

# NSW Government Aboriginal internship program

Information about the program, why agencies should participate and case studies from past participants.

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The NSW Government Aboriginal Internship Program provides a career springboard for Aboriginal university students by connecting them with employers who offer paid internships during university holidays. It introduces interns to the world of work and builds their interest in pursuing a career with NSW Government.

The program ensures that NSW Government has a presence in a highly competitive market and showcases the choices and opportunities available in NSW Government.

The program is delivered by **CareerTrackers**, a non-profit organisation that links Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students with employers and provides interns with support and advice during their placement. Interns complete a 12-week summer placement and 4-week winter placement.

## Benefits for agencies

Departments and agencies who host an Aboriginal intern can:

- recruit diverse and high potential Aboriginal talent
- develop a pipeline of future Aboriginal leaders
- value, support and retain Aboriginal people by facilitating their career development

- boost their agency's performance against future diversity targets on Aboriginal employment
- invest in raising the profile of their employment brand in Aboriginal communities
- access a depth of Aboriginal perspectives and strengthen your agency's knowledge and relationship with Aboriginal communities.

Agencies who have participated in the program have said it's helped them to attract and retain Aboriginal people in their agency.

## Funding and costs

The PSC funds the annual sponsorship cost of \$9,500 per intern for 10 interns for the duration of the **Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2025**.

As interns are employed by their host agency, agencies will be required to fund intern salaries. The total approximate cost is \$17,500 per intern per annum, which assumes a Crown Employees Award Clerk General Scale Step 4 salary (including on-costs) for 12 weeks over summer and 4 weeks over winter.

To ensure ongoing support is provided to Aboriginal students, participating agencies are encouraged to commit to an enduring relationship with interns.

## How to apply to host an Aboriginal intern

Applications are closed for the 2023-24 Aboriginal internship program.

## Case studies of past interns

### Q&A with Suzanne Ross, 2022 Graduate at NSW Department of Planning and Environment

Suzanne Ross is a Wiradjuri woman and was an intern placed with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) in the Natural Resource Commission team. After completing the internship with CareerTrackers, she subsequently applied for and joined the **NSW Government Graduate Program** as a graduate in the primary stream. Now, in the first of her three 6-month rotations, she is working in the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE). We interviewed Suzanne about her experience in both programs and her motivations for joining NSW Government.

#### 1. What did you study and where? What made you want to study it?

I studied a Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Laws (Honours) at the University of Newcastle. I wanted to study it because I'm passionate about equity and justice, especially in the area of environmental law.

#### 2. What made you want to apply for the CareerTrackers internship at NSW Government?

I had heard other Indigenous students giving praise to the program and how it was changing lives. When an internship became available with Premier and Cabinet in the Natural Resource Commission team, which was directly related to my interests and studies, I jumped on the opportunity. It also provided me with an opportunity to experience working for NSW Government and the career opportunities it offered to graduates.

### **3. Do you think you benefited from the experience, how?**

The internship was an amazing experience as it had direct correlation between my studies and the work I was doing. It also gave me motivation to continue with my studies.

I also believe my internship helped me gain the confidence, skills and experience that were needed to succeed in getting to the graduate program, as I was able to demonstrate during the job recruitment process relevant transferable skills I had learnt.

### **4. What was your favourite part of the role?**

The inclusiveness of the team I worked with and how they accepted me as part of the team I was engaged in the work from day one.

### **5. Did you receive support throughout the internship program?**

I was supported throughout my internship by both my CareerTrackers advisor and my work managers and colleagues. Upon commencement a program development plan was set up and regular check-ins and meetings scheduled. This is a paid program, so it also provided me with financial assistance to continue my studies.

### **6. What advice would you give a student applying for the internship program?**

My advice is to be brave and step outside your comfort zone.

### **7. What made you then want to apply for the NSW Government Graduate Program?**

I had completed an internship with Career Trackers as part of the NSW Government internship program and knew from that experience this was my employer of choice for a graduate role.

### **8. Why did you select to be in a regional location and what has it been like for you?**

I am working from the Newcastle office. This is where I grew up and I am settled here with my family, friends, and social interests. Regional areas are rapidly expanding and as a result, graduates in these areas have the same career and development opportunities as the graduates located in Sydney.

### **9. Can you tell us about placement so far and the work you have been involved in?**

I am currently in my first of the required three rotations, which are each 6 months in length. I am working in the Department of Planning and Environment in a business group called People Culture and Communication (PCC). I am part of the project team of the Office of the Deputy Secretary (ODS). I have assisted in collating, reviewing, developing, and administering key programs including the divisional risk register. I have provided

executive support by scheduling meetings, preparing agendas, and following up any actionable items from these meetings. I was a guest speaker on a panel for International Women's Day that was broadcast live as part of the DPE Inspiring Leaders Series and hosted by Grace Papers.

**10. Did you receive support throughout the graduate program?**

I have been supported throughout the program as well as during the application and recruitment process. The graduate program has valued my culture throughout, and I have not felt at any stage that I had to conform to a perceived graduate profile.

**11. What advice would you give a student applying for the graduate program?**

My advice would be to have an open mind and be ready to embrace new opportunities.

**Amanda Burns, intern at NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment**



Amanda Burns is an intern placed with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) through the NSW Government Aboriginal Internships program. This program is delivered through CareerTrackers, a non-profit organisation that links Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students with employers.

The interns are provided with professional support and opportunities to learn and add value to the work of their host agency. Interns are given a career springboard by completing up to 16 weeks' placement during each year of their degree.

“The Department has given me transferrable skills that I can use within any workplace, as well as relevant on-the-ground experiences that will link to my uni courses this semester.” – Amanda Burns.

It's not just the intern who benefits from this experience. Amanda's placement and skills have brought value to the Environment Protection Authority and Local Land Services teams by incorporating a depth of Aboriginal perspectives and strengthening DPIE's knowledge and relationship with Aboriginal communities.

Opportunities such as these support the identification of future talent and strengthen the NSW Government's profile as an employer of choice for Aboriginal people. The internships also assist in identifying and developing future Aboriginal leaders in both urban and regional locations. This is an action item under the Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2025, in line with the Premier's Priority of increasing the number of Aboriginal people in senior leadership roles.

## Contact us

To find out more about how your agency can be involved in the Aboriginal Internship Program, please **contact us**.