



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

Indigenous Workforce Strategy & Action Plan

2024-2028



Gnalla Moorditj Bullargar
We Are Strong Together

Just as the maali fly together, safe and streamlined, our university is stronger working together as one community.

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Western Australia acknowledges all of the custodians and traditional owners of lands across Australia, including the Whadjuk Noongar people at the Crawley campus and the Menang Noongar people at the Albany campus.

The University recognises and celebrates that these traditional owners remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their lands, and continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge.



Foreword



Professor Amit Chakma
Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to endorse The University of Western Australia's Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028, which outlines the University's commitment to creating a work environment where Indigenous peoples, cultures, beliefs, and values are acknowledged and respected, and where the career aspirations of Indigenous staff are supported.

The University's vision is to provide world-class education, research and community engagement for the advancement of the prosperity and welfare of all communities, including Indigenous peoples. Building upon the University's progress to date, this Strategy aligns with the *Universities Australia 2022-2025 Indigenous Strategy* to ensure Indigenous staff success and underscores a commitment to increasing the proportion of Indigenous employment to 3% to align with goals set by the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Indigenous staff play a pivotal role in Indigenous education, student success, research, culture, and heritage. Hundreds of UWA Indigenous graduates are contributing to various sectors across Western Australia and beyond. This Strategy recognises the importance of Indigenous staff and the need to create a work environment in which Indigenous peoples, cultures, beliefs, and values are acknowledged and respected, and in which the career goals and aims of Indigenous staff are identified, promoted and achieved.

While we celebrate our successes, significant effort and focus will be required to meet an employment target of 3% and plans to achieve this are embedded within this Strategy.

Many UWA Indigenous staff have led or contributed to this Strategy and I would like to extend my thanks to them.



Professor Jill Milroy
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education

In 1988, UWA established its first Indigenous programs and has since seen over 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates. These graduates represent a new generation of Indigenous leaders. They include doctors, lawyers, dentists, engineers, scientists, and arts professionals, many being the first Indigenous graduates in their field.

From its early beginnings as a Centre, the Indigenous Education portfolio now includes the School of Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Student Services, the Berndt Museum, and the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health.

Building on this success, the Indigenous Workforce Strategy shall continue to grow and develop Indigenous staff, embodying the spirit of the Noongar language, *Gnalla Moorditj Bullargar – We Are Strong Together*.

This Strategy is the outcome of the drive and dedication of many talented people. I would like to thank all Indigenous staff involved and extend my appreciation to the University Executive and Senior Leadership for their support and enthusiasm in driving this Strategy forward.

Dr Richard Walley OAM, Senior Cultural Consultant, UWA

The Maali Story woven throughout the Indigenous Workforce Strategy reflects a strong connection to Noongar heritage, enriched by the cultural wisdom captured in the artwork and concept provided by Dr Richard Walley, Noongar Elder, artist, musician, and writer.

Context

This Strategy aligns the University's activities with nationally endorsed strategies, programs and legislative guidelines for Indigenous employment, including in the higher education sector:

- The *Indigenous Advancement Strategy*, administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, which prioritises activities in a range of areas including Jobs, Land and Economy, Safety and Wellbeing, Culture and Capability, and Research and Evaluation.
- The *Indigenous Student Success Program* (ISSP) and the *Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017*, administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, require institutions to have a publicly available Indigenous Workforce Strategy as part of their eligibility for funding. A key performance indicator of this strategy is that at least 3% of the institution's employees must be Indigenous.
- The *Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-25* which outlines a range of commitments for staff success including that Universities have workforce strategies that include initiatives for attracting and retaining Indigenous staff.
- *Universities Australia Indigenous Employment Guidelines* propose practical guidelines to attract and grow Indigenous workforce the self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

In addition, the Indigenous Workforce Strategy ensures alignment with the following UWA strategies and frameworks:

- *UWA 2030* which commits to driving culturally capable leadership and a curriculum connected to Indigenous languages, culture and knowledge.
- *UWA Indigenous Strategy* which outlines the University's goals for Indigenous Education, Indigenous Research, Community and Engagement, and People, Policy and Planning.
- The *UWA Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework* which includes Indigenous Knowledge as one of the seven key Framework principles. It ensures that Indigenous staff and students have access to culturally safe and responsive mental health services for Indigenous staff and students, and delivers mandatory cultural awareness training for everyone.
- The *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2022-25* which includes increasing and supporting Indigenous staff in key priority areas.
- The *UWA Professional and General Employees Enterprise Agreement 2023* and *UWA Academic Employees Enterprise Agreement 2023* which commit the University to develop and implement a proactive, long-term strategy aimed at increasing Indigenous employment to 3% of overall staff.



