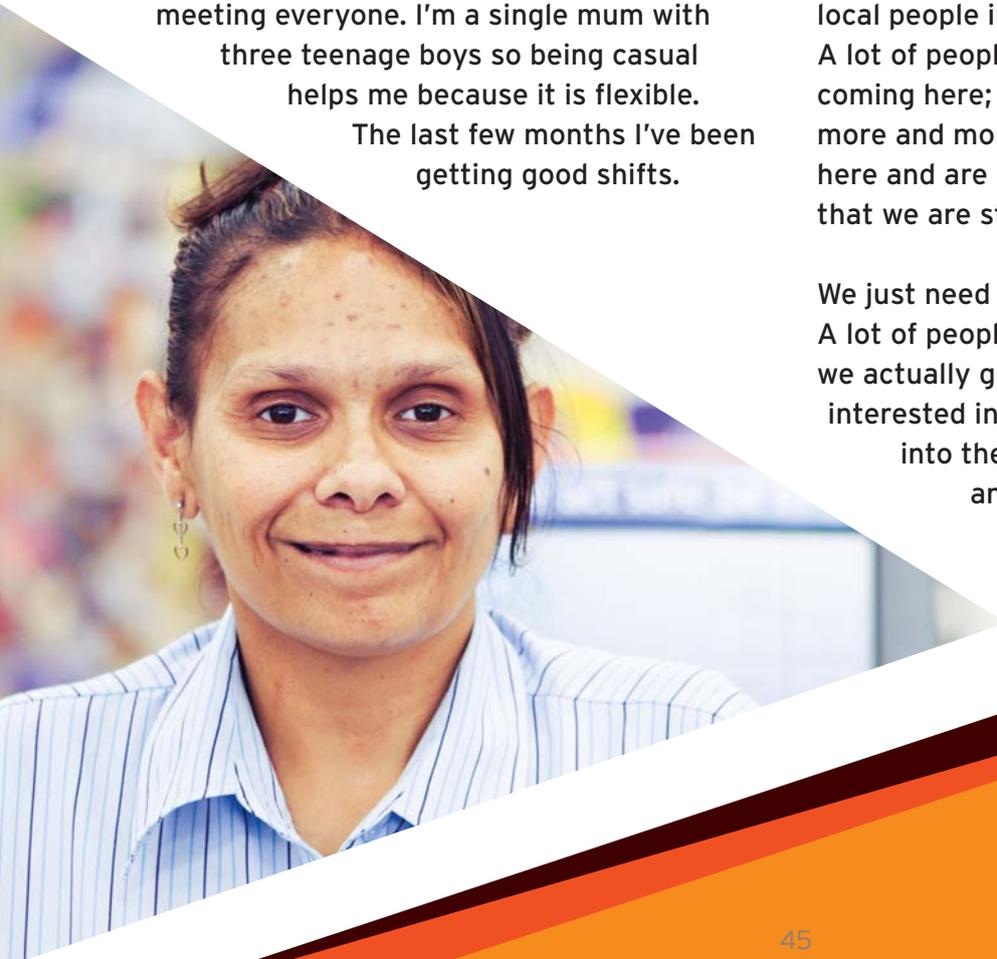
The last few months I've been getting good shifts.

I had a bad start, I came late and I missed a shift. They were really understanding, I could really trust and talk to them. I know now that if there is an issue they will do whatever they can to deal with it.

Everyone has been great and supportive here, they are great people to work with and a great workplace. There was a time that I got a bit down and they all pitched in and helped. Diversity Dimensions and Central West Community College were all calling me to check if they could help. I've had hard times but I've hung in there and kept going and if it wasn't for my job here I just don't know. When my car stopped working they helped me to get it repaired so I could get to work; they even offered taxis to help me get to the shifts. Being provided with uniforms also really helps.

The community is happy to finally see some local people in the store; they are supportive. A lot of people in the community had stopped coming here; in the last year we are getting more and more, they are more comfortable here and are shopping more here; they can see that we are still here a year later.

We just need more of these programs now. A lot of people are starting to ask about it, we actually get a lot of people now really interested including young ones who come into the store and ask me if there are any jobs available.'



## OUTCOMES

The results of the program appear to have been impressive, although with caveats.

- In all programs the driver is real jobs and retention. Roughly 350 people have been placed in jobs over two years. Woolworths have recorded that “75% are still in the business”
- Specific programs have achieved six month quoted retention rates of 84% and 62%
- In Kempsey, after one year, four out of six (67%) of the people placed remain in regular employment. A fifth is planning to return after maternity leave
- In Kempsey, they have found the turnover of Indigenous staff to be average relative to other staff
- Third party estimates suggest 3-5% of store managers engaged in the program are Indigenous.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Whilst this case study includes examples from all elements of the framework, three particular learnings, insights or distinctive features stand out:

	1. Right People	2. Underpinning philosophy	3. Appropriate funding	4. Effective methodology
System	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Underpinning philosophy: A clear business rationale

The program cannot be in conflict with commercial objectives. Management need to

feel confident that, if challenged, they can point out that the program is good for all stakeholders: staff, customers, the community and ultimately shareholders.

Woolworths stores have a continual need for high quality staff from the communities within which they operate. This program not only delivers a pipeline of staff, but of ‘pre-prepared’ staff. Whilst Woolworths agrees that there continue to be culture-specific challenges with any group, they are clear that the Indigenous Employment Program is delivering employees that stay in the business and serve it well.

### Effective methodology: Don’t bite off more than you can chew

A very specific observation by one of the trainers on this program is that, while Woolworths were committed to increasing Indigenous employment, they did not simply mandate change, or try to change everything at once. They started with a limited number of programs using a limited number of partners. Where they observed success they replicated the program elsewhere. Importantly, while they refined the program they ‘stuck to what worked’. In this regard, having a limited number of partners (and one ‘National Partner’: Diversity Dimensions) helps. The quality of their partners (including the skills, qualifications and experience of their staff and contractors) is clearly high and the personal rapport between these partners and the National Diversity Manager both makes it easier to replicate with confidence and to effectively delegate responsibility to each partner.

### Effective methodology: Valuing a diverse workforce

Woolworths’ commitment to equal opportunity, recognition of the business benefits of diversity and experience in creating a truly inclusive working environment is a key element to the success of their Indigenous employment program.

To create this environment, Woolworths makes a point of acknowledging and celebrating diversity across all cultural groups. For example, in business meetings in Head Office they will celebrate diversity and different religious and cultural holidays/ceremonies are acknowledged and celebrated. Their commitment to the encouragement of diversity

is perhaps epitomised by the creation of a Senior Management role of 'Diversity Manager' and a Diversity Steering Committee made up of leaders from all parts of the business. This provides a high base level of support for any attempt to encompass and embrace ANY other ethnic/cultural group, including Indigenous Australians.

The implications of this for Indigenous employees is that, while staff are educated on Indigenous culture and background, this is within the context of other diverse cultures and consequently they do not feel singled out.





# ISS Australia

## Indigenous Employment Program

Name	ISS Facility Services Australia Limited
Location	Sydney (Head Office) with regional offices and operations in all states and territories
Type	Transnational commercial services company
Workforce	15,000-20,000 (in Australia) of which 247 are Indigenous
Industry	Facility Services to many industries and sectors
Total Revenue	FY 11: \$900 million (Australian Division only)



## CASE STUDY ISS Australia, Indigenous Employment Program



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# Case Study

## ISS Australia

### Indigenous Employment Program

#### ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

ISS provides Facility Services to a wide range of sectors including the property, security, education, health and resources industries. It is one of the top four private employers in the world with more than 500,000 employees across the globe. The Australian business is the fourth largest in the group with operations and offices in all states and territories. With a customer base of 50,000 and around 20,000 employees and contractors, ISS Australia is experiencing a growth in the demand for its outsourced services.

Operating across many sectors of the Australian economy, ISS Australia has a diverse workforce including an increasing number of Indigenous employees. It is a company in perpetual need of employees.

#### PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

<b>Name</b>	Indigenous Employment Program (IEP)
<b>Number of years running</b>	3
<b>Number of participants</b>	247
<b>Average number of participants per cohort</b>	50
<b>Types of jobs offered</b>	Security officers, health workers, building cleaning, hygiene workers, health facility workers

#### JOURNEY OF ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM

In 2008, driven by the then CEO and Director of Strategy, ISS Australia developed a Strategy which set out a broad corporate approach to growing the company's Indigenous workforce. The motivation for developing the Strategy was threefold.

- 1) Facility Services is a growth industry. The company has many employment opportunities and has a permanent need for good people.
- 2) ISS business is set to grow in remote Australia and in the Natural Resources sector. ISS needs employees who are familiar with the culture and working conditions of remote Indigenous communities and who are able to work in those areas.
- 3) Indigenous employment is a key part of the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda and serves also as a market differentiator for the company.

*'This program is about us moving from ignorance to understanding'*

*Scott Erwin  
National General Manager, Human Resources, ISS Facility Services Australia*

Soon after signing the AEC, ISS hired a National Manager, Indigenous Development & Employment, as well as an Indigenous Program Officer to work with Indigenous communities and 'get good people into the system'. However, certain business units of the company resisted, both passively and actively.

Those who resisted argued that integrating Indigenous colleagues into the workplace would be too difficult and complex.

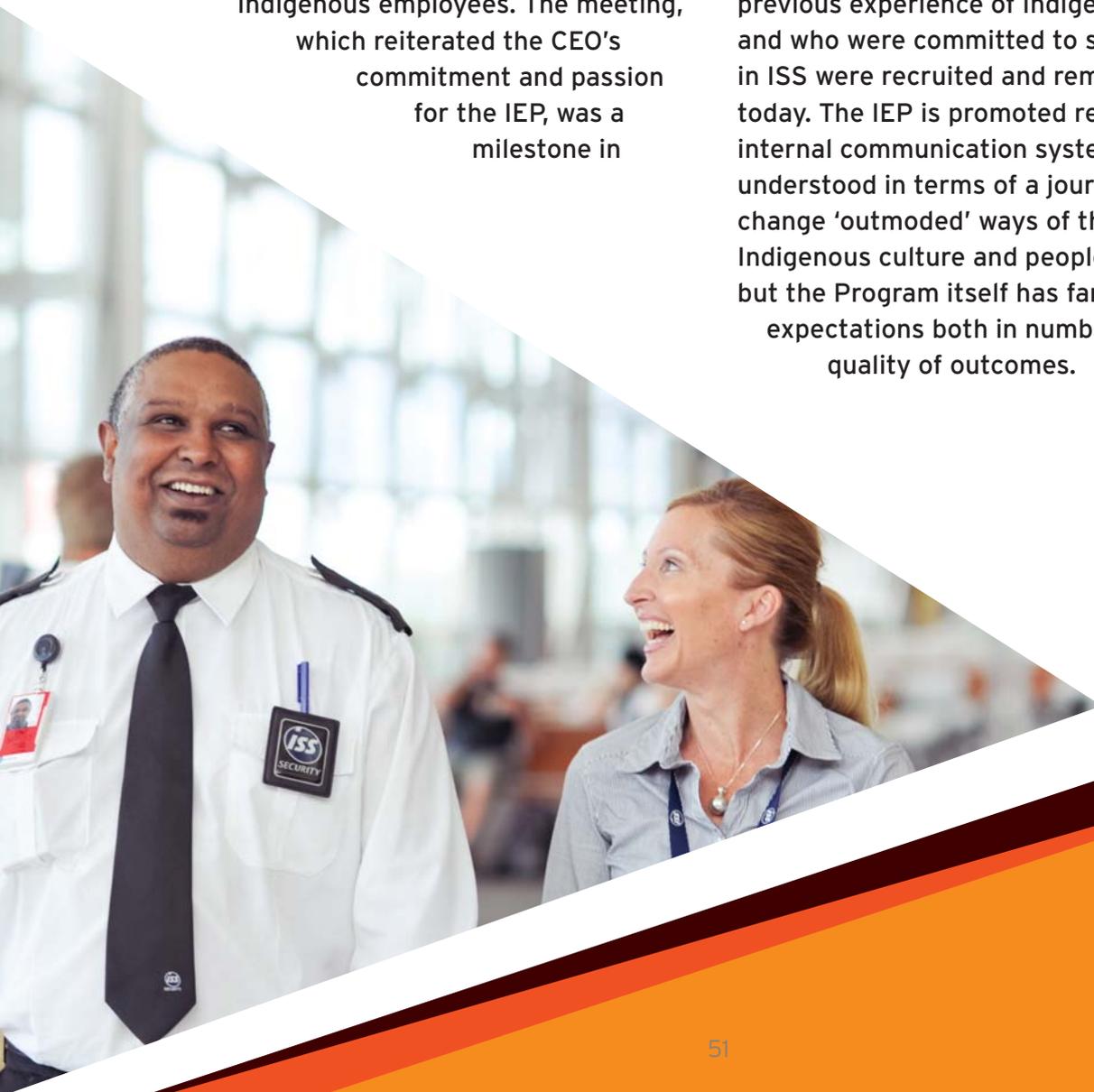
In response to this pushback, which some considered to be 'outmoded thinking,' ISS senior management convened a meeting of key business unit leaders and managers from across the business. The meeting was presented as an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the challenges of implementing the IEP. Managers were encouraged to speak openly about the challenges they faced and through the process a range of issues were identified pertaining to how ISS recruited and placed Indigenous people in the business.

At the end of the process an analysis of the issues revealed several areas in which ISS could improve its HR practices, but also that most of the areas applied to employees generally and not specifically to Indigenous employees. The meeting, which reiterated the CEO's commitment and passion for the IEP, was a milestone in

bringing about a change in internal culture. One result has been a greater understanding by managers of how to manage a modern and diverse workplace.

Over the initial 12-month period several Indigenous employees performed exceptionally well which was important for site managers and staff to see. At the same time, ISS responded to requests from Indigenous staff for a buddy system to help newcomers acclimatise to the workplace. Adjustments were made throughout the first year and continue to be made to improve the Program.

