



North West
Hospital and Health Service

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2019 – 2026



Cover Artwork



“Community Connections”, by Kalkadoon artist Glenda McCulloch

After developing our North West Hospital and Health Service (NWHHS) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy, we commissioned an artwork to depict a visual representation of the Strategy in action.

Kalkadoon artist Glenda McCulloch was successful in winning the commission and has produced a piece titled “Community Connections”. The middle circle represents NWHHS and has a strong connection to the six smaller circles which represents the six elements within the NWHHS workforce strategy: recruitment, retention, workforce profile, leadership and governance, inclusive workplaces, and community engagement. The circles are then connected to lines which create a flow-on effect that will bridge the gap and bring us all back together as one. “My painting is a representation of a dream that I have for my community and my people to come together and to work in unison to achieve a positive everlasting relationship between the Aboriginal community and the North West Hospital and Health Service,” Ms McCulloch said.

Glenda is a contemporary Aboriginal artist born and raised in Mount Isa.

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Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

The North West Hospital and Health Service respectfully acknowledges the elders past, present and emerging and the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways which we service and declares the North West Hospital and Health Service's commitment to reducing inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous health outcomes in line with the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap).

Acknowledgement of Controlled Wages

North West Hospital and Health Service is mindful of the negative impacts of colonisation and past government policies, injustices and inequalities that continue to contribute to disadvantage and poor health outcomes experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. We acknowledge and appreciate the financial contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders toward the expansion of Queensland's hospitals, health infrastructure and services. We recognise and regret that this was a part of past government policies of control over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' wages and savings under the 'Protection Acts'.

North West Hospital and Health Service wants to address longstanding mistrust and fear of government departments and it is with genuine commitment that we grow our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in accordance with agreement with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Message from the Board

Paul Woodhouse, Board Chair

The North West Hospital and Health Service is responsible for delivering public hospital and other health services to the communities of North West Queensland. We serve a population of around 28,000 people, distributed across 300,000 square kilometres, providing services across one regional hospital, two multipurpose health services, three remote hospitals and, five primary health clinics.

Our vision is to be Queensland's leading Hospital and Health Service, delivering excellence in remote healthcare to our patients.

To achieve this, we must ensure that our staff are truly representative of the patients we are privileged to care for. For this reason, we have set ourselves the ambitious – but realistic – goal of achieving an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce of at least 26 percent by 2026.

Working in collaboration with the National Employment Services Association, our first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy and Action Plan sets out the steps we will take to ensure that we can recruit, retain and maximise the skills of our existing workforce – as well as further train and develop our leaders for the future and promote more inclusive workplaces.

The 26 percent target is challenging. However, as this reflects the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living within the North West region, we believe this is achievable and further demonstrates both the Board and the Executive Team's commitment towards Closing the Gap.

The North West Hospital and Health Board has every confidence that, working with local communities and our key stakeholders, we will ensure we achieve this worthy goal and become a leading employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both in Queensland and also within Australia.

Our workforce is our greatest asset and I would like to acknowledge the skills and dedication of all North West Hospital and Health Service staff, both past and present, and invite them to join us in the journey to establishing more culturally inclusive workplaces.



CEO Message

Lisa Davies Jones, Health Service Chief Executive

As I have travelled around our communities in my time as Chief Executive, our staff, Elders, and community members have consistently voiced the need to see a skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

I would like to acknowledge the passion and commitment of the existing NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to improving health outcomes and to the input and engagement they have provided towards this NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2019-2026. The contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can make, and have made, to the public sector and our health service is significant, and critical as we move forward with health improvements to help Close the Gap.

The Strategy has been developed within the overall policy context of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023 and its specific goal to ensure that Australia has a health system that delivers clinically appropriate care that is culturally safe, non-discriminatory and free from racism, high quality, responsive and accessible for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I am confident that the successful implementation of the Strategy will position our health service as a favoured workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.



Executive Director Message

Christine Mann, Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Improving the health of the North West's Aboriginal community is a key priority for the North West Hospital and Health Service (NWHHS). We recognise that this cannot be relegated to second-order business, but reflects a change in the way we operate to become more responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A key factor is a concerted effort to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels of our organisation (NWHHS) and to embed ways of knowing and doing in practice. We aspire to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices front and centre, and to continue to listen, learn and build relationships with the North West's Aboriginal people and communities in the way that reflects the needs and desires of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I would like to acknowledge the collaboration with National Employment Services Association who have worked with our staff and stakeholders to assist us in developing this essential strategy for our health service. I look forward to the implementation phases now, over the duration of this strategy with our aspiration of arriving at our destination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders making up 26% of our workforce by 2026.



