

# First Nations Workforce Strategy



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### Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work and learn. We recognise their deep and ongoing connection to this land, its seas, skies, and waterways, and the role they continue to play in caring for Country.

We also honour their right to self-determination, acknowledging the importance of their guidance and leadership in shaping our futures. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, honouring their wisdom, leadership, and the cultural traditions they uphold. May their strength and connection to the land guide us as we come together.



# Our Commitment

**CQUniversity's prior First Nations Workforce Strategy (2020–2025) represented the University's first formal and institution-wide approach to strengthening the recruitment, retention, and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. The 2020–2025 First Nations Workforce Strategy established a strong foundation through initiatives such as the improvements in recruitment practices, integration of cultural competency training across the workforce, and the development of culturally safe onboarding practices. The prior Strategy successfully exceeded its workforce parity target, achieving 3.55 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander continuing and fixed-term employees in 2025.**


Equally important were the lessons learned. Initiatives such as structured mentoring, comprehensive traineeship programs, and leadership development pathways highlighted the need for earlier planning, sustained investment, and systematic scalability across all campuses. These insights now shape the priorities for the next phase of workforce development.

In developing this First Nations Workforce Strategy, we undertook a targeted consultation process with our First Nations staff, including a dedicated survey to capture staff insights, priorities, and lived experiences; their feedback has directly informed the direction, actions, and commitments outlined in this document, ensuring the strategy reflects the voices and aspirations of our First Nations workforce.

The First Nations Workforce Strategy (2026–2030) builds on progress made to date, and responds to the evolving aspirations of staff, students, and community. It is closely aligned with the CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2024–2028, the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2025–2028, the First Nations Research Strategy 2023–2028, and national policy frameworks including the Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017 and the Australian Universities Accord, which centres Indigenous equity and success at the heart of the tertiary education system.

The Accord's national equity agenda recognises the value of First Nations knowledge systems and calls for universities to embed Indigenous perspectives across teaching, research, and workforce development. In aligning with the Australian Universities Accord, our First Nations Workforce Strategy embraces national calls for a stronger, more representative Indigenous presence in academia.

Collectively, these frameworks aim to position CQUniversity as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, embedding First Nations engagement and leadership into the heart of institutional planning and performance.



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## Looking forward, the 2026–2030 Strategy is structured around the three interconnected priority areas below.

Together, the actions and deliverables underpinning this strategy will establish an ambitious and measurable agenda for 2026–2030. They will deepen CQUniversity's commitment to reconciliation, enhance our ability to attract and retain First Nations talent, and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to contribute, lead, and succeed at all levels of the University. The First Nations Workforce Strategy (2026–2030) sets a clear and ambitious pathway for CQUniversity to continue building a culturally safe, inclusive, and high-performing workforce.

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### ATTRACTION & RECRUITMENT

Positioning CQUniversity as an employer of choice through:

- › stronger pre-employment programs
- › culturally informed recruitment practices
- › enhanced advertising
- › outreach
- › ambitious growth in identified and senior First Nations positions.

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### RETENTION & DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening career pathways through:

- › structured traineeship, cadetship and postdoctoral programs
- › professional development and leadership training
- › networking, mentoring, and recognition opportunities that empower staff to thrive
- › embedding a new Cultural Safety Framework
- › strengthening cultural capability training across all levels of the workforce
- › supporting supervisors
- › addressing colonial load to ensure an inclusive and supportive workplace.

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### GOVERNANCE & REPORTING

Ensuring First Nations voices are embedded in:

- › decision-making
- › strengthening transparency through robust monitoring and reporting
- › building accountability into all policies, procedures and workforce initiatives.

