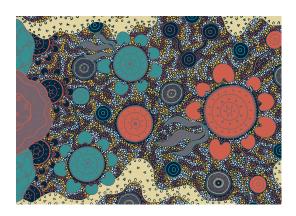




Artist Acknowledgement

We are honoured to feature the work of Chloe Watego, a proud Iman and South Sea Islander woman, with ties to Torres Strait Island and the Bundjalung nation. Her painting "Where We Stand, Together" has become the heart of this year's annual report. Chloe's work is a layered reflection on unity, community, and the enduring power of shared purpose. Through her distinctive style, Chloe speaks to the essence of reconciliation, membership, and collective strength - an invitation to come together, grounded in respect, truth and a deep connection to Country.



In "Where We Stand, Together," Chloe creates a visual narrative of collaboration and innovation, blending traditional and contemporary elements to portray a shared journey toward a brighter, more inclusive future. Her use of overlapping forms and symbolic representation calls attention to the strength that arises from

communities merging, not to erase their identities, but to build something greater.

As an artist deeply rooted in her family's cultural heritage, Chloe's work is also a personal journey of healing and reconnecting with her roots. Born and raised on Yugambeh land and now residing on Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi Country. Her art serves as a beacon of strength and resilience, illuminating the way for future generations of her family and community.

We thank Chloe Watego for sharing this powerful and meaningful artwork with us, one that not only reflects the journey of reconciliation but also calls us to act, stand together and build the future with mutual respect and understanding.

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Message from the Chair

I am proud to present the inaugural Annual Report of the National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance (The Alliance), marking a significant milestone in our collective journey to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and training sector.

The sector we represent is vital yet remains undervalued. With an estimated economic footprint of over \$500 million, we deliver culturally grounded, place-based services to more than 188,000 Indigenous job seekers and learners nationwide. These services create measurable impact in urban, regional and remote communities. However the broader policy and funding environment still fails to reflect our contribution or unlock our full potential.

From the outset, I have been honoured to help shape The Alliance's vision and purpose. As Chair and a founding member of the inaugural Board, I have been privileged to support the establishment of a national, Indigenous-led peak body that represents and champions the frontline organisations working to close the employment gap for our communities.

The establishment of The Alliance in 2023 marked a turning point. For the first time, frontline Indigenous employment providers and training organisations have a national, Indigenous-led voice; one built by and for the sector. I have been honoured to support this vision: one that centres self-determination. sector leadership and systemic change.

Over the past year, we've laid the foundations for long-term reform. We've engaged governments, influenced key policy and procurement conversations, and started to help build sector and workforce capability. We're now building a united platform to shape the future, grounded in culture, evidence and accountability.

I acknowledge the strategic leadership of our inaugural CEO, Kylie Penehoe, whose clarity and commitment has guided the organisation from concept to action. I also extend my sincere thanks to our members, board, and partners whose support and commitment have made this first year a success.

As we look to the year ahead, we do so with purpose. There are new opportunities to grow our impact, strengthen our voice, and drive meaningful, systemic change. With the right policy settings, procurement reforms and long-term investment, this sector can unlock transformational economic, social, and cultural outcomes, not just for our people, but for the nation. This work is vital. Let's continue this journey together.



Matthew Clarke Ngunnawal Chair The Alliance



CEO Report

It is with great pride that I present the inaugural Annual Report of the National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance (The Alliance).

This report marks a significant milestone in our journey as a newly established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led national peak body. It signals the emergence of a strong, united and Indigenous-led voice for a sector that is foundational to our nation's future.

We believe the Indigenous employment and training sector is not just part of the system. It is an enabling system that drives workforce participation, strengthens community resilience and supports economic self-determination. Through this sector, we amplify Indigenous voices, shape national policy and improve the cultural safety and effectiveness of Australian workplaces.

The 2024–25 year laid the groundwork for long-term systemic change. Key achievements included:

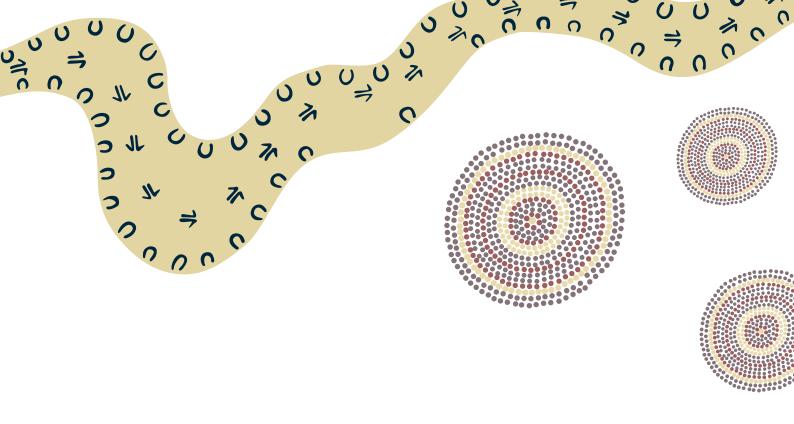
- The official launch of The Alliance
- The release of the First Nations Employment Index 2025 (Index 2025)
- The establishment of our founding membership base, now 22 strong and growing.

From day one, our focus has been on building credibility, delivering value to members and positioning the sector for lasting impact. We are investing in the things that matter: governance, data, partnerships, and capability, so the sector can grow stronger, more visible and better resourced.

The release of Index 2025 was a pivotal step. It provides a shared evidence base about the workplace experiences of nearly 30,000 First Nations employees. More importantly, it highlights what works and what still needs to change to ensure our people feel safe, respected and able to thrive in the workplace.

Alongside this, we have made quiet but important progress on other fronts:

- Advocating for Indigenous-led input into program and policy design
- Supporting government engagement around procurement reform
- Embedding Indigenous ownership and control in our governance through constitutional changes
- Establishing a small but growing team to serve our members with strategy, service and care.



Our members are leading this change on the ground. They deliver culturally grounded employment and training services every day, often in complex and under-resourced environments. The Alliance exists to back them, to elevate their impact, secure investment in their work and build a future where their leadership is embedded in the systems that shape our people's economic futures.

As we move forward, we will continue building a thriving, connected and future-fit sector. We will support employers to deliver better outcomes, help members strengthen their capability and voice, and advocate for national policy that is responsive to Indigenous realities and aspirations.

We know this work matters. And we know it will take time, partnership and persistence.

