



Merrilyn Bourne

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN 2024-27

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2024 – 2027

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Education Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians and recognises any other peoples or families with connection to the lands of the Canberra region.

We also acknowledge and pay respect to the Wreck Bay peoples as traditional custodians of the land on which the Jervis Bay school is located.

We respect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, their continuing culture and ongoing contribution to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

Acknowledgement of Contributors

Directorate staff have contributed generously and on occasions courageously to the development of this Action Plan. The success of this Action Plan hinges on remembering those voices, and that any action should remain grounded in the day-to-day experiences of Directorate staff.

For each focus area, the voices of our staff are reproduced to bring life and meaning to the actions aligned to that focus.

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From our Director-General

The vision of our *Strategic Plan 2022–25* is that ‘every child and young person receives an excellent education’ and that this vision is ‘delivered and supported by highly skilled and valued professionals’. I have always said that education is a people business – machines will never replace the need for human relationships. For our people to be at their best to enact our shared vision, they must feel not only supported and safe, but also deeply valued for their role in meeting the needs of children and young people. If we can do this, we foster a highly skilled and stable workforce, equipped to tackle the evolving challenges of education in the modern world.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not just members of our workforce, but active contributors. Their unique ways of knowing, being, and doing, are not just significant, but critical, to the educational outcomes of all children, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

This plan has been developed in collaboration with Education’s First Nations Staff Network to ensure we deliver outcomes. We thank those staff for their valuable contributions, and generous sharing of insight into lived experience.

This Employment Action Plan is more than a practical initiative. It’s a tangible step towards the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, the Reconciliation national agenda, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–28*, and our recent Directorate’s *Commitment to Cultural Integrity*. This Action Plan is a testament to our unwavering responsibility to foster a workplace culture that is not just free from racism and discrimination, but one that is deeply rooted in respect and support building a culture where all our employees, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can thrive.

Katy Haire

Katy Haire

Director-General

July 2024



From your First Nations Staff Network

Gawaymbanha marambangbilang-dhu bagarayban-dhu (to tell to come, or welcome you deadly mob).

We welcome this second iteration of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan and recognise the strides that the ACT Education Directorate is making to build pathways for reconciliation through this Plan.

It is heartening to see the continued commitment and constantly evolving understanding of the Directorate's Executive Leadership team in addressing change to produce outcomes, focussing on improving the working environment for First Nations staff.

We know that this work is only the beginning, but this Plan contains inclusive and positive steps in our shared journey. The First Nations Staff Network provides a voice for First Nations staff in the Directorate and it is one that is actively listened to. Of note is the commitment to develop First Nations staff and provide opportunities through retention strategies, leadership alignment and the creation of career pathways. The First Nations Staff Network continues to welcome this work, which supports the voices of First Nations staff across the Directorate.

As the key initiatives of the Plan are progressed, the Network continues to hold a position that supports the progress of the work and brings clarity to the discussion in representing First Nations staff across our system. All Mob are encouraged to share your views and suggestions for improvement through the Staff Network.

I would like to personally commend the intent of this Plan and acknowledge the commitment to outcomes for First Nations staff, demonstrated in the range of initiatives. I encourage all First Nations staff in our system to *Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, loud and proud* for our young ones coming through Education and into the Directorate as educators, support staff, administration staff and leaders and for ourselves, as we hold our space and work to build a better future for all of us.

Mandaang guwu-galang (many thanks)

Helen Uren-Randall

Chair First Nations Staff Network

July 2024

Introduction

The Directorate acknowledges the importance of an inclusive and equitable workplace, where all employees are safe, valued, and able to flourish. To ensure the Directorate is a great place to work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, this Employment Action Plan (Action Plan) brings together and promotes career opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and enhances the development of our existing workforce.

We support all employees to realise their full potential by working from a strength-based perspective and continuing to build positive cultures. This Action Plan outlines practical and measurable activities that focuses on key areas: attract and recruit, retain and build capability, leadership and accountability.

