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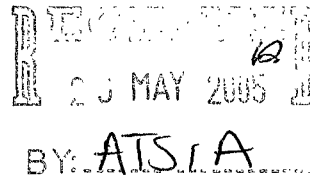
Brisbane City Council
ABN 72 002 765 795

Your ref:
Our ref:
Contact: Office of the CEO
Telephone: (07) 3403 8888

Office of the Chief Executive
GPO Box 1434
Brisbane Qld 4001
Australia
Telephone 07 340 38888
Facsimile 07 340 36211

18 May 2005

Ms Cheryl Scarlett
Inquiry Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal &
Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Ms Scarlett

I refer to your letter dated 23 March in which you invited Brisbane City Council to prepare a submission which would be considered as part of the inquiry into indigenous employment.

Attached, for the inquiry's consideration, is Council's submission. My apologies for the delay in not forwarding this submission by the due date, however, I trust that Council's comments will be considered.

I trust the attached submission will be of interest to the inquiry and thank you for inviting Brisbane City Council to provide comment.

Yours sincerely

Jude Munro
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Brisbane City Council

Submission to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

May 2005



■ Brisbane City Council values the knowledge and ideas Indigenous people bring to its workplace.

■ We want you to consider a career with us.

SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS: INQUIRY INTO INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT

Background:

Brisbane City Council's approach to the employment of indigenous people is driven by organisational values that embrace diversity, equity and inclusiveness. This ethos shapes the Workplace Equity & Diversity Framework, which provides the policy and strategic framework for Council to address issues such as equitable representation of indigenous employees in Council's workforce.

Divisions and Business Units are responsible for implementing the E&D Framework. This they do by each developing a local equity and diversity plan (LEDP) that sets out their objectives, targets, strategies, actions and performance indicators.

Progress on implementation of these LEDPs, in particular, progress on indigenous employment, is monitored and reported on by the following mechanisms and at the indicated intervals:

Mechanism	Interval	Action/s
Indigenous Employment Strategist	Weekly	Monitor
Divisional Management Teams	Monthly	Report review performance
Indigenous [employees] Reference Group (IRG)	Bi-monthly	Monitor, review performance and make recommendations
Equity & Diversity Consultative Committee	Bi-monthly	Monitor and consider recommendations from IRG
Indigenous Employment Strategist	Quarterly	Report progress and make recommendations
Indigenous Community Reference Group (ICRG)	Quarterly	Review performance and make recommendations
Equity & Diversity Team	Annually	Report and review performance
Executive Management Team	Annually	Review performance

Equity & Diversity performance agreements are also integral aspects of managers' contracts.

Currently, Council's target for indigenous representation in our workforce is 2.5%. This target is based on ABS Census data for the region that Council has local government responsibility

for and adjusted upwards in response to the recommendations of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Council's *Indigenous Employment Program* has four main components, the elements of which are outlined herein. Those components are:

- a) Recruitment programs;
- b) Support programs;
- c) Mentoring program;
- d) Reference groups.

RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS

Traineeships

- Council participates in the Queensland State Government's "Breaking the Unemployment Cycle" initiative to employ trainees. Traineeships are 12-month programs involving on and off the job training with most trainees graduating at Certificate 2 or 3 level. Funding criteria requires that 20% of traineeship positions available each year be filled by indigenous people.

Apprenticeships

- Council employs apprentices in order to provide skilled, trained, competent and capable future tradespeople for its own requirements and Brisbane City in general. Whilst funding support for apprenticeships is not subject to EEO allocation criteria, Council aims to fill 20% of the apprenticeships available each year with indigenous applicants.

Whilst we're not always successful in achieving these quotas, some 80% of indigenous persons recruited through these schemes find on-going employment with Council on successful completion of their traineeships and apprenticeships.

Community Jobs Projects

The Community Jobs Plan program is funded by the Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council under the "Breaking the Unemployment Cycle" initiative. This program aims to assist long-term unemployed people, or those at risk of long-term unemployment, to secure ongoing employment and helps them develop skills and gain on-the-job experience and training in a range of different industries. The program benchmark is set at achieving 7% employment of indigenous participants. Council views the 7% benchmark as a minimum and has achieved a 22% placement of indigenous applicants on the program since its inception six years ago.