In spite of such steps (and after building the systems within the business), the National Manager, Indigenous Development & Employment, and his team left ISS after 12 months, burned out by the feeling that the company was not supportive enough of their roles. Replacements who had extensive previous experience of Indigenous employment and who were committed to seeing results in ISS were recruited and remain in place today. The IEP is promoted regularly through internal communication systems and is understood in terms of a journey. Efforts to change 'outmoded' ways of thinking about Indigenous culture and people are ongoing but the Program itself has far exceeded initial expectations both in numbers and the quality of outcomes.



## THE SYSTEM

ISS has a small but effective surrounding system and recognises that this could be extended as the Program grows and expands to new regions of Australia.

- Funding in the form of Indigenous Wage Subsidies and other incentives from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is critical. ISS finds the partnership with DEEWR to be flexible and the funding sufficient in volume. The Program is cost neutral to ISS but without the funding the Program would not exist.
- External Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) work closely with ISS Australia to design and deliver pre-employment training in Brisbane and Perth. The partnership is defined by a commitment from both parties to jointly design a culturally appropriate but rigorous training program for Indigenous new starters. External training providers partner with ISS in Brisbane to provide accredited technical certification in security/aviation security as

well, which is one of the most popular job types for Indigenous employees.

- Aboriginal Connections Employment Services (ACES), a privately owned Indigenous business, has worked with ISS on a small, informal scale for some period of time to improve Indigenous employment outcomes in priority employment areas within NSW. The partnership has recently been scaled up under an MOU agreed between ISS and ACES with DEEWR as a proposed funder. ACES, as an Indigenous business, assists, identifies and recruits Indigenous employees into ISS's Government Cleaning Division in NSW. ACES provides case management and mentoring services and ISS guarantees jobs and a two-day non-accredited work-ready training program.
- JSAs refer some candidates and provide vital support to them for transport and initial out of pocket expenses and in preparation for interviews with ISS.

## THE PROGRAM

The ISS Indigenous Employment Program is founded on a decisive, personal, and strategic commitment by the Board and senior leadership, characterised by a preparedness to not give up when challenges arise, driven by a team experienced in and passionate about Indigenous employment and an approach that rewards merit while recognising personal circumstances.



## Resources - People and Funding

Funding for ISS's Program comes from DEEWR through the Indigenous Employment Program. Funding is the critical essential element of the program without which ISS's own program would not be possible. ISS managers reported that the level of funding is sufficient for the company to cover the costs of a small team. Business units receive a share of the financial incentives which has proven to be a small but important way for middle management to support the program. Of equal significance is the willingness of DEEWR to be flexible and responsive to the way in which some of the funding is used. At times securing approvals from DEEWR for specific initiatives can take a long time, compelling ISS to fund operations for a period of time.

Two staff based in Brisbane work full-time on managing the Program. The National Manager, Indigenous Development & Employment, is supported by the Human Resources Coordinator, Queensland. A third HR Coordinator position manages the Program in Western Australia. The recruitment of the current National Manager, Indigenous Development & Employment, who has extensive previous experience in Indigenous employment, was a direct response to the burnout of the initial Program management team in 2009.

This small team is supported by and works side by side with ISS's National Human Resources team. The National GM for Human Resources has a strong professional background in Indigenous employment and has a passion for the subject which sets the tone throughout the national HR team. The National Manager, Indigenous Development & Employment, also reports regularly on the Program to the CEO.

## Philosophy

ISS's program is driven by a belief that the employment of Indigenous people will help the company deliver its business and social objectives. This belief is underpinned by an appreciation that real outcomes require a

long term perspective, and that mistakes will be made but lessons can be learned through the process. ISS's corporate values (quality, responsibility, entrepreneurship, honesty) define the parameters of the Program with both the employee and the company taking responsibility for delivering a win-win situation. ISS has a realistic understanding of what it can and cannot offer and uses funding and partnerships within the system to leverage greater impact. A visible feature of ISS's approach to Indigenous employment is its willingness to find solutions that work for both the individual and the business unit. When hurdles or challenges arise the response is to find a solution that meets the employee's individual circumstances as well as delivering value to the company. This commitment not to give up at the first challenge has paid significant dividends in the form of participants reporting very high levels of job satisfaction and referrals of family and friends to ISS.

*'Employers need to have an appreciation of the role and importance of family and the positives and negatives of that'*

*Sarah Larson  
HR Coordinator, Queensland,  
ISS Facility Services Australia*

Standards are kept high and consistent for both the individual and company. The focus is on the individual and enabling them to make the most of opportunity. ISS puts significant effort into working with participants on an individual basis and the entrance into the company is highly personalised. After being placed in a job, participants are encouraged to progress through the company and move within geographies or business units. The company recognises, at the same time, that managers on site must be co-owners of the program so support is available from the program team to assist in a range of areas.

## METHODOLOGY

While ISS has a discrete Indigenous Employment Program the team works closely with and actually from within the corporate HR system. This structure has been integral to the Program's success. The Program team is responsible for attracting, recruiting and preparing participants for employment in ISS. The National Manager, Indigenous Development & Employment, has additional responsibilities for managing the contracts and the relationship with DEEWR as well as being the senior internal promoter of the Program. The team and especially the National Manager, Indigenous Development & Employment, play a continuous and important role in assisting site managers and staff with understanding the intent and modalities of the Program as well as serving as a source of information and advice on how to manage day to day issues.

An important part of ISS's methodology is to provide opportunities to participants across Australia, not just in Brisbane or Queensland. Having the IEP team in close physical proximity means they work seamlessly to identify opportunities across the company's offices and business units and match participants to those.

Once in a job, Indigenous employees are performance-managed by their site managers. The fact that Indigenous employees are 'managed' by the unit managers, just like all other employees, and not 'managed' by the IEP Program team is a message that has taken some work to get across. But on the other hand, emphasising this has led to greater ownership of the Program across ISS.

## Employee Attraction

ISS attracts candidates to the program in several ways.

- ISS website and others such as SEEK
- Job fairs are used to promote opportunities and the company
- JSAs are kept informed of employment opportunities at ISS
- Word of mouth referrals from satisfied employees. This is considered to be the most effective method of attracting new Indigenous employees.

Initial contact with a candidate is usually on the telephone. The HR Coordinator has an informal discussion with the person and determines whether the candidate meets ISS's basic criteria. The basic criteria include whether they live within 50 km of the work site and whether they have legal barriers that prevent them from employment in a particular role (e.g. having a criminal record for a security role). Most of the initial screening happens at this stage.

## Screening/Selection/Placement

The candidates who move beyond the initial phone call are invited into ISS for a formal interview with one of the Program team. If the candidate demonstrates a commitment to work the process of finding the right role begins. Most candidates in Queensland and the Brisbane area (where the majority of interviews for this case study took place) are placed, or express interest in being placed, in the security business. Highly regulated, the security industry requires significant minimum standards in terms of certification and location. In cases where candidates do not live within a 50 km radius of Brisbane, or have a criminal conviction, ISS is unable to provide a job. In cases where transportation or certification and training are lacking, ISS works closely with the individual to find solutions and place them in a job.

## Pre-employment Training/Preparation

A job in the security business requires a base minimum Certificate II qualification in Security Operations. As most candidates do not have this, ISS has an agreement with the National Security Training Academy to provide a two-week course. An extra third week is available for those interested in a security job at the airport. Once the course is completed candidates must wait 6-7 weeks for their certification before they can begin work. This is seen as a critical period for many and it can be a challenge to not lose motivation. Interviews with ISS and participants suggest, however, that the vast majority of candidates do manage to bridge the gap and take up a role with ISS.

Once the training is complete and certification has been received, ISS provides an intensive two-day pre-employment training program. The program, designed in close discussion with an Indigenous facilitator from an external RTO, is innovative in its approach and structure.

Participants are introduced to the concept of a work culture and explore their motivations for seeking work. Various elements of a workplace are explored: goal setting, customer service, expectations of the employer, attire and self-presentation. The course understands that previous working experiences have not necessarily been positive for the participants and so considerable attention is given to public speaking, confidence building and exploring workplace relationships.

The course is informal and presented in a manner that builds on the metaphor of an Indigenous hunter. The employee is represented as a hunter or fisherman. Corporate and business culture is represented as the bush or environment. Skills that are needed to be a successful hunter or fisherman (awareness, cooperation, respect for the environment) are translated into the ISS workplace making the learning experience enjoyable and less 'official'.

During the two-day course senior managers and executives visit the cohort to meet with them and welcome them to the company. Participants who were interviewed for this study indicated this was useful in that on the first day of work they felt as if they already knew some important people in the company.

The pre-employment course is followed by a day of role-specific induction in the particular workplace.

ISS considers its pre-employment, training and induction package to be one of the most important factors in the success of its Program, which is confirmed by many of the participants themselves.

*'The pre-employment course was very essential. I wasn't dropped in the deep end like in previous jobs'*

*Dean Jones*

*Program Participant and Internal Mentor,  
Brisbane International Airport*

## On the Job Support

Once on the job, Indigenous employees are supported through the normal HR systems and processes available to all employees of ISS. In addition, to assist with the transition into work, ISS has initiated a 'mentoring' system for participants in the Program. Currently participants have access to one external mentor who is also the facilitator of the pre-employment training, and an internal mentor, an Indigenous man and participant in the Program who has shown strong potential and delivered results in his role. This is a relatively new system and the precise roles and responsibilities of the internal mentor have yet to be formalised but include being a sounding board for other participants, advisor on workplace issues and a representative participant in formal HR disciplinary or performance management settings. ISS has plans to expand the network of internal mentors as the cohort grows.

Participants report that they feel they are supported on the job by a system that is responsive to their needs and is quick to address workplace complaints or conflict.

### Career Progression/Retention

ISS actively supports participants to consider the company a long-term permanent employer and the Program has been designed to support those who seek to progress or move around in the company. ISS is conscious of the costs of turnover and recruitment and seeks to make the workplace welcoming and rewarding.





## Dean Jones

### Security Screening Officer, ISS Internal Mentor Brisbane Airport

'I am Brisbane born and bred. My family comes from Stradbroke Island but I never spent much time up there.

I've worked in quite a few jobs all my life. I spent about ten years at JB Swift, the meat company in Morningside. I had a couple of different roles there, like shipping clerk and in the cold stores.

Before ISS I was out of work for about six months. I applied for a lot of jobs, was looking for work all the time. I must have applied for about 60 jobs as a forklift operator but didn't get a look in. And I'm a licensed forklift operator.

I found out about this job through the ISS website. They put up an IEP notification and on the first day it was up on the site, I called Scott Wilson and talked to him. He was great. He called me in and then we had a bit of a yarn about my work experience and history. I told him I was willing to learn and I guess he could see I have good social skills.

I was interested in the Security Officer role but didn't have the certificates so had to do a two-week security course at NSTA. Some were from ISS, others weren't. A few were Indigenous but most weren't. After the two weeks we had a break and then I went back for another week to do the aviation security training. Once all those certificates came through I and about a dozen others had a pre-employment course over about three days.

The course was absolutely essential. I wasn't dropped in the deep end like at other jobs. It was facilitated by Bridget who is Indigenous herself and that was good. We got a lot of information about ISS and its expectations. Those were made very clear! Bridget talked

about how to meet and greet people and what our attitude and dress sense should be like.

Senior managers from ISS came in to meet us for a day which was great. It really broke the ice, 'cause we all felt as if we had met them which was good for our future comfort. They just treated us just like anybody. They told us to contact them if we had any particular 'cultural' issues and they would try to help us find a solution. This was really different. In other jobs they talk about OHS and hygiene and things like that but never address Indigenous or cultural issues. But to me, it's essential for the company to know these issues exist and make the employee more comfortable about raising them.

ISS have been great to get me job shifts that allowed me to get to work before I had a car. They are very helpful. I see long-term prospects here. They've made me a mentor because I know what it's like to have hurdles and help others. They don't give up at first hurdle.

My role as a mentor is to support other Indigenous staff with things like family and transport and community issues that affect their work. If there is disciplinary action I attend those meetings with the person. It's a great program. Essential. There should be more of us.

What's my advice to employers?

- Be up front with Indigenous people, don't bullshit.
- Make the workplace accessible. A relaxed environment.
- Aboriginal mentors and buddies are a good support to us.'

## OUTCOMES

The initial goal and commitment to AEC was for 50 placements. In less than three years this target has been exceeded nearly five times over, with 247 Indigenous people working in ISS across every state and territory except one.

Participants in the Program report very high levels of satisfaction with ISS as an employer, as well as their management of the recruitment-to-placement process. Several participants, such as a Security Officer at Brisbane Airport who has been given responsibility as Mentor, have already progressed within the organisation.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Whilst this case study includes examples from all elements of the framework, three particular learnings, insights or distinctive features stand out:

	1. Right People	2. Underpinning philosophy	3. Appropriate funding	4. Effective methodology
System	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Right people: Success depends on the passionate commitment of leadership

The ISS Program is championed at the very highest levels of management (CEO) and founded on a compelling business case. The CEO is not just supportive of the Program but is personally passionate about Indigenous employment and demands accountability from his management team to deliver. The company has strategically recruited key personnel experienced in Indigenous employment programs who share the CEO's passion to

manage the Program. When the Program has met challenges the CEO's and senior management's resolve has not wavered.

### Effective methodology and underpinning philosophy: The Program is an organisational journey that takes determination

After three years ISS considers itself still to be in the early days of the Program. Management frames the Program in terms of a journey that extends well into the future. They are realistic about making mistakes but are committed to learning lessons and readjusting the Program in light of those learnings. A key to the success is the team's and company's resilience demonstrated in its refusal to give up at the first hurdle or challenge. The Program team is proactive in finding solutions for individuals so the company can gain a good employee and the individual a good job.