# Attraction and Recruitment

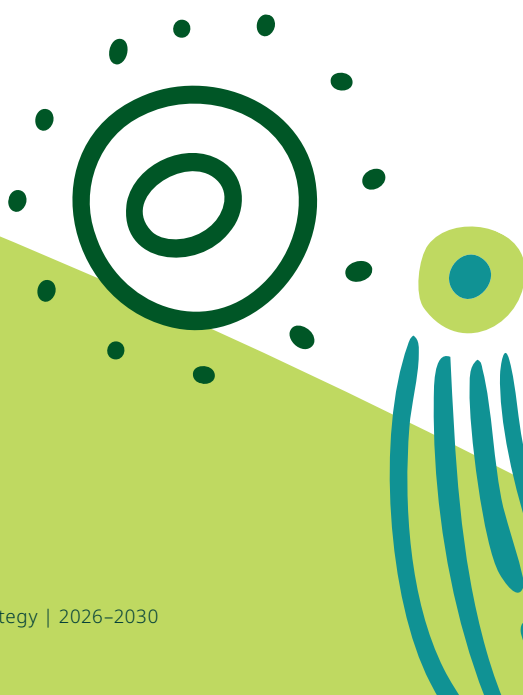
The attraction and recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff continues to be a priority for CQUniversity. Building a strong, representative First Nations workforce is essential to advancing cultural leadership, equity, and authentic engagement across the University. Strengthening pathways into employment, implementing culturally responsive recruitment practices, and proactively promoting opportunities ensures that First Nations talent is supported, visible, and empowered. This focus not only drives workforce diversity but also reinforces the University's commitment to reconciliation, inclusive excellence, and long-term capability development.



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
1. Become an employer of choice for First Nations Peoples by improving pre-employment resources.	1.1 Develop pre-employment tools and resources to support potential First Nations applicants.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture (PaC)
	1.2 Develop, promote and deliver, at least four (4) times per year, pre-employment skills building and career preparation workshops online.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Careers and Development
	1.3 Continually improve the First Nations Employment page on the CQUniversity website by including stories and testimonials from current First Nations employees, along with additional support information and resources.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	1.4 Update Careers site to include a section on First Nations Employment.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
2. Increase effectiveness of job vacancy advertisements to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, encompassing online, targeted publications, and additional platforms.	2.1 Submit an application for exemption in NSW to designate and recruit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identified positions.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	2.2 Collaborate with Indigenous Engagement Division to increase First Nations representation at career events and providing culturally appropriate promotional resources.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	2.3 Centralise an advertising budget for specialised recruitment channels (e.g. DreamJobz and Campus Radar) in PaC to better support the universities strategic recruitment practices.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	2.4 Advertise all Identified positions on First Nations recruitment platforms as appropriate to the position.	December 2026–2030	
	2.5 Utilise targeted campaign platforms (e.g. Campus Radar) for hard-to-fill Identified positions as required.	December 2026–2030	
	2.6 Optimise advertisement copy to ensure tone and language are culturally respectful and appropriate for the target audience.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	2.7 Feature CQUniversity's First Nations artwork on all Identified position advertisements, along with approved exemption wording under special measures provisions.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Global Brand and Marketing
	2.8 Identified job advertisements to include images of First Nations staff, and where relevant, incorporate storytelling to foster cultural connection and authenticity in recruitment messaging.	June 2027	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
<b>3. Promote vacancies through First Nations employment and community networks.</b>	3.1 Promote vacancies via Aboriginal Employment Officers Network (AEON).	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	3.2 Promote vacancies via CQUniversity Indigenous Engagement social media channels.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	3.3 Promote vacancies via prescribed body corporates and other First Nations community organisations.	December 2026–2030	
	3.4 Develop a First Nations Employment Opportunities mailing list to promote vacancies.	December 2026–2030	
	3.5 Promote the First Nations Employment Opportunities mailing list to Indigenous Alumni.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Director – Global Brand and Marketing
	3.6 Promote internal vacancies via the First Nations staff teams site.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
