



Submission No. 86

Date Received 31-05-05

Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

30 May 2005

05/150676

Ms Cheryl Scarlett
Secretary
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RECEIVED
31 MAY 2005
BY: ATSI/A

Dear Ms Scarlett

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

I refer to the inquiry into Indigenous employment announced on 18 March 2005 by the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and to the invitation for written submissions from interested persons and organisations.

A submission to the Standing Committee's Inquiry into Indigenous Employment from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is attached. The submission outlines DFAT's efforts to promote the recruitment, career development and retention of Indigenous employees.

Please contact me should you require further information about the department's initiatives and activities in providing employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. My telephone contact details are 02-6261 2292.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ruth Adler
Assistant Secretary
Staff Development and Post Issues Branch
Corporate Management Division

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

Submission to House of Representatives' Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, May 2005

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) aims to advance the interests of Australia internationally. A key goal is to foster public understanding of Australia's foreign and trade policies, and to project a positive image of Australia internationally. Significant ways in which the department can achieve these objectives include

- ensuring that our overseas representation reflects correctly the cultural diversity of Australian society; and
- promoting a positive and accurate image of Australia's peoples and cultures, including Indigenous Australians.

2. Through its workplace diversity program, DFAT seeks to provide Indigenous Australians with employment opportunities and for these employees to serve both in Australia and overseas. It has sought to recruit Indigenous staff and to promote awareness of employment opportunities through increasing its outreach activities with Indigenous communities and networks. In addition, the department has concentrated efforts to promote the career development and retention of Indigenous employees through the establishment of an Indigenous Task Force which provides a forum for Indigenous employees to discuss issues of concern with senior management.

3. DFAT currently (May 2005) has 35 Indigenous employees (representing 1.7 per cent of the department's Australia-based staff), compared to 26 in June 2000 (representing 1.3 per cent of Australia-based staff). Twelve of DFAT's Indigenous staff are presently serving overseas at Australian embassies and high commissions.

Recruitment Activities

4. The department has a range of ongoing initiatives to promote the recruitment of Indigenous Australians.

5. Each year, DFAT participates in the National Indigenous Cadetship Program and seeks to recruit at least three Indigenous Australian undergraduates to the department's Indigenous Cadetship Program (ICP). Candidates are selected on the basis of their potential to pursue a successful career in DFAT. Since 2001, DFAT has engaged 13 Indigenous cadets. Of these, ten continue to be employed by DFAT. Three of the ten have graduated from the program and are now employed full-time with the department.

6. DFAT administers a graduate recruitment process annually and seeks to recruit Indigenous graduates both through this and in conjunction with relevant Australian Public Service Commission initiatives. DFAT recruits its graduates and Indigenous cadets from a broad range of academic disciplines. Successful graduate applicants enter either the generalist foreign and trade policy Graduate Trainee (GT) program or the Corporate and Financial Management Trainee (CFMT) program. Graduates undertake an extensive professional development training program located in Canberra prior to an overseas posting. Over the past 11 years, the department has recruited 19 Indigenous GTs and one Indigenous CFMT.

7. The department also seeks to recruit suitably qualified Indigenous employees through general and specialist recruitment processes. In addition, the department has three identified Indigenous positions.

8. Furthermore, DFAT administers the Roni Ellis Indigenous study awards scheme in memory of the former DFAT Indigenous employee who died of leukaemia in 2001. Under the scheme, the department awards two bursaries worth \$1,000 each to students undertaking the foundation program at the University of Canberra's Ngunnawal Centre. The scheme promotes awareness among Indigenous communities of employment opportunities in DFAT.

Indigenous Recruitment and Career Development Strategy

9. In order to promote the recruitment, career development and retention of Indigenous employees, in November 2004 DFAT launched a new **Indigenous Recruitment and Career Development Strategy (IRCDS) 2004-07**. The aims of the strategy are to

- ensure that DFAT continues to attract talented Indigenous Australians;
- increase the number of Indigenous Australians employed in the department;
- ensure that Indigenous employees receive advice and access to appropriate training and career development opportunities; and
- foster awareness of Indigenous Australia in DFAT, including through the celebration of National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and a range of international public diplomacy activities.

10. The IRCDS 2004-07 was developed by the department's Indigenous Task Force (ITF), chaired at deputy secretary level. All DFAT's Indigenous employees are members of the ITF. The text of the strategy is at **Attachment 1**.

Attachment 1

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**Indigenous Recruitment and Career Development
Strategy**

2004-07

December 2004

Introduction

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is committed to promoting diversity in the workplace. Efforts to promote the recruitment, career development and retention of Indigenous employees and to promote awareness of Indigenous Australia within DFAT form part of the department's workplace diversity program.

