



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The background of the cover is a vibrant Indigenous dot painting. It features a complex pattern of blue dots of various sizes, creating a sense of depth and movement. Winding through the composition are light blue and white lines that represent waterways or rivers. Scattered throughout are numerous circular motifs, some with concentric rings in shades of orange, red, and yellow, and others with solid colors. The overall effect is a rich, textured tapestry of traditional Indigenous art.

OFFICE OF THE PACIFIC INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2021-23

ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Maggie-Jean Douglas

Artists Biography

Maggie Douglas is a descendant of the Gubbi Gubbi people from the Sunshine Coast region and a proud member of the Australian South Sea Islander community. She is currently living and working in Canberra on Ngunnawal and Ngambri country and feels grateful to be able to do so. Her cultural heritage is something she is extremely proud of. She hopes her artworks have a positive impact on those who view and engage with her art.

Artwork Title

'Australia, the Pacific Islands and their people'

Artwork statement

This artwork represents Australia and the countries throughout the Pacific Ocean and their connection to one another. I wanted the finished artwork to create a celebration of both their connection to each other and their connection to the land and sea; as well as the diversity between Australia and the Pacific.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First peoples of Australia and recognises their contributions to the Department's representation of Australia to the world.



Head of the Office of the Pacific Foreword



Ewen McDonald

The Office of the Pacific was established in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support Australia's deepening engagement with the Pacific. As Head of the Office of the Pacific, I coordinate our whole-of-government efforts to build stronger relationships with Pacific leaders, governments and peoples, as well as with regional organisations and institutions.

The rich and distinct culture of Indigenous Australia resonates deeply with Pacific Islander people. In sharing this culture with Pacific people through our diplomatic engagement, it is paramount that we are working collaboratively with Indigenous Australians, to portray an accurate and authentic representation.

This Indigenous Engagement Plan aims to guide efforts by the Office of the Pacific to support deeper and more direct engagement between Indigenous Australians and Pacific Islander people, as well as to embed Indigenous perspectives in the strategic and diplomatic work of the Office of the Pacific.

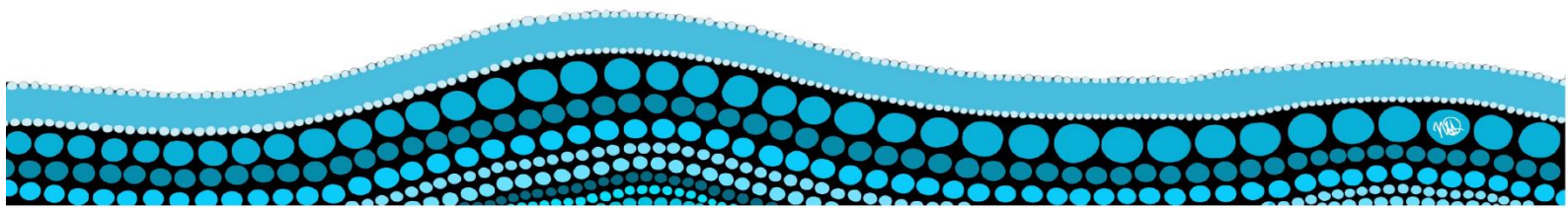
Message from DFAT's Indigenous Champion



Tony Sheehan

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is deeply committed to the reconciliation and empowerment of Indigenous Australian peoples, communities and businesses. DFAT launched the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan in 2019, renewing our commitment to the journey of reconciliation.

As the Indigenous Champion, I am committed to ensuring the department remains energised and focused on delivering sustainable change. I strongly support the initiative of the Office of the Pacific in developing the Indigenous Engagement Plan. This document demonstrates a holistic and ambitious approach to operationalising key elements of DFAT and Australian Government priorities.



Introduction

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade acknowledges and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) cultures and heritage as a part of our national identity¹. Indigenous Australian and Pacific Islander peoples share long-standing cultural and family connections. The Office of the Pacific (OTP) extends this acknowledgement to the Australian South Sea Islander community, who share these connections and are recognised as a distinct cultural group in Australia².

In 2016, the Pacific Division (now OTP) developed the 'Engaging Indigenous Australia in the Pacific' policy. This policy sought to leverage these cultural connections to strengthen Australia's relationships with the Pacific. To further this work, the OTP has developed an **Indigenous Engagement Plan (IEP)**.