### Right people: Strategic 'people' decisions make all the difference

ISS's Program demonstrates best practice by the way in which key strategic decisions have been made:

- Designing a pre-employment program in conjunction with an Indigenous specialist, that is engaging, culturally sensitive and innovative
- Recruiting the most experienced personnel to drive the Program rather than try to 'make do' with existing resources
- Choosing partners carefully and deliberately and, as in the case with ACES, in a way that increases the positive impact on Indigenous employment.



# Skill360 Australia

## Indigenous Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program

Name	Skill360 Australia
Location	Cairns (Head Office) Townsville (Branch Office) with operations throughout far northern Queensland including Cape York
Type	Non-profit; Group Training Organisation (GTO); Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
Workforce	67 FTE of which 3 are Indigenous. 610 apprentices and trainees in over 230 workplaces across far North Queensland
Industry	All, however special capability in construction and building services; natural resources; business services and hospitality industries
Total Revenue	FY 11: \$21 million



## CASE STUDY

### Skill360 Australia, Indigenous Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program



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## Case Study Skill360 Australia Indigenous Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program

### ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Skill360 Australia is a provider of apprentices and trainees in Far North Queensland with a special capability in meeting the needs of employers in the construction, building services, natural resources, business services and hospitality sectors. The organisation is structured as a non-profit organisation and prides itself on its deep community roots. Most of the staff, apprentices and trainees are North Queensland residents who identify with the community values of the organisation, including its long established commitment to working positively with Indigenous Australians. As the naming rights sponsor of the local Rugby League team, Skill360 Australia is a very visible part of the local and regional communities. It is well known and well regarded amongst job seekers, employers and government in the region.

Skill360 Australia's operating area stretches from Cardwell in the south to the Torres Strait Islands in the north, west across the Tablelands and Gulf and all off-shore islands to the east. Their Head Office is located in Cairns. In addition, Skill360 Australia provides training on a contract basis to organisations across Australia.

### Indigenous Community Context

Approximately 10% of all Indigenous Australians live in North Queensland and the Cape York Peninsula. The region has a population of around 250,000 people of which almost 12% is Indigenous. Of the 101,800 Indigenous people aged 15 years and above in Queensland approximately 20% were unemployed in 2010. There are substantial, Indigenous communities in

Cairns and Cooktown as well as small and remote communities all across the Cape York Peninsula.

The largest part of Skill360 Australia's operations is in the remote, sparsely populated and often inaccessible Cape York Peninsula. Operating in the Cape places an additional layer of complexity on the issues of Indigenous disengagement from the workforce as:

- The number and range of employment opportunities for Cape residents are few and usually linked with community councils
- Poor infrastructure means employers and jobseekers often struggle to connect, as many communities are inaccessible for long periods at a time over the rainy season
- Cape communities are generally regarded as being more conservative and members less able and/or willing to relocate to other parts of Australia for work purposes

To get around these challenges Skill360 Australia offers two solutions:

- 1) They offer apprenticeships and traineeships to individuals in the Cape, for roles which are often outside of the Cape
- 2) They facilitate the creation of jobs for Indigenous people in the Cape by supporting 'host' employers who want to come into the Cape for short periods, to find their workforce.

One of the distinguishing features of the Far North Queensland social tapestry, relative to some of the other areas in Australia, is the degree of interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This study

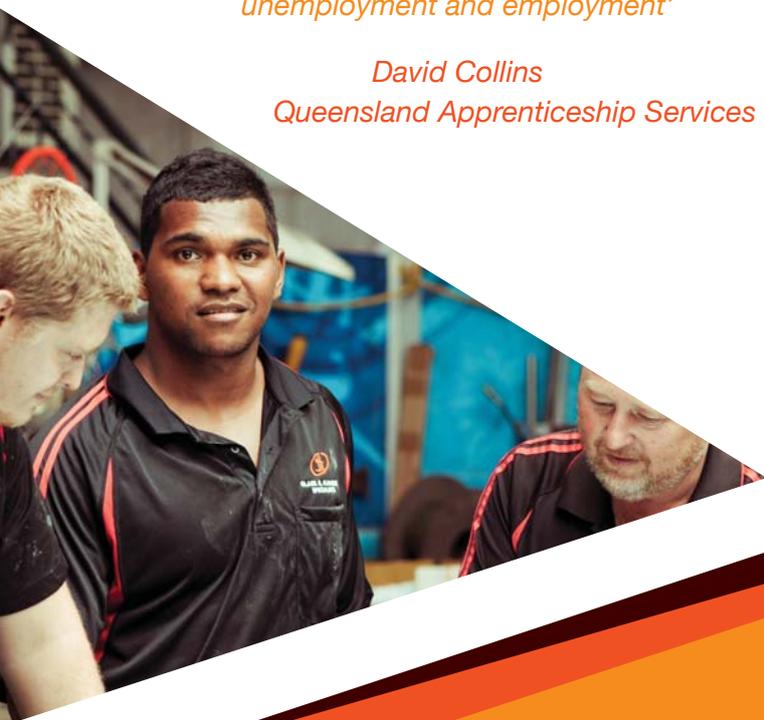
found that most employers in the region were less daunted by the prospect of employing Indigenous Australians than those interviewed elsewhere. Their perception of what adaptations would be necessary was less and many had already had positive experiences with Indigenous employees. Many had an understanding of the cultural context of their Indigenous peers.

As a result, Skill360 Australia does not think about their work with Indigenous employees and candidates as a discrete Indigenous employment program. They simply recruit and place apprentices and trainees, regardless of ethnicity. Comments such as, 'the only thing we care about is that the apprentice shows up every morning' or, 'there is only one number that counts: 38 (hours),' were near universal in Far North Queensland.

Having said this, there was a clear difference in perception between Indigenous Australians living within Cairns and other urban settings, and those from more traditional Cape York communities. One interviewee referred to a distinction between 'acceptable' Indigenous people - i.e. those who were familiar with the work environment and able to navigate non-Indigenous dominated situations comfortably - and those who were not in this position.

*'The cultural gap is not between Indigenous and non-Indigenous but between unemployment and employment'*

*David Collins  
Queensland Apprenticeship Services*



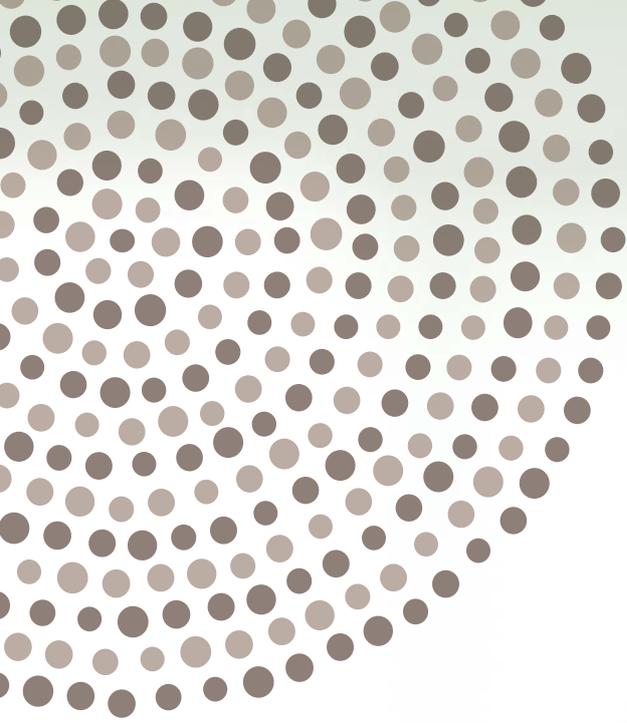
## The Group Training Organisation (GTO) Model

A uniquely Australian model developed over 30 years ago, Group Training Organisations provide employers of all sizes and industries with apprentices and trainees by acting as an indenturing employer. The GTO provides in-house and external training (as required) to the individual apprentice/trainee as well as post-employment and personalised support. The model is particularly attractive to small or medium-size employers or employers with seasonal work as the GTO bears most of the risk involved in putting on an apprentice.

The GTO recruits the apprentice/trainee, manages their payroll and all relevant administrative paperwork, including compliance with government subsidies, incentives and other schemes. The GTO places each participant with a 'host' employer who is invoiced each month. Perhaps most attractive to 'host' employers is the flexibility that this model provides them if their business struggles or the apprentice/trainee is no longer required.

Skill360 Australia services a network of over 230 businesses of all sizes and retains a pool of over 600 apprentices and trainees. The recruitment process, terms and conditions of employment for apprentices and trainees differ from that of the other 67 FTE employees, many of whom are involved in training and field operations.

Skill360 Australia apprentices and trainees span school leavers, transitional and long-term unemployed people.



## PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

<b>Name</b>	Indigenous Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program
<b>Number of years running</b>	25 +
<b>Number of participants</b>	More than 15,000 apprentices and trainees placed over 25 years; approximately 25% of whom are Indigenous
<b>Average number of participants per cohort</b>	Skill360 Australia retains a large pool of apprentices and trainees who are placed with a network of over 230 'host' employers. The number of participants in employment with 'host' organisations varies at any given point
<b>Types of jobs offered</b>	Cabinet makers, plumbers, carpenters, office administrators, chefs, heavy machine operators, landscape maintenance

## JOURNEY OF ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM

Skill360 Australia is a non-profit organisation with strong links in the regional community. Founding CEO John Winsor was personally committed to Indigenous employment and prioritised the Cape York Peninsula as a key focus area for the organisation. This commitment continues 25 years later under the current leadership.

The key driver of Skill360 Australia's commitment to Indigenous employment has been and continues to be a set of values that have guided the organisation since

its founding. Among these are equity and Indigenous empowerment. The leadership and staff of Skill360 Australia see themselves as a 'community organisation' with a commitment to serving all residents of the Far North Queensland region.

*'Employers need good apprentices and trainees and the pool is small. Many Indigenous people have skills or the potential to skill up'*

*Peter Langbien  
CEO, Skill360 Australia*

Over the years Skill360 Australia's work in the Cape has led to a significant increase in the volume of Indigenous apprentices and trainees in the organisation. In 2009, with the full support of the Board, the then CEO Troy Williams established the Indigenous Skills Centre as a discrete business unit responsible for managing all aspects of Indigenous traineeships and apprenticeships. This move was driven by a need to provide better and more focused management of their work with Indigenous apprentices and trainees, as well as to promote their capabilities to employers and the broader community. An Indigenous woman, Alfreida Roberts, was appointed as Manager of the Centre and continues in that role today. Beyond the strong values and cultures of the organisation and the 'feel good factor' that partners and employers find so important, is a genuine business imperative driving Skill360 Australia. In a region where skilled employees are hard to come by, Indigenous employment is just common sense. With a small population and considerable growth in key industries such as mining and construction, businesses need employees who have skills but also understand and are able to work in remote areas.

## THE SYSTEM

As a result of its community roots and dual capability as GTO and RTO, Skill360 Australia is a self-contained system in its own right. Skill360 Australia is employer, trainer, facilitator, job agency and community support organisation. Many tasks that other organisations would outsource are part of Skill360 Australia's corporate DNA. While Skill360 Australia has a diverse capability it still works closely with a range of other organisations which complement its capabilities:

- Queensland Apprenticeship Services (QAS) is mandated by government to assist GTOs, including Skill360 Australia, in the management and administration of its DEEWR incentive contracts. At the same time QAS promotes the GTO model to businesses who would benefit from the GTO model, thereby supporting Skill360 Australia in developing its network of 'host' employers
- Tropical North Queensland TAFE (TNQIT), located next door to Skill360 Australia's Head Office, provides longer 'blocks' of classroom-based training to apprentices to complement Skill360 Australia's more practical on-site training
- Finally, JSA providers, and particularly certain individuals within the JSA network who share Skill360 Australia's vision and understand its business model, are important partners. JSAs support individuals in the early transition to work, including through the apprentice/trainee route.

Skill360 Australia has found that the workplace can be a strange and challenging environment for many Indigenous people, especially those that have left their local community to take up jobs in Cairns or Cooktown. Families of apprentices and trainees are therefore an important part of the system. Field Officers work proactively with families and wider communities to identify people who will support the person in his or her journey to employment. Families may also need support to deal with the stress of a family member leaving community for an unfamiliar lifestyle and location.

*'If you invest in a family unit they will understand better. It means it's less of an issue if someone misses a community event, e.g. a funeral, because you've got people saying 'You can't come – you've got to go to work'*

*Petrina Villaflor*

*Cape York Project Leader, Skill360 Australia*

Finally, Skill360 Australia works with over 200 'host' employers; maintaining good and productive relationships with 'hosts' is critical to their ongoing success.

The system is large and at times complex. Skill360 Australia has learned over time that strong coordination is critical to making the system work effectively, and prioritises the management of expectations and clear role definition with all of its partners.



## THE PROGRAM

Skill360 Australia's Indigenous Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program is characterised by the investment of significant time and effort in establishing trust with Indigenous communities, personalised support and mentoring from individual staff members, and an approach that emphasises mutual accountability.

### Resources - People and Funding

Funding for Skill360 Australia's work with unemployed Indigenous Australians comes through DEEWR in the form of Indigenous Wage Subsidies which are split between the 'host' and Skill360 Australia (as indenturing employer). Additional funding and incentives are provided by federal and state governments to contribute to costs of training, equipment and other related costs (e.g. through Abstudy). Employer incentives are split between the 'host' and Skill360 Australia. In most cases the incentive/subsidy is shared equally but in cases where participants are engaged in remote locations such as the Cape, Skill360 Australia retains the major share of the funding. Skill360 Australia will also support apprentices and trainees to claim grants available to individuals for tools, etc. Overall, Skill360 Australia reported the funding to be sufficient and flexible for non-remote training and placements.