The Indigenous Recruitment and Career Development Strategy 2004-07 outlines the means by which DFAT will seek to improve the recruitment and retention rates of Indigenous staff and to ensure that these staff maximise their potential for a successful career in DFAT. This strategy also outlines initiatives to promote awareness of Indigenous Australia within DFAT.

The Indigenous Task Force (ITF) will oversee the implementation of the strategy. The terms of reference and membership of the ITF are at **Annex A**. Staff Development and Post Issues Branch (SDB) will have responsibility for the coordination and implementation of activities associated with the strategy, and will provide regular updates to the ITF.

The ITF will work closely with the Indigenous Employees' Network (IEN) on the implementation of this strategy. The IEN will also provide advice and mentor Indigenous staff on career development issues and play an advocacy role on behalf of Indigenous staff in the ITF.

Recruitment

Aim

To ensure that DFAT continues to attract talented Indigenous Australians and to increase the number of Indigenous Australians employed in the department through the Indigenous cadetship program, the graduate recruitment program and lateral recruitment.

Initiatives

Indigenous cadetship program (ICP)

The department will seek to recruit at least three Indigenous Australian undergraduates each year to the ICP, selected on the basis of their potential to pursue a successful career in DFAT. This will be achieved through:

- promoting the ICP through direct contact with Indigenous studies centres at Australian tertiary institutions;
- promoting the ICP in conjunction with DFAT's graduate trainee (GT) program;

- promoting the ICP on DFAT's website;
- promoting awareness of the DFAT ICP among Indigenous undergraduate students through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, which has responsibility for the National Indigenous Cadetship Program; and
- Corporate Management Division (CMD) and the IEN maintaining active contact with Indigenous cadets to ensure their retention and commitment to a career in DFAT.

The ITF will monitor and address any issues which arise in relation to the progress and retention of these staff in the department.

Graduate recruitment

The department will seek to recruit at least two Indigenous participants to the graduate trainee (GT) program each year. The department, through the Graduate Recruitment Unit in SDB, will promote awareness of DFAT's GT program among Indigenous students and graduates through the following initiatives:

- working with university careers advisory services and Indigenous studies centres to target Indigenous students as part of DFAT's annual graduate recruitment campus visits program;
- encouraging the Indigenous Employees Network (IEN) to liaise with Indigenous studies centres and to provide IEN contact points to Indigenous students who may wish to discuss the GT program;
- selecting Indigenous employees and former graduate recruits to participate in the university campus visits program;
- participating in Australian Public Service Commission initiatives to promote the Australian Public Service and DFAT as employers of choice among Indigenous graduates;
- ensuring that DFAT promotional material, including on the DFAT website, is up-to-date and appropriately targeted at potential Indigenous applicants; and
- targeted advertising, including through Indigenous media outlets, of DFAT's graduate recruitment program.

Lateral recruitment

The department will also seek to recruit suitably qualified Indigenous employees through general and specialist recruitment processes. SDB

will advise the Indigenous Australian Public Service Network of forthcoming recruitment processes and, as appropriate, advertise in Indigenous media.

Induction and training

Aim

To ensure that newly recruited Indigenous employees receive advice and access to appropriate training and career development opportunities.

Initiatives

Indigenous cadets

DFAT will address the training and development needs of newly recruited Indigenous cadets through:

- the Workplace Diversity Unit (WDU) providing an induction briefing to new cadets covering training and development, employee support services and DFAT values.
 - The WDU will also arrange for Indigenous cadets to be briefed by the Assistant Secretary, SDB; the Director, Training Development and Performance Management Section (TDP); the BB1/2 team leader in Staffing Branch (SFB) and, as appropriate, the Staff Counsellor and Family Liaison Officer;
- promoting the professional development of cadets through work placements during long university vacations to be decided by SFB in consultation with SDB and divisions;
- the WDU facilitating contact for cadets with the IEN; and
- SDB and the IEN (through a designated individual) maintaining contact with cadets as they progress through their studies and during their work placements.

ICP graduates

Upon commencement of permanent employment with DFAT, the WDU will arrange a comprehensive induction and training program for each ICP graduate. This will involve:

- two six month work placements in the first year of full-time employment prior to being assigned to a long-term placement, to be decided by SFB in consultation with SDB and divisions;

- the development of an individually tailored training program covering
 - core DFAT professional skills, for example, DFAT writing, meeting skills, negotiation and liaison skills, media skills, conduct and ethics, and security awareness; and
 - elements of the graduate training program, for example, “gap-filling” courses such as international relations, international law and economics; briefings from line areas in DFAT and other agencies; and seminars provided by guest speakers.

Each ICP graduate will also meet with AS SDB and the branch head of the area to which they are initially assigned to discuss training and career development needs.

