



Aboriginal Employment Strategy

2023 – 2028





Foreword

Dr Debra Sayce,
*Executive Director, Catholic Education
Western Australia Limited*



CEWA's ongoing commitment to honouring the importance of Aboriginal cultures in our society, and that we take reconciliation seriously as a professional community.

I am privileged to be able to commend this Strategy to you, and I look forward to seeing it contribute to CEWA's mission.

Dr Debra Sayce
*Executive Director
Catholic Education Western Australia*

Dear Colleagues

I am pleased to introduce Catholic Education Western Australia Limited's (CEWA's) updated Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2023–2028 (the Strategy).

Our Catholic schools serve a diverse range of communities across the state, and we are committed to inspiring Aboriginal people to see our schools and offices as employers of choice.

The updated Strategy brings together, into a single framework, the breadth of successful initiatives and programs being implemented across our organisation to increase employment opportunities and growth for Aboriginal staff.

The Strategy builds on the strong work which has already been done by focusing on how we can further lift the number and capacity of Aboriginal employees within our system. It is my hope that this Strategy demonstrates





Background



Catholic Education Western Australia Limited (CEWA) is a Christ-centred, child-focused community of over 67,000 students and almost 9,000 staff members across Western Australia. CEWA's offices and schools are located on the traditional lands of many Aboriginal peoples across the state.

The CEWA Executive Team and the staff of their directorates function as the executive arm of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA). CECWA was established by the Bishops of Western Australia to ensure the Bishops' Mandate for Catholic education in Western Australia is enacted throughout the state.

CECWA has five committees to assist its governance work, including the Aboriginal Community Committee. The Committee is convened to consider strategies to improve, engage and make decisions that benefit Aboriginal students, staff and communities.

CEWA launched its inaugural Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2017–2018 (the Strategy) in 2017. This Strategy responded to a significant under-representation of Aboriginal employees within CEWA schools and offices. The Strategy also recognised the need for a more strategic approach to improving employment outcomes for Aboriginal people across the system. The Strategy provided CEWA employers, both at schools and the offices,

with resources and guidance to understand, and respond to, the need for increased employment of Aboriginal people across all levels in CEWA.

Since the implementation of the inaugural Strategy in 2017, there has been significant change within CEWA, the broader education landscape and Australian society, especially in relation to Aboriginal matters. The current Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2023–2028 is responding to those changes by incorporating increasing ownership and shared responsibility among CEWA leadership and employers. The new Strategy aims to continue to improve ways to increase the number and capability of Aboriginal employees.

The Strategy outlines CEWA's commitment to make its offices and schools workplaces where Aboriginal people are employed at the same rate and at the same levels as non-Aboriginal Australians, in line with government and community expectations.

In the context of CEWA, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to the First Peoples of this Country, and respectfully includes Torres Strait Islander peoples, as outlined in the CEWA Terminology Guide.



Rationale



The aim of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy is to increase the number of Aboriginal people employed at all levels across CEWA. This increase of Aboriginal staff is intended to:

- improve connection between communities, families and schools;
- provide role models for Aboriginal children and young adults;
- improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, especially in the areas of educational access, participation, literacy and numeracy, and retention and graduation;
- enable all Australians to have a better understanding of Aboriginal Australia; and
- contribute to the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal Australians.



An increase in Aboriginal staff in our schools and offices will enable greater opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and staff to have authentic relationships with Aboriginal Australians. This will better prepare our students to be educated for a modern, future-focused Australia. At the same time, an increased number of Aboriginal employees will assist all staff to gain a better understanding of the richness of Aboriginal culture and our shared history.



Employment data



There are currently 319 Aboriginal staff members employed by CEWA Ltd. Aboriginal employees currently make up 3% of the total CEWA Ltd workforce. There are no Aboriginal people appointed to principal positions. The number of Aboriginal employees in professional roles does not meet expectations. The Strategy provides a focus to improve this.

CEWA Ltd employee numbers from 2019 to 2023, as at 1 February each year

Aboriginal staff numbers CEWA Ltd schools & CEWA office only	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Catholic Education Office	12	12	11	14	17
ATA, ALOS and EAs	187	194	194	201	198
Other (social workers, gardeners, admin assistants, cadets, etc)	42	46	41	43	38
Principals	0	0	0	0	0
Middle Leaders (HOYs, HODs, Aps, DPs, RECs, etc)	4	4	4	6	5
Teachers	29	34	32	32	32
Casuals	25	22	23	31	29
Grand total headcount Aboriginal staff (full-time, part-time & casual)	299	312	305	327	319
CEWA Ltd staff numbers	9,286	8,908	9,028	9,355	9,574
Percentage	3.0%	3.3%	3.1%	3.2%	3.0%

Photo: Christ the King Catholic School, Djarindjin Lombadina and Artwork: "Indigenous Seasons" by Year 10s at Mandurah Catholic College, Mandurah





Guiding documents

“ Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word “dialogue”. If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue. ”

Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, #198, 2020

The Strategy responds to various elements of CEWA initiatives and recent national reports aimed at creating an equitable society for all, including Aboriginal people.