Overall, the Action Plan builds capacity for each of us to integrate Cultural Integrity, foster inclusiveness, and embrace and celebrate our differences, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's cultural ways of learning, being and doing. In doing so, we live our values, empowering all employees to apply their skills, ideas, perspectives, and qualities, so that all can flourish.

This Action Plan supports the implementation of the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–28*, *Future of Education Strategy*, *Education Directorate Strategic Plan 2022–25*, and the Directorate's *Commitment to Cultural Integrity*.





ABOUT THE ARTIST: SARAH RICHARDS

A Ngiyampaa woman born on Gadigal land, Sarah is a contemporary artist living and painting on Ngunnawal and Ngambri countries since 2012. Sarah was awarded ACT NAIDOC Artist of the year in 2015 and Canberra Women in Business' Indigenous Business Woman of the Year in 2023. In 2018, Sarah used the knowledge from her commerce degree and CPA qualification to turn her passion from a hobby into a small business and created Marrawuy Journeys.

Marrawuy (Mar-ra-way) in her ancestors' language of the Wongaibon people means red kangaroo and was the totem of one of her ancestors, Richard King. This is one of the reasons she has chosen to go by Marrawuy Journeys but the other is the fact that a kangaroo can't easily jump backwards. This also resonates strongly with Sarah because no matter what challenge she is thrown, she keeps moving forward.

Marrawuy Journeys has a vision of healing as individuals so that we can heal as a country. Having a creative outlet allowed Sarah to undergo a journey of healing and through Marrawuy Journeys Sarah creates opportunities for others to experience the same.

“Having a creative outlet has allowed me to undergo a journey of healing. I create a space for others to have the opportunity to experience the same. I believe that we all have something to heal from and if we can heal as individuals, it will contribute to our healing as a country.”

Sarah Richards



ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Commitment to Impact was created for the ACT Education Directorate's (Directorate) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan (Action Plan). The Action Plan is aimed at building capacity to integrate Cultural Integrity, foster inclusiveness, and celebrate diversity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural ways of learning, being, and doing. By living these values, the Action Plan empowers all employees to apply their skills, ideas, perspectives, and qualities, ensuring everyone can flourish.

At the core of the design are three ripples ascending from the bottom to the top, each ripple represents a vital focus area and distinguishing unique colours, each carrying its own significance.

The first ripple, **Attract & Recruit**, is depicted in red with footprints symbolising a journey. Red represents action and enthusiasm, highlighting the dynamic efforts to create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to join the Directorate.

