

**ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY  
2014-2017  
(Trim FIL10/02209)**

Prepared by  
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Finance & Administration Committee –  
Insert the date the Plan was approved by Council

## **SYNOPSIS**

AlburyCity in providing real opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to be employed across every business unit of Council will ensure that practices with Aboriginal families are culturally appropriate and in turn, will support our vulnerable communities.

Over time, Council is committed to assist more Aboriginal peoples to obtain senior and professional positions both externally and at AlburyCity. Council needs to do this to better support Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

This strategy outlines key elements of an Aboriginal Employment Strategy for AlburyCity.

The following four goals have been identified as the key elements of an Aboriginal Employment Strategy for AlburyCity:

- Become an employer of choice for Aboriginal Australians;
- Increase employment of Aboriginal Australians;
- Develop systems to maintain Aboriginal employment; and
- Develop partnerships that support the Strategy.

The Strategy details practical steps that can be taken to ensure positive outcomes for Aboriginal community members and the wider Albury community.

The key recommendations are that:

1. AlburyCity adopt and support the implementation of the strategy;
2. AlburyCity continues to develop on a regular basis projects that engage the Aboriginal community and benefit the whole Albury community;
3. AlburyCity identifies through Human Resources and the Aboriginal Community Development Officer, ongoing employment paths through traineeships and apprenticeships for Aboriginal recruits; and
4. That AlburyCity adopt a policy of encouraging Aboriginal work experience students from local schools.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

AlburyCity acknowledges the Wiradjuri peoples on whose traditional lands AlburyCity is located. The AlburyCity Aboriginal Employment Strategy also recognises and acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in NSW and their right to receive quality services and support within the community.

Referral is made only to Aboriginal in this strategy; in recognition that Aboriginal peoples are the first Nations of NSW. AlburyCity acknowledges the different cultures and unique histories of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and respect and recognise their separate identities.

AlburyCity is an environment that affirms and respects Aboriginal cultural values in the workplace.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Strategy fits within a responsibility of AlburyCity to lead by action which links to Council's Community Strategy, Albury 2030 – Working together, a self reliant and involved community – consolidate and expand Aboriginal employment strategies and programs by liaising with relevant partners. It is believed that the adoption of this Strategy will illustrate to the wider community, local business and educational facilities, the commitment to increasing Aboriginal employment opportunities within the Council and the community.

Through the strategy, AlburyCity will focus on:

- Building the capacity of Aboriginal applicants to apply for vacancies;
- Supporting Aboriginal staff to build successful local government employment and careers with external businesses / organisations;
- Increase the representation of Aboriginal people in management and leadership positions;
- Build staff capacity to develop and deliver quality services and programs;
- Supporting all staff to work proactively and in partnership with non government organisations.

## **BACKGROUND**

Two Ways Together - the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012

“Two Ways Together” (TWT) is the NSW tool for implementing the Overarching Agreement between the Australian and NSW Governments.

TWT is intimately linked to the NSW State Plan and is the means by which the State Plan priority *Improved health, education, and social outcomes for Aboriginal peoples* is being implemented. TWT forums are also making sure that Aboriginal peoples and their issues are included in other relevant State Plan priorities, such as law and order, environmental protection and management, arts, culture, sport and recreation, community activities, and human services.

Implications for local councils

TWT, while not binding on local councils, does provide a range of opportunities to facilitate planning to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples and communities.

These opportunities include:

- a strategic framework to guide council planning and service development;
- access to established regional and local Aboriginal planning networks;
- the ability to enter into joint partnerships for the delivery of services to Aboriginal communities; and
- an informal gateway into Aboriginal communities. The historical legacy of Australian governments' involvement with Aboriginal peoples is such that they are usually distrustful of all levels of government.

AlburyCity's Aboriginal Employment Strategy supports the NSW Government's initiative to recruit, retain and develop the careers of Aboriginal peoples.

The most recent statistical information illustrates that 2% of the Albury population identify as Aboriginal. This equates to approximately 1,063 people. According to the local Aboriginal Elders the Aboriginal population in Albury is closer to 1500 and 2000 persons given the transient nature of the community.

The disparity in unemployment rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in NSW regional cities have historically been extreme. Studies prepared for the New South Wales Government based on Bureau of Statistics 2011 census figures found that unemployment rates between the two groups are Aboriginal 20.6% and non-Aboriginal 5.5%.

Workforce planning research indicates that the public sector will face increasing workforce shortages because of the general ageing population. The Aboriginal population is young and growing, and this increasing pool of young people could support current and future public sector workforce needs in all areas of Council. (*Source: NSW Public Sector Workforce Strategy: 2008 – 2012*).

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AlburyCity can attain long term success with this Aboriginal Employment Strategy. It should not be seen as a 'special initiative' but eventually becomes part of the way the organisation does business, because it is the best way to work with Aboriginal peoples and because it makes good business sense.

