



Charles Sturt
University

First Nations



First Nations Employment Strategy 2024-2025

About the artwork

Interwoven Wisdom: Nurturing growth in First Nations community

This artwork shows community connected to our staff, and the valuable networks the university can access through the relationships that our First Nations staff hold. These are represented through orange elements.

Relationships between First Nations staff, managers and leaders is shown in the orange part of the gathering symbol, through lines meeting up to the people symbols. The gathering symbol at the centre also expresses our commitment to empower staff in a safe environment to grow and develop. The blue and green lines coming from the gathering symbol represent the guidance that comes from First Nations Elders and First Nations leaders – those who have gone before us and are able to share their wisdom and lived experience to support others.

Pathways are used in the artwork with footprints, representing inland and sea Country, and recognising the pathways of Alumni coming through as staff of the university as well as more people coming through behind them.

Finally, the weave coming from the gathering symbol represents the many benefits for students and communities as a result of growing and strengthening First Nations employment at the university, and wider commitments of our overarching First Nations Strategy 2023–25.

About the artist

Lani Balzan is an Aboriginal artist and graphic designer specialising in designing Indigenous canvas art, graphic design, logo design, Reconciliation Action Plans design, and document design.

Lani is a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri people of the three-river tribe. Her family originates from Mudgee but she grew up all over Australia and lived in many different towns – starting her business in the Illawarra New South Wales and recently relocating to Mid-North Queensland.

In 2016 Lani was announced as the 2016 NAIDOC poster competition winner with her artwork “*Songlines*”. This poster was used as the 2016 NAIDOC theme across the country.

Lani has been creating Aboriginal art since 2013 and has continued success across the country. One of her biggest goals and inspirations with creating Aboriginal art is to develop a better connection to her culture and to continue to work towards reconciliation; bringing people and communities together to learn about the amazing culture we have here in Australia.



Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work together. Charles Sturt University and its staff pay respect to Elders within First Nations communities and acknowledge the continuity of cultures, languages, leadership and knowledge systems.

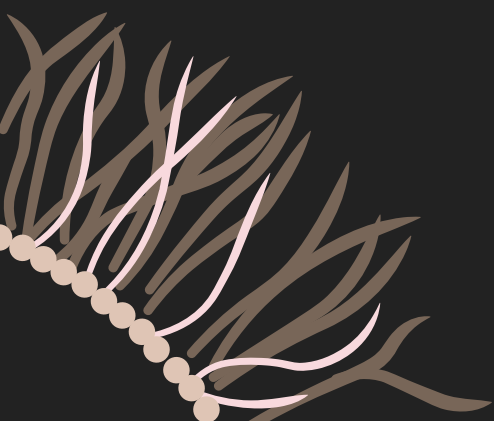
We acknowledge First Nations Peoples' continuous connection to Country, recognising the unique, diverse identities and cultures of peoples in our communities, regions and nation.

As such, we value the collaboration to strongly position First Nations Peoples in our university, through languages, leadership, cultures, knowledges, research and ceremonies.



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Vice-Chancellor's message

I warmly acknowledge that many people have been part of Charles Sturt University's long history of achieving positive First Nations employment outcomes. Many First Nations Peoples have chosen to join the university as staff, made significant contributions, and progressed their careers within the university and beyond. Many managers and leaders have worked with First Nations staff and invested in developing their own understanding of cultural safety and lived experience.

At the heart of what we do is an unrelenting desire to improve recognition of and equality for First Nations Peoples. Through our First Nations Employment Strategy, we will build on these strong foundations, and achieve even more together.

We have a strong commitment to attract and recruit First Nations people to roles in the university, retain and support our First Nations staff and enhance career opportunities. Our First Nations Employment Strategy reflects this approach, and the focus areas are a result of extensive collaboration with our First Nations networks and our university community.

This strategy has been developed to underpin the university's purpose, 'yindyamarra winhanganha', ensuring our commitments are genuine and meaningful. Our First Nations strategy is everyone's business, with commitments and accountabilities across education, engagement and research.

