



Government of Western Australia
Child and Adolescent Health Service



CAHS Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan (AWAP) 2026-2028



Acknowledgement of Country

The Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) acknowledges the Whadjuk and Binjareb people of the Noongar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land, sea and waters on which we work and live. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present.

Aboriginal people, as the First Peoples, have cared for this land for at least 65,000 years. We recognise and value their continuing cultural and spiritual connections to this land. CAHS acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal people from across Western Australia who access the health services provided within CAHS.

CAHS recognises that the colonisation of this Country has come at a great cost to Aboriginal peoples and communities and the continued effects of colonisation impact on health and wellbeing today. We pay tribute to the strength, resilience, and courage of Aboriginal people who have survived the devastation of the recent past, to stand strong and proud today.

CAHS is committed to working towards a better future, where all cultures are respected and valued, and Aboriginal people take their rightful place as the First Australians.

Using the term Aboriginal

Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be referred to in the national context, and Indigenous may be referred to in the international context. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.



Table of contents

Foreword	04
Background	05
Going forward	07
Our Aboriginal workforce profile	08
Celebrating our past achievements and progress to date	09
- Recruitment	09
- Retention	10
- Advancement	10
Building on our progress to create a sustainable and inclusive future	11
- Our pillars of action	11
- Our phases	12
Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan 2026-2028 (AWAP)	13
- Pillar 1: Recruitment	13
- Pillar 2: Retention	14
- Pillar 3: Advancement	14
Monitoring and evaluation	15
Acronyms	16

Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan 2026–2028 (AWAP).

As Western Australia's only dedicated paediatric health service, CAHS provides comprehensive care across primary, secondary, and tertiary settings, from birth through to early adulthood. Our vision is for healthy children and healthy communities, and we understand that achieving this requires a workforce that reflects and respects the diversity of the families we serve.

This AWAP, alongside our Multicultural Action Plan and CAHS Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), reaffirms our commitment to building a culturally safe, inclusive, and empowered Aboriginal workforce. The AWAP marks a significant step in our reconciliation journey and is central to our mission of delivering high-quality, culturally safe care to Aboriginal children, young people, and their families.

The AWAP is built around three 3 key pillars:

Recruitment: We are committed to attracting Aboriginal talent into all areas of CAHS. This includes creating culturally welcoming entry points, partnering with Aboriginal education and training providers, and promoting health careers to Aboriginal young people and jobseekers.

Retention: We recognise that retaining Aboriginal staff requires more than employment, it requires belonging. We will foster culturally safe workplaces where Aboriginal employees feel respected, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Advancement: We are focused on building pathways for Aboriginal staff to grow and lead. Through targeted development opportunities, leadership programs, and succession planning, we aim to increase Aboriginal representation at all levels of clinical care, decision-making and governance.

This AWAP aligns with the Public Sector Commission's Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy 2020–2025 and the WA Health Workforce Strategy 2034, supporting the aspirational Aboriginal employment target of 3.7% by 2026. However, we know that real change requires more than targets, it demands an inclusive culture, strong leadership, and the amplification of lived experience, which is why I am proud that this AWAP has been shaped by the voices and leadership of our Aboriginal employees whose insights have guided our priorities and will continue to inform our journey.

It is incumbent on all of us at CAHS to contribute to a culturally safe and inclusive workplace. Whether through developing cultural knowledge, supporting new Aboriginal colleagues, engaging with dates of significance, or participating in our Aboriginal Health Champions Program, we each have a role to play. By implementing the initiatives in this AWAP, we will build a stronger, more inclusive, and capable workforce. A workforce that enables CAHS to deliver care that is not only clinically excellent, but culturally secure, respectful, and empowering.



I extend my sincere thanks to our internal stakeholders who informed the plan, especially the voices and leadership of our Aboriginal employees. Your contributions are the foundation of our shared journey toward a more inclusive and culturally secure health service.