Introduction

The North West Hospital and Health Service (NWHHS) covers an area of over 300,000 square kilometres and services the rural and remote communities within North Western Queensland and the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Health Service includes the City of Mount Isa and the towns and areas of Burketown, Camooweal, Cloncurry, Dajarra, Doomadgee, Julia Creek, Karumba, Normanton and Mornington Island.

The percentage of Aboriginal people living in the North West is nearly 26 percent, compared to 4 percent within all of Queensland. In particular, the two communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island have populations in which 86 percent or more of the population identify themselves as either an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. Within this, over 50 percent of clients accessing services at NWHHS are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

NWHHS know that to deliver the best quality health care to the communities in which we service, our workforce must reflect those communities. Our organisation is committed to taking practical steps to ensure that this can happen. We are committed to employing more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in our workforce across all areas of operations including clinical, non-clinical and leadership roles.

NWHHS will increase our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce from 10 percent to 26 percent to reflect the population across the region within seven years. Working across our organisation, with our staff and with our communities, we will identify and implement strategies that achieve this goal.

The NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy confirms our commitment and actions to achieving this goal.

The NWHHS Office of Indigenous Health

While all staff will have a role in implementing the NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy, the Office of Indigenous Health will provide the leadership and coordination for the delivery of this Strategy.

