



Day out fishing by Fiona Omeenyo (Lockhart River, 2017)

Connecting with mob and country (by land and sea)

Our cultural capability action plan 2017–2019



Our commitment

‘As leaders we need to move from passive to active, so that when it matters you act with conviction. Conviction comes from purpose, it comes from the heart. Creating an authorising environment where every employee feels empowered to act and understands their influence is how we create our organisational DNA. It’s how we create legacy and resilience—so First Australians become and remain at the forefront of our thinking for generations to come.’

The Gathering of Leaders, Barcaldine, 2017

This action plan commits our department and our staff to do all we can to engage with, and co-create meaningful opportunities for, First Australians.

Background

In 2008, following the National Apology, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the *National Indigenous reform agreement (closing the gap)* that sets targets for health, education and employment outcomes—which has informed the development of *The Queensland Government reconciliation plan 2009–2012* and the Queensland Government Cultural Capability Framework. All Queensland Government agencies are required to develop cultural capability action plans addressing five guiding principles (the focus areas outlined in this document).

The department also has obligations under the Queensland Government’s response to the *Queensland Stolen Wages Reparations Taskforce report: reconciling past injustice*, to develop ‘lasting recognition’ and ‘an appropriate respectful reflection’ of the historical use of controlled wages to expand electricity supply in Queensland.

The purpose of this action plan is to update the departments’ previous cultural capability action plan and incorporate our acknowledgement of controlled wages. We want to deliver it in a format that connects staff to the goals of this plan and to the broader objectives of our Diversity and Inclusion Framework.

Our approach

Recognising the role we play

Developing respectful relationships, understanding and connections with First Australians should not only occur in frontline agencies. All departmental employees and contractors have a responsibility to develop an understanding of First Nations peoples’ culture and use this knowledge to work towards addressing the barriers faced by First Nations peoples.

This action plan commits the department and our staff to continue to work to overcome the barriers faced by First Nations peoples.

As public servants we are also empowered, regardless of position, to promote the public good and the government’s vision to create parity for First Australians. We must appreciate the needs and interests of mob and country (beyond the data). Success relies on us creating an environment that enables access, participation, ongoing consultation and self-determination. It is also important to acknowledge that each community and culture is unique and that relationships will take time to flourish.

As a participator in the Government Champions Program, the department has a key opportunity to build a direct link with the Lockhart River community to support joint problem-solving and foster cultural capability across the agency.



Our strategic business objectives include many goals that are shared with First Australians, such as:

- creating safe, secure water supplies and resilient, affordable energy
- building a diverse economy and jobs
- protecting our environment.

Engaging First Australians in our work allows us to see the world through their eyes—so we can learn from them. This includes recognising the unmistakable spiritual and cultural connection of mob to country and sea, and the benefits of traditional environmental management.

Striving for reconciliation and cultural recognition

Our goal is to co-create an environment that supports equal life chance for all Australians. This starts with acknowledging our national and state history, and the actions of previous government agencies that have been detrimental to First Nations peoples.

As a department, we:

- **acknowledge** the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's wages and savings in the expansion of the electricity network across the state during the era of government control
- **recognise and regret** the historical injustices and financial disadvantages caused by previous government policies, known as the 'Protection Acts'
- **appreciate** all that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have done for Queensland and Australia.

In the spirit of reconciliation we also:

- **celebrate** the culture of the First Australians and **promote** the diversity of custom, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs that make up the oldest living culture on earth
- **recognise** the unique relationship that First Australians have with country and respect the wisdom and knowledge that this connection brings
- **acknowledge** that there is much we can learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about caring for country
- **respect** the cultural and spiritual links of traditional owners and those whose links to an area is historical, regardless of whether native title is formally recognised over that area
- **strive** to work with First Australians and align their aspirations for country with our work to deliver a sustainable energy future and the ongoing safety and security of our water supply
- **commit** to creating parity and sustainable social and economic opportunities for First Australians.

Put new ways of thinking into practice

Creating parity relies on listening to the voices of First Australians and applying that narrative to all aspects of our work so that our actions reflect co-designed processes. It is our opportunity to turn our good intentions into these actions, both as public servants and private citizens.

Giving our staff a clear authorising environment in which they can act with purpose is the key to delivering more for First Australians, now and in the future.

Our focus areas

1. Understand and celebrate culture

Our goal is to build cultural capability in all our staff, not just as public servants, but as Australians. We need to share our knowledge and experiences across the department so we can learn and grow together. We will embed reconciliation initiatives into our core business by focusing on engagement, in the spirit of learning, with First Australians.

| Action | Target | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|--|---------------------|--|
| Deliver cultural capability workshops on culture and history across the department using experts and leaders | 30% of staff completed training by the end of 2017 | April–December 2017 | Deputy-Director General, Business and Corporate Partnership |
| Create an annual employee award to be presented at an appropriate time | Recognise and reward work that enables better outcomes for First Australians | June 2018 | Deputy-Director General, Business and Corporate Partnership |
| Establish a multi-agency working group to research the historical context around the use of controlled wages by former energy agencies, and share this knowledge through briefings and web-based information | Mainstream understanding of the use of controlled wages to build energy infrastructure across the state | June 2018 | Deputy-Director General, chair, controlled wages working group |
| Install monuments and plaques in suitable locations across Queensland to acknowledge the use of controlled wages | Install a plaque in 1 William Street Identify a suitable public site in South East Queensland | June 2018 | Deputy-Director General, chair, controlled wages working group |
| Hold departmental events during National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week | All-staff forum on stolen wages to connect staff to departmental history Host a stand at the Musgrave Park Family Fun Day to connect services and staff to community Host an event to celebrate culture and encourage learning | May–June each year | Deputy-Director General, Business and Corporate Partnership |

2. Enhance our work by applying cultural knowledge and perspective

We will look beyond data to gain a deeper understanding of the strength of each community and, together, identify and prioritise community needs. The department has been working closely with First Australian communities in relation to some energy and water supply initiatives and our intention is to co-design strategies to strengthen this expertise. We will use an ongoing cycle of engagement with community members and leaders so that we are informed and can better inform in return.