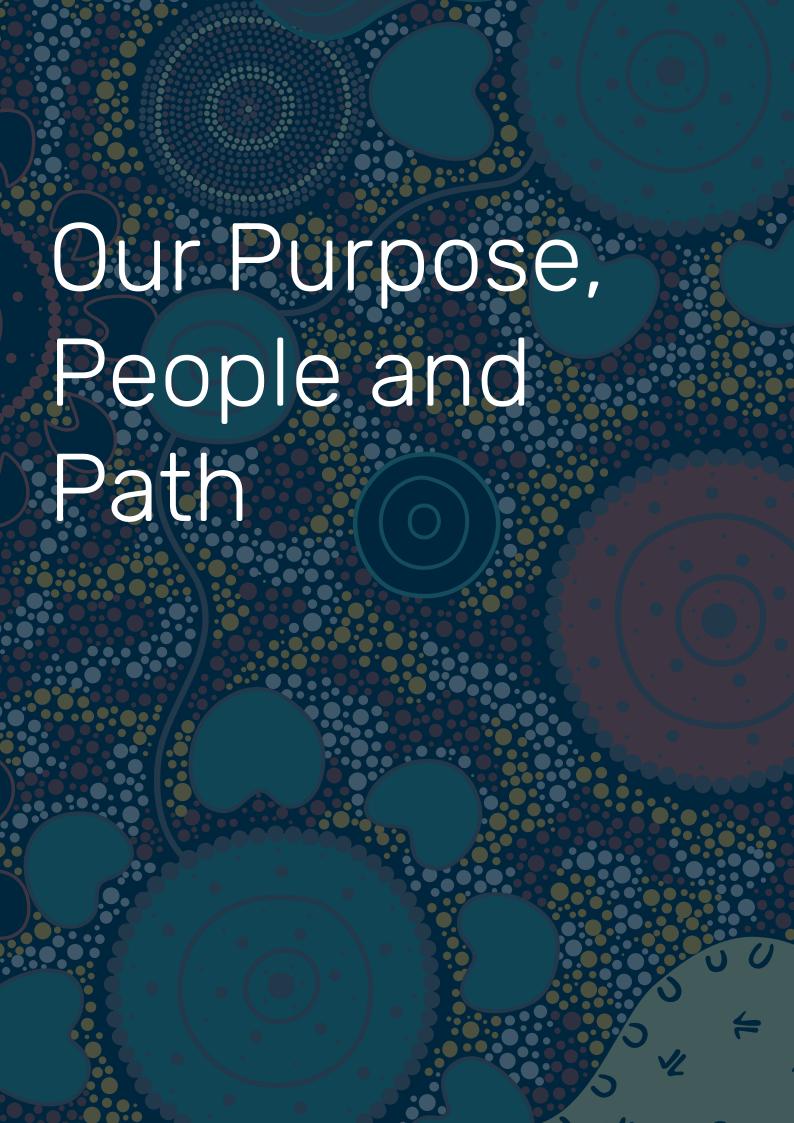
Thank you to our members, Board, partners, and staff for everything you have done to make this first year meaningful. We are proud of what we have built and ready for what is next.

Together, through determination and transparency, we are rewriting the story!

Il Tenchoe

Kylie Penehoe Wonnarua & Wiradjuri CEO The Alliance





Who We Are

We are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led peak body empowering Indigenous employment and training through advocacy, collaboration, cultural respect and sustainable impact. We exist to unite and grow the sector, shape policy, build workforce capability and ensure that the voices of Indigenous people are central to decisions that affect their economic futures.

Our work strengthens sector capacity, influences policy, and supports self-determination and economic prosperity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Vision

A world where Indigenous people are self-reliant, valued and enjoy economic prosperity.

Mission

To revolutionise the employment landscape by empowering the Indigenous employment and training sector to create sustainable impact for Indigenous people.

Purpose

To support the growth and impact of the Indigenous employment and training sector, contributing to closing the gap in employment and training outcomes.

Cultural Respect

Honour the diverse cultures, traditions, perspectives and contributions of Indigenous people.

Excellence

Uphold the highest standards and impact in everything we do.

Empowerment

Foster a culture where people feel valued, trusted and inspired to take initiative and make decisions.

Our

Values

Strengthen a united voice for the sector to advance outcomes for Indigenous people.

Unity

Collaboration

Embrace meaningful partnerships across the sector, government and business industry.

Trust

Foster dependable and transparent relationships that people can rely on.

Theory of Change

Our focus areas ...

Sector strengthening

Unite and grow a collaborative, coordinated and influential Indigenous employment and training sector.

Capability development

Strengthen the knowledge, skills and impact of the sector through collective learning and capability building.

Advocacy and policy development

Influence national policy, funding and reform by working collectively with the sector to champion Indigenous-led solutions and system reform.

Evidence and Indigenous data sovereignty

Strengthen the sector's voice and credibility by generating, sharing and protecting Indigenous-led evidence and insights.

Procurement and funding

Influence how government funds and partners with Indigenous-led organisations to create fairer, culturally safe systems for Indigenous organisations.

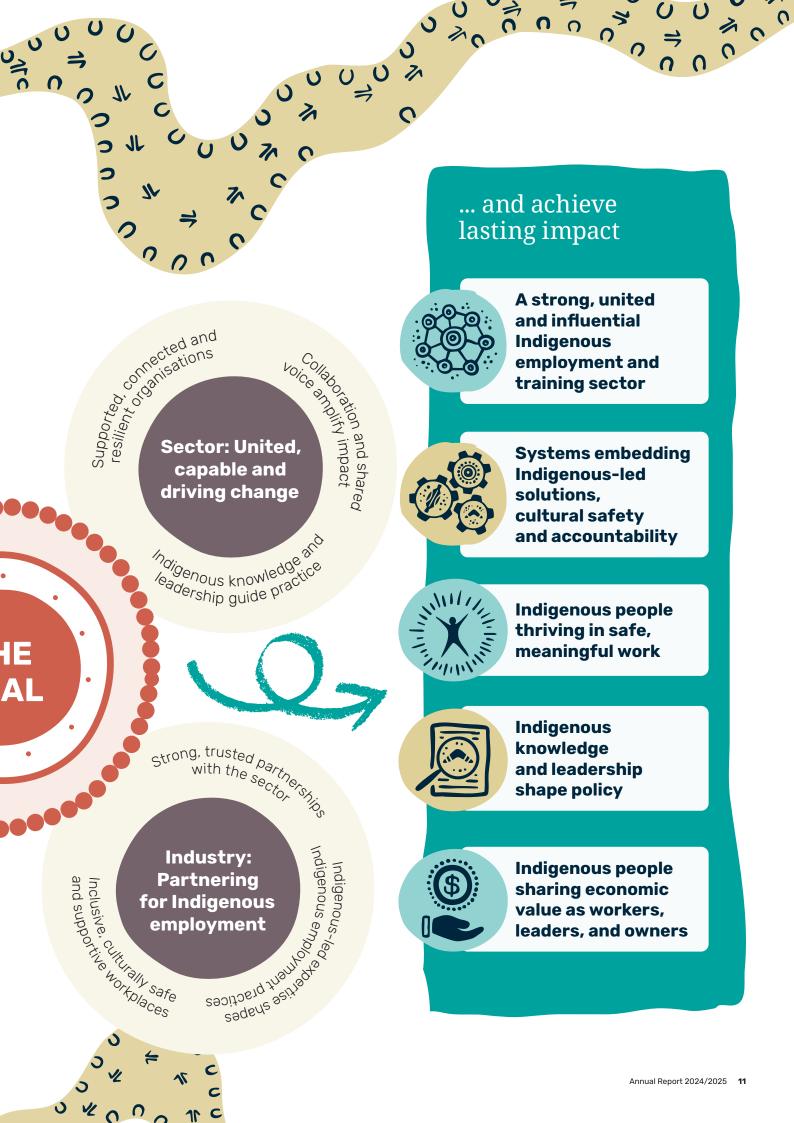
Industry partnerships for workforce inclusion

Work with industry to create culturally safe workplaces and sustainable employment for Indigenous people.

... to change systems ...

The Alliance's Theory of Change sets out how our work strengthens the sector, reforms systems and delivers lasting impact for Indigenous people.





Board of Directors

As an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), The Alliance is proudly owned by our members and governed by a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board of Directors. Our leadership is grounded in the cultural authority and resilience of our communities, guided by an Indigenous CEO to ensure our direction remains authentic, accountable and community focused. Together, our Board and leadership embody a culturally strong and self-determined governance approach that reflects the rights, needs and vision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Interim Board

At the time of our establishment, an interim Board was appointed to provide strategic leadership during our start-up phase. Comprising experienced sector leaders, the interim Board was instrumental in shaping our initial direction, establishing foundational governance structures and supporting operational setup.