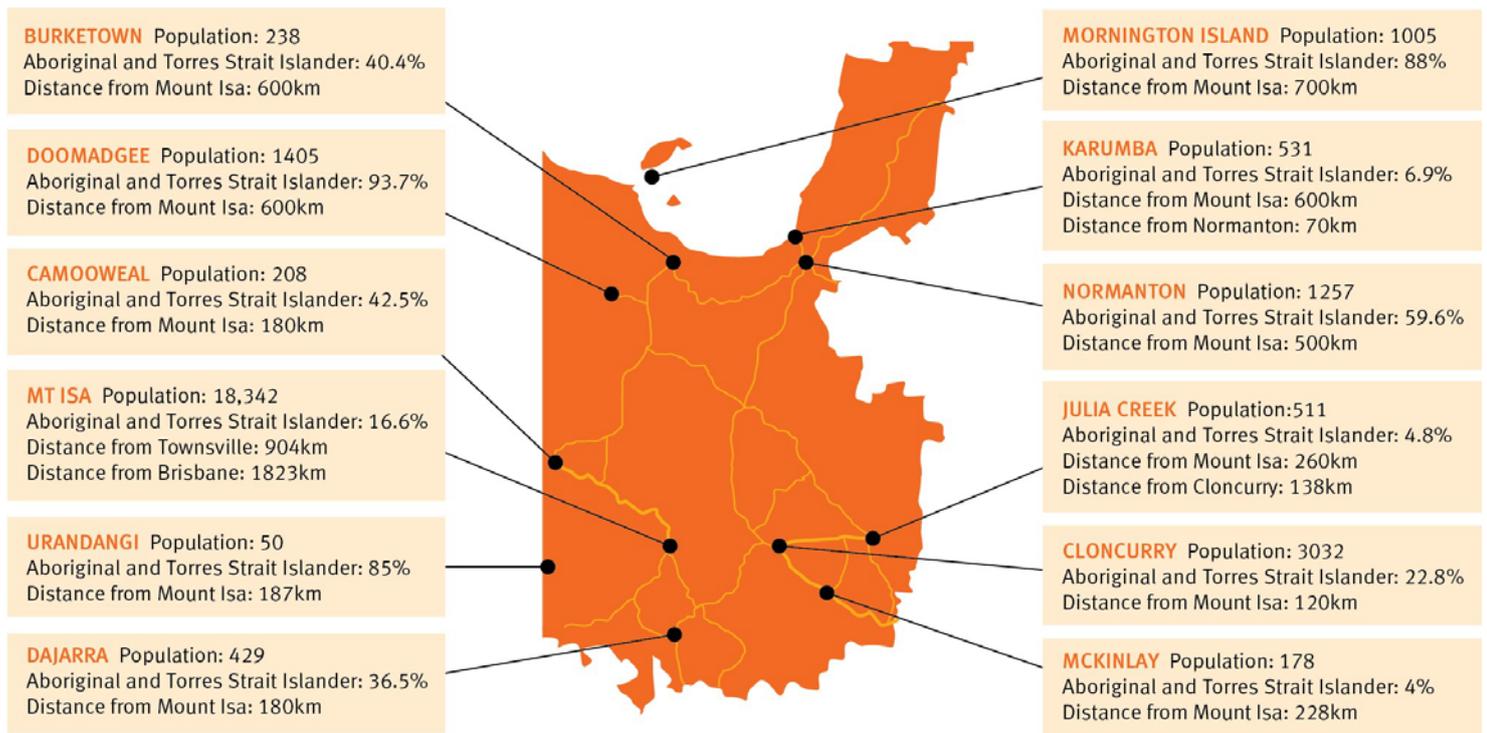
Our Community Profile

The NWHHS had an estimated resident population 28,173 people, which has shown considerable decline in recent years due to issues including drought and the downturn in mining in the region.

Custom region / Local Government Area / State	Number as at 30 June 2017			Percentage average annual growth	
	2009	2014	2017	2009-2014	2014-2017
North West Region	31032	32621	28173	1.0	-13.6
Burke (S)	543	559	345	0.6	-38.2
Carpentaria (S)	2136	2245	1994	1.0	-11.1
Cloncurry (S)	3304	3399	3133	0.6	-7.8
Doomadgee (S)	1273	1395	1494	1.8	7.0
McKinlay (S)	1011	1083	810	1.4	-25.2
Mornington (S)	1158	1223	1205	1.1	-0.1
Mount Isa (C)	21,607	22,717	19,192	1.0	-15.5
Queensland	4,328,771	4,722,447	4,929,152	1.8	4.3

Within this population the percentage of Indigenous people living in the North West sits at 26 percent compared to 4 percent within all of Queensland. In particular, the two Local Government Areas of Doomadgee and Mornington Island have populations in which 86 percent or more of the population identify themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Across the NWHHS service footprint, we are connected with Traditional Custodians from 15 different groups. Our region is also home to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia.



Our significant footprint, the wide range of services we provide and our commitment to our communities and achieving positive health outcomes means NWHHS have a significant opportunity and responsibility to grow our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. While proud of our existing workforce, specific targeted actions will be required if we are to deliver on our goal of 26 percent.



NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy

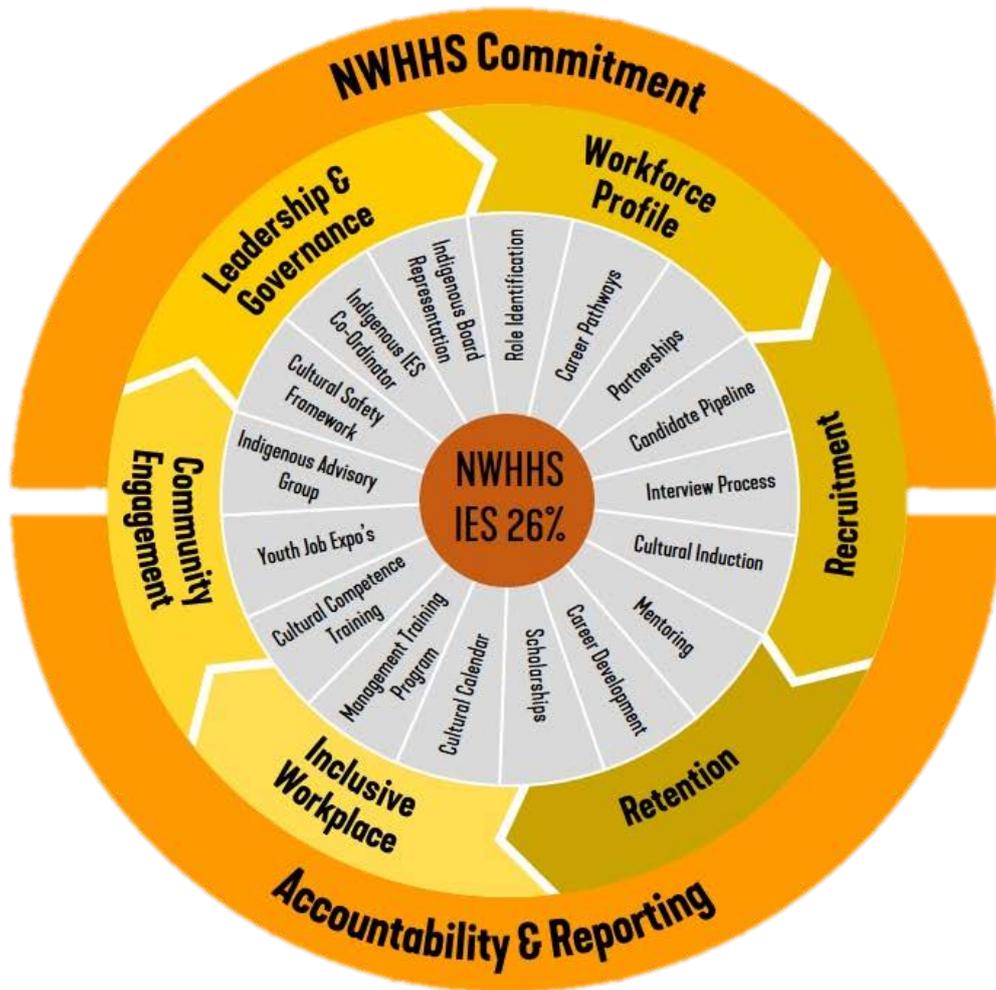
The NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy underpins our organisations commitment to increase our Indigenous workforce profile from ten percent to 26 percent. The strategy provides a framework that builds on the current infrastructure, capability and foundations of NWHHS.

