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| symbol represents the coming together of Aboriginal and local government communities.  | **ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT****IN VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT** |
|  | Resources guide **Fact Sheet 2** |
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# Framework – “Koories In Victorian Councils”



There are many reasons why councils will benefit from actively attracting, recruiting and employing Aboriginal people. The core business case ingredients include:

* Local government is a significant local employer with a broad range of jobs at many different levels
* As a tier of government with a vested interest in communities having positive social and economic wellbeing, offering employment to people who have had historic low levels of employment and face different life outcomes to non-Aboriginal Australians, will deliver considerable benefits for the whole community
* Having a reputation as a supportive and culturally inclusive workplace environment is a key attractor for the local government workforce of the future, particularly young people
* Having Aboriginal people employed at council will generate greater awareness and use of council services by the wider Aboriginal community, and assist in breaking down any barriers which may be currently deterring visits by Aboriginal people.

To address employment needs of the future, councils need to look at new ways of investing in sourcing their employees from new groups of people which haven’t traditionally sought to work in local government, and who may have different background and skills that will need to be incorporated to deliver necessary council services.

The key is ensuring council workplaces have a respectful work environment, there are opportunities for professional growth and development, and that all employees have an understanding of Aboriginal culture and history.

Key thoughts: very simple things can make a big difference; the first step is committing to do what it takes to make it happen.

**For further details visit our website - [www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/indigenous/aboriginal-employment/Documents/www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment)**

# Frequently Asked Questions

**What should I include in the business case to council?**

Setting out the business case for councils to increase employment of Aboriginal people will help everyone understand the benefits that will be gained. As a tier of government with a vested interest in communities having positive social and economic wellbeing, offering employment to people who have had historic low levels of employment and face different life outcomes to non-Aboriginal Australians, will deliver considerable benefits for the whole community. Having a reputation as a supportive and culturally inclusive workplace environment will also be a key attractor for the local government workforce of the future, particularly young people. Further examples of what could be included in the business case are included in the Library section of this fact sheet.

**What resources and funding are available to councils?**

There are a number of Federal Government programs which provide funding to private providers and organisations such as councils for traineeships and other support services to assist Aboriginal employees settle into work. The specific programs and links are contained in the Library section of this fact sheet.

**What do ‘special measures’ mean?**

Under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 organisations taking positive steps to help disadvantaged groups do not need to apply or get approval from VCAT for an exemption to the Act if they meet the criteria outlined in the ‘[special measures’](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/indigenous/aboriginal-employment/Documents/%E2%80%A2%09http%3A/www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/exceptions-exemptions-and-special-measures/special-measures) provisions. As long as actively seeking the employment of Aboriginal people is being done in good faith to help promote or achieve substantive equality for Aboriginal people, then actively writing that the council is seeking to employ Aboriginal people in a job advertisement, for example, will not constitute discrimination and require an exemption to the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010.* Councils will need to considerwhether their proposed actions meet the test for a special measure – further information and advice is readily available from the [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/).

**Should councils set employment targets?**

There is no state-wide target for councils, so setting targets is a matter for councils to decide individually. Some organisations find the setting of targets a useful way tool to focus their attention because it involves analysis of the current status, reporting and organisational commitment over time. In its Karreeta Yirramboi Aboriginal Employment Strategy, the Victorian Government has set a target of achieving a one per cent Aboriginal employment target for the Victorian public sector to be achieved by 2015. This would bring the total number of Aboriginal employees in the Victorian public sector to approximately 2,700. The variability in population numbers at a local level, however, may mean that resident population-derived targets do not deliver the intended outcomes due to availability of potential Aboriginal employees not being confined to council boundaries. If targets are considered helpful in driving organisational commitment, see the [Aboriginal Employment page](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/indigenous/aboriginal-employment/Pages/default.aspx) on the MAV website for examples of targets set by various organisations.

**What if there is no extra funding in staffing budgets?**

If councils do not have the resources to allocate extra funding for an Aboriginal employment program, there are internal measures which can be taken utilising existing resources. For example, advertising of positions to the Aboriginal community is easily initiated without extra cost by including them in existing distribution lists. Contacting local Aboriginal organisations about what support and mentoring possibilities might be available through other sources will also assist councils to provide the extra supports that may be required to enable retention of Aboriginal employees.

**Do councils need to have Aboriginal-specific cultural leave policies?**

This is a commonly asked question. The short answer is that this is best determined on a case-by-case basis consistent with councils’ general approach to engagement and retention of staff. Managers of Aboriginal employees may benefit from having cultural training to alert them to the family and community obligations and responsibilities that Aboriginal employees may be expected to meet. To assist council consideration of this matter, the MAV has compiled some examples of policies from a variety of organisations, plus some suggestions developed at a forum held in 2014 attended by human resource and community development managers. See the MAV website [www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment](http://www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment) for more information.