In November 2024, we held our inaugural Annual General Meeting (AGM), marking a key milestone in our governance journey. In accordance with our Constitution, half of the interim Board retired, and a democratic election process was undertaken to appoint new Directors.

This transition reflects our commitment to strong, transparent and representative governance.

The newly elected Board brings a wealth of

experience and deep community connection, ensuring The Alliance remains accountable and member-led as we continue to grow.

We acknowledge and sincerely thank the interim Board of Directors for their leadership, dedication and vision. Their contribution laid the foundations of our organisation and continues to guide our path forward.

Interim Board of Directors

Matthew Clarke

Cameron Miller

Jessica Taylor

Emma Kelly

Tony Martens

Alastair King

Steven Sonneman-Smith



Governing Board 2024/2025



Matthew Clarke - Ngunnawal - Chairperson

Matthew has been the inaugural CEO of Yilabara since 2020 and brings over 20 years of experience in employment services and Aboriginal health. He has held senior roles with National Employment Services Australia and Campbell Page. Matthew has led national Closing the Gap initiatives focused on employment, capacity building, mental health and remote school attendance.

Matthew currently serves as Co-Chair of the Minister of Indigenous Affairs First Nations Reference Group and is Deputy Chair of Birribee Housing.



Gayden Carey

- Yinhawangka/Banjima - Western Region Director

Gayden is Business Manager and Director at Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, leading strategic initiatives in community development and economic empowerment. With a background in heavy vehicle fitting, he understands the value of quality training and employment. He works closely with government and industry partners to create impactful partnerships that deliver real outcomes for Aboriginal communities.



Neil Fong - Yawuru - Western Region Director

Neil has over 25 years' senior management experience across government, non-government, and private sectors, specialising in health, aging and human services. He has led First Nations engagement in justice, disability, and community development, and served as Director of Aboriginal Health WA. Neil co-owns a consultancy and is a Director of Jobs Pathways and Wirrum Dawung Pty Ltd.



Richard Callaghan

- Potawurutj/Tatiara - Central Region Director

Richard is an experienced executive and non-executive director across not-for-profit and for-profit sectors. He chairs Rural Remote Mental Health Ltd and leads the Yaran Business Group, including TQCSI Yaran. A certified management consultant and ORIC-registered Examiner, he has served on the IBA Board and multiple Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trusts, specialising in governance, certification and corporate leadership.

Governing Board 2024/2025 - Continued



Ganygulpa Dhurrkay

- Yolngu - Central Region Director

Ganygulpa is a respected Traditional Owner representative for the Milingimbi community. She served as Acting Deputy Chairperson for the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA) in 2024 and 2025 and is the Chairperson for ALPA's enterprise, Manapan Furniture. Ganygulpa works as a cultural facilitator for the East Arnhem Land Youth Model working group, providing invaluable support in language interpreting services.



Cameron Miller - Ally - Central Region Director

Cameron is the CEO of Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation and Chairperson of Outback Stores Pty Ltd. With over 25 years' experience in corporate and community leadership across Central Australia, he brings expertise in advocacy, accounting, and economic development, with a strong focus on supporting remote communities through social enterprise, service delivery and sustainable regional growth.



Letitia Rainbow - Kutrijar - Eastern Region Director

Appointed Co-CEO of Bynoe Community Advancement Co-Operative in 2021, Letitia brings expertise in community development and Native Title. She holds qualifications in community housing, management, and local government, and is certified in drug and alcohol testing. Passionate about Indigenous advocacy and sustainable development, Letitia is committed to creating lasting, positive change in her community.



Fiona Jose (Commenced 27 February 2025)

- Kuku Yalanji/Zenadth Kes - Eastern Region Representative

Fiona is Chief Executive of Cape York Partnership (CYP), leading 10 entities driving reform, education, employment and economic development for Indigenous families. She drives place-based policy innovation and leads the national Empowered Communities initiative. Under her leadership, CYP is creating 300 jobs in three years, with 65% of its 350 staff proudly identifying as Indigenous.



Jessica Taylor (Departure 1 April 2025)

- Yuwaalaraay - Independent Specialist Director

Jessica is deeply committed to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. With over eight years' experience in the notfor-profit and employment sectors, she has led programs in employment, justice reinvestment and community wellbeing. Her expertise includes program management, strategic development, and culturally sensitive consultancy, focusing on empowering Indigenous voices and outcomes.

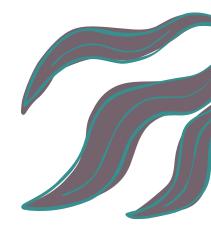
Governing Board 2024/2025 - Continued



Tony Martens (Departure 20 December 2024) - Gunggandji - Eastern Region Representative

Tony is Co-Owner and Managing Director of Australian Training Works Group, a 100% Indigenous-owned training and employment organisation. With 22 years in government, he brings extensive experience in Indigenous employment, training and economic development. Tony leads innovative workforce strategies and initiatives like the Australian Indigenous Destinations Program, which supports and empowers Indigenous youth to transition into meaningful careers.

Finance, Risk and **Governance Committee**



The Finance, Risk and Governance Committee provide strategic oversight of the organisation's financial performance, risk management and governance frameworks. The Committee ensures accountability, transparency and sustainability in line with our values and regulatory obligations, supporting the Board's fiduciary responsibilities.

The Committee brings significant expertise in finance, governance, and risk; members include:



Richard Callaghan - Chairperson

Richard is a certified management consultant and ORIC-registered Examiner with extensive financial management and advisory services experience. He brings analytical perspective and a deep understanding of regulatory compliance.



Fiona Jose

Fiona brings deep governance and risk expertise from leadership roles across diverse organisations. Her strategic insight strengthens oversight of organisational resilience and ethical leadership.

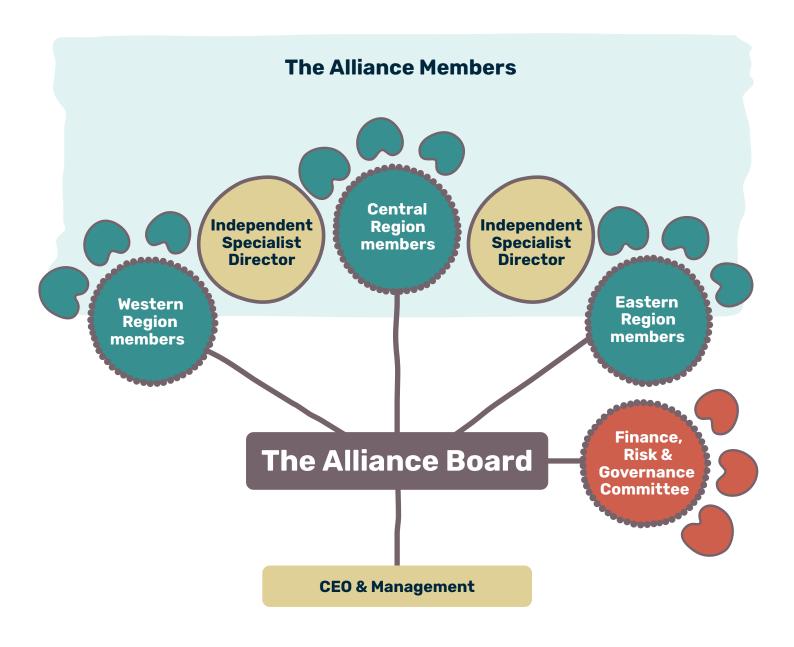


Steven Sonneman-Smith

Steven is a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA) with extensive experience in financial management and executive leadership contributing valuable insights into strategic governance and fiscal oversight.

