

# Recruitment



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All NSW Government agencies have a responsibility to use culturally safe recruitment practices to attract and recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When recruiting, you should follow applicable GSE Act and GSE Rules and your agency's usual recruitment processes, with some additional steps to successfully recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. **The recruitment and selection guide** provides best practice support on recruitment strategies.

### Video embed:

**Cultural capability guide - Troy**

## Culturally inclusive recruitment

Culturally inclusive recruitment embraces cultural diversity and enables all candidates to demonstrate their capabilities. This helps employers identify the best person for the role and build a diverse workforce.

All aspects of recruitment should be inclusive, from marketing and assessment to communication and candidate care. When applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, inclusive recruitment addresses their unique cultural and social considerations.

Importantly, inclusive recruitment does not mean accepting a lower standard. Rather, it eliminates barriers and ensures every applicant is assessed fairly on merit.

# Career pathways

Potential recruitment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include:

- **NSW Government Aboriginal internship program** — a targeted program, in partnership with Career Trackers, which aims to provide early exposure and understanding of NSW Government, building a pipeline of future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.
- Traineeships and apprenticeships.
- Cadetships.
- **NSW Government Graduate Program** — a structured employment and development program, designed to attract and retain talented graduates, build public sector capability, and develop a cohort of future leaders.
- **NSW Public Sector talent pools** — use the sector talent pools to access candidates who have gone through a rigorous comparative assessment process and are ready to be hired.

## Case study – Creating legal career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Enhancing education and employment is fundamental to closing the gap in health and life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A collaboration between Legal Aid NSW, TAFE NSW and Macquarie University is helping to achieve this through the Legal Career Pathways Program.

The program is the first of its kind in the NSW legal sector. It focuses on supporting the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities through education and employment pathways to legal careers. All participants are guaranteed a job at Legal Aid NSW for the duration of their studies.

Over the 4-year agreement, the Legal Career Pathways Program will:

- employ 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Legal Aid NSW
- support employees to complete a qualification(s) in legal services
- create cohorts of scholars employed by Legal Aid NSW who support each other's success in vocational education and career aspirations
- build an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services workforce with the skills and capacity to deliver culturally appropriate services to clients and communities across NSW.

## Wraparound support

Designed using a 7-step model of vocational education developed by the Djurali team (formerly Poche Centre), the program centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives and cultures. It provides wraparound support (including a community of practice to support participant managers) and uses

culturally safe practices, including recognising cultural and kinship obligations.

Since commencement, the program has facilitated employment for 32 participants in a variety of roles, including legal support, client services and grants administration. Educational qualifications continue to increase as all participants are enrolled in or undertaking legal studies.

With a substantial boost to Legal Aid NSW's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, from 6% to 8%, and increased workplace diversity that reflects its client base, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are working across more locations in NSW to provide culturally appropriate services to communities.

The program is about taking real and meaningful action that supports TAFE NSW's Reconciliation Action Plan, Macquarie University's Reconciliation Statement and Legal Aid NSW's Closing the Gap commitments.

## The selection and assessment process

All candidates should be treated fairly and equally during the assessment and selection process. During the assessment and selection process, you should ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants are not disadvantaged by cultural values, norms, and behaviours. Consider the following tips through the application, interview, and assessment stages of the recruitment process.

### Application



- Ensure there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander panel members for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified and targeted roles, and that other panel members have attended cultural awareness training.
- The Aboriginal panel member(s) should either:
  - be employed in the hiring agency or be a member of the local community
  - be involved in delivering services to Aboriginal communities.
- Listen to the advice of Aboriginal panel members, as they bring with them cultural knowledge and understanding.

### Interview



- Provide clear details about the interview process during the application stage or prior to interview.
- Ensure the interview space is culturally safe and is an environment where everyone is open-minded and flexible in attitudes towards people from cultures other than their own. For example, ensure office spaces reflect appreciation of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures by displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags or artwork.

- Deliver an Acknowledgment to Country before an interview commences. An Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of an interview is a sign of respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people.
- Take into account that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have their own communication style, which may include longer silences than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are used to and that it may be impolite to make lots of eye contact.

## Assessment methods



Ensure the chosen assessments are accessible for all candidates and are suitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates. For example, psychometric or aptitude testing may create a barrier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates



Encourage unsuccessful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates to apply again in the future. Provide positive feedback on where they went well in the application and interview process and advice on areas to improve on.