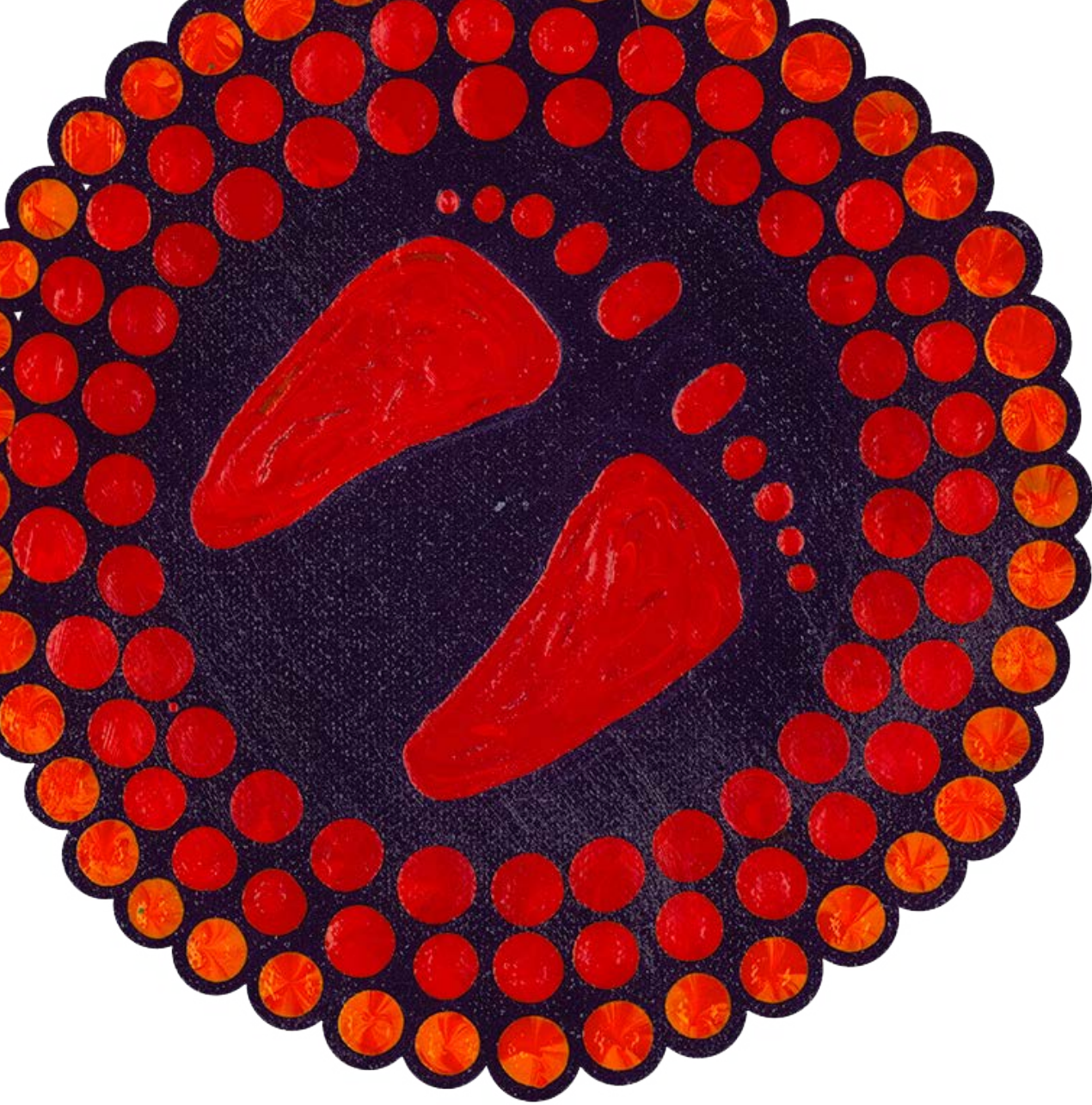
The second ripple, **Retain & Build Capability**, is represented in green by hands and two connecting dots. Green symbolises growth and commitment, reflecting the focus on nurturing and developing staff capabilities. This imagery highlights the commitment to retaining talent and fostering continuous professional development.

The third ripple, **Leadership & Accountability**, is symbolised in purple by a circle surrounded by arcs. Purple represents passion and leadership, signifying the positive impact of good leadership and accountability on workforce culture. This element emphasises the importance of leadership at all levels within the organisation.

The interlocking blue lines running parallel to these ripples, represent the Directorate's commitment to the Action Plan, its staff, and the goal of delivering welcoming, supportive, and aspirational public schools. Blue signifies commitment and growth, highlighting interconnectedness and a unified approach to the Action Plan's objectives.

In the top left corner, the four school networks across the ACT and in the bottom right corner, the four educational sectors, are represented against a yellow background with green elements. Yellow represents optimism and a welcoming feeling, while green symbolises growth, highlighting the tailored and energetic approach to different areas and the focus on growth across all educational levels.

This artwork serves as a visual roadmap, illustrating the interconnected elements of the Action Plan and commitment to support all employees to realise their full potential within an inclusive and equitable workplace.



Attract & Recruit

We create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to join the Directorate.