Through collaboration we can create a workplace environment that fosters success and cultural safety, and a workplace of choice for First Nations Peoples. Now is the time to build on the progress we have made, to drive shared ownership and lasting change.



Professor Renée Leon PSM
Vice-Chancellor and President



Our commitment

University's purpose

We are privileged to have as our purpose the Wiradjuri phrase 'yindyamarra winhanganha'. This phrase means the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in. Together, we will strive to bring this purpose to life through our everyday actions and work. It should underpin everything we do – our commitment to our students, communities and stakeholders, and our interactions with each other. We are still learning about yindyamarra winhanganha, and as a university and as individuals, we will continually learn, grow and adopt this meaningful and inspiring concept. This applies to being respectful of current and past knowledges and sharing new knowledges for future generations. When we connect our attributes with those of our peers, amazing things start to happen. We start to make a real difference to the lives of many – the colleagues we work with, the students who come to our university to explore their ideas, and everyone who works with us to drive innovation and seek a better future.

Vision

At Charles Sturt, our vision is to remain Australia's leading regional university, advance the careers of our students, inspire research excellence and drive regional outcomes with global impact. We are proud of our history in the regions and work together with our students, industry partners, government, and communities for the public good.

We are a leader in:

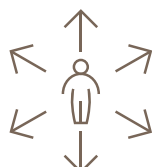
- education for graduate outcomes and employment, and online delivery
- applied research outcomes and will grow our key focus areas through strategic partnering and investment
- supporting student pathways for equity and diversity and will engage First Nations Peoples in our employment, education and research programs.

Values



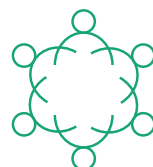
Insightful

Understanding people and the world



Impactful

Outcome driven



Inclusive

Stronger together



Inspiring

Leading for the future

Our communities and workforce

Snapshot of First Nations people across our campuses and local communities

Location	First Nations people as a per cent of total population*	First Nations staff as a per cent of all Charles Sturt staff^
Australia	3.2%	3.4%
Albury	3.8%	1.2%
Bathurst	7.2%	3.2%
Canberra	2.0%	2.6%
Dubbo	16.6%	32%
Goulburn	5.1%	1.9%
Orange	7.7%	2.1%
Port Macquarie	5.5%	7.4%
Wagga Wagga	6.6%	2.5%
Wangaratta	1.9%	0%
Off campus/other	N/A	1.8%

Level of education qualifications of First Nations people aged 20 years and over (%)#

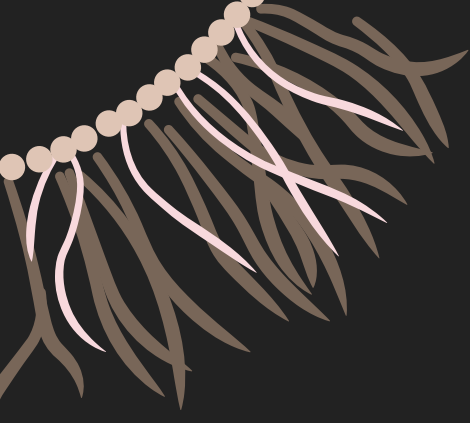
Location	Postgraduate degree	Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate	Bachelor degree	Advanced diploma and diploma	Certificate III and IV	Certificate I and II
NSW	1.4	0.9	6.5	8.2	22.9	2.6

Reviewing Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on the highest level of education for First Nations people demonstrates that an employment strategy for First Nations staff should link from our First Nations education initiatives. Charles Sturt University needs to develop pathways through education into employment with the university, especially to nurture the development of more First Nations academics.

*Source: ABS, 2021 Census data www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/census-population-and-housing-counts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/2021#available-data

^Source: DPC EO data fixed-term and continuing staff, snapshot date of 31 March 2023.