Governance Practices

The Alliance Board met eight times during the financial year to oversee strategic direction and operations. To strengthen governance and transparency, it established the Finance, Risk and Governance Committee, which held one meeting.



Upholding Cultural Integrity & Advancing Self-Determination

At the heart of our work lies a deep commitment to cultural integrity from which we support Indigenous-led solutions driven by self-determination and cultural strength. Reflective of this commitment, our Constitution establishes the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at every level of governance. The majority of our Directors are required to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and be drawn from a 100% Indigenousowned, managed and controlled organisation. This structure ensures our leadership is embedded in cultural integrity and reflects the communities we serve. The positions of Chair and Deputy Chair are identified roles, reinforcing our commitment to Indigenous-led leadership and decision-making.

As a national body, we understand that the experiences, needs and priorities of communities differ across regions. To support this diversity, our Board includes representation from three broad geographic regions: Eastern Australia, Central Australia, and Western Australia.

This governance model embodies The Alliance's foundational values of self-determination and cultural respect. It ensures our strategic direction is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural principles and led by those with lived experience and connection to community.

The identified CEO role further strengthens our culturally informed leadership, ensuring The Alliance remains true to its vision of empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through authentic representation and voice.

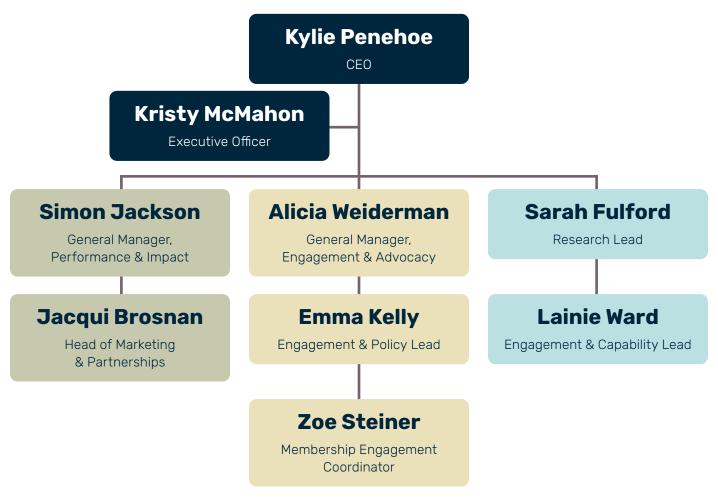
As an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), we place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the centre of service design, delivery and governance. Embedded in community leadership, this model ensures that decisions that impact Indigenous people are made by Indigenous people.



Our People

The Alliance operates with a small but high-impact team, purpose-built to drive systems changes and outcomes for the Indigenous employment and training sector. As a start-up peak body, our operational model is lean and agile, allowing us to respond quickly to sector needs while laying the foundations for long-term sustainability. Our team brings deep expertise across Indigenous affairs, policy, research, advocacy and stakeholder engagement and is united by our shared vision of a world where Indigenous people are self-reliant, valued and enjoy economic prosperity.

We are proud that over 50 per cent of our workforce identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, ensuring cultural knowledge and lived experience are embedded in all we do. The Alliance is led by a Wonnarua and Wiradjuri woman and we walk this journey alongside allies who share our deep commitment to support the impact and growth of the Indigenous employment and training sector.



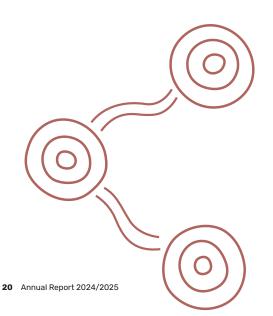


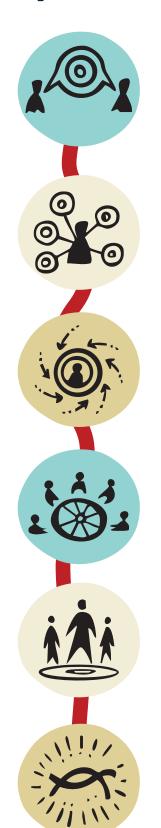
Timeline of Key Milestones

The Alliance was born from a shared vision to address critical gaps in support, advocacy and representation within the Indigenous employment and training sector.

In 2023, at a historic National Gathering on Gadigal Country, over 50 leaders, representing regions from the Pilbara to Brisbane and Torres Strait to Western Sydney, came together with one shared purpose: to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This pivotal moment laid the foundation for The Alliance
- a united force dedicated to empowering the sector, amplifying Indigenous voices and driving systemic change to reshape the future of the Indigenous employment landscape in Australia.





2020

Initial conversations start

2021

Engaging with Indigenous employment & training providers

2022

Ongoing engagement with Indigenous employment & training providers

2023

Indigenous Employment & Training Gathering, business incorporated, interim Board established

2024

Inaugural AGM held, Board of Directors elected, appointment of inaugural First Nations CEO & memberships accepted

2025

Launch of The Alliance

Highlights Report



22 member organisations



Over 135 individual member contacts



154 meaningful advocacy engagements with Government



4 in person sector events held across the country



1 research report released



1 public research presentation



40 webinars and briefings delivered



2 industry engagement events held



9 staff onboarded



8 board meetings



8 Index 2025 employer debriefs



7 written policy submissions on topics that matter to members



706 Index 2025 reports distributed



1 website launched



1 launch event attended by 124 valued stakeholders



11 tangible policy and program changes influenced through engagement

State of the Indigenous Employment and Training Sector

The Indigenous employment and training sector is a cornerstone of Australia's efforts to close the employment gap and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. With an estimated value of over half a billion dollars¹ this sector operates across every state and territory, delivering culturally responsive services that support more than 188,000² Indigenous job seekers and learners. Despite this scale and critical role, Indigenous organisations remain significantly underrepresented in mainstream employment services, presenting both a systemic challenge and a call to action.

Persistent disparities in employment services

Indigenous participation in government employment programs is high, yet Indigenous leadership within these services is disproportionately low:

- Workforce Australia Services supports over 84,200 Indigenous job seekers, representing more than 18% of total participants. Yet only 2 of the 42³ generalist providers contracted nationally are Indigenous-led.
- Indigenous Specialist Services under Workforce Australia operate under 16 licences but just 1 is held by an Indigenous-led organisation.
- The youth-focused Transition to Work program reports 26% Indigenous participation but only 3 Indigenous-led providers operate nationally.
- ParentsNext supports more than 17,200 participants, with 20% identifying as Indigenous, yet only 4 of 30 providers are Indigenous-led.

This deep structural imbalance persists across urban and regional areas, where program delivery is dominated by large non-Indigenous providers.

In contrast, remote regions tell a different story: under the Community Development Program (CDP), which serves approximately 41,000 participants across 60 regions, the majority of the 42 contracted providers are Indigenous-led. This is the result of more than a decade of focused procurement reforms and capability-building, evidence of what is possible when governments commit to Indigenous-led solutions.

Indigenous-led training meets community needs

The Indigenous-led Registered Training Organisation (RTO) sector is a critical enabler of culturally relevant vocational education and training, especially in communities underserved by mainstream providers. The private and community RTO sector, which includes Indigenous RTOs, accounts for 75.8%⁴ of Indigenous vocational education students, demonstrating their pivotal role in flexible and community-responsive delivery. The sector is poised to leverage reforms under the National Skills Agreement and ongoing partnership committee work to expand access and outcomes further.