Our intention is to:

- listen, be decisive and accountable, and create a safe, welcoming environment that enables First Nations communities to participate in identifying and designing solutions
- regularly check in with leaders, elders and young people before and during community engagement to ensure we hear what is being said
- understand the true impact of our laws, policies and programs, and use this intelligence to challenge, change and improve
- acknowledge and understand our history and its impact so that cultural sensitivities are acknowledged when co-designing solutions
- learn from First Australians—particularly in relation to caring for country, traditional land management and seasonal approaches to water supply—and move from design to co-design.

| Action | Target | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|---|----------|------------------------------|
| Develop culturally savvy materials and community-based activities, training and awareness—particularly in the areas of solar, drinking water quality, rebates and concessions | Deliver appropriate community engagement strategies Co-design activities for community solar and drinking water quality | Ongoing | All Deputy Directors-General |
| Participate in cultural networks across the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) to strengthen community contacts and broker solutions | Grow our contacts and engagement and then look to embed consultation with First Australians into our policy and program development and review | Ongoing | All Deputy Directors-General |
| Commit to spending time with communities as a learning and development opportunity | Look for opportunities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musgrave Park Family Fun Day • Lockhart River Champions • DATSIP contacts (e.g. local elders' groups) | Ongoing | All staff |

3. Lead the way

We have an opportunity to lead the way in how we co-create meaningful relationships, opportunities and outcomes for First Australians. We will:

- make ourselves accountable for delivery by ensuring our activities and initiatives are written into departmental and team plans
- look at opportunities within our portfolio to make communities more energy self-sufficient and ensure access to safe and reliable water supplies
- share learning and development opportunities with industry and other public sector agencies
- ensure buy-in at every level by ensuring accountability for the delivery of initiatives is included in staff performance development agreements
- ask communities what success looks like for them and what their expectations are, and ensure this is a measured outcome.

| Action | Target | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|--|-----------|---|
| Deliver 'The Gathering of Leaders 2017–18' | Create an opportunity for leaders to come together, tell stories and discuss and deliver solutions for unresolved issues | June 2018 | Deputy-Director General, Business and Corporate Partnership |

4. Improve economic and social outcomes

The department regrets past wrongs and acknowledges its responsibilities under the *Stolen Wages Reparations Taskforce report: reconciling past injustice* to establish an appropriately respectful reflection of the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the growth of Queensland.

Reconciliation provides an important imperative to doing all we can to create parity for First Australians. Accordingly, we will work with DATSIP, Energy Queensland and other sector agencies to identify meaningful reparations that improve economic and social outcomes. The most important of these will be to create traineeship programs that provide opportunities and create genuine and transferrable skill sets—particularly in areas where there is growing community interest and need.

| Action | Target | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|---|-----------|---|
| Develop traineeship or work experience opportunities in recognition of the use of controlled wages in expanding the electricity supply in Queensland | Look at economy of scale by developing interchange, mentoring and life skills programs across agencies | June 2018 | Deputy-Director General, chair, controlled wages working group Deputy-Director General, Business and Corporate Partnership |
| Install solar in the Lockhart River community as a pilot program to deliver savings for the community | The solar team and controlled wages working group to explore opportunities for solar in other communities | June 2018 | Deputy Director-General, Energy |

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|---|--|-----------|---|
| Continue to develop and co-deliver community-based training programs for drinking water quality | Work with, and in, communities to develop skills to ensure the ongoing safe supply of drinking water | Ongoing | General Manager, Water Planning and Regulation |
| Deliver funding and compliance assistance to the Puuya Foundation in the Lockhart River | Work with the Puuya Foundation to identify opportunities for greater strategic funding assistance | June 2018 | Director-General, Department of Energy and Water Supply |

5. Strive for stronger partnerships and engagement

The department has an opportunity to enhance and improve how we engage with First Australians and their communities by treating each community as unique and taking the time to build connections. This also means developing stronger relationships and partnerships with agencies that have solid community relationships, such as DATSIP and DNRM.

| Action | Target | Timeline | Responsibility |
|---|---|----------|---|
| Develop a protocol and communications guide | Protocol and communications guide developed and implemented through staff training and awareness sessions | Ongoing | Deputy-Director General, Business and Corporate Partnership |
| Regularly invite First Australian perspective into relevant work and meetings | Use our growing network across our department, DATSIP, DNRM and community leaders (such as the Mayors and CEOs Forum) for frequent, meaningful engagement | Ongoing | All staff |

Implementation and governance

The department has an ongoing obligation to report on activities under our cultural capability action plan, including contributing to a whole-of-government progress report.

The department will also monitor our progress in meeting the milestones and deliverables of this action plan and the workforce targets of our Diversity and Inclusion Program.