<b>4. Improve and Promote the First Nations Talent Pool.</b>	4.1 Undertake audit of First Nations Talent Pool in EMPower to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants only.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	4.2 Update candidate profile to ensure update wording around identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.	December 2026	
	4.3 Investigate automatic notifications to Indigenous Engagement Projects Team when there is a new addition to the First Nations Talent Pool.	December 2026	
	4.4 Include all applicants in the First Nations Talent Pool on the First Nations Employment Opportunities mailing list.	December 2026–2030	
	4.5 Promote First Nations Talent Pool with Alumni via newsletter.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Director – Global Brand and Marketing
<b>5. Increase First Nations workforce representation.</b>	5.1 Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to 5.5% across continuing and fixed term positions.	March 2028	<b>Division:</b> All Divisions <b>Lead:</b> University Executive <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	5.2 Increase Identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions by a minimum of five (5) over the life of the RAP.	March 2028	
	5.3 Conduct an annual review of all positions within the University to ensure that any position that is eligible to be Identified for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is identified as such.	December 2026–2030	
	5.4 Recruit and appoint two (2) additional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members to senior academic positions (Level D or E) within the schools or research centres or institutes.	March 2028	<b>Division:</b> Tertiary Education Division and Research Division <b>Lead:</b> Vice-President – Academic and Vice-President – Research <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
6. Develop and implement Indigenous Employment Pathway Programs.	6.1 Develop and implement Indigenous Traineeship Program.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	6.2 Each division to employ at least one (1) First Nations trainee each year.	December 2027–2030	<b>Division:</b> All Divisions <b>Lead:</b> University Executive <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	6.3 Develop and implement a two (2) year First Nations Early Career Academic Program.	December 2027	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Vice-President – Academic
	6.4 Each school to employ at least one (1) Indigenous Early Career Academic over the life of this strategy.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Tertiary Education Division <b>Lead:</b> Vice-President – Academic <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	6.5 Develop a First Nations Post Doctoral Program.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Research Division <b>Lead:</b> Vice-President – Research
	6.6 Appoint a minimum of two (2) First Nations post-doctoral research fellows for a period of at least two (2) years each.	December 2026	<b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement, Director – Office of Research
	6.7 Investigate developing a cadetship program for current Indigenous students.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, DVP Education, Strategy and Innovation
	6.8 Investigate developing an internship program for First Nations high school students.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
7. Improve Onboarding for First Nations staff and their supervisors.	7.1 Update the First Nations Onboarding Extras Package to include:	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	7.1.1 Specific First Nations staff leave provisions.		
	7.1.2 First Nations cultural workload allocation provisions.		
	7.2 Ensure personalised welcome from Vice-President Indigenous Engagement to new starters.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Vice-President – Indigenous Engagement
7.3 Ensure all new First Nations staff members are linked with an on-campus Indigenous 'buddy'.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture	
7.4 Develop Cultural Safety Toolbox for Supervisors/Managers of First Nations staff including:	December 2027		
7.4.1 Specific First Nations staff leave provisions.			
7.4.2 First Nations cultural workload allocation provisions.			
7.4.3 Promotion of Cultural Awareness training.			
7.4.4 Promotion of Cultural Safety Framework.			
7.4.5 Provision of information regarding cultural and colonial load.			