Systemic challenges and missed opportunities

The 2024-25 year was marked by policy delays, unclear communication and constrained reform implementation. Key national programs including the redesign of Disability Employment Services (DES), rollout of Inclusive Employment Australia (IEA) and reform of the Community Development Program (CDP) were either delayed or introduced without the co-design or clarity needed for meaningful planning.

These disruptions added pressure to Indigenous organisations already operating within short-term funding cycles, tight compliance regimes and limited capacity support.

At the same time, macroeconomic shifts including slowing labour demand and skills shortages made it harder for employers to recruit and retain Indigenous workers. These challenges compounded access barriers for Indigenous job seekers, particularly in remote and regional communities.

Despite these conditions, Indigenous-led organisations continued to deliver high-impact outcomes with minimal resources. Their performance underscores both their resilience and the need to shift from pilot programs to long-term structural inclusion.

¹Estimate value based on investment in employment and training services nationally.

² Figure comprises data from Workforce Australia Caseload Data, May 2025 (dewr.gov.au); Community Development Program Caseload Data, 2023-24 (niaa.gov. au), ParentPathways Caseload Data, May 2025 (dewr. gov.au), Disability Employment Services Caseload Data, May 2025 (data.gov.au). This figure does not include the number of Indigenous VET students aged 15 and over, recorded at 173,835 based on NCVER data.

³ Figures for the 24/25 Financial Year. This figure does not take into account Indigenous-led services who operate in sub-contracting arrangements within Workforce Australia Services, or services engaged as part of the Broome Employment Service, and Yarrabah Employment Service.

⁴ Data download, NCVER DataBuilder, 2023 data.

Our Members

Uniting and growing the sector

Number of new members onboarded	11	
Number of face to face events held	3	
% of members per region	West - 4 (18%) Central - 9 (41%) East - 9 (41%)	

In our foundation year (FY25), The Alliance united 22 Indigenous-owned and controlled organisations to establish a national peak body committed to systemic reform, cultural integrity and Indigenous-led solutions.

Our members include Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Indigenous not-forprofits, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanderowned businesses delivering frontline services across employment, training, community development and economic participation. Their reach spans some of the most diverse and complex delivery environments in the country:

- 46% operate in remote communities
- 27% operate in regional centres
- 27% operate in urban areas.

This national footprint reflects the strength and adaptability of Indigenous-led organisations responding to local priorities, cultural contexts and economic opportunity.

To ensure strong national representation and placebased leadership, members are represented across three governance regions. In FY25, 41% were based in the east, 41% in central Australia and 18% in the west. Throughout FY25, our members played an integral role in shaping The Alliance's strategic direction and advocacy agenda. They contributed to planning, consultations and national forums including:

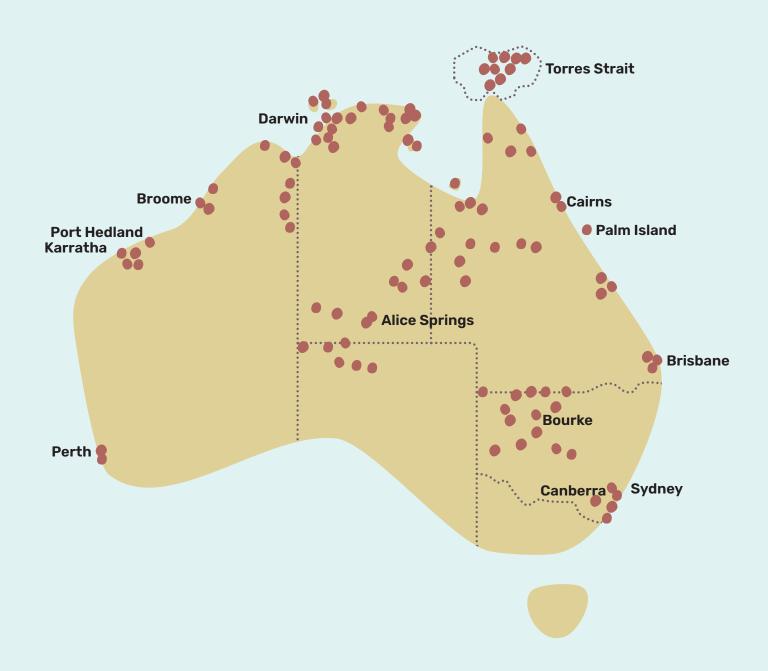
- the 2024 Member Forum in Darwin
- the REAL Program webinar
- the 2025 Federal Budget briefing
- · the Building the Sector event in Perth.

This active engagement led to a dozen policy and program shifts and helped drive seven major sector reforms, from redesigning remote employment models to embedding cultural safety and accountability across government-funded programs.

Every day, our members support thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people into work and training, grow local capability and strengthen inclusive economies.



Our members geographical distribution



Driving Policy and Advocacy

Delivering change through quality engagement and advocacy on behalf of members

Number of policy submissions or consultations participated in	21
Frequency of engagement with government representatives	154
Number of policy or program changes	11
Number of policy reforms influenced, supported or led to improve sector conditions	7

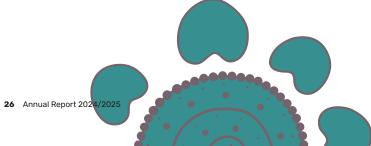
In FY25, The Alliance strengthened its role as a credible and effective voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations working across employment, training, and economic development. Through consistent engagement, evidence-based positions, and strong member input, we influenced key national reforms and reshaped how government programs consider Indigenous-led delivery.

Our member consultations throughout the year highlighted several recurring advocacy priorities. These included embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in policy design; growing and sustaining the Indigenous employment and training sector; securing fit-for-purpose and long-term investment; promoting cultural safety and accountability in workplaces; and removing regulatory barriers that restrict access to government programs and economic opportunities.

These themes guided our contributions to key national reform agendas, including the redesign of remote employment services led by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), licensing reviews of Workforce Australia and the introduction of Inclusive Employment Australia by the Department of Social Services (DSS). The implementation of the National Skills Agreement also marked a major shift in training sector policy and investment. At every stage, The Alliance worked to ensure Indigenous organisations were not just consulted but meaningfully engaged in program design and delivery.

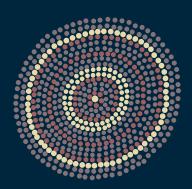
In FY25, The Alliance:

- Submitted 7 major policy papers shaped by member input
- Held 115 formal engagements with government representatives
- Took active roles in national forums including the First Nations Reference Group, DEWR Peak Body meetings, the Closing the Gap Assembly and the VET First Nations Roundtable
- Co-authored a joint submission with members on the Remote Australian Employment Services Program
- Provided recommendations on the Reconnection Employment and Learning Program, Capability Funding and the Apprenticeships Incentive System
- Advised the Department of Health and Aged Care on growing the Indigenous workforce in aged care and disability
- Supported two new Aboriginal organisations to secure Workforce Australia contracts in Queensland and the Northern Territory
- Maintained bipartisan engagement to build political support for Indigenousled program delivery.



Case Study

Creating Choice Through Connection Workforce Australia Family Servicing Trial



Summary

The Workforce Australia Family Servicing Trial (the Trial) was a partnership between Yilabara, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and The Alliance, designed to explore how employment services could better support blended Indigenous and non-Indigenous families through culturally responsive, family-based service models.

Context

Indigenous family structures are complex, interconnected, and built on extended relationships of care and obligation. These structures often include non-Indigenous family members, who play a central role in shared decision-making and community participation. Traditional employment services typically focus on individuals in isolation, failing to reflect these realities.