The management of the Indigenous apprenticeships and traineeships is the responsibility of the Manager of the Indigenous Skills Centre, a business unit created in 2009 to manage and grow Indigenous participation in Skill360 Australia's programs. The manager is the only employee hired specifically to manage Indigenous training and apprenticeship activities. All other staff, including Field Officers, Employment Coordinators and trainers, service and manage a mixed caseload of Indigenous and

non-Indigenous participants. Management of Indigenous participants is therefore integrated within existing systems and structures of the organisation. However, as many Indigenous participants, especially those who are working away from home, do require a higher level of support, Field Officers and Employer Coordinators are expected to provide a range of individualised support services which often require these staff members to work long and irregular hours.

*'Every host employer and apprentice has a dedicated Skill360 Australia Field Officer... they're available after hours and at night if necessary... it is part of the service provided by the company to maximise the chances of success'*

*Peter Langbien  
CEO, Skill360 Australia*

### Philosophy

Skill360 Australia's philosophy is built on the principles of mutual accountability, merit and empowerment. Indigenous people are given the same opportunities as any other apprentice or trainee and expected to meet the same standards of performance. Skill360 Australia believes the best way to achieve results is, whenever possible, to take the 'Indigenous' out of the Indigenous employment equation. Apprentices and trainees are placed with 'host' employers on the basis of their skills and ability.

Skill360 Australia also believes in moving Indigenous people further up the employment value chain beyond entry level and low-skill jobs and actively seeks to place participants in workplaces which offer these opportunities, such as the major banks.

## METHODOLOGY

### Employee attraction

A significant proportion of the effort to prepare Indigenous apprentices and trainees takes place at the stage of attracting and recruiting candidates. The individual is seen as being a part of a larger social group made up of family and community.

Skill360 Australia has developed strong networks and partnerships with Indigenous communities throughout its operating areas; its reputation is generally strong among Indigenous people. Two Field Officers (one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous) frequently and regularly visit the communities promoting the organisation's apprenticeship and training opportunities to employers, students and job-seekers. Field Officers then work proactively with individuals, their families and communities when there is interest.

### Screening/Selection/Placement

Skill360 Australia attracts apprentices and trainees in several ways:

- The company website has a 'For Apprentices' portal where people are able to apply and learn of opportunities
- This is complemented by a Facebook page which posts information about the organisation, lists jobs and allows people to invite friends to get in touch with Skill360 Australia
- Word of mouth from members of the community and family is especially effective and staff and the CEO work hard to maintain these relationships.

Apprentices and trainees apply for the Skill360 Australia program directly or online and are interviewed by staff. In the case of Indigenous participants the interview is relaxed and more of a 'yarn' about what they want and what Skill360 Australia is able

to offer. Once selected, Skill360 Australia actively seeks to place them with a 'host' employer which involves preparing the participant for how to act in an interview.

Skill360 Australia recognises that the workplace must be welcoming and suitable for an apprentice and, therefore, a process of vetting 'host' employers prior to placement is a regular feature. While this includes making sure the employer has appropriate expectations of the apprentice or trainee and the workplace meets OH&S standards, employers are also vetted for their attitudes toward working with Indigenous apprentices/trainees to ensure the placement is a positive experience for both parties.

*'All you have to do is sign a piece of paper and then 360 does it all!'*

*Michael Skeene  
4th Year Indigenous Apprentice*

### Pre-employment Training/Preparation

Any skill-based pre-employment training is the responsibility of the 'host' employer. However, Skill360 Australia Field Officers and others partners do significant work to prepare candidates while they are still in the attraction phase. In discussions with job seekers, family members and community leaders, Field Officers inform potential participants about how a workplace functions, what business culture means in practical terms (punctuality, attire, having to speak to strangers) and what expectations employers will have of their employees. These messages are reinforced by most multiple parties in the system including TAFE and JSAs.

As part of the program apprentices are required to complete blocks of additional training as determined by the industry. This is built and costed into the program and is delivered either directly by Skill360 Australia at their Head Office in Cairns or by a TAFE, depending on the requirements of the training.

*'Often literacy and numeracy are low so we deliver training differently. We try new ways of assessing skills by having the students 'show' us the outcome rather than write about it. We change the delivery method to enable them to reach the competency'*

*Ron Todd  
Tropical North Queensland TAFE*

## On the Job Support

From the moment an apprentice is accepted to the program and, indeed, often well before, the Field Officers serve as a personal 'coach' and mentor for the individual. This means assisting them with logistical

support such as accommodation, transport and other barriers, as well as on the job training and work related conflict. This individualised care extends, if required, up to six months after placement.

Skill360 Australia Field Officers (also known as Employer Coordinators) also work closely with the 'host' employer to ensure the arrival and experience of an apprentice or trainee in their business is well received. The Field Officer supports the 'host' employer in troubleshooting workplace challenges and plays the role of a neutral mediator or advisor.

## Career Progression/Retention

Skill360 Australia is focused on apprenticeships and traineeships and therefore does not track the progress of apprentices or trainees after completion of the program. Significant effort is put into keeping participants motivated throughout their apprenticeship or traineeship especially in the third and fourth year. Skill360 Australia relies heavily on the support of family and community members to do this.





## Petrina Villaflor

### Previous Program Manager

Petrina Villaflor is an Indigenous woman employed in the position of Cape Project Leader at Skill360 Australia. She is a single mother of three young children with family roots in Cape York. Educated and raised in Cooktown, Petrina has lived and worked all across North Queensland. Regarded by her colleagues and the CEO as a 'superstar' of the organisation she is respected for her professionalism, tireless dedication to her clients (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and her passion for quality employment outcomes.

'Before joining Skill360 I worked for NEATO Employment Services, a 5 star Jobs Services Australia provider (JSA) in Cairns. Success to me looks like Indigenous people getting jobs on the sole basis of merit. I'm personally trying to be friend and mother to Indigenous young people to get them out of the cycle [of unemployment].

I travel a lot across north Queensland, including the Cape. My job is to promote the opportunity of apprenticeships/traineeships to school leavers, the unemployed and employers alike. Most of my clients are non-Indigenous, especially on the host employer side. But the Indigenous apprentices do need a special approach. I try to engage the community to be present when I'm talking to people about work. If you can draw Indigenous families into the equation they can support the employer to get the person to work on time and to keep coming. Someone else in the family needs to be on the person's side who wants to see them succeed. At work that's a mentor but they need someone at home too.

Being aware of cultural differences is a big success factor when it comes to getting Indigenous Australians into work. But culture is a two-way street. Of course employers

do need to do more to deepen their own understanding of the culture of their Indigenous employees, but they shouldn't walk on eggshells. Employers need to be confident to talk about work-related issues with their Indigenous staff. Indigenous jobseekers and employees need to understand that they have to understand and work within a 'work culture' too.

I work with Indigenous people to get them to think differently...that your job comes first. Get them to think from the employers' point of view. When there is a funeral or family event, I ask them, 'Can't you go for half a day, what degree of relation is this? If it is distant cousin you don't need to be there for a week!'

You have to be careful not to set people up for failure. You have to communicate it properly to them in a way they understand and feel empowered to do it. If we say we want 'apprenticeships' no one will apply as they feel this is official and formal and not for me. When I meet people in community I say, 'Who of you likes to work with kids?' rather than 'Who wants to sign up for a Child Care Traineeship?' If we don't communicate properly and get their interest they won't sign up.

I'm consistent, I deliver. Being accountable and demanding accountability is hard work. I've made a clear niche for Skill360. Everyone knows what they get out of us and what we will deliver for them. Employers and apprentices and communities. Being clear and accountable and delivering is very important to build trust. I've hired and fired apprentices but because I'm accountable and fair and consistent I don't get push-back from community.'

## OUTCOMES

Skill360 Australia's commitment to Indigenous employment through training has had significant employment outcomes in Far North Queensland. The organisation has seen the number of Indigenous people participating in its programs increasing over the past several years. Now, of the 610 participants, 25% identify themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Approximately 60% of participants are retained for a full year and, while the completion rate for the Indigenous cohort is substantially below that for non-Indigenous participants, the percentage of those who are completing the program is increasing. A lower completion rate was reported in those relocating from remote Cape communities.

In interviews with 'host' employers Indigenous apprentices and trainees were regarded highly and indeed in many instances demonstrated more motivation and commitment than their non-Indigenous peers.



## KEY LEARNINGS

Whilst this case study includes examples from all elements of the framework, two particular learnings, insights or distinctive features stand out:

	1. Right People	2. Underpinning philosophy	3. Appropriate funding	4. Effective methodology
System	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Underpinning philosophy: The GTO model

The GTO model is especially attractive to small and medium-sized organisations and those who want to minimise their business's time on administering an apprenticeship program, without jeopardising the development of their employee. It removes some of the risk from hiring decisions and reduces the complexities of contracts and accessing government incentives.

### Effective methodology: The social context makes a difference

The social and demographic context of a particular region does influence how the Indigenous employment continuum works and is understood. This is demonstrated most clearly by the fact that Skill360 Australia does not have a discrete 'Indigenous employment program' but rather an Apprentice and Traineeship program with levels of high participation of Indigenous people.

While a discrete business unit manages Indigenous apprenticeships, the delivery of the program and management of the cohort is integrated into existing systems and

structures. The way in which participants are attracted to Skill360 Australia is tailored to be appropriate to Indigenous people, but once they have entered the system they are considered to be simply apprentices. Skill360 Australia certainly provides a personalised and culturally sensitive support system, but this is regarded as part and parcel of a contemporary and diverse workplace.

### Effective methodology: Including families is essential

The central and critical role families play in achieving successful employment outcomes is a strong learning from Skill360 Australia.

While family trauma, dysfunction and jealousy are real issues for some Indigenous apprentices and trainees, Skill360 Australia's proactive and deliberate inclusion of family members and community members as accountable stakeholders in the individual person's journey is a noteworthy approach.

Also important is the fact that Skill360 Australia acknowledges that the transition into employment for an individual can also be challenging for those around him, particularly when it is not the norm in that community, and relocation may be required. Support is required to enable both parties to adjust and, ideally, to support each other.



# Karen Sheldon Training

Future Stars

Name	Karen Sheldon Catering Pty Ltd
Location	Northern Territory: Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs
Type	Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and private company
Workforce	The Karen Sheldon Catering team consists of a team of qualified hospitality specialists in event management, restaurant and cafe operations, chefs, and wait staff.
Industry	Specialise in hospitality/catering/retail and Indigenous training and employment
Total Revenue	\$3.9 million p.a. (whole of company)



## CASE STUDY Karen Sheldon Training, Future Stars



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# Case Study

## Karen Sheldon Training Future Stars

### ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

Karen Sheldon Training & Development (KSTD) is a division of Karen Sheldon Catering (KSC), a company which has been in operation for over 30 years across the Northern Territory and beyond. Karen Sheldon Catering operates a number of cafes and specialises in catering and events management. The interplay of these two organisations ensures that participants have ample opportunities to apply their learning in practical settings and to build their confidence through experiencing success.

There are multiple synergies between the two entities: KSC is an active member of the Australian Employment Covenant, and when jobs become available, graduates can move into full-time positions within the company (either in the catering field, administration or mentoring roles); secondly, program participants or 'Future Stars' are often offered work experience during the course and/or paid function work after graduation.

Karen Sheldon Training & Development operates across the Northern Territory, delivering its Future Stars program in four major towns: Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. It also delivers other training programs on a fee-for-service basis.

Future Stars participants come from a range of different backgrounds. Some live in urban settings in Darwin, some in very traditional smaller communities, and many are in transit from remote communities. Often groups are a mix of people from quite different backgrounds and at differing distances from the workforce. There is no initial screening hurdle to participate in the program and the team welcomes all Indigenous people seeking development for employment, regardless of background, age, skill base or any other criterion.

### PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

<b>Name</b>	Future Stars Training Program
<b>Number of years running</b>	3
<b>Number of participants</b>	Intakes vary, usually between 10 to 25 participants
<b>Types of jobs offered</b>	The course uses hospitality skills as a focus, but participants go onto a range of roles.

The Future Stars training program prepares graduates for jobs in a wide range of industries, not limited to the focus area of hospitality but across areas such as business IT and administration, mining, health work, retail, tourism and catering. After graduation, participants are placed into 'survival jobs' to begin the process of developing their employability skills. Sometimes they stay and develop careers in these jobs. Sometimes this is considered a learning job until they are in a position to begin to pursue their career goals.

The team work with Indigenous people from a wide range of backgrounds and in a variety of settings. There is no initial screening to get onto the course, making it accessible for those who might be excluded from other opportunities due to low literacy levels or lack of transport. Where specialist external support is required, for example, in cases of substance abuse or domestic violence, the team will support applicants to access this help and get to a point where they can successfully complete the course.

*'It's all about taking steps forward. We'll put them through whatever training they need. We need to give them the mindset and opportunities and sometimes be very blunt with them and say, 'This is something you can do', because often they don't have anyone saying that to them – not their parents or anyone else'*

*Timothy Werner  
Ironbark Recruitment*

Beyond the course, Karen Sheldon Training places graduates into jobs and provides intensive support both for them and their employers for at least the first six months. The connection to the participant often lasts far beyond this period, often for many years, and involves supporting the participant through various challenges along the way.

## **JOURNEY OF ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM**

The Future Stars program started largely due to the passion of the founder, Karen Sheldon, to make a difference and enable Indigenous people to access opportunities. With like-minded business partners, the organisation applied for and was awarded a place on the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) service provider panel.

This proved to be a catalyst, with the team soon being approached to work with McDonalds and develop a program which would enable them to overcome challenges they were facing in finding Indigenous workers for their restaurants. The program has since developed, based on lessons learned, and continues to develop with the expansion of an 'incubator' model for graduates requiring further support before entering mainstream jobs. Participants can now access the program in four major towns across the Northern Territory and participants are going on to employment in a range of fields, supported by Karen Sheldon mentors post-placement.