[Bishops’ Mandate 2009–2015](#)

All members of the Catholic school community have responsibilities related to promoting its aims and effectiveness. Anyone accepting a position within a Catholic school community accepts the role of Catholic educator who helps to form followers of Christ (Paragraph 92, Bishops’ Mandate 2009–2015).

[CECWA Strategic Directions 2019–2023](#)

The guiding principles of the CECWA Strategic Directions include reaching out to the marginalised. Employers in CEWA are in a position to impact directly on employment outcomes for Aboriginal people.

[Quality Catholic Education \(QCE\)](#)

QCE acknowledges that CEWA staff are its most important and valued resource.

In addition, QCE references Catholic social teaching, including the Dignity of the Human Person, which promotes inclusive practices that welcome and celebrate the uniqueness and diversity of each person formed in the image of God.

QCE also prescribes the need to demonstrate respect for Aboriginal culture and traditions, and a commitment, through the Transforming Lives Strategy, to providing educational opportunities to Aboriginal children to enable them to reach their full potential with a strong sense of identity and agency.

[CECWA Aboriginal Education Executive Directive](#)

The Aboriginal Education Executive Directive expresses CEWA’s commitment to reconciliation,

which promotes the principles of truth, justice, equity, and inclusivity.

[Office and Schools Reconciliation Action Plans](#)

The CEWA offices, as well as many CEWA schools, have developed their own Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). Through their RAPs, the offices and schools express their commitment to our ongoing journey of reconciliation and acknowledge the responsibility to build a society together that will benefit all people.

[Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration \(MED\) 2019](#)

The Strategy cannot be looked at separately from the Mparntwe Education Declaration (MED) because of the intricate links between education, employment opportunities and living full lives as equal contributors to society.

[The National Agreement on Closing the Gap \(Targets 6, 7, 8\)](#)

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap has [17 national socio-economic targets](#) that have an impact on the life outcomes of Aboriginal people. The National Agreement calls attention to the profound importance of employment as a means to addressing the economic and social disadvantages that Aboriginal people experience.

[Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and Equal Opportunity Act 1984](#)

The Australian Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the WA Equal Opportunity Act 1984 promote equality for all people regardless of race, colour or national or ethnic origin. In particular, Sections 50 and 51 of the Equal Opportunity Act provide the opportunity for employees to explicitly encourage Aboriginal candidates to apply for jobs.



Developing and implementing the Strategy

The Strategy has been developed by the Aboriginal Employment Strategy Project Group. The Project Group included Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal membership from CEWA office staff (representing each of the CEWA Directorates), school principals, and government agencies.

The implementation of the Strategy is a shared responsibility of the CEWA system and includes all staff at offices and schools. As a service provider to schools, CEWA office staff continue to play a leading role in coordinating and supporting the achievement of the actions of the Strategy. However, it is CEWA schools, as the largest employers of the system, that have the greatest capacity to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal Australians.



Accountability

To meet accountability to government and to the Catholic education community, CEWA will monitor and report on the implementation of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and then review the Strategy, as required.



Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2023–2028

Recognising the need for a multi-faceted approach to successfully increase employment of Aboriginal people across CEWA, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) comprises of five elements, each with dedicated actions, targets, responsibilities, and timelines.

The five elements are: Organisational Design and Culture; Attraction and Selection; Onboarding and Orientation; Growth and Capability Development; and Feedback and Data.