SDB will encourage branch heads, directors and other managers to provide advice on career development and training issues, and to mentor informally Indigenous employees.

The IEN will also seek to identify appropriate individuals to provide advice to Indigenous employees on these issues.

Indigenous graduate trainees

Indigenous graduates who join DFAT through the graduate recruitment program will complete the two year GT program. The WDU will facilitate initial contact between the IEN and Indigenous graduate trainees.

Lateral recruits

SDB will provide advice to lateral recruits covering training and development opportunities, employee support services and DFAT values. The WDU will also arrange for Indigenous cadets to be briefed by the Assistant Secretary, SDB; the Director, TDP; the relevant team leader in SFB and, as appropriate, the Staff Counsellor and Family Liaison Officer.

Where appropriate, Indigenous staff will be encouraged to nominate for in-house training programs, such as the Administrative Development Program (ADP).

Career development

Aim

To promote the ongoing career development of Indigenous employees.

Initiatives

The ITF will monitor periodically retention, promotions and posting rates of Indigenous employees.

Managers, through the performance management process, will fulfil their responsibility to provide frank feedback to staff on promotion and postings prospects and advice on strategies, including through addressing training and development needs, to prepare for promotion and postings.

Managers, in consultation with SDB, will advise Indigenous staff on relevant training and development opportunities. Where appropriate, the Staff Counsellor will also provide advice to Indigenous staff on career development and work-related issues.

SFB, through the team leaders, will advise Indigenous staff on placements and postings options.

Identified Indigenous positions

Where appropriate, and in accordance with operational requirements, the department through SFB will seek to ensure that Indigenous employees are assigned to identified Indigenous positions.

The department will

- seek to retain at least three identified Indigenous positions, including a broadband 3 position in Cultural Relations Section, Images of Australia Branch (IAB); a broadband 2 position in the Torres Strait Island Treaty Liaison Office; and another in International Legal Division, to be decided in consultation with SFB and the ITF; and
- in consultation with the ITF, periodically review the effectiveness and assess the need to increase the number of identified Indigenous positions.

Promotion of awareness of Indigenous Australia within DFAT

Aim

To promote awareness of Indigenous Australia in DFAT.

Initiatives

As part of its effort to promote awareness of Indigenous Australia, DFAT Canberra, state and territory offices and overseas posts will continue to celebrate National Reconciliation Week and National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week. NAIDOC Week in Canberra will be celebrated through the annual flag-raising ceremony, social and cultural activities (including films and exhibitions) and the annual quiz night. State and territory offices and overseas posts will advise SDB of activities undertaken to celebrate NAIDOC Week and SDB will report to the ITF on this.

IAB will provide regular updates to the ITF on activities to promote greater awareness overseas of Australia's Indigenous cultures.

DFAT will continue to support the Roni Ellis Indigenous study awards scheme in memory of the former DFAT Indigenous employee who died of leukaemia in 2001. Under the scheme, the department awards two bursaries worth \$1,000 each to students undertaking the foundation program at the University of Canberra's Ngunnawal Centre.

As part of the graduate trainee program, DFAT will continue to include coverage of how Indigenous culture should be promoted overseas by posts and provide opportunities for graduate trainees to meet with Indigenous communities in regional and rural Australia as part of the regional travel program.

DFAT will also continue to encourage the provision of programs and activities which promote awareness and understanding of Indigenous Australia in the Currawong Childcare Centre.

Review

SDB will report annually on the implementation of this strategy to the ITF. CMD will review the effectiveness of this strategy in 2007 or earlier if considered appropriate by the ITF.

DFAT INDIGENOUS TASK FORCE

Terms of Reference

- To provide a forum for Indigenous employees to discuss issues of concern with senior management.
- To provide a regular high level review of issues that affect the recruitment, career development and retention of Indigenous employees.

Membership

Deputy Secretary (Chair)

Members of the Indigenous Employees Network (IEN)

First Assistant Secretary, Corporate Management Division

Assistant Secretary, Staffing Branch, Corporate Management Division

Assistant Secretary, Staff Development and Post Issues Branch,
Corporate Management Division

Assistant Secretary, Images of Australia Branch, Public Diplomacy,
Consular and Passports Division

Director, Human Rights and Indigenous Issues Section, International
Organisations Branch, International and Legal Division

Director, Workplace Diversity Unit, Staff Development and Post Issues
Branch, Corporate Management Division

Director, Training, Development and Performance Management
Section, Staff Development and Post Issues Branch, Corporate
Management Division

Director, Forecasting, Recruitment and Contractors Section, Staff
Development and Post Issues Branch, Corporate Management
Division

Three employees nominated by the IEN