The IEP has three key objectives, which will guide and inform the delivery of activities. Through the objectives, the IEP aims to respond to the strong interest from the region for greater engagement with, and representation of, Indigenous Australian peoples and perspectives³. These objectives are -

1. Embedding Indigenous Australian and Australian South Sea Islander peoples, businesses and perspectives in the delivery of the Pacific Step Up.
2. Increased representation of Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander peoples in the OTP and at Posts
3. Increased investment in the cultural awareness and capability of OTP staff.

The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper⁴ sets out Australia's highest foreign policy priorities, including a commitment to step up our engagement in the Pacific. The OTP recognises its position as the lead coordinating body for whole-of-government engagement in the Pacific; and the responsibility shared across government to implement the Pacific Step Up.

The OTP will seek to leverage this position by encouraging greater coordination of efforts with whole-of-government partners both in the region, and domestically. In particular, the IEP will be a key contributor to strengthening our people-to-people linkages in the Pacific.

The IEP will be reviewed in 2022, to ensure it remains fit for purpose.



Photo credit to OPT/PSD/PXS

NAIDOC 2019 APS Touch Football Carnival

Colleagues from the Office of the Pacific participating in the 2019 NAIDOC touch football competition alongside the former Indigenous Champion (Richard Maude) and members of the Indigenous Employees Network.

The APSC hosts this increasingly popular event annually during NAIDOC week. Government departments are encouraged to enter a team each year to celebrate diversity and promote understanding and respect among Indigenous and non-Indigenous APS employees.

¹ DFAT (2019), *Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan*

² Queensland Government (2000), *Recognition Statement: Australian South Sea Islander Community*

³ Whitlam Institute (2020), *Submission to JSCFADT inquiry into strengthening Australia's relationships with countries in the Pacific region*

⁴ Australian Government (2017), *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*

Strategic Linkages

The IEP will support the delivery of activities and outcomes across a number of key policies, including the -

- **Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP).** The IPP is a Commonwealth-level policy, which seeks to drive demand for Indigenous goods and services, stimulate Indigenous economic development and grow the Indigenous business sector. The IEP will invigorate the OTP's application of the IPP by encouraging sections and posts to procure goods and services directly from Indigenous businesses and indirectly through larger managing contractors.
- **DFAT Indigenous Peoples Strategy (IPS).** The IPS seeks to elevate indigenous issues (beyond Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) in the work of the department. The IEP will assist the implementation of Pillar two and three – integrating indigenous issues into the overseas aid program and our soft power initiatives in the Pacific.
- **Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).** The RAP cements the department's commitment to strengthening staff cultural competency, including in consolidating the skills required to represent, advocate for and promote Indigenous Australia, particularly in our work overseas. The three focus areas of the RAP are – Relationships, Respect and Opportunities.
- **Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Framework.** The D&I Framework highlights the key priorities for all the diversity networks in DFAT. The IEP will encourage staff to consider opportunities of intersectionality across DFAT's broader diversity and inclusion priorities, with a focus on Indigenous representation.

Key Deliverables

The key deliverables and focus areas for each IEP objective are located at **Annex A**.

Communications

OTP staff are encouraged to identify opportunities to highlight OTP's commitments in the IEP. This will include by posting on social media and using inclusive language in speeches, talking points and briefing papers. Staff are encouraged to consider the below messages when developing any DFAT communications that relate to Indigenous engagement.

- *Australia's Indigenous heritage is a fundamental element of this nation's story. DFAT has been uniquely tasked with 'taking Australia' to the world.*
- *DFAT is committed to promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures to the world, and providing opportunities to assist Indigenous peoples — both in Australia and overseas — to overcome social and economic disadvantages*



Photo credit to the INLOC Group

Case Study: Ranger program in Papua New Guinea

Australia has supported remote communities in the South Fly District of PNG through a Ranger program for over five years. Adapted from a successful Indigenous Australian community ranger model, the program has built a cohort of 162 community rangers, of which 30% are women. It aims to empower female rangers by training women to the same standard as men, including plumbing, building, sanitation, disaster response, first aid, well-digging and marine rescue. Consequently, female rangers have become role models for gender equality in village communities by undertaking tasks traditionally divided by gender roles.