#Source: ABS education data, from 2016 Census: www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/education-statistics-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/2018-19#non-school-education



Background

Charles Sturt University launched its first Indigenous Australian Employment Strategy in 2005 and held the first Nguluway Conference the same year. We are proud to have maintained and elevated this focus over the last two decades, while acknowledging there is still more to be done to close the gap in employment opportunities and outcomes for First Nations Peoples. Since 2005, new schemes have been explored ranging from First Nations Traineeships to Academic Fellowships and maintaining an employment register for First Nations Peoples. The strategy has also been reviewed and revised to take account of achievements, renew its focus and ensure ongoing relevance.

“We need to recognise the important skills First Nations people bring – having a strategy is a good way to define how we approach recruitment, retention and progression.”

“Sharing culture to non-Indigenous staff is vital to cultural safety.”

“What’s ok - but needs to be better - is including First Nations staff in matters that affect them.”

“Staff network meetings are great, I have never had that before.”

“Support to effectively use EDRS to identify career development goals and access to skills/knowledge development at opportune times from relevant organisations.”

“More support for further study.”

Our voices – the planning

This strategy builds upon the successes and learnings from previous strategies and has been developed based on extensive consultation with First Nations staff and a broad range of stakeholders across the university, including senior leaders. Throughout April and May 2023, the First Nations Employment Adviser and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team in the Division of People and Culture DPC facilitated 17 face-to-face and online consultation workshops, supplemented with a comprehensive online survey. The key priority areas and actions included in this strategy emerged from that consultation process.

“I would like to see the word ‘inclusive’ being lived on each campus in a more obvious way.”

“Realistically competitive remuneration, understanding that there are limited First Nations professionals, with particular qualifications.”

“Better understanding of communication styles. How do we decipher lateral violence/emotional issues/communication?”

“Develop culturally-appropriate onboarding pack ready to go.”

“More opportunities for progression and secondment, now staff apply outside of Charles Sturt for promotional opportunities.”

“First Nations staff are being hired elsewhere as they are in high demand. If we set staff up to progress, it should be seen as a success.”

Strategic alignment

This strategy aligns with several internal and external strategies and initiatives listed below that support the goal of enhancing our First Nations workforce and being an employer of choice to First Nations Peoples. Charles Sturt recognises cultural safety of First Nations staff underpins all the initiatives in this strategy. The importance of creating a workplace culture of inclusion, respect and belonging cannot be understated. As cultural safety will be addressed through the First Nations Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan, it is not included as a specific action in this strategy.

Charles Sturt University Strategy 2030

- Commitment to improve First Nations education, research and engagement and to drive shared ownership for outcomes.

Charles Sturt First Nations Strategy 2023-2025

- Increase First Nations Peoples' success in higher education as students, graduates, researchers, and staff
- Create a culturally safe university environment and implement measures to ensure continuous improvement
- Commit to appropriate and diverse involvement of First Nations people in decision making
- Promote university-wide understanding and engagement with First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing
- Develop sustainable frameworks for First Nations research, engagement and ethical conduct
- Integrate First Nations studies and content into all courses.

Charles Sturt Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2023

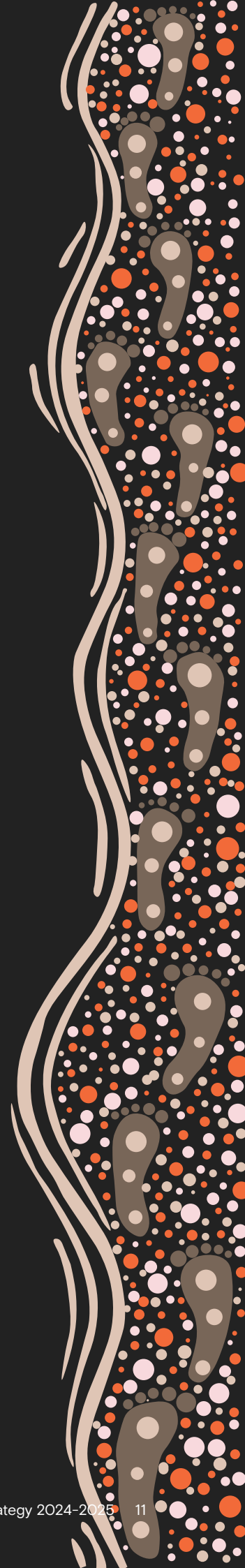
- Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations
- Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence
- Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies
- Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning
- Demonstrate respect to First Nations Peoples by observing cultural protocols
- Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations recruitment, retention, and professional development.