The framework comprises of six key focus areas and underlining principles identified by NWHHS to deliver accountability and change at every level within NWHHS. These focus areas are interlinked and are all critical to the overall success of the strategy. They are:

1. Recruitment
2. Retention
3. Workforce Profile
4. Leadership and Governance
5. Inclusive Workplaces
6. Community Engagement.



NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy Framework



Recruitment

Goal Statement

NWHHS's recruitment and selection processes will promote, encourage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access employment within our organisation.

Our processes will be culturally appropriate and continually evaluated by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Leadership Advisory Group. We will use a wide range of methods to promote opportunities within our organisation while developing and maintaining a comprehensive engagement strategy with our local Aboriginal communities. We will work to partner with experts to create a suitable pipeline for our workforce, and to promote our service as a quality place to work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Actions

To attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to our workforce, and provide access to employment within our organisation we will:

- Undertake a review of our recruitment processes to adjust them to enable and encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply for roles within NWHHS
- Formalise an internal protocol for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on all interview panels as part of selection processes within NWHHS
- Develop and implement an Ambassador Program with existing staff that showcases the benefits of employment within NWHHS
- Identify entry-level opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – including traineeships and apprenticeships – in occupations that offer career opportunities in NWHHS and elsewhere across the health sector or public service
- Participation activity in local events such as the Centre for Rural and Remote Careers Day, and local Career Expos
- Develop NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment resources that can be circulated and promoted at local community events and expos
- Identify alternative channels to promote employment opportunities including the use of Aboriginal Media
- Develop an Aboriginal social media campaign promoting employment opportunities within NWHHS
- Develop and engage a network of local employment providers and other stakeholders to source local candidates
- Engage with university and training sectors to influence program enrolments that reflect NWHHS's needs (current and forecast) for skilled and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- Develop partnerships with peak professional bodies to promote employment opportunities with NWHHS: Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives; Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association; Indigenous Allied Health Australia; and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association
- Work with the secondary schools, universities and vocational education and training sector to develop pathways to support career development and progression in occupational areas

Retention

Goal Statement

NWHHS will ensure that we create an environment which promotes and supports the retention of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

We will proactively invest in strategies which positions our organisation as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We will continually seek feedback from our staff and local communities on this commitment.