Clare Dobb – Executive Director,

People, Capability and Culture
Child and Adolescent Health Service

Background

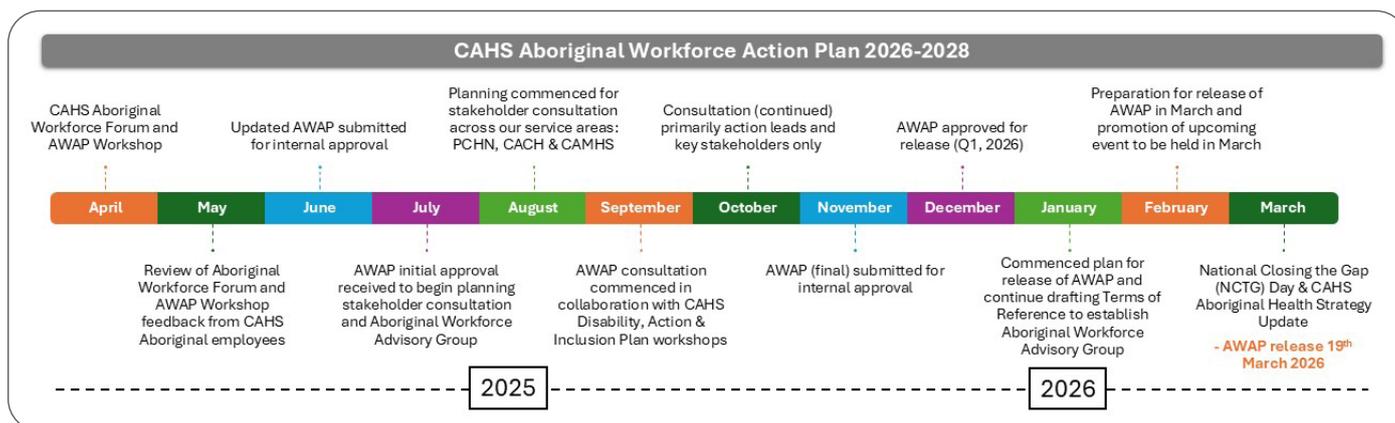


In 2020, the Public Sector Commission (PSC) launched the Workforce Diversification Strategy to transform the Western Australian public sector into a leading employer in diversity and inclusion, where the qualities, contributions, and perspectives of every individual are valued.

Aboriginal people were identified as one of six key diversity focus areas, with agency-specific actions and aspirational targets outlined in the Workforce and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020–2025 and the Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People 2020–2025.

To respond to the above PSC strategies, the Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) convened its inaugural Aboriginal Workforce Forum in 2023, bringing together Aboriginal staff and stakeholders to co-design an Aboriginal Workforce framework focused on 3 key pillars: Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement. This framework laid the foundation for a more targeted and holistic approach to Aboriginal workforce employment and engagement across CAHS.

Recognising the need for a more detailed and responsive plan, CAHS held its second Aboriginal Workforce Forum in 2025. This forum reflected on progress made, identified what had worked well, and gathered feedback on emerging priorities which led to the re-design of the framework. The insights shared by Aboriginal employees and stakeholders directly informed the development of the CAHS Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan 2026–2028 (AWAP).



This AWAP outlines a collective set of actions designed to grow a capable and engaged Aboriginal workforce with improved representation across clinical, non-clinical, and leadership roles at all levels. It supports CAHS's commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, and families and the employment experience for CAHS staff.

The AWAP is informed by and aligned to CAHS Values and a range of strategic frameworks and priorities, including:

- [National Agreement on Closing the Gap \(2020\)](#)
- [Public Sector Commission WA Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy \(2020–2025\)](#)
- [WA Health Aboriginal Workforce Policy 2018](#)
- [WA Health Workforce Strategy 2024–2034](#)
- [WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030](#)
- [CAHS Strategic Plan 2023–2025](#)
- [CAHS Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–2026](#)
- CAHS Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – in development
- CAHS Aboriginal Cultural Security Audit (ACSA) – recommendations under review
- [CAHS Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan \(2025–2026\)](#)



Going forward

We acknowledge that this AWAP will continue to evolve, incorporating future plans, emerging strategies, and ongoing feedback from our Aboriginal workforce to ensure it remains a true reflection of current workforce needs and organisational priorities.