While the genesis story of Karen Sheldon Catering involves a great deal of personal passion for social justice, the team present a robust business case for employers in the region to play their role. There are significant skills shortages in Darwin and the young and growing Indigenous population constitutes a largely untapped labour market. The team particularly cite over-dependence on backpackers and transient workers in the hospitality industry as a risk for local businesses, and the desires of tourists to engage with Indigenous Australians as a major opportunity. The growing list of employer partners who take on program graduates indicates these messages are resonating and employers are seeing Karen Sheldon as an effective partner to enable them to access job-ready Indigenous Australians.

The 'FStars Crew' is now a close-knit ever-changing group that keeps in contact through their Facebook page, and have become highly sought after to tackle big event jobs in Darwin throughout the function season.

## **THE SYSTEM**

Karen Sheldon Training & Development offers a four-to-six week course which takes participants through intensive pre-employment training, using hospitality and catering as the vehicle to deliver key life skills, knowledge and confidence.

The course covers the following modules:

- Hospitality pathways
- Personal health & nutrition
- Customer service
- Money handling
- Basic cookery
- Basic bar service
- Restaurant service

- Kitchen equipment
- Occupational Health & Safety
- Housekeeping
- Cleaning and maintenance
- Motivation
- Barriers to work
- First impressions
- Grooming and hygiene
- Conflict resolution

Trainees also gain their Responsible Service of Alcohol certificate, a nationally recognised qualification required for most hospitality roles. On completion of the course, graduates are supported into employment and benefit from six months of intensive support from Karen Sheldon Mentors.

## THE PROGRAM

*'We make partnerships work because we never take no for an answer. We actively work on nurturing our JSA partnerships – mentors will go along to JSA meetings with participants and we'll make sure we're meeting the participation requirements for the JSAs so it works for them'*

*Karen Sheldon  
CEO, Karen Sheldon Catering*

Karen Sheldon works in partnership with a range of stakeholders and puts significant effort into developing an understanding of what shared success looks like and how the relationship can be mutually beneficial.

The team work with JSAs to source participants and ensure they are receiving effective wraparound support. Where more specialist support is required, for example, where trainees are dealing with alcohol or

drug dependency, domestic violence or mental health issues, they will also support them to access these services.

*'We like working with them – they're another pair of eyes looking for jobs for our guys. They have really good knowledge internally of how JSAs work, the justice system, etc. They know what they're talking about and what we're dealing with'*

*Timothy Werner  
Ironbark Recruitment*

During the initial training course, Karen Sheldon Training and its parent company, Karen Sheldon Catering, partner to provide real work experience at some of the major events the company caters, e.g. the V8 Supercars. This may also continue beyond the course where further support and development is required, with the graduate either being placed within a Karen Sheldon Catering company full-time for a limited time period, or taking on casual catering work alongside another role.

Partnerships with many local employers, such as Westpac, Sodexo, Accor, IHG, Prospect NT, and Coles, support the placement of graduates into a range of job roles.

## Resources - People and Funding

The team at Karen Sheldon Catering exhibit clear commitment to the personal and professional development of each individual participant. They develop a culture of trust amongst the group of trainers and participants, allowing them to take risks, make mistakes and be totally open with each other about the program objectives, and also about their own barriers, strengths and weaknesses. This is even more important in the mentor - participant relationship.

*'They're surrounded by bad things – trauma – every day. Suicide, addiction, abuse. It's a parallel but whole different world. They're survivors but have no idea of their strengths'*

*Stevie Wie*

*Training Manager, Karen Sheldon Training*

Trainers have experience in hospitality and are able to share many technical skills - e.g. knife skills, customer service - but are also highly skilled in maximising learning opportunities by, for example, bringing basic mathematics into a workshop on cocktail-making. As much of the course is about developing participants to become more self-aware, self-confident and able to cope with conflict, trainers need to have skills beyond the practical and technical.

Mentoring is a key element of the Future Stars program and therefore the role of the mentor has been closely examined and is part of a continual learning curve. The key requirement for this role is defined as 'the ability to judge when to push, pull or walk alongside.' Sometimes it is also knowing when to step away for a time. It is a challenging role as mentors are often exposed to significant trauma and stress, which can lead to burn-out if internalised. Regular weekly debrief sessions enable mentors to 'unload' at the end of the week and therefore not take their grief or frustration home with them. The creation of a 'Mentor Manager' role to support the team of mentors, without taking on their own case load, is a recent program innovation with the aim of dealing with this challenge.

*'It's a specific sort of relationship.. we soon found out that the 'bleeding heart' thing is unhelpful. You need someone who'll be a coach – they have purpose in all things – there's strategy. They have to judge when they need to walk alongside, push from behind or pull from in front'*

*Stevie Wie*

*Training Manager, Karen Sheldon Training*

Karen Sheldon Training & Development receive funding through the federal government's Indigenous Employment Program, but also fund program elements through internal resources due to funding constraints and their commitment to Indigenous employment outcomes.

## Philosophy

Throughout the program participants are challenged but also holistically supported on both a practical and personal level. Transport to and from the course is available if required, participants receive morning tea and lunch at the course (which they cook themselves) and are encouraged to take leftover food home for themselves and their families (also an opportunity to reinforce food handling knowledge). In addition they are taken shopping for work clothes, shoes and any other equipment required.

The training team personally connect with the cohort, encouraging them to call if they have any difficulties (participants memorise their phone numbers during the course). The tone is very honest but non-judgmental which appears to encourage participants who 'fall off' to get back in touch and re-engage when they feel ready. The key is to start from day one of the course to develop a strong personal connection with the participants. All team members are always totally honest with participants and reinforce their respect for the strong, resourceful and resilient nature of the individual participant.

Trainers tend to work across locations and therefore are well placed to stay connected with participants if they move between towns: a common occurrence.

The approach is based around a deep respect for the client base and appreciation of the challenges they are facing, but a focus on pushing them to improve their lives for themselves.

## METHODOLOGY

### Employee Attraction

The primary channels through which participants come to the program are via JSA referrals, word of mouth recommendations, through contact with family and friends, and as a result of media advertising. Trainees may be referred or self-refer between training locations, particularly where they were unable to complete the course at their first attempt or feel they need to repeat it.

As an IEP panel member, Karen Sheldon Training is required to work with all the local JSAs but has particularly strong partnerships with those which have strong alignment in terms of their purpose and philosophy. Ironbark Recruitment is one of these.

### Screening/Selection/Placement

No initial screening is imposed by Karen Sheldon Training, enabling those who may not be able to access other programs to take a positive step towards employment. Participants may have very low literacy and numeracy levels, seriously lack confidence and be dealing with multiple, complex barriers to employment. The requirement from all participants is that they will show commitment throughout the training and to gaining employment at the end.

The transition into a specific job role at the conclusion of the initial training is supported but often requires the graduate to impress at interview. Resume-writing and mock interview workshops take place during the course and the participant's Mentor will often accompany them to the interview.

### Pre-employment Training/Preparation

Pre-employment training is intensive and personalised. There is an acknowledgement that everyone moves at their own pace and they can't be rushed (and that they may drop off and then come back). There is a move towards accredited training but this is due

to the need to satisfy the JSA requirement rather than a sense that it really adds value. The fact that the training is structured around hospitality is due to:

- 1) The core skills required for hospitality jobs are the same ones that are required in almost every other type of industry; therefore it's a versatile vehicle to deliver a range of skills and knowledge, while building self-esteem and confidence
- 2) There is availability and accessibility of entry-level jobs in this field
- 3) The team is experienced and able to access opportunities to provide hands-on learning

There is a strong focus on practical, applied learning. The participants learn how to clean up after themselves (gaining skills such as toilet cleaning, glass cleaning, vacuuming, etc., that others may take for granted), make their own lunches, and learn technical skills (e.g. safe knife techniques) and life skills such as everyday nutrition and teamwork. Participants grow in confidence as they see themselves achieving things and learning. In addition, practical needs are addressed as participants receive morning tea and lunch, and are able to take home nutritious food for themselves and their families. Practical nutrition learning is a big part of the course - because so many of the participants display poor health and poor personal nutrition habits.

*'Many of our participants could paper their walls - if they had walls! - with certificates they have gained at various imposed Training Courses...we think the unaccredited pre-employment course model resulting in a real job - and then looking at job-specific accredited training after basic employability skills are acquired - is more results orientated. Participants take ownership of their training, and learn more quickly once they can see practical reasons for it'*

*Karen Sheldon  
CEO Karen Sheldon Catering*

Through role-play and work experience, participants are able to gain exposure to situations they will face in the workplace and practise skills and behaviours in a safe environment. This helps them to understand elements of the workplace which are often taken for granted, e.g. what good customer service looks like, the fact that you can't have lunch at lunchtime if working in a restaurant, and coping techniques for dealing with challenges outside of the workplace while being able to perform your role.

*'We teach a lot of professionalism – the minimum level we expect is actually very high. We tell them it's up to them to decide, on a personal level, what they think is right. They come back from working functions and will tell us about the other workers and their lower standards of presentation and skills – they're really surprised'*

*Stevie Wie*

*Training Manager, Karen Sheldon Training*

The training element aims to leave participants with a 'mental roadmap for success' – what it looks like and how to achieve it.

### **An Additional Layer of Support - the 'Incubator' Model**

The team at Karen Sheldon Training are deeply aware that all program participants are individuals who will progress at their own rate. This is particularly important as the choice not to screen applicants for entry onto the course means they are working with participants who are coming from a wide range of contexts and starting points, with differing strengths and development needs. A significant proportion are initially very distant from the workforce and have multiple, complex barriers to overcome before they are equipped to be successful in mainstream employment. This is unlikely to be achievable in the space of a short training course, even with the best pre-employment training.

Entry into mainstream employment before an individual is ready for that transition can be detrimental. For the individual, it can compound a sense of failure and inadequacy. From the employer's perspective, employment of non-productive staff members is unsustainable and the experience can perpetuate negative stereotypes. The Karen Sheldon team certainly want to avoid setting participants up for failure, but recognise that employment can act as an imperative for individuals to take personal responsibility for overcoming challenges.

*'People ask why we don't fix things before we send people out to work but actually it's important they have work as a reason to change. Otherwise you're saying, 'You shouldn't drink', and the only reason is because you personally think they shouldn't. If they're working they'll be thinking, 'I like work, I get a pat on the back when I do well..', then they'll go on a bender, not show and there'll be shame and it'll hit them hard - but it's a reason to change'*

*Stevie Wie*

*Training Manager, Karen Sheldon Training*

This has led to the development of an additional layer of support for those Future Stars participants who complete the course but are not yet ready for mainstream employment. The Karen Sheldon team refer to this as their 'incubator' model.

The incubator model sees trainees placed into one of the Karen Sheldon Catering businesses on a temporary basis. They are supported in this role: an Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO) embedded within the business provides intensive support, acting as a 'cushion' between the individual and their manager. The job is secure: it is funded as supernumerary, rather than through the normal staffing budget, and managers are not permitted to fire trainees going through this process. When they are ready (usually after a short period of a few months – but depending on the individual

barriers it may take longer), the Karen Sheldon team will seek to support them into other workplaces, i.e. the open labour market, in the same manner as those placed directly following the course, with mentoring during the transitional period.

Although it is a relatively recent initiative for the Karen Sheldon team, they believe this intermediate labour market model has a great deal of promise. Already, it is giving work experience, skills, confidence and hope to individuals who would otherwise have had difficulty attaining and maintaining employment beyond the course. The incubator component is currently entirely funded by Karen Sheldon Training and Catering, however the team is planning to seek external financial support to extend this program element - in particular to fund on the job trainers and mentors, to further develop the program, and to collect evidence of its efficacy.

### On the Job Support

Post-placement support on completion of the course takes the form of an assigned 'mentor' working with the participant for the first six months of employment. Mentors meet with participants during the second part of the training to start building the relationship and also work with employers to coordinate placements and ensure the workplace is also prepared.

Support for the participant is initially very intensive with participants being prepared for interviews/first days, even down to rehearsing their route into work, and always being picked up on completion of their shift for an in-car debrief. During the first weeks, the mentor may meet with the participant daily, and the employer weekly, to address any transitional challenges.

Many will move into jobs but may also join the 'FStars' event crew on a casual basis and be developed through this (as well as earning additional money). The relationship with Karen

Sheldon tends to be strong and they often have people coming back to them a long time after completion of the course.

Destinations for Karen Sheldon Training graduates include hotels, mining companies, IT and administrative positions, health positions, arts and culture outlets and retail, as well as kitchen positions. Many go into apprenticeships and NT government or private traineeships.

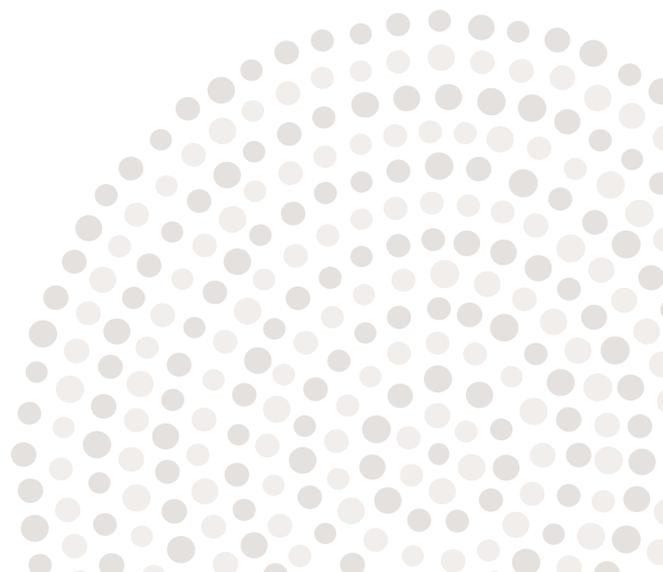
*'Everyone here wants to get a job after this and improve our lifestyles. It benefits us, our communities, our families'*

*Lizzie  
Future Stars Trainee*

### Career Progression/Retention

The biggest successes are considered to be when participants go on to work in a job which suits them regardless of the industry and become self-sustaining members of the workforce.