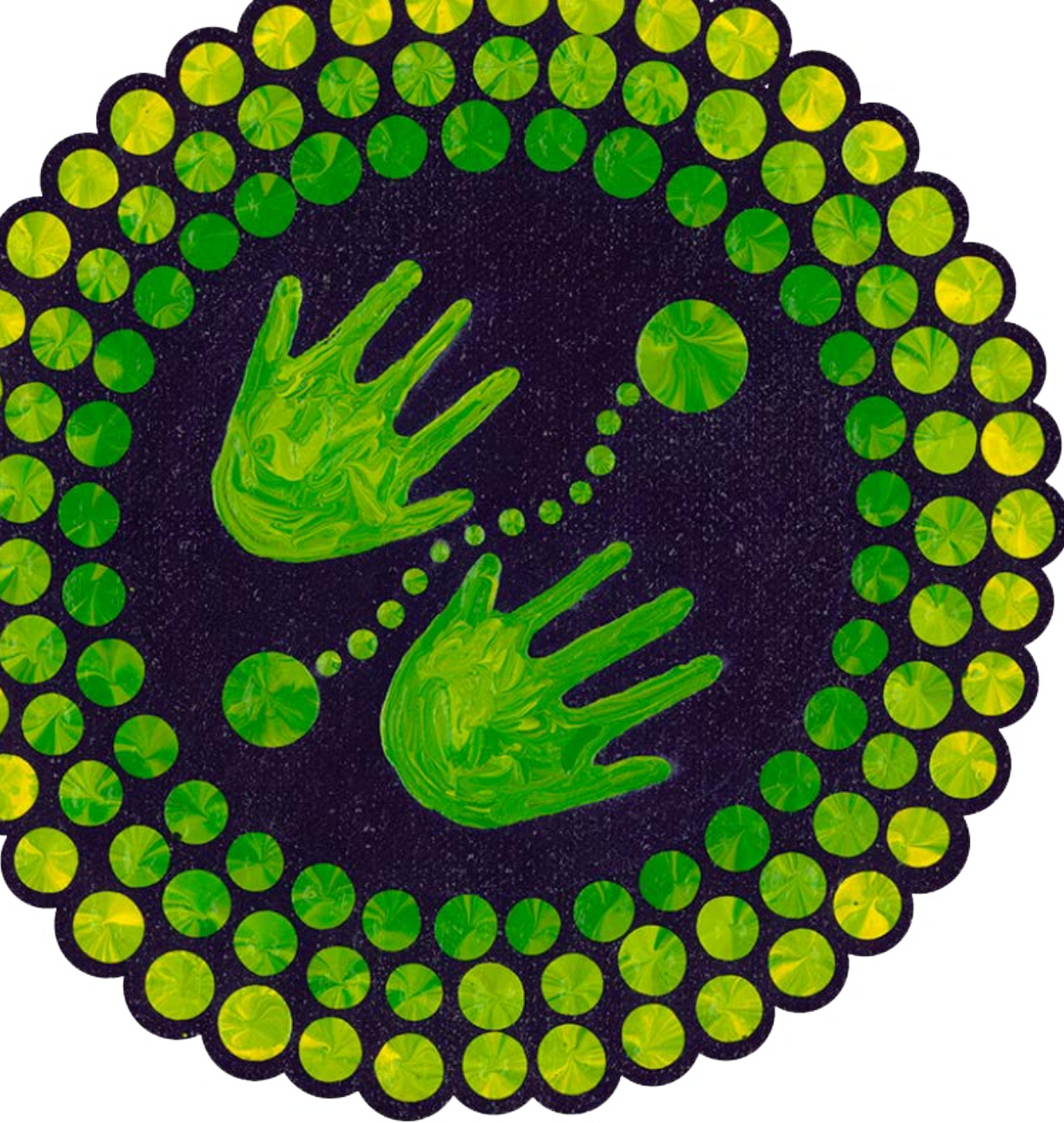
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STAFF VOICES

What is culturally safe recruitment?