The AWAP, alongside other supporting frameworks, will serve as an important roadmap to guide our recruitment decisions, focus efforts on retention and development of our existing Aboriginal workforce, increase cultural knowledge and capability, and enhance the overall workplace experience and cultural safety for Aboriginal employees.

While the AWAP actions are predominantly led by the People Capability and Culture Directorate, in line with the CAHS value of collaboration, all service areas will contribute to the successful implementation of this Plan.

We also look forward to working closely with our Aboriginal Workforce Advisory Group (AWAG), whose leadership and guidance will help us monitor progress, share outcomes, and hold ourselves accountable to the commitments we have made as follows:

Our commitments

- Set clear expectations for all staff regarding their role in fostering an inclusive and culturally safe workplace across all service areas.
- Strengthen leadership capability and commitment by embedding cultural awareness, inclusive leadership practices, and allyship into leadership development programs.
- Enhance retention strategies through culturally responsive support systems, mentoring, and career development pathways tailored for Aboriginal employees.
- Monitor and evaluate progress using data-driven insights and feedback to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.
- Celebrate and amplify success by recognising Aboriginal employee contributions and sharing stories that reflect the impact of inclusion across CAHS.
- Deepen partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations to co-design initiatives and ensure relevance and respect in all workforce strategies.



Pictured: Aboriginal Child Health Immersion Program (2025)

Our Aboriginal workforce profile

As of 31 August 2025, CAHS employed **123 Aboriginal employees**, representing **1.7%** of our total workforce of 7,295. These employees are primarily engaged across nursing, medical support, administration, and clerical Services.

While this reflects a modest increase, Aboriginal representation remains below the **Public Sector Commission’s Aboriginal Employment Target of 3.7%**.

Achieving meaningful and sustainable Aboriginal employment outcomes will require **focused effort, culturally informed strategies, and a strong commitment** to equity and inclusion across all levels of our workforce.

CAHS Aboriginal Workforce – Actual vs Targets	
CAHS Aboriginal Employees – Actual 123 (1.7%) as at August 2025	
Aboriginal Employment Targets	Department of Health – (3.2%) by 2034
	CAHS EEO Management – Plan (2.9%) by 2026
	Public Sector Commission – 3.7% by 2026

Creating Aboriginal employment opportunities through planned workforce growth

In addition to continuing recruitment into identified (Section 50D) positions, CAHS will adopt a more proactive approach by targeting all recruitment efforts, including non-identified roles, to attract and retain more Aboriginal candidates. Additionally, another focus area is converting fixed term appointments to permanent employment where possible.

