ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS VICTORIANS

A Review of the Literature

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Australian Council for Educational Research

March 2006

A document prepared for the Victorian State Services Authority

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although this has been a desktop review of the literature on Indigenous employment in Victoria, our work was also guided by discussions with a number of people.

In particular, we greatly appreciate the support and advice provided by members of the ACER Standing Committee on Indigenous Education, especially Wayne Muir and Lyn Riley-Mundine. Our ACER research colleagues Phil McKenzie and Sheldon Rothman also provided helpful comment.

We are grateful for the support and advice provided by the Project Reference Group members Peter Harmsworth (Chair), Lionel Bamblett, Karen Cleave, Jill Gallagher, Terry Garwood, Ian Hamm, Andrew Jackomos, Mark Rose, and Stephen Walsh.

Particular thanks are due to Elizabeth Jensen from the State Services Authority who has provided very competent guidance at every stage of this project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper was completed under contract to the State of Victoria through the State Services Authority. It draws on recent Victorian, Australian, and international literature in order to provide an overview of the barriers to, and drivers of successful workforce participation for Indigenous Victorians. Some barriers and drivers are generic, and thus apply to most people; other barriers and drivers are specific to Indigenous Australians; a few barriers and drivers apply specifically to Indigenous Victorians.

The term 'workforce participation' is used interchangeably with 'employment' and should be interpreted in the broad sense of including both initial engagement and ongoing retention in work that is mutually productive and satisfying for employer and employee.

A prolific body of literature dealing with Indigenous employment disadvantage has been created over the last three decades. Some of this literature is based in rigorous and systematic research; some of it is less rigorous, but nevertheless generally based in the accumulated wisdom that emerges from the experiences of both employee and employer in their attempts to enhance employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

The disadvantage that accrues from Indigenous unemployment is unrelenting and immense. This disadvantage may well become worse as the Indigenous 'baby boom' increasingly reaches working age – it has been described as a potential time-bomb. There are devastating effects of unemployment on Indigenous people in terms of their access to the full range of life chances in Australian society. A low Indigenous employment rate is generally seen as an underlying factor of Indigenous poverty, poor health and emotional well-being, inadequate housing, and low participation and attainment in education.

There are also economic costs to the broader community of Indigenous unemployment. Social disharmony and cultural deprivation is experienced by all Australians when Indigenous unemployment rates remain at low levels.

Summaries of two key evaluations of the effectiveness of Indigenous employment policies demonstrate clearly that there are barriers to Indigenous employment that have persisted over time.

First, the *Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* (1985) found that the (then) National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals (NESA) was deficient in many respects – it was incomplete and did not provide for a substantial section of the Aboriginal population, in particular those living in and around rural non-Aboriginal towns. Other identified deficiencies included: failure to implement all parts of the Strategy; an almost exclusive concern with short-term employment, with little attention being given to promoting long-term employment possibilities; failure to implement the Strategy in a cohesive way because of a lack of co-ordination between departments and agencies.

Second, the 1994 *Review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy* found that although there had been a marginal improvement in employment rates for Indigenous Australians between the 1986 and 1991, unemployment levels remained unacceptably high. Factors seen to contribute to these high unemployment levels included low levels of formal education and training; discrimination and racism; a high concentration in the younger age groups; and, especially in remote locations, a lack of conventional employment opportunities.

Today, similar key barriers are repeatedly referred to in both the anecdotal and research literature: lack of engagement with Indigenous communities; low levels of education and training outcomes in the Indigenous population; a lack of understanding of cultural differences leading to discrimination in the workforce, and geographic location.

The Victorian Government's Indigenous Employment Strategy, Wur-cum barra, remains as a key document in addressing the Indigenous employment disadvantage in Victoria. It is a functional strategy in keeping with other Indigenous employment strategies Australia wide. It is soundly base in the accepted wisdom that has built up over the years before and since the Miller[1] report of the factors that we know are related to the employment of Indigenous Australians.

The review of the literature suggests a number of key factors will drive positive employment outcomes for Indigenous Victorians.

- Clear strategy documentation, and energetic marketing of strategy to all public sector bodies
- Consultation and partnerships with Indigenous communities – this is the most important issue to be understood if Indigenous employment strategies are to be successful – ongoing consultative and partnership relationships between Indigenous groups and public and private sector employers must be developed
- A focus on creating public sector employment opportunities in regional Victoria, using Indigenous employment brokers who are well-informed about the machinations of the public sector, and who are based in regional areas with which they have an affinity
- Adequate resourcing in terms of dollars and committed people at all levels – there should be a combination of funding sourced both from a department's or agency's own budget and from external sources
- Monitoring and evaluation of progress – based on the clear framework set out in Wur-cum barra, and centred around six key performance indicators: Capacity Building and Pathways; Recruitment; Induction and Retention; Career Development; Workplace Culture; and Indigenous Community Organisations
- Education and training – including the provision of scholarships, cadetships, traineeships, apprenticeships, in-service professional development and training, time allowance for further study. It also includes the development of connections with schools to promote an awareness and understanding of employment and

[1] The 1985 report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs is commonly know as the *Miller Report*. Mick Miller was Chair of the Committee. Other members of the Committee were Mary Anne Bin-Sallik, H. C. Coombs, Frederick Hall AM, and Jim Morrison.

career opportunities and how to access them, and to assist in the improvement of general employability skills to help lift Indigenous productivity.

- Workplace practices – that give appropriate attention to recruitment processes; mechanisms for career development; flexibility; cultural awareness training;
- Leadership – that is meaningful, purposeful, and visionary and which operates at all levels with sustained commitment.

These drivers can be encased within a '3-C' framework to aid thinking about enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians: *Coherence*, *Collaboration*, *Commitment*.

A coherent policy framework is needed to overcome fragmentation of effort and unclear delineation of functional responsibilities across Government department. Collaboration is at the heart of capacity building within Indigenous communities and requires genuine and open interactions between Indigenous individuals, organisations, and communities and public and private sector bodies. High levels of sustained commitment are needed to bring about change. A one-off effort will not result in immediate change, nor change that is sustained over time. Repeated action by a team of people dedicated to the task of ensuring Indigenous employment policy is implemented and supported is required. The necessary commitment probably derives from a set of values propositions that include those of a moral, social, and economic nature. Coherent, collaborative, and committed action will require flexibility to implement creative action, and recognition that not one-size fits-all in terms of creating Indigenous employment opportunities.

On a final positive note, it seems that some Victorian public sector bodies are making a substantial contribution to enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians. The 2001 ABS estimate of Victoria's Indigenous population was 0.6 % of the State's estimated resident population. Recent Victorian public sector estimates of the proportion of Indigenous employees are approximately 0.7% of the total workforce. Such a positive message, of course, does not eliminate the need to continue efforts to redress the obvious employment disadvantage that exists for a great number of Indigenous Victorians. Sustainable commitment and aggressive action is needed to overcome the cumulative and devastating effects of Indigenous employment disadvantage.

STRUCTURE OF THE REVIEW

Section 1 outlines the background to the project. It describes the current situation of employment for Indigenous people in Australia, and summarises Victoria's response to the under-representation of Indigenous people in the public and private sector workforce.

Section 2 provides a description of the review methodology.

Section 3 begins with a brief consideration of general principles of employment. The remainder of the section presents an overview of a wide range of policies and strategies developed by national and state governments, public sector bodies, and private sector employers in response to Indigenous employment disadvantage. This section also includes a number of case studies to illustrate various strategic responses to facilitating workforce participation for Indigenous people. The section concludes with a brief reminder of the limitations of the literature, and how such limitations might affect the development of policy.

Section 4 summarises the structural, cultural, and other barriers to workforce participation for Indigenous people. Many of these barriers have been alluded to in documentation summarised in the previous section. In addition, Section 4 focuses particularly on two sources of information about the difficulties faced by Indigenous Australians in obtaining and be retained in employment: the voices of Indigenous people as they recount their employment experiences and observations; and the systematic program of research conducted since 1990 by researchers at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). Other literature is referred to as appropriate.

Section 5 summarises the factors that promote workforce participation – in general, and in particular for Indigenous Victorians. Similarly, it draws on documentation summarised in Section 3, the documented observations and experiences of Indigenous people, research conducted by CAEPR, and other relevant literature.

Section 6 offers a way forward by summarising key issues that have arisen through engagement with a vast body of literature. Some of this literature is based in rigorous and systematic research; some of it is less rigorous, but nevertheless generally based in the accumulated wisdom that emerges from the experiences of both employee and employer in their attempts to enhance employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

The list of reference provided in the bibliography is quite extensive, although not all references are cited in this review. We have provided this more comprehensive list because most of the documents contributed to our own understanding of the complexity of employment related issues as they affect Indigenous Australians. Readers of this review at least have the option of sourcing the materials for further investigation if so desired.

1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

1.1 Indigenous employment in Australian: The current scene

Indigenous Australians experience significant workforce participation disadvantage relative to other Australians. The reasons for this disadvantage are complex but there is no doubt that the effects are profound. A low Indigenous employment rate is generally seen as an underlying factor of Indigenous poverty, poor health and emotional well-being, inadequate housing, and low participation and attainment in education.

The most recent report on Indigenous employment shows that in 2004 there were an estimated 136,500 Indigenous people aged 15 years and over in employment[2] in Australia (including people involved in the Community Development Employment Program, CDEP). This represented 45.2% of the Indigenous population 15 years and over (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

By way of comparison, 60.6% of non-Indigenous people aged 15 years and over were in employment.[3]

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates show that the unemployment rate for Indigenous people has declined over the three year period 2002 to 2004, but there are also fewer Indigenous people in the labour force.

When interpreting figures in the ABS report, it is important to keep in mind that participation in a CDEP scheme is classified by the ABS as employment. If CDEP employment is considered separately from non-CDEP employment, then employment levels are actually lower, particularly in regional and more remote areas of Australia, where CDEP employment is high.

Another cautionary note in interpretation of ABS data is provided by researchers at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). Although the

[2] An employed person is someone aged 15 years and over who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind in a job or business, or on a farm (comprising employees, employers and own account workers); or
- worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. contributing family workers); or
- were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
  - away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; or
  - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four week period to the end of the reference week: or
  - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement: or
  - on strike or locked out: or
  - on workers' compensation and expected to return to their job: or
- were employers or own account workers, who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.
-

[3] The ABS report notes a number of important statistical and data quality issues that should be considered when using its estimates to describe labour force characteristics of Indigenous people. In particular, the reliability of estimates, which are affected by the small number of Indigenous people in the sample, the relatively small size of the Indigenous population, and collection difficulties in remote areas.

number of Indigenous Australians who participate in the labour market and who find employment appears to have increased over time, the considerable increase in the number of Australians identifying as having an Indigenous background means that it is not clear whether changes from one census to the next mean an improvement in employment outcomes for Indigenous people (Hunter, Kinfu & Taylor, 2003).

Table 1.1 shows the breakdown of labour force participation of Indigenous people by state and territory. Of the states and territories, Victoria had the highest unemployment rate in each of the years 2002 to 2004. In 2004, only 39.8% of Indigenous Victorians 15 years and over were in employment.

Although care should be exercised in comparing employment figures across years because of changed data collection and analysis methods, it is nevertheless useful to reflect on the 1981 ABS Census of Population and Housing statistics for Indigenous Australians as reported in the 1985 *Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* (see Table 1.2). These figures highlight two important points. First, the number of Indigenous people in Australia aged 15 years or more has more than tripled since 1981 (from 91,900 to 301,800 – compared with an increase from 10.9 million to 16.1 million for all Australians 15 years and over). Second, the unemployment rate for Indigenous Australians is higher in 2004 (16.8% compared with 11.6% in 1981).

For Indigenous Victorians, the unemployment rate rose from 12% in 1981, to 23.5% in 2004. In some regions in Victoria, higher unemployment figures have been reported. For example, a study commissioned by the Koori Economic Employment and Training Agency found that in the Shepparton / Mooroopna region in 2002, within the broader community, unemployment was 7.5%. Within the Indigenous community, excluding those on CDEP, the unemployment rate for Indigenous people was 77.6% (Alford, 2002).

Table 1.1 Labour force status estimates of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, by states and territories (2002 to 2004)

	Total employed	Total unem-ployed	Labour force	Not in labour force	Civilian population aged 15 years and over	Unemploy-ment rate	Participation rate	Employment to population ratio
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	%	%	%
NEW SOUTH WALES								
2002	38.5	8.6	47.1	36.0	83.1	18.3	56.6	46.3
2003	38.6	9.8	48.4	36.7	85.1	20.3	56.9	45.4
2004	36.0	8.2	44.2	43.0	87.2	18.6	50.7	41.2
VICTORIA								
2002	8.0	2.0	10.0	7.6	17.6	20.5	56.9	45.3
2003	7.4	2.3	9.7	8.5	18.2	23.9	53.3	40.5
2004	7.5	2.3	9.8	9.0	18.8	23.5	52.1	39.8
QUEENSLAND								
2002	39.0	10.1	49.1	28.6	77.7	20.5	63.2	50.2
2003	40.1	9.1	49.2	30.6	79.7	18.5	61.7	50.3
2004	42.9	7.4	50.3	31.7	82.0	14.7	61.3	52.3
SOUTH AUSTRALIA								
2002	6.9	2.1	8.9	7.3	16.2	23.2	55.1	42.3
2003	7.2	1.7	8.8	7.9	16.7	18.9	52.9	42.9
2004	8.2	1.7	9.9	7.3	17.1	17.2	57.5	47.6
WESTERN AUSTRALIA								
2002	21.0	3.9	24.9	16.6	41.5	15.8	59.9	50.5
2003	20.6	3.7	24.2	18.5	42.7	15.2	56.8	48.2
2004	20.2	3.4	23.6	20.3	43.9	14.5	53.7	45.9
TASMANIA								
2002	5.2	1.4	6.6	4.2	10.8	21.2	61.4	48.4
2003	4.7	1.1	5.8	5.3	11.0	18.3	52.3	42.8
2004	5.7	0.9	6.6	4.6	11.3	13.3	58.8	51.0
NORTHERN TERRITORY								
2002	18.3	2.7	21.0	16.4	37.3	12.7	56.2	49.1
2003	16.5	2.8	19.4	18.7	38.1	14.7	50.9	43.4
2004	14.5	3.5	18.0	20.9	38.8	19.4	46.2	37.3
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY								
2002	1.4	0.2	1.6	0.9	2.5	10.8	64.7	57.7
2003	1.5	0.2	1.7	0.9	2.6	14.2	66.7	57.2
2004	1.6	0.2	1.9	0.8	2.6	13.1	71.0	61.7
AUSTRALIA								
2002	**138.2**	**31.0**	**169.2**	**117.6**	**286.7**	**18.3**	**59.0**	**48.2**
2003	**136.5**	**30.8**	**167.2**	**126.9**	**294.1**	**18.4**	**56.9**	**46.4**
2004	**136.5**	**27.6**	**164.1**	**137.7**	**301.8**	**16.8**	**54.4**	**45.2**

Source: ABS, 2006.

Table 1.2 1981 ABS Census of Population and Housing statistics for Indigenous Australians

Group	Employed	Unemployed	Total in labour force	Not in the labour force	Total population aged 15 or more
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders ('000)	32.8	10.7	43.5	48.4	91.9
All Australians	6292.6	397.9	6690.5	4228.9	10 919.4
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as a proportion of the total (%)	0.5	2.7	0.7	1.1	0.0

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

According to Hunter (ABS, 2004a), the ongoing low labour market status of Indigenous Australians is due to a variety of interdependent factors that can be summarised as historical, including the failure of successive policy regimes, and locational and cultural factors.

An understanding of some of these factors can be gleaned from the ABS report of the 2002 NATSISS. The report provides information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia (aged 15 years and over) for a wide range of areas of social concern including health, education, culture, and labour force participation.

The report provides some insight into the cultural and social environments of the Indigenous population across States and Territories. While highlighting diversity within the Indigenous population, the survey results show that the Indigenous population in Victoria overall has slightly better educational outcomes but poor health and employments outcomes, and significant contact with the criminal justice system, which is one measure of social exclusion.

Information relating to the whole of Australia and to Victoria is presented in Table 1.2 below. Such information assists in understanding the complexity of Indigenous disadvantage.

Table 1.3 Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over, summary indicators for Victoria and Australia, 2002

	Victoria	Australia
	'000	**'000**
Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over	17.4	282.2
	%	**%**
Family and culture		
Involved in social activities in last 3 months	88.9	90.0
Participated in sport or physical recreation activities in last 12 months	47.5	49.3
Had undertaken voluntary work in last 12 months	37.2	27.6
Able to get support in time of crisis from someone outside household	88.0	90.4
At least one stressor experienced in last 12 months	81.7	82.3

	Victoria	Australia
Person or relative removed from natural family	45.6	37.6
Identifies with clan, tribal or language group	47.9	54.1
Currently lives in homelands/traditional country	14.5	21.9
Attended cultural event(s) in last 12 months	53.2	68.1
Speaks an Indigenous language	7.8	21.1
Main language spoken at home		
English	98.2	85.9
Aboriginal language	0.5	10.9
Torres Strait Islander language	0.7	1.2
Other(a)	0.6	2.0
Health and disability		
Self-assessed health status		
Excellent/very good	41.8	44.1
Good	29.9	32.4
Fair/poor	28.2	23.3
Has a disability or long-term health condition	44.3	36.5
Risk behaviour/characteristics		
Current daily smoker	51.8	48.6
Risky/high risk alcohol consumption in last 12 months(b)	16.9	15.1
Education		
Attending post-school institution		
University or other tertiary institution	3.7	3.2
Other post-school institution(c)	7.2	7.4
Educational attainment		
Has a non-school qualification		
Bachelor degree or above	6.0	3.3
Certificate or Diploma	31.2	21.6
Total with non-school qualification(d)	37.9	26.1
Does not have a non-school qualification		
Completed Year 12	6.8	9.9
Completed Year 10 or Year 11	24.6	28.8
Completed Year 9 or below(e)	30.8	35.2
Total with no non-school qualification(d)	62.1	73.9
Employment		
Employed		
CDEP	3.5	12.1
Non-CDEP	42.4	34.1
Total employed(d)	45.8	46.2
Unemployed		
Less than 1 year	9.2	9.7
1 year or more	2.4	3.5
Total unemployed(d)	11.7	13.8
Not in the labour force	42.5	40.0
Income		
Equivalised gross household income(f)		
Second and third deciles	28.4	37.3

	Victoria	Australia
Lowest quintile	39.0	42.5
Second quintile	26.3	28.3
Third quintile	15.2	14.0
Fourth quintile	11.1	9.2
Highest quintile	8.3	5.9
Financial stress		
Unable to raise $2,000 within a week for something important	46.3	54.3
Housing		
Household tenure type		
Owner		
Owner without a mortgage	11.8	9.7
Owner with a mortgage	22.7	16.8
Renter		
State or Territory Housing Authority	22.5	22.1
Indigenous Housing Organisation/Community housing	10.6	24.3
Other landlord types	29.1	23.3
Total renters	62.2	69.7
Dwelling has major structural problems	37.7	39.6
Repairs and maintenance carried out in last 12 months	63.9	62.6
Dwelling requires additional bedroom/s(g)	15.5	25.7
Law and justice		
Used legal services in last 12 months	19.9	19.8
Arrested by police in last 5 years	17.0	16.4
Incarcerated in last 5 years(h)	6.7	7.1
Victim of physical or threatened violence in last 12 months	30.3	24.3
Transport access		
Has access to motor vehicle(s) to drive	61.2	54.6
Difficulty with transport(i)		
Can easily get to the places needed	71.6	70.1
Cannot, or often has difficulty, getting to the places needed	11.1	11.7
Mobility		
Moved dwellings in last 12 months	33.7	30.9
Information technology		
Used computer in last 12 months	65.8	55.5
Accessed Internet in last 12 months	52.6	41.0
Mean equivalised gross household income ($)	**417**	**387**

(a) May include some speakers of Oceanian pidgins and creoles.
(b) See Glossary for information on alcohol consumption and associated risk levels.
(c) Includes TAFE, technical college, business college, industry skills centre.
(d) Total may include persons for whom some specific information could not be determined.
(e) Includes persons who never attended school.
(f) Based on national quantile boundaries from the 2002 General Social Survey.
(g) Based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness.
(h) May include persons who were held in protective custody.
(i) Not all categories are shown for this data item.
Source: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002 (ABS), Table 2.

1.2 Victoria Government response: Wur-cum barra

In 2002, the Victorian government launched an Indigenous Employment Strategy called Wur-cum barra as one measure to address Indigenous disadvantage in Victoria.

The Strategy aimed to establish a whole-of-government strategic framework for co-ordinating and sustaining government efforts to achieve a greater representation of Indigenous people within all levels of the public sector.

The Strategy was founded on the principles of merit, organisational autonomy, continuous improvement, shared accountability, and respect for Indigenous culture.

It identified the following eleven key milestones to be achieved by June 2005:

1. Establishment of the Wur-cum barra Strategy Coordination Committee
2. Establishment of the Victorian Public Sector Indigenous Officer Network
3. Implementation of the Indigenous Component of the Graduate Recruitment Scheme
4. Implementation of a Scholarship Program
5. Implementation of the Wur-cum barra Strategy Communications/Marketing Campaign
6. Development of Departmental Indigenous Employment Plans
7. Completion of the Wur-cum barra Labour Market Analysis Report
8. Completion of the Wur-cum barra Strategy Data Improvement Strategy
9. Launch of the Wur-cum barra Victorian Public Authorities Indigenous Employment Strategy
10. Publication of the First Annual Wur-cum barra Implementation Report
11. Achievement of the Wur-cum barra Strategy Public Service Target

An evaluation of Wur-cum barra has established that milestones one to ten above were met in full over the lifetime of the 2002-2005 Strategy. The overall employment target for the Victorian Public Service of 230 full-time permanent positions was only partially met. There were 114 additional employees; that figure rises to 159 with the inclusion of part-time, fixed-term and trainee Indigenous employees.

The evaluation report notes that although there has been considerable public sector activity aimed at improving Indigenous employment outcomes, there are at least six ongoing issues that need to be addressed. These issues relate to:

- relationships with Indigenous communities
- workforce planning and recruitment
- development of pathways and employability
- types of employment
- employment targets
- accountability and resourcing.

1.3 Context for implementation of Wur-cum barra

The implementation of Wur-cum barra occurs in a context of a reform agenda that aims to position Australia as one of the world's leading economies. Previous reforms focussed on opening up the economy and extending the reach of competition. The current reform agenda proposed by the Victorian Premier notes that it will be "a new *human capital* agenda that delivers greater productivity combined with higher labour force participation, which will allow us to reach for higher levels of prosperity in the decade ahead. Improving health, learning and work outcomes is the path to building a healthy, skilled and motivated society, and an economy that is among the world's best." (*A Third Wave of National Reform*, 2005, p. 3)

This human capital agenda coexists with *A Fairer Victoria*, the Victorian Government's action plan for making Victoria a better place to live for disadvantaged members of the community – including Indigenous Victorians. One of the 14 proposed strategies focuses specifically on building a new partnership with Indigenous Victorians to break the cycle of disadvantage in Indigenous communities. Other *A Fairer Victoria* actions – such as supporting local education and employment networks; tackling systemic discrimination; refocussing employment programs to increase workplace participation in disadvantaged areas; improving public transport; and providing more community buses – also have a bearing on Indigenous employment issues.

Social investment to achieve a strong, prosperous, and progressive community is enshrined in the Victorian Government's *Better Workplaces* strategy, which aims to promote cooperative workplaces, promote fair employment conditions, and improve safety in the workplace.

Challenges in Addressing Disadvantage in Victoria provides a picture of the nature and extent of disadvantage in Victoria. It identifies areas where Victorians 'aren't getting a fair go', and makes the case for reducing disadvantage in the interests of all Victorians. The report also outlines the future approach the Government will take to reduce disadvantage. Indigenous employment is not specifically targeted for action, although actions to reduce Indigenous disadvantage in other areas (e.g., education, health, justice) have flow-on effects for employment.

Implementation of Wur-cum barra also coincided with the *Victorian Implementation Review (2005) of the Recommendations from the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991)*. The Implementation Review serves as a timely reminder of the importance of sincerely addressing Indigenous employment issues because the consequences of not doing so are grave.

Recommendations 305 and 305 of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody,* made nearly 15 years ago, are particularly pertinent.

> **Recommendation 305.** That the emphasis on public sector recruitment of Aboriginal people should be continued. The emphasis should be not only to achieve a target total figure, but a target for Aboriginal employment at all levels in the public sector. The adoption of such latter targets involves the provision of training opportunities. The emphasis should be directed at the whole of the public sector including statutory authorities and government owned businesses and not designed merely to provide opportunities for employment within areas of

service delivery to Aboriginal people (although it is very important to have Aboriginal people employed in those areas).

Recommendation 306. That governments attempt to encourage Aboriginal employment in the private sector, but until the private sector level of Aboriginal employment reaches an acceptable level, governments should be prepared to set targets for recruitment into the public sector at somewhat higher target figures than would reflect the proportionate representation of Aboriginal people in the population.

1.4 Summary

Indigenous employment disadvantage across Australia is well documented. Twenty years ago, the *Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* (1985) found that the (then) National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals (NESA) was deficient in many respects – it was incomplete and did not provide for a substantial section of the Aboriginal population, in particular those living in and around rural non-Aboriginal towns. Other identified deficiencies included: failure to implement all parts of the Strategy; an almost exclusive concern with short-term employment, with little attention being given to promoting long-term employment possibilities; failure to implement the Strategy in a cohesive way because of a lack of co-ordination between departments and agencies.

