



Wayne Quilliam

# First Nations Employment Strategy

**2023-2025**

External



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# Introduction

**The Benevolent Society (TBS) proudly acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely, and pays respect to their Elders past and present. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities continues to enrich our wider society and we embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.**

TBS's employees and volunteers are our most valuable asset in accomplishing the organisation's vision for reconciliation and representing the full expression of TBS's Values in the work we do.

The Benevolent Society's 'Innovate RAP' (Reconciliation Action Plan) provides us with a clear pathway to building and maintaining meaningful and positively-impacting relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, **whether they be employees, volunteers, clients, family members of clients, and community members.**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy) is a direct deliverable of the organisation's Reconciliation commitments detailed in its Innovate RAP (2023-2025).

This strategy delivers a framework of accountability in working to deliver an impactful and equitable **employee experience** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at TBS, through activities focused on **recruitment, retention, career development, and workplace culture.**

At TBS, the Executive Sponsor of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy is the Executive Director, People & Culture. The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy is supported by the TBS Executive Management Team.

# Our Services, Clients and Workforce

## The Benevolent Society provides services covering Disability, Ageing and Carers, and Child, Youth and Families.

Our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families, older people and people with a disability, including supports delivered in the home, has helped shape TBS's reputation as a leading organisation in the areas of social justice and excellence in service delivery.

TBS has 1,185 staff of which **54 (4.6%)** identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (May 2022). In 2020-2021 we supported:

- 2,630 carers of which **68** carers identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 886 carers identify as culturally and linguistically diverse;
- 2,000 ageing clients of which **43** identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 474 identify as culturally and linguistically diverse;
- 5,432 disability clients of which **416** identify as First Nations and 393 identify as culturally and linguistically diverse;
- 140,127 child and family clients of which **3,098** identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 4,074 identify as culturally and linguistically diverse.



## Objectives

The intention of TBS's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy is to build a high performing and sustainable cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the areas of policy, programs, professional staff and senior leadership through a multi-faceted and coordinated approach. To achieve this TBS will invest in resources and strategies to attract, retain, support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent. This will be fortified by a workplace culture, which understands, values and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture.

The objectives of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy are guided by TBS's strategic priorities, its ongoing commitment to Reconciliation, its People & Culture Strategy, the TBS Enterprise Agreement, the TBS Professional Governance Framework, the TBS Code of Conduct, and other relevant policies.

TBS's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy involves implementing a range of initiatives in the following four key areas:

- **Recruitment** – Building meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all organisational areas involved in programs, policy and positions of leadership. Providing effective engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support the attraction and recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent. This focus will include regional and remote service area locations.
- **Retention** – Ensuring workplace practices provide a supportive and flexible environment that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to meet professional and cultural obligations.
- **Career Development** – Enhanced career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees through targeted career development, professional development and training programs.
- **Workplace Culture** – Commitment to creating a culturally safe and inclusive working environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Demonstrated respect for and recognition of the unique cultural and spiritual knowledge and experience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees bring to TBS.

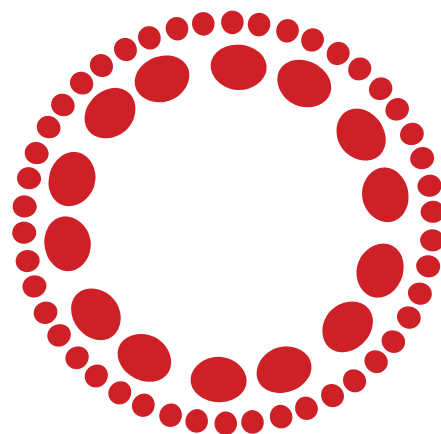


In terms of overall impact, other expected outcomes of the **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy** include:

- Support the development and delivery of TBS's strategic priorities.

Improved ability to provide culturally appropriate and culturally safe programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **clients**, and influence the adaptation of services to better meet the needs of diverse populations.

- Influence the organisation's continued self-assessment, expansion of knowledge and resourcing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander best practice approaches.
- Collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment data and employee experience data in order to inform and measure our success, including featuring in TBS Annual Reports and on the TBS website, within the context of our accountability to deliver on our Innovate RAP.
- Support diversity and inclusion in general, in terms of modeling acceptance and respect for difference.





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## 'No about us without us'

Consistent with best practice in demonstrating our cultural capability and responsiveness, we will involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the development, refinement and implementation of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy. To this end, the strategy includes the essential requirement of establishing and supporting a **TBS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Reference Group**. The TBS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employee Reference Group, like the TBS RAP Working Group, will be responsible for the provision of strategic advice and guidance on the development and implementation of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy and is expected to:

- Facilitate consultation with stakeholders and community members when required.
- Consult with senior staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the development of the strategy.
- Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Community in the development and implementation of the key strategies within the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy that support the development of locally directed initiatives and workforce plans.
- Develop organisational Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy measures, actions and results in consultation with stakeholders.

Ongoing engagement and consultation with existing staff members who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples is a high priority. We want to ensure that the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy is continually reviewed based on feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees which identified the following priorities:

- Support and recognition of their cultural wisdom, expertise, knowledge and experience.
- The need for Cultural Mentoring and Coaching.
- The need for training and professional development to fulfil their roles.
- Organisational wide cultural awareness for co-workers and Supervisors.
- The Implementation of consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions as a standard of best practice when working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients and other stakeholders involved in decision making.
- Culturally appropriate and proficient recruitment processes are implemented and embedded when recruiting Identified Positions.
- Identified Worker – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Business Partner/ Coordinator within the People & Culture Team as a point of contact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Involvement by the organisation in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Sydney, to promote diversity within the Benevolent Society.



## Implementation Plan

The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy contains a detailed Implementation Plan that is consistent with the intent and content of the Innovate RAP and TBS's People & Culture Strategy. The Implementation Plan includes clear accountabilities and periodic review and reporting to the TBS Executive and Board.



Wayne Quilliam



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# The Benevolent Society RAP Primary Contact

**Sarah Boyne**

First Nations Employment Specialist

T: **0403 963 268**

E: **Sarah.Boyne@benevolent.org.au**



2E Wentworth Park Road, Glebe NSW 2037  
PO Box 257, Broadway NSW 2007



**[www.benevolent.org.au](http://www.benevolent.org.au)**