# Be culturally appropriate and sensitive when confirmation of Aboriginality is required

Some roles within the public sector may be reserved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people only (identified roles). For other roles, it is not essential to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, however, it is desired (targeted roles).

For roles for which being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is essential or desired, the job advertisement and role description should reflect this. Confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage is required for these roles.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification is a complex and often contentious issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and governments. For some, being asked how they identify can trigger painful emotions associated with traumatic experiences from both their past and present.

Confirming the Aboriginality of a candidate can sometimes be challenging for selection panels. The optimal outcome is not to create overly prescriptive or restrictive barriers to employment.

It is important to note that each agency will have its own process to confirm Aboriginality. The advertisement should make clear the process that will be used to confirm Aboriginality requirements.

Hiring managers should consider the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The impact of past social and political developments and contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues may prevent some applicants from being able to demonstrate their Aboriginality and/or cultural knowledge as easily as others.

Some agencies use the definition contained in the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, which refers to a person who:

- a. is member of the Aboriginal race of Australia, and
- b. identifies as an Aboriginal person, and
- c. is accepted by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal person.

Agencies may consider asking a pre-screening question at the application stage to confirm if applicants have Confirmation of Aboriginality documentation.

During an interview for an identified or targeted role, the assessors must be satisfied the applicant has confirmed their Aboriginality either by providing documentary evidence or by assessment through the interview panel, or both. Physical appearance or where the applicant lives are not relevant factors in determining Aboriginality.

Examples of written documentation include:

- a document demonstrating membership of their Local Aboriginal Land Council
- a certificate or documentation confirming Aboriginality from a recognised Aboriginal organisation with a common seal
- references from at least two Aboriginal community representatives with a signed declaration in the following terms:
  - I am a person of Aboriginal descent.
  - I identify as an Aboriginal person
  - I am accepted by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal person
  - I declare that this information is true and correct at the time of submission
- a statutory declaration if the applicant has no other formal documentary evidence. However, the applicant may need to provide additional supporting documents if the evidence in the declaration is not strong enough.

If an applicant cannot provide any of the above written documentation, an agency can consider providing the applicant with an opportunity during the interview to confirm their Aboriginality.

The hiring manager should record how Aboriginality was confirmed.

## Suggested interview questions to confirm Aboriginality

- Can you briefly outline knowledge of your Aboriginal heritage, including where you come from and your community ties?

- Aboriginality is an essential requirement for this role. Please outline, how your Aboriginal cultural background, together with your professional skills, knowledge and experience, will enable you to effectively provide other Aboriginal people with a service for the purpose of promoting their welfare?

It is important that the assessors for identified and targeted roles include an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person to advise and inform decisions on confirmation of Aboriginality. At interview, the Aboriginal panel member(s) should ask about the applicant's history, family, and community ties, and outline their own, if relevant. Reach out to your agency's Aboriginal Employment team or to the PSC if you require support.

For applicants unable to confirm their Aboriginality to fulfill the requirements of the role, the assessors should look for ways to provide applicant care. For example, encourage applicants to participate in their local Aboriginal community and, where applicable, share available support services.

## Considerations to prepare for culturally inclusive recruitment

- Do your advertisements and role description encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply?
- How can you ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants are not disadvantaged in the assessment and selection process?
- Do you know your agency policy on confirming Aboriginality?
- Do you provide advice and clear reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates did not get the role?

## Useful links and other information

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### **I Work for NSW - Information for Aboriginal graduates**

Specialised support and information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students wanting to apply for the NSW Government Graduate Program.



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### **Career Trackers**

Career Trackers match students with employment partners to create meaningful internships that build skills, knowledge and connection with other First Nations talent in diverse fields and industries.



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### **Recruitment and selection guide**

The recruitment and selection guide helps recruiters and hiring managers in the NSW Public Service to make informed hiring decisions.



### **Capability Application Tool**

The capability application tool helps job applicants understand and use the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework when applying for jobs with the NSW government and provides practice interview questions.



### **Aboriginal Affairs NSW - Aboriginal Identification The Way Forward**

This report uses research to identify and propose solutions where Aboriginal people might be encouraged to identify as Aboriginal.



### **NSW Government Aboriginal internship program**

This program provides a career springboard for Aboriginal university students by connecting them with employers who offer paid internships during university holidays.

