



19 April 2011

Survey Outcomes

Over 250 people completed our survey* about what you want included in the CPSU bargaining claim to support improved employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the APS. This is based on the Government commitment to reach 2.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the APS by 2015.

*that's 39% of those on our APS NATSIC email list – a great return

This is the statistical summary of the survey returns.

Targets in agency agreements

- 93% of respondents support setting a target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in current Agreement negotiations.
- 83.8% of respondents in Agencies with an employment level above 2.7% supported a target that would increase the level of employment.
- Of those in Agencies below the 2.7% target, 94% wanted to set a target to reach 2.7% during the life of this agreement. Those supporting a target lower than 2.7% this bargaining round tended to come from organisations that were a long way behind the target.

Support for other matters to be included in Agency agreements was as follows

- 99% supported mentor programs, additional training and cadetships to improve career pathways
- 98% supported strategies to improve the overall Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff numbers
- 91% supported quarterly reporting on the gender, location, classification, length of service and employment status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- 96% supported quarterly reporting on the rates of engagement and separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- 95% supported the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee to advise on and monitor the implementation of the agency's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employment strategy
- 97% supported the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network

Here is the summary of the comments included in the survey responses.

Targets – a means to an end.

While targets were strongly endorsed the majority of comments talked about the need to ensure there was accountability for them to avoid them becoming tokenistic and to make sure that the targets weren't reached by staff holding predominantly lower classifications.

Ensuring accountability for targets through measures such as Agency KPI, and making sure they are just one part of a broader strategy to improve recruitment, retention and career pathways were the main comments on targets. Here some direct quotes:

- *Equity across the ranks is as important as raw numbers!*
- *We should achieve much higher targets for the people of this land.*
- *Do not want targets to be tokenistic*
- *We should also consider having individual targets or KPIs in particular Teams within Agencies. You just need to look at the low rate of representation for team manager positions*
- *Need to look at gender equity when setting targets and classification levels.*

- *The Australian Government should lead by example*
- *Schools & entry level programs should be run at all offices not just the capital cities*
- *They should be a minimum target not the maximum.*
- *Increase number of indigenous staff in middle and senior management positions by provision of specific training & development and succession planning being offered to potential staff*
- *More Indigenous Senior Managers are needed in Indigenous portfolios.*
- *I would like to see the Commission monitor employment within all Agency*
- *Reiterate ACCOUNTABILITY.*
- *Targets are easy to reach with entry level programs. The real problem is retaining staff once the targets are met. We have lost too many staff at the more senior levels. This is affecting morale at the lower levels.*

From the small number of respondents not supporting targets, the main reason is reflected in the comment *“there should be no targets in place and more incentives for ATSI to come and work in APS.”* Another concern was that staff being recruited through these targeted measures would not get the same access to career improvement as others.

On accountability, the following stand out:

- *Set the target as suggested however if agencies do not reach the target they should provide reasons why they have not achieved this goal. Also make it part of the Secretaries performance agreement. Report to be tabled in Parliament, COAG and the Productivity Commission for long term planning - best practice etc.*
- *Stated commitments are never followed through currently there is no such agency asking questions of Human Resource Management. Reporting should be mandatory to the Commission and the Minister.*

The questions around strategies and support mechanisms to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes in the APS show strong support for your involvement in developing and monitoring these. There was also acknowledgement that some agencies are putting work into these, but more needs to be done. Again, some quotes:

- *... (our) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network which meets on a regular basis, however when workloads are a priority this falls down.*
- *Mentor programs are more worth while.*
- *Empowerment = success*
- *.. It is very rare in Queensland that an Indigenous staff member is successful in winning an identified position.*
- *Indigenous staff networks should be free of Management influence and should represent Indigenous staff of the Department, not the Management of the Department.*

The frustrations of many are reflected in these comments:

- *It is all well and good to establish committees and targets but rarely is anything ever done to continue its place in the agency. Commitment shown at the beginning but yet it dies off. It just goes around in circles, nothing much is ever achieved.*
- *All the things suggested in the previous set of questions have been tried before. The simple answer is that until Indigenous people are regarded as an integral part of the workforce, that they are accepted for the skills and abilities they bring to the workplace, until they are regarded as human beings, they will never achieve anything in the APS. To many people in the APS at the senior management and executive levels believe Indigenous people are inferior to them and other groups.*

This is just some of the valuable feedback we received in the survey. If you can't see your comment in these samples, please be confident that it has influenced our work. Starting with strategies and targets is good, but the clear message is that accountability, support and ongoing monitoring are needed to back these up.

To see the bargaining clause based on this part of the APS Bargaining Framework go to <http://www.cpsu.org.au/multiattachments/22623.html> and watch for regular email updates on bargaining progress. Contact cpsu_natsic@cpsu.org.au or 1300 137 636 for any questions.