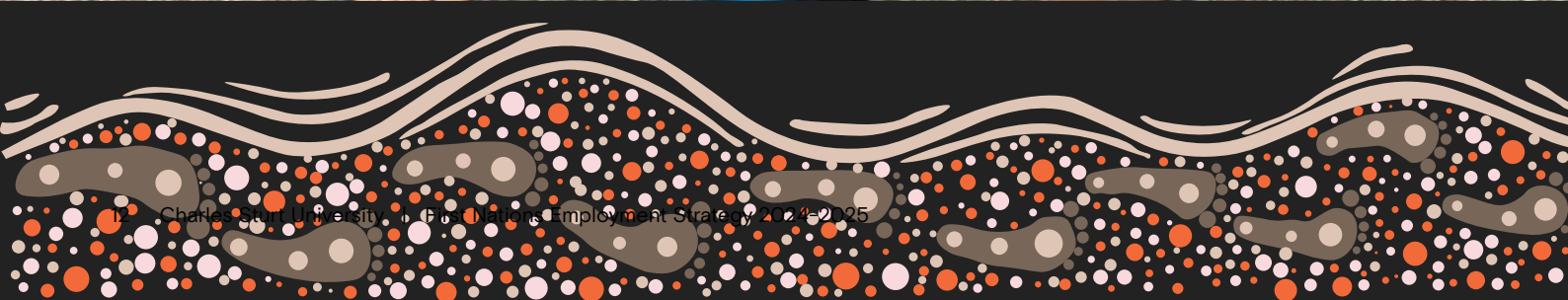
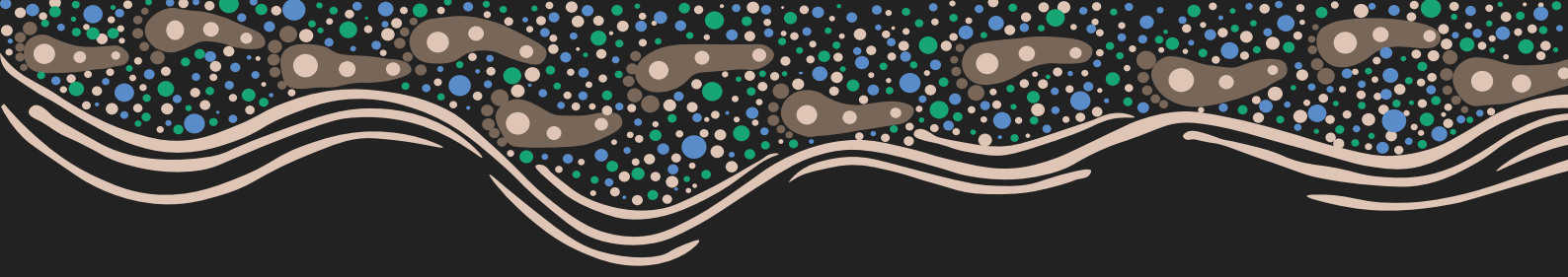
Charles Sturt Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2023-2025

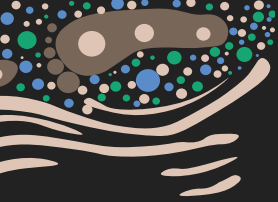
- Develop resources and training in inclusive behaviours
- Enhance our data and dashboards to monitor key diversity groups including First Nations staff
- Intersectional approach to diversity and inclusion
- Establish Diversity Champions to sponsor employee networks and raise issues to senior executives
- Develop opportunities for storytelling, including for First Nations staff.

Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025

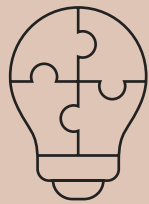
Collectively, these strategies and plans help Charles Sturt meet the expectations set out in Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025.