Actions

To support and retain our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees we will:

- Monitor retention levels across NWHHS with mandated reporting to the Board on NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees' representation
- Develop and embed tailored and cultural induction program for new employees to complement the existing NWHHS induction process
- Build on our induction processes by developing and embedding a 90 day on boarding program for new Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees
- Develop and embed a structured mentoring program for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees to provide support and coaching within the workplace if they opt into it
- Support staff who have been recruited into Identified roles to fill any skill gaps that might restrict their career progression/mobility in NWHHS
- Explore investment into the professional development of our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff to enable career progression in NWHHS
- Introduce a Cultural Capability Plan to enhance the cultural capability of all staff working within NWHHS
- Formalise an annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence training program for all management to complete



Workforce Profile

Goal Statement

NWHHS will create a workplace profile that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to work across all departments within NWHHS.

NWHHS will formalise and promote clear career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to either join NWHHS or advance with NWHHS. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees will be supported within their roles with a clear commitment to professional development and advancement.

Actions

To ensure we achieve our goal, we will:

- Undertake a review of our workforce to report our understanding of our current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee profile, and the future workforce need and ensure that recruitment and career advancement strategies are aligned with this need
- Undertake an internal review of Position Descriptions related to the NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy to ensure that all roles have been appropriately designed, and that skills are utilised across NWHHS
- Establish, embed and promote workforce targets across all departments within NWHHS.
- Improve the integrity and provision of employment data used for reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce planning, development and profiling
- Develop clear pathways into roles across NWHHS and formalise opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees through strategies which could include work experience, transfers and secondments
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees complete an annual Career Succession Plan with support from the Office of Indigenous Health to further develop staff to reach their goals, and support relationships with line managers

Leadership and Governance

Goal Statement

NWHHS's leadership and governance arrangements will enable the successful implementation of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy.

Our Leadership will be developed, supported, encouraged and displayed across aspects of our delivery. Our Communication protocols will build the necessary trust to achieve our goals.

Our governance model will enable all key stakeholders to have a voice in the implementation of our strategy which will be underpinned by clear accountability checkpoints.

Actions

To provide the high level quality governance and leadership to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy, we will:

- Develop an implementation plan for our strategy with clear objectives, milestones and clear lines of accountability
- Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Cultural Capability and Engagement Unit overseeing the advancement and career development of NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group to provide cultural advice on the implementation of our strategy
- Formalise a bi-annual Strategic Planning Meeting with all employees to qualify and evaluate the advancement of employment within NWHHS
- Develop a parallel change management strategy to ensure all NWHHS staff are supportive of the NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce strategy



Inclusive Workplaces

Goal Statement

NWHHS will always represent an inclusive workplace that values the contribution of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and local communities in our service delivery.

Our commitment is developing and maintain a working culture that embeds cultural perspectives in all dimensions of our organisation. This is fundamental to the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working within our organisation, and to the health care of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Our staff will be supported to build their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. We will create and maintain a workplace environment which encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to share their experience, expertise and connection with country.

Actions

To ensure we are an inclusive workforce we will:

- Develop a cultural competence framework which will support staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- Structure a bi-annual strategic planning meeting with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to qualify and evaluate the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within NWHHS
- Develop an annual cultural calendar capturing all local, state and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander key events
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within our organisation to share their knowledge, history and connections to support each other and improve our service delivery
- Aboriginal staff retention is monitored and HR systems and exit interviews used to identify cultural understanding issues affecting results
- Collect information (e.g. through surveys) on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff/consumer perceptions of the workplace/service and act on this

Community Engagement

Goal Statement

NWHHS will develop and implement a strong cultural community engagement strategy developing and strengthening our relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our community engagement will be centred on positive engagement, increasing access to our services and sharing information and resources. Our workforce where possible will be drawn from local communities to enable a strong local profile across the NWHHS workforce.

Actions

To ensure the community is actively engaged in supporting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy we will:

- Appoint an external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group to provide advice on implementation of the strategy
- Develop and resource an annual sponsorship fund to support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events
- Participate in community events to build our connection and promote employment opportunities in our organisation
- Provide support and training to staff to better enable them to engage and connect with the community
- Undertake an internal review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patient/clients accessibility to ensure that our workforce structure meets community needs



Governance, Monitoring and Reporting

The governance, monitoring and reporting of the NWHHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy is critical for achieving the intended outcomes. The overall accountability and success of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy has been assigned to the NWHHS Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team. An action plan will support the implementation of the Strategy.

The responsibility is reinforced through the NWHHS Strategic and Operational Plan with reporting to the Senior Management Team and NWHHS Board.