AlburyCity developed its Reconciliation Statement in 2005 acknowledging the Wiradjuri peoples on whose traditional land Albury is located. Council expressed recognition and sorrow for the way Aboriginal peoples have been treated in the past and made a commitment to work in partnership with the Aboriginal community to 'strive towards empowerment for the Indigenous community of Albury'.

This demonstrates a willingness by Council to work with other key stakeholders to promote greater understanding of Aboriginal issues and acceptance of Aboriginal culture.

**AlburyCity - Reconciliation Statement**

*“AlburyCity acknowledges the Wiradjuri people on whose traditional lands AlburyCity is located.*

*The history culture, diversity and values of all Indigenous<sup>1</sup> peoples are recognised, acknowledged and respected.*

*AlburyCity recognises that Indigenous peoples have experienced social injustice, and racism since the commencement of colonisation in Australia.*

*AlburyCity expresses deep sorrow over the unjust policies and practices that have prevailed in Australia’s relationship with Indigenous peoples.*

*AlburyCity regrets that these actions and attitudes have occurred and ensure such practices will not be repeated.*

*AlburyCity acknowledges the ongoing effects of such practices on the lives of Indigenous<sup>1</sup> peoples.*

*AlburyCity commits to work in partnership with the Indigenous community to strive towards empowerment for the betterment of the Indigenous community of Albury.”*

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<sup>1</sup> The term Indigenous has been used in this Statement

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In taking a leading action in the community through a variety of programs that include the NAIDOC programs, support for Koori Kindermanna, Aboriginal youth dance groups, the Wiradjuri Interpretation Centre and the Wagirra Trail Project, (a component of the Murray River Experience) Council continues to acknowledge the reconciliation process.

Generally, Council is a key agency that supports Aboriginal agencies and networks to identify and address Aboriginal issues impacting on the community.

### STRATEGY

AlburyCity will need to address the following key issues when discussing the introduction of an Aboriginal Employment Strategy:

- the importance of the strategy to Council;
- methods of promotion to gain commitment to the strategy of Aboriginal stakeholders, including potential employees;
- advice of how to gain commitment to the strategy from AlburyCity Management and Supervisors;
- how to link the strategy to performance management systems; and
- establishment of monitoring and review systems.

### GOALS

The following four goals have been identified as the key elements of ongoing commitment by AlburyCity for an Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Goal One: Become an Employer of Choice for Aboriginal Australians.

STRATEGY	ACTIONS	BY	WHEN
Promote employment opportunities to Aboriginal Australians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing access to advertised positions;</li> <li>• Give presentations to jobseekers, through on-site tour or off-site presentation;</li> <li>• Talk to schools so as to attract young people;</li> <li>• Provide work experience placements for two school students during a school year.</li> </ul>		
Establish links with Aboriginal employment service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with Albury High Schools to highlight to Aboriginal students the importance of furthering education to offer future opportunities;</li> <li>• Liaise with other tertiary educational organisations within the Albury area to discuss educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples;</li> <li>• Meet with job network agents to attract suitable employees and further discuss future employment programs.</li> </ul>		
Increase cross-cultural awareness throughout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that managerial staff, Supervisors, Customer</li> </ul>		

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AlburyCity	<p>Service staff and other staff members who have contact with the public have the opportunity to attend cultural awareness training;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of important Indigenous Australian celebrations, for example, NAIDOC week and other events through the AlburyCity Website.</li> </ul>		
Develop systems to meet the needs of Aboriginal staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage support mentors to visit the Council regularly in the initial period after recruitment;</li> <li>• Determine ongoing educational needs of Aboriginal employees through the performance Appraisal and Skill Sets process to enable persons who wish to improve their educational status to be able to do so.</li> </ul>		

### Goal Two: Increase employment of Aboriginal Australians throughout Council

Ensure recruitment processes are culturally appropriate*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advertise Aboriginal specific positions in Koori Mail as well as local papers;*</li> <li>• recognise differing communication techniques;</li> <li>• ask if they have the skills to do the job, not their experience doing the job;</li> <li>• provide flexible interviewing options.</li> </ul>		
Recognise the skills and contributions of Aboriginal staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job descriptions to reflect skills required in the role in addition to any relevant qualifications; *</li> <li>• Include skills that reflect Aboriginal community knowledge where relevant;*</li> <li>• Conduct annual staff performance appraisals.*</li> </ul>		
Support staff development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for staff to undertake training, particularly staff who left school early or who were unable to access higher educational oppoprtnunities.*</li> <li>• Encourage complementary skills to support and work with other teams.*</li> </ul>		
Support Aboriginal employees to develop their own career strategies, goals and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide goal setting opportunities for staff annually at performance appraisals.*</li> <li>• Where and if appropriate, assign a workplace buddy to Aboriginal staff.*</li> </ul>		
Have a succession plan that gives Aboriginal Australians opportunities to move into senior positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the career aspirations of staff.*</li> <li>• Provide Aboriginal employees with exposure to divisions where they have opportunities for career development.*</li> </ul>		

