



INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY 2021-2024



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INTRODUCTION

WEHI's Indigenous Employment Strategy (IES) comprises of four key pillars:

1. Recruitment and retention
2. Development and leadership
3. Inclusive culture
4. Governance, monitoring and reporting

These areas of focus include strategies that concentrate on “building the pipeline”, providing a culturally safe environment, strengthening relationships, and increasing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across WEHI.

The IES builds on WEHI's commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outlined in the Reconciliation Action Plan, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, and the Strategic Plan 2019-2023. The IES directs attention on increasing the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels of WEHI in both research and professional services and outlines a framework to support and develop existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

The strategy also takes into account the existing structure of WEHI, our strengths, opportunities for synergies or efficiencies, and acknowledges existing relationships and our ability to leverage off or develop other partnerships with key stakeholders.



Murrup Barak camp student during a WEHI laboratory discovery tour

OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

WEHI has made clear commitments in its Strategic Plan in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, developing and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and creating a culturally safe organisation. The IES will drive action in achieving these aspirations which are woven into our vision for Indigenous employment at WEHI.

*We have a responsibility to **improve the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples**. We will contribute to **closing the gap in life expectancy by collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers** whose strengths align with our areas of research including chronic diseases, cancer and ageing. WEHI Strategic Plan 2019-2023, p.6.*

*We will provide **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers with access to expertise and technology** at WEHI. We will support our researchers to contribute to this national priority **by fostering their active engagement in a way that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**. WEHI Strategic Plan 2019-2023, p.6.*

*We will pay particular attention to providing women, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples** and other under-represented groups **with development opportunities** to equip them with the skills to **enable greater access to leadership positions**. WEHI Strategic Plan 2019-2023, p.11.*

UNDERPINNING FOR SUCCESS

We recognise that a strong foundation must be laid to ensure successful implementation of the IES. This includes creating accountability for delivery of the action plan, incentivising outcomes of each action and adopting new practices and initiatives. Increasing the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment will require WEHI to commit to a long-term approach which will require a significant level of investment across the organisation.

Innovative practices that will underpin the success of the IES include:

- Investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure their full potential is reached
- A focus on value development and incorporating cultural skills that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students may offer to WEHI
- Development of a talent pipeline of Indigenous students through schools, universities, training and employment programs to increase employment in both research and professional services areas
- Developing partnerships and collaborative approaches within the medical research sector to enhance Indigenous employment opportunities
- Building WEHI's pathway to cultural competency and cultural safety for its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

EMPLOYMENT AND RECONCILIATION

WEHI is committed to addressing the five interconnected dimensions of reconciliation and has been part of Reconciliation Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program since 2014.

Our IES is a key foundational piece that will scaffold the development of our third RAP in 2021. The strategy demonstrates our long-term commitment to building sustainable employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our workforce. The IES will work in concert with the RAP and provide a key delivery mechanism for our commitments related to employment, education and cultural competency.

OUR VISION FOR INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT AT WEHI

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be engaged at the scientific frontier, making exciting discoveries and decisions about the future of health in this country, and part of a leading professional services workforce supporting the realisation of these discoveries.

We will achieve this vision by:

- Being a culturally safe place that values Indigenous knowledge and actively addresses structural racism
- Providing opportunities for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical and health researchers
- Supporting the career progression and development of First Nations people through sustained investment
- Prioritising access to WEHI expertise, facilities and technology for Indigenous researchers to further their own research
- Forming partnerships with key stakeholders to enhance employment and education opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



Lilly Backshell. WEHI alumni, CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship program.

EMPLOYMENT TARGET:

WEHI has set itself the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce target of **1% by 2024**. This is based on the current Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of around 1% (0.9% ABS 2011).

This would mean, based on current workforce numbers (766 FTE), an increase **to 8 FTE employees by 2024**.

In the longer term, WEHI aspires to set targets for senior scientific and professional services positions, reflecting the focus on career development and leadership within the strategy and our commitment to diversity in our leadership.

POST-GRADUATE STUDENT TARGET:

WEHI has set an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **postgraduate student target of 1%**. This is based on the number of Indigenous students enrolled in Natural and Physical sciences university courses representing 0.87 per cent of all students enrolled nationally (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017).

This would mean, based on current student numbers (131 FTE), **one new PhD candidate by 2024**.

PROFILE OF WORKFORCE

WEHI currently has very low numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students with one staff member, one post graduate student and five undergraduate interns. This number may be greater but routine monitoring of staff and student demographics is not currently undertaken but is planned as part of the forthcoming Human Resource Information System implementation.

This means there is currently:

- **0.13%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce representation as a total of all staff.
- **0.74%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander post-graduate student representation.
- **3.1%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander total student representation (under-graduate including interns and post-graduate).