Twenty years on, the *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (2005) confirmed that unemployment continues to be a major source of disadvantage for Indigenous Victorians. Indeed, the most recent ABS figures (ABS, 2005) suggest that Indigenous unemployment in Victoria is particularly concerning. This concern was reflected in the comments that emerged during consultations with Indigenous Victorians in the *Deaths in Custody Review* – for many Indigenous Victorians, unemployment was viewed as *the* biggest problem, particularly for young people.

In Victoria, Wur-cum barra is the Victorian Government's Indigenous employment strategy. Its implementation occurs in the context of other State Government initiatives designed to promote fairer workplaces and to overcome disadvantage within the broader Victorian community.

Wur-cum barra is an important first step in addressing the continued employment disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Victorians, but a recent evaluation suggests some areas need more attention: relationships with Indigenous communities; workforce planning and recruitment; development of pathways and employability; types of employment; employment targets; and accountability and resourcing.

2 METHODOLOGY

Members of the ACER project team, its Internal Reference Group, and its Standing Committee on Indigenous Education have considerable practical and research knowledge of Indigenous and employment issues. This knowledge was used to structure a search of the Victorian, Australian, and international literature pertaining to the issues outlined in the RFQ brief. Aspects identified for investigation included:

- the drivers of participation of the Indigenous community in Victorian public and private sector employment, taking into account the experiences and findings of the Wur-cum barra Indigenous Employment Strategy Phase 1
- structural, cultural and other barriers to such participation in Victorian public and private sector employment
- mechanisms that exist and should exist to promote a better matching of Victorian Indigenous aspiration for employment, and the opportunities that exist to meet that aspiration
- the efficacy of developing an employment brokerage model for implementation by Departments with a high profile in rural and regional areas in Victoria, to foster the identification and development of employment opportunities within or supported by the wider public sector and non-government organisations in regional and rural locations
- experience where participation has been improved by working with the Indigenous community and the public or private sector to maximise supply and link to sustainable employment in local areas and in demand sectors
- principles, policies, and initiatives that have been used to inform Indigenous workforce participation strategies, both in the public and private sector, to maximise the participation of Indigenous people in training and employment
- how such principles, policies, and initiatives take into account Indigenous welfare and community needs, thereby demonstrating cultural awareness.

The literature search was conducted using the Internet and the comprehensive holdings of ACER's Cunningham Library (including inter-library loan). The search strategy used combinations of such key words as: *employment*, *Indigenous* (*aboriginal/ Koorie/ Koori*), *Wur-cum barra*, *strategy*; *minority groups*; etc. In addition, Indigenous employment strategy documents from organisations and Government Departments in other Australian states and territories were obtained via the Internet.

Social science databases available through EBSCO Host, AUSTROM, etc. were searched. In addition, references in collected papers were scanned and relevant references were added to the collection. Finally, discussions with key people led to identification of other references not located by the above methods.

The identified documents were stored in a bibliographic database to facilitate selection of the most relevant materials, and organisation of those materials around the issues to be addressed.

The desktop analysis of documents had two key foci: identification of the barriers to Indigenous employment, and identification of strategies to eliminate the identified barriers.

The review paper is intended to inform the Victorian Government's consideration of its future strategy to increase employment of Indigenous Victorians.

Note on referencing format

In many instances throughout the document, in-text citations appear as a hyperlink to facilitate access by the reader of the electronic version to more detailed information if required.

The bibliography provided at the end of the document contains material that is not cited within the document. We have provided this more comprehensive list because most of the documents contributed to our own understanding of the complexity of employment related issues as they affect Indigenous Australians. Readers of this review at least have the option of sourcing the materials for further investigation if so desired.

3 EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The literature used to inform the content of this and the succeeding chapters comes from a mix of sources including, but not limited to, ABS census and survey data and reports; published academic papers; case studies; reflections from employed and unemployed Indigenous people and Indigenous employment coordinators; national and state policies and reports; departmental briefings; and unspecified electronic material sourced from the internet.

Much of the literature has a national focus and is not always disaggregated in a way that allows specific insights into the situations of Victorian Indigenous people; yet many of the themes that arise in the literature are applicable to local contexts. Where possible, Victorian data and case studies are used to identify employment issues as they apply to Indigenous Victorians.

3.1 Definitions and general principles of employment

In Australia, employed people, as measured statistically, are defined as those who have worked for at least one hour during a specified reference period. The labour force framework as defined by the ABS, in accordance with international standards, categorises the working-age population either as employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force.

Subgroups of employed people include full- and part-time employees, self-employed persons, those who are underemployed (in terms of time, skill-utilisation or income), and Indigenous people on CDEP. Other participants in the labour force include unemployed people who are without work but available and actively seeking work. All other people of working age are classified as not being in the labour force.

The employment disadvantage experienced by various groups within the community relates not only to whether they are employed or not, but also to the type of employment in which they are engaged. For example, four part-time employees employed on a short-term basis in low-skill, low-paying jobs will, statistically, appear to be better than one full-time employee. Employment disadvantage may also be reflected in marginal attachment to the labour force (e.g., discouraged job seekers). Research suggests that Indigenous people experience higher levels of under-employment and are more likely to be discouraged job seekers and therefore not in the labour force (Hunter & Gray, 2000).

Employment, as a process, encompasses a range of activities in which both employer and employee are involved. This includes the recruitment process, retention of the employee, career pathways, experience of training and development, and promotion. In terms of employment process, disadvantage may be experienced at any or all of these stages. Sometimes the employment policies or practices of an organisation may disproportionately exclude certain groups of people due to factors that are unrelated to the nature of the job or to merit. Policies and practices may appear neutral, and be unintentional; however, the result is a systematic discrimination.

Thus, the concept of enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians includes:

- more Indigenous Victorians in employment (numerical increase)
- more jobs for Indigenous Victorians (numerical increase)
- a wider range of employment
- more positions at a senior level
- longer hours of employment available, towards full-time employment, if this is the desired outcome (it will vary from individual to individual, depending on personal circumstances)
- positive approaches to Indigenous employment from all involved – Indigenous employees and their families, employers of Indigenous workers, and their fellow workers
- improved training and educational opportunities as pre-requisites to successful employment – Indigenous people need motivation, access, and success in these areas;
- stronger retention outcomes
- improved job satisfaction, linked to improved work output for Indigenous employees – in terms of quality, quantity, and efficiency
- inspection and removal of policies and practices that are discriminatory de facto.

3.2 The international literature: Canada and New Zealand

The international literature suggests that the barriers to employment faced by Indigenous Australians are also experienced by Indigenous peoples of other countries, such as Canada and New Zealand. Government initiatives in these countries have been put in place to overcome employment barriers for Indigenous people.

For instance, in Canada, the *Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative* (AWPI) is part of the Government of Canada's commitment to help Aboriginal people build stronger, healthier, and more self-reliant communities. AWPI works with employers to develop proactive strategies and initiatives to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian workforce. Through this initiative, AWPI works with employers to identify systemic barriers and to provide training to minimize attitudinal barriers in the workplace.

AWPI is built on the notion that barriers to Aboriginal employment come in two categories, commonly referred to as systemic and attitudinal.

Systemic barriers are issues such as human resource practices that inhibit the participation of Aboriginal people. Systemic barriers include pre-screening and/or assessment tools that are not culturally sensitive; dispute resolution mechanisms that are not inclusive; and job qualifications that do not reflect real employment requirements thereby limiting potential applicants.

Attitudinal barriers are usually more overt. They include misconceptions about Aboriginal people that are based on stereotypes and a lack of information. In extreme cases, these misconceptions manifest themselves as discrimination and racism. In the workplace, these conditions adversely influence Aboriginal employment and retention initiatives.

In addition, *location and distance* to the work-site are recognised as tremendous barriers for Aboriginal Canadians

A recent survey of business and labour leaders in Canada (Lamontagne, 2004) highlights the enormity of attitudinal barriers faced in that country. Lamontagne asked business and labour leaders whether hiring more Aboriginal people could help them meet their skill needs. For Canada as a whole, business and labour leaders seem united in their view that hiring Aboriginal workers is generally not an important solution to solving the skill needs of organisations. Lamontagne notes the implications of such a view in light of an increasing Aboriginal population, increasing education levels of Aboriginal people, and the aging population in general.

In New Zealand, initiatives in the public service to increase Māori workforce participation include:

- recruitment through Māori media
- close liaison and networking with iwi[4] groups
- consultation with and input from the Māori caucus
- recruiting Māori graduates via the Graduate Recruitment Programme (which includes making links with the Māori student network within universities)
- a focus on workplace culture and staff development
- the provision of scholarships
- cadet programs that provide development opportunities to move into positions of leadership
- the inclusion of management accountability for the recruitment of Māori in managers' performance agreements.

In the report *Maori in the Public Service* (1998), the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi to the successful workforce participation of Māori people was noted.

> Departments appear to be more effective in their initiatives to attract and retain Maori staff when they are clear about how the Treaty influences their department, are explicit in their reasons for wanting to attract and retain Māori staff, and have an understanding of the value that Māori bring to their department.

With respect to factors influencing participation of Māori in the Public Service, the report notes that:

- there may be a disproportionate loss of Māori staff when restructuring of a department includes the closing down of regional offices that have a high percentage of employees who are Māori
- alternatives investigated by departments for building in Māori perspectives to their work included the establishment of specific units to provide Māori perspectives

[4] Iwi are the largest everyday social units in Māori society; the meaning has become analogous to that of tribe or clan.

- initiatives taken in one area could have pay-offs in another. For example, at least two departments found that offering scholarships for Māori students had been seen as a commitment to Māori and resulted in improved recruitment of Maori generally
- the involvement of the Chief Executive personally may be necessary to increase the profile of particular initiatives to increase recruitment of Māori staff
- recruitment problems linked to the perception that Māori joining the Public Service have 'sold-out' can be overcome by obtaining advice on Māori perspectives.

3.3 Australian Government initiatives

3.3.1 Policies and practices

There has long been recognition of the employment disadvantage experienced by Indigenous peoples and the impact that this has on individuals, their communities, and society at large. The *Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* (1985, commonly referred to as the Miller Report) documents the history of Indigenous involvement in the Australian labour market. This and similar documentation (e.g., Dockery & Milsom, 2004) clearly demonstrates the extent of employment deprivation that has existed for Indigenous Australians since Australian colonisation.

Attempts to address employment disadvantage in a coordinated and focussed way began in 1977 when the commonwealth government instituted a National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals (NESA). However, a review of this policy in 1985 (*Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs*) found no evidence of its having been implemented as a cohesive strategy, a recurring theme in some of the subsequent literature on Indigenous employment in Australia.

In 1987, a national Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) was introduced with associated programs, including the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and the Training for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders Program (TAP). While these programs produced some improvements in employment levels, subsequent evaluations have highlighted a need for a more strategic approach to facilitate a better matching of training and employment programs (Shergold, 2001).

The 1994 *Review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy* found that although there had been a marginal improvement in employment rates for Indigenous Australians between the 1986 and 1991, unemployment levels remained unacceptably high. Factors seen to contribute to these high unemployment levels included low levels of formal education and training; discrimination and racism; a high concentration in the younger age groups; and, especially in remote locations, a lack of conventional employment opportunities.

In response to continuing high unemployment rates among Indigenous Australians and a demographic profile indicating that the labour market disadvantages of Indigenous Australians would, in all likelihood, increase further unless special efforts were made, the *Indigenous Employment Policy* (IEP) has been implemented progressively

since 1999. It is administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), and aims to assist Indigenous Australians to enter the workforce, and to assist employers to employ Indigenous staff.

There are 12 components of the IEP, which provide assistance through three major elements:

- *the Indigenous Employment Programme*
- *initiatives to support Indigenous business development*
- *measures to improve employment services and outcome for Indigenous Australians.*

Specific strategies emerging from the IEP are documented on the *Australian Workplace* website and include:

- *Indigenous Employment Centres* (IECs) which aim to help Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) participants find suitable long term jobs. They help participants get ready for work outside of the CDEP and support them while they are in their chosen job
- *Job Network*, which is a national network of private and community organisations that help people find jobs. Special measures are in place to help Indigenous job seekers
- *Indigenous Youth Employment Consultants*, who work to enhance education, training, and employment outcomes for disengaged Indigenous young people aged between 15 and 19 years.

Initiatives specifically aimed at assisting employers include:

- *Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project* – generates jobs in the private sector for Indigenous people with flexible funding arrangements to help businesses meet their own needs and employ Indigenous people[5]
- *Structured Training and Employment Projects* (STEP) - provides flexible financial assistance for projects that offer structured training (e.g., apprenticeships).
- *Wage Assistance* - helps job seekers find long-term jobs either through Job Network or their own efforts, using a wage subsidy card
- *National Indigenous Cadetship Project* - assists companies to offset their financial support for the cadet during the academic year.

Effectiveness of Indigenous Employment Policy initiatives

IEP initiatives have been evaluated internally by DEWR and evaluation findings were reported in two reports. The first report (Stage One) was a progress report in 2002 and as such is not as useful as the Stage Two report (2003) for examining the barriers and drivers of Indigenous employment Australia-wide. Specific findings of the Stage 2 report are examined in greater depth in subsequent chapters of this review

[5] Appendix A provides a list of signatories to the *Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project* . The websites of some of these signatories provide information about their Indigenous Employment Strategies and examples of successes.

document, but it is useful at this point to note clear findings in relation to the recruitment and retention phases of the employment process.

In terms of recruitment, the effectiveness of employment brokering activities performed by Centrelink and Job Network was summed up in this way:

> While a clear link between services and outcomes has yet to be established, **high performing providers** appear to **build good relationships**, are **innovative** in getting and keeping job seekers in work, and implement **proactive strategies** to minimise dropout from both training and employment.

In terms of employee retention, it was reported that successful employers were able to list a wide range of strategies they used to retain employees in their jobs including mentoring/support, workplace cultural awareness training, flexible work arrangements, giving interesting and varied work, and starting people in groups and having group support. No single activity was seen as a solution for all situations; successful employers address attitudinal issues as well as adjusting the work itself and the way it is organised. In contrast, less successful employers tended to focus more narrowly on just two strategies – mentoring and cultural awareness training.

3.3.2 Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)

One Australian Government initiative has attracted particular attention in the literature and is worth commenting on in greater detail here. Much of the research regarding workforce participation is focused on the impact that CDEP programs have on employment statistics and whether or not participation in a CDEP project translates to mainstream employment. It is generally agreed that one of the main factors complicating the analysis of trends in Indigenous labour force status since the early 1980s is the rise of the CDEP scheme (DEWR, 2005).

Overall, CDEP organisations perform a number of roles in their communities including community service and generating business. In recent times, Indigenous Employment Centres have been set up in some CDEP organisations to assist their Indigenous clients to gain mainstream employment (Champion, 2002). Originally, the scheme was introduced in remote areas of Australia where Indigenous Australians had limited access to a mainstream labour market. Gradually the scheme was extended to other areas of Australia where Indigenous Australians faced difficulties finding employment, including Victoria. The scheme is characterized as a key program for Indigenous community and economic development. CDEP employs around 35, 000 Indigenous Australians and accounts for over one quarter of total Indigenous employment.

Evaluations of the scheme have found that it has important positive economic and community development impacts, particularly in remote and very remote regions of Australia where labour market opportunities are limited (Altman Gray & Levitus, 2005).

The scheme has a considerable influence on Indigenous employment statistics because CDEP scheme participants are classified as 'employed'. CDEP is also thought to contribute to Indigenous underemployment in instances where participants

would prefer to be in a position with greater hours or a better utilization of their skills.

Although the scheme has been criticized in a number of forums, particularly where CDEP participants do not make a transition to mainstream employment, some of the case studies conducted by researchers at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) demonstrate that CDEPs can have a very positive effect on the well-being of participants and on community development, particularly in remote and very remote areas.

Analyses of NATSISS data show the social and cultural benefits of CDEP employment whereby the type of employment and the flexibility in the way that it is organized is valued by Indigenous participants. It enables them to participate in a range of non-market activities that may be economically beneficial; it allows them to meet social and cultural obligations and to participate in customary activities such as 'caring for country'; and it facilitates an Indigenous voice in a range of forums (Arthur, 2002; Altman, Gray et al., 2005).

Although CDEP accounts for a small proportion of Indigenous Victorians compared with elsewhere in the country, it nevertheless represents a prospective group of employees for some public sector bodies, particularly in regional areas. It is worth considering, therefore, the findings of the recent DEWR (2005) discussion paper in which four key proposals for improving CDEP are made:

Proposal 1. Linking CDEP to local community needs. There was a lot of support for better links between CDEP activities and community needs and for a whole-of-government approach to meeting Indigenous community needs. Many people felt that they were not yet seeing the whole-of-government approach working on the ground.

Proposal 2. Three key areas: employment, community activities, and business development. There was agreement that these are the three areas that CDEP organisations should focus on. There was strong support also for each CDEP continuing to offer a unique mix of activities that match local needs and job opportunities. Most people wanted a stronger focus on results but many were worried about whether good results can be achieved, especially in remote areas. There were calls for more training for CDEP participants. There was agreement that more funding should go to activities and many people wanted more funding overall.

Proposal 3. Links with other programmes and services. There was very strong support for building better links but many people do not know what help is available and where to find this help. Many people want to see more proof that government funded services can work together.

Proposal 4. Supporting CDEP organisations. Support to deliver better results and services is wanted and needed. People were worried about getting the right staff and management arrangements in place in CDEP organisations.

3.3.3 The Australian Public Service (APS)

The APS has developed its own Indigenous employment policy in keeping with the IEP. The APS policy, *Employment and Capability Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employees*, was developed in response to declining recruitment levels and falling retention rates in Indigenous employment in the APS.

Reasons proposed for these declines relate, in the main, to leadership, and reduced employment opportunities because of the increased graduate profile of APS employees.

In terms of leadership, results of a 2005 APS survey of Indigenous employees clearly indicated that this is a key factor in APS employees' perceptions of a supportive workplace. Many of the survey respondents explained that this meant not only having effective leaders in their own right, but also visible Indigenous leaders at the Senior Executive Staff (SES) level.

As noted by Briggs (2005), leadership has been an issue for at least two decades. She stressed the need to focus not only on numbers but also on leadership by referring to a comment made in 1983 by the then Prime Minister.

> Numbers, however, are not in themselves enough. Aboriginal people should be at a sufficiently influential level to be able to play a significant part in Aboriginal self-management.

The increased graduate profile of APS employees is another factor that has strongly affected employment opportunities for Indigenous people within the APS, and is related to the changing nature of the work in the APS. Until the 1970s, the APS was a major employer of blue-collar workers and skilled tradespeople. This role declined significantly after 1975, when the postal and telecommunications services provided by the Postmaster-General's Department were removed from the APS. The decline continued during the 1980s and 1990s when most of the functions of the former Departments of Housing and Construction and Administrative Services and the industrial areas of the Department of Defence either were corporatised or outsourced (Briggs, 2005).

Other factors that have contributed to reduced employment opportunities for tradespeople and less skilled employees in the APS include:

- the streamlining of award structures to remove the demarcations around particular types of low-skilled work
- provision of a networked personal computer to most APS employees by the early 1990s, followed by the spread of email and Internet access, which have reduced the need to employ staff to work exclusively on producing, distributing and storing paper documents
- a gradual redefinition of the role of the APS, which has led to the excision of many areas of internal and external service delivery, including:
  - corporate services such as ICT support, payroll and telecommunications, which have been contracted out

- repatriation hospitals, which have been transferred to state governments and private companies
- functions formerly administered by the Department of Territories, which have been transferred to the ACT Government
- a number of regulatory and other former APS activities, which have been corporatised (for example, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, and the Australian Government Solicitor)
- some service delivery functions (for instance, the Job Network) which have been outsourced.

A snapshot of Indigenous employment in the APS from 1990 to 2004 is provided in Box 3.1, and shows that, as the APS workforce has become both more skilled and more multiskilled, it has also become concentrated within a smaller hierarchical structure of classifications.

Box 3.1 Snapshot of Indigenous Employment in the APS

Almost one-quarter of employed Indigenous people work in the public sector. In comparison, around one-sixth of the general workforce work in the public sector.

In 2001, around 27% of Indigenous public servants were employed by APS and other Australian Government agencies, with a much higher proportion employed in state and territory public services.

The numbers of Indigenous people employed in the APS have tended to fluctuate in recent years.

In 1990, slightly over 2000 – or around 1.6% – of ongoing APS employees identified themselves as being Indigenous people. Two-thirds of these were at the APS 1–3 levels, compared with half of all ongoing employees.

By 1996, the number of APS employees identifying themselves as being Indigenous people had risen to over 3000, comprising around 2.5% of the workforce.
Since that time, the proportion of employees identifying themselves as being Indigenous people has fallen slightly; in June 2004, it stood at 2.3% of the APS workforce. While action needs to be taken to reverse this downward trend, the current participation rate of Indigenous people in the APS workforce still compares favourably with the 1.4% average across the Australian labour force.

The numbers of Indigenous people employed at middle and senior management levels have been rising significantly over the same period:

- At the APS 5–6 levels, their numbers rose from around 600 in 1995 to over 800 in 2004.
- At the EL 1 and 2 levels, their numbers more than doubled from around 130 in 1995 to 260 in 2004.
- Similarly, in the SES, their numbers rose from 13 in 1994 to 24 in 2004.

The numbers of Indigenous people reaching working age have been growing and are projected to continue to grow at a much faster rate than applies to the general population.

Only 3% of Indigenous Australians have tertiary qualifications, as opposed to 19% of the general population of working age and over 60% of new recruits to the APS in 2003–04.

Indigenous Australians are over-represented in low skilled work, with 24% employed in labouring and similar types of occupations, compared to less than 10% of the general population.

APS agencies are making strong efforts to recruit from the limited pool of Indigenous graduates, with the agency survey conducted for this project finding that 17 out of 66 agencies have Indigenous cadetship programmes and nine have Indigenous graduate or trainee schemes. Moreover, 21 agencies are currently participating in the Indigenous Graduate Recruitment Initiative, a collaborative recruitment and placement exercise designed to meet participating agencies' needs for Indigenous graduates in 2006.

However, while recruitment of Indigenous graduates will continue to be an important mechanism for sustaining and improving participation levels of Indigenous people in the APS workforce, other pathways that attract non-graduates will also be critically important.

Another priority will be that of addressing the comparatively low retention rates of Indigenous employees (half of those who leave the APS have less than five years experience, as opposed to only one-third of non-Indigenous employees).

A further difficulty in recruiting Indigenous people to the APS is their concentration in regional and remote areas – 69.5% in 2001 compared to 34.1% of non-Indigenous Australians. There is a long-term trend for APS employment–particularly at the middle to higher levels–to be concentrated in Canberra.

(from *Managing and Sustaining the APS Workforce)*

The situation described in Box 3.1 is that which has led to focussed effort in the form of the implementation of the *Employment and Capability Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employees*.

The *Strategy* involves five core elements:

- supporting whole-of-government by building public sector capability to do Indigenous business
- providing pathways to employment by removing barriers to the effective employment of Indigenous Australians
- supporting employees by maximising their contribution to the workplace
- supporting employers by helping them to align their Indigenous Employment Strategies with their workforce planning and capacity building
- developing and strengthening cross-agency partnerships to support working together to promote Indigenous employment.

Evolving from this Strategy, specific APS initiatives to address declining numbers and leadership issues have included:

- secondments for senior Indigenous managers to gain broader experiences and perspectives, including placements in the central agencies
- development of a national exchange programme for non-senior executive service employees to provide short-term placement opportunities in other agencies
- entry-level traineeships to provide accessible pathways into public sector employment
- job-ready training to equip potential employees with the skills needed for public sector jobs, and advice regarding the conversion of life experiences into evidence of workplace skills
- service-wide graduate recruitment to increasingly target Indigenous graduates as potential employees
- school-to-work transition support, recognising the link between educational attainment and employment outcomes
- Indigenous Development Programmes across the range of classification groups and in regional centres, and the incorporation of an Indigenous perspective into existing and new 'mainstream' programmes
- continued support of Indigenous Employee Networks and the establishment of an SES network
- a significant research programme looking at areas such as capacity development, separation rates, and effective recruitment and retention strategies, and the development of a range of better practice guidance
- the establishment of an Indigenous Recruitment Taskforce to target regional recruitment opportunities, and a central employment register of potential Indigenous employees
- the creation of an Indigenous Liaison Officer position in the Australian Public Service Commission to assist agencies to develop strategies, negotiate partnerships and linkages, and provide cross-cultural advice.

3.4 Private sector employment

The private sector is not renowned for its employment of Indigenous Australians; however, a report to the Business Council of Australia reports on business-Indigenous community collaborative activities undertaken by 64 Australian companies. The report notes that whilst the practices reported are positive, many impressive, these types of initiatives are not common in the private sector (Allen Consulting Group, 2001).

The website of the *Australian Chamber of Commerce* (ACCI) provides information to support employers in thinking about some of the issues that may arise for them and their Indigenous employees. The information provided encourages employers to develop strategies to address these issues.

The ACCI encourages its members to think about employing Indigenous Australians for the following reasons:

- to be strategic (i.e., to focus on building a future workplace that will address emerging labour and skill shortages)
- to utilise the unique skills and perspectives of Indigenous Australians
- to find new markets and networks
- to establish a stable and dedicated local workforce
- to meet corporate social responsibilities and objectives.

An ACCI discussion paper, *Employing Indigenous Australians Indigenous Employment Strategy Framework for Industry*, although directed at private sector employment, identifies a number of strategies to overcome the challenges to Indigenous employment that are equally applicable to public sector organisations.