'Growing Our Own' Indigenous Cadetship Program

Council introduced the 'Growing Our Own' Indigenous Cadetship Program in July 2002. This program targets indigenous undergraduates and in some instances, indigenous TAFE students and aims to provide those undergraduates with permanent employment upon successful completion of their cadetships.

For Council, it means we can recruit indigenous people who have the qualifications we need in our workforce to deliver our business. For indigenous undergraduates, it means they can:

- attend to their studies without the worry of finding suitable employment after they graduate;
- get to apply their tertiary learnings in a relevant work setting;

- get to know the business and work conditions of Council prior to commencing full-time employment;
- establish relationships with the people they will be working with once they graduate; and
- ease the transition from full-time study to full-time employment.

Council also wants to improve the representation of indigenous employees in the higher band levels and views the our Growing Our Own Program as better-practice approach to achieving this than other options.

External Access to Band 2-4 Vacancies

Indigenous people who are external to Council's workforce have access to internal vacancies. Access to these vacancies was agreed upon by Council's Executive Management and respective Unions to both improve the representation of indigenous employees in Council's workforce and help ease unemployment in the local indigenous community.

Since the inception of this program, Indigenous representation in Bands 2-4 positions has increased by 47%.

Other employment opportunities

Indigenous people have access to, and are encouraged to participate in non-targeted recruitment programs such as:

- General recruitment
- Graduate employment program
- Vacation employment (University and TAFE students)
- Work experience (high school students)

These employment opportunities are advertised through the general and indigenous media.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Indigenous Cultural Awareness

Council delivers an internally provided Indigenous Cultural Awareness (ICA) program, the core aim of which is to improve our capacity to recruit and retain indigenous staff. The program is delivered by a senior indigenous staff member and in an appropriate setting.

The ICA program has been in place since November 2001 and is delivered on a monthly basis and targets managers, supervisors and team leaders. To date, more than 500 employees have attended ICA sessions and report that they have a better appreciation of the issues affecting indigenous people and also that this has helped them in their relationships with indigenous employees in their work areas.

INDIGENOUS MENTORING & CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (IMCDP)

Council is keen to maximise our success in increasing the number of Indigenous employees in our workforce. A key strategy aimed at achieving this is the *Indigenous Career Development & Mentoring Program*. This program aims to enhance:

- the retention of Indigenous employees; and
- their capacity to realise their career aspirations including progression to and through higher Band levels, acquisition of qualifications for this and movement to technical and specialist positions.

Key Initiatives

The *Indigenous Career Development & Mentoring Program* comprises a number of key initiatives. These include, but are not limited to:

- Mentoring Partnerships – ongoing, culturally appropriate
- Indigenous Cultural Awareness to Mentors
- Roles and Responsibilities Training for Mentors and Mentees
- Individual Career Development Programs for Mentees
- Information sessions, briefings and advice
- Personal and professional development opportunities for Mentees
- Internal Support – External Experience
- Assessment and review – critical self-analysis

Each of these initiatives is to be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of mentors and mentees, and to adapt to the changing needs of Council and our workforce needs.

Mentoring Partnerships

Sustainable and effective mentoring

Mentoring Partnerships are developed with and entered into by indigenous mentees and their chosen mentors. Each mentor-mentee relationship is a specific partnership that has the following aspects:

- Mentoring Agreements
- Regular review and modification processes
- Informal progress evaluations, including self-assessment

The Mentees

The mentees take part in an assessment process and are offered regular support and advice. Face-to-face interviews are conducted for this process as research indicates that this method has proven to be the most successful from a cultural aspect.

The Mentors

Mentors participate in the development of mentoring agreements whereby they commit themselves to their respective partnerships. Further, mentors are encouraged to participate in the development of individual mentee's career development plans.

Cultural Awareness for Mentors

Understanding cultural forces at play in the workplace

Cultural Awareness is provided for mentors prior to entering a partnership. As Council already delivers an Indigenous Cultural Awareness Program that includes Indigenous history and the impact of Indigenous/Non-indigenous contact, this process focuses more on communication and behavioural issues and the personal needs of Indigenous employees.