Our university should feel like a safe place to come home to - a nest - for our community.



Future Directions

Current Status

While UWA maintains a consistent Indigenous staff presence, it ranks lower in both the total number and proportion of Indigenous employees compared to several Australian universities.

According to the Department of Education's Higher Education Statistics, UWA had 34 Indigenous staff members in 2023, representing 0.9% of its workforce. Within Western Australia, UWA is on par with Murdoch University but lags behind Curtin University and Edith Cowan University. The proportion of Indigenous staff at UWA is also below the average for Group of Eight (Go8) universities, where institutions like Australian National University (2.1%) and The University of Melbourne (1.8%) demonstrate stronger Indigenous representation.

In 2024, UWA reported 53 Indigenous staff members, representing approximately 1.3% of the workforce. While some discrepancies between reported and actual data remain, the University is actively investigating system enhancements to improve the accuracy of Indigenous identity disclosures within its human resources processes.

To achieve the 3% Indigenous employment target and fulfill national commitments alongside the University's enterprise agreements, UWA must not only retain its current Indigenous staff but also steadily increase the Indigenous workforce each year. The following projections are estimates and will be adjusted to reflect any increases in the total staff count.

The University will take a proactive and comprehensive approach, focusing on three key interconnected themes:

- Attraction & Recruitment
- Retention, Development & Support
- Leadership, Governance & Reporting

Nine strategic priorities have been established under these themes, with a consolidated list of strategic themes and priorities provided at the conclusion of this document.

This will deliver on the University's promise in Vision 2030 to "recognise and value Indigenous peoples' rights, knowledge, culture and values" and the commitment to "embrace Indigenous knowledge and culture to drive culturally capable leadership."

Table 1: UWA Indigenous Staff Actual (2024-2026) and Projection (2027-2028)

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Proportion Indigenous Staff	0.9%*	1.3%*	1.3%*	1.5%*	2.6%	3%

Source: UWA Strategy, Planning and Performance

*Source: Department of Education Higher Education Statistics - 2023 Staff First Nations, at 31st March 2023. 2024 Staff First Nations, as at 31st March 2024, 2025 Staff First Nations, as at 31st March 2025. 2026 Staff First Nations, at 31st March 2026

Strategic Themes, Priorities & Actions

This section focuses on the three key themes:

- Attraction & Recruitment
- Retention, Development & Support, and
- Leadership, Governance & Reporting.

To support effective implementation, the Strategy is delivered in two phases. Phase 1 (2024–2025) focused on strengthening the foundations for long-term growth, including baseline workforce data, governance, and the creation of roles to embed Indigenous knowledge, experience and perspectives across the University, supported by targeted funding to accelerate growth. Phase 2 (2026–2028) builds on this foundation and sets out the Action Plan for the remainder of the Strategy period. It replaces the Phase 1 Action Plan in this document and identifies the priorities, actions and measures required to support continued progress against the Strategy's objectives.

A consolidated list of strategic themes and priorities is available at the end of this document.

Here we bring together conventional linear perspectives and the Indigenous understanding of our world as cyclical and continuous. At UWA, these ways of learning come together.



1 Attraction & Recruitment

The University is committed to promoting diversity and creating a climate of inclusion for diverse student and staff communities. This diversity enriches and enhances the University by incorporating a broader range of perspectives and experiences.

Indigenous communities have historically faced barriers to employment in various sectors, including higher education.

Attracting and recruiting Indigenous staff is of key importance to the success of this Strategy and meeting the 3% target. Indigenous employment opportunities at UWA will be created for both academic and professional positions, and strengthened by initiatives to support Indigenous students' transition into Higher Degree Research programs, academic employment, and other career paths.

Strategic Priority	Description
Improve mechanisms for attracting and recruiting Indigenous people	The University will grow Indigenous employment by improving its recruitment resources, policies, processes and strategies.
Build the Indigenous staff workforce	The University will build its workforce by strengthening Higher Degree Research (HDR) and academic pathways, internships, and by creating Identified positions in academic and professional priority areas.
Prioritise and incentivise Indigenous employment	The University will commit to better investing in Indigenous employment through increased resourcing.

Attraction & Recruitment Key Actions Phase 2 (2026-2028)
Continued implementation of Identified positions and targeted recruitment approaches
Strengthen academic pathways, internships and employment pipelines
Partnering with Schools and senior leaders to identify priority workforce areas
Embedding Indigenous employment in workforce planning and resource allocation

2 Retention, Development, & Support

Building upon the University's efforts in attraction and recruitment, retention, development and support are critical components of fostering a work environment that is inclusive and contributes to the wellbeing and retention of Indigenous staff.