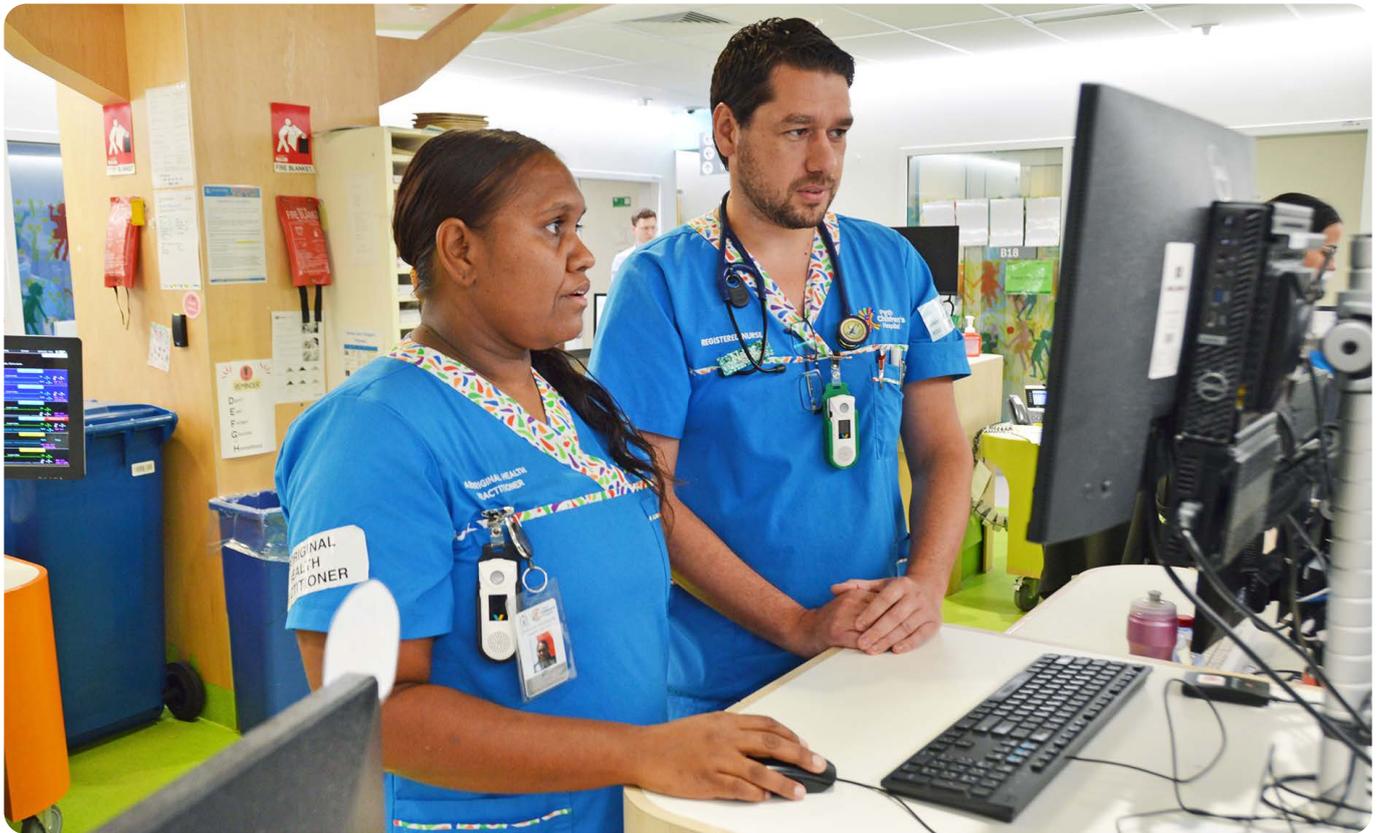
While our ability to increase Aboriginal representation may be influenced by vacancy availability and broader workforce changes, we remain committed to identifying and pursuing opportunities wherever possible.

This AWAP supports our goal of increasing Aboriginal representation in alignment with both our workforce forecast and the target outlined in the CAHS Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan, as shown below.

	Actual			Forecast		
	2023*	2024*	2025*	2026	2027	2028
Total current and planned workforce	6,563	6,964	7,344	7,744	8,144	8,544
General increase of FTE year on year	Increase	401	380	400	400	400
Total current and planned Aboriginal employees	114	120	125	221	276	316
% of total	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	2.9%	3.4%	3.7%
Aboriginal people that we need to employ in all position types	Increase	6	5	96	55	40

*Peak workforce at a particular month

Celebrating our past achievements and progress to date



CAHS has made meaningful progress in building a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for Aboriginal employees. These achievements reflect our ongoing commitment to reconciliation, equity, and fostering a workforce culture where Aboriginal staff feel included and valued.

Our efforts have been focused across 3 key areas - Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement each contributing to our goal of becoming an employer of choice for Aboriginal people and working towards the Public Sector Commission's Aboriginal Employment Target of 3.7%.