There is a template for employers to use to help them develop their own Indigenous employment strategy, which is in keeping with the notion that developing a written Indigenous Employment Strategy will help to make Indigenous employment an established part of an organisation's enterprise. The Strategy is built on three clear goals; it provides very specific suggestions for action, and suggests that business organisations need to specify who will execute the actions and within what timeframe.

The Strategy template is reproduced in Box 3.2 as an example of translating a strategy into specific action. The translation, however, is only a first step. The degree to which actions are undertaken is likely to depend, in the main, on one person or a committee of the organisation charged with facilitating action.

Box 3.2 ACCI sample Indigenous Employment Strategy for the private sector

Goal one: Become an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians

Strategy	Actions	Who	When
Promote employment opportunities to Indigenous Australians.	• Identify what area of the workforce that may be of interest to Indigenous Australians. • Give presentations to jobseekers, through on-site tour or off-site presentation. • Talk to schools so as to attract young people. • Provide work placements for two school students.		
Establish links with Indigenous employment service providers.	• Arrange for a Job Network member to visit at least twice per year. • Talk to the local Indigenous Employment Centre and Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP). • Email an outline of operations to preferred service providers.		
Increase cross-cultural awareness throughout the business.	• Ensure that all staff completes cross-cultural awareness training. • Acknowledge important Indigenous Australian celebrations, such as, NAIDOC week and other events.		
Develop systems to meet the special needs of Indigenous staff.	• Determine special needs of Indigenous employees with the help of a Job Network member or mentoring agency. • Encourage mentors to visit the workplace regularly in the initial period after recruitment.		

Goal Two: Increase employment of Indigenous Australians at all levels

Strategy	Actions	Who	When
Review recruitment processes to ensure they are culturally appropriate.	• Develop a recruitment checklist. • Develop protocols for recruiting and • employing Indigenous Australians. • Where appropriate, assign a workplace • buddy to Indigenous staff.		
Recognise the skills and contributions of Indigenous staff.	• Establish job descriptions to reflect the skills and knowledge of each employee, by clearly defining the value of practical skills and knowledge. Also including skills that reflect Indigenous community knowledge. • Conduct annual staff performance appraisals.		
Support staff development.	• Provide opportunities for staff to undertake training.		
Enable Indigenous	• Provide goal-setting opportunities for staff annually at performance		

employees to develop their own career strategies, goals and objectives.	appraisals.		
Have a succession plan that gives Indigenous Australians opportunities to move into management positions.	• Acknowledge the career aspirations of staff. • Select key positions to job share with Indigenous Australians. • Assign Indigenous employees to divisions where they have opportunities for career development.		

Goal Three: Develop systems to maintain Indigenous employment

Strategy	Actions	Who	When
Set Indigenous employment targets.	• Review Indigenous employment targets annually.		
Report on workplace diversity.	• Report on Indigenous employment outcomes.		
Assign an Indigenous employment officer (if your organisation is big enough).	• Assign an appropriate Indigenous employment officer. • Ensure the officer is sufficiently briefed on their duties and the expectations of the business.		
Evaluate the Indigenous employment strategy.	• Assess Indigenous employment performance annually.		

3.5 State and territory initiatives

Although Indigenous people in various regions around Australian face context-specific issues with respect to employment disadvantage, there is a consistent gap between them and their non-Indigenous counterparts in terms of employment opportunities. Hence, improving Indigenous employment outcomes, at all stages of the employment process, is prominent in State and Territory policy documents, particularly with respect to public sector employment.

All states and territories have Indigenous employment policies that reflect the key elements of the national Indigenous Employment Policy (IEP). Solutions may need to be creatively context-specific, but there are principles that appear to apply generally.

Below is a detailed overview of Indigenous employment initiatives undertaken in Victoria that are supported by both the Australian government and the Victorian

government. One example is given also of a private sector Indigenous employment initiative. Following this, the main approaches taken in other States and Territories are briefly outlined.

3.5.1 Victoria

There are a number of initiatives that relate to the employment of Indigenous Victorians. These are outlined in the following section, with an attempt to tease out how these initiatives are based on what is known about the barriers to and drivers of workforce participation. Somewhat disappointingly, there is little clear identification of specific strategies that have been shown to increase employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians. Minimal evaluation information is available about the success of the initiatives, but where that is available, it is presented.

Jobs for Victoria

Jobs for Victoria is the Victorian Government's initiative (2003-2007) to get more Victorians into sustainable jobs. It consists of a range of initiatives, several of which are particularly relevant to Indigenous Victorians.

Workforce Participation Partnerships is the 'umbrella' program for *Jobs for Victoria*. It commenced in 2005 and replaces previous programs: the *Community Jobs Program* (including both the *Jobs & Training* and the *Employment Initiatives* components), the *Jobs For Young People (JYP) Program*, and the *Community Regional Industry Skills Program (CRISP-Communities)*, and the Regional Jobs Package. The *Community Regional Industry Skills Program – Business* is continuing. It is administered by Regional Development Victoria.

The *Workforce Participation Partnerships* program targets areas with skill and labour shortages to benefit local industry and the broader community. It aims to assist jobseekers who face specific barriers to employment (e.g., people form culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Indigenous Australians, older jobseekers, etc.). The program supports creative, flexible solutions to local, regional, or state-wide skill needs that provide sustainable employment for unemployed Victorians.

The program builds on the *Moving Forward* plan to attract people, jobs, and investment to provincial Victoria by delivering infrastructure and skills, supporting small towns, and supporting local councils to manage growth and quality of life.

Specifically, the program aims to:

- Assist Victorians facing significant barriers to employment including
    - people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including refugees and recently arrived migrants
    - people with disabilities
    - people with a mental illness
    - older jobseekers (aged 45 years and over)
    - Indigenous Australians
    - young people (aged 15-24 years)

  - retrenched workers with limited labour market opportunities
  - recently released offenders
  - eligible residents of Neighbourhood Renewal areas
  - homeless jobseekers

- place jobseekers into ongoing, sustainable employment
- assist employers to meet their labour and skill needs
- forge stronger links between service agencies and employers to identify sustainable job opportunities
- provide case management services to targeted jobseekers
- optimise the use of existing resources, programs, and infrastructure.

There is no readily available information about the key elements of success of this program, or of any of the predecessors upon which it was built. However, some of the barriers that such employment programs must seek to overcome are outlined in the personal report of an Indigenous person who was offered an initial opportunity through YES, one of the programs that has been replaced by *Workforce Participation Partnerships*.

Box 3.3 Being recruited to recruit

As a Recruitment Officer for Victoria Police, Leonie Muir is well placed to comment on some of the employment barriers faced by Indigenous people, and while Victoria Police does not currently have a large representation of Koori employees Leonie believes there are various contributing factors.

Educational Requirements

Leonie notes that a lot of High School kids have already had enough of study by the time they reach their VCE. She said she was 'lucky enough to have my family push me to complete that and I realised at that stage that you need to complete VCE to get somewhere.' The statistics show that many Indigenous students do not go past Year 10, which is the minimum requirement for the police force.

According to Leonie, 'even if you are selected for training at the academy, it's then 20 weeks of training and it's very academic. A lot of people think it's more physical stuff but it's not.'

Image Problems

Another recruitment obstacle is the historical image problem. Victoria Police still suffers from the legacy of the Stolen Generations where police had an active involvement in the removal of children from their families. Leonie said, 'It's sort of filtered down and the parents have told the kids to be careful of the police - all that sort of stuff. I had a girl that was very keen on applying for the police. She'd finished her VCE and was very interested but she said, 'Look, if I apply my family will disown me.' So it's a very real problem.'

Another issue relates to criminal history - if you have one you won't be recruited. In a community where assault is not uncommon this also affects Indigenous employment prospects, not only with Victoria Police. Leonie said, 'it's so important that we somehow get to the kids before they get in with the wrong crowd.'

One of the ways they try to do this is to attend a lot of sporting activities like the Victorian Indigenous Football and Netball Carnival.' A large number of Koori people attend these functions, so we get down there and get involved. It's important to work on our image and

get the idea out there that we are here to help.'

Community Links

Another recruitment obstacle relates to the location of employment. As Leonie explained, 'before you start training at the academy you will sign a form stating that you can be situated anywhere in Victoria. You will initially be stationed in Melbourne for a few weeks while you go to your Traffic Management Schools and you work on the booze buses. Then you'll probably work two years in the metro area for your probationary period and after that they will ballot you out. They put a whole heap of names in a hat and whoever they pull out will go wherever they're told.'

Depending on where the individual's community is, this may involve a significant dislocation from all their regular family supports.

Despite the various obstacles, Leonie remains positive about the career prospects offered by Victoria Police. In her own case, she was initially offered a position as a trainee in the Youth Employment Scheme. After she completed the traineeship, with a Certificate III in Business Office Administration, she was given a full-time position in Victoria Police.

She said she still finds her job very interesting and very rewarding. 'That's probably why I'm still there.'

Leonie Muir, Victoria Police
From a presentation made to the May/June 2004 Wur-cum barra Regional Forum series.

Victoria: Working Futures

The *Victoria: Working Futures* document reports on the impact of demographic change on labour force participation in Victoria in the medium to long term. Population ageing and slowed population growth have raised serious concerns about falling labour force participation rates and the impact this will have on Victoria's future economic growth.

It supposedly focuses on two issues: future skills requirements; and existing disincentives and barriers to participation for special groups. With respect to the latter, Indigenous-specific barriers were derived from *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005* and included low levels of education attainment, health status, geographic location, employer and customer attitudes to Indigenous workers, contact with the criminal justice system, the welfare payment system, and low levels of self-employment.

No specific recommendation is made with respect to improving the workforce participation of Indigenous people in Victoria. With respect to addressing barriers and disincentives to employment, the report suggests that in general there is a need to:

- make child-care more affordable, available, and flexible
- tackle age discrimination against older workers in the community and the workplace
- re-engage Victorian teenagers who are not in education, training, or employment
- make basic job search assistance provided through Commonwealth employment services available to all jobseekers in accordance with OECD recommendations

- invest in long term, innovative, and coordinated labour market support for highly disadvantaged groups
- implement place-based strategies to focus on areas of low participation rates for working age population, establish clear workforce participation objectives, and link to economic development.

Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP)

STEP is an initiative of the Australian Government to support its *Indigenous Employment Policy*. The program focuses on creating opportunities for Indigenous people. Although aimed at the private sector, collaborative ventures with public sector bodies are possible. The key criterion is that the participant's job must be ongoing after the funding period has finished. Assistance is tailored to business needs and includes funding for apprenticeships, mentoring, and other innovative approaches.

STEP projects undertaken in Victoria are listed below and illustrate the possibilities for collaboration.

- La Trobe University Bundoora - to provide employment and training for Indigenous Australians over three years. The project includes the provision for traineeships and graduate positions in various university departments
- Parks Victoria - to provide employment and training for Indigenous Australians as Trainee Rangers or Field Service Officers in conservation and land management. An Indigenous HR Project Officer will also be employed under this project
- N J & L J Cartledge Pty Ltd - to provide employment and training in building and construction
- R.C. Skewes Pty Ltd - to provide employment and training in building and construction
- World Vision of Australia - to conduct a feasibility study to identify employment opportunities within World Vision for Indigenous Australians
- Parks Victoria - to provide employment and training for Indigenous Australians as Trainee Rangers or Field Service Officers in conservation and land management. An Indigenous HR Project Officer will also be employed under this project
- Patrick J. Cannon, Coburn and Associates - to provide employment and training in the legal profession
- Artistic Catering Company Pty Ltd – to place Indigenous Australians in employment and training in the hospitality industry
- Aus Workforce Pty Ltd – will provide employment and training in the Horsham region
- Career Brokers and Trainers Pty Ltd – to develop Indigenous Recruitment models for the Victorian University of Technology and the RMIT University
- Central Victoria Area Consultative Committee Incorporated – to provide pre-employment training and employment in the Greater Bendigo area
- City of Darebin – to provide employment and training with the Darebin/Moreland City Councils

- Ford Motor Company Australia Ltd – to provide pre-employment training and support at Ford's Broadmeadows and Geelong plants
- The Replay Group Pty Ltd – two projects to place Indigenous Australians in employment and training in aged care and home and community care
- University of Ballarat – to provide employment and training with the University of Ballarat
- Western Suburbs Indigenous Gathering Place Incorporated – to provide employment and training in medical receptionist/clerical work
- Wodonga Rural City Council – to develop an Indigenous Employment Strategy Feasibility Study for the shires of Indigo, Towong and the City of Wodonga
- Womens Health Grampians Incorporated – to provide employment and training in Indigenous health promotion work
- Indigenous Employment Specialists – to provide training and employment across a range of industries including retail, tourism and hospitality
- Murray Mallee STEP Swan Hill – to provide training and employment in a variety of industries
- Koorie Hospitality Escape – to provide training and employment in tourism and hospitality industries
- William Angliss Pre-Vocational Indigenous Hospitality Program – to provide training and employment in the hospitality industry
- Koorie New Apprenticeships Project – to provide apprenticeships in the Echuca/Moama region for school leavers
- Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Tower Hill Team – to provide traineeships in Tourism, Art and Design.

Several public sector bodies have been particularly successful in providing employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians: The Department of Justice and Parks Victoria. Summary information is provided below.

Department of Justice

Under the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, the Department of Justice delivers a comprehensive Koorie Recruitment and Career Development Strategy (KRCDS). This strategy is specifically aimed at enriching the cultural diversity across the entire Justice portfolio through greater employment of Koories within a range of professions. Through the KRCDS, Indigenous staff members have shared their experiences to guide colleagues to better understand Indigenous people as public servants, and at the same time, understand them as Indigenous people who are part of a unique cultural community (Department of Justice, *Layun Nguttay Kit)*. Box 3.4 presents information about the employment initiatives in the Department of Justice as presented at a 2004 Wur-cum barra Regional Forum.

Box 3.4 Koori Recruitment and Career Development Initiatives in the Department of Justice

According to Melissa Stevens, Manager of the Koori Recruitment and Career Development Strategy in the Department of Justice, the Strategy 'sits under the umbrella of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, which is a partnership between the Victorian Government and the Koori community'.

The Strategy aims to increase Indigenous employment across the Justice portfolio and, as Melissa explained, 'One of our big aims is to keep our staff once we've got them, and to look at career development and how we move people up through the hierarchy.'

The Department has adopted a collaborative approach to implementing new initiatives and these are developed in consultation with their Indigenous staff support network. This means the issues and experiences of current employees help shape the initiatives designed to help attract and support more Indigenous employees.

Recruitment Targets

The Department has set an employment target of an additional 50 Indigenous people, to be recruited by June 2005, and it aims to achieve this through a number of 'pathways' and strategies. As Melissa explained, 'Our recruitment streams include general recruitment, youth employment through the Youth Employment Scheme, our Pathways to Justice and Gateways to Justice Programs, as well as the Graduate Recruitment Scheme.'

The Department has also developed 'an Identified Positions Policy that's quite unique in the sense that a lot of our positions are working with Indigenous communities, whether it be in service delivery or policy. These positions target Indigenous applicants,' explained Melissa, and the key selection criteria are heavily weighted towards knowledge and experience in dealing with Indigenous people and issues.

The Department is also addressing a common issue that affects Indigenous staff retention, namely the high proportion of fixed-term rather than ongoing roles. Melissa said, 'We're looking at making sure we convert all our fixed-term positions to ongoing ones, and making sure that new ones are established as ongoing positions from the onset.' While ultimately everyone hopes the day will come when there is no longer a need for Identified or Indigenous-specific positions, the long-term nature of the social and justice-related problems makes it is reasonable, at this stage, to ensure these positions are ongoing. This also provides greater opportunities for Indigenous people to move from identified positions into mainstream roles, which helps retention while providing meaningful career paths and opportunities for Indigenous people.

Melissa also described how, as part of making sure the Department attracts Indigenous employees, 'we are going to the community and doing a recruitment drive. It's active and ongoing promotion of opportunities.' These opportunities include the following.

Pathways to Justice

This initiative is a partnership arrangement between Northland Secondary College in Preston and the Department of Justice. According to Wendy Harris, who is the Senior Project Officer for the Koori Recruitment and Career Development Strategy, there 'were a number of opportunities that were identified within the partnership arrangement. For example, we've donated 50 or more computers to Northland - provided work experience places and we have a program of guest speakers who go out and talk to Legal Studies students at Northland Secondary. We also provide an opportunity for Art students to exhibit their work each year during Reconciliation Week.'

These are just some of the ways in which the Department is developing connections and employment pathways for Indigenous people, as well as helping break down some of the negative perceptions that have developed through past policies and experiences such as the Stolen Generations.

Supporting and Retaining Valuable Staff

According to Melissa, 'Another one of the challenges is finding out who our Indigenous staff currently are. One of the ways we do this is by using an Indigenous Registration Form that is sent out to all new employees, who then have an opportunity to self-identify.' People are given the opportunity to self-identify for statistical purposes only, or to be involved in a range of supports and initiatives including the Department's Staff Network.

The Department also ensures all new staff are made aware of the Wur-cum barra Strategy during their induction, and they also run an introductory session for all new Indigenous staff to help them settle in - particularly if they are the only Indigenous person in their work area.

Melissa explained, 'We also have an Indigenous Australian Staff Network that meets in different metropolitan and regional locations,' and an Annual Justice Portfolio Koori Conference. These provide a great opportunity for informal mentoring, sharing of experiences and finding out about career opportunities within the department.

The Department also has a Meeting Ground intranet website, and this provides another link and connection point for Indigenous employees. It can be used by anyone who wants to find out more about the Department's programs, specific jobs that are being advertised, or what is happening in NAIDOC Week, for example. A paper version is available for people without internet or intranet access.

Addressing Cultural Issues

Raising awareness of cross-cultural issues and celebrating successes are other important parts of the Koori Recruitment and Development Strategy. According to Wendy Harris, 'Indigenous Cultural Awareness training is held monthly and we use an external provider.' The training package is currently due for review and they are going to a look at how it might be tailored for different groups. For example, what do Prison Officers need to understand and know compared with staff in Consumer Affairs Victoria'
One of the other ways in which the Department promotes positive images of Indigenous employment is through its Gateways to Justice Calendar. This profiles a variety of Indigenous staff who work in different agencies, and it shows the pathways they took to get to their current position. The Calendars have been distributed widely, and many of them were handed out at the five regional and one metropolitan job fair held in 2003.

Making it Work

As to what makes the Koori Recruitment and Career Development Strategy work, Melissa believes, 'We need people who are passionate about Wur-cum barra and passionate about Indigenous employment. So having the right people championing what we're here to do is just so important.'

Melissa Stevens and Wendy Harris, Department of Justice
From a presentation made to the May/June 2004 Wur-cum barra Regional Forum series.

Parks Victoria

A Victorian public sector agency that has demonstrated success in Indigenous employment is *Parks Victoria*. As at 30 June 2005, Parks Victoria had 51 Indigenous staff, representing 5.3 per cent of the total workforce (excluding casuals).

Much of this success must be attributed to the department's *Indigenous Partnerships Strategy*. The primary purpose of this strategy is to provide opportunities for Indigenous communities to have their rights and aspirations incorporated into all

aspects of park management. The key components of the strategy include relationships and partnerships with Indigenous communities, cross cultural awareness training for Parks Victoria staff, Indigenous employment and training, tourism and education, and managing Indigenous cultural heritage and environmental values.

The main factor critical to the success of the recruitment of Indigenous employees appears to be the development of strong communication links with local communities. This is seen to be particularly important when positions are advertised. The Regional Indigenous Team Leaders play a key role in developing good relationships and open lines of communication between local communities and Parks Victoria. Flexibility when locating and placing successful candidates is also important.

Parks Victoria suggests a number of reasons for its success in recruitment including:

- developing position descriptions and performance plans
- having corporate and action plans
- working to get all staff 'on board'
- providing training, and confidence and capacity building
- having commitment from the top
- having passion and innovation
- having recognition and respect
- having patience and time for working together
- working with and listening to Indigenous people
- 'being in the paddock'
- building the plan into work programs and resourcing it
- being accountable
- delivering through leadership.

The Ford Motor Company

The Ford Motor Company is an example of a private sector company in Victoria that has achieved considerable success in the implementation of its Indigenous employment strategy. It has achieved public recognition of these achievements through the *Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment* Award Scheme and through a *Diversity at Work* Award.

Central to Ford's Indigenous Employment Strategy was the development of *Employability for Life* (EFL), a nine-week pre-employment training program. Through research and discussions with local Indigenous people, Ford found that the lack of skills, potential behavioural issues, and patchy employment histories were the factors preventing access to employment for many Indigenous people. EFL was designed to address these issues. Of the objectives within Ford's Indigenous Employment Strategy, probably the most important has been establishing relationships with, listening to, and learning from local Indigenous communities.

Strategies to assist workers via EFL include one-on-one coaching in behaviour, 100 hours of classroom training, mock interviews, intensive job search support, work

experience, work on a real life project, and contact hours with mentors. Employees can complete a Certificate II in Automotive Studies with support provided if they are interested in becoming a group leader or apprentice. In addition, cross-cultural training programs have been delivered to Ford employees, positively changing employees' perceptions of Indigenous people and culture. Recruitment processes are regularly reviewed to ensure ongoing equitable access for Indigenous people.

Outcomes have included increased numbers – employment of Indigenous people increased from 5 to 36 in one year, and the employment of Indigenous individuals who previously had little or no access to employment opportunities (e.g., Michael Bligh, who won an *Outstanding Individual* award).

Victorian Local Government Indigenous employment strategies

Local governments are particularly well-placed to provide employment opportunities for Indigenous people, although the extent to which this occurs is unclear. Two examples of local government approaches to addressing Indigenous employment disadvantage are provided here.

City of Port Phillip Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Port Phillip Indigenous Community (1999) 2002

The City of Port Phillip has responsibility for a broad range of policies and programs that involve the Indigenous community specifically, as well as the whole community. Under the previous broad brush approach, Indigenous people tended to participate only if the discussion or issues impacted on or [were] relevant to their work or 'mob'. The more recent policy includes having smaller, focussed Indigenous work groups that afford scope for Indigenous community members to work and contribute in the area/s most relevant or of interest to them.

The City of Port Phillip has set up an Indigenous Forum with flexible size and adaptability as key features. Smaller themed work groups meet several times throughout the year and an annual Joint Indigenous Forum is held. One of the 2005 – 2006 themed work groups has as its focus *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy and Employment and Training*. This should enhance employment opportunities both through recognition of the issue as worthy of separate focus and in the actual discussions and actions that proceed.

The language of the document is very important. Key words noted in the document include 'commitment', 'adaptability', and 'engage'. Opportunities noted for participants include the aim 'to have fun and grow'.

A key feature of the City of Port Phillip approach to Indigenous employment is its commitment to working collaboratively with the Indigenous community. The Council works with the community and local businesses to create employment opportunities. The City's Indigenous Employment Program promotes five options to make employment support and training easier to achieve for Indigenous people:

1. Traineeships – Permanent, full time, ongoing positions with accredited training.
2. Permanent full time ongoing City of Port Phillip positions

3. Contracts, usually with festivals and event or arts, and cultural programs
4. Position transfer – should the skill level of a current employee be below the required standard, a transfer to a traineeship may be proposed
5. Trainee to permanent employee – Should a trainee be offered and wish to undertake any position with the City of Port Phillip during the traineeship.

The strategy document reflects an energy in its approach to enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous people. The City brazenly seeks to promote the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, local faith based, and non-government organisations. The City has established and supports an Indigenous employee network to reduce the impact of employee isolation and to create additional support.

City of Stonnington Needs Analysis for Indigenous Developments Discussion Paper 2003.

While less developed than the City of Port Phillip strategy, this document also reflects a positive attitude on the part of local government towards the participation in the community and in employment of Indigenous members of its community. Terms used include 'engage', 'build links' and 'sustain'. The Needs Analysis Consultation that took place listed employment opportunities as fourth of four discrete areas for future focus. The areas are reconciliation; consultative mechanism; staff training and employment opportunities. Positive attitudes to be enhanced from all parties are promoted in the first two of these areas, while necessary practical aspects are the direction suggested in the third and fourth areas.

Key ideas evident from an examination of both local council documents

- Local government initiatives may be the most appropriate starting points for action in particular communities
- Commitment, consultation and collaboration are essential, with sharing and mutuality preferable to approaches that are paternalistic, even if well-meaning
- Recognition and valuing of Indigenous citizens is enhanced by the creation of explicit documents of reconciliation and by the act of establishing and sustaining mechanisms and instrumentalities that explicitly name and promote Indigenous affairs and culture
- Employment is a specific issue that requires planning and action, but successful outcomes depend on a wider knowledge of, and respect for the broader context of Indigenous culture.

3.5.2 Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Government's commitment to improving outcomes for Indigenous people is documented in the 2003 *Canberra Plan.* A number of initiatives have been undertaken to support Indigenous businesses and although an employment strategy for the public sector is yet to be finalized, there are a number of initiatives that departments have implemented to improve employment opportunities for Indigenous people. For example, the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment has Indigenous trainees employed as park rangers, park workers, in visitor services, and in

administration. They are supported through an Indigenous workers' network, and are provided with opportunities to participate in a number of training programs.

Indigenous people are employed in a variety of positions in different departments. Some have been recruited with modified selection processes and with Indigenous people sitting on selection panels, whereas others have been employed through normal recruitment and selection processes (for example, two Indigenous prosecutors have been appointed to the Department of Public Prosecutions).

Local Indigenous people are also employed for tasks such as surveying the fire trail, and are engaged in volunteer land care projects by the Indigenous Landcare Coordinator. The Department of Education and Training has undertaken a number of marketing activities to increase numbers of Indigenous teachers, and the ACT public transport authority has implemented a STEP program to increase employment in positions such as bus driving.