In 2018 the PNG Ranger program sent two community rangers to an Indigenous Rangers Forum in Burketown, Australia, which brought together representatives of 72 ranger groups from all over northern Australia. This exchange of cultural knowledge provided an opportunity for the PNG rangers to both learn from Australian Indigenous ranger methods and showcase their own skills.

Cultural Working Group

The OTP will establish a Cultural Working Group in early 2021. Members of the working group will include –

- **Cultural Champion:** An OTP SES officer will fill the Cultural Champion role. The Cultural Champion will advocate for the delivery of IEP outcomes and chair the Cultural Working Group.
- **Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO):** The ILO will play a key role in managing the day-to-day implementation, liaison and management of the IEP.
- **Divisional and Regional Champions:** Divisional and Regional Champions will act as the point of contact for Divisions and/or Pacific Posts on issues relating to the IEP. They will also support monitoring and evaluation efforts. Each OTP Division Head is responsible for the identification of Divisional Champions.
- **Indigenous Employee Network (IEN):** As the department's network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, the IEN will be encouraged to provide a representative at each working group meeting.

The key roles of the working group will include –

- Providing expertise and advice on Indigenous engagement and delivery of the IEP, with an awareness of the strategic, political and/or operational outcomes.
- Engaging and collaborate with existing (and new) stakeholders and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Developing and review draft reports, briefing papers, speeches and discussion papers
- Coordinating or supporting the delivery of events in celebration of Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islanders days of significance.
- Monitor and report on the implementation of OTP's Indigenous priorities including through the Department's Reconciliation Action Plan, OTP's Divisional Business Plan, Indigenous Peoples Strategy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Cultural Working Group will play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the IEP across the OTP. This includes by holding work areas responsible for actioning key deliverables and highlighting outcomes of the IEP. A detailed reporting schedule is located at **Annex B**.

In addition to the reporting schedule, the Cultural Working Group will meet quarterly to discuss progress, future planning and other issues raised. The Cultural Working Group will aim to hold these meetings in March, July and November.

Case Study: Melanesia Ecumenical Special Visit Program 2019



Photo credit to OTP MLB

OTP hosted seven Melanesian church leaders from Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea in early 2019. As part of the program, the delegation met with Indigenous church leaders in Brisbane and travelled to a remote Aboriginal community in Queensland. This experience provided the opportunity for the delegation to better understand work by Aboriginal Christian leaders in rural Australia and within Indigenous communities.

The delegation also visited the Aboriginal Inland Mission and Cherbourg Ration Shed Museum. This experience provided delegates with an understanding of the inter-generational trauma stemming from the Aboriginal Protection Act, and an opportunity to connect on shared issues. The delegation considered this a highlight of their visit program and expressed interest in maintaining these connections