Recruitment

The recruitment of Aboriginal employees has been improved by:

- Promotion of Commissioners Instruction 39 (direct appointment for Aboriginal employees) to all service areas.
- Creating roles which provide support to Aboriginal people, where Aboriginal people are best placed to provide those supports/services and applying EEO Act Section 50(d).
- All advertising now includes Section 51 (EEO Act 1984) to support our employment targets and contribute to a diverse workforce.
- Advertising templates, where possible, now include Aboriginal employee vignettes describing CAHS as an employer of choice.

Retention

An ongoing focus on retention of Aboriginal employees through:

- Promotion of access to cultural leave to all CAHS Aboriginal employees.
- Building manager's understanding and confidence to approve cultural leave requests.
- Yarning sessions held during throughout the year.
- Annual programs developed for Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week across all CAHS sites which include Acknowledgement to Country, Smoking/Water Ceremonies, language sessions, screenings, panel sessions (Grand Round), Kids' Bridge walk, hosting stalls/ displays at PCH for families and children including various opportunities to collaborate with external organisations.
- Aboriginal Workforce Forum (2025) provided an opportunity to network and workshop the AWAP.
- Cultural Awareness Training (face-face) co-facilitated with Aboriginal Health Strategy

Advancement

A continued focus on career development and training through:

- Establishment of the Child Development Service (CDS) Aboriginal Liaison Officer service.
- Creation and appointment to the Aboriginal Health Liaison Coordinator 50(d) role.
- Creation and appointment to the Aboriginal Consumer Engagement 50(d) role.
- Creation of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Aboriginal Mental Health Lead 50(d) roles.
- Creation of 2 AHLO (50d) roles (Murdoch and Midland Hubs).
- Ongoing participation in Institute of Health Leadership (IHL) Aboriginal Leadership programs (First Steps and LEAD).
- Aboriginal Workforce Co-ordinator held one-on-one "job ready" sessions with Aboriginal staff.



Pictured: National Reconciliation Week display at PCH (2025)

Building on our progress to create a sustainable and inclusive future

Our approach is intentionally phased to ensure we continue to build strong foundations, foster growth, and embed sustainable practices around 3 key pillars: **Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement.**

The AWAP is designed to integrate Aboriginal inclusion into the fabric of CAHS not as a standalone initiative, but as a core organisational focus. It builds on our foundations and aligns with our broader Strategic Priorities, including the new **CAHS Inclusion and Diversity Framework**, to ensure a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for all.

Our pillars of action

- **Recruitment:** We are committed to attracting Aboriginal talent into all areas of CAHS. This includes creating culturally welcoming entry points, partnering with Aboriginal training providers, and promoting health careers to Aboriginal young people and jobseekers.
- **Retention:** We recognise that retaining Aboriginal staff requires more than employment, it requires belonging. We will foster culturally safe workplaces where Aboriginal employees feel respected, supported, and empowered to thrive.
- **Advancement:** We are focused on building pathways for Aboriginal staff to grow and lead. Through targeted development opportunities, leadership programs, and succession planning, we aim to increase Aboriginal representation at all levels of decision-making and governance.



Pictured: Aboriginal Child Health Immersion Program (2024)



Our phases

The initiatives in the AWAP will be delivered across 2 phases:

Evolving Phase – Year 1 (2026)

In the first year, our focus is building on existing foundations, refining our processes and strengthening capability. We aim to create culturally safe and accessible pathways for Aboriginal people to enter our workforce. This includes strengthening our recruitment practices with culturally sensitive methodologies, engaging in inclusive workforce planning, and ensuring that all service areas understand their shared responsibility in achieving Aboriginal workforce targets. Importantly, we begin cultivating ownership and accountability among managers for the retention and support of Aboriginal employees.

Emerging Phase – Years 2 and 3 (2027–2028)

As we move into the second and third years of the Action Plan, our focus will shift toward deepening engagement, expanding initiatives, and embedding inclusive practices across all levels of CAHS. This phase will consolidate early gains, scale successful strategies, and ensure that Aboriginal workforce inclusion is not only sustained but actively championed throughout the organisation.