# Activity ideas

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| **Suggestions for Aboriginal-specific activities to attract and recruit Aboriginal job candidates** |
| Council decides to actively seek to employ Aboriginal candidates | Include development of an Aboriginal employment strategy in the council budget | Include wording on all job vacancies so that candidates from culturally diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders, are encouraged to apply |
| Recruit through workshops with Aboriginal community members | Invite elders and other respected Aboriginal community members to be on the job interview panel | Reserve positions in departmental budgets that can be filled in the event of a suitable Aboriginal candidate being available |
| Budget for, and conduct, cultural awareness training for teams with Aboriginal staff members, or the organisation as a whole | Let Aboriginal communities know about the sorts of activities and services councils undertake | Participate in anti-racism campaigns, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission “Racism. It Stops with Me” campaign |
| Develop social media links with Aboriginal people and communities | Promote the existence and use of council employment websites among Aboriginal communities | Utilise word-of-mouth among Aboriginal communities through current Aboriginal employees and community contacts |
| Aboriginal employees are strong advocates – encourage them to provide testimonials and profiles | Advertise mainstream council jobs in the Koori Mail and the National Indigenous Times | Employ an Aboriginal employment officer |
| **Victorian Local Government Aboriginal Engagement & Reconciliation Survey 2012**Employment of Aboriginal people in Victorian councils is extremely low, with a [2012 survey](http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au/pages/local-government.php) undertaken by Reconciliation Victoria showing that 25 councils employed a total of 76 known Indigenous employees. This is an extremely low proportion given the total local government workforce in Victoria is approximately 40,000 employees.The sorts of jobs held by the 76 Aboriginal people identified as working in Victorian Councils are included in the following diagram. |  |
|  | The MAV acknowledges with thanks the partnership funding provided by the Victorian Government through the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources Employment Start-Up for Aboriginal Jobseekers Program |

# Library / resources

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| attraction & recruitment  |

**General context/justification:**

* The Victorian Government’s [Karreeta Yirramboi – An Employer Toolkit to Grow Aboriginal Employment in Your Organisation](http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/products/view-products/karreeta-yirramboi.html) has advice about cultural awareness competency and how to attract Aboriginal people
* The Australian Public Service [Building an Indigenous Employment Strategy kit](http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/building-an-indigenous-employment-strategy-kit/focus-area-2-attraction-and-recruitment) contains advice about what agencies can do to attract Aboriginal job-candidates.

**Developing the Business Case:**

* Chapter 3 of [Closing the Gap Through Place-Based Employment](http://www.acelg.org.au/file/1602/download?token=tt9nsXHBeEcrEfRNb-PAxN_HHVnUta9c-qp9FJ9agUo) paper prepared by the Centre for Excellence in Local Government (ACELG)
* [Everybody's Business: A Handbook for Indigenous Employment](http://generationone.org.au/employers/resources) developed by GenerationOne, Reconciliation Australia and Social Ventures Australia .

**Accessing support from federal and state government programs:**

* There are a number of wage subsidy programs that councils can apply for, including the Australian Government’s [Indigenous Employment Programme (IEP](http://employment.gov.au/indigenous-employment-program-iep)) and the Victorian Government’s [Youth Employment Scheme (YES](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/Jobs%2B%26%2BCareers/Work%2Boptions/Employment%2BStart%2BUp)) scheme for 15-24 year-olds
* The Australian Government’s [Indigenous Cadetship Support (ICS)](https://www.ics.deewr.gov.au/Home.aspx) program seeks to improve the professional employment prospects of Aboriginal people by linking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary students with employers in a cadetship arrangement involving full-time study and negotiated work placements
* Explore potential partnerships with the Australian Government’s [Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways Program (IYCP)](http://employment.gov.au/indigenous-youth-careers-pathways-program) which provides school-based traineeships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in years 11 and 12 cases year 10).

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| **procurement**  |

As a major purchaser of local goods and services, councils can provide a significant stimulus to Aboriginal employment if they procure services from Aboriginal businesses.

* Learn about local Aboriginal businesses and the services they offer through the Victorian Government’s [Aboriginal Business Directory](http://directory.business.vic.gov.au/indigenous/)
* Become a member of [Supply Nation](https://supplynation.org.au/), a national organisation funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Formerly known as AIMSC (the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council), Supply Nation connects corporate and government organisations with Indigenous business suppliers who are already achieving success or have the potential to develop into vibrant, vital businesses
* Ask your local Aboriginal community if there are any Aboriginal-owned businesses operating in your municipality.

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| **induction & retention**  |

**Local government examples:**

* The MAV report [Pathways to better employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victorian local governmen](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/indigenous/aboriginal-employment/Documents/Pathways%20to%20better%20employment%20outcomes%20for%20Aboriginal%20people%20in%20local%20government.docx)t provides examples of what is working in Victorian councils
* Whittlesea City Council’s [Aboriginal Employment Pathways Strategy and Action Plan](https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/your-council/plans-strategies-and-policies/aboriginal-employment-pathways-strategy-and-action-plan)
* Port Phillip City Council’s [Positions vacant](http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/positions_vacant.htm) website introduction includes mention of Aboriginal people being welcome to apply for jobs
* Latrobe City Council’s [Indigenous ‘steps to the future’ program](http://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/About_Council/Careers_at_Latrobe/Indigenous_Employment) has been developed in partnership with the Federal Department of Education Employment Workplace Relations to improve employment opportunities in Gippsland.