3.5.3 New South Wales

The NSW Government's *Two Ways Together* provides the framework for a whole-of-government approach to dealing with Indigenous disadvantage, including employment disadvantage in both the private and public sectors. The Office of Industrial Relations' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit provides advice and support with respect to Indigenous employment across sectors.

The NSW government's *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* details a number of initiatives to promote Indigenous employment in the public sector. The Premier's Department manages the strategy and the programs associated with it, which include cadetship and training strategies. Various government departments have developed and implemented their individual strategies such as the *NSW Health Workforce Action Plan*, the Department of Corrective Services' *Aboriginal Employment and Careers Strategy 2003-6*.

The *Aboriginal Employment in Practice Support Strategy* (AEIPSS) aims to:

- assist public sector agencies and local councils in improving quality of service and program outcomes, through employment of Aboriginal people
- assist public sector agencies and local councils in ensuring they have the workforce needed to meet current and future service and program requirements; the focus is on entry and front line service jobs
- help strengthen partnerships between public sector agencies, local councils and Aboriginal communities through Aboriginal employment.

The Strategy provides a one-off payment to employers that recruit Aboriginal people to 12-month traineeships and full-time, on-going employment.

Specific initiatives that have been implemented by the NSW Government to support Indigenous employment include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cadetship Program for NSW public sector

- Apprenticeships and traineeships, through the Department of Education and Training, New Apprenticeships Centres
- The Aboriginal Employment in Practice Support Strategy 2004/06, whereby NSW Government agencies received financial assistance for employing Aboriginal people in full time positions in 2004/05
- Aboriginal Participation in Construction Guidelines, which encourage NSW Government to engage Aboriginal workers and construction firms in construction, and provide employment and training opportunities
- The Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program, which provides part-funding for the permanent or temporary employment of an Aboriginal person, offering a 12-week graduate work experience placement.

3.5.4 Northern Territory

Employment in the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) is supported through the NTPS *Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy* 2002-2006. An earlier version of the strategy was reviewed and found to be lacking in accountability; the latest version of the strategy increases reporting requirements to enable better monitoring across departments. A continuous increase in Indigenous employment rates has been reported.

A notable feature of the strategy is its detailed specification of the strategy together with action needed to facilitate implementation (see Appendix B).

Factors attributed to the recent success of the strategy include:

- engaging Indigenous people in the planning, development, implementation, and review of a succession of *Indigenous Employment Forums* across the Territory that focused on Indigenous employment
- promoting positive case studies on Indigenous recruitment, career development and retention strategies
- establishing transparent and accountable systems and processes to monitor outcomes
- gaining support for the strategy at a senior level, with executive and management staff actively involved supporting and championing Indigenous employment in the workplace
- developing strategies at a systemic level but driving and coordinating the process at a local and regional level
- developing partnerships, networks and interactions across sectors to be more flexible, innovative and inclusive of the Indigenous community
- providing greater flexibility in all aspects of employment, including pre-recruitment, recruitment, job design and career pathways
- providing greater opportunities for work placements in communities, particularly in regional and remote areas where access to jobs is limited.

The NTPS provides an *Indigenous Employment Tool Kit* for Indigenous employees. Assistance is provided to employers and managers to increase Indigenous employment through the development of appropriate recruitment and retention

strategies. The NTPS has also conducted Indigenous Men's and Women's Leadership Development Programs that have involved Indigenous participants.

3.5.5 Queensland

The Queensland Government's strategic policy framework for initiatives aimed at Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders is *Partnership Queensland*. Under this framework, initiatives to support the development of a skilled and prosperous Indigenous community are based on partnerships, community engagement, accountability and shared responsibility.

In 2001, the Queensland Government established a special unit (Wal Meta), within the Department of Employment and Training, to maximise recruitment and retention of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in order to achieve the following objectives:

- to assist Queensland Government agencies meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment targets
- to increase training and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public sector employees by implementing and continuously improving a range of advancement programs
- to provide a whole-of-government recruitment service with the view to assisting retention rates
- to break down existing employment barriers by providing Indigenous specific cross-cultural awareness training (Mura Ama Wakaana).

Barriers to sustainable employment in Queensland have been identified to include the inconsistent or inappropriate interpretation of policy in the past; a lack of coordination and cooperation among key stakeholders; few Indigenous owned small businesses; competing priorities of remote communities; low levels of education and training outcomes; a lack of understanding about cultural differences; and discrimination in the workforce.

Queensland schools operate under the framework of *Partners for Success* to improve educational and employment outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

The *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative provides a number of supports for Indigenous unemployed people, including the Indigenous Employment and Training Support Program (mentoring and support for vocational education and training); the Indigenous Employment and Training Managers Program; and the Indigenous Employment Policy for Queensland Government Building and Civil Construction Projects (to maximise Indigenous employment and training outcomes in Queensland Government funded building and civil construction projects) in designated communities. Of the 12 per cent of Indigenous participants in *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle*, 62 per cent have achieved employment.

3.5.6 South Australia

A key employment strategy in South Australia has been the *South Australia Works* strategy, which includes the priority areas *Regions at Work* and *Indigenous Works.* Launched in 2003, the strategy has involved the provision of funding for a range of training and employment initiatives including Indigenous Apprenticeships (20 Indigenous apprentices graduated in 2004), Tauondi College (an Indigenous controlled registered training organisation), an Indigenous Enrolled Nurses Program, and various other training initiatives in the areas of tourism, building, education, and health.

The *Indigenous Employment Strategy for the South Australian Public Sector* was launched in 2003. The implementation of the strategy has involved:

- appointing a principal consultant to coordinate the strategy across government
- establishing the SA Public Sector Indigenous Employees Network (SAPSIEN)
- an Indigenous Scholarship Program, which placed and is supporting six Indigenous scholars across government (an additional nine are to be placed 2006)
- the provision of advice to departments on strategic directions in Indigenous employment (for example, the recent Child Protection Initiative recruitment and selection process saw a record number of Indigenous applicants)
- raising the profile of the SA public sector in the Indigenous community
- celebrating Indigenous community events, functions and days of commemoration across government
- developing protocols for the use of a Statement of Acknowledgement.

The State Government also supports Indigenous cadetships, a Youth Traineeship program (among 500 trainees in 2004/05 there was a minimum target of 70 Indigenous trainees) as well specific programs for Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands.

In the South Australian Government's submission to the *Inquiry into Indigenous Employment* (South Australian Government, 2005), it was reported that the elements that have contributed to successful employment outcomes include:

- one-on-one case management for participants and their employers
- effective mentoring
- regular follow-up visits, even when there is nothing of concern
- commitment and perseverance
- knowledge of Indigenous culture and potential impacts on employment
- finding the right participant/employer match
- focusing on quality not quantity
- accessibility and flexibility
- ability to build up a level of trust
- training programs able to be delivered in participants local area

- ability to forge good links, working relationships and partnerships with key stake holders in the region including Indigenous community members, CDEPs, job network providers, and Indigenous support organisations and industry.

3.5.7 Tasmania

Tasmania Together is the main policy document, which covers social, environmental, and economic policy, and in which improving outcomes for Aboriginal Tasmanians is a priority. The Tasmanian Government aims to increase the number of Indigenous Tasmanians employed in the public sector and areas dealing with natural resources, to promote links between Indigenous communities and local governments, and to address issues of land ownership. Improving education and training outcomes for Indigenous Tasmanians is also priority and closely linked with improving employment opportunities. Strategies such as *Tasmania: A State of Learning* and *oana mallacka – the Tasmanian plan for action for increasing Aboriginal people's access to vocational education and training* – deal with education and training issues. Among mainstream employment initiatives that include Indigenous people as a focus is the *Partnership to Jobs* program, which supports attempts by long-term unemployed and disadvantaged people to enter the workforce.

The Tasmanian *State Government Aboriginal Employment Strategy* has a primary aim of increasing the access by Indigenous people to State Government employment opportunities. In 2004-05, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs secured 14 Indigenous appointments within the State Service through this program. The employment of Indigenous Tasmanians in the State Service is fostered through:

- the provision of Identified positions (for Indigenous people only) and Tagged positions (for applicants who demonstrate an ability to work with Indigenous communities) in the Tasmanian State Service - currently there are 77 Identified and 14 Tagged positions
- the employment of two Aboriginal Employment Officers with the Office of Aboriginal Affairs
- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fixed Term Employment Register to fill identified and tagged positions
- the development of an Aboriginal Tourism plan, to identify employment opportunities
- the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Indigenous Employment Initiative, which includes a National Indigenous Cadetship Program scholarship.

A major departmental initiative has been the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) *Aboriginal Employment and Career Development* Strategy, which was published in 2003. The strategy details a number of initiatives, including the plan to negotiate a STEPS Project to support the recruitment (through the Fixed Term Employment Register) and retention of Indigenous people in positions across the Department through cadetships, traineeships, and CDEP placements. The Tasmanian Government aimed to recruit at least 16 Indigenous people through cadetships, traineeships and base grade positions in 2005-6.

3.5.8 Western Australia

The 2001 *Statement of Commitment* articulates a formal commitment of the State government to build a relationship with Indigenous Western Australians based on principles of equity, regional and local approaches, inclusiveness, improved capacity building and economic independence. *Making it Happen: Improving Training and Employment Opportunities for Indigenous Australian 2001-2005* outlines the government's strategy across sectors. The strategy focusing on public sector employment is *Indigenous Employment in the Public Sector: Valuing Difference.*

As is the case with most other States and Territories, Indigenous Western Australians have been under-represented in the public sector as a whole and particularly in senior management positions. *Valuing Difference* identifies a series of agency specific and whole-of-government strategies to improve Indigenous employment opportunities. These strategies are based on the principles of respect for Aboriginal cultures, recognition of diversity, merit, organisational autonomy, and shared accountability. The areas that are addressed include cultural security, recruitment and induction, career development, and management and leadership. Under each of these, a series of success indicators are nominated to guide the development of Indigenous employee satisfaction surveys and data collection generally.

An example of one of the initiatives undertaken is that by the Department of Justice, which is liaising with Indigenous elders to gather support, culturally appropriate input, and suggestions to develop a recruitment program to attract Indigenous prison officers. Following community meetings at which information was provided, and the use of Indigenous employment organisations was promoted, 195 applications were received for 15 positions, which were successfully filled.

The strategy is supported by resources such as *Insights: Strategies for Success. Indigenous and non-Indigenous People on Work*. This collection of cross-cultural perspectives from Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working in the Western Australian public sector presents a vast array of practical suggestions for building a workplace that is inclusive and supportive of Indigenous staff and managers.

The *Aboriginal Employment and Career Action Plan 2002-2004* is another Western Australian document that focuses on Indigenous employment opportunities as a way of supporting Indigenous communities and improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. The *Action Plan* is supported by specific strategies such as ensuring that all advertised positions are accompanied by a statement that Indigenous people are strongly encouraged to apply; discouraging the thinking that Indigenous people can only be employed if extra funding is available; supporting ongoing employment after cadetships; providing mentoring/ work-shadowing/ support networks; implementing flexible work practices (for example, working from home/ job sharing); and emphasizing the matching of skills with jobs.

3.5 Indigenous employment in higher education institutions

The tertiary education sector provides an appropriate comparison with the Public Service (governmental administration) sector in its documents of policies and strategies related to the employment of Indigenous Australians.

Higher eduction institutions in Victoria and throughout the rest of Australia have begun, in recent years, to address the issue of equity in employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. In a number of institutions, inclusive practices have been focussed first and primarily on students. Provision of accommodation, off-campus course modules, scholarships, Indigenous student support officers, cultural awareness programs or events and relevant curricula are initiatives that some higher education institutions are promoting to encourage Indigenous student entry and retention in tertiary studies.

Equity in employment is also an explicitly stated value in the tertiary sector, but this still tends to be concerned with equal opportunity for women or worded in general statements about the avoiding of discrimination. Designated policies to increase employment and retention of Indigenous staff appear to be following a step behind those for Indigenous students but, as required by Commonwealth law, are being developed and implemented in most universities and tertiary colleges.

A survey of Victorian higher education institutions was conducted via their web sites to investigate the current standing of each with reference to Indigenous employment. Findings from the survey are summarised in Table 3.1. Because discourse is central to partnerships, shared understandings, and reconciliation, some attention has been paid to the language of the documents. Following the table, more detailed comments on the policies and strategies of a sample of higher education institutions are provided.

Table 3.1 Higher Education Institutions (Victoria) Indigenous Employment
*see separate notes

Institution	www address	Indigenous employment policy or strategy document?	Indigenous Employment Officer?	Terminology used	Features (inc funding & research base)
Australia and New Zealand School of Government	*www.anzsog.edu.au*	No	No	Not applicable	Commenced teaching in 2003. Not for profit consortium of governments & universities. Objective: postgraduate training of public sector leaders
Australian Catholic University National	*www.acu.edu.au*	No. As at 15 February 2006, an Indigenous Employment Strategy is just being completed.	No	Not applicable	Equal Opportunity Policy in employment & education for staff & students – general statements
* Deakin University	*www.deakin.edu.au*	Indigenous Employment Strategy to be developed 2005; specified in *Access, Equity and Equal Opportunity Plan 2004 – 2006*; current equity focus stronger on gender; par. in *Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2005 - 2008*	No	'equity'; 'access'; 'acknowledge historical disadvantages'	Research: Indigenous Employment table 2003; Institute of Koorie Education has student support officers and includes careers advice

Institution	www address	Indigenous employment policy or strategy document?	Indigenous Employment Officer?	Terminology used *(note: 3Feb 2006 – to be completed)*	Features (inc funding & research base)
* La Trobe University	*www.latrobe.edu.au*	Yes; specified in *La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2004 - 2008*	Yes 'Indigenous Employment Coordinator'		Target 30 positions over a 3-yr period
Melba Conservatorium of Music	*www.melba.vic.edu.au*	No	No		Affil. with Victoria University; no policies on www.
Melbourne College of Divinity	*www.mcd.unimelb.edu.au*	No. *AUQA Quality Audit Dec 2005* noted very few Indigenous students; no ref to Indig. employment	No		Seven Associated Teaching Institutions
* Monash University	*www.monash.edu.au*	Yes. *Advancing Indigenous Employment (Policy and Strategy 2004 - 2008*) from 2004	Yes. Imp. Role - Advancing Indigenous Employment Coordinator – AIEC or Indig. Rep on interview panels	'opportunity'; 'positive inclusion'; 'supporting retention and career development'; 'removing barriers'; 'heritage'; 'culture'; 'partnerships'	Ten new Indigenous workers per year in ongoing positions between 2005 and 2008; from May 2005, HEW5 posns to AIEC first
* RMIT University	*www.rmit.edu.au*	Yes. *RMIT Indigenous Employment Strategy 2004*	Yes. Indigenous Employment Coordinator, People and Culture.	'self-determination'; 'recruitment'; 'development/retention'; 'culture'; 'partnerships'	Research-based; part of Wurreker Implementation Plan
* Swinburne University of Technology	*www.swin.edu.au*	Yes. Indigenous Education Statement 2004	Yes? Manager Indigenous Programs		
Tabor College Victoria	*www.tabor.vic.edu.au*	No	No	Mentions 'indigenous church in Australia' but other usage of 'indigenous' is in a general (world) sense	Christian training college

Institution	www address	Indigenous employment policy or strategy document?	Indigenous Employment Officer?	Terminology used *(note: 3Feb 2006 – to be completed)*	Features (inc funding & research base)
* University of Ballarat	*www.ballarat.edu.au*	Yes. Indigenous Employment Strategy (IES) 2004 - 2006	Yes. Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator.		
* University of Melbourne	*www.unimelb.edu.au*	Yes. *Indigenous Employment Strategy.* See also: *The University of Melbourne Enterprise Agreement 2003*	Co-ordinator, Indigenous Employment and Career Development		See also:Goulburn Valley Office, Academy of Sport, Health and Education, 2004, links with Rumbalara Football & Netball Club (Indigenous community), current employer of Indigenous staff.
Victoria University	*www.vu.edu.au*	Not yet. To be developed. See: *Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2005 (to 2008)*	Yes		Research base: employment data 2003. Has Moondani Balluk (Indigenous Services) est. 1993, focus students.
Victorian College of the Arts	*www.vca.unimelb.edu.au*	Not yet. To be developed in life of *Victorian College of the Arts Enterprise Agreement 2005*	Not yet. Has Indigenous Liaison Officer, with mainly a student focus.		Currently affil. Uni Melb. To be merged with the Uni Melb during 2006. Includes: Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development

Victorian Higher Education Institutions

Deakin University

Deakin University established the Institute of Koorie Education in December 1991. Its formal structure is based on principles of joint management, with cooperation and partnership between the University and the Victorian Koorie community. In its setting up of conditions and procedures that encourage Indigenous students to enrol and to persevere in their studies, the Institute also recognises the importance of career development and employment counselling.

The links that Deakin makes between education and employment are evident in several key documents. *Access, Equity and Equal Opportunity Plan 2004 – 2006, Draft, dated November 2004*, addresses Indigenous employment directly, as follows:

Section 6. Objectives and targets.
Objective 1: Promoting internal and external leadership in access and equity
Strategy
1.1 Achieve national and international recognition of the Institute of Koorie Education
Actions [*relevant selected*]:

- Position the Institute as a leading Australian educator and employer of Indigenous people.
- Develop and implement an Indigenous Employment Strategy in 2005.

It is significant that Deakin's future planning of strategies and actions on equity issues in employment, including, specifically, Indigenous employment, is based on research data collected for their annual Human Resources Report and in their biennial Equity and Diversity survey. The following table is provided at 5.2.8 in the *Access, Equity* document as background data for Section 6 (above). Levels of employment of Indigenous staff are low.

Numbers and Levels of Appointment of Indigenous Staff 2003

	Female	Male	Total
HEW 1	0	0	0
HEW 2	1	0	1
HEW 3	2	0	2
HEW 4	1	2	3
HEW 5	1	0	1
HEW 6	1	1	2
HEW 7	0	0	0
HEW 8	1	2	3
HEW 9	0	0	0
HEW 10	0	0	0
Casual HEW 1	1	1	2
Casual HEW 3	0	1	1
Casual HEW 7	0	1	1
Level A	0	0	0
Level B	5	4	9
Level C	2	0	2
Level D	0	1	1
Level E	0	0	0
Casual Academic	3	0	3
TOTAL	18	13	31

These data will provide a base against which the next set of employment statistics will be able to be measured.

Among the 16-person membership of the Deakin Access, Equity and Equal Opportunity Committee is 'one member nominated by the Board of the Institute of Koorie Education'. Participation of Indigenous representatives at senior policy levels is recognised as a necessary step in redressing the inequalities that have existed for Indigenous people in University employment.

Section 76, Indigenous Employment, of the *Deakin University Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2005 – 2008* builds on earlier progress. Its two clauses are:

76.1 The parties to this Agreement acknowledge the historical disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, particularly in the spheres of employment and educational opportunities. The parties to this Agreement note and endorse the agreement reached between the Institute of Koorie Education, on behalf of Deakin, and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI).

76.2 The parties to this Agreement acknowledge the development of the Deakin University Indigenous Employment Strategy and are committed to, and will monitor, these employment strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the University.

'Acknowledgment', partnerships and monitoring through data collection and other evidence are key strategic initiatives.

La Trobe University

The *La Trobe University Indigenous Education Strategies for the 2003 -2005 Triennium* set, as one of its planned new activities, the development of an Indigenous Employment Strategy. This has been achieved and an Indigenous Employment Coordinator appointed. The University won an award for the Strategy in the 2004 Wurreker Awards. These awards are a joint initiative of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) and the State Office of Training and Tertiary Education.

The *La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2004 – 2008* expresses a commitment to 'equity, access and participation for staff' (p. 6). The sixth of six Strategies is 'consolidate and strengthen support and opportunities for Indigenous staff', which is repeated in the achievement Outcome: 'Enhanced employment opportunities for Indigenous staff'. The fourth of four Key Targets for 2008 is set thus: 'At least 30 Indigenous staff to be employed by the University'.

Monash University

In 2004, Monash University instituted the *Advancing Indigenous Employment Policy 0404* and the *Advancing Indigenous Employment Strategy 2004 – 2008*, with acknowledgment made to the University of Newcastle's *Indigenous Employment Strategy 2003-2005* for its structure.

The Policy Statement declares:

> Monash University, in keeping with its objective of contributing to the social, scientific and economic development of Australia, and in valuing the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the Australian community, will where possible, provide opportunities in employment and career development throughout the University for Indigenous People. The University also recognises the Commonwealth Aboriginal Employment and Development Policy and the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody that highlighted, among other issues, the importance of employment and education to Indigenous Australians.

The Policy is, thus, placed in a national and an historical context.

Principles underlying policy include fostering equality of opportunity through positive recruitment efforts, removal of barriers and recognition and valuing of Indigenous Peoples' culture, knowledge and skills.

Under the heading 'Purpose', the Policy sets out several programs to be developed. These require strong involvement of the Advancing Indigenous Employment Coordinator in searching for suitable applicants, selection, traineeship mentoring of both trainee and supervisor, dealing with issues arising and appointment to ongoing positions.

The *Advancing Indigenous Employment Strategy 2004 – 2008* is structured under the headings Vision Statement, Key Principles and four Key Result Areas. The Vision Statement can be viewed as a clear exposition of values:

> To strengthen ties between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Monash University in order to promote the cultures and aspirations of Indigenous People and ensure widespread representation in ongoing employment positions.

The Key Principles repeat those set out in the Policy. Each Key Result Area contains an Objective, Strategy/ies and Perceived Outcomes. It should be noted that the Strategies and the Perceived Outcomes are very detailed and measurable. The Key Result Areas are expressed thus:

1. Develop Relationships with Indigenous Communities
2. Facilitating Effective Indigenous Recruitment Processes
3. Build Retention Rates of Indigenous Employees
4. Support for Indigenous Career Development.

Strategies include advertising employment opportunities in 'culturally appropriate areas', having Indigenous representatives on selection panels, building stronger cross-cultural awareness and encouraging training and career development.

RMIT University

The November 1999 RMIT Policy Paper *RMIT Response to Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report, Australia's young adults: the Deepening Divide* noted briefly that Indigenous young people are 'over-represented in the 'at risk' group' of unemployed Australian young

people. Since 2000, or earlier, the University has been active in strategy development relating to Indigenous employment within RMIT.

As with other Universities, the RMIT University links Indigenous Peoples' education with employment. The *RMIT University Indigenous Employment Strategy* document sets itself in context, through references to Wurreker and Wur-cum- barra. It provides baseline data of there being four Indigenous Australian staff members at 30 June 2004. The aim of the Strategy is to increase this 'to more closely reflect the level of Indigenous Australians within the broader Australian population'.

The Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the Career Development Strategy Sub-committee have been set up to oversee the implementation of the Indigenous Employment Strategy. The Strategy document's statement of purpose begins:

> The Indigenous Employment Strategy recognises the inherent value of Indigenous Australian perspectives to the University and aims to position RMIT as an attractive employer for Indigenous educators and employees.

Guiding principles are: self-determination; development of Koorie community; development of the individual, and maintaining Koorie culture and identity. Seven benefits of the Strategy are listed, though they are more like aims (e.g., encouraging diversity and equity across RMIT workforce). It seems that aims or objectives and benefits can be like two sides of a coin.

Four objectives are explicit, each with detail of programs and sample key performance indicators. They are:

> Objective 1: Recruitment
> Objective 2: Career Development/Retention
> Objective 3: Inclusive Culture
> Objective 4: Community Partnerships

Communication processes and resources to support the Strategy are outlined. A detailed timeline of three phases, from July 2004 to December 2006, is provided. The strategy document concludes with brief notes about reporting, evaluation, and project management.

Swinburne University of Technology

Swinburne University's *DEST Institution Assessment Framework 2004 Indigenous Education Statement* underlines, in Section 1, the University's commitment to improving outcomes in Indigenous education. Valuing diversity and encouraging the participation of local Indigenous community groups are emphasised. Partnerships are operating in various forums, working groups and committees.

Section 2, headed 'Achievement of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) goals and plans for the 2005 – 2007 Triennium', draws attention to employment in 2.2:

> To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in education and training.

The Indigenous Programs Unit and the University's Human Resources section have developed and implemented *Swinburne University of Technology – Policy for the Employment of Indigenous Australians 2001 – 2005.* It is intended to encourage employment in both administrative and academic positions. It will be succeeded by the *Indigenous Employment Strategy for 2006 – 2010.* Data collected show that in 2003 the University employed four Indigenous staff and two Indigenous academics in the Indigenous Programs Unit.

The current Indigenous Employment Strategy has four key objectives:

- To raise awareness among the University community of the positive contribution that may be made by Indigenous Australians;
- To provide training opportunities that will enable Indigenous Australians to develop the skills and gain the experience to further their employment opportunities;
- To enable greater Indigenous Australian participation in the University community and in doing so advance Indigenous self-determination;
- To develop the staffing infrastructure to enable the University to deliver TAFE and higher education programs that are inclusive of Indigenous issues.

As noted with other Universities, Swinburne links education and employment closely.

The strategy recognises the importance of flexible work arrangements that respect Indigenous Australians' cultural and family responsibilities. Appropriate media will be used for advertising positions. Recruitment, also, will be targeted. The Manager, Indigenous Programs, or other Indigenous person will serve on selection panels.

The policy makes explicit reference to financial support, with Federal and State assistance being used (e.g., from the Commonwealth Indigenous Employment Program or the National Indigenous Cadetship Program). On the job training and professional development are also viewed as important. Induction processes for new employees are specified, including the provision of a mentor. At the Lilydale campus, a combined 'Assembly' of the Australian Indigenous Consultative Assembly and the Swinburne Indigenous Consultative Assembly is scheduled to meet six times a year.