Our efforts in this phase will be informed by CAHS' developing Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Framework, which is expected to set clear expectations for all staff and prioritise leadership capability and the support of Aboriginal employees.

This phase is about embedding inclusion into our culture, not as a standalone initiative, but as a shared responsibility and enduring organisational commitment.



Pictured: Marr Mooditj Training nursing students with PCH staff and Mel Robinson, Director Aboriginal Health Strategy

Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan 2026-2028 (AWAP)

Pillar 1: Recruitment

Focus area 1: Inclusive recruitment practices and programs to make CAHS an employer of choice.

Action	Timeline	Responsible Department
Update and enhance CAHS Aboriginal Workforce online website pages to promote CAHS as a more attractive employer	Q1 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Capability and Culture Directorate (PCC) • Communications
Develop new recruitment/promotional resources for career exhibitions and events	Q1 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC • Communications
Review and design recruitment processes to remove systemic barriers for 50D positions up to and equivalent to HSO G6/P1 proportionate to the requirements of the role	Q3 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC and all hiring managers
Culturally informed recruitment practices, interview style and delivery for all 50D positions and candidates who have disclosed identity in recruitment process	Q3 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC
Targeted Aboriginal Talent Registers	Q1 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC and all service area leaders

Focus area 2: Expand career entry pathways for Aboriginal students and implement inclusive workforce planning across CAHS for Aboriginal people.

Action	Timeline	Responsible Department
Create opportunity for all services to include Aboriginal Graduates (DOH) in their workforce planning	Q1 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC, Nursing Education • Medical Workforce • Allied Health Workforce • Aboriginal Health Strategy
Review and determine the requirement of 50D positions and positions that will require work with Aboriginal consumers/employees within workforce planning strategies for all service areas	Q2 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC • All service area leaders
Increase in the transition of fixed FTE to Permanent FTE of Aboriginal employees	Q2 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All line managers • PCC
Register with PSC on Solid Future – Aboriginal Traineeship Program	Q3 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC
Clear career pathways and workforce planning at all levels, including SLG and executive leadership. Initial focus on targeted pathways such as Nursing, Administration, Patient Support etc.	Q4 2026 Q4 2027 Q4 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC • Office of the Chief Executive • All Executive Directors
CAHS will explore opportunities to increase the number of Aboriginal Cadets year on year	Q4 2026 Q4 2027 Q4 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Health Strategy Team
Establish a workforce pipeline of future Aboriginal employees by targeting high school and university students and establishing strategic partnership with Aboriginal education to employment specialists	Q1 2028 Q1 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC • All service area leaders • Nursing Education
Build on existing EN early practitioner program	Q1 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC • Nursing Education
Explore junior medical officer internship at CAHS	Q2 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Workforce



Pillar 2: Retention

Focus area 3: Action is taken to foster an inclusive organisational culture, where Aboriginal people feel culturally safe, experience a sense of belonging and are treated with equity and respect.

Action	Timeline	Responsible Department
Create a CAHS Aboriginal Workforce Network	Q1 2026	• PCC
Develop an Aboriginal employee 'stay' annual survey to identify what is working well and where improvements can be proactively explored	Q1 2026 Q1 2027 Q1 2028	• PCC
Develop a resource for managers on how to support Aboriginal employees with cultural and family obligations to minimise cultural pressures in alignment to the broader training across CAHS and DOH	Q1 2026	• PCC
Annual CAHS Aboriginal Workforce Forum	Q2 2026 Q2 2027 Q2 2028	• PCC
Develop a CAHS Two-way Aboriginal Mentoring Program that focuses on mentoring or career development and future leadership of our Aboriginal employees	Q4 2028	• PCC

Pillar 3: Advancement

Focus area 4: Enhancing development opportunities to enable Aboriginal staff to develop their leadership capability and experience.