ACTION PLAN 2021-2024

Pillar 1: Recruitment and retention

To build the future talent pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students, we will commit to long-term planning and investment, the implementation of innovative practices, and work with key partners including in the community and education sectors. Retention is strongly linked to how safe and valued people feel in the workplace and being given an opportunity to achieve their full potential and demonstrate their talent.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
1.1 Building the pipeline				
1.1.1 Explore and implement programs to build the pipeline and support the career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:	Reconciliation Committee Chairs Head of Fundraising Head of Education	Strategic Cabinet		
A. Implement a visiting Indigenous fellowship program to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to further their research at WEHI.			June 2021	2 visiting fellows by end 2024
B. Explore the development of an Indigenous specific scholarship fund that targets tertiary students (at all levels) currently studying in areas related to medical research.			December 2024	Scholarship fund in place
1.1.2 Continue the partnership with CareerTrackers to identify opportunities for Indigenous interns as well as strengthen the partnership with the Aurora Indigenous Internship program with a focus on career opportunities in professional services.	Head of Scientific Education Office Reconciliation Committee	Head of Education Chief Operating Officer	Ongoing, December annually	8 CareerTracker interns annually 2 Aurora Interns annually

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
1.1 Building the pipeline				
1.1.3 Establish relationships/partnerships to build the pipeline for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students across WEHI with the following programs: - University of Melbourne's Bachelor of Science (Extended) program - GTAC's RISE - AFL SportsReady	People and Culture Head of Scientific Education Office	Chief People Officer Head of Education	GTAC RISE- December 2021 AFL Sports Ready- December 2022 Melbourne University Bachelor of Science (Extended)- December 2023	Partnership established with programs. Students engaged with WEHI through programs Staff employed through Sports Ready program.
1.1.4 Pilot a school outreach program to deliver virtual science activities aimed at Indigenous students.	Head of Scientific Education Office Reconciliation Committee	Head of Education Reconciliation Committee Chairs	June 2022	Outreach program piloted.
1.2 Review policy and practice				
1.2.1 Implement inclusive recruitment and selection practices that include special measures and identified positions to directly target potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	People and Culture	Chief People Officer	June 2022	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees recruited through positive action pathways in roles across WEHI.
1.2.2 Advertise and promote job opportunities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, networks and communities including, but not limited to, National Indigenous Times, Koori Mail, Indigenous Employment Australia and Indigenous recruitment agencies.	People and Culture	Chief People Officer	June 2022	Advertisements routinely placed in media and other forums. Increased number of job applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
1.2 Review policy and practice				
1.2.3 Develop an inclusive job advertisement including a primary statement encouraging Indigenous applicants to apply, together with an accompanying statement that explicitly outlines that Indigenous peoples, knowledge and perspectives are highly valued within WEHI.	People and Culture	Chief People Officer	June 2021	Increased number of job applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
1.2.4 Develop an inclusive statement to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate and post graduate students to apply for honours and PhD projects.	Head of Scientific Education Office People and Culture	Head of Education Chief People Officer	June 2021	Increased number of applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for honours and PhD programs. Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander honours and PhD students enrolled.
1.2.5 Ensure WEHI's recruitment and selection policy and job requirements acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants' cultural skills, relationships, and prior community work/research experience.	People and Culture	Chief People Officer	June 2022	Increased number of job applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Increased number of successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
1.3 Incentives for recruitment				
1.3.1 Investigate the opportunity to provide an incentive for Laboratory Heads to recruit Indigenous students and staff in recognition of the requirements associated with managing the laboratory including management time, mentoring and any on the job support that may be required.	People and Culture	Deputy Director, Scientific Strategy	December 2024	<p>Increased number of students engaged through CareerTrackers, Aurora and other programs.</p> <p>Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander post-graduate students.</p> <p>Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic staff.</p>
1.4 Induction and on boarding				
1.4.1 Develop a targeted induction/on boarding process for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students and their supervisors.	People and Culture Head of Scientific Education Office	Chief People Officer Head of Education	December 2021	<p>Equal or higher level of staff satisfaction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students as measured by key culture survey metrics</p> <p>Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at equal or higher levels than other staff.</p> <p>Completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to or higher than for other students.</p>