Key priority areas



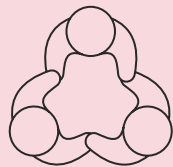
Attract and recruit

We will enhance how we attract and recruit First Nations Peoples across the university – including in academic, research, professional and senior positions.



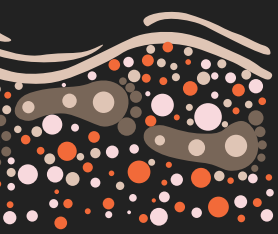
Develop and progress

We will support our First Nations staff to develop their professional skills and provide opportunities for career pathways and progression.



Engage and support

We will support our First Nations staff to have a sense of belonging and feeling valued through enhanced engagement and support.



Attract and recruit

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Performance indicator
<p>Review recruitment process to use more appropriate language and processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position descriptions for identified roles reviewed by First Nations Employment Adviser Inclusivity training for hiring managers and interview panels Review and update advertising templates and EOI processes 	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Talent Acquisition Team, DPC</p>	December 2024	<p>Increase in number of applications from people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</p> <p>Increase in number of appointments from people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</p>
<p>Develop new onboarding process for First Nations new hires and hiring managers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a First Nations new hire onboarding pack with key information, key contacts and where to seek support Develop an onboarding pack for hiring managers of First Nations staff to support them to provide a culturally safe work environment Ensure First Nations new hires are connected with other First Nations staff 	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Organisation Development, DPC</p>	December 2024	<p>Your Voice metrics</p> <p>Attrition rate for First Nations staff</p>
<p>Create a First Nations talent pool.</p>	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Talent Acquisition Team, DPC</p>	June 2024	<p>Number of people applying for the First Nations talent pool</p> <p>Number of people in the First Nations talent pool offered roles at the university</p>
<p>Promote the university as a First Nations employer of choice through First Nations employment and community networks.</p>	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Talent Acquisition Team, DPC</p>	Ongoing during the strategy	<p>Number of First Nations people applying for roles at Charles Sturt</p>
<p>Increase First Nations workforce representation.</p>	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Talent Acquisition Team, DPC</p> <p>Hiring managers</p> <p>Executive Leadership Team members</p>	<p>December 2024</p> <p>December 2030</p>	<p>Targets met and reported:</p> <p>2024 – 4% of all staff identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</p> <p>2030 – 6% of all staff identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</p>

Attract and recruit

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Performance indicator
Review and reinvigorate the First Nations Cadetship Program.	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC	December 2025	Number of cadets employed
Explore opportunities to establish additional First Nations employment programs such as traineeships or graduate programs in future years.	Talent Acquisition Team, DPC Hiring managers ELT members		Number of program participants employed in ongoing roles (internally and externally)
Support leaders to create pathways for final year students and First Nations Cadets to gain employment with the university.			

Develop and progress

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Performance indicator
<p>Increase professional development opportunities for First Nations staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinvigorate staff development support schemes Facilitate access to Charles Sturt professional development (PD) programs for First Nations staff Explore targeted First Nations professional development programs (cultural, professional or leadership development) 	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Organisational Development Team, DPC</p> <p>First Nations staff managers</p>	<p>March 2024</p> <p>June 2024</p> <p>December 2024</p>	<p>Participants in staff development support schemes</p> <p>Participants in Charles Sturt PD programs</p> <p>Participants in First Nations-specific PD programs</p>
Provide opportunities for First Nations staff to participate in career planning conversations and on-the-job learning and development programs, such as EOIs, secondments, and acting opportunities for backfill and vacancies.	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Organisational Development Team, DPC</p> <p>Talent Acquisition Team, DPC</p> <p>First Nations staff managers</p>	September 2025	Participation and feedback from First Nations staff
Facilitate access to opportunities for First Nations staff to participate in peer buddying and mentoring.	<p>Organisational Development Team, DPC</p> <p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>First Nations staff peer support</p>	September 2024	Participation and feedback from First Nations staff