Action	Timeline	Responsible Department
Continued annual participation in IHL Aboriginal Leadership Programs (First Step and LEAD)	Q4 2026 Q4 2027 Q4 2028	• PCC
CAHS Academy leadership courses to promote use of Section 51 within their selection criteria to encourage and prioritise Aboriginal employees to nominate into leadership and management development programs	Q1 2026	• PCC
Internal support program for existing employees to apply for permanent roles, secondments, acting opportunities and internal EOI's	Q2 2026	• PCC
Include consideration of lived experience as an assessment criteria in selection processes to enable existing employees to be considered for role progression	Q4 2028	• PCC

Focus area 5: Monitoring, evaluation and governance.

Action	Timeline	Responsible Department
Simplify and align current multiple Aboriginal Workforce data sources, with a focus on reducing manual analysis and enhancing dashboard reporting	Q2 2026	• PCC

Monitoring and evaluation

Effective governance and monitoring are essential to ensuring accountability and tracking progress against the goals of the CAHS Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan 2026–2028.

To support this, CAHS will establish a dedicated Aboriginal Advisory Group to oversee implementation and provide strategic guidance. This group will monitor progress on a quarterly basis, with formal progress reports submitted annually to the Workforce Executive Committee and Board PCC Committee. Workforce data and related outcomes will also be reported through the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan and other relevant governance arrangements.



Regular reporting and feedback mechanisms will be embedded across the organisation to ensure transparency and continuous improvement. These include:

- **Annual progress reports will be submitted to the Workforce Executive Committee and Board PCC Committee.** Periodic updates may also be integrated into existing workforce diversity profiles, diversity and inclusion reporting, and as part of I&D Framework and Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) reporting.
- **RAP Working Group:** Updates on Aboriginal workforce initiatives will be provided as part of the broader RAP reporting schedule.
- **Workforce Executive Committee:** Periodic updates will be presented, and ongoing feedback will be collected from committee members to inform future actions.
- **Aboriginal Workforce Forum:** Aboriginal employees will continue to provide feedback on the implementation and outcomes of the AWAP through structured engagement sessions.
- **CAHS Mob:** Aboriginal employees will contribute to monitoring and evaluation through regular meetings, feedback sessions, and participation in annual ‘Stay’ surveys.

These mechanisms will ensure that the AWAP remains responsive, inclusive, and aligned with the needs and aspirations of our Aboriginal workforce. Through consistent monitoring and meaningful engagement, CAHS will continue to build a culturally safe, accountable, and high-performing health service.



Acronyms

AHS - Aboriginal Health Strategy	HSP - Health Service Provider
AHLO - Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer	HSS - Health Support Services
AHP - Aboriginal Health Practitioner	I&D - Inclusion and Diversity
ALO - Aboriginal Liaison Officer	IHL - Institute of Health Leadership
AWAG - Aboriginal Workforce Advisory Group	IR - Industrial Relations
AWAP - Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan	JMO - Junior Medical Officer
C&I - Culture and Inclusion	LEAD - Leadership Excellence and Development Program (IHL)
CACH - Child and Adolescent Community Health	MGT - Management
CAHS - Child and Adolescent Health Service	OCE - Office of the Chief Executive
CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service	OD - Organisational Development
DOH - Department of Health	PCC - People Capability and Culture
ED - Executive Director	PCHN - Perth Children's Hospital and Neonatology
EEO - Equal Employment Opportunity	RAP - Reconciliation Action Plan
EN - Enrolled Nurse	RN - Registered Nurse
EOI - Expression of Interest	SHRBP - Senior Human Resources Business Partner
First Step - First Step Aboriginal Leaders Program (IHL)	START - (PCC Talent Acquisition team)
FTE - Full Time Equivalent	WEC - Workforce Executive Committee
HOD - Head of Department	WFP - Workforce Planning



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service



Telephone: (08) 6456 2222

For language assistance, please speak to one of our staff or call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450 to facilitate your call.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

Disclaimer: This publication is for general education and information purposes. Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed. © State of Western Australia, Child and Adolescent Health Service. Produced by: Aboriginal Workforce/People Capability and Culture. Ref.no 2015. 2026.