Within this theme, the University will develop and implement an Indigenous Cultural Capability Framework that integrates Indigenous competencies into leadership development and ensures mandatory Indigenous cultural competency training for all staff.

Strategic Priority	Description
Enhance Indigenous staff engagement and development	The University will engage, develop and improve the retention of UWA Indigenous staff.
Grow and develop Indigenous staff	The University will identify professional development needs and invest in Indigenous growth and success.
Foster Indigenous staff career advancement	The University will ensure relevant policies, processes, and career support mechanisms recognise the skills, expertise, unique roles, and responsibilities of Indigenous staff.
Strengthen cultural competence	The University will implement a Cultural Capability Framework and ensure staff undertake programs to build and maintain Indigenous cultural competency.

Retention, Development & Support Key Actions Phase 2 (2026-2028)
- Identify and address barriers to Indigenous staff retention - Expanding career development, promotion pathways and professional support - Maintaining and strengthening the Indigenous Staff Network and forum - Implementing and embedding the Indigenous Cultural Capability Framework

3 Leadership, Governance, & Reporting

Effective governance, oversight, accountability, and reporting mechanisms are essential for the success of this Strategy. These will ensure effective stakeholder engagement, regular progress reviews and reporting, appropriate resource allocation, and adjustments to strategic priorities and actions based on feedback, outcomes, and changing circumstances.

An Indigenous Workforce Committee was established in 2025 to oversee the implementation of this Strategy.

Strategic Priority	Description
Ensure Indigenous Workforce Strategy leadership and governance	The University will ensure strong leadership, stakeholder engagement and governance from across the University to ensure completion of the actions within this Strategy.
Establish reporting mechanisms for the Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan	The University will establish effective systems, procedures, and reporting mechanisms to effectively and accurately measure and evaluate progress.

Leadership, Governance & Reporting Key Actions Phase 2 (2026-2028)
• Maintaining effective governance structures (Steering Committee and Working Group) • Supporting University-wide accountability and engagement • Strengthening Indigenous workforce data quality, monitoring and reporting • Providing regular progress updates to support visibility and shared ownership



Wisdom doesn't come easily. The maali's secret to gliding along the water is hard work beneath the surface.

Consolidated List of Strategic Priorities

The maali and Rose Window of Winthrop Hall entwine as a symbol of connection between UWA and Indigenous communities.



Strategic Priority	Description
Theme 1: Attraction & Recruitment	
Improve mechanisms for attracting and recruiting Indigenous people	The University will grow Indigenous employment by improving its recruitment resources, policies, processes and strategies
Build the Indigenous staff workforce	The University will build its workforce by strengthening Higher Degree Research (HDR) and academic pathways, internships, and by creating Identified positions in academic and professional priority areas
Prioritise and incentivise Indigenous employment	The University will commit to better investing in Indigenous employment through increased resourcing
Theme 2: Retention, Development & Support	
Enhance Indigenous staff engagement and development	The University will engage, develop and improve the retention of UWA Indigenous staff
Grow and develop Indigenous staff	The University will identify professional development needs and invest in Indigenous growth and success
Foster Indigenous staff career advancement	The University will ensure relevant policies, processes, and career support mechanisms recognise the skills, expertise, unique roles, and responsibilities of Indigenous staff
Strengthen cultural competence	The University will implement a Cultural Capability Framework and ensure staff undertake programs to build and maintain Indigenous cultural competency
Theme 3: Leadership, Governance, & Reporting	
Ensure Indigenous Workforce Strategy leadership and governance	The University will ensure strong leadership, stakeholder engagement and governance from across the University to ensure completion of the actions within this Strategy
Establish reporting mechanisms for the Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan	The University will establish effective systems, procedures, and reporting mechanisms to effectively and accurately measure and evaluate progress

Outcomes Phase 1 (2024 -2025)

The first phase of implementation delivered strong outcomes across all three strategic themes, including growth in Indigenous staff numbers, expanded recruitment pathways, and strengthened governance and support structures.

These outcomes provide a foundation for Phase 2, which will focus on scaling and embedding sustainable workforce outcomes.