Karen Sheldon Training's mentors and wider team support participants as they go through the process of deciding which job suits them, even where this requires ongoing contact over a period of years. There is an acknowledgment that this process often requires a few 'misses' and that people may disengage for a period to deal with an issue, and then return once better able to engage.



## OUTCOMES

Karen Sheldon training and development have a strong history of placing long-term unemployed Indigenous people into sustainable, meaningful employment across sectors.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Whilst this case study includes examples from all elements of the framework, three particular learnings, insights or distinctive features stand out:

	1. Right People	2. Underpinning philosophy	3. Appropriate funding	4. Effective methodology
System	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program	✓	✓	✓	✓



## Effective methodology: The need for practical work experience and application of learning

The Future Stars program is highly practical and every learning opportunity is fully utilised to teach a wide range of transferable skills for life and work. While catering and hospitality are the vehicles for learning, the skills, knowledge and mindsets developed through the program are invaluable regardless of their career path beyond the program. Some examples of this are:

- Through cooking lunch for the group each day, trainees learn about food hygiene, nutrition and everyday healthy choices for a range of dietary requirements. The skills are fully transferable to homemaker skills and providing a healthier, cleaner environment for their children
- A shopping trip to get suitable work shoes give the opportunity to talk about workplace health and safety, and the post-trip debrief is an opportunity for the group to talk about customer service and to challenge their assumptions about why they may be treated in particular ways in shops
- Working a Karen Sheldon Catering event or work experience in an incubator cafe towards the end of the course not only gives trainees a chance to practice their catering, customer service and teamwork skills developed over the course, but also demonstrates to them that they can rise to challenges and be successful, while also being able to reflect on areas for further development.

## Effective methodology and appropriate funding: The value of the 'incubator' as a pre-employment training model

While this element of the program is currently not receiving government funding, it has emerged as a key innovation, acknowledging

that trainees have varying degrees of need and will inevitably progress at different paces. This will support employment outcomes by:

- Enabling those trainees in need of additional support to receive it in a protected yet still challenging environment, reducing their likelihood of disengaging entirely
- Preventing employers from being 'burned' by taking on an employee before they are fully ready to cope with the workplace, reducing the likelihood of perpetuating negative stereotypes and costs to businesses

## Right people: The need for clarity of definition around the mentor role

The majority of programs seeking to increase Indigenous employment cite mentorship as an essential element for success; few, however, actually define what the role of mentor entails. At best, they may give some guidance on what a mentor is not.

The team at Karen Sheldon Catering continue to put significant time and energy into drilling down to identifying what it is that makes people successful in terms of outcomes, and resilient in terms of their own ability to cope with the trauma they are being exposed to. For them, the mentor role has turned out to be closer to that of a coach, and core capabilities and skills needed to be more about strategy and purpose than sympathy. Perhaps the most surprising element was that they found Indigenous mentors were more likely to internalise grief, anger and frustration and hence had a higher burnout rate than non-Indigenous mentors. This has led to the recognition of the need for additional support for the supporters to enable them to deal with exposure to trauma and has also challenged their initial assumptions.



# Observations and Insights

We have observed that a set of consistent conditions exist across systems, employers and programs that are achieving substantial Indigenous employment outcomes. These are summarised in the table below and are explained in greater detail in the following pages.

	Right people	Underpinning philosophy	Appropriate funding	Effective methodology
System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed, skilled driving individuals in each partner organisation</li> <li>Engaged local Indigenous champions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'It will take real specialists to achieve results'</li> <li>'We are succeeding if individuals are equipped to succeed and pursue career aspirations'</li> <li>'No excuses'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners tap the range of funding pools available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The convenor of the system represents the employers' needs</li> <li>Alignment on shared vision of success and roles</li> <li>Partners co-create the program</li> <li>Partners act as a virtual case management team</li> <li>Ongoing interaction drives partner alignment and program refinement</li> </ul>
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership is wholly committed and invest appropriately</li> <li>Management are on board and understand their roles and responsibilities</li> <li>A dedicated team/ individual owns and delivers the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'This is important - but it's not just goodwill - there are compelling business benefits'</li> <li>'This is complex and intensive but do-able'</li> <li>'We have deep respect for participants and challenge our assumptions, seeking to understand their context'</li> <li>'We treat all staff consistently, and as individuals'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment has clear business benefits</li> <li>Funding is needed where return on investment is not seen quickly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance management metrics and HR policies are clear, consistent, known and support diversity</li> <li>Broader organisation receive communications and have somewhere to direct queries</li> <li>Roll out of program is staged starting with areas most ready</li> <li>Participants are consulted on material they are included in</li> <li>Issues are addressed immediately and directly</li> </ul>
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team has intense commitment, resilience, high levels of EQ and are creative problem solvers</li> <li>A consistent, trusted point of contact supports each participant and their line manager</li> <li>Ongoing tangible and visible senior leadership support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Participants can be, and want to be, active contributors to their development'</li> <li>'Participants' strengths, abilities and aspirations will guide their pathway'</li> <li>'Honesty is central to interactions and we will meet any promises we make'</li> <li>'We have consistently high expectations'</li> <li>'Common barriers are surmountable' (e.g. housing)</li> <li>'Learning will be a two-way process and non-Indigenous colleagues may also need support to adapt'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program is appropriately resourced with sufficient staff, facilities and budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalised and informal style of engagement throughout</li> <li>Clear, consistent expectations communicated and explained at all stages</li> <li>Families are engaged at multiple stages as resources to support the participant</li> <li>Employee attraction, pre-employment and accredited training/preparation, screening/selection/placement, on the job support and career progression/retention should all be addressed. See page 94 for detail.</li> </ul>

## Right people

Partnership, mutual responsibility and connectedness are universal factors in the success of these programs. This is reflected in the 'systemic' focus of these case studies. One reason this approach is so powerful is that it maximises resources available through harnessing expertise, avoids duplication and creates synergies. It does however require thoughtful and deliberate resourcing at the **system level**.

- **A skilled and committed individual from each partner organisation owns their contribution and relationships with the other partners**

It is the individuals within each organisation who drive an open, transparent, effective and cohesive 'system'. Where systems are successful, these people are deeply committed, skilled in their respective specialties and in relationship management, and have a degree of influence and/or autonomy within their organisations.

- **Champion/s from within the Indigenous community (local if possible) are engaged**

Within the local Indigenous community there are likely to be individuals who are strong champions of Indigenous employment. Early and ongoing engagement with these opinion-leaders can not only helpfully inform program design but also build awareness within the community of the opportunities available, supporting attraction of good candidates. This engagement can happen formally (e.g. **Crown Melbourne** employing Charles Williams, a strong role model from the local Indigenous community, as Program Coordinator) or informally (e.g. **Skill360** Cape York Project Officer, Petrina Villaflor, prioritising building relationships with the broader community).

For an employer seeking to develop an Indigenous Employment Strategy, buy-in at all levels appears to be necessary for a program to gain traction. We have observed that this support does not need to be pervasive prior to the start of the program, but may be built up over time as program successes become apparent, as long as those directly affected by the program roll-out are informed and supportive. At the **employer**, these characteristics of the people involved were observed:

- **CEO/Board/Leaders were wholly committed to the program's success and willing to invest appropriately**

Leaders at the highest level of the organisation need to have passion for the program from its earliest inception, and recognise that significant investment is required to make it work. Commitment must be long-term, visible and clearly defined. This creates impetus for the rest of the organisation. At **Burswood**, concerted efforts to set up an Indigenous employment Strategy failed to take hold until James Packer, Chair of Crown Limited, made a public commitment to employ 2000 Indigenous Australians by 2021. This high-level support meant that Indigenous employment became an immediate priority with senior management accountability. At **Woolworths**, commitment began from the CEO who initiated the completion of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and subsequently hired a National Diversity Manager and implemented a diversity steering committee which spans across all Woolworths businesses.

- **All management involved with the program are on board and understand their roles and responsibilities**

Those managers directly connected to the program (e.g. the managers of teams who are hiring an Indigenous person, Human Resources, Recruitment, etc.) must understand what is expected of them in

their role and be committed to attaining this. **Crown** identified and worked with particular business areas to ensure they were supportive before placing their first program participants. Charles works across teams to support those recruiting, selecting, managing and otherwise working with participants in their engagement with the program.

- **A dedicated team/individual owns and delivers the program**

A key message from interviews is that program delivery is not a part time or 'add on' role; a dedicated resource/s is required. The size of the team will depend on a number of factors including cohort size, level of support required and roles assumed by the employer organisation (as opposed to the wider system partners). Incidences of burnout were widely reported across the case study organisations due not only to the 24/7 nature of these roles, but also to the emotionally charged nature of supporting individuals who are possibly dealing with significant challenges, and mediating between various diverse stakeholder groups.

At the **program level**, resourcing is vital. The right people are needed: individuals that can work with and relate to both participants and the rest of the business. They need to be supported to drive effectiveness and avoid burnout.

- **The program team demonstrate intense commitment, resilience, high levels of EQ and are creative problem-solvers**

The personal connection between a participant and program staff member was universally cited as a key success factor in these programs. At **Karen Sheldon**, the mentor relationship is seen as 90% of the program due to its power in translating training into practice over the transition into employment. For this reason it's vital that the right people are selected for the

role. These cases point to the importance of the ability to navigate the corporate and the local community and develop trusted partnerships, as well as high levels of resilience, creativity and resourcefulness.

- **An assigned and trusted team member is the consistent point of contact for each participant and their line manager, mediating between the two**

Charles Williams, program coordinator at **Crown**, is able to act as mediator and translator between the corporate culture of Crown, program participants and the wider Indigenous community. Charles is able to challenge prejudices on both sides and navigate tensions resulting from cultural and contextual differences. This neutral position also enables him to be both a strong advocate for program participants within Crown and an ally to managers and other Crown employees facing challenges linked to the program.

- **There is ongoing tangible and visible senior leadership support for team, participants and program**

At **Burswood**, senior leadership meet with program staff on a fortnightly basis. This not only ensures program staff are supported but also that leadership are able to effectively advocate for the program internally and externally, informed by current outcomes data. At **ISS**, senior managers came in to meet program participants for a day during their pre-employment training. This was helpful in building participants' confidence and easing the transition, as reported by Dean Jones: 'It really broke the ice because we had met them and it was good for our future comfort. They treated us just like anybody else.'

## Underpinning philosophy

It is apparent from these case studies that there are consistencies in underpinning philosophy that contribute strongly to their success. There are nuanced differences depending on the context in which the organisation is operating; however, at the highest level there is acknowledgement of three things: firstly, that the primary measure of success is that individuals get into careers; secondly, that this is eminently possible, but it takes skills and investment to do it; thirdly, that all those involved must understand the benefits to them as well as to the broader society.

Through the **system** this presents as:

- **'It will take real specialists to achieve results'**

The best placed organisation within the local context should be delivering each program element. In each of these case studies, the employer drew on specialists where support required was outside of their in-house expertise, and others were better placed to provide it. An example of this is the partnership between **Burswood** and **Polytechnic West** who deliver the 'Real Jobs' training.

- **'We are succeeding if individuals are equipped to succeed and pursue career aspirations'**

It was noteworthy throughout these case studies that employers were interested in the development of individuals, beyond their own staffing needs. **Crown** regularly places program applicants with other employers, where their career aspirations don't fit with a Crown career path. This is considered a successful outcome for Crown as they are seeking 'retention within the workforce' and see the program as more than a workforce planning solution. Across the broader system, there was a consistent focus on equipping individuals to be able

to succeed and compete in the open labour market, in line with their own aspirations.

- **'No excuses'**

People throughout the system have a can-do attitude backed by creative problem-solving. An obvious parallel between successful programs observed is a high level of creativity and resourcefulness from all those involved. For example, the staff at **Karen Sheldon** have strong relationships with JSA providers and are very honest with themselves and participants about the challenges they face. Together they address these challenges and draw on all available resources to overcome them, potentially over an extended period, rather than giving up.

In the **employer** it can be seen as:

- **'This is important - but it's not just goodwill - there are compelling business benefits'**

While goodwill is important, for a program to be sustainable it needs to have business benefits which are clear, compelling and robust. In the words of Peter Coyne, EGM HR for **Crown Limited**, 'providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal Australians is not just the right and responsible thing to do, but a smart way to do business.' While the individuals involved in these case studies often have a personal passion for social justice, this is not enough to enable program success. Businesses are accountable to shareholders and require a robust business case in order to sustainably invest in Indigenous employment over the long term. There must therefore be a genuine job vacancy and need.

- **'This is complex and intensive but do-able'**

As noted elsewhere, a consistent feature across cases was a realistic awareness of the complexity of this work, and therefore an appreciation of the potential investment

along with a proactive, resourceful approach to problem-solving and a 'can-do' attitude. This is equally important at the employer and system levels.

- **'We have deep respect for participants and challenge our assumptions, seeking to understand their contexts'**

This was expressed differently in different cases. Some referred to a willingness to 'give a second chance' to program participants, others to 'asking the right questions'. The consistent point is that organisations operating successful programs avoided jumping to conclusions, particularly around performance concerns, and would seek to understand the underlying causes and work with the individual to find a way forward.

- **'We treat all staff, including diverse personalities, backgrounds, beliefs and cultures, consistently, and as individuals'**

Throughout these case studies, participants have spoken about not wanting to be 'under a spotlight' and about the challenges of working with others who assume they are receiving preferential treatment. At **Skill360**, Petrina Villaflor believes that the key is in 'taking the Indigenous out of the conversation', and ensuring that program participants understand that employers have consistent procedures around deadlines, holidays, drug testing, etc. Consistent expectations clearly communicated and backed by HR policies which recognise and respect diversity enable this balance of fairness and consistency.

At the **program level**, this manifests as:

- **'Participants can be, and want to be, active contributors to their development'**

Across these case studies we have seen participants driving their own development. Through being involved in identifying their own challenges and creating development

plans (often in conversation with a mentor on an ongoing basis), rather than being assessed and told what they require in order to succeed, participants are empowered and engaged.