University of Ballarat

The University of Ballarat *Indigenous Employment Strategy (IES) 2004 – 2006* is based on research data and studies of employment in the Central Highlands Region, where there are serious issues of Indigenous and youth unemployment. Skills development of Indigenous Peoples and the contributions they can make in employment are both seen as important. The Strategy is explicitly linked with the Victorian Government's Wur-cum barra Strategy in increasing Indigenous employment in the public sector.

The University's Strategy aims to:

- provide employment for up to 15 Indigenous Australians across all employment categories … across the University's six campuses;
- provide for an increase in Indigenous staff representation in ongoing positions;

- provide an ongoing career development program for Indigenous staff through appropriate accredited training and targeted career development opportunities to ensure career advancement and employment retention.

Three key results areas are described: recruitment processes; training and career development and cultural awareness training and support. Funding is from a University of Ballarat and Commonwealth DEWR three-year (2004-2006) Structured Training and Employment Program (STEP) allocation.

A table sets out six 'Strategy Elements': employment processes; training and career development; cultural awareness training and support; promotion of strategy; funding and monitoring and accountability. Action, responsibility and a Time Frame are listed. It is noted that the Indigenous Employment Coordinator has sole or shared responsibility in every area.

University of Melbourne

The *University of Melbourne Enterprise Agreement 2003* (due to expire 30 June 2006) included the development of an Indigenous Employment Strategy as a policy to be implemented within the life of the Agreement. It had a target of the appointment of at least five additional Indigenous employees for each of 2004, 2005 and 2006. Principles to be followed included respect for Indigenous Australians' cultural, social and religious systems, support for their participation in their own cultural occasions as of direct benefit to themselves as employees in a workplace and hence to the University as an employer, and an acknowledgment of the need to 'redress' past social injustices in employment for Indigenous Peoples.

The University of Melbourne *Indigenous Employment Strategy* was then implemented as part of the *University Strategic Plan* 2004. Its perspective is summed up in the guiding value:

> Advancing the intellectual, cultural, economic and social welfare of the Melbourne, Victorian and Australian communities it serves, recognising the workplace needs and aspirations of Indigenous Australians.

Melbourne University has demonstrated an increasing awareness and development of Indigenous educational studies since the 1960s. The 2004 Strategy is research data-based, with statistics on population numbers and age groupings.

There are four guiding values behind the Strategy, expressed in general philosophical terms relating to welfare, human rights, diversity, harmony, equity and cultural enrichment.

Objectives are set out as follows:

> Overall Objectives
> To make the University of Melbourne an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians.
>
> To implement, monitor and review on an ongoing basis an employment strategy to support the participation and career progression of Indigenous people in academic and general staff positions across all areas of the University.

Specific Objectives
Objective 1: The Cultural Environment
Recognise Indigenous cultures, languages and history on University campuses and sites, and acknowledge the contribution of Indigenous people to Australian society.

Objective 2: University Culture and Leadership
Foster the ongoing development of a University culture and environment which values diversity and provides leadership for the implementation of the Indigenous Employment Strategy and Reconciliation Statement.

Objective 3: Recruitment of Indigenous Australian staff
Develop and implement further strategies for attracting and retaining Indigenous academic and general staff across all areas of the University.

Objective 4: Work Environment
Provide a work environment at the University of Melbourne which supports employment equity for Indigenous Australians.

Objective 5: Professional Development
Maximise staff development opportunities, along with the transfer of job skills and information, in order to increase expertise, remuneration, job security and career progression of Indigenous academic and general staff.

Objective 6: Monitoring and Reviewing Implementation
Establish an Indigenous Working Party to oversee the implementation of the Indigenous Employment Strategy, identify performance indicators, and monitor and review the University's progress in relation to the employment of Indigenous staff.

The document details strategies under each Objective (e.g., covering media and community links, the identifying of a 'champion' at Executive level, seeking exemption from the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995 to enable positive recruitment – a step being taken in several other higher education institutions, building links, respecting cultural obligations and dealing with grievances). This *Indigenous Employment Strategy* appears the most detailed in its analysis and presentation of intended strategies.

The Australian Universities Quality Agency, in its report of its audit of the University of Melbourne released in January 2006, affirmed (Affirmation Number 7) the University's work in promoting Indigenous employment in faculties and departments through the application of its Strategy and the appointment of the Coordinator, Indigenous Employment and Career Development. It reported an increase in numbers of Indigenous employees, from 12 in 2003 to 21 in 2004. There were 32 Indigenous employees as at October 2005 (W. Muir, personal communication, March 2, 2006).

Victoria University

Victoria University is currently working to formalise an Indigenous Employment Strategy. The *Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2005 – 2008* lists 'Indigenous Employment Strategy' under Staff Development and Performance thus: 'A commitment to the implementation of an Indigenous Australian employment and a career development strategy'. It also includes, under 'Leave of Absence and

Holidays', the notes – 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Leave – provides for ceremonial obligations of staff members who identify and are accepted as members of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities'.

This University has already demonstrated awareness of Indigenous staff and students in several ways. The University's website for Nyerna Studies contains an extensive list, with brief summaries of activity or responsibility, of web resources relevant to Indigenous Peoples and their issues. Equal opportunity has been strongly on the University's agenda since at least 2000, with documents and checklists concerning equity, access, participation, basic rights and diversity etc. A research base for work on equal opportunity is provided in *Workplace Profile Data – Diverse Language and Cultural Backgrounds – December 2003*. This provides data relating to 'Indigenous Employees' thus:

Females	Males	Total	Full Time Equivalent Females	FTE Males	FTE Total
4	3	7	3.277	2.5	5.777

4 BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Section 3 provided an overview of a wide range of policies and strategies developed by governments, public sector bodies, and private sector employers in response to Indigenous employment disadvantage.

National and international research points to common underlying barriers to employment that relate to low levels of education, poor health, geographic location, and discrimination in the workplace. These factors apply equally to Indigenous Victorians. In the following sections, these and other overarching themes are explored, in the first instance as they have been presented from an Indigenous perspective, and then through research based on census and survey data.

4.1 Indigenous voices: The barriers to employment

The 2004 *Wur-cum barra Regional Forums* provide insight into employment barriers in the VPS as they are perceived by Indigenous Victorians in the VPS. As well as concerns about educational and skill levels, speakers at this forum spoke about knowledge of the workplace, job-search experience, self-confidence, family commitments, isolation, racism, and stereotypes in the workplace as presenting barriers to gaining employment, staying in a job, and advancing careers.

Edited excerpts from some presentations are presented below, together with comments from other Indigenous writers about their perceived barriers to employment.

Box 4.1 Family commitments

There are the extended family responsibilities, the most obvious of which is the high number of Indigenous funerals. In part, this is because of a lower life expectancy. Not only are funerals a large part of the grieving process but they also provide a major point of connection with the family. Recent data on the Victorian public service found that Indigenous staff were much more likely than their non-Indigenous peers to report that they had family or community responsibilities. However, they were much less likely to use the forms of leave that were there to support that. Instead, they used their holidays and sick leave or time in lieu. This reinforces the need for better induction of Indigenous employees and for more support and flexibility by individual managers.

Craig Leary, Department of Human Services
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

Box 4.2 Knowledge and perceptions of workplace

An organisation's reputation, particularly in relation to Indigenous employment, makes a difference to potential applicants. Kylie explained, 'I had spoken to a few other people and if they had had a bad experience working in an agency then it's not going to be somewhere you want to work. I can't emphasise that enough.'

Kylie Kinsela, Wur-cum barra Officer in the Department of Human Services
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

Victoria Police still suffers from the legacy of the Stolen Generations where police had an active involvement in the removal of children from their families. I had a girl that was very keen on applying for the police. She'd finished her VCE and was very interested but she said, 'Look, if I apply my family will disown me.' So it's a very real problem.'

Leonie Muir, Recruitment Officer for Victoria Police
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

Box 4.3 Isolation

Leanne also spoke about the sense of isolation she sometimes feels as the only Koori person in the whole building. 'I'm the only person with my duties. I'm the only person who does what I do, and knows how I do it, and I think that sometimes there's a lack of understanding about my Indigenous personal life - my family and community commitments and responsibilities.'

Leanne Andrews, Department of Human Services
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

Box 4.4 Skills demands

According to Leanne, a large proportion of Indigenous people are employed in Indigenous roles. She believes one of the reasons for this is the high value placed on formal qualifications for many mainstream roles. From her own experience she says, 'I don't have any formal qualifications in terms of diplomas, bachelors, or a degree of any kind, but I know that in the interview process I was up against a couple of other people who were not Indigenous but who had Masters degrees or very high degree-level education.' She said she believed, 'it was recognised that I was the one with the knowledge and the contacts and the skills because of the work that I've already done. So it was recognised that perhaps I was the better one for the role in terms of my community work and so on. So it's really important to recognise that qualifications are not necessarily better than skills and experience gained another way.'

Leanne Andrews, Department of Human Services
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

Age is a strong barrier in the workforce for Indigenous people. With 71% of the Indigenous population not having continued past year 12 it is common for Indigenous people to return to education later in their lives, this means that it takes them a considerable time to reach the same qualifications as their younger associates.

Shirley Morgan, Aboriginal Employment Coordinator, University of Western Sydney

Many Indigenous people are recruited into Indigenous roles in the workplace. These positions may come with levels of expectations from employers and communities, limited career pathways, and may be funded for short terms. All of these factors may pose barriers to the extent that they effect the retention and career development of Indigenous people.

Box 4.5 Indigenous job demands

According to Barbara there can be a certain 'schizophrenic' quality to being an Indigenous employee. She explained, 'When you work with a government agency you have to be very careful because you step in and out of the community to do your role, and you want to do the best for your community, but you also need to be aware of what your Department expects of you….I use the term schizophrenic because you're in the middle and people want your attention and a piece of you.'

Barbara Gibson-Thorpe, Department of Human Services
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

There's good and bad things about people being employed in specific Indigenous roles. On the plus side, they are seen as the essential link with the community and we tend to see them as the experts in Aboriginal affairs for the whole of the department. This can also have its downside because it means I'll have people come to me and expect me to know about, or give my opinion on, what's happening in the Northern Territory, for example. It's just not appropriate and I will not and I cannot, and nor can any of my colleagues, speak for anyone else but themselves and their

opinions. Another negative is that having the internal expertise means others are less likely to make their own links with Indigenous communities

Leanne Andrews, Department of Human Services
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

There is a tendency to have them assume the role of curators of their culture, they are expected to mentor and become role models for Indigenous students and also undertake several other roles which relate to their heritage. Universities tend to utilize their Indigenous Staff members by insisting they are included as sitting members of various committees and activities thereby addressing the current trend for Indigenous consultation. This is fine, but to also expect people to carry on scholarly pursuits such as finding time to write books is what I suggest is unreasonable and places higher expectations on Indigenous people. There are blurred boundaries between what is expected of an Indigenous academic and their non-Indigenous counterparts in the workplace.

Shirley Morgan, Aboriginal Employment Coordinator, University of Western Sydney

Box 4.6 Pathways

If we take a moment to examine my situation it will become clearer. Within the University of Western Sydney my position as the Aboriginal Employer Coordinator is unique. It is an identified position, which deals mainly with issues relating to Indigenous matters. No one at the University operates in a position that is similar to mine. The position, which is in direct line management, is the Director of Human Resources. Although I have been at the University for five years, when I look at the generic job statements which are issued for positions I find that none of my skills are transferable. My contention is that if the stated desirables of the job had a little more thought given to them and a little more consideration taken when constructing them it would give Indigenous people more opportunity.

Shirley Morgan, Aboriginal Employment Coordinator, University of Western Sydney

Extended periods of unemployment make it difficult for those affected to return to work through a combination of reduced confidence, motivation, and skill. In general, long-term unemployed people tend to be less educated, their last job was at a lower skill level, they reside in lower socio-economic locations, and they tend to live with other non-working adults.

Box 4.7 Unemployment

People who are on welfare or are just leaving it are hurt, demeaned, and frightened each and every day by the way organisations do things in our current systems. Why are these people with the least resources, experience and opportunity treated as if they should have loads of confidence and be exceptionally self-assured? Our current welfare system often strips these people of self-confidence and self-assurance by assuming they have all the time in the world for paperwork and interviews and then nothing fruitful or sustainable is forthcoming. So why do those of us with sufficient incomes, as well as those of us with enormous incomes expect Indigenous people to fit into a normal job without support and guidance?

Lori Parish, Indigenous Employment Coordinator, University of Newcastle

Box 4.8 Limited job opportunities

We know that it is sometimes hard to recruit Indigenous people but there is also a lack of ongoing employment opportunities and we usually get positions that pay at the lower end of the scale. There was also a sense [that] by attracting Indigenous people into the public sector you weaken the Aboriginal community organisations capacity to deliver culturally appropriate services. Why can't there be a program of secondments or exchanges between the public sector and community

> organisations. Another way could be by getting Koori students into Government departments during their summer break .
>
> *Response, Metropolitan Melbourne*
> *Victorian Review Implementation recommendations to Royal Commission Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.*

Thus it seems that when Indigenous people are surveyed about the barriers that they face in gaining employment, staying in a job or being promoted, a complex picture emerges reflecting attitudinal, cultural, and social barriers that create systemic disadvantage. These are reflected in community attitudes and more specifically, in the policies and practices of workplaces and organisations.

4.2 Evidence-based findings

The following section provides an overview of research that is based on the collection and analysis of data. This data-driven research supports many of the widely held understandings about barriers to Indigenous employment held by Indigenous people.

Such research confirms that Indigenous Australians continue to experience multiple sources of disadvantage, particularly if they live in deprived areas. They experience the problems faced by the broader communities in which they live but at higher rates than those of non Indigenous people – such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. Indigenous people may also experience disadvantage because of discrimination, inadequate services, and language and cultural barriers to accessing information and services.

4.2.1 Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research

A great deal of the literature that focuses on Indigenous employment issues comes from the research output of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). Researchers at the centre have performed numerous analyses of ABS census data and their findings are cited widely in policy documents, opinion pieces, websites and other types of articles that discuss Indigenous employment disadvantage.

CAEPR research shows changes in Indigenous demography that sometimes make it difficult to compare outcomes over time. For instance, although the numbers of Indigenous Australians who participate in the labour market and who find employment has increased over time (an apparent growth rate of 22 per cent between 1996 and 2001), the analysis of these data using demographic techniques suggests that there has been no real improvement in employment of Indigenous people and there could well be rising unemployment in the future. However, the considerable increase in the number of Australians identifying as having an Indigenous background means that it is not clear whether changes from one census to the next mean an improvement in employment conditions. (Hunter, Kinfu & Taylor, 2003)

The analyses of Census data performed by CAEPR is given depth through consideration of data collected from the 1994 *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey* (NATSIS) and the 2002 *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey* (NATSISS). These surveys provide important information about individual

characteristics and the social and cultural environments of Indigenous Australian who are both in and out of the labour market; they also provide an indication of ongoing barriers to employment.

NATSIS data shows level of education as the biggest predictor of having job; having been arrested was the largest disadvantage in gaining employment. Historically, barriers to access and success in school education have contributed significantly to the employment disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. Indigenous young people experience significant disadvantage at all ages of schooling and this has a significant impact on their school-to-work transition (Long, Frigo & Batten, 1999).

The NATSIS survey also found that age was a barrier to employment, with Indigenous youth (15-19 year-olds) having higher unemployment rates than older age groups of Indigenous Australians, and significantly higher unemployment than non-Indigenous youth. The difficulties that they faced in gaining employment included transport problems, lack of jobs and insufficient education or training.

The Victorian data from the NATSISS survey showed that unemployed Indigenous Victorians experienced the following as barriers to employment:

- insufficient education, training or skills (23.7%)
- transport problems/distance (21.4%)
- no jobs in local area or line of work (19.1%)
- no jobs at all (3.8%)
- other difficulties (19.2%).

Whilst education and training are important factors in gaining employment, an analysis of increased numbers of employed Indigenous Australians in the 1986, 1991 and 1996 censuses suggests that improved educational outcomes for Indigenous Australian would not necessarily translate to equitable employment and labour force participation outcomes. Gray and Hunter(1999) argued that moving Indigenous people to buoyant job markets in urban areas and increasing their post-secondary qualifications would not resolve their labour market disadvantage. After taking cohort specific features into account, it was found that region, educational attainment, and language background were not related to the probability of employment for Indigenous males and females in the way that they were for non-Indigenous males and females; a large part of Indigenous employment disadvantage is also due to unobserved differences such as schooling quality, assimilation, discrimination and other attitudes (Gray & Hunter, 1999).

A consistent theme in the CAEPR discussion papers has been that there are significant underlying forces that discriminate against Indigenous Australians in terms of employment and labour force participation. Research that focuses on easily measurable outcomes such as jobs and wages to the exclusion of less easily measured factors such as discrimination and culture offers limited solutions to improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians (Hunter 2003).

Hunter (ABS, 2004a) argues that the scope for labour market discrimination to explain ongoing Indigenous employment disadvantage is greater than previously

thought. He argues that irrespective of any differential access to useful social networks, employer discrimination may mean that Indigenous employment outcomes will continue to be low for the foreseeable future. While the provision of job search assistance may increase the rates of employment of Indigenous Australians, in the end it will only be effective to the extent to which Indigenous job seekers are job ready, and are prepared to live in regions in which there are mainstream employment opportunities.

The *Longitudinal Survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Job Seekers* reveals clear differences between job search methods used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous jobseekers. Indigenous job seekers tended to be less pro-active and to rely far more on friends and relatives as a source of information about jobs than non-Indigenous job seekers, even though these networks were sometimes not particularly strong (Gray & Hunter, 2005; Hunter & Gray, 2004).

An analysis of data collected for the *Longitudinal Survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Job Seekers* found that job search methods were not related to the probability of finding and retaining employment when other personal and regional factors were considered. Factors such as educational attainment, health status, region of residence and having been arrested, accounted for the majority of labour market success. Reasons that job seekers gave for lack of success included lack of work experience and work skills, there being no jobs available, transport difficulties, and lack of education and training (Gray & Hunter, 2005; Hunter & Gray, 2004).

4.2.2 Surveys, case studies and community consultations

While motivation and aspirations have been noted as a barrier to employment, it has been suggested that young Indigenous people have motivation and aspirations towards employment similar to their non-Indigenous peers. A key difference is that they anticipate many barriers to achieving their aspirations. Students surveyed by Craven and colleagues (2005) identified a number of factors that they perceived as barriers, including the support that they have been given at school in terms of career advice, access to further education, job opportunities, family support, and employer attitudes

In 1999, a survey of Indigenous people commissioned by the Gippsland Area Consultative Committee[6] identified the following as contributing to employment disadvantage in the region:

- non-Indigenous community perceptions, racism and stereotyping
- few employers in the region have had any dealings with Indigenous employees or prospective employees
- employers seldom received referrals of Koorie clients through Job Network providers, employment agencies and Group Training Companies
- many of the employers lacked knowledge about Koorie culture and issues. There is a lack of recognition among employers of the cultural differences between

[6] It was not possible to source the original report. This list is taken from a summary on the Diversity@work website.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and disadvantages suffered by the Indigenous community
- widespread generalisation of the level of government assistance to Aboriginal people, with the misconception that Indigenous people get increased unemployment benefits
- a lack of knowledge of the existing skill base among Aboriginal people
- employers do not want to separate Indigenous from non-Indigenous employment issues
- employers are unwilling to consider special consideration for the employment of Indigenous people
- a general perception among employers that Aboriginal people are not interested in, or do not need employment.

The DEWR toolbox (Australian Government Department of Employment and Work Relations, 2005b) contains a summary of the five most significant barriers faced by Indigenous job seekers that were identified in a survey conducted by the Adelaide Metropolitan Area Consultative Committee. The five barriers were:

- family issues and responsibilities
- lack of reliable transport
- lack of appropriate education, skills and knowledge
- low self esteem
- inability to look for a job.

Indigenous community consultations reported in the *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (2005) indicate that lack of employment continues to be widely cited by Indigenous respondents as a major ongoing problem for Indigenous people. For many Indigenous people, it is *the* biggest problem confronting their communities, particularly young people in those communities. In the review document, matters raised in connection with unemployment centred on:

- systemic and explicit racism in employment practices
- reluctance of mainstream business to play its part in providing employment opportunities for Indigenous people
- poor employment opportunities outside the community and public sectors.

The review notes that Indigenous people are sceptical about the success of initiatives to create employment for them by State government and local government agencies.

4.2.3 Labour market analysis: Public sector employment barriers

The Wur-cum barra Labour Market Analysis (LMA) was conducted to provide an understanding of the workforce demands of the public sector and the likely sources of supply of Indigenous staff needed to meet employment targets consistent with Wur-cum barra.

The LMA report makes a number of recommendations to overcome employment barriers that relate to education and training pathways, regional imbalances, opportunities for work experience, and collaboration with Indigenous community organisations.

Specifically, it is noted that regional differences are a significant factor in employment opportunities for Indigenous people in Victoria. For instance, only about a quarter of VPS positions are located in rural regions; however, nearly half of Victoria's Indigenous working-aged population is located in these areas. The report notes that the twin factors of a low proportional base level of Indigenous employment in areas where vacancies are less frequent creates a barrier that needs to be overcome.

Low levels of turnover in the VPS present another problem for Indigenous job seekers. Job opportunities come up infrequently and are competitive.

Another issue highlighted relates to qualification requirements in the VPS. Indigenous job seekers are disadvantaged because of lower levels of secondary and tertiary education. The LMA recommends increased assistance for Indigenous people to prepare for tertiary study and the establishment of pathway programs involving traineeships, cadetships and scholarships. On the other hand, some change might be necessary in the way that qualifications are perceived as relevant to some positions. The LMS showed that nearly half VPS positions could be filled without pre-requisite qualifications.

The LMA strongly indicates that a closer relationship between the VPS and Indigenous students through their communities and education providers is necessary to achieve progress under Wur-cum barra. Central to this are more proactive approaches to graduate recruitment, scholarships and cadetships, as well as more active approaches to Indigenous job seekers and potential job seekers. Of most potential, is the area of cadetships aimed at those who have not completed Year 12 (involving bridging courses) and those enrolled at certificate levels, particularly certificate III and IV.

Finally, the report suggests that a greater effort is required to bring Wur-cum barra to students and job seekers. Capacity also exists for closer cooperation between the VPS and Indigenous Community Organisations through such measures as structured staff exchanges.

Another source of information about employment barriers are evaluations that are conducted by industries and organisations of their own policies and practices which, when considered with Indigenous population characteristics, operate to reinforce employment barriers for Indigenous people. For example, a paper written for the Australian Society of Archivists (Thorpe, 2003) identifies the following as disadvantaging Indigenous people seeking employment, or wishing to establish meaningful careers in the field of archives and record management. Some of these barriers include:

- lack of Indigenous Scholarships and Cadetship/Traineeship programs for Indigenous people

- employment schemes created that do not meet the needs of Indigenous people and are inflexible in their conditions of operating
- distance to educational institutions and employment
- full fee paying courses to undertake study
- lack on ongoing government funding for Indigenous initiatives in record holding agencies
- lack of financial commitment and long term planning from record holding agencies to employ and train Indigenous people to ensure that positions are occupied with changes in staff
- lack of awareness in Aboriginal communities of archives and record management professions and career paths to become professionals
- lack of Indigenous perspectives in archives and records management studies.

4.3 Barriers to employment: Summary

The factors that contribute to Indigenous employment disadvantage in Australia have been well documented over the past two decades. In the 1985 report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs, commonly know as the *Miller Report*, the observation was made that the demographics of the Indigenous population contributed significantly to employment disadvantage. The Indigenous population tended to be young and more likely to be in rural and remote areas with few employment opportunities; they had lower education levels and were more likely to be in less skilled or permanent employment. The Miller Report highlighted low educational outcomes as a significant barrier to employment. These three factors, however, did not explain the extent of employment disadvantage. Of greater importance were two other factors: discrimination against aboriginal people with respect to employment, and an apparent preference by aboriginal people not to participate in the regular labour market.

Nearly a decade later, and as already noted in section 3.1.1, the 1994 *Review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy* found that unemployment levels remained unacceptably high and that factors that contributed to this included, low levels of formal education and training, discrimination and racism, a high concentration in the younger age groups, and especially in remote locations, a lack of conventional employment opportunities.

Over ten years on, these factors continue to be significant underlying issues as reported by Indigenous people and as evidenced in research.

It is clear also that barriers to Indigenous employment can be regarded from different perspectives; those that focus more on the population characteristics of the potential employees, and those that focus on the characteristics of the workplace.

The next section draws on the literature to identify ways in which barriers to employment for Indigenous people can be addressed. In presenting these drivers to workforce participation, however, it is worth noting Hunter's caution that shows the complexity of the solutions required.

Indigenous unemployment cannot be addressed by relying solely on the economist's usual toolkit (for example, increasing the number of suitable jobs available in the local area or sending the unemployed back to school). Innovative policies must be found to deal directly with the root causes of social exclusion, whilst accommodating differences between Indigenous and other Australians (Hunter, 2000).

5 DRIVERS OF WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

5.1 Introduction

There are numerous 'lists' of the factors that drive workforce participation. Often these lists have been derived from large data sets that do not necessarily disaggregate the data to examine how drivers may vary for groups of people who approach the workplace with particular sets of social and cultural circumstances.