- The panel considers and identifies their own cultural bias in relation to what makes a “leader” before a process.
- Explicit inclusion of cultural diversity in the application process/selection criteria – not just ticking a box.
- Considering the importance of relationship and connection.
- Walk and Talk - use processes that are relevant and appropriate; conversations directly pertaining to the position and how you see yourself in it.
- Constructive, relaxed, equitable, inclusive.
- Applicants feel that their voice and vision is truly heard.
- Ensuring that identified positions are filled by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Outcomes: what we aim to achieve	Actions: what we will do
<p>1 Promote the Education Directorate as an employer of choice amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities</p>	<p>1.1 All recruitment to identified positions and bulk recruitment rounds will be advertised in the Koori Mail.</p> <p>1.2 Bi-annual meetings are established with external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based recruitment and training organisations to foster closer relationships with the Directorate.</p> <p>1.3 Bi-annual meetings are established with external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks in universities/Technical and Further Education institutes to foster closer relationships with the Directorate.</p> <p>1.4 Develop a range of resources, such as vignettes, videos and positive stories to be used in Education Directorate job advertisements, which highlight achievements such as cultural integrity, and employee testimonials.</p>

Outcomes: what we aim to achieve	Actions: what we will do
<p>2 Recruitment and onboarding include cultural awareness and safety</p>	<p>2.1 Develop and implement recruitment panel training incorporating diversity in recruitment, unconscious bias, and cultural integrity.</p> <p>2.2 Develop factsheet/s to support selection panels in the recruitment of positions identified for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.</p> <p>2.3 Cultural Integrity is included in All Staff Induction and New Educator Induction programs.</p> <p>2.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training will be promoted as recommended learning for all staff to complete within 12 months of commencement.</p> <p>2.5 As a standard part of the induction pack for all new employees, background information on the cultures and histories of Ngunnawal Country and Wreck Bay, and adjacent Nations.</p>
<p>3 Increasing pathways to employment in the Directorate</p>	<p>3.1 The Directorate will participate in each iteration of the ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Inclusion Employment Programs (eg Vocational Employment Programs), with the aim of accepting at least two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants through each program.</p> <p>3.2 The Directorate will recruit, where opportunity arises, at least one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate through the ACTPS Graduate Program each year.</p> <p>3.3 Investigate the feasibility and benefits of an Education Directorate-specific employment program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and present a paper to Executive Governance Committee Workforce Sub-Committee (EGC WSC) for consideration.</p> <p>3.4 Investigate pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to move from ACT Colleges to the ACT Government, including work experience, Australian School-based Apprenticeships (ASbAs), cadetships or internships, with a paper developed for EGC consideration.</p>



**Retain &
Build Capability**

The Directorate empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees by providing culturally safe work environments, through authentic and robust relationships, providing opportunities to participate in strategic decision making and genuine career development opportunities.

The Directorate leads the ACT Public Service in providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to develop career pathways and achieve career aspirations. The Directorate has high expectations of all employees to build their cultural integrity and capability, by embracing the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, experiences and cultures. This has been highlighted by our Statement of Commitment to Cultural Integrity.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STAFF VOICES

What does retention mean to us? Why do we stay?

- To be part of a system and workplace that grows, changes, and improves futures.
- To contribute to positive systemic change.
- To be in spaces where my personal perspective and lived experience is heard and valued.
- To exceed expectations and be a better role model for younger generations.
- For the kids and our community.
- Non-Indigenous students and peoples have a right to learn the truth and hear the voices of the Land.
- To make my Ancestors proud and continue the stories of truth and truth telling.
- Because I love it and if I can make even one small change, or plant one small seed – then it is all worth it to me.