- **'Participants' strengths, abilities and aspirations will guide their pathway'**

There is a strengths-based approach. These programs acknowledge that individuals are not a 'problem to be solved' but bring with them a range of existing skills and abilities, regardless of their employment background. Through adopting a strengths-based approach, and discussing and exploring participant aspirations from an early stage, programs are more likely to guide participants into roles in which they can experience success and feel fulfilled.

- **'Honesty is central to interactions and we will meet any promises we make'**

At **Karen Sheldon** this was particularly emphasised in the context of program staff working with participants. The program team are very honest with participants about challenges they will face and how they are progressing in order to avoid setting them up for failure. At **Skill360** the experience of engaging with communities in Cape York made apparent the need to deliver on promises and be very honest at a wider community level. These communities were initially sceptical about what Skill360 could deliver, having engaged with organisations in the past who had not met their promises (e.g. taken up training opportunities which then didn't lead to employment). Building trust took time and consistency.

- **'We have consistently high expectations'**

Successful programs support individuals to surmount the bar rather than lowering it. Merit-based employment means participants are able to be successful in their role and the wider labour market; it lowers the likelihood of resentment

between the Indigenous cohort and other employees; and it ensures that employer needs are satisfied. A merit-based approach to employment was fundamental to all the programs we explored. This doesn't however mean that processes cannot be adapted. Providing multiple channels for application (rather than just online), providing opportunities to 'test' employment opportunities, enabling family members to accompany a young person for interview and decreasing the level of formality of a selection day are all examples of simple adaptations which can support a long-term unemployed Indigenous job-seeker to demonstrate the skills and capabilities required to get a job on merit.

- **'Common barriers are surmountable' (e.g. housing, transport)**

Commonly reported barriers are sometimes seen as too much for a program to overcome. Two examples of these are housing and transport. Those programs achieving success consistently find solutions to these barriers. With shift work being the norm at **Crown** and **Burswood**, and participants generally relying on public transport, poor infrastructure can be a major issue. It is often the reason that participants are late or miss shifts. Program staff at both venues have worked with participants to create travel plans (helping them to navigate the public transport system), provided taxi vouchers and supported them to negotiate shift patterns to suit their family commitments.

- **'Learning will be a two-way process and non-Indigenous colleagues may also need support to adapt'**

It is normal for there to be some reservations within the wider workforce about the impact of an Indigenous Employment Program. The mindset that seems to lead to success doesn't judge people for needing support to adapt, but

seeks to enable that through education, information and providing space for discussion. At **ISS**, some site managers and business unit managers were initially concerned about participants not turning up for work or meeting requirements. They were invited to put issues on the table without judgment and these were worked through. This helped to break down their resistance as they found the issues were the same as for any employee.

### Appropriate funding

While we heard regularly about the limitations of current government funding structures (by far the major funder of this work), we also observed that **systems** achieving successful employment outcomes were finding ways around these limitations to make money work for their purposes.

- **Different funding pools, available to partners in the system, are drawn on**

Partnering with others, operating in different systems, can provide access to a wider range of funding avenues than any one organisation may be able to draw on independently. Highly effective systems we have observed view funding as place-based and, depending on the resources required to deliver the best outcomes, will channel it accordingly. Resourcefulness in maximising resources is apparent in the case of **Skill360** where partnering RTOs drew on funding not available to Skill360 and a JSA representative spoke of engaging the community sector to provide support outside of their funding scope, e.g. for those experiencing homelessness.

For the **employer** as a whole or the individual business units involved we found that, despite significant goodwill, organisations experience competing business priorities and it was therefore critical that they could see the translation to business benefits, either in the short or long term.

- **Investment in the program is supported by a clear business rationale, with additional funding provided where return on investment will not be seen within the reporting period**

The business case varies between organisations, and may evolve over time; for example, there were anecdotal reports of higher rates of loyalty amongst Indigenous staff members beyond the initial transition (exemplified by increased retention and diligence). Some organisations also spoke of increased capacity and skill development across the wider workforce as a result of increased diversity. Some common business reasons for investment were:

- We need more employees (access to broader talent pool)
- We recognise that our customers/workforce care about this issue

- Our workforce is not representative of our client base/the demographics of our community: we believe this will improve our relationships with the community and/or drive additional business.

Return on investment may not be apparent in the short term but might instead require a longer term view. Where this is the case we found it important that funding was made available to the business to cover costs and avoid a shortfall in the reporting period.

At the **program** level appropriate funding can look like a cash budget, the number and level of staff employed and their benefits (e.g. overtime), the facilities available for program use, access to other expertise within the business (e.g. marketing), or access to specialist services that are high quality and fully funded.

- **The program is appropriately resourced with sufficient staff, facilities and budget**

As noted at the organisational level, under-resourcing of staff in this key role will quickly lead to burnout due to the intense nature of the work. At **Burswood** it was also apparent that the space available to the team was important: a quiet, private space was required for the team to work with participants in confidence. Budget is required for program set up, ongoing administration and for each consecutive cohort of participants.



## Effective methodology

Components of an **effective methodology** appear to be very consistent across the case studies. For the **system**, this is primarily about creating high performing partnerships that knit together flawlessly around the participants.

- **An organisation focused on employer needs convenes the system**

Where meaningful, sustainable employment is the goal, the employer's needs must be central to the design and efforts of the whole system. This requires one of the system partners to take responsibility for convening the group, around this central point. This is often the employer but not always. In the case of **Karen Sheldon** it is a training organisation, with strong employer partnerships and industry awareness.

- **There is alignment around a shared vision of success (mediated if required) and clarity on each partner's roles in contributing to this**

The key people, or ideally all partners involved, align around a shared vision. We observed that this was always focused on outcomes for the job-seeker. Case study organisations broadly defined success as Indigenous people being equipped to succeed and pursue career aspirations. This is a long-term view for the individual and would sometimes mean that they ended up in a role that was not in the initial employer. Whilst alignment sounds relatively simple, organisations tend to have different perspectives on the detail of 'what success looks like for the job seeker' and what is going to meet their organisation's need.

Mediation by a third party can support the development of a shared vision if it is proving challenging to develop across the system.

- **Partners co-create the program to utilise expertise and meet each partner's specific needs**

Whilst there is alignment on a long-term vision of success, system partners also acknowledge and respect the shorter-term needs (e.g. funding KPIs) of the partner organisations. The program is designed together to meet these more immediate needs without compromising on the long-term vision of success. It is also designed to draw on the specific expertise that each organisation can offer.

- **From first contact point, partners act as a virtual case management team around the participant, including providing a safety net to catch those who fall out**

Whilst there may be a large number of people supporting the participant in the background, for the individual it must feel relatively seamless and simple. One or a few key people develop a close relationship with the participant and they manage the system to come together around that individual, proactively seeking and sharing information and drawing on the expertise of others when it is required. Should that person fall out of the system, someone knows where they are and is in regular contact with them to offer support.

- **Ongoing interaction of partners drives partner alignment and program refinement**

Through the virtual case management approach, system partners work together regularly and therefore get to know each other's needs and processes in greater detail; it is with this understanding that the program can be refined to meet all partners' needs. **Karen Sheldon** mentors go along to JSA meetings with participants; that way they can make sure they meet the participation requirements for the JSAs 'so it works for them'.

For the **employer**, we consistently observed that real effort goes into preparing the rest of the organisation to help, not hinder, the program. The way that the employer represents the program and its participants, and how it wins support from the Indigenous community also emerged as important to the program's success.

- **Performance management metrics encourage prioritisation of the program**

Metrics (for example, percentage of Indigenous employees) can be adopted to encourage line and department managers to embrace the program; this is particularly useful in the initial stages of the program roll-out before the business case is well proven. In instances where other employees/management are concerned that they might not reach current KPIs as a result of the program (e.g. productivity targets), program staff can work with the manager and the organisation to adapt the KPIs accordingly. In fact, such concerns are rarely an issue since participants are employed based on merit, and are well-supported to perform at least as well as their peers.

- **HR policies support diversity and give clear and consistent guidelines for all staff. Managers understand how to apply them**

Policies that are clear to all staff and are applied consistently ensure that there is no perception of special treatment for anyone. This can mean that policies are consistent, while processes are adaptive and flexible to take into account differences. **Woolworths** focuses on creating a culture of diversity to the extent that they have a senior manager of diversity and a Steering Committee that includes leaders from each of the Woolworths businesses. While each of the Woolworths businesses has autonomy over their HR, Corporate HR have articulated a 'diversity document'.

- **Individuals within the organisation are provided with opportunity to understand the program as it impacts them and have somewhere to direct their queries**

Communication is provided to the broader organisation but in particular to those who will be directly involved with the program. Communication is designed to provide an understanding of the program, its benefits and their roles and responsibilities and how it will affect them. A safe, neutral party (often the program team) is responsible for handling all queries and staff are encouraged to voice their concerns so that they can be addressed directly. We observed that communication is predominantly done through staff meetings (including leadership meetings) and one-on-one conversations.

- **Roll-out of the program is staged starting with areas most ready. Proof of model and business case is used to build momentum across the business**

All organisations started with a small scale pilot and expanded into areas most ready, where there were effective partnerships and where the biggest wins could be had. They generally managed the roll-out slowly and evolved the business case as successes occurred, communicating these successes. For example, **Crown** has found retention of Indigenous employees to be higher than average retention. Such success, though it looks different in each organisation, has tended to breed interest and dispel concerns from others across the organisation. **Woolworths** has pursued initial growth in the areas where there is a large Indigenous population and where they have trusted partners.

- **Participants are involved in deciding how they are represented internally and externally (marketing/communications, cultural awareness training)**

Organisations that are successful tend to be sensitive to the needs of the individual and their concerns about being in the spotlight or about how they are publicly portrayed. They therefore engage participants in the design of any collateral or events showcasing their successes. For example, all organisations insisted that these case studies were cleared with participants before publication. Personal examples used in cultural awareness training are also cleared with participants.

- **Any issues arising are addressed immediately and directly and treated as a learning opportunity for all involved**

All programs cited that part of their success is not shying away from the hard issues and the hard conversations but rather addressing these directly. They commented that trust from the participant and the Indigenous community relies on them knowing that any issues will be dealt with directly and quickly. In the case of **Crown**, they use prevailing issues as a two-way learning opportunity and embrace the opportunity for education of the individuals involved, their broader team and sometimes the whole department. First and foremost, however, the Crown program team will work with the individual involved to define together how they handle the situation.

For the **program**, there are five phases to the journey:

- 1) The initial attraction of employees
- 2) Their training and preparation (both work-readiness and skills-based, accredited and non-accredited)
- 3) Screening/selection/placement in a job
- 4) On the job support
- 5) Career progression/retention.

Throughout all phases a personalised and informal style of engagement makes the

program or workplace more accessible and enjoyable for participants. Clear and consistent expectations are communicated to participants and families are engaged.

- **Personalised and informal style of engagement throughout**

From the first point of contact at **Crown** participants experience personal contact through the Indigenous Employment Team and this does not change when they eventually enter the organisation. Participants quickly develop a rapport with the team as they help them to navigate their way through tours, tastings and/or the application process. Furthermore, rather than formal meetings and interviews, Crown program team staff are more likely to arrange informal conversations or gatherings to ease any anxieties of the participants. The HR manager will often join a tour to say hello and have a 'chat'. Meeting senior leadership informally means that participants are likely to find the workplace less intimidating.

- **Clear, consistent expectations communicated and explained at all stages**

As previously mentioned, **Skill360** believe that the key to ensuring all employees are viewed consistently is in the communication of expectations upon initial contact and regularly thereafter. This ensures that individuals are not set up to fail.

- **Families are engaged at multiple stages as resources to support the participants**

Families should be engaged to ensure their comfort with the organisation and the proposed role, but further as champions to support the participant throughout their process into employment and onwards.

**Crown** welcome families to the Crown site for a tour and to meet the team; they are also active in the community. **Skill360** do a lot of ground work with the family pre-

placement and then actively continue the relationship to ensure the individual is supported. According to Petrina Villaflor 'it means it's less of an issue if someone misses a community event - for example, a funeral - because you've got people saying you can't come, you've got to go to work'. Particularly where a young person is the first person in that family or community to go to work: 'Families are fearful for their child because they don't know or understand that world themselves. Some parents will support their child to stay through challenges; others will encourage them to come home as soon as it gets difficult.'

At each stage of the journey for the individual, we have observed consistencies within the successful programs:

attracting them. You have to be careful not to set them up for failure. You have to communicate the opportunity properly, in a way they understand and feel empowered to do the job'. Misinterpretation is easy and specific language can elicit unintended responses from potential participants, therefore organisations are careful and deliberate about the language they use to communicate their opportunities.

- **Multiple avenues, including tasters, enable participants to learn about, test and access opportunities**

All organisations in the case studies drew on a range of avenues to meet and attract potential participants. This almost always included going into community and developing relationships with Indigenous

Effective Methodology					
	Employee Attraction	Screening/ Selection/ Placement	Pre-employment Training and Preparation	On the Job Support	Career Progression/ Retention
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language tested to ensure resonance</li> <li>• Multiple avenues, including tasters, to learn about and test opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on capabilities rather than experience and qualifications</li> <li>• Process is adapted to enable candidates to demonstrate abilities</li> <li>• Selection is merit-based and objective</li> <li>• Employer has partnership and knowledge in navigating barriers</li> <li>• Support (including trying for other roles) and feedback provided where not selected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepares for 'work' rather than a specific role</li> <li>• Training based on employers' needs and flexible to participant need</li> <li>• Training has clear expectations and line of sight to a job</li> <li>• Whole organisation is educated on Indigenous culture and history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive, early intervention is provided by team</li> <li>• Support includes: troubleshooter, buddy, peer support, career coach, life coach (filled flexibly)</li> <li>• Support for line managers and others to troubleshoot issues (decreases over time)</li> <li>• Privacy and confidentiality is strictly observed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial and ongoing conversation on career aspirations, development needs and progression opportunities</li> <li>• Ongoing exposure to potential progression pathways, opportunities and role models</li> <li>• Advocates within organisation for progression of Indigenous employees (on a merit basis)</li> </ul>

### Employee attraction

- **Language about opportunities is tested to ensure resonance**

According to Skill360's Petrina Villaflor 'How you pique the interest of the community/person is critical to

organisations, but often also included site tours, ads, website, training and/ or events. After some time in operation many organisations found that word of mouth was their most effective channel for attracting new recruits. The range of avenues typically took into account

different contexts including variation in literacy levels, access to computers/ internet, etc.