Attraction & Recruitment

- Indigenous staff numbers increased by 25%, from 54 in March 2025 to 68 by year-end.
- Significant growth in Identified (50D) roles across the University
- Targeted funding enabled the creation of new positions across Schools, including through Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor initiatives
- Indigenous Workforce Engagement Specialist appointed
- Guidelines for the greater use of Identified positions at UWA developed

Retention, Development & Support

- Progression and development supported through changes to academic promotion processes
- Work commenced on the Indigenous Cultural Capability Framework, with mandatory online training to be introduced in 2026
- Ongoing Indigenous Staff Network meetings strengthened connection, belonging, and peer support across the University

Leadership, Governance & Reporting

- Establishment of the Indigenous Workforce Strategy Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor
- Strengthened governance and oversight of Strategy implementation through cross-University representation

Action Plan Phase 2 (2026 - 2028)

THEME 1: ATTRACTION & RECRUITMENT		
Strategic Priority	Action	Responsibility
Improve mechanisms for attracting and recruiting Indigenous people	Continue to implement targeted recruitment strategies to attract Indigenous applicants, including the expanded use of Identified (50D) positions.	Associate Director, Talent Acquisition; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Deliver coordinated recruitment approaches and strengthen partnerships with Indigenous employment agencies and community organisations.	Associate Director, Talent Acquisition; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Enhance recruitment capability and processes, including training and support for 50D recruitment and classification requirements.	Associate Director, Talent Acquisition; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Further develop recruitment infrastructure, including a clear Employer Value Proposition (EVP) aligned to Indigenous employment priorities	Associate Director, Talent Acquisition; Associate Director, Organisational Development & People Strategy
Build the Indigenous staff workforce	Work with Heads of Schools and Professional Senior Leaders to identify and prioritise Indigenous workforce needs across academic and professional areas.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education; University Executive; Heads of School and Professional Senior Leaders
	Support a more even distribution of Indigenous staff across Schools and portfolios, aligned to workforce planning.	Heads of School and Professional Senior Leaders; University Executive; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Expand academic pathways, including Higher Degree Research (HDR) and PhD opportunities, to support long-term workforce growth.	Heads of School; Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Increase opportunities for Indigenous students and graduates to transition into employment at the University.	Heads of School; Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
Prioritise and incentivise Indigenous employment	Embed Indigenous employment priorities into workforce planning, KPIs, and resource allocation processes across the University.	University Executive; Heads of School and Professional Senior Leaders; Associate Director, Business Partnering and Change; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Continue to leverage targeted funding and University-led initiatives to support recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff.	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Associate Director, Business Partnering and Change; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Sustain momentum in Indigenous academic recruitment through ongoing targeted appointment pathways and initiatives.	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Associate Director, Business Partnering and Change; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment

THEME 2: RETENTION, DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT		
Strategic Priority	Action	Responsibility
Enhance Indigenous staff engagement, development and retention	Continue to identify and address barriers to retention for Indigenous staff across the University	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment; Senior Leaders; Associate Director, Business Partnering and Change;
	Strengthen processes to support ongoing employment, including contract extension and conversion of fixed-term roles to ongoing positions where appropriate	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment; Senior Leaders; Associate Director, Business Partnering and Change;
	Maintain and grow the Indigenous Staff Network and forums to support connection, communication, and peer support	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
Grow and develop Indigenous staff and foster career advancement	Expand professional development opportunities and targeted support to enable career progression for Indigenous staff	Associate Director, Organisational Development & People Strategy; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Continue to implement and embed improvements to academic promotion processes to support advancement	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous); Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Enhance mentoring, career development and leadership pathways to support progression across academic and professional roles	Associate Director, Organisational Development & People Strategy; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Provide targeted support for career development, including grant application support, research development, and professional staff progression	Associate Director, Organisational Development & People Strategy; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
Strengthen cultural competence	Implement and embed the UWA Indigenous Cultural Capability Framework across the University	Associate Director, Organisational Capability; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Support staff participation in cultural capability programs to build and maintain Indigenous cultural competency	Associate Director, Organisational Development & People Strategy; Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment

THEME 3: LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & REPORTING

Strategic Priority	Action	Responsibility
Ensure Indigenous Workforce Strategy leadership and governance	Maintain and strengthen governance structures, including the Indigenous Workforce Strategy Steering Committee and Working Group	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Continue to engage senior leaders and stakeholders to support accountability for Indigenous workforce outcomes	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Promote and communicate the Indigenous Workforce Strategy across the University to support awareness and engagement	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
Establish effective reporting mechanisms for the Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan	Strengthen the collection, quality, and governance of Indigenous workforce data, including EEO data integrity	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment
	Embed consistent workforce planning and reporting processes across Schools and portfolios	Associate Director, Business Partnering and Change;
	Provide regular progress reporting to support monitoring, transparency, and shared ownership of outcomes	Senior Manager, Indigenous Employment



The maali stands proudly on the UWA coat of arms, as our community stands proudly as thought leaders and creators, sharers of knowledge and seekers of wisdom.



Danjoo Kaartdijin
Noongar artist Sharyn Egan

This artwork embodies the strong symbol of the Black Swan watching over the nest. The Swan's wings expand in a protective embrace, providing a source of strength and belonging, a place to call home.