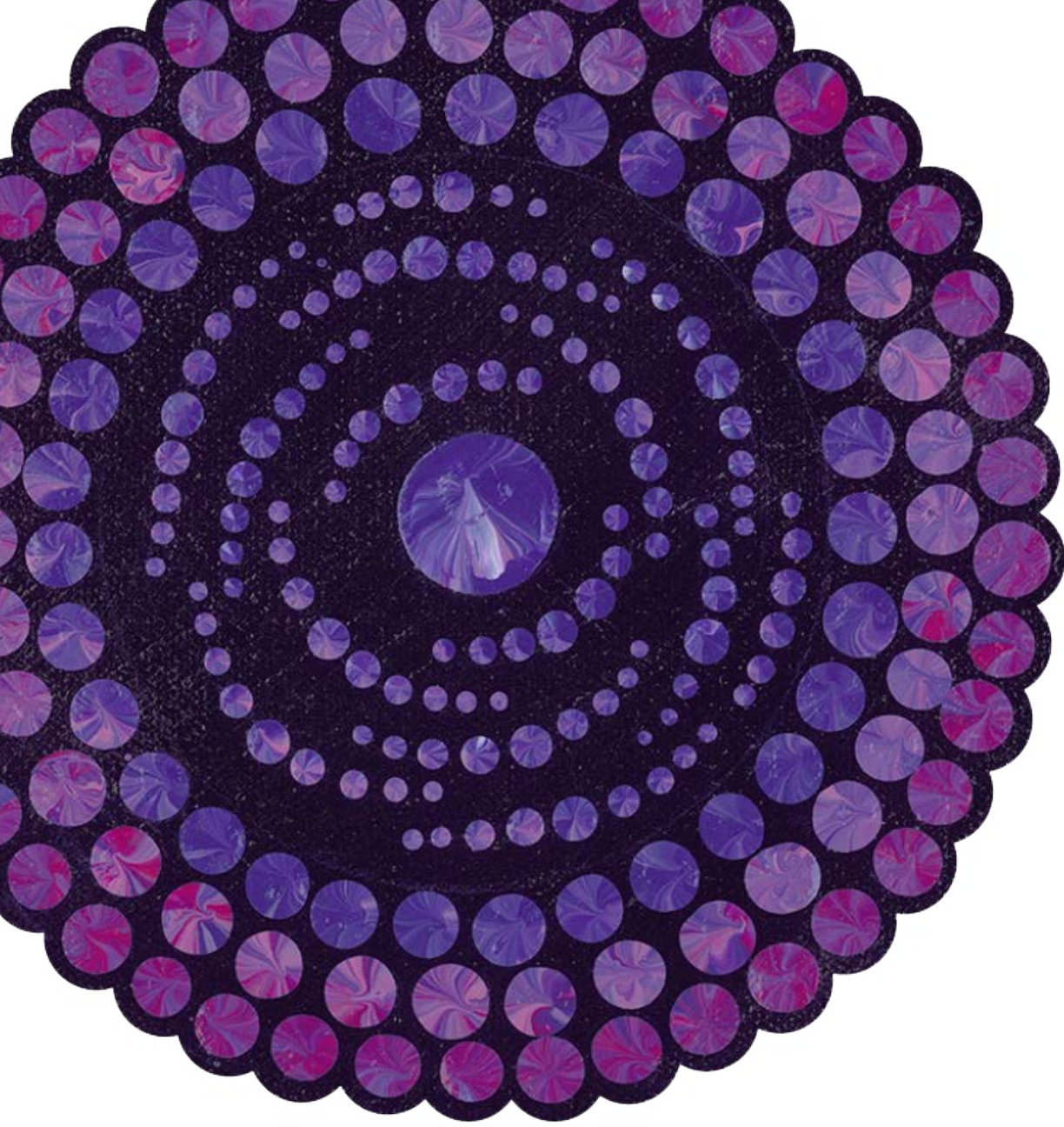
Retention – what does it look like?

- Cooperation and collaboration between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and non-Indigenous peoples.
- To be allowed to support my family as a grandmother and mother and still do my job.
- To be valued and set high expectations for myself.
- Valuing difference, we are not all the same, we have diverse stories, families, and communities, so be flexible and considerate of familial and kinship connections.
- Empowering, I feel I belong, and I can be all of who I am.

What does build capability mean to us?

- Think about how to make all our goals, programs and policies self-sustaining. We need to look further ahead and start to lay solid foundations at this time.
- Genuine consultation. When the Directorate does not always go to the same person for “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” input, we know we have built capability.
- Holding individuals and organisations accountable.
- Knowing when to ask for help, knowing who to go to for help as everyone has different skills and strengths.
- Capability is fluid and context dependant.