# Retention and Development

Supporting the growth and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is essential for CQUniversity, as a strong, supported, and empowered First Nations workforce sustains cultural leadership, institutional knowledge, and inclusive excellence. Investing in tailored professional development, mentoring, leadership pathways, and culturally safe environments ensures staff are equipped, valued, and able to progress in their careers, while recognition, meaningful engagement, and responsive support address the unique challenges of colonial load and workplace inequities. By fostering career growth, wellbeing, and cultural safety, the University strengthens its capacity by maintaining a representative and resilient First Nations workforce that can lead, innovate and drive institutional change.



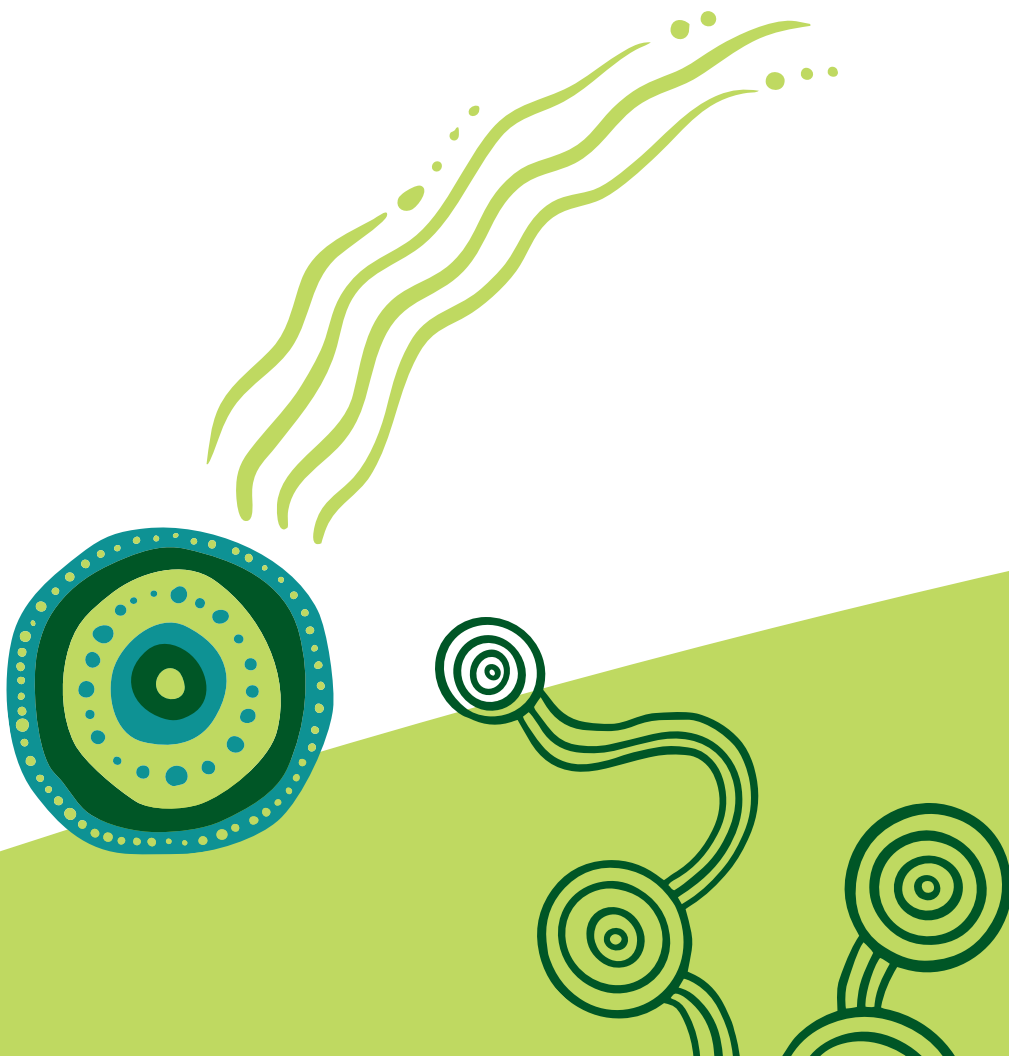
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
8. Improve networking, mentoring and engagement to increase staff retention.	8.1 Strengthen Indigenous staff network teams site to include:	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	8.1.1 Promotion of internal vacancies for career advancement.	December 2026–2030	
	8.1.2 Establish Indigenous campus leads to strengthen campus networks and relationships.	December 2026–2030	
	8.1.3 Creation of peer support networks for academic, teaching, research and professional staff.	December 2026	
	8.1.4 Develop an internal 'buddy' system to connect new and existing staff.	December 2026	
	8.2 Develop and present Indigenous Staff Excellence Awards:	December 2027	<b>Division:</b> All Divisions <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	8.2.1 Research Award.		<b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Vice-President – Academic, Vice-President – Research
	8.2.2 Professional Award.		
	8.2.3 Academic Award.		
	8.2.4 Teaching Award.		
	8.3 Annual check in with Vice-President Indigenous Engagement and First Nations staff via online forum.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Vice-President – Indigenous Engagement
	8.4 Develop and conduct personalised exit interviews with First Nations staff to identify improvements for future success strategies.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	8.5 Host First Nations staff conference at least every two (2) years.	December 2027,	
	8.5.1 Remove financial barriers to ensure maximum participation of First Nations staff.	December 2029	
8.5.2 Include targeted sessions for academics, researchers, teachers and professional staff.			