Pillar 2 Development and leadership

Investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students is critical and will focus on the provision of professional development and leadership opportunities which are aligned to career goals and leadership aspirations, both internally and externally.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
2.1 Mentoring				
2.1.1 Establish a formalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career mentoring program for staff and students with internal or external mentees to develop professional skills and provide general and/or cultural guidance.	Learning and Organisational Development Manager Head of Scientific Education Office	Chief People Officer Head of Education	December 2024	Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at equal or higher levels than for other staff Promotions rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff equal to or higher than other staff. Completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to or higher than for other students.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
2.2 Networking				
2.2.1 Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students with the opportunity to network with staff and students at other medical research institutes and those within the Parkville precinct by encouraging and facilitating participation.	Learning and Organisational Development Manager Head of Scientific Education Office	Chief People Officer Head of Education	June 2023	Equal or higher level of satisfaction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students as measured by key culture survey metrics Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at equal or higher levels than other staff Promotions rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff equal to or higher than for other staff. Completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to or higher than for other students.
2.2.2 Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD students have access to the cohort of Indigenous PhD students at the University of Melbourne by connecting with the Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health for appropriate academic skill support.	Head of Scientific Education Office	Head of Education	December 2021	Equal or higher level of student satisfaction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as measured by key culture survey metrics. Completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD students equal to or higher than for other students.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
2.3 Remuneration and development				
2.3.1 Explore the opportunity for financial recognition to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and student's cultural skills, relationships, leadership and community work/ research.	People and Culture	Chief People Officer	December 2022	<p>Increased number of job applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.</p> <p>Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff equal or higher than for other staff.</p> <p>Equal or higher level of satisfaction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students as measured by key culture survey metrics.</p> <p>Completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to or higher than for other students.</p>

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
2.3 Remuneration and development				
2.3.2 Provide targeted support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students in both professional and research areas in the form of further training and development such as job shadowing opportunities and mentoring.	Learning and Organisational Development Manager Head of Scientific Education Office	Chief People Officer Head of Education	December 2022	Equal or higher level of satisfaction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students as measured by key culture survey metrics. Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff equal or higher than for other staff. Promotions rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff equal to or higher than other staff. Completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to or higher than for other students.
2.3.3 Explore opportunities for co-employment of Indigenous staff with universities and/or other research institutes in the Parkville Precinct.	People and Culture	Chief People Officer	December 2024	Co-employment opportunity in place.

Pillar 3: Inclusive culture

Creating an environment which embeds cultural perspectives in all dimensions of WEHI is fundamental for the cultural well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
3.1 Cultural awareness and exchange				
3.1.1 Provide cultural awareness training to all staff with training made available to executive level staff, managers, theme leaders, division heads and laboratory heads as a priority.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Chief People Officer	December 2022	Senior leadership have participated in training. 50% of staff and students have participated in training.
3.1.2 Create a cultural resource/learning hub that contains information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and education and mechanisms and guidance for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager Learning and Organisational Development Manager Head of Scientific Education Office	Chief People Officer Head of Education	June 2023	Equal or higher level of satisfaction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students as measured by key culture survey metrics. Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff equal or higher than for other staff. Promotions rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff equal to or higher than other staff. Completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to or higher than for other students.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
3.2 Workplace practices and policies				
3.2.1 Promote inclusive workplace practices and policies such as implementing a diversity and inclusion strategy, RAP, cultural leave policy, Acknowledgement of Country (plaque, website, emails, meetings).	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Chief People Officer	Ongoing	Strategies and policies in place. Positive response to key culture survey metrics regarding commitment to diversity and inclusion.
3.2.2 Continue to build awareness of WEHI by establishing strong relationships with the Indigenous community through RAP activities, seminars and events.	Reconciliation Committee Internal Communications Manager Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Reconciliation Committee Co-Chairs	Ongoing	Reconciliation seminars delivered annually. See RAP actions

Pillar 4: Governance, monitoring and reporting

The governance arrangements will ensure that key representatives drive implementation, monitoring and reporting across all aspects of the strategy creating the necessary accountability and transparency on delivery of the plan.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	TIMELINE	OUTCOMES/SUCCESS
4.1 Drive and monitor the IES implementation				
4.1.1 Implement the governance arrangements to drive and monitor the implementation of the IES.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager Reconciliation Committee Chairs	People and Culture Board Subcommittee Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee	June 2021	Governance arrangements in place
4.1.2 Assign responsibility for actions amongst each area of WEHI and embed individual responsibilities for key management personnel as part of individual performance plans.	Chief People Officer	Director	June 2021	Responsibility assigned and part of performance plans.
4.1.3 Undertake regular monitoring of the IES to inform quarterly reports to the People and Culture Board Subcommittee.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager Reconciliation Committee Chairs	Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee	Quarterly from June 2021	Reports delivered
4.2 Capturing data				
4.2.1 Implement systems to capture self-identification during recruitment and for current staff and students for the purposes of informing employment data and workforce development and planning.	People and Culture	Chief People Officer	December 2021	Improvement in data collection through Workday and culture survey.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of the land where our campuses are located, and recognise their continuing connection to country and community.



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