**Industry and public sector examples:**

* There are many examples of Aboriginal employment programs from the corporate and other public sector organisations. The Reconciliation Australia [Workplace Ready Program](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/workplace/) has a toolkit for line managers, human resources managers and supervisors. Some industry examples include [KPMG](http://www.kpmg.com/au/en/about/corporate-citizenship/social-inclusion/pages/default.aspx), [Qantas Indigenous Employment Program](http://www.qantas.com.au/travel/airlines/indigenous-overview/global/en), [Vicroads](https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/careers/employment-programs-and-traineeships/indigenous-employment-program), and the [Wesfarmers Reconciliation Action Plan](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/indigenous/aboriginal-employment/Documents/%EF%83%98%09https%3A/www.wesfarmers.com.au/community-a-sustainability/working-towards-reconciliation.html),

**Cultural awareness training providers:**

* There are many cultural awareness programs offered by a range of providers. The Reconciliation Australia website section [Share Our Pride](http://shareourpride.reconciliation.org.au/) is a good place to start, with background information about Aboriginal Australians. This website also provides a list of providers
* The [Koori Heritage Trust](http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com/cultural_education) provides a unique perspective as the custodian of Aboriginal cultural heritage of south-eastern Australia. It also offers cultural awareness training services.

**Examples of strategies for long-term retention:**

The Australian Public Service [Employment and Capability Strategy for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Employees](http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-aps-employees-census-report)survey provides insight into the barriers and challenges that Indigenous APS employees can face in their working environment. In turn, this helps agencies determine the strategies they need to develop and implement in order to attract, recruit, develop and retain Indigenous staff. The strategy also has a chapter about [encouraging retention](http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-aps-employees-census-report/agency-support-to-encourage-retention).

**Examples of cultural leave policies:**

Some examples of policies from a variety of organisations, plus some suggestions developed at a forum held in 2014 attended by human resource and community development managers, are available on the MAV website [www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment](http://www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment).



The terms Aboriginal and Indigenous are used to describe both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. “Koories is a word commonly used to refer to Aboriginal people who come from south-eastern Australia. The MAV gratefully acknowledges the artwork provided by Ngarra Murray, who is a proud Wamba Wamba and Yorta Yorta woman having strong family connections to Lake Boga and Cummeragunja.

# Roadmap to increase employment of Aboriginal people

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| 1. **Build from recognition**
 | Recognition and respect are the cornerstones of relationships with the local Aboriginal community and its support is essential. Successful programs come from a place that recognises the importance of Aboriginal people in the broader community, the local economy and the council workforce. |
| 1. **Commit to the long journey**
 | Improving Aboriginal employment outcomes requires a formal commitment from council to prioritise the issue in the long term. Successful programs are supported by active councillors and senior managers who recognise that it may require many attempts to achieve positive outcomes. Councils that do well take the time to reflect on their mistakes and try new approaches. |
| 1. **Move on all fronts**
 | Successful councils manage a range of other activities that complement employment programs. Councils who are active around Aboriginal employment often have in place a Reconciliation Action Plan, special childcare, aged care and youth programs and an Aboriginal consultative committee or similar structure. These form part of a broader and very meaningful engagement with local Aboriginal people and reduce barriers to employment. |
| 1. **Find like-minded organisations**
 | Regional and sub-regional committees and forums feature in the stories of successful councils.  |
| 1. **Build local capacity**
 | Pre-employment training and development programs that build specific skills for prospective Aboriginal employees, while building a relationship between council and the person, are highly effective. Programs can range from formal pre-employment training programs through to informal. For example, encouraging members of the local Aboriginal community to volunteer for life-guard duty at the swimming pool while they complete the necessary qualifications for permanent positions. |
| 1. **Connect within your own organisation**
 | Community development areas of council are often the drivers for improved Aboriginal employment, but they can find it difficult to connect with the broader human resources areas. An internal reference group made up of community development, human resources and other senior managers is often present in successful programs. |

Extract from MAV report “Pathways to better employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victorian local government”

# Further information

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| **Visit the** [**aboriginal employment page**](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/indigenous/aboriginal-employment/Pages/default.aspx) **of the mav website or access it via** **www.bit.ly/aboriginalemployment** | **Download Mav Fact Sheet1 - “Getting Started”** |

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| Issue 6 (2014) of CiVic magazine for the centrepiece article on Reconciliation [Read CiVic online](https://mobile.mav.asn.au/owa/redir.aspx?C=iv1XGl2CEUuoKWqq2GCJ0VE6rybrpNEIK4py9DP426Z1yyihQdTFq4d_NZZSVULkSYIJn6SfUeg.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fissuu.com%2fcivic-magazine)**|**[Download the iPad app](https://mobile.mav.asn.au/owa/redir.aspx?C=iv1XGl2CEUuoKWqq2GCJ0VE6rybrpNEIK4py9DP426Z1yyihQdTFq4d_NZZSVULkSYIJn6SfUeg.&URL=https%3a%2f%2fitunes.apple.com%2fau%2fapp%2fcivic%2fid576216073%3fmt%3d8) | CiVic magazine |