A study by Dawkins, Lim, and Summers (2004), using Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey data, identified four key drivers of workforce participation: demographics, education, labour force history, and health. These factors appear to be general factors that are repeatedly found in the literature, and which apply also to disadvantaged jobseekers.

With respect to disadvantaged groups of people, the Victorian Government has developed a framework for action to reduce disadvantage in Victoria (*Challenges in Addressing Disadvantage in Victoria*, 2005). To tackle the entrenched disadvantage experienced by some groups, the government has looked to new approaches that are in place worldwide and which appear to work effectively with disadvantaged people. Features of these approaches, when translated to employment environments for Indigenous people suggest that employers need to:

- apply greater flexibility, time, and resources to meet the needs of their Indigenous employees
- individually tailor the help and support they provide to Indigenous employees
- develop closer working relationships with Indigenous communities and groups
- involve Indigenous people in the design and implementation of employment strategies and actions, and in decisions that directly affect their employment.

The development and implementation of Indigenous employment policies and strategies across governments, public sector, and private sector organisations appears to have had a positive influence on Indigenous employment opportunities in many respects. For instance, preliminary assessments of the Australian Government's Indigenous Employment Policy (DEWR, 2002) suggested that it was indeed headed in the right direction. Over time, monitoring and evaluation of the policy and its components have led to different emphases, particularly in the area of promoting more Indigenous employment in the private sector and strengthening the link between CDEP and mainstream employment (DEWR, 2002; Shergold, 2001;).

The Stage 2 evaluation of the Indigenous Employment Policy (DEWR, 2005) suggests that successful components of the IEP include the development of good relationships with Indigenous jobseekers and their communities, the provision of more holistic assistance (e.g., providing assistance with transport), the provision of high quality mentoring, and improvements in the quality, extent, and availability of administrative data.

In Victoria, according to the Government's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment, employment programs that specifically target Indigenous Victorians have demonstrated that four key factors need to be incorporated into the design of programs if they are to achieve positive and sustained employment outcomes for Indigenous people.

- Programs need to be developed as real partnerships with the local Indigenous community, all levels of government (Commonwealth, State and Local) and the local business community.
- Programs should target young Indigenous people in regional areas and provide real career and employment opportunities to allow them to remain in and be active members of the local community.
- Providing appropriate support services such as mentoring, buddies, and supports networks for Indigenous staff within the workplace is essential.
- Workplace cultures must reflect an understanding and respect for Indigenous culture.

In the following subsections, we outline a number of drivers of workforce participation that appear to be especially important to facilitating positive employment outcomes for Indigenous Victorians. These factors were derived from lists such as those mentioned above and from the vast body of literature on Indigenous employment disadvantage, some of which has been summarised in preceding chapters. Although each of the factors is discussed separately, it is important to remember the complexity to which we have referred earlier and which thus requires complex responses rather than stand-alone solutions.

5.2 Drivers of workforce participation for Indigenous Victorians

5.2.1 Strategy documentation and promotion

The development of Indigenous employment policy and strategy documentation is an important step in enhancing employment outcomes for Indigenous people. It has been claimed that employment strategy documents should be marketing documents (Parish, 2001). They need to market an organisation as an employer to the local Indigenous community – to gain acceptance in the community, to gain recognition as a good place to work, to gain the interest of potential Indigenous employees, because local communities are the source of potential employees. Marketing of an employment opportunity to Indigenous people also needs to demonstrate the value propositions on which it is based. These may include

- a commitment to redressing the social inequity that has long been experienced by Indigenous Australians; and
- the promotion of an economic benefit to Indigenous individuals and their communities as well as to the broader community in which they reside.

It is important to note the difference between documentation that is the policy (or strategy) and documentation or action that supports strategy implementation.

A policy statement is a specific statement of principles or guiding actions that imply clear commitment by an employing body. Policy documentation should contain an unambiguous statement of values or intent that provides a basis for consistent

decision making and resource allocation; it also should indicate a clear course of action to achieve specified aims. An important feature of good policy is that it will change infrequently – it sets a course for the foreseeable future and beyond. Another key feature of good policy is that it generates initiatives that can be clearly linked back to its main intent.

With respect to this latter observation, one criticism of current Indigenous employment strategies could be that they do not always appear to be the drivers of initiatives, programs, and actions aimed at overcoming Indigenous employment disadvantage. A proliferation of initiatives can be confusing as noted in the Queensland Government's submission to the inquiry into Indigenous employment (2005), particularly when they do not appear to be directly attached to an Indigenous Employment Policy. The Queensland Government submission observed that a major impediment to the effective implementation of policies has been the inconsistency in their interpretation and in the definition of appropriate measures for success. Furthermore, the submission noted a disparity of coordination and cooperative arrangements between government, industry, training providers, and Indigenous communities that impedes the flexible delivery and holistic approach needed to address Indigenous employment issues. The submission also noted that the administration and implementation of government initiatives in the area of Indigenous employment is often undertaken in isolation or is independent of other government agencies and industry stakeholders.

> This has resulted in confusion within Indigenous communities regarding government and industry commitment and support to Indigenous employment, a duplication of government effort, ad hoc and or duplication of service planning, development and delivery, and reduced outcomes for Indigenous people. (p.4)

The Victorian Indigenous Employment Strategy for the Public Sector, Wur-cum barra clearly outlines the key areas for action: Capacity building and pathways; recruitment; induction and retention; career development; changing workplace culture; and the Indigenous Community Organisation sector. It is important that any broad-based Victorian Government initiatives that relate to employment or disadvantage should be informed by these key strategy areas.

Each public sector department or agency needs to translate the overall Victorian State Indigenous employment strategy to apply to its specific context. However, it is important that specific Indigenous employment plans specify quite clearly the aims that are relevant to the department or agency, and the specific strategies that will be implemented.

Documentation in itself, however, is insufficient if real and sustained improvements are to be achieved. In the following subsections, we outline other specific factors that will drive employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians.

5.2.2 Consultation and partnerships

The building of ongoing, consultative relationships between Indigenous groups and employers is probably the most important issue to be understood if Indigenous employment strategies are to be successful. The importance of this factor is evident in the literature on Indigenous people in Canada and New Zealand, as well as in the

broader Australian literature on Indigenous employment (e.g., Ah Chin, 2005; Parish, 2001).

The formation of partnerships with Indigenous communities is not only essential to the well-being of Indigenous communities; it is an essential component of the health of *all* communities within the broader society and as such needs to be nurtured.

For instance, Considine (2004a) proposes that the formation of partnerships is a key ingredient of any community strengthening process, and involves a process of enhancing connectedness, engagement, and partnership between various stakeholders in the community. Considine (2004b) also suggests that four core ingredients of helping communities become stronger have emerged from the national and international literature: increased connectedness among key actors; new forms of distributed leadership; partnerships and joint ventures; and the development of new governance institutions.

Without exception, national, state, and territory Indigenous employment policy documents stress the establishment of partnerships as an underlying mechanism for successful employment outcomes. Agencies need to work with Indigenous community organisations, other agencies, and other sectors to plan, design, deliver, and evaluate Indigenous employment initiatives. This approach is especially needed in regional areas to achieve long-term, locally based employment for Indigenous people. Additionally, partnerships with local government are particularly important because they:

- provide a framework for a whole of community response to employment outcomes at a local level;
- increase ownership and commitment from everyone involved;
- ensure the strategies connect with other initiatives, including government policy, community initiatives, and agency directions;
- draw on the skills, knowledge and experience of others, particularly Aboriginal people from other organisations;
- increase agency staff's understanding and expertise;
- will align service outcomes with Aboriginal ways of doing business, with the result of that Indigenous stakeholders are more likely to endorse the service;
- improve relationships between agencies and the community, and
- achieve the reconciliation principle of involving Aboriginal people in directing their own futures. (NSW Indigenous Employment Policy)

An example in Victoria of a program that appears to have been successful because of strong partnership arrangements is the *Ladders to Success* Project that was conducted in the Shepparton region 2002-2005. The project was conducted by Ganbina Koori Economic Employment and Training Agency, an Indigenous representative body in the Goulburn Valley that deals with economic, employment, and training issues.

The main *Ladders to Success Project* was implemented December 2002. It was a partnership between the Commonwealth Department of Employment Workplace Relations (DEWR), the Department of Victorian Communities (DVC), the City of Greater Shepparton (COGS), Ganbina, and approximately 60 local businesses. The

project focused on achieving real and sustainable employment for Indigenous people in mainstream skilled or professional areas. It followed from a pilot *Ladders* project conducted in 2000.

The project was built around were four key aspects. It focussed on:

- mainstreaming Indigenous employment
- finding career paths through full-time jobs in skilled or professional areas
- linking employment assistance to identifying further education and training options
- creating real and sustainable employment rather than a dependence on welfare wages.

According to the project report, in dealing with 131 individuals who registered with the program, 125 fulltime or part-time/casual employment positions were created over the 3 years. A total of 73 full time employment positions were accessed, 10 of which are still progressing towards the 26 week outcome milestone. This level of success was acknowledged by DEWR as placing Indigenous job seekers in more numbers and at a faster rate than any other of its programs.

The *Ladders* program is not only an example of success that evolves from strong partnerships. The program was also successful because it was built on a sound employment brokering model, another driver of successful employment for Indigenous people, which is discussed in the next section. Strong partnerships and appropriate employment brokering are especially important for regional areas where the greater proportion of unemployed or non-participating Indigenous Victorians resides.

An important understanding to emerge from the *Ladders* project concerns the limited work ready job seeker pool of Indigenous Victorians. In the three years of operation of the project, it became apparent that this pool had been significantly depleted. To access the potential employment opportunities still available to the Indigenous population, different methods of engagement and development are required. Ganbina plans, therefore, to launch a new phase of *Ladders to Success* that will focus on preparing young Indigenous people in the region for work. Students in schools will be a focus of attention.

Other examples of partnerships created to enhance employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians are provided in the *Wur-cum Barra Toolkit: Workplace Culture Resources and Tools* and include those listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Examples of partnerships to enhance Indigenous employment opportunities

Title/Link	Comments
Indigenous Partnership Strategy - Department of Sustainability and Environment	A comprehensive high-level strategy for working in partnership with Indigenous communities - includes capacity building, cultural awareness, and land and natural

	resource management
Wimmera Indigenous Management Partnership - Department of Sustainability and Environment	A cultural exchange program designed to help land managers better meet their legislative and moral obligations in relation to Indigenous cultural heritage and Native Title matters (see pages 51-53)
Memorandum of Understanding between ATSIC and Queensland University of Technology	An example of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between an organisation and the Indigenous Community
Promoting Partnerships - Parks Victoria	This newsletter contains articles on Parks Victoria's approach to developing effective relationships with Indigenous communities
Royal Botanic Gardens	The Aboriginal Heritage Walk is an example of an effective community partnership (see pp. 9-10)
The Community Engagement Workbook	For ideas on how to effectively engage communities consider this workbooks and tools that were developed by DSE and DPI. (see pp. 47-49)
Koori Liaison Officer - Bairnsdale Regional Health Service	These roles provide an opportunity to develop links with Indigenous communities and improve cultural awareness (see pp. 29-30)
Koori Liaison Officer Position Description - Women's and Children's Health	An example of a job description for an identified position
Community Consultation - Yarra Valley Community Health Service	An example of how a health service consulted with the local Indigenous community to achieve better health outcomes (see pp. 13-15)
Community Consultation - Royal Children's Hospital	An example of how a health service consulted with the local Indigenous community to achieve better health outcomes (see pp. 37-38)
Community Consultation - Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE	An example of how a TAFE consulted with the local Indigenous community to achieve better outcomes for students (see pp. 35-36)
Community Consultation - Sunraysia Institute of TAFE	An example of how a TAFE consulted with the local Indigenous community to achieve better outcomes for students (see pp. 21-23)

Although the above examples, in the main, do not focus on employment outcomes for Indigenous peoples, they nevertheless provide examples of how to form partnerships that will lead to positive outcomes for both employer and employee.

In building consultative and collaborative relationships between employers and Indigenous communities, it is particularly important to consider locational factors that have a specific bearing on the employment of Indigenous people in Victoria. This issue is discussed in the next subsection.

5.2.3 Location

There are no clear figures of the current distribution of public sector organisations within Victoria but according to the 2004 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Public Employment, the percentage of public sector employees located in regional Victoria is somewhere between one quarter and one third of the total public sector population of employees. Given that approximately 50% of Indigenous Victorians are located in regional areas, an apparent driver of employment for this group would seem to be the availability of jobs in close vicinity to place of residence[7].

The document *Achieving Equality and Optimal Participation: Indigenous Employees in the Victorian Public Sector* (Institute of Koorie Education, Deakin University, 2005) recommended that Indigenous employment strategies should be incorporated into any future regional development strategies. In this respect, the Victorian Government's *Community Building Initiative* (CBRS) is potentially an important consideration in developing partnerships to build employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians in regional areas.

The CBRS commenced in September 2003 and comprises a set of resource and support services for community strengthening work in Victoria, including specific place-based, disadvantaged groups such as Indigenous communities. In an initial evaluation of the CBRS (West, 2004) concluded

> community strengthening in Victoria needs to be scaled up and sustained. … it is time to move from a short-term project-based effort to a long-term approach, which sees community strengthening as a 'core business', connected with mainstream policy and programs. This implies a key role for the Victorian State Government in providing leadership into a new phase of upscaled community strengthening effort. (p. 27).

Such an observation also emphasises the need for interdepartmental collaboration in promoting regional partnerships that involve local government and Indigenous communities.

Achieving Equality and Optimal Participation: Indigenous Employees in the Victorian Public Sector (Institute of Koorie Education, Deakin University, 2005, pp. 24-25) also recommended five specific strategies that focus on strengthening regional government activity and which are likely to result in sustainable employment for Indigenous people and regional growth.

[7] Hunter and Gray (1999) provide a rider to the power of location to positively affect Indigenous employment outcomes. Their analysis of three sets of census data led them to conclude, "…simply moving Indigenous people to the buoyant markets in major urban areas is not a panacea for Indigenous deficits in labour force status." (p. 11)

- Strategically placing people at high level and entry-level positions in regions to affect change on a whole-of-government basis. This could include the establishment of an "across agency" position to support and drive regional employment initiatives.
- Facilitating cooperation between organisations in the public service and broader public sector to harmonise efforts on the regional level.
- Identifying large regional centres (such as Ballarat, Bendigo, Mildura, Warrnambool, Shepparton, Bairnsdale) with significant Indigenous populations to serve as "hubs" of activity. This could include the setting of regional recruitment targets across agencies.
- Creating a more "joined up" approach to employment and service provision between organisations (e.g. DHS and DSE) and between target groups (e.g. people with disability and Indigenous people). This should include a regional approach to pre-employment programs and training and development to improve the recruitment pool, increase the capacity of job-seekers, and provide networking opportunities.

In relation to this last point, the national network of Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) provides an important link between the Government and rural and metropolitan Australia. As volunteer community based organisations, ACCs are potentially well-placed to respond to issues in their regions and provide a vital conduit to government on local, social and economic conditions. Although the ACCs are a national government initiative, the potential to inform Victorian State Indigenous employment policy and initiatives should be recognised.

It is interesting to note in the 2004 Annual Report of the North East Victoria ACC that,

> During the September'03 quarter, DEWR advised NEVACC's Acting Chairman that it was withdrawing its offer to NEVACC to employ two Indigenous Employment Facilitators to promote and market DEWR's STEP / IEP to local employers and community groups. NEVACC was advised that DEWR, as a Department, felt it already had sufficient contracts in place in the Shepparton region to secure the outcomes it was required to achieve under the COAG agreements. (from section on *Indigenous Community*)

In light of recent reports that the COAG trial conducted in the Shepparton region has not been successful, particularly in increasing employment levels (e.g., Calma, 2005; Cutcliffe, 2004; *The Age* February 16, 2006), is seems that policy relating to the employment of Indigenous Employment Facilitators should be revisited.

An example of a seemingly successful partnership arrangement between government and a regional Indigenous community is the Queensland Government's Cape York Partnerships (CYP). Although operating within a different set of circumstances for Indigenous people, aspects of the CYP model may provide direction for collaborations in relation to promoting employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians in regional areas.

CYP was initiated in 2000 as a means by which to facilitate the reduction in welfare dependency of Indigenous Queenslanders in the Cape York region (e.g., see Pearson,

1999). It is based on establishing partnerships to develop business activities that improve economic and social outcomes for Indigenous people of the area.

CYP is a community development organisation formed as a result of an agreement between the Queensland Government and regional Indigenous organisations. The approach of CYP is to develop community initiatives within the Cape York region, developing such opportunities through partnerships and garnering support for projects at a regional level to guarantee benefits and outcomes in the regional setting. The initiative is based on the understanding that within the Indigenous communities, there are concerns about mechanisms for representation at regional level in a context where speaking about matters associated with country is bound by customs and protocols. The value in having a collective regional voice to represent overarching Indigenous concerns is recognised.

The addressing of Indigenous employment issues in regional areas by working with local Indigenous communities has implications for employment brokering, as discussed in the next subsection.

5.2.4 Employment brokering

Employment brokering has been a common practice for a long time, although there is no available research that provides information on the degree to which different models of employment brokering are successful. In simple terms, employment brokers are public and private agencies that match employers with job seekers. To a limited extent, the provision of job information (as in Job Search; Centrelink) is a form of brokering.

Effective brokering requires a person or persons with a comprehensive understanding of the range of available employment opportunities, knowledge of what the jobseeker is looking for and capable of in the workplace, and good rapport with both employer and job seeker.

Employment brokering has not been widely researched in Australia, although research into the effectiveness of *training* brokers in regional Australia provides some insights for employment brokering. A study that examined several models in use by training brokers concluded that there are differing outcomes for clients of not-for-profit and for-profit brokers (Kilpatrick & Bound, 1999). The major difference between these groupings is that for-profit brokers have a market focus and charge fees to clients to cover costs of organising trainers and costs of providers. Not-for-profit brokers have a client focus and operate with government or industry funding, and thus are not solely reliant on fees to cover the costs of providing information and brokering training.

In terms of outcomes, the researchers concluded that:

> Both market focussed and client focussed brokers were valued by their clients, and seemed to improve the outcomes of training by achieving a good match between clients and providers. However, if our concern is with development of human potential and a skilful Australia, then the findings from this research appear to support the need for brokers with a client focus and learning orientation. Such brokers have an interest in assessing client needs to encourage not only self development, but the establishment of dialogue which facilitates

> further learning and provides ongoing support and develops lifelong learners. This suggests that there is a case for public support of training to extend beyond mere delivery, to developing providers to be flexible, adaptable and understanding of client needs, and developing clients as informed, discerning and empowered consumers of quality vocational education and training.

The study highlights, then, the importance of the relationship the broker establishes between itself, the client and training provider, and how this relationship is critical to the extent to which the needs of the client are met. Further, it highlights how such a relationship is best developed when the focus of the broker is not diverted by the for-profit principle.

Perhaps of most significance, however is the finding related to networking:

> . . . networking is core business for brokers. Networking not only builds resources (knowledge), but is important in gaining and establishing effective relationships with training providers and increasing and deepening relationships with clients. However, there are differences between brokers with a market focus and those with a client focus. Values as well as context inform the focus and orientation of brokers. . . . determining the nature of outcomes for clients (p.10).

The processes of an employment brokering system are documented in the report of a study of the experiences of a group of Indigenous job-seekers (DEETYA, 1998). The study examined the way in which case management services (brokers) dealt with their Indigenous clients and identified a number of limitations with their processes. Limitations included a failure to address clients' pre-vocational needs (by focussing solely on employment outcomes), inappropriate reliance on written communication, failure to develop personal relationships with the participants, failure to use Indigenous informal networks, and placing Indigenous people in environments and situations that they found uncomfortable (in group situations or interviews).

The report recommended the use of employment services that demonstrated a number of key characteristics or practices. Employment services (brokers) should involve community-based Indigenous organisations; have access to informal networks; acknowledge the significance of Indigenous values (particularly regarding family); address prevocational needs of clients (e.g., confidence building and assertiveness courses); be aware of substance use issues and support programs; establish relationships with clients; communicate in person; acknowledge sociocultural differences in lifestyle; and provide post service follow-up.

An example of training and employment brokering in Victoria[8] is drawn from the Melbourne based consultancy, Juno Consultancy. This company has assisted the Ford motor company to implement its Indigenous Employment Plan, which calls for increased employment of Indigenous workers. Ford and DEWR formed a partnership to run the *Employability for Life* (EFL) program inside Ford with participants referred via the Job Network agencies. Prior to the implementation of EFL within Ford, over 200 company staff from all levels underwent cross-cultural communication training. Also trained were 50 Ford employees who volunteered to mentor EFL program participants for three months, with a focus on supporting

[8] Also see section 5.2.2. *Ladders to Success* is another example of the application of brokering to facilitate positive employment outcomes for Indigenous Victorians.

individual's job search, role modeling workplace behaviour and aiding the transition into the Ford workplace.

In the EFL model, long-term unemployed job seekers receive nine weeks of training, hands on work experience – tackling real workplace projects – and supervised job search. The program is based on a 40-hour week over nine weeks and focuses on the attitudes and behaviours expected in the workplace as well as on more general problem solving, team building, communication, and life skills.

Program outcomes at Ford were evaluated as being successful. Of 50 Indigenous EFL participants, 24 were hired by Ford as assembly line workers and one as an apprentice. Ten participants found work with other companies. In terms of numbers of people employed, this represents a 70% success rate.

Box 5.1 contains excerpts from a *Juno Consultancy paper on brokering*, which describes the key elements of successful brokering.

Box 5.1 Elements of successful brokering

As any good business or non-profit knows, the success of any organisation, including a brokerage, is about people and relationships. A brokerage needs people to create relationships, manage expectations, provide marketing, advice and training, manage supply & demand and needs to be entrepreneurial in seeing opportunities and testing out different approaches. A brokerage will be seen by business and community organisations as a team of people they trust based on their ability to solve their particular problems in setting up and managing partnerships. For this reason, brokerages need to go beyond website matching services or services creating little more than initial introductions between business and community.

Brokerage is more effective when focussing on a particular geographic region, which may comprise one or neighbouring local government area. The meaning of community is inherently localised and a local structure is more likely to find acceptance than an 'outside intruder'. Further, only a local brokerage could adequately build relationships with the myriad of very small community organisations and small businesses that comprise the vast majority of groups. A non-local service would have the clear tendency to favour the large player simply for lack of local knowledge.

Whilst government should support the establishment of such brokerages through seed funding (including the process of initial local stakeholder consultation and buy-in), in the long term the brokerage should be self-sustainable through membership fees and fee-for-service work.

State Government could play a significant role in accelerating the process of such brokerages being established. By adopting a brokerage template and a process template for stakeholder buy-in, interested communities could achieve deployment quite rapidly if seed funding is provided as well. This initial momentum would be highly valuable to the process of giving stakeholders the benefits of fast results and success stories.

From *Brokering Corporate Volunteering*, Juno Consultancy

Another brokering initiative of importance in Victoria is that linked with Wurreker, the strategy for Indigenous vocational education and training policy development and service delivery in Victoria developed by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) in partnership with the State Government. The strategy both informs and responds to national and state strategies that relate to Indigenous post-compulsory education and training.

Wurreker brokers are employed by VAEAI to promote vocational education, training, and employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians. The State Government, via

the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) has a responsibility, both as partner and signatory to Wurreker to ensure the ongoing successful implementation of the strategy. To this end, OTTE funds Wurreker implementation as part of its portfolio responsibilities.

Although more focussed on vocational education and training, the Wurreker strategy works towards an outcome of employment for its Indigenous clients. Wurreker brokers work in nine regions in Victoria to achieve the aims of the strategy.

An important networking aspect of the Wurreker strategy is the Key Stakeholder Forums that are held in each of the regions. The purpose of these forums is to ascertain the projected industry growth for the region, as well as to discuss and set training priorities for regional training plans. Various industry groups, local government councils, TAFE colleges, job networks, and members of Koorie communities are invited to local forums to examine regional projected industry growth, and to discuss the type of training that is needed for Koorie people to match this projected growth.

What appears to be important in the above examples of employment brokering is the emphasis on networking and relationships, and adequate resourcing. The not-for-profit aspect identified by Kilpatrick and Bound (1999) as contributing to positive employment outcomes is not a feature of the Juno Consultancy model but is perhaps compensated for by the Ford's commitment to adequately resource the brokering process, and to follow through with an Indigenous Employment Plan that aims for long-term retention of its Indigenous employees. Government funding is also accessed via DEWR and Job Network.

Despite the strengths of the brokering examples provided above, and their particular relevance to regional Victoria, there is a lack of publicly documented evaluation information about the level to which these broking approaches have been successful in retaining people in employment in the long-term.

5.2.5 Resourcing

An important consideration for organisations implementing any policy or strategy is to ensure that it is sufficiently supported in terms of resources, personnel, and funding (Parish, 2001). In the area of employment, the Human Resources divisions of organisations will have a range of existing resources and programs already in place to recruit and support their workforces. Most likely, these will operate in line with Equal Opportunity requirements to support diversity and equity in the workplace. However, if the normal processes that operate within the organisation do not lend themselves to attracting, retaining, and supporting career development of Indigenous staff, then it is likely that different processes, and additional resources and funding will be needed to support an Indigenous Employment Strategy.

Many organisations employ an Indigenous Employment Coordinator to oversee the implementation of their Indigenous employment strategies. The Coordinator is often part of the Human Resources division and, working with HR staff and managers, will have duties that include assisting organisations to:

- set targets and identify positions for Indigenous employees
- identify funding sources,
- seek out potential applicants,
- providie broker training, and
- oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

Other tasks may include training for recruitment, contributing to position descriptions, providing marketing advice, overseeing induction processes, mentoring programs, and developing Indigenous networks within the organisation and with the local Indigenous community. In the Queensland public service, there is a unit dedicated to performing this role across departments (see Box 5.3).