Outcomes: what we aim to achieve	Actions: what we will do
<p>4 Provide opportunities for career development</p>	<p>4.1 Develop and promote career development resources on ConnectED that provide career guidance.</p> <p>4.2 Investigate developing and/or delivering a mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, with a paper developed for EGC Workforce Sub-Committee (EGC WSC) consideration.</p> <p>4.3 Investigate career development programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and provide an options paper to EGC WSC outlining an approach to providing supported program placements.</p> <p>4.4 Introduce wording into Directorate guidelines for Performance Development Plan discussions to include a focus on cultural integrity and cultural responsiveness development for the individual.</p> <p>4.5 Provide career development training opportunities, with a focus on leadership and managing staff.</p>
<p>5 Build strong relationships and connections through networking opportunities, including across whole of Government</p>	<p>5.1 Raise profile of the First Nations Staff Network and/or ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Yarning Brew, through promotion at all induction programs and at events associated with days of significance.</p> <p>5.2 First Nations Staff Network and Diversity and Inclusion Intranet pages are reviewed and updated quarterly.</p>
<p>6 Build strong respectful relationships and connections within our workforce</p>	<p>6.1. Promote to the whole of Directorate participation in days of significance and events to celebrate and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.</p> <p>6.2. Develop guidance to increase understanding for supervisors and managers about the provision of leave for cultural responsibilities.</p>



Leadership & Accountability

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STAFF VOICES

What does leadership and accountability mean to us?

- Leadership is not a title or a role – it is being, knowing and doing.
- Valuing diversity. Being considerate of all people's experiences and enacting collaborative processes for decision making.
- Leading by example with purpose.
- Stepping up to be able to have the frank and fearless conversations.
- It is not management. Management is part of it – but management does not keep people on a team.
- Empowering others to develop and not holding onto power.
- Leaders inspire, they don't have to be in management or "leadership" positions but that helps to enable change and cultural shifts.
- Creating space for diverse voices to be heard and valued.
- Think about how to make all our goals, programs, and policies self-sustaining. We need to look further ahead and start to lay solid foundations at this time.
- Genuine consultation. When the Directorate does not always go to the same person for "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" input.
- Holding individuals and organisations accountable.

What does this look like?

- Respectful of others expertise and experiences.
- Being able to support students, staff, and mob. Being aware of what is going on throughout the school.
- Regular check-ins, trust and understanding.
- Positive, open, clear, honest, and confident communication.
- Understanding family/community commitments; cultural load.
- High expectations: supported to take risks, challenge and be challenged.
- Offering advice and help through listening with a non-judgemental ear.
- Listening to understand not respond.
- Having the same expectations for all staff.
- Respecting my story not trying to make me fit a box that suits.
- Always up for a yarn.

Outcomes: what we aim to achieve	Actions: what we will do
<p>7 Leadership to drive change and model behaviours</p>	<p>7.1 When undertaking recruitment, adopt proactive consideration of making the position an identified position for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples regardless of the position.</p>
<p>8 The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are heard in the Directorate</p>	<p>8.1 EGC invites the First Nations Staff Network to provide updates. Items raised will be recorded and followed up by EGC.</p> <p>8.2 Regular meetings between First Nations Staff Network members and the Diversity and Inclusion team to provide an opportunity for informal discussion and feedback.</p>
<p>9 Data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees drives decision making and change</p>	<p>9.1 All-staff communications encouraging self-identification in our HR system will be sent at least twice a year.</p> <p>9.2 Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees about the types of data they would like to see collected is pursued.</p> <p>9.3 Workforce reports on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment will be provided to the EGC Workforce Sub-committee on a regular basis.</p> <p>9.4 Quarterly reports providing progress against this Action Plan is monitored and reported to the EGC Workforce Sub-committee.</p> <p>9.5 All Senior Executives will have diversity employment targets included in annual performance plans.</p> <p>9.6 Within the Educational Directorate's annual report, a section will be dedicated to the progress against this Action Plan.</p>

