



Career development for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff

Everyone within your organisation requires career development and performance monitoring for success.

This includes supervision, feedback and opportunities to explore new roles as well as ongoing training and study options.

Many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people have not had the same opportunities as non-Aboriginal people or non-Torres Strait Islander people to study and gain formal qualifications because of the disadvantage they experienced in terms of health, education and housing, discrimination in the education system and ongoing experiences of cultural abuse and racism. Opportunities to build skills through professional development, study and secondments are important in terms of:

- Individual professional development for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff
- Ensuring effective services are delivered by these staff
- Building cultural and practice skills in your organisation.

Organisations should ensure Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff are supported throughout their study or secondments in a culturally appropriate way.

Professional development of individual Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff makes an important contribution to capacity building in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Supporting and facilitating Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff to gain qualifications and expertise across a range of areas contributes to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community capacity building and to restoring to those communities the ability to make their own decisions and deliver their own programs to their communities.¹

Tips for best practice in career managing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff like all staff like to hear feedback about their performance and ongoing encouragement and acknowledgement is important in building confidence and supporting career development.
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff may need support and encouragement to go to training, enter a qualification or to apply for the next level up position.
- Create an open and trusting relationship and ensure staff feel comfortable and safe to express themselves and eliminate feelings of shame.
- Do not pigeonhole Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff into identified or designated positions, even if they were recruited to one, and make it clear that there is room to move and explore different areas.
- Provide opportunities for ongoing training and study in areas that your employee has expressed interest in.

Questions for managers and workplaces in supporting career development of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff:

- Do you create professional development plans for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff?
- How are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff encouraged, supported and resourced by the organisation to access further training and gain qualifications?
- Are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff provided with opportunities for experiences and skill development through secondments within the organisation?
- Does the organisation actively support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

students through student placements across the organisation?

- When you ask questions of staff who leave the organisation: Are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people given the opportunity to discuss their experiences in the organisation with a person of their choice, including an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person?

Useful links and other information



(1) Source: VACCA Building Respectful Partnerships 2010.