The implementation of special processes to facilitate achievement of Indigenous employment goals will not always require additional resourcing. For example, implementing flexible work hours in an organisation to support employees in maintaining a family/work life balance does not require extra funding. Additionally, there may be a number of existing Indigenous employees who can contribute advice about the development and implementation of an Indigenous Employment Strategy. A number of resources and references are readily available online as examples of effective practice (e.g., the *Wur-cum barra Toolkit*, the APS booklet *Working Together*, and other state and territory publications related to implementation of their Indigenous employment strategies).

It has been suggested that difficulties may arise when initiatives, which are undertaken as part of an employment strategy, rely on special funding and not on developing positions and practices that continue into the long-term, and do not stop as soon as the funding runs out. The view that the employment of Indigenous Australians can only be supported if there is special funding can, in fact, become a significant limitation in the successful implementation of an Indigenous employment strategy if the result is temporary jobs that are peripheral to the organisation (Griffith University, 2004).

However, to adequately implement change that is enduring will usually require extra money. An Indigenous employment strategy is not merely a job creation scheme but a commitment to improving Indigenous employment disadvantage that may be experienced at a number of levels. Funding may be needed to employ extra personnel to support specialised recruitment processes, and training initiatives (for example, for HR personnel to develop appropriate networks; to implement workplace cultural training for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees). Inevitably, time is needed for extra meetings and this must be accounted for in employees' job descriptions.

Additional funding for Indigenous employment strategy implementation usually involves a combination of funding sourced both from the organisation's own budget and from external sources. Organisations may already access funding through mainstream programs that can be used to support Indigenous employees. Whilst there is not a great deal of information in the public domain about the amounts of money that this involves, many organisations take advantage of funding made available under the Australian Government Indigenous Employment Programme.

For example, a range of public sector, private sector, and training organisations have accessed *STEP* funding to support the employment and training of Indigenous Australians within their organisations. The *STEP* website includes the following organisations as examples of funding recipients:

- *La Trobe University Bundoora* - to provide employment and training for Indigenous Australians over three years, including provision for traineeships and graduate positions in various departments)
- *Career Brokers and Trainers Pty Ltd* – funding for two projects to develop Indigenous Recruitment models for the Victorian University of Technology and the RMIT University
- *Parks Victoria* - to provide employment and training for Indigenous Australians as Trainee Rangers or Field Service Officers in conservation and land management and to employ an Indigenous HR Project Officer
- *University of Ballarat* – to provide employment and training with the University of Ballarat.
- *City of Darebin* – to provide employment and training with the Darebin/Moreland City Councils.
- *Tasmanian State Government* – to provide employment and training with the Tasmanian public sector.
- *Parks and Wildlife Service* - to provide employment and training for Indigenous Australians as Parks and Wildlife Service Trainee Field Officers in Tasmania.

Some organisations support traineeships, apprenticeships, scholarships and cadetships for Indigenous employees and a number source funding from the *National Indigenous Cadetship Project* for this purpose.

Wage Assistance has been another funding source that has encouraged and supported organisations to employ Indigenous applicants. In some instances, the funding has been used to support training courses; in others, the funding has supported companies to upgrade positions from casual to full-time positions (see Box 5.2).

Box 5.2 Using *Wage Assistance*: An example

A week after Roy commenced, Lindsay Clarke, Manager from Shared Vision Aboriginal Corporation applied for the Wage Assistance subsidy. This subsidy was used to send Roy to the local TAFE to upgrade his computer skills. Through ongoing work training and education, Roy also developed many other skills that he thought were not possible at his age.

In January 2003, after Daniel received his Wage Assistance card in the mail, he visited his local Job Network office and spoke to an employment consultant who told him how to use the card to look for work. A week later, Daniel showed his Wage Assistance card to his manager, Mr Les Bentley. Les rang the Indigenous Employment Line and found out that QIS was eligible for the wage subsidy. It was a simple process that enabled the company to upgrade Daniel's position to full-time

In Victoria, there are State Government funding initiatives that may be used to support Indigenous employment strategies. Initiatives include the *Youth Employment Scheme* (*YES*), which provides a wage subsidy of $9000 to public sector bodies to assist

in the recruitment of trainees and apprentices for a period of one year. The scheme is part of the State Government's *Jobs for Victoria* employment strategy, and has been funded to June 2007. The *YES* program targets young people aged between 15 and 24, and has an annual target of 650 commencements in traineeships or apprenticeships. Thirty per cent of the positions are targeted at the long term unemployed and disadvantaged young people, including Indigenous people.

Two examples from other States are provided below of state public sector approaches to the resourcing of their Indigenous employment strategies. In the first case (Queensland), a special unit has been set up within the Department of Employment and Training to promote implementation of the strategy. In the second case (the Northern Territory), implementation is seen to be the responsibility of public sector agencies and it is expected that agencies will resource their own strategies.

Box 5.3 An example from the Queensland public sector: Resourcing Indigenous employment strategies in the public sector

In July 2001, the Wal Meta Unit was established in the Department of Employment and Training to seek equity in employment and economic status for Queensland's Indigenous population. Wal-Meta works with both national, state, and local government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to recruit, train, and retain Indigenous people in the Queensland public sector.

The formation of the unit transpired in direct response to the *Review of Public Sector Attraction and Retention Strategies to Maximise the Employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Giles & Thiesfild, 2000).

The funding proposal outlined in the Review was for the unit to be staffed as follows:

Manager (AO8)
Career Development Officer (1 x AO6)
Promotions Officer (AO5)
Employment Coordinators (1 x AO5; 1 x AO3)
Administrative Assistant (AO2)

Budget Item	Amount ($)
Salaries	350 000
On-Costs	70 000
Travel	60 000
Vehicles	30 000
Accommodation	20 000
Marketing and Promotion	70 000
TOTAL	600 000

Options available for funding of the unit were identified as:

- fee-for-service activities;
- an allocation of state-based funds; and
- an agency levy.

The review suggested that because the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations already funded support for training for Indigenous peoples, $100 000 of this funding could be transferred to the new unit; fee-for-service and marketing activities could modestly be expected to contribute $50 000 to the unit's operations. The remaining $450 000 could be funded by:

- a state-based allocation as a special initiative;
- a levy of $25 000 on each Department (with a flat levy recognising the capacity of larger departments to undertake initiatives more readily in their own right.); or
- further fee-for-service activity (for example to commonwealth and local governments).

Box 5.4 An example from the Northern Territory: Resourcing Indigenous employment strategies in the public sector

The NTPS Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy (2002-2006) requires that Indigenous employment outcomes are core business for the Northern Territory Public Sector and as such, agencies are required to incorporate additional costs for implementing the strategy in their existing budgets. Agencies are encouraged to reallocated or realign funding as required. Agencies may also access external funding support through programs such as the NICP and the NTPS School Leaver Apprenticeship Program.

The reasoning behind this is that special funding for Indigenous programs often fails to translate into long-term outcomes – programs lapse when funding ceases. Although there may be some difficulties associated with this, many of the initiatives associated with the strategy can be implemented with little or no extra funding. For instance, in the NT, the Indigenous Employment Consultant in the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment provides assistance to agencies to identify and develop initiatives, and to develop partnerships and networks across departments to enable them to achieve targets.

From the NTPS Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy: FAQ Sheet, January 2003

5.2.6 Monitoring and evaluation

> There is broad consensus that the net impact effects of programs for the work deprived are either small or very small. For all that has been tried, sadly we have not learned a great deal as to what programs work for different people and why. We argue that this is due in part to deficiencies in past and ongoing evaluation efforts, including the lack of rigorous research designs and access to data for independent researchers. Second, labour market programs are regarded by evaluations as a 'black box' into which the unemployed enter and come out at the other end either employed or not, with little attention paid to the nature of the barriers faced by the work deprived and the appropriate treatments. (Dockery & Webster, 2001, p. iii)

Dockery and Webster's note of caution highlights the importance of designing evaluations that do more than tell us something has or has not worked because employment figures have changed. As important as the figures is evaluation content that explains *why* the figures have improved or not.

Research has repeatedly shown that monitoring and evaluation is an important aspect of goal achievement (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, it is important for each organisation to collect baseline data that reflects a range of aspects about its goals with respect to Indigenous employment. These goals are generally enunciated in an organisation's Indigenous employment plan.

Achieving positive Indigenous employment outcomes needs to be core business for the public sector. To ensure Indigenous Employment Strategies are integrated into the core business of public sector departments and agencies, the monitoring and evaluation of Strategies should become part of the normal planning processes.

Victorian public sector departments and agencies have a clear framework for monitoring and evaluating their performance in relation to enhancing opportunities for Indigenous employees. This framework is set out in Wur-cum barra, the Victorian government's Indigenous Employment Strategy, and is reproduced in Box 5.5. Although the framework appears to focus on numeric outcomes, agencies are

encouraged to reflect more deeply on their performance, through a series of questions posed in the toolkit that supports implementation of the Government's Indigenous Employment Strategy (Guidelines for Reporting Progress on Wur-cum barra). These questions provide clear and useful guidelines for reporting progress, and are also replicated below (Boxes 5.6 and 5.7). Such questions should drive Indigenous employment action in all public sector bodies in Victoria.

Box 5.5 Indigenous Employment Strategy performance indicator framework

Capacity Building and Pathways

- Accessibility of organisational and employment information to Indigenous communities
- Accessibility of organisational and employment information to education and training organisations

Recruitment

- Number of Indigenous employees
- Number of funded position for Indigenous employees

Induction and Retention

- Indigenous staff separation rate
- Indigenous staff – Reason for separation
- Indigenous staff average length of service (by key occupational groups)

Career Development

- Indigenous representation by level/occupation
- Percentage of Indigenous staff in work related study
- Percentage of all Indigenous staff in mainstream positions

Workplace Culture

- Implementation of initiatives to make the workplace more accommodating to Indigenous people
- Accessibility of cross cultural training and staff support
- Indigenous employee satisfaction

Indigenous Community Organisations

- Number of organisation-funded ICO positions

Box 5.6 Questions to provide direction for evaluation of the Indigenous Employment Strategy within the organisation

- Does the organisation have one individual with specific responsibility for coordinating implementation of the Wur-cum barra Strategy? When this is not their full job, is the time allocation appropriate to the challenge?
- Has the organisation established or made good progress towards establishing its Indigenous Employment Plan?
- Has the organisation established the number of Indigenous people currently employed? (for use as the base-line measure for future evaluations)
- Is the organisation establishing a process to report to the CEO/Executive at least quarterly on performance against key result areas (see below)?

Box 5.7 Indicators of successful Indigenous Employment Strategy implementation

- Is quarterly reporting to the CEO/Executive established as a standard practice?
- Has the organisation identified sources for potential Indigenous employees, and established direct contact with them? These sources could involve Indigenous communities themselves as well as university and TAFE Indigenous support units, secondary schools, Wurreker brokers, and specialist job network employment service providers.
- Are managers, particularly those who are most likely to advertise vacancies that Indigenous people could fill, aware of the Strategy and how to attract Indigenous applicants?
- Has the HR function established processes to promote practices that will support and maintain Indigenous employment and to monitor their effectiveness?
- Has the organisation established or participated in any Indigenous scholarship, cadetship, or Internship schemes?
- Are there processes in place to review key selection criteria to ensure that they do not inadvertently discriminate against Indigenous people (eg by requiring qualifications that are not necessary)?
- Does the organisation ensure that the jobs filled by Indigenous people are not disproportionately fixed-term? If this is the case, has there been any consideration to converting fixed-term positions to an ongoing basis?
- Has there been any examination of recruitment processes to support the movement of Indigenous people from identified to mainstream positions (thereby creating opportunities for further recruitment into identified positions)?

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the progress report of the Northern Territory Public Sector Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2002-2006 noted that information on Indigenous employment throughout the Northern Territory Public Sector is inconsistent and difficult to measure. The report recommended that a key priority of any future strategy must therefore be to develop adequate means of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting of data. The Victorian Public Sector Census 2004 Report indicates that a similar situation exists in Victoria in terms of incompleteness of data about the employment of Indigenous people in the public sector.

5.2.7 Education and training

Education and training play an important role in assisting people to access the labour market. For most job seekers in Australia, education and preparation for entry to the workforce occurs during the formal years of schooling and in many instances, through further education at the completion of secondary school. For well-prepared employees, ongoing training, or professional development, occurs as part of a total employment experience. For less well-prepared employees, more specialised training will need to be implemented.

It is important to note that research shows that the link between education and employment for Indigenous people is a complex one. For instance, Gray and Hunter (1999) used data from the 1986, 1991, and 1996 censuses to study the determinants of employment and labour force participation for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Their research clearly showed that factors associated with the likelihood of employment are different for the two groups. With respect to education, the increasing levels of educational attainment demonstrated by Indigenous Australians between 1986 and 1996 did not result in anticipated improvements in employment outcomes. In contrast, an increase in level of educational attainment was positively associated with increased employment outcomes for non-Indigenous Australians.

One explanation for this lies in the *relative rate of increase* in educational attainment in the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, with that ratio being higher in the non-Indigenous population. Because the Indigenous population is increasing at a much faster rate than the non-Indigenous population, this proportional discrepancy is exacerbated.

Hunter and Gray concluded that

> …increasing the post-secondary educational attainment of Indigenous Australians to that of non-Indigenous Australians would not resolve Indigenous labour market disadvantage. Other difficult to measure factors such as. . . discrimination and lack of worker motivation, are likely to be as important… (p. v)

With respect to worker motivation, Hunter and Gray suggest that the factors that are related to the decision to participate in the labour force are related to the likelihood of gaining employment. Thus, a circular situation ensues, with motivation waning on the part of Indigenous jobseekers because experience has indicated that proportionally fewer Indigenous people gain employment when compared to non-Indigenous jobseekers.

These caveats aside, level of educational attainment remains a critical factor in improving employment outcomes for Indigenous people – more so, if this growth in proportional imbalance is to be stemmed. Although it may appear to be out-or-scope for public sector bodies, involvement with Indigenous young people during their years of formal schooling has the potential to provide worthwhile payoffs. It is widely acknowledged that the biggest predictor of success is past success or achievement. This in large part explains the large numbers of Indigenous young people who do not complete secondary schooling because history and ongoing disadvantage has prevented their successful achievement at school. If the pool of job ready Indigenous Victorians is to increase, potential employers have some obligation to contribute to

that increase. This can be achieved by public sector bodies having a greater presence in schools either through the provision of scholarships or through involvement in career programs, particularly in regional areas.

Beyond schooling, there are a number of actions that need to be taken to promote employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians. Currently the State government's *Jobs for Victoria* employment strategy promotes the *YES* program (outlined above). The extent to which *YES* has resulted in increased employment for Indigenous people is unknown although there is a current internal review, the results of which will be important in shaping future discussion on any specific traineeship program for Indigenous youth.

The continuation of a traineeship program is essential; however, this needs to be done in conjunction with programs that work at different levels of the workforce. It is important that the public sector provide opportunities for Indigenous employees that will allow them to develop workplace skills that will enable them to remain in the labour force in the long-term. Ongoing training in the workforce is a key driver in enhancing employment outcomes.

In a review of Indigenous specific training projects (Long, Frigo, & Batten, 1999), a number of factors associated with successful training programs were identified. Programs need to be embedded within the Indigenous culture and developed via adequate consultation with the community. They need to use existing support structures as well as garner support for the program from committed advocates. Culturally appropriate courses should be developed through consultation and negotiation with communities. Courses should be provided by trainers and educators who are committed to meeting the needs of the individuals. Where possible, training should be embedded in work experience and delivered by the Indigenous sectors or specialist training units in mainstream organisations. Finally, appropriate recruitment of trainees is essential, as is ongoing evaluation of the program.

The offering of scholarships for Indigenous young people to continue with tertiary education is one kind of initiative to develop a skilled Indigenous workforce for the Victorian Public Service. The Koori Tertiary Scholarships offered within the Victorian Department of Justice is an example of this. Other public sector bodies could offer similar scholarships in focussed areas of study to broaden the skill base of Indigenous recruits.

Whatever form of initial and ongoing specialised training is provided to develop a skilled Indigenous workforce for the Victorian public sector, there are some features of training that appear to facilitate success. NCVER research has identified some of these key features (Miller, 2005) in a systematic review of research into the features required in the planning, design and delivery of vocational education and training and adult community education for Indigenous Australians identified seven key factors. Seven factors were found to lead to positive outcomes for Indigenous Australians when present all of the time in the context of education and training. The seven factors were:

- the involvement of and 'ownership' of training by local communities;

- the incorporation of Indigenous identities, cultures, knowledge and values into training programs;
- the establishment of true partnerships between Indigenous communities, training providers, industry and government organisations;
- the inclusion of flexibility in course design, content and delivery;
- the commitment, expertise and understanding of all staff;
- the provision of appropriate and adequate student support services; and
- the provision of funding that is ongoing and responsive to the realities of location.

The focus on education as a driver of employment opportunity for Indigenous Victorians needs to occur simultaneously with a focus on other issues that affect the personal circumstances of Indigenous people and their ability to participate in the workforce. One form of ongoing education that occurs in the workplace occurs through mentoring relationships as described in the next subsection.

5.2.8 Mentoring

Generally, mentoring programs are promoted as fostering a learning environment within an organisation by providing employees with a confidant and an advisor (Clutterbuck & Ragins, 2002). Mentoring allows new employees to learn how to be productive at the start of employment, thus providing them with greater satisfaction and a greater sense of connection to the organisation. Employees with mentors may be able to obtain career guidance, project assistance, and corporate culture advice that cannot be obtained easily from a manager.

While mentoring is a common practice in many workplaces, mentoring programs are seen to be particularly useful for equal employment opportunity target groups, including Indigenous employees. Mentoring is frequently mentioned as a particularly useful strategy to support induction, retention, and career development of Indigenous Australians (e.g., Public Service and Merit Protection Commission, 2001).

Stories from Indigenous employees with positive employment experiences in the public sector commonly refer to the influence of mentors and role models in their career development (Australian Public Service Commission, 2002). To be successful with Indigenous employees, mentoring programs need to be structured with social and cultural considerations in mind.

There are many resources available to support mentoring programs for Indigenous employees (see Wur-cum barra resources) including *Dulin Inc* (Indigenous Young Peoples Mentoring Service), and courses and publications such as *Insights: Strategies for Success. Indigenous and non-Indigenous People on Work;* and the *Indigenous New Apprenticeships Resource Kit* (DEST), which provides detailed information about setting up successful mentoring relationships.

Any mentoring partnership should be based on mutual respect for each other's values, which, in the case of a cross-cultural mentoring relationship includes cultural values. The mentor should possess a strong range of cross-cultural communication skills and knowledge, which may include the following:

- Supports – doesn't rescue
- Encourages – doesn't condescend
- Offers constructive advice – without being opinionated
- Helps identify opportunities – without being paternalistic
- Encourages mutual discussion and problem solving – doesn't dictate
- Promotes personal empowerment and builds a mutual, equal learning relationship – isn't hierarchical
- Is aware of own cultural values and doesn't 'judge' the cultural values of the mentoree
- Listens – more than talks
- Facilitates decision making – doesn't 'tell' or instruct
- Gets to know the whole person – not just the 'work' person

(Office of Equal Opportunity Government of Western Australia, 2001).

The Stage 2 report of DEWR's Indigenous Employment Policy notes that formal mentoring seems to lead to better retention rates in smaller projects but has little, if any, effect in larger projects. This raises questions about the quality of mentoring in larger projects, where the level of proactive personal support needed may be difficult to achieve. Evaluation should include an examination of the quality of mentoring as well as merely its existence.

Key messages for effective mentoring suggested by DEWR (2003) include:

- have a mentor in place early, as this appears to improve recruitment and reduces the risks to employers by helping them anticipate issues that can be dealt with before participants drop out
- have a mentor who is able to deal constructively with workplace issues based on industry-specific knowledge, as well as one who possesses the more obvious attributes such as cultural awareness and communication skills
- small projects and projects run by brokers where several workers are placed at one worksite (rather than several) have better retention because they focus more on quality through personalised attention and peer support.

The range of skills required from mentors suggests that formal mentoring programmes should be designed to deal with cultural, family and relationship issues, as well as employment conditions; mentoring programs should also be implemented in such a way that advice to employers can be given when relevant issues arise within a mentoring relationship. Coordination of high quality mentoring provided by a range of people needs to be considered carefully in the design of a project and monitored to ensure that it is working as expected.

5.2.9 Workplace practices

There are a number of features of the workplace have been identified repeatedly by Indigenous people as key factors that drive their initial recruitment and influence their decisions to remain. What has been viewed as unhelpful workplace practices has also been described under the banner of discrimination.

Recruitment processes

The first stage of the employment process, that of recruitment, has the potential to discriminate against Indigenous jobseekers. It is often reported that Indigenous people do not apply for positions when they are advertised, even when they have the necessary skills and qualifications. Morgan (2001) urges employers to consider carefully that the way positions are advertised may be the barrier and not an inherent failing within potential Indigenous applicants. Morgan suggests the placing of generic job descriptions in major national newspapers may in fact be an example of exclusionary practice, given that many Indigenous people do not read such newspapers.

The requirement for specified levels of educational attainment is also potentially discriminatory at the recruitment phase. The Wur-cum barra Labour Market Analysis report suggests that some change is possible in the way that qualifications are perceived as relevant to positions.

Box 5.8 provides an example of an appropriate recruitment process leading to success.

Box 5.8 Promoting Your Organisation to Job: One Manager's Experience

We couldn't get Aboriginal people to work here, because we couldn't get them to apply, until we appointed an Indigenous person to work in Human Resources. Part of her job is to liaise with job networks and Indigenous job applicants, and to work with selection panels to minimise any potential disadvantage to Indigenous job applicants. Having her in our team has made a huge difference to the number of quality applicants we attract. Indigenous staffing figures at all levels are actually starting to improve!

My advice to employers who want to attract as many applicants as possible is to use the Aboriginal grapevine, like advertising jobs in Aboriginal organisations. Word gets around quicker!

From *Insights: Strategies for Success. Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People on Work*

The Australian Public Service suggests that agencies are able to incorporate a range of options in their strategies to increase their recruitment of Indigenous employees. These include the use of specifically identified opportunities, the creation of explicit positions, opportunities for career development, or other support initiatives such as a mentoring program and an agency-based Indigenous employee network (APS, 2001).

Mechanisms for career development

Promotion in the workplace is normally achieved by following a set of established guidelines that are often related to the attainment of qualifications or linked to the possession of defined sets of skills. Focussed assistance for the career development of Indigenous employees may be required to overcome initial disadvantage that is associated with low education levels. Mentoring, traineeships, time allocation for further study have all been applied as mechanisms to support the career development of Indigenous employees.

The Australian Public Service Commission (2001) suggests that agencies may identify a specific work unit that can accommodate a trainee program. Base-grade recruits are

provided with a training program and on-the-job experience to equip them with the skills and abilities to perform the duties of the job. The training might include an accredited course at a local educational institution as well as relevant courses offered within the agency and other APS agencies. Upon successful completion of training, the trainee APS 1 would be allocated the appropriate classification as set down in Schedule 2 of *the Public Service Classification Rules 1999*.

Flexibility

The importance of flexibility in the workplace to assist employees to achieve a work life balance is increasingly recognised. Flexible work arrangements are as important, if not more so, for Indigenous employees who have community of family obligations that are culturally-based.

Cultural awareness training

Cultural awareness training is promoted as being necessary for and providing benefits to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees. In the first instance, it is seen to provide the tools to recruit Indigenous people and deal with practical issues that may arise in the workplace. It also enables staff to gain a greater understanding of issues specific to Indigenous people, and to develop the skills and knowledge needed to assist Indigenous people entering and remaining in the workforce.

The benefits of cross cultural awareness training are promoted as including:

- increased staff satisfaction
- creating a work environment which is inclusive of, and values, diversity in the work place
- improved retention of Indigenous staff
- the delivery of culturally appropriate services
- increased efficiency and effectiveness of an agency's business.

5.2.10 Leadership

An important driver of Indigenous participation in employment has been the leadership displayed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders who are committed to improving Indigenous employment participation. A constant theme in reports by Indigenous people of why particular initiatives are successful, or why their workplaces are viewed in a positive light is the importance of a deep level of commitment from people in positions of power to make things work.

Meaningful, purposeful, and visionary leadership is important for both the creation and implementation of policy. It is important at the most senior levels as well as at the level of middle management, and its importance is reflected in the comments of several Indigenous employees at the 2004 Regional Forum presentations, which focussed on how different organisations are implementing the Victorian Public Sector Indigenous Employment Strategy.

Box 5.9 Leaders in the workplace

We need people who are passionate about Wur-cum barra and passionate about Indigenous employment. So having the right people championing what we're here to do is just so important.'

Melissa Stevens, Department of Justice
Wur-cum barra Regional Forum Series, 2004

There is a need for champions for the cause, because if you don't have champions, then one person on their own can't cure the problems. Having champions helps create a pathway into departments and it also makes it easier for that transition from identified into mainstream positions.

Lionel Dukakis, Department of Sustainability and Environment

These sentiments reflect those reported earlier in this review, whereby leadership is perceived by Indigenous employees in the Australian public sector as a key factor in supportive workplaces. Such leadership involves sustained commitment that does not resile from the difficult task of translating ideas into action. The necessary commitment probably derives from a set of values propositions that include those of a moral, social, and economic nature. Committed leaders perceive the devastation that ensues from lack of employment opportunity amongst Indigenous people, and they work to create opportunities for their successful recruitment and retention in the workplace.

