

# Onboarding



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Onboarding builds trust and sets the foundations for working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. The induction process should be tailored to best suit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. There are many elements that ensure a successful onboarding experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Most important is ensuring that the workplace is culturally safe, inclusive, and welcoming.

## Video embed:

**[Cultural capability guide - Tamara](#)**

## Inductions that make a difference

Initial workplace inductions are important for all employees and should be tailored for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Inductions provide an important opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to be connected.

Key elements to include in your induction process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees include:

- assigning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ‘buddy’ or an informal mentor on the first day of employment. If their buddy/mentor is not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, connect the buddy/mentor with resources like this guide.
- linking new starters with their team and fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Networks .

- giving new starters time to meet with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to build connection and create an environment where cultural connection is respected.
- sharing details of available Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support mechanisms, such as NAIDOC leave and anti-racism policies or procedures.
- sharing information they need to effectively perform their role, including organisational systems and human resources processes
- encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to introduce themselves, where comfortable. Do not introduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees as 'the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee' or similar. Many people do not define their employment by their cultural background.

## Cultural responsibilities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees may have cultural responsibilities requiring their absence from work. Cultural responsibilities vary for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee. Examples of cultural responsibilities include:

- attending significant community meetings or events.
- Sorry Business (bereavement and funerals). Attendance is an important tradition for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait people. It is an expectation and seen as an act of showing respect to community members and families.
- significant cultural events and celebrations such as NAIDOC, Sorry Day, and Reconciliation Week.

Agencies should use flexible approaches to help employees meet their cultural responsibilities, which in turn helps employees feel supported and valued.

## NAIDOC Week

**NAIDOC Week** recognises and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and the contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to our country and society.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees can access Special Leave to participate in NAIDOC events [Clause 84.9 of the **Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009**].

The PSC issues annual **circulares and memos** that clarify arrangements to support the release of eligible employees on Special Leave. The circular is be distributed across NSW Public Sector agencies to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to access Special Leave and non-Aboriginal employees who are members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access other forms of leave for NAIDOC events.

# Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support mechanisms are shared

There are several internal and external support mechanisms available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

## Internal agency support

- Workplace employee assistance programs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAP services
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Networks and support.

## External support services

### 13YARN – crisis support

P: 13 9276

### Link Up – NSW Aboriginal referral and counselling service for Aboriginal people affected by past government policies

P: 02 7227 1443

E: [linkup@nsw.link-up.org.au](mailto:linkup@nsw.link-up.org.au)

### Healing Foundation – national support service supporting Aboriginal people and communities affected by trauma

P: 02 6272 7500

E: [info@healingfoundation.org.au](mailto:info@healingfoundation.org.au)

### Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia – national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and mental health care support services

E: [info@gayaadhuwi.org.au](mailto:info@gayaadhuwi.org.au)

### Beyond Blue – social and emotional well-being support resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

P: 1300 22 4636

## Considerations for onboarding Aboriginal employees

- Connect with your People and Culture team and find out about available support for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- Plan the onboarding experience for your new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.