## Screening/selection/placement

- **Screening criteria focus on capabilities rather than experience and qualifications. The process is adapted to enable candidates to demonstrate abilities in a way that suits their cultural and personal needs. Selection is merit-based and objective**

In all case studies, selection is merit-based; however the process for how the organisation determines merit may be adapted to support the participants to personally realise and outwardly demonstrate their potential.

At **Crown**, 'it all boils down to merit and who's best for the job'. However, to determine who is best for the job Crown will often adapt the recruitment processes to be more welcoming and strengths-based for Indigenous applicants. For example, rather than running a large group selection day they will run a small group or individual interview which is less formal.

When participants had the chance to test a role before committing to it, through work experience, work shadowing and/ or tours and taster sessions, they talked about the positive impact this had on their understanding of the opportunities available and the role/s they preferred. At **Woolworths** work experience replaces an interview process; almost everyone who completes the work experience is offered a job.

- **Employer has the knowledge, experience and contacts to negotiate barriers**

While all employers draw on external experts to provide support for individual participants in specialist areas, they also had (at minimum) a basic level of knowledge themselves in how to overcome

traditional barriers to employment, for example: criminal records, homelessness, childcare, drug and alcohol addictions, transport challenges and family responsibilities.

- **When applicants are not selected, support and feedback is provided and the opportunity is given to try for another role or to access training to meet any skills gaps**

As mentioned previously, success for the organisations is defined as the participant in meaningful employment with career pathway options. Therefore when someone seems like a good fit but misses out, **Crown** will stay in touch and try to place them in another role: 'With some candidates we go back two or three times and try to steer them into a different role'. If they are not the right fit with Crown, they will be supported into opportunities external to Crown.

Throughout this process organisations noted the criticality of the person being provided with feedback and supported into other opportunities. If people fall through the cracks at this point they are likely to become more disillusioned and further distanced from the workforce.

## Pre-employment training and preparation

- **Pre-employment training prepares participants for 'work' rather than being limited to a specific role**

While there may be job or industry-specific elements to training and preparation, the focus for all case studies is on transferable and life skills in order to retain the breadth of opportunity for each individual. It:

- Builds self-awareness and self-esteem
- Develops interpersonal skills appropriate to the work place

- Develops coping mechanisms and resilience to face challenges
- Offers exposure to common workplace scenarios to make them less daunting
- Addresses the 'why' as well as the 'how' of working (recognising systemic disincentives exist)
- Prepares the participant in detail for their first day of work (and interview if appropriate) to address details which may be causing concern at an individual level
- Builds relationships within their cohort, and with trainers/mentors which can be drawn upon during the initial transition-to-work phase
- **Training is based around employers' needs but meets the participant where they are, bridging the gap**

Throughout the case studies the employer's needs are ascertained through ongoing consultation or co-creation of the training curriculum with the training provider (except where training is delivered internally, as in the case of **Crown**).

In **Burswood** the 'Real Jobs' program delivered by Polytechnic West is tailored specifically for Burswood and is tailored to each individual participant, it's 'not just training, there's a whole program which is necessary for the most at-risk groups - they've been out of work for some time'.

- **Training has clear expectations and line of sight to a job; it is applied, practical and relevant to the workplace. Different learning styles are catered for**

Overwhelmingly we heard that pre-employment training should be broadly based on generic 'work' skills to enable participants to access the broadest range of opportunities; however, we heard about the importance of it having a clear line of sight to a job so that participants could see

the application of what they are learning. At **Karen Sheldon** they use hospitality and catering as a vehicle to deliver a range of transferable skills; Stevie Wie, Training Manager, commented: 'We teach front and back of house skills but really it's all about building confidence and self-esteem'. The course is highly practical and applied to the work environment. Participants gain work experience through catering events hosted by the Karen Sheldon Catering Company. This is an opportunity to practise technical skills, team work, etc., and also to gain a sense of achievement.

We heard that training should not feel like 'school' because many people have negative associations with school; however it can still include desk-based modules as long as they are applied and relevant. One thing that really stood out for many participants across the cases was when management visited during the course of the training.

- **The employer organisation is educated on Indigenous culture and history as part of broader cultural diversity awareness**

All organisations talked about the need for education of other staff prior to the participants coming on board; many also talked about the need for ongoing education. While we found that the depth of training can vary, it was always well received and considered to be a necessary part of ensuring that the workplace was ready for the participants. Education tended to be offered to the broader team, beyond just the individuals directly involved. In the case of **Woolworths** it is compulsory for the store management before they are accepted as part of the program.

In most cases we found that while the programs and education are Indigenous specific, there was an appreciation that they should be viewed and delivered within the context of celebrating broader cultural

diversity. This serves two purposes: firstly, it creates a truly inclusive workforce for all individuals and, secondly, the Indigenous participants do not feel singled out.

## On the job support

- **Proactive, early intervention is provided by the team**

The Indigenous employment programs analysed all recognised that support does not end when the participant is placed in a role. Instead the role of the program team shifts to ongoing support including anticipating challenges before they arise or actively surface. The teams pre-emptively seek solutions, recognising that participants may be shy to raise challenges and some issues may take time to come to the surface. This is time intensive and we heard from many of the organisations that in order to do it even more effectively they required greater numbers of staff.

- **Support roles for employee include: buddy, peer support, career coach, life coach, troubleshooter. There is flexibility in how these are filled**

All organisations talked about mentoring being critically important to the success of their programs; however, they had varying levels of clarity on their definition of mentoring. Through our discussions it became clear that there are a range of support roles that are consistent in these programs despite being filled very differently.

- The buddy - is an individual that shows the new employee around and makes them feel comfortable, particularly in their first days of work. They have more of a 'friend' relationship.
- Peer support - is a network of colleagues that build a sense of community and who can share experiences and learn from each other.

- Career coach - is someone who supports the exploration of job challenges and development of career aspirations. This is usually a more structured relationship.
- Life coach - is someone who supports the individual to work through their personal circumstances and is a sounding board for non-work related issues. Like the career coaching role, this is usually a more structured relationship.
- Troubleshooter - is someone who is a problem solver when issues occur (or pre-empts issues from occurring). They can work with the participant and the wider organisation, acting as a neutral party and mediating between the two if required.

These roles may be filled by the same person or a range of different people, potentially from multiple partners in the system.

At its most basic level, the role of the mentor with **Skill360** is to 'visit, sign off, and check they're OK'. The mentor is the main point of contact if the apprentice/trainee is experiencing difficulties with their placement or more broadly. The mentor tries to approach this in a way which is empowering - helping them to work through the issue and figure out how to deal with it, rather than providing answers. The aim is to reduce this type of support over time in order to avoid dependency on the mentor.

- **Support exists for line managers and other employees to troubleshoot issues with neutrality. This decreases over time but remains available**

We heard strongly of the need to support line managers to plan for circumstances and overcome issues if and when they occur. Knowing they had this support

made it easier for them to buy into the program and to take what they might have considered a risk. We observed that it was important for this support to be seen as normal and expected so that managers were comfortable accessing it. At **Woolworths** this support is generally provided by external partners - for example, Diversity Dimensions - who work with the store management and participants as a neutral party. At **Crown** this support is provided internally by the program team.

- **Privacy and confidentiality is strictly observed**

Whilst it goes without saying, it is worth reiterating the importance that the organisations and individuals placed on real privacy and confidentiality, unless there was a legal requirement for disclosure. A quiet space helped the teams to work with participants in private.

### Career progression/retention

- **There are initial and ongoing conversations about career aspirations, development needs and progression opportunities**

From the initial contact with the system, conversations with the participant are centred on broader career aspirations, development needs and progression opportunities. After job placement, this focus increases. At **Burswood**, CEO Barry Felstead includes in his vision of success for Indigenous employment at the company: 'Seeing a General Manager come through the program'. Program participants are already moving from entry-level into more senior roles, in line with their aspirations. Sharon Ninnette, the current Mentor in the Aboriginal Employment Program team, joined Burswood as part of the cohort that came through their Real Jobs program.

- **There is ongoing exposure to potential progression pathways, opportunities and role models**

Similar to the initial approach of 'tasters', some of the organisations interviewed found work shadowing to be a useful way to support progression into more senior roles. Sharon at **Burswood** is now also a strong advocate for program participants seeking to progress into supervisor or manager roles: 'People are keen to move on up and why not if they've got the experience'. She eases the way for them by talking to their managers, accessing training for them if there's a skills gap and organising work shadowing to gain the relevant experience.

Erica Pell is a Housekeeping Assistant/ Supervisor at Burswood. Erica says she is now doing things which would have scared her before she came into Burswood's program, one of which is managing a shift of 40-45 people as a supervisor. She wasn't trained for it but was 'thrown in the deep end' having learned by watching and listening. Erica is one of Burswood's 'Rising Stars' - an award given for excellence - but is happy to stay where she is for now.

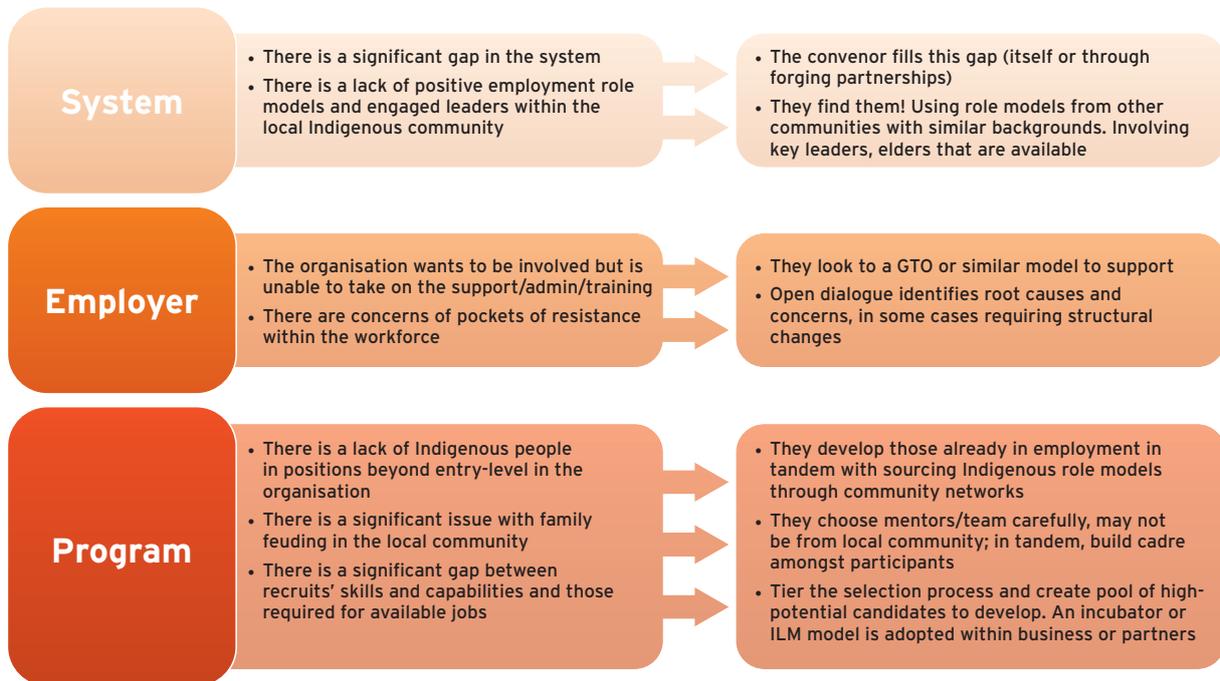
By providing ongoing exposure to positive role models (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), organisations found that they could support the participants to increase their sense of possibility and to see the route towards a sustained career.

- **The team advocates at a program and organisational level for progression of Indigenous employees (on a merit basis)**

Finally, while individuals' progress is based on merit, those programs that actively advocated on behalf of the individual or program into the wider organisation appear to have had greater success in achieving progression in a short period of time.

## KEY DIFFERENCES

While we heard the above consistent messages across the case studies, we also found that there were examples where the unique context had a significant impact on the people or methodology deployed. The following table describes these differences and our observations on how they were handled in the cases:



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Finally, during our conversations we heard consistent and loud messages about changes that could better support program delivery that leads to sustainable, meaningful employment. These messages were generally about funding and the sharing of expertise.

We heard that funding for Indigenous employment initiatives should:

- Be available to the convenor
- Take a system view rather than an organisational view
- Be place-based and tailored to the context
- Maintain flexibility (of the current IEP funding), and
- Take into account initial set up costs, administrative overhead, and the incremental costs of each successive cohort.

Employers should be able to access funding to invest in Indigenous employment; however, this should not be framed as a 'subsidy' where they are gaining a valuable employee due to the risk of distorting hiring behaviours and creating a misconception by the employer of the value of that employee.

A clear, outcome-focused plan and desire to collaborate with others should be part of a successful funding application.

We also heard that there is an appetite for a system to share learnings with others engaged in this work. Organisations felt strongly that this would be most effective if employer or community driven but would need to be supported by government. In addition, businesses who are already demonstrating success should consider being agents for broader change; for example, through encouraging social procurement practices.

**For further information please contact Social Ventures Australia or GenerationOne.**