Engage and support

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Performance indicator
<p>Foster opportunities for First Nations staff to engage with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host monthly staff network meetings • Host monthly informal catch ups • Explore opportunities for face-to-face catch ups and yarning at each campus • Support annual Nguluway conference 	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC	Ongoing during the strategy	<p>Attendance numbers at each event</p> <p>Participation and feedback from First Nations staff</p>
<p>Reinvigorate the First Nations Staff Network, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a voice for First Nations staff by facilitating engagement and consultation on matters that affect them • Developing Terms of Reference for the Network 	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC	March 2024	<p>Terms of Reference developed and implemented</p> <p>First Nations are consulted on matters that affect them</p>
<p>Provide First Nations staff with access to cultural advice and employment guidance.</p>	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC	November 2023	Number of staff contacting First Nations Employment Adviser/ Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team for advice and guidance
<p>Develop framework to recognise and value cultural load of First Nations staff, informed by consultation with First Nations staff.</p>	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Employee Relations Team, DPC</p>	<p>September 2024</p> <p><i>NB: timing depends upon EA finalisation.</i></p>	<p>Framework endorsed by First Nations Staff Network</p> <p>Framework launched</p>
<p>Strengthen exit interview processes to understand the lived experience of First Nations staff working at Charles Sturt which will inform the development of future First Nations employment programs and strategies.</p>	<p>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team, DPC</p> <p>Employee Services Team, DPC</p>	December 2024	<p>Number of exit interviews conducted</p> <p>Reduced attrition rates for First Nations staff</p>



Operationalising the strategy

Roles and responsibilities

All staff

- Value and respect First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.
- Actively seek to develop own cultural awareness and understanding.
- Be self-aware and consider how your words and actions impact others.
- Treat people with dignity and respect, and help others to thrive at work.
- Get involved and support First Nations events and initiatives.
- Be conscious of and seek to minimise cultural load on our First Nations staff.
- Be familiar with the university's First Nations Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan and First Nations Employment Strategy.

Managers, supervisors and team leaders

- Be aware of potential unconscious bias or non-inclusive practices.
- Be familiar with university diversity and inclusion policy and procedures.
- Value diversity as a team strength, and strive to create an inclusive culture.
- Address behaviour not aligned with university values or Code of Conduct, including zero tolerance of racist practices.
- Support First Nations staff to be involved in First Nations Staff Network, forums, conferences and cultural events.
- Support and advocate for First Nations staff to access professional and career development opportunities.
- Be aware of team needs and support workplace flexibility, including cultural leave and impact of cultural load.

Senior leaders and executives

- Take the lead in championing diversity and inclusion, including the value of First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.
- Walk the talk – model inclusive behaviours and practices, including zero tolerance of racist practices.
- Use workforce data and actively seek to increase First Nations workforce representation in your team or portfolio (identified, targeted and mainstream roles).
- Participate in the First Nations Cadetship Program where possible, and seek opportunities for cadet career progression.
- Take action and hold yourself/others to account for First Nations employment goals and practices.
- Support and enable First Nations staff career development and progression.

First Nations staff

- Actively participate in First Nations Staff Network, forum, conferences and events.
- Communicate with your line manager and supervisor, including what adjustments or additional cultural leave you may need to access at times.
- Proactively engage in professional development and training opportunities.
- Proactively engage in career planning discussions with your manager to help drive your career progression.
- Leverage formal and informal networks, mentors and peers to support your career progression.
- Raise concerns with your line manager, your executive, or DPC if you don't feel culturally safe to escalate with your manager/executive.