The Trial tested what happens when families, not just individuals, are supported through Indigenous Specialist Providers. By enabling both Indigenous and non-Indigenous family members to engage services together, the model gave families greater choice, flexibility, and cultural safety, with providers gaining deeper insight into the dynamics that influence participation.

The Alliance worked with DEWR and Yilabara to co-design the approach, developing a theory of change, an implementation roadmap and an outcomes framework to guide learning and evaluation.

Impact

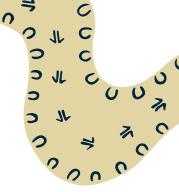
- Strengthened understanding of family-centred, culturally responsive employment servicing
- Identified eligibility barriers impacting
 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- Developed an evidence base to inform future employment services reform
- Created a proof of concept for more flexible, relationship-based servicing models.

In their words

"The Department regards the Trial as a great opportunity to collaborate with First Nations organisations and explore the need for more flexible and tailored servicing options... Findings such as the impact of eligibility parameters on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family structures will be a consideration for future employment services reform."

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Driving Research and Evidence-Based Practice



Grounding advocacy in evidence while building capability

Number of research publications or data reports released	2
Number of Index 2025 distributions & downloads	256 downloaded 500 printed
Number of employee Index 2025 debriefs	8
Number of sector webinars	40
Number of industry webinars	2

Research is foundational to The Alliance's mission to transform Indigenous employment and training systems. In FY25, we launched our dedicated research function to ensure policy and reform are not only evidence-informed but led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people — who own the data, shape the narrative, and define success on their terms.

Establishing our research function

FY25 marked the launch of The Alliance's long-term research agenda. Underpinned by Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) principles, our research framework ensures that data collected about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is controlled by them, for their benefit. This shift is not symbolic — it's structural. It places Indigenous leadership at the centre of reform efforts in both government and corporate systems.

Our work spans five core research themes:

- 1. Sector mapping and state of play
- 2. Workforce development and Indigenous leadership
- 3. Employer engagement and cultural safety
- 4. Indigenous participation in employment and training
- 5. Policy, investment, and systems reform.

First Nations Employment Index 2025

In March 2025, we launched our first major publication: the First Nations Employment Index 2025. The Index benchmarks the performance of 34 large employers representing over 1.1 million workers, including nearly 30,000 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees. Employers were assessed on maturity levels from Foundational to Advocacy, providing a roadmap for internal reform and Indigenous workforce growth.

Sharing our leadership globally

In April 2025, The Alliance presented at the Global Indigenous Data Sovereignty Conference in Canberra. Our presentation on IDS and data governance in employment and training marked a pivotal moment putting our mark down as a research voice within both the national and international Indigenous data community.



Case Study

Reclaiming the Narrative

Summary

The transfer of the First Nations Employment Index 2025 from a non-Indigenous philanthropic organisation to The Alliance marked a pivotal step in advancing Indigenous Data Sovereignty. This transition restored Indigenous leadership over one of the nation's most significant tools for tracking and improving corporate performance in Indigenous employment. The Index is now a platform for evidence, accountability and reform governed by an Indigenous-led organisation.

Context

For too long, data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been collected and controlled by others. Even when wellintentioned, this disconnect undermines selfdetermination and reinforces colonial dynamics.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) principles assert that Indigenous peoples must have the right to control the collection, access, use and reporting of their own data. The Index, originally held within a philanthropic structure, lacked the cultural authority and governance to fully realise these principles. Its transfer to The Alliance was not just a technical handover but a structural and symbolic realignment with the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous ownership.

By reclaiming control, The Alliance has created space to embed a listen, yarn and act conceptual framework into the research, centring cultural safety, Indigenous perspectives and practical reform. It empowers Indigenous-led solutions and holds corporate Australia to account in more meaningful ways.

Impact

- Restored Indigenous ownership and governance of a national employment data asset
- Embedded IDS and IDG principles across methodology, analysis, and reporting
- Reframed the Index as a tool for advocacy, accountability and cultural safety
- Informed national policy and employer practice through culturally grounded insights
- Shared Australia's experience with global peers at the Indigenous Data Sovereignty Conference.

In their words

"The handover of the Index isn't just symbolic; it's structural. It's about who defines the problem, who owns the data and who gets to shape the solutions. That's what Indigenous Data Sovereignty looks like."

Kylie Penehoe, CEO, The Alliance

Building Capability Across the Indigenous Employment Ecosystem

Building capability and improving practice to deliver for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Number of sector webinars/activities

40

In FY25, The Alliance made tangible progress in strengthening and sustaining the Indigenous-led employment and training sector. Our work was strategically focused on building capability, recognising that lasting employment outcomes rely on strong, well-resourced Indigenous organisations and culturally capable employers. By creating the right conditions, we enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations to thrive.

Strengthening the sector from within

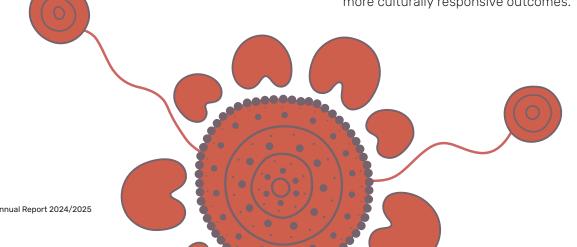
Throughout the year, we worked closely with members to ensure they had the tools, support and knowledge to lead effectively. Through targeted webinars, regional engagements and one-on-one support, we addressed priority issues including grant readiness, program design, budgeting and the implications of policy reforms such as the Indigenous Procurement Policy, and the 2025 Federal Budget.

Members also accessed expert advisory support from our growing network of specialists. This helped them build operational capability, secure funding and expand their service reach.

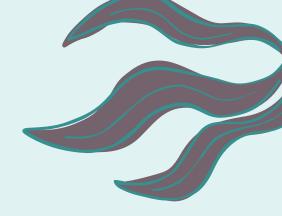
Supporting employers to shift from intent to action

The Alliance also invested in lifting the capability of employers to create culturally safe, sustainable career pathways for First Nations job seekers. Following the release of the First Nations Employment Index 2025, we briefed 18 large organisations and delivered eight tailored debriefs to participating employers. These sessions offered evidence-based insights, supported internal reflection and created action pathways based on each employer's maturity stage.

This work is designed to ensure employers have the practical tools, cultural understanding, and long-term support needed to engage meaningfully with Indigenous job seekers and deliver stronger, more culturally responsive outcomes.







A framework for transformation

We are now embedding a cultural capability framework that defines six core domains of employer practice: Attraction and Recruitment, Retention, Professional Development and Leadership, Workplace Culture and Inclusion, Commitments and Accountability, and First Nations Community Engagement. This framework will underpin our future work with employers, giving them the tools, structure and support needed to deliver meaningful, measurable outcomes.

Looking forward

Our approach to capability is not transactional. It is transformational. It is about elevating the sector, restoring cultural authority and ensuring Indigenous organisations are equipped to lead system reform. In the year ahead, we will deepen this work by expanding our support models, strengthening partnerships and advocating for sustained investment in Indigenous organisational capacity.

When Indigenous organisations thrive, our whole system lifts. This is where lasting change begins.



Case Study

Returning to Lead – Ironbark Secures Workforce Australia Services Licence

Summary

After more than a decade, Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation, a 100% First Nations owned and operated organisation, has returned to deliver mainstream employment services in Darwin. With strategic support from The Alliance, Ironbark successfully secured a Workforce Australia Generalist licence through the 2024 licensing review. Service delivery will commence on 1 July 2025, marking a milestone for Indigenous-led participation in national employment systems.