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*\*It should be noted that elements of this strategy are currently catered for as part of AlburyCity Policies. However, Council should assess whether adjustments need to be made to ensure the current approaches cater for Aboriginal people's needs.*

### Goal Three: Develop systems to maintain Aboriginal employment

Tailor training and development programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal employees through recognition of different learning styles and approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist managers and supervisors in providing regular, constructive feedback to Aboriginal employees;</li> <li>Liaise with training providers to ensure programs are tailored for the attendees*</li> </ul>		
Review Traineeships and Apprenticeships opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review traineeships / apprenticeships vacancies to determine opportunities for Aboriginal traineeships / apprenticeships;</li> <li>On-going identification of traineeships and Apprenticeships for Aboriginal staff.</li> </ul>		
Evaluate the Aboriginal Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess Aboriginal employment and review the Strategy every 3 years.</li> </ul>		

### Goal Four: Develop partnerships that support the Strategy

Establish partnerships to maximise employment outcomes of Aboriginal people in the Albury region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise local networks that include rural community development, regional service delivery and local business. These partnerships demonstrate the benefits in taking a whole-of-community response. Some examples include partnerships with Murray Industry Community Education and Employment Partnership (MICEEP) and Job Network Agencies.</li> <li>Implement a partnership within the Aboriginal Community to enable them to be support members of their community that are in employment.</li> </ul>		
Devise projects that ensure Aboriginal participation and integration	AlburyCity to develop ongoing medium term projects that integrate Aboriginal Employment Strategy elements.		
Pursue further development of Council Projects that are on the drawing board	Develop existing partnerships, for example Wonga Wetlands Proposal and Wagirra Murray River Experience.		

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**Currently the Division of Local Government and Local Government NSW endorse positive steps to incorporate Aboriginal Australians in all aspects of Local Government processes. This includes development of Aboriginal Employment Strategies.**

It is important to recognise and embrace the benefits of a diverse workforce that reflects local communities.

The Local Government Act 1993, Section 345 requires that AlburyCity prepare, implement and review an Equal Opportunity Management (EEO) plan in order to:

- eliminate and ensure the absence of discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, sex, marital status and disability; and
- promote equal employment opportunity for women, members of racial minorities and persons with disabilities.

AlburyCity currently has an EEO and Diversity Strategy in place that seeks to prevent discrimination to all groups and also provides consideration to women via the National Framework for Women in Local Government. It also contains specific actions relating to supporting this Aboriginal Employment Strategy and the key outcomes in this strategy.

The employment of Aboriginal peoples by AlburyCity Council is an effective way to tap into young Aboriginal peoples to replace the aging workforce by encouraging them to gain expertise in a diverse range of employment opportunities. This in itself is initiative in closing the gap and benefiting the whole community of AlburyCity.

It will also include better representation, improved communication with diverse members of the community and increased understanding of the range of issues that affect different groups within the community.

### **CONCLUSION**

Diversity is a source of strength for AlburyCity. By increasing Aboriginal employment it will build AlburyCity's capacity to deliver programs and services that are effective and appropriate for both the Aboriginal peoples and the community. By having a better understanding of cultural difference, and taking it into account through policies and practice, Council will enhance the integrity of services and improve ability to meet the needs of AlburyCity's diverse population in meaningful, appropriate ways.

Workforce planning research indicates that the public sector will face increasing workforce shortages because of the general ageing population. The Aboriginal population is young and growing, and this increasing pool of young people could support current and future workforce needs in all areas of Council.

The unemployment rate experienced by Aboriginal people is roughly 4 times higher than the general population. Improving employment is one way of achieving an overall reduction in Aboriginal unemployment which will not only benefit the Aboriginal community, but the total AlburyCity community in the future.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Bureau of Statistics 2011
2. Two Ways Together - the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012
3. NSW Family & Community Services Aboriginal Employment & Development Strategy, July 2011
4. A Guide to better attraction selection and retention strategies – Department of Health Western Australia – Office of Aboriginal Health
5. NSW Public Sector Workforce Strategy: 2008 – 2012
6. The State Plan, NSW Public Sector Workforce Strategy, Keep them safe
7. The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation
8. New South Wales Government, The NSW Government Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People. 1997, New South Wales Government, Sydney.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. AlburyCity support and adopt the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and ongoing review.
2. AlburyCity continues to develop on a regular basis existing and future projects that engage the Aboriginal community and benefit the whole Albury community.
3. AlburyCity identifies through the Human Resources Team ongoing employment paths through traineeships and apprenticeships for Aboriginal recruits.
4. AlburyCity adopt a policy of encouraging Aboriginal work experience students from local schools.