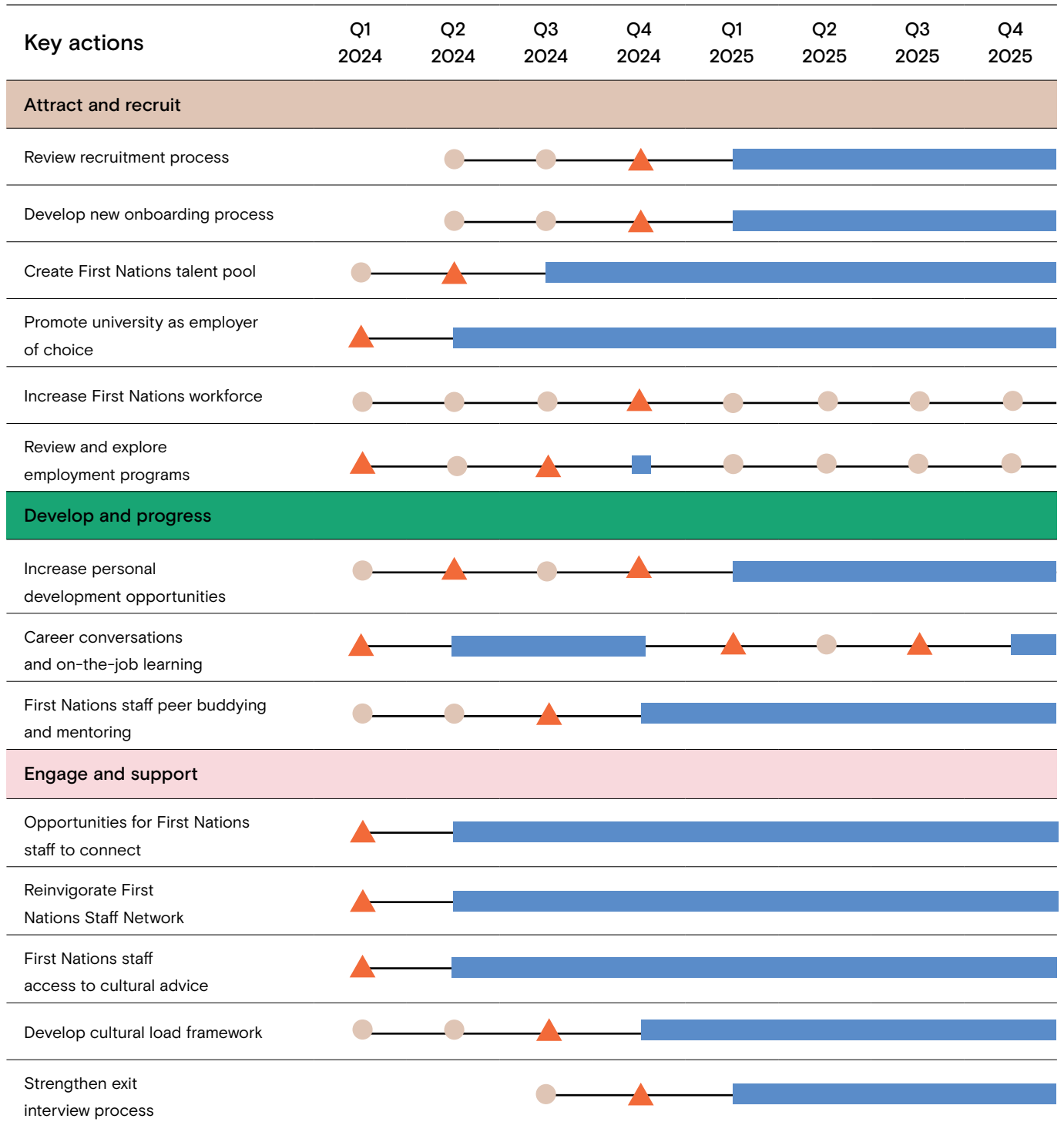
Governance

Working in collaboration with the Pro Vice-Chancellor First Nations Engagement, implementation of this strategy will be led by the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team in the Division of People and Culture (DPC). The strategy and its implementation will be overseen by the People Committee to provide direction, guidance, and monitor our progress, and will report annually to University Council and in the university's annual report.

University engagement and cultural surveys and pulse surveys will also be monitored through a diversity and inclusion lens to monitor operationalisation and impact of the strategy.

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is the Executive Sponsor with overall responsibility for supporting and enabling the strategy and providing the Vice-Chancellor with guidance in relation to First Nations employment matters at Charles Sturt. The COO is supported by the Executive Director, DPC, and the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Team.

Implementation and timing



● Planning and preparation ▲ Implementation ■ Becomes business as usual



Charles Sturt
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—
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To keep up to date with the latest employment
strategy information, please visit

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