The flow on effects of each successful employment action with respect to Indigenous people is potentially quite large, and committed leaders recognise this Not only do the benefits accrue to the individual Indigenous employee – the person's family and community reap the rewards, as does the employing agency in terms of promoting a diverse workforce. The positive consequences of more Indigenous wage earners are particularly marked in Victorian regional communities. This is portrayed, for instance, in a recent evaluation report of the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) process at Shepparton (Cutcliffe, 2004).

> If Shepparton's Aboriginal people were assisted to achieve even half of the economic activity levels of the Goulburn Valley, then Shepparton would benefit from an inflow of more than $150 million per annum. The saving that would flow from the Local, State, and Federal welfare and justice budgets and other community costs are more difficult to assess, but the figure of $50 million does not seem unrealistic. Participation at 50% of the level of Indigenous Shepparton would then point to a nett benefit of $200 million per annum, double that to $400 million if total parity were to be achieved.
>
> … The economic cost also has an equivalency in the social disharmony and cultural deprivation which affects the entire community, regardless of race or culture. (p. 47)

5.3 Limitations in the literature

The forgoing sections of this chapter and chapters 3 to 4 provide evidence of much activity that has been directed towards redressing Indigenous employment disadvantage. The assumption is that an increase in the economic well-being of Indigenous people will be achieved through higher rates of employment, as well as through the employment of more Indigenous people at levels that attract higher

incomes. The emphasis has generally been on quantity rather than on quality and process.

However, it is important to note a major limitation in the literature on Indigenous employment in Australia. This limitation relates to the rigour of the evaluation processes that are used to assess whether an initiative has been successful; if so why, and if not why not?

Although there is a profusion of literature related to Indigenous employment, the greater part of it is not based in research, let alone rigorous research. This does not necessarily invalidate its content, but more substantial evaluation data are required if real and sustained progress is to be made.

The enumeration of the drivers of workforce participation for Indigenous Victorians in the preceding subsections was not strongly based in evidence of what actually promotes employment. There appears to have developed some firmly held beliefs that the factors mentioned above are likely to be important.

Evaluation of any kind requires the collection of 'good' data. Good data are comprehensive, reliable, and pertain specifically to that which is being evaluated. Such data emerge from evaluation processes that are planned *prior* to the implementation of an initiative or program, *not after* its completion.

Unfortunately, much of the literature that is available does not contain findings that are based in the evidence provided by good data. In many cases, there is no data, just what appear to be observational assessments by individuals or groups of people who often have a stake in reporting success. Although such assessments are usually well-intentioned, there is no process by which conclusions can be verified. In other instances, data cannot be relied upon because the processes used to collect them cannot be counted upon to return dependable information. For instance, if surveys have not been designed with an awareness of the difficulties of surveying people on personally sensitive issues, and of persuading them to return completed surveys, then data will be diminished in its quality and capacity to inform our understanding of key issues.

Case studies are often presented as examples of the successful implementation of strategies. There is a problem with much of the literature connected with case studies, however, because case studies are also often written by people with a stake in demonstrating success, particularly when success is connected to funding.

Sometimes, little attention is paid in the evaluation process to the aims of a program, and the only outcome that is measured is an increase in the number of people employed. Although substantive numerical increases are important, just as important are levels of Indigenous employee satisfaction and the reasons why employees are satisfied (or not).

6 SUMMARY, AND A WAY FORWARD

There has been a consistent story across time and context that, as a group, Indigenous Australians are disadvantaged in many areas of their lives. Lack of employment opportunity is one of those areas.

One of the ways in which governments have attempted to overcome such disadvantage is through policies that seek to influence a range of factors including the job search behaviour of the unemployed (Gray & Hunter, 2005), important associated social and cultural indicators such as education and health status, and the workplace environments in which potential job-seekers might find themselves (Hunter, 2002).

The Victorian Government's response has been the development and launching in 2002 of its Indigenous Employment Strategy, Wur-cum barra. The strategy is a whole-of-government framework for coordinating and sustaining government efforts to achieve a greater representation of Indigenous people within all levels of the Public Sector.

Wur-cum barra is a functional strategy that is in keeping with other Indigenous employment strategies Australia wide. It is soundly base in the accepted wisdom that has built up over the years before and since the Miller report (1985) of the factors that we know are related to the employment of Indigenous Australians.

In a very real sense the Wur-cum barra document (2002) identifies the broad barriers to and drivers of Indigenous workforce participation. The barriers and actions were identified in consultations with Indigenous and government stakeholders. In section 3.3 of the Wur-cum barra document, six key areas for consideration are listed, and within each of these areas, barriers to be addressed, and actions to address the barriers are identified.

Our review of the literature suggests that Wur-cum barra provides a sound policy framework for future action. Some public sector agencies (notably, the Department of Justice, and Parks Victoria) have moved further down the track of addressing Indigenous employment issues, probably because their core business enhances opportunities for Indigenous people more than is the case in other departments and agencies.

Anecdotally it has been reported that some departments and agencies, however, have not engaged with Wur-cum barra. This suggests that the strategy has not been promoted as effectively as it should have been. Promotion of the strategy involves not only raising awareness of its existence in the first place (and this is a necessary initial action that probably needs attention), but it also involves the provision of support for attitudinal and structural workplace changes.

To roll out the next phase of Wur-cum barra, there must be adequate resourcing in terms of dollars and committed people at all levels. There must be coordination between government departments and organisations within departments – in keeping with a whole-of government approach. Ongoing training of people is required to create cultural awareness to operate in ways that are consultative, collaborative, non-competitive, and conducive to inter agency networking.

A profusion of initiatives is not conducive to a holistic approach but rather leads to a fragmented approach. So, there is a need to ensure that everyone is going in the same direction and that everyone is aware of what the destination should be – constant change means a shifting ground. For instance, over the two months of conducting this review of the literature, key government sites and initiatives have changed. This is not conducive to creating commitment among people. When people are unsure of what they should be doing, they inevitably continue with what they have always done, and this may not be in the best interests of enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

A one-off effort will not result in immediate change, nor change that is sustained over time. Repeated action by a team of people dedicated to the task of ensuring Indigenous employment policy is implemented and supported is required. This has been recognised in Queensland with the establishment of Wal-meta, the unit that has the responsibility to ensure the implementation of that state's strategy.

An excerpt from the evaluation report on the NT Public Sector Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2002-2006 serves as a pertinent reminder of the commitment that is needed to achieve positive Indigenous employment outcomes.

> … there are no easy or 'silver bullet' solutions to achieving growth in indigenous employment … putting in the hard yards and persistency is required before outcomes are achieved. (NT Government, Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment, 2004, p. 6)

Wur-cum barra is one of a suite of government policies to improve Indigenous disadvantage but it can only do so much. Low workforce participation of Indigenous people results from a complex interaction of a range of factors, which calls for solutions that are themselves complex and based in interagency cooperation and partnerships with Indigenous individuals and communities.

It is clear that there is a limited pool of job-ready Indigenous people available for employment in the public sector. Time will be needed for that pool to increase, because a key factor is the increased levels of education that will come in the first instance from increased participation in education. Although the education sector has a primary responsibility here, the responsibility needs also to be taken up by public sector bodies. It is possible to develop links with schools with a view to promoting careers within the public sector. The provision of scholarships to school students with a view to eventual employment within either the broad public sector or a specific public sector body could be considered.

Research tells us that many young Indigenous people have high career aspirations, but a number of factors get in the way of fulfilling those aspirations, including the support that they have been given at school in terms of career advice (Craven et al., 2005). It is possible that greater interaction between a wide range of Victorian public sector bodies and Indigenous students in schools would lead to increased awareness amongst the students of the wide range of employment possibilities that exist in the public sector. Such interaction is particularly important to raise awareness that many

positions in the public sector require semi-skilled people – they do not require academic qualifications at high levels.

The provision of employee services to enhance the attractiveness of employment within public sector bodies also needs continued attention. In particular, the provision of flexible work arrangements, transport, health, and childcare facilities have been suggested as being important to Indigenous people, especially in regional areas.

The brokering of employment opportunities should be core business in the public sector. Employment brokers, in the main, need to be Indigenous, well-informed about the machinations of the public sector, and based in regional areas with which they have an affinity.

There are limitations in the collecting of data and this should be addressed– much of what reports rely on for analysis/evaluation of policy uses census/survey data that is derived from instruments designed for other purposes. To effectively monitor and evaluate progress in overcoming Indigenous employment disadvantage requires the departmental collection of baseline data about the full range of issues that are addressed in policy documentation.

The importance of leadership cannot be overstated. Meaningful, purposeful, and visionary leadership is required to ensure the good policy is developed, implemented, resourced, and evaluated. Good leaders ensure that workplaces are staffed with people who understand and value difference; they ensure that people are provided with opportunities to develop skills and follow career pathways.

Some organisations are getting it right and are creating opportunities and workplaces through committed action and application of clear policy. Wur-cum barra provides a sound framework and some departments in Victoria are using the framework to make notable progress. Their progress acknowledges the broader issues, set of barriers that apply to Indigenous people, and the types of solutions that are required. Successful employers have applied this understanding to their own specific workplaces and, for example, have asked such questions as:

- How should we advertise to attract an Indigenous person?
- How do we create links with Indigenous communities?
- How can we skill up our non-Indigenous workforce to work with Indigenous colleagues?
- What workplace arrangements do we make to enable our Indigenous employees to continue to work with us?
- What skills do our Indigenous employees have? What skills need to be developed or improved? How can we help our Indigenous employees to acquire those skills?

The Way Forward

Numerous policies, programs, and strategies have been examined in the course of conducting this review of the literature. Case studies abound of small and large programs implemented across public and private sector organisations; these are mostly descriptive but occasionally involve a process of evaluation. The numbers of

Indigenous people involved in training and employment because of particular initiatives sometimes reflects success. Often, however, the numbers do not quite meet designated targets, and there are questions about whether the targets that *are* met will translate into ongoing employment.

To advance current efforts to enhance Indigenous employment opportunities in the Victorian public sector, we suggest a 3-C framework – *coherence, collaboration, and commitment* – to guide thinking. The framework sits well with the important six-level performance indicator framework of Wur-cum barra, which should remain as the core guide for action.

Coherence

The first 'C' relates to development of a coherent policy framework. Researchers have warned that employment will continue to be a major area of disadvantage for Indigenous people. This disadvantage may well become worse as the Indigenous 'baby boom' increasingly reaches working age. Improving Indigenous employment outcomes, therefore, will continue to be a national priority for some time. A number of States and Territories have held Indigenous forums, and there are currently inquiries being conducted at the national level. It is important that these efforts are coordinated and there is an opportunity to take stock, particularly in the area of funding and resourcing (note the recent abolition of ATSIC, and the newly formed Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination), so that future initiatives are strategically positioned to build on success.

Emerging from the literature, however, is a sense of fragmentation of efforts and a lack of follow through. A major problem is the rapidity with which program initiatives come and go. For instance, in the Victorian submission to the current *Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs Inquiry into Indigenous Employment*, the listing of initiatives does no match the actuality of those in existence at the time of writing this review of the literature. Most of those listed have been replaced by *Workforce Participation Partnerships*. This constant change makes it difficult to monitor and evaluate the success of project. Evaluation motivation wanes once a program is no longer extant.

Two decades ago, the report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs [1985] commented on the problem of a lack of a clear delineation in the functional responsibilities between different government agencies. This problem persists and results in a proliferation of programs and measures that are sometimes not distinguishable one from one the other. Such overlap and duplication confuses both Indigenous people and the staff responsible for the delivery of programs. Any policy to promote Indigenous employment must be framed in such a way as to clearly delineate the functional responsibilities of each government agency involved.

The Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Vol 1 made a number of recommendations with respect to government agency responsibility for addressing the employment and economic status of Aboriginal people. The clarity that is needed in terms of delineating responsibility

for the various actions needed cannot be over-emphasised. These recommendations are reproduced in Appendix C.

A coherent policy framework requires the inclusion of all stakeholders and demands a whole-of-government approach that recognizes the complex causes and outcomes of Indigenous employment disadvantage, and the interconnectedness of improving employment, housing, education, and health. Policy needs to build the capacity of Indigenous communities, particularly in rural and regional areas, so that they can continue to participate in developing, implementing and monitoring these strategies.

Collaboration

Collaboration, the second 'C', is a major theme that emerges in most of the documentation that we consulted. The way in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals, organisations and communities often worked together in the past was based on the notion of partnerships and consultation that often did not exist in reality or in a genuine way. Initiatives were developed to support Indigenous employment that were perhaps not understood or accepted by the people they were intended to help.

There is a sense emerging now that Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals, organisations, and communities are increasingly coming together to forge meaningful relationships that are dynamic, ongoing, and have the capacity to strengthen over time. Indigenous employment coordinators have played an important role in forging these relationships; Indigenous brokers have the potential to play a similar role in bringing parties together for training and employment. The genuine and active involvement of Indigenous communities is consistently featured as a key to success, particularly in rural and remote areas. Building the capacity of Indigenous communities is crucial to generating long-term viable employment outcomes. This process will not happen overnight, so much patience is required

Commitment

The third 'C' is commitment. A sustained and significant level of commitment is needed at senior levels of government and from senior executives and managers across sectors and organisations. Commitment is needed also at the level of middle management, where often the responsibility for translating policy into action lies. Repeatedly, it is individuals working at the 'coal face' who are seen to drive change; unless these people have genuine, hands on, support from the top, their efforts may not translate into long-term, systemic change.

Organisational and government commitment is reflected through adequate resourcing and funding. Whilst some of this funding may come from external sources (for example, the National Indigenous Cadetship Project – which could be extended to include traineeships and apprenticeships), dependence on special resources and funding may hamper efforts to support long-term change. A commitment to improving Indigenous employment outcomes needs to be intrinsic to the operation of organisations and reflected in the accountability of managers to meet these Indigenous employment targets as the core business. Commitment will also require a

recognition that not one-size fits-all and that flexibility to implement creative solutions is needed.

A note of hope

On a final positive note, it seems that some Victorian public sector bodies are making a substantial contribution to enhancing employment opportunities for Indigenous Victorians. The 2001 ABS estimate of Victoria's Indigenous population was 0.6 % of the State's estimated resident population. Recent Victorian public sector estimates of the proportion of Indigenous employees are approximately 0.7% of the total workforce (E. Jensen, personal communication, November 28, 2006; Institute of Koorie Education, Deakin University, 2005; State Services Authority, 2005a). Such a positive message, of course, does not eliminate the need to continue efforts to redress the obvious employment disadvantage that exists for a great number of Indigenous Victorians. Sustainable commitment and aggressive action is needed to overcome the cumulative and devastating effects of Indigenous employment disadvantage.

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APPENDIX A

Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project Signatories

The websites of some of these signatories provide information about their Indigenous Employment Strategies and examples of successes.

Corporate Leader Signatories - May 2005

- AAT Kings Tours Pty Ltd
- Accor Asia-Pacific
- Alcan Gove Pty Limited
- AMP Limited
- Australian Gas Light Company
- Australian Integration Management Services Corporation Pty Ltd
- Australian Power and Water Pty Ltd
- Banjo's
- BankWest
- Barclay Mowlem
- Baulderstone Hornibrook Pty Ltd
- Bendigo Bank Ltd
- BHP Billiton
- Bindaree Beef
- Boral Limited
- Bovis Lend Lease
- BP Australia Retail Marketing
- Carey Mining Pty Ltd
- Catholic Welfare Australia
- Chubb Protective Services
- Clough Engineering Limited
- Coles Myer Ltd
- Compass Group
- Consolidated Meat Group
- Country Energy
- Deacons
- Delco Australia Pty Ltd
- Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu
- Fairfax Group
- Fletcher International Exports Pty Ltd
- Flinders University
- Ford Motor Company
- Groote Eylandt Mining Company Pty Ltd
- Heathgate Resources Pty Ltd

- Henry Walker Eltin
- Insurance Australia Group (IAG)
- InterContinental Hotels Group
- Irritek Pty Ltd
- John Holland Group
- Lactos Pty Ltd
- Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd
- McDonalds Australia Ltd
- Minara Resources Limited
- Morris Corporation
- Namoi Cotton Cooperative
- National Australia Bank
- Newmont Australia
- NIB
- Northern Metropolitan Regional Corporate Leaders
- Qantas Airways Limited
- Rio Tinto
- Roche Bros Pty Ltd
- Salmat Limited
- Skilled Engineering
- Sodexho Australia
- SSL Nationwide – Spotless
- Tatiara Meat Company
- Telstra Corporation
- The Body Shop
- The Uniting Church – South Australia
- Thiess Contractors Pty Ltd
- Timber Industry of South Australia
- Voyages Hotels & Resorts
- Warner Village Theme Parks
- Westpac Banking Corporation
- WMC Resources Ltd
- Woodside Energy Ltd
- Woolworths
- Xstrata
- Young & Rubicam

APPENDIX B

Northern Territory Public Sector Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2002-2006: Framework for Future Action

The Northern Territory Public Sector Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2002-2006 Framework for Future Action document provide a good example of the specific enunciation of action to achieve designated outcomes. Also included in the document (but not included here) are two extra columns that list which government agency is to be responsible for the action and the timeframe for the action.

Framework for the Future

OUTCOME 1: Increased number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander men and women recruited into the public sector

STRATEGY	ACTION
1.1 Establish and maintain a comprehensive range of entry level programs targeted specifically at Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people including: • Apprenticeship programs • STEP programs. • Cadetships. • Scholarships.	• Consult with Indigenous organisations, DEET and tertiary institutions to develop appropriate programs. • Market opportunities through job and youth expos and appropriate media channels. • Manage and coordinate program intakes. • Identify suitable placements and commit to minimum annual intakes.
1.2 Market the Northern Territory Public Sector as an employer of choice for Indigenous youth.	• Participate in job and youth expos. • Establish work experience and vacation employment programs targeting Indigenous youth. • Ensure Indigenous people are represented on interview panels.
1..3 Create a pool of potential Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander applicants for vacancies in the Northern Territory Public Sector	• Establish a voluntary job search register for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people wanting to work in the Northern Territory Public Sector. • Provide pre-recruitment assistance to Indigenous applicants for the register. • Agencies access the register to screen for potential applicants • .
1.4 Improve coordination and communication in the Northern Territory Public Sector in relation to Indigenous employment opportunities.	• Establish an Indigenous Employment Task Force with representation from agencies and Indigenous organisations • Develop a recruitment strategy focusing on Indigenous employees in the rural and remote locations. • Review the types of training courses offered by tertiary institutions to increase the number of skilled Indigenous staff in remote locations.

OUTCOME 2: Adequate representation of Indigenous people at all levels within the public sector to enable effective contribution to policy and decision making affecting Indigenous people

2.1 Increase the number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people progressing through middle and senior levels within the Northern Territory Public Sector through professional development.	• Establish personal learning and development plans for Indigenous employees. • Participate in work exchange and mobility programs for Indigenous employees. • Promote participation by Indigenous employees in Tertiary study assistance programs. • Groom high potential Indigenous employees for management positions.
2.2 Establish relevant career pathways that facilitate the advancement of Indigenous employees into policy development and decision making roles.	• Identify areas where participation of Indigenous employees will enhance policy and service delivery outcomes. • Provide appropriate career counselling to Indigenous employees. • Implement appropriate succession planning for work units that will benefit from Indigenous participation. • Establish mentorship programs within agencies. • Develop specific strategies to ensure Indigenous people are employed to assist in the implementation of key policies in the Northern Territory Public Sector, eg. Health Boards and Learnings Lessons Review.
2.3 Increase retention rates of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employees through fostering appropriate peer support mechanisms.	• Establish an "Indigenous Network" which meets regularly for development and networking purposes. • Maintain electronic "Indigenous Network" for Indigenous employees. • Access existing (and develop as necessary) short courses, skills development and management programs targeting Indigenous employees throughout the Northern Territory Public Sector.

OUTCOME 3: Effective evaluation and reporting systems developed to assist in the implementation of the Strategy

3.1 Establish effective mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the success of the strategy in improving employment and career development outcomes for Indigenous people.	• Establish benchmarks and targets for Indigenous employment outcomes. • Review data collection systems to enable the collation and analysis of data related to Indigenous employment and career development.
3.2 Incorporate Indigenous employment outcomes in Equal Opportunity Management Plans (EOMP).	• Update EOMPs to address the strategy. • Report progress and outcomes in annual reports. • Where appropriate, establish IECDS sub committees of EOMP Committees to focus on Indigenous issues.
3.3 Establish Partnership Performance Agreements within agencies.	• As required, agencies to develop internal Agreements to achieve Indigenous employment outcomes.
3.4 Promote, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy at the sector wide level.	• Report outcomes quarterly to IWIWP • IWIWP to monitor and report to PSCC on a quarterly basis. • Interim review of effectiveness of the Strategy

OUTCOME 4: Increased cultural diversity throughout the public sector leading to improved understanding and respect for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage

STRATEGY	ACTION
4.1 Promote understanding of Indigenous culture and heritage within the Northern Territory Public Sector.	• Conduct cross cultural awareness programs. • Develop awareness programs that will assist agencies to identify opportunities to benefit from increased Indigenous employment levels. • Develop workshops for HR practitioners and managers on good practice in employing and retaining Indigenous people.
4.2 Promote understanding by Indigenous employees of procedures and processes within a bureaucracy framework..	• Effective induction and orientation programs.. • Ensure all Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employees have access to these programs.

APPENDIX C

Recommendations from *The Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* regarding government agency responsibility for addressing the employment and economic status of Aboriginal people.

Recommendation 5.

That the Department for Victorian Communities:

(a) expand the Indigenous Employment Initiative in Shepparton to other areas across the State and whether the target of providing 100 employment opportunities over a three-year period has been achieved (Recommendation 301 relating to employment development agreements);

(b) examine the various schemes for the enhancement of local Indigenous involvement in stimulating economic activity (Recommendations 302-303 relating to the proposed examination of various schemes for the enhancement of local Aboriginal involvement in stimulating economic activity);

(c) advise on how the needs of local Indigenous communities are linked to mainstream labour market programs and what proportion of the resourcing for those programs is allocated to Indigenous groups (Recommendation 304 relating to training and active labour market programs);

(d) advise on the provision of preferential tendering and the employment of Indigenous people in any Victorian Government tendering work (Recommendation 307 relating to preference to tenderers who employ Aboriginal people);

(e) establish a peak body, with partners drawn from the Commonwealth Government, private sector and Indigenous community (supported by a network of local employment promotion committees) to begin the process of implementing an Aboriginal Employment Development Program type strategy in Victoria (Recommendation 308 relating to the encouragement of Aboriginal employment in the private sector and Recommendation 309 relating to funding local employment promotion committees);

(f) ensure that the Aboriginal Employment Development Program type strategy is underpinned by significant research on the correlation between Indigenous over-representation and economic disadvantage (Recommendations 308 and 309);

(g) ensure that the principles of the *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement* are underpinned in the establishment of the peak body referred to in (e) above (Recommendations 308 and 309);

(h) apply the principles enshrined in Recommendations 311 to 313 relating to Aboriginal enterprise and developing economic opportunities to its own business enterprise programs;

(i) report on what steps have been implemented to maximise Indigenous employment through Aboriginal interests in any major mining and tourism development (Recommendation 314);

(j) work with the Commonwealth Government on the effective delivery of the Community Development Employment Program across all Indigenous communities (Recommendations 317-319), noting the concerns raised by the Koori Business Network;

(k) undertake further research into the economic circumstances of Indigenous people at Lake Tyers and Framlingham Aboriginal Trusts (Recommendation 320);

(l) determine the contribution in which Indigenous communities make to the local or regional economy and the impact of the income and tax system on Aboriginal individuals and organisations (Recommendation 320);

(m) facilitate realistic economic planning by Indigenous communities which is consistent with the prevailing economic circumstances (Recommendation 320);

(n) advise on whether a database has been established, how it is being maintained and how it is used and accessed by the Indigenous community to assist in their planning processes (Recommendation 320); and

(o) provide a report to the Aboriginal Justice Forum on (a)-(n).

That the Victorian Government continue to implement and monitor Recommendations 301 (relating to employment development agreements); Recommendation 302-303 (relating to the proposed examination of various schemes for the enhancement of local Aboriginal involvement in stimulating economic activity), Recommendation 304 (relating to training and active labour market programs), Recommendation 308 (relating to

the encouragement of Aboriginal employment in the private sector), Recommendation 309 (relating to funding local employment promotion committees), Recommendations 311-313 (relating to Aboriginal enterprise and developing economic opportunities to its own business enterprise programs), Recommendation 314 (relating to Indigenous employment through Aboriginal interests in any major mining and tourism development), Recommendation 317-319 (relating to Community Development and Employment Project) and Recommendation 320 (relating to the impact of the income and tax system on Aboriginal individuals and organisations through any monitoring process established as a consequence of this Review.

Recommendation 6.

That the State Services Authority continue to implement and monitor Recommendations 305 and 306 (relating to detailed targeting of Aboriginal employment in the public service and enhanced public sector employment targets respectively) through the *Wur-cum barra* Employment Strategy including:

(a) whether the targets in the Wur-cum barra Strategy to maximise employment of Indigenous officers in all areas and in all levels of the Victorian Public Service & Private Sector are being achieved;

(b) whether the targets set in the Wur-cum barra Strategy are based on the high unemployment levels in the Indigenous community, rather than on the proportionate size of the Indigenous community; and

(c) what resources have been allocated to implement the Wur-cum barra Strategy; and

(d) provide a report to the Aboriginal Justice Forum on (a)-(c).