Element One: Organisational Design and Culture

FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	TARGETS AND TIMELINES	ACCOUNTABILITY
1. Development of culturally secure workplaces	1.1 Develop and deliver a range of Professional Learning (PL) opportunities to support all staff in Catholic schools and offices to become more culturally responsive employees. Explore mandated learning similar to Accreditation process.	Ongoing, with a PL framework being developed by December 2025.	Deputy Executive Director Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Director of Religious Education Director of Teaching and Learning Principals
	1.2 Identify and promote to schools and offices recommended PL that develops the cultural responsiveness of staff.	Set up and manage a register of recommended PL and engagement by December 2024.	Deputy Executive Director Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Director of Teaching and Learning
	1.3 Ensure the development of CEWA guiding documents uses culturally appropriate and inclusive language.	Ongoing	Deputy Executive Director
	1.4 Include Aboriginal representation on employment panels for leadership appointments especially in communities with significant Aboriginal populations – including when there are no Aboriginal candidates.	Keep records of when Aboriginal representation on panels occurs commencing December 2024.	Director of People and Culture
2. Engagement with and support of school and office leadership	2.1 CEWA Leadership Programs continue to include more explicit content to support school and office leaders to develop understanding, knowledge and skills to achieve better Aboriginal employment outcomes.	A scope and sequence of content is developed and integrated into the appropriate Leadership Programs by January 2024.	Director of Religious Education
	2.2 Principals entering any school community with significant Aboriginal populations are provided with contextual orientation to support the goals of the AES.	Ongoing, but commencing January 2024. Principals going to schools with significant Aboriginal enrolment will be supported.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing
3. QCE improvement frameworks	3.1 Ensure QCE processes and tools for system improvement include reflection, and where appropriate, direction to increased commitment to the goals of the AES e.g. Aboriginal Education Improvement Map.	Ongoing	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Director of Teaching and Learning
	3.2 Continue to enhance the established processes of inquiry and reflection around Aboriginal employment in the Quality Catholic Education School Review (QCESR).	Ongoing with elements of the QCESR related to Aboriginal employment being highlighted in panel inductions.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing



Element Two: Attraction and Selection

FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	TARGETS AND TIMELINES	ACCOUNTABILITY
4. Catholic schools and offices as employers of choice	4.1 Develop and implement a communication strategy that highlights stories relating to the achievements of Aboriginal people in Catholic schools and offices.	A plan is developed each year and shared with stakeholders to create content.	Deputy Executive Director Director of People and Culture
	4.2 Promote the contribution of Aboriginal employees to Catholic education and to Aboriginal and wider communities.	A plan is developed each year and shared with stakeholders to create content.	Deputy Executive Director Director of People and Culture Principals
	4.3 Identify, describe, and promote the characteristics of CEWA that make it an employer of choice for Aboriginal people.	Ongoing with the qualities of CEWA appreciated by Aboriginal staff identified by December 2023.	Deputy Executive Director Director of People and Culture
5. Identification of potential employees	5.1 Outreach to tertiary institutions, schools and the broader community to inform and inspire Aboriginal people to work in CEWA schools and offices across all job types.	A plan is developed each year that uses the content produced under Focus Area 4.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing
	5.2 Establish formal and informal relationships with WA universities and TAFEs and Aboriginal engagement organisations.	A relationship management register is developed with WA universities and appropriate training providers by December 2023.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing
	5.3 Identify cadetship and traineeship opportunities and appoint people to these positions in CEWA schools and offices.	Appoint twelve Cadets and four Trainees by December 2028.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Principals
	5.4 Where appropriate, include suitable Aboriginal job applicants in interview shortlisting. If applicants are suitable but unsuccessful, consider recommending to other positions or to the CEWA Talent Identification Team.	Ongoing	Director of People and Culture Principals
	5.5 Provide schools and offices with resources to support Aboriginal employment, i.e. information on employment organisations and support resources with regard to attracting and retaining Aboriginal staff.	Ongoing with specific information for guidance being identified by March 2024.	Director of People and Culture Director of Leadership and Wellbeing
	5.6 Provide information to CEWA employers about policy and legislative tools that support Aboriginal employment e.g. Application of Section 50 and 51 of the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1984</i> and educate employers around its rationale and use to achieve AES goals.	Ongoing with specific information for guidance being identified for employers by March 2024.	Director of People and Culture Director of Leadership and Wellbeing



Element Three: Onboarding and Orientation

FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	TARGETS AND TIMELINES	ACCOUNTABILITY
6. Early career support	6.1 Strengthen practices to support Aboriginal employees in their early career in CEWA including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contextualised induction processes; and improved Aboriginal employee networks. 	Ongoing with relevant stakeholders are provided with guidance and resources to ensure positive onboarding and orientation.	Director of People and Culture Director of Teaching and Learning Director of Leadership and Wellbeing
	6.2 A welcome/induction process/package for Aboriginal staff is developed for schools and offices.	An induction package is developed and trialled by December 2024.	Director of People and Culture Director of Teaching and Learning Principals
	6.3 The Aboriginal Education Reference Group (AERG) is strengthened in each diocese to provide network opportunities and PL to build capacity of ATAs in performing their roles.	AERG Networks are established by March 2024.	Director of Teaching and Learning Principals
	6.4 Provide consultation opportunities for ATAs to better understand employment and industrial matters that affect them.	Ongoing	Director of People and Culture Principals