Roles and Responsibilities for Mentors and Mentees

Understanding & knowledge

Understanding roles and responsibilities is considered tantamount to the successful implementation of this program. All parties are made aware of the following:

- The intent and spirit of the mentoring program
- The role and responsibilities of mentors
- The role and responsibilities of mentees
- The role and responsibilities of workplace managers or supervisors
- The role and responsibilities of the Facilitator/Program Coordinator

Individual Career Development Programs (CDP/s)

Plotting the course

Career development programs are developed by each mentee in consultation with their mentor and the facilitator. Each CDP encompasses the following:

- Initial skills & aspirations audit of mentees
- Mentees' self-assessment
- Development of a skills profile and resume
- Development of a training plan based on the above
- Identification of possible learning, training and education options
- Mapping to career opportunities within Council
- Review and assessment

Twenty-one (21) of Council's indigenous staff are enrolled in this program at this point in time.

REFERENCE GROUPS

Council has two indigenous reference groups. They are:

- a) the *Indigenous Reference Group*, an internal mechanism established under the Equity & Diversity Framework and made up of indigenous employees; and
- b) the *Indigenous Community Reference Group*, which provides an avenue for indigenous community participation in shaping the strategic directions of Council in the area of indigenous employment.

Indigenous Reference Group (IRG)

Membership of the IRG is open to all indigenous employees of Council and its purpose of the is to:

- "Provide a mechanism for Indigenous Employees to have input to Council's Equity and Diversity Policies and programs and provide a representative voice in workplace matters".

The role of the IRG is:

To make recommendations relating to:

- a) Employment and career development opportunities for Indigenous employees;
- b) Equity and Diversity and Human Resources policies and programs for the attention of the Equity and Diversity Consultative Committee and Human Resources and Strategic Management; and
- c) Occasions and events that are of cultural significance to indigenous employees.

Keep indigenous employees informed of relevant Equity & Diversity issues.

Maintain a network for indigenous employees to share information and provide Support for each other.

The IRG has been an active and successful group with average attendance at meetings during being 20. Besides being the main organising group for Council's involvement in National Aborigines & Islanders Week celebrations, the IRG has contributed to the development of a range of workplace policies that make Council an employer of choice to local indigenous people.

Indigenous Community Reference Group

Council has an Indigenous Community Reference Group (ICRG) which was established following a joint workshop of Council's Executive and representatives of the local Indigenous community, and importantly, at the recommendation of the Indigenous representatives at that workshop.

Importantly, the ICRG shaped its *Vision and Role* without interference or influence from Council staff or Executive. By taking this approach, Council Executive demonstrated that it respects the ability of the indigenous community to make decisions and also gave the ICRG ownership of the role it felt it should have. The Vision and Role the ICRG determined it should have is:

VISION

To make Brisbane City Council the leading mainstream municipal employer of Indigenous people in Australia and thus contribute to the wellbeing of the Indigenous community of Brisbane by delivering on equitable employment opportunities and outcomes.

ROLE

- a) *Facilitate an enduring, substantial and productive relationship between Brisbane City Council and the Indigenous community of Brisbane;*
- b) *Inform the strategic directions of Brisbane City Council particularly as they relate to the employment of Indigenous people;*
- c) *Provide advice to Brisbane City Council on how Council might optimise the participation and input of Indigenous people in the 2010 Vision and how related Council activities might impact on the Indigenous community of Brisbane in general.*

Importantly, this Vision and Role is respected throughout Council as it sends a clear message to us that the indigenous community wants to work in partnerships with us and, that the indigenous community believes we have a role to play in its well-being. Crucially, this also raises a range of issues that go beyond equitable representation of indigenous people in our workforce. This challenges Council and what we do in terms of our programs and services servility to the aspirations of the local indigenous community.

OUTCOMES

These initiatives have led to Council being viewed as an employer of choice in the Brisbane indigenous community. This we believe is evidenced by the fact that 14% of new jobs in Council have been filled by indigenous people since the 2000-01 and the representation of indigenous employees in our workforce has improved from 1.04% to 2.6% over the same period.

Individually, indigenous employees report that Council is a good and attractive employer for the following reasons:

- Wide range of developmental opportunities that suit their aspirations and which they can readily access;
- Progression based on skills, competency and merit;
- Flexible work arrangements available under a range of strategies including Work & Family, Permanent part-time employment, Job shadowing, Job sharing, Home based work, Leave purchasing, Cultural & Ceremonial leave, culturally sensitive Bereavement leave, etc;
- Mobility across the organisation;
- License to be innovative; and
- Their contributions to local area business strategies being valued.