Context

Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation has been delivering employment, economic, and business development services for over 20 years. From 2010 to 2014, it stood as the sole Indigenous provider operating in the non-remote employment services sector, a powerful but rare example of Indigenous-led leadership in a space historically dominated by non-Indigenous organisations.

Despite consistently high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the Darwin region, Indigenous control over service delivery has remained limited. For Ironbark, the aspiration to return and lead again in this space has been long-held and deeply grounded in community connection and local knowledge.

Impact

In 2024, Ironbark joined the Workforce Australia licensing review process, supported by The Alliance through targeted advice, sector knowledge, and access to specialist consultants. This partnership proved instrumental in preparing a compelling Expression of Interest.

In early 2025, Ironbark was awarded the generalist employment services licence for the Darwin region (a contract running to June 2027).

This decision repositions Ironbark at the forefront of employment delivery in the Top End and represents a broader shift toward Indigenous-led, place-based service models that better reflect local needs.

This milestone delivers on two key system goals: increasing Indigenous participation not just as clients but as service leaders, and embedding culturally grounded, community-led approaches in the mainstream system.

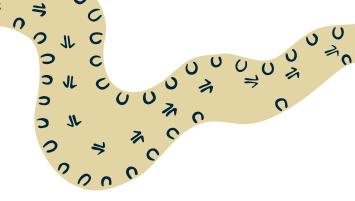
In their words

"After a decade away, the Ironbark team are proud to return to a space where we once stood as a high-performing provider. This marks a significant milestone in our journey, and we're excited to again serve our Darwin and Palmerston communities with quality, culturally safe services that drive meaningful, long-term outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people."

Kristine Cossens, General Manager, Ironbark Operations



Collaborating with Industry



Influencing dialogue and relationships to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment through shared responsibility

Number of industry engagement sessions held

6

In 2024–25, The Alliance strengthened its role as a trusted partner to industry by forging deeper relationships with employers, industry leaders and national influencers committed to improving Indigenous employment outcomes. We set out to build shared responsibility, grow cultural capability, and embed Indigenous leadership in the workforce agenda.

Influencing national dialogues

The Alliance was invited to contribute to high-level national conversations on Indigenous employment through participation in several key forums.

In December 2024, The Alliance joined the Business Council of Australia's Indigenous Employment Roundtable, alongside 34 leaders from business and government, including the Minister for Indigenous Australians, to explore strategies to accelerate Indigenous participation in the national workforce.

That same month, The Alliance participated in the Creating Parity First Nations Roundtable, hosted by Dr Andrew Forrest. This roundtable convened over 30 leaders to discuss challenges and solutions related to education and training, economic development, health and wellbeing and community leadership.

Creating connections

As part of the transition of the First Nations Employment Index to The Alliance, 103 employers joined panel sessions to learn more about our role as the national Indigenous-led peak body. These sessions marked a shift in industry's view of benchmarking and accountability, recognising the value of First Nations-led reform.

In March 2025, our Uniting the Sector event in Perth further strengthened relationships and knowledge-sharing between employers and Indigenous employment and training providers. Attended by over 40 stakeholders, a key highlight was Wilsons Group's presentation on their practical efforts to recruit, support, and retain Indigenous staff—offering a powerful example of change in action.

The Alliance also featured on Toll Group's National Reconciliation Week panel, where we championed the role of Indigenous-led providers and advocated for co-designed, culturally responsive employment strategies.

Sharing learnings

To ensure the First Nations Employment Index 2025 drove real change, all participating employers were invited to an embargoed preview of the key findings.

Through each of these touchpoints,
The Alliance is helping employers move
from intent to impact—growing an ecosystem
where Indigenous employment is not a niche
priority, but a shared national commitment.



Case Study

Strengthening Commitment Through Reflection

Summary

As one of Australia's largest employers, Programmed approached the First Nations Employment Index 2025 (Index 2025) not just as a benchmarking excercise but an opportunity to listen, reflect and lead. The process supported the organisation to deepen internal alignment, sharpen strategy and reaffirm its commitment to cultural safety and employment parity, laying the groundwork for strategic and sustainable change.

Context

With over 30,000 employees annually and partnerships across more than 10,000 businesses, Programmed holds significant potential to influence Indigenous workforce participation across industries and geographies. Participation in the Index offered a structured, evidence-based approach to assess where the organisation was succeeding and where improvement was needed.

Programmed entered the process with humility and openness, embracing the opportunity to benchmark performance alongside peers and learn from sector-wide insights. The Index created space for honest internal dialogue, encouraged critical questioning, and supported the identification of key areas for growth to help strengthen their First Nations employment outcomes moving forward.

Impact

Since participating in the Index 2025, Programmed has commenced translating insight into meaningful action. The organisation is currently developing a new Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), with refreshed and measurable deliverables informed by the Index findings. This process has sharpened focus across teams and reinforced a commitment to sustainable, culturally responsive change.

Participation also enabled Programmed to connect more deeply with other employers committed to Indigenous workforce reform. Peer learning and collaborative yarning sessions were a highlight of the process, offering shared wisdom and reinforcing the importance of collective effort in driving change. These conversations have strengthened industry collaboration and reinforced the importance of collective effort in achieving employment parity and culturally safe workplaces for Indigenous peoples.

In their words

"Some content can be uncomfortable, but we're committed to truth-telling. Our employees' wellbeing is always considered, but stories and perspectives must be heard."

Belinda Nye, First Nations Engagement Manager.



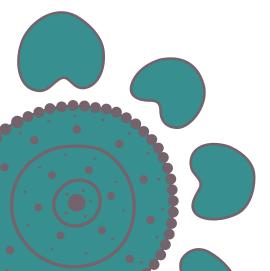
Financial Overview

In FY25, The Alliance completed its first full year of operations with a sound financial result, reflecting both the generosity of philanthropic partners and the early confidence of government and members. Total income was \$1.569 million compared with \$72,047 in the prior year. Philanthropic seed funding provided the foundation for our establishment, complemented by government grants that enabled us to scale delivery. In addition, consulting and sitting fees contributed a modest but important stream of self-generated income.

Expenditure for the year was \$1.498 million, carefully aligned to building capability and delivering early impact. The majority was directed to staffing and employee benefits as we recruited a core team. Key operational investments included governance and consulting fees, travel and accommodation to connect with members and stakeholders, IT systems, and marketing and events.

The organisation reported a net surplus of \$70,719, increasing retained earnings to \$81,236 at year end. Cash reserves closed at \$3.712 million, up from \$1.111 million in 2024, reflecting significant philanthropic income received in advance to fund programs and services in the coming year.

As a start-up peak body, The Alliance remains reliant on philanthropy and grants at this stage, while beginning to generate small but meaningful revenue from membership, partnerships, and events. Our financial position provides a stable platform for growth, ensuring we can meet obligations while investing in the sector's long-term sustainability.



Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

Account	2025	2024
Income		
Revenue and Other Income	1,569,033	72,047
Total Income	1,569,033	72,047
Expenses		
Auditors' remuneration	17,000	0
Computer and IT Related Expenses	79,792	17,123
Depreciation	10,010	38
Employee benefits expenses	1,121,034	0
Insurance	14,785	0
Other Expenses	255,695	44,368
Total Expenses	1,498,315	61,529
Current Year Surplus Before Income Tax	70,719	10,518
Net Current Year Surplus	70,719	10,518
Total Comprehensive Income	70,719	10,518



Statement of Financial Position

National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance As at 30 June 2025

Account	2025	2024
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,711,871	1,111,013
Trade and Other Receivables	69,432	361
Other Current Assets	10,214	0
Total Current Assets	3,791,518	1,111,374
Non-Current Assets		
Property, Plant and Equipment	25,259	2,257
Total Non-Current Assets	25,259	2,257
Total Assets	3,816,777	1,113,631
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	202,901	164,642
Provisions	54,743	0
Income in Advance	3,475,873	938,471
Total Current Liabilities	3,733,517	1,103,113
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employee Provisions	2,023	0
Total Non-Current Liabilities	2,023	0
Total Liabilities	3,735,540	1,103,113
Net Assets	81,236	10,518
Equity		
Retained Earnings	81,236	10,518
Total Equity	81,236	10,518

Statement of Changes in Equity

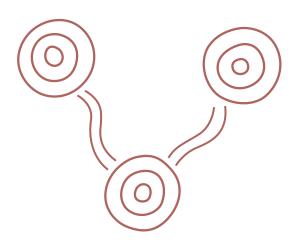
National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance For the year ended 30 June 2025

Account	Retained Earnings	Total
Statement of Changes in Equity		
Balance at 1 July 2023	0	0
Net Surplus for the year	10,518	10,518
Balance at 30 June 2024	10,518	10,518
Balance at 1 July 2024	10,518	10,518
Net Surplus for the year	70,719	70,719
Balance at 30 June 2025	81,236	81,236

Statement of Cash Flows

Account	2025	2024
Statement of Cash Flows		
Cashflows from Operating Activities		
Receipts from Grants and Rendering of Services	4,037,363	1,010,157
Payments to Suppliers and Employees	(1,403,493)	103,113
Total Cashflows from Operating Activities	2,633,870	1,113,270
Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment		
Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment	(33,012)	(2,257)
Total Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment	(33,012)	(2,257)
Cash at the end of the financial year		
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	2,600,858	1,111,013
Cash at the beginning of the year	1,111,013	0
Cash at the end of the year	3,711,871	1,111,013





Future Outlook

As we look to FY26, The Alliance stands at a pivotal point. In just our first year, we have laid critical foundations. The focus now is to scale and deepen our impact across the Indigenous employment and training system.

Our strategic direction for the year ahead is clear.

We will continue to unite and grow the sector, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations — from remote service providers to urban RTOs and job agencies — are connected, supported and visible. A national membership campaign, regional events and peer learning opportunities will drive this work.

We will amplify member voices in policy reform, building on progress in Workforce Australia, CDP redesign and Inclusive Employment Australia. Our priority is to secure long-term investment and structural reform that embeds Indigenous-led delivery.

Our research function will expand, with new data products, enhanced employer benchmarking and continued leadership in Indigenous Data Sovereignty. This work will position The Alliance as a trusted evidence partner in reform and accountability.

We will deepen employer engagement, helping organisations move from intent to action. Index 2025 delivered the sector's first national

benchmarking tool. In FY26, we will support more employers to use it to drive measurable change.

We will also strengthen our operations, investing in systems, people and governance for long-term success as a high-performing, values-led peak body.

While opportunities are emerging, challenges remain. Fiscal constraints, workforce shortages and fragmented systems continue to impact our members. Yet momentum is building. Public awareness is rising, government commitments to Closing the Gap are growing and the Indigenous economy is forecast to reach \$50 billion by 2035*.

In this context, The Alliance calls on governments, employers, funders and communities to act with clarity and purpose. Self-determination must shift from policy intent to operational reality.

The Alliance was created to lead this change. Our vision is bold and our focus is unwavering. When Indigenous organisations lead, outcomes improve.

*ANZ backs \$50bn First Nations economy with new strategy to drive Indigenous business growth | ANZ

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan outlines The Alliance's long-term vision and the key priorities guiding our work. It provides transparency and accountability to our members, partners and funders by showing how our activities align with our mission and the outcomes we are working to achieve. The Strategic Plan also serves as a roadmap for future growth, helping us stay focused, measure progress, and respond effectively to emerging opportunities and challenges.



Uniting and growing the sector

To unify, grow the value and expand the Indigenous employment & training sector.



Engaging government and advocacy

To influence government policy and programs to grow the value and impact of the sector.



Driving operational excellence

To establish excellent standards and efficiencies.



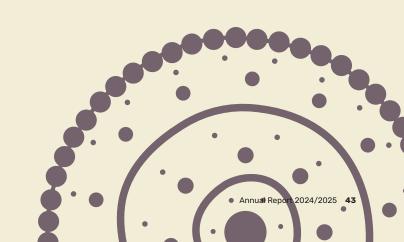
Driving research and evidence-based practices and policy

To provide evidence-based insights to guide policy and practice improvements.



Collaborating with industry

To work with Australia's largest employers to advance Indigenous employment & training outcomes.



Glossary of Sector Terms

Indigenous employment and training sector (sector)	Indigenous organisations (including ACCOs, not-for-profits, private enterprises) that operate throughout Australia and provide support to Indigenous jobseekers and Indigenous learners.
Members/member organisations	Organisations that are members of the National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance (The Alliance).
Industry	A group of businesses that produce a particular kind of goods or service. We use the term to refer to businesses that support Indigenous employment.
Government	A government agency is a permanent or semi-permanent organisation in the machinery of government. A government agency can operate at the local, state or national level.
Ecosystem	We use this term to describe a community connected to create value, specifically, the sector, government, and industry.
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)	Typically a non-profit organisation that is driven and governed by Indigenous community to provide services to an Indigenous community.
Indigenous provider	An Indigenous organisation, business or non-profit that provides employment and/or training services under a contractual arrangement.
Indigenous business	An Indigenous private enterprise.
Indigenous organisations	Collective noun to describe Indigenous private enterprises, businesses and not-for-profits.
Membership based body	An organisation formed to serve and represent a group of members who share common interests, goals or professions.
Indigenous peak body	A type of membership-based body. An Indigenous organisation that represents and advocates for a specific industry, profession, or sector at a national or regional level.
Indigenous jobseeker	A person who identifies as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is unemployed and looking for work.
Indigenous learner	A person who identifies as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is in the process of learning knowledge or skills.

Training	The action of teaching a person a new knowledge and/or skill. Typically short-term with a narrow focus. We look at training in the pursuit of knowledge and skills development for education.
Education	Education is long-term and has a broader scope.
Registered Training Organisation (RTO)	A training provider that offers nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) courses and qualifications.
Building capability	The process of developing the skills and knowledge needed to achieve goals.
Cultural awareness	The ability to recognise, understand and respect cultural differences and similarities between cultures.
Cultural capability	Skills, knowledge, behaviours and tools needed to plan, support, improve and deliver services in a culturally respectful manner.
Colonial load	The expectation put on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to share their cultural knowledge, or lived experience, in order to educate others.
Cultural safety	The practice of creating an environment where people feel safe and respected, regardless of their cultural background. This means there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience.
Indigenous procurement	The act of buying goods and services from Indigenous-owned organisations, including ACCOs, not-for-profits and businesses.
Indigenous Data Sovereignty	Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) is the right of Indigenous peoples to control and manage data about their communities, lands, and resources.
Indigenous Data Governance	Is the practice that supports IDS rights and is built around two central premises: Indigenous rights over the data about Indigenous peoples (regardless of where it is held and by whom) and right to access the data.
Self-determination (Australian Human Rights Commission)	The fundamental right of people to shape their own lives. In a practical sense, self-determination means that we have the freedom to live well and to determine what it means to live well according to our own values and beliefs.