Element Four: Growth and Capability Development

FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	TARGETS AND TIMELINES	ACCOUNTABILITY
7. Support the faith formation and Catholicity of staff	7.1 Monitor and report Accreditation status of Aboriginal staff and where required develop and implement strategies to ensure Aboriginal staff achieve the appropriate level of Accreditation.	Ongoing	Director of Religious Education Principals
	7.2 Provide faith formation opportunities for Aboriginal staff.	Ongoing with a suite of relevant faith formation opportunities being identified by December 2023 to offer from 2024.	Director of Religious Education Director of Teaching and Learning Principals





8. Aboriginal educators development	8.1 Provide scholarship opportunities for Aboriginal educators to access PL, VET and higher education courses to improve their qualifications and capabilities.	Ongoing with prospective candidates identified in October for commencement in the following year.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing
	8.2 Provide scholarships for Aboriginal educators to train as Aboriginal language teachers.	Ongoing with two Aboriginal Language Teacher Scholarships awarded annually.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Director of Teaching and Learning Principals
	8.3 Support the placement of suitable Aboriginal people into positions for development where appropriate.	Ongoing with prospective candidates identified in October for commencement in the following year.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Principals
9. ATA upskilling	9.1 Support ATAs to move from Unqualified to Qualified status.	Ongoing with prospective candidates identified in October for commencement in the following year.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Principals
	9.2 Identify ATAs with an aptitude for teaching and assist them to achieve a Bachelor of Education through a case management approach.	Ongoing with prospective candidates identified in October for commencement in the following year.	Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Principals
	9.3 Provide targeted short course PL activities relevant to the ATA role.	Ongoing with a suite of relevant PL opportunities identified by December 2023 to offer in 2024.	Director of Teaching and Learning Director of Leadership and Wellbeing Principals

Element Five: Feedback and Data

FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	TARGETS AND TIMELINES	ACCOUNTABILITY
10. Monitoring feedback and data	10.1 Establish an Implementation Group to meet each term to monitor, and to report each semester to relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the AES.	An Implementation Group is established by July 2023.	Director of People and Culture
	10.2 Aboriginal employees in schools and offices are identified at employment through AOS and MyHR.	Ongoing	Principals Director of People and Culture
	10.3 Collect and collate Aboriginal employment data to report to stakeholders.	Increase of 10% in Aboriginal employment from 2022 numbers by 2028.	Director of People and Culture Director of Leadership and Wellbeing



Testimonials

The CEWA Cadetship program kickstarted my career in education and it provided the guidance every early career teacher needs.

HASS Teacher, Aranmore Catholic College

I worked as an ATA (Aboriginal Teaching Assistant) in a secondary school in Perth. My journey in further education to achieve a degree in counselling supported by a CEWA ATA Scholarship has allowed me to walk alongside and better support my students and families. I feel truly blessed and grateful for the opportunity.

School Counsellor, Clontarf Aboriginal College

CEWA has supported my journey through higher education and has given me the opportunity to better support staff, students and the wider community. I now have my Bachelor of Education (Early Years).

Transforming Lives Engagement Officer, Mandurah

I started working with CEWA as a trainee, joining the IT Team in 2014 doing a Cert IV in Networking. I now enjoy working in the Networks Team supporting over 150 schools and 3 regional offices to help ensure network stability.

Network Administrator, CEWA Office

A Cadetship with CEWA has supported my journey in higher education by providing guidance from experienced colleagues and great learning opportunities in my area of study, psychology.

Wellbeing Cadet, CEWA Office



The Cadetship allowed me to work in many different areas of CEWA. Years later it gave me the confidence to take on leadership roles as I was familiar with CEWA as a system. The mentoring is outstanding and I have had mentors who saw things in me I did not see in myself.

Head of Department, St Luke's College

I started working as an ATA after I began studying and that truly ignited my passion for Aboriginal education. I applied for and was awarded a CEWA Cadetship. I saw my mentor every term during my studies and with his encouragement I graduated in 2019.

Primary Teacher, Salvado College



“ The Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others. ”

St John Paul II,
Address to the Aboriginal People of Australia,
Alice Springs, 29 November 1986



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