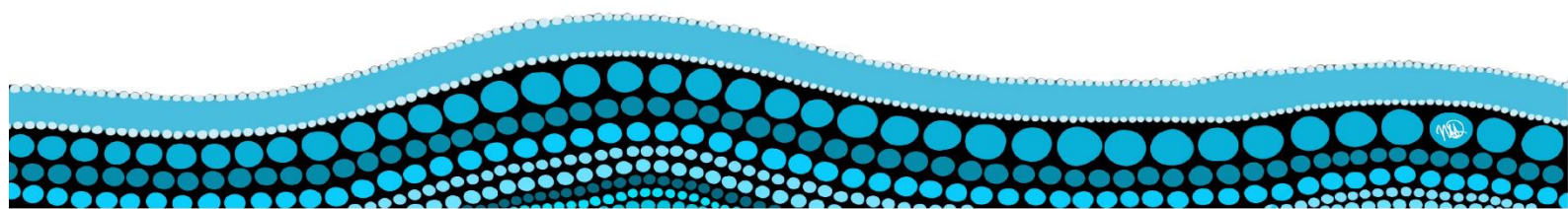
Annex A - Key Deliverables

OBJECTIVE	KEY DELIVERABLES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	RESPONSIBLE
<p>Objective one: Embedding Indigenous Australian and Australian South Sea Islander peoples, businesses and perspectives in the delivery of the Pacific Step Up.</p>	<p>Greater application and monitoring of the Indigenous Procurement Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring major implementing partners are considering and following through on the diversity commitments of their successful tenders or proposals. - Increasing direct engagement with Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs listed in Supply Nation. <p>The incorporation of cultural protocols and exchange opportunities within existing processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Including at least one Indigenous and/or Australian South Sea Islander-focussed activity in visit and exchange programs. - Increasing the dialogue and relationship building between the OTP, Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander peoples, entrepreneurs and communities. 	<p>Increase in Indigenous procurement and contracting, including those under \$10k.</p> <p>Managing contractors are following through on diversity commitments in tenders.</p> <p>Welcome to Country ceremony is performed at all high-level events.</p> <p>Indigenous engagement is included in all visit programs</p>	<p>Lead: OTP Senior Leadership, Directors, Managers</p> <p>Support: Financial Policy, Contracting and Aid Management Division, National Indigenous Australians Agency, implementing partners</p>
<p>Objective two: Increased representation of Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander peoples in the OTP and at Posts.</p>	<p>Representation of Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander staff in recruitment, secondments, promotions and postings rounds is actively considered. Including by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting external rounds through Indigenous recruiting agencies, digital and traditional media outlets - Encouraging Indigenous officers on entry-level and skills development programs to undertake a rotation within the OTP. - Work collaboratively with whole of government partners to support a greater representation of Indigenous peoples in the region <p>The OTP will maintain a minimum of two affirmative measures positions.</p>	<p>Increased representation of Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander staff in OTP and at Posts</p> <p>more interdepartmental engagement on Indigenous matters</p> <p>Increased rotations by Indigenous trainees or graduates in the OTP</p>	<p>Lead: OTP Senior Leadership, Pacific Posts, OTP Hub, Cultural Working Group</p> <p>Support: Diplomatic Academy, People Division, government partners, implementing partners</p>
<p>Objective Three: Greater investment in cultural awareness and capability, to strengthen the confidence of staff.</p>	<p>OTP staff (incl. locally engaged staff) are actively participating in cultural training opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completing cultural courses provided by the Diplomatic Academy such as Ngunnawal Language and Understanding Indigenous Australia courses. - Attending panel discussions and workshops discussing key cultural issues. <p>Celebrating days of significance for Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander communities.</p> <p>Increased cultural leadership from non-Indigenous and/or Australian South Sea Islander staff.</p>	<p>Non-Indigenous staff feel more confident engaging on Indigenous matters.</p> <p>Increase in OTP staff completing cultural training</p> <p>Increased engagement with cultural activities (including Jawun).</p> <p>Non-Indigenous or Australian South Sea Islander staff are taking initiative to pursue cultural engagements or events.</p>	<p>Lead: OTP Senior Leadership, Pacific Posts, Cultural Working Group</p> <p>Support: Executive Division, Diplomatic Academy, local Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander communities and leaders</p>

Annex B – Reporting Schedule

REPORT	DESCRIPTION	Due	LEAD AREA	DATA SOURCE
Baseline report	The baseline report will be developed from an initial stocktake of Indigenous engagement in the OTP. This report will be used to assess progress and inform recommendations in the first annual review (June 2021).	March 2021	Cultural working group	Cables, contracts, database, program M&E reports, case studies, activity reports, PeopleSoft, AidWorks, staff surveys, other sources as needed
Annual review	The annual review will provide a 12-month review on the outcomes achieved against each IEP objective and provide recommendations for the next year. Attached agencies may be invited to provide a one-page submission for inclusion in this report.	June 2021 June 2022	Cultural working group and attached agencies	
Progress report	The report will provide a summary of outcomes and will play a key role in responding to a range of departmental reporting processes.	December 2021 December 2022	Cultural working group	
High-level	This includes but is not limited to - input to ministerial and executive packs, requests for briefing and reports, and input to the Strategic Policy Committee via Indigenous Taskforce.	Ad hoc	Work areas	
Internal	This includes but is not limited to – a standing agenda item of IEP updates is added to the monthly OTP agenda; work areas providing updates or responses on the RAP and D&I Framework as needed.	Ad hoc	Work areas	

Notes





Office of the Pacific
Indigenous Engagement Plan

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