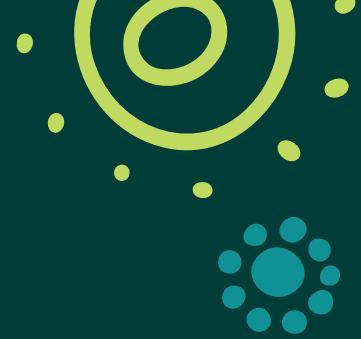
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
9. Maintain a culturally safe and supportive work environment.	9.1 Develop and implement a new CQUniversity Cultural Safety Framework.	July 2026	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	9.2 Continue to create, where possible, culturally safe spaces on each campus utilising the CQUniversity Culturally Safe Space and Place Guidelines.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Director – Facilities Management
	9.3 Implement the Cultural Competency Framework 2023–2028 by developing a suite of Cultural Competency training modules for all continuing and fixed term staff.	December 2028	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	9.3.1 Develop and deliver an online Cultural Awareness (introductory) training program to 75% of continuing and fixed term staff.	December 2026	
	9.3.2 Develop and deliver an online Cultural Safety (intermediate) training program to 60% of continuing and fixed term staff.	December 2026	
	9.3.3 Develop and deliver an online Cultural Competency (advanced) training program to 50% of continuing and fixed term staff.	December 2027	
	9.4 Continue to monitor staff participation and completion in Cross-Cultural Competency training.	December 2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	9.5 Improve reporting mechanisms for staff to enable them to report instances where staff feel culturally unsafe.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	9.6 Actively address colonial load impacts for Indigenous staff.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	9.6.1 Develop framework/guideline for supervisors regarding the differences between cultural load and colonial load.		
9.6.2 Ensure appropriate workload allocation for cultural duties as per the Enterprise Agreement.		<b>Division:</b> All Divisions <b>Lead:</b> University Executive <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture, Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement	

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
10. Develop and implement professional development pathways for Indigenous staff.	10.1 Develop and implement mentoring program for Indigenous staff.	December 2027	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture
	10.2 Continually promote awareness of professional development entitlements and encourage participation, with a focus on supporting First Nations employees to access opportunities and funding.	December 2026–2030	
	10.3 Develop targeted professional development programs for First Nations staff.	July 2028	
	10.3.1 Develop governance and chair training. 10.3.2 Develop public speaking training.		
	10.4 Investigate developing a pool for Indigenous staff seeking secondment opportunities.	July 2028	



# Governance and Reporting

Strong governance and transparent reporting remain key priorities, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in decision-making ensures not only cultural integrity and accountability, but is integral to the effective implementation of the First Nations Workforce Strategy. Through strengthened leadership representation, policy reviews that recognise Indigenous contributions and voices, and robust reporting and review mechanisms, the University can monitor progress, tackle systemic barriers, and uphold its commitments to workforce equity and inclusive excellence.



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility Area
11. Ensure active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and representatives in CQUniversity's institutional decision-making and planning processes.	11.1 Continue to review PaC and recruitment policies and procedures to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the workplace.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Vice-Chancellor and Presidents Division <b>Lead:</b> Executive Director – People and Culture <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	11.2 Ensure Indigenous representation on selection panels when interviewing for an identified position.	December 2026	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	11.2.1 Establish a pool of First Nations staff wanting to be on interview panels as a professional development opportunity.	December 2026	
	11.3 Ensure all policies and procedures that impact First Nations staff and students are referred through to the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC) for feedback and endorsement.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Corporate Services Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Governance/University Secretary <b>Support:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement
11.4 Review and update the Academic Promotion Policy and Procedure to include Indigenisation of the curriculum within promotion criteria.	December 2030	<b>Division:</b> Tertiary Education Division <b>Lead:</b> Vice-President – Academic <b>Support:</b> Vice-President – Indigenous Engagement	
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting achievements, challenges and learnings.	12.1 Provide six-monthly progress reports on The First Nations Workforce Strategy (2026–2030) to the First Nations Success Strategies Committee, Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) and University Management Committee (UMC).	2026–2030	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Responsible Persons
	12.2 Conduct an internal review of the First Nations Workforce Strategy.	July 2028	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Officer – Office of Indigenous Engagement
	12.3 Commence development of the next iteration of the First Nations Workforce Strategy.	January 2029	<b>Division:</b> Indigenous Engagement Division <b>Lead:</b> Director – Office of Indigenous Engagement <b>Support:</b> Executive Officer – Office of Indigenous Engagement



# Chasing Dreams

## CQUniversity's Indigenous Artwork by Coolamon Creative

'Chasing Dreams' is a multi-faceted design bringing together elements to illustrate self-improvement, journey, connection, community, support, and being a part of something bigger.

The centre shows students envisioning a world of possibilities that knowledge can bring to make dreams a reality. The shooting stars represent chasing dreams, and the hand symbols represent reaching out for the stars.

The journey symbol serves as a reminder that we are all on our own path and is a foundation of who we are and where we are from. The artwork as a whole represents the expansion of the mind, through the use of strokes radiating from the centre outwards.



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# First Nations Workforce Strategy 2026-2030

## Contact us

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