



Department of Energy, Mines,  
Industry Regulation and Safety

# Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative

Updated 2024



The background is a dark purple field filled with various abstract elements. There are several sets of concentric circles in shades of purple and blue, some of which are larger and more prominent than others. Scattered throughout are small, colorful dots in white, orange, and green. There are also larger, organic, wavy shapes in light purple and teal, some resembling stylized leaves or droplets. Two large, stylized circular motifs with orange and black segments are positioned on the left and right sides of the page.

An overview of the initiative to support and accelerate achievement of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy's goals within the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DEMIRS).

This document has been updated from the original version published in 2022 to reflect the department's name change and to incorporate artwork by Jarni Creative created for the Aboriginal Empowerment Unit.



As DEMIRS provides services across Western Australia, it is critical for the department to ensure that strong relationships are maintained and promoted between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the broader community and the department.

One of the key functions of DEMIRS is to ensure the State's natural mineral and petroleum resources are developed and managed responsibly.

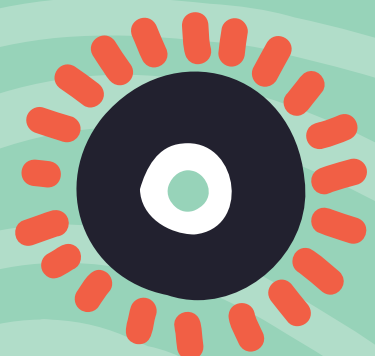
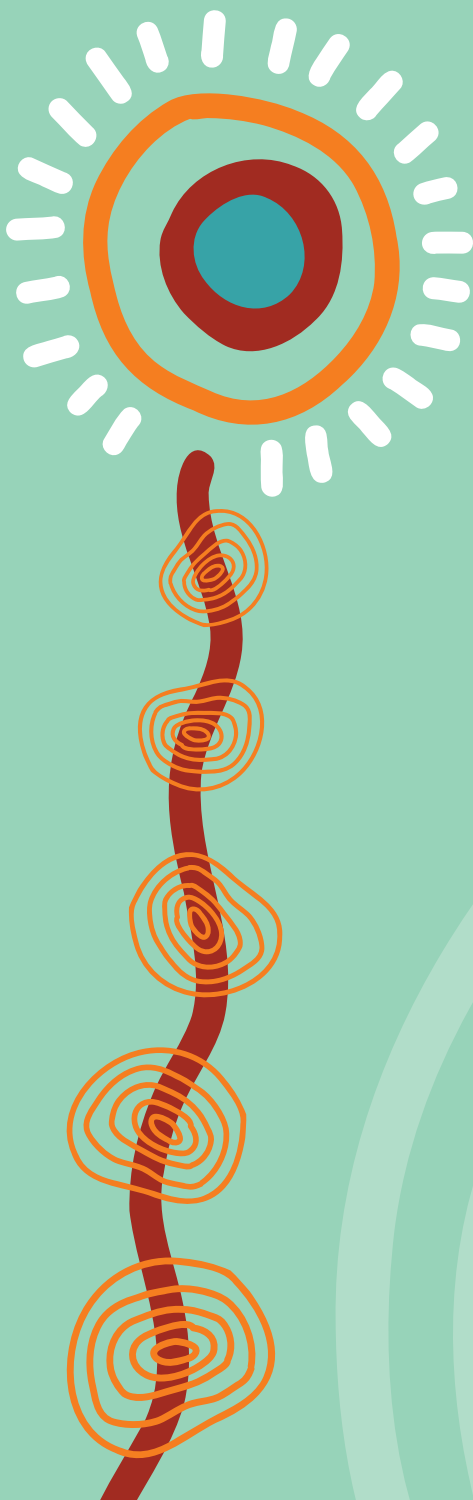
DEMIRS has the opportunity under the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy to take further steps to ensure resource development also delivers improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative has been created to deliver against the Strategy, with input gathered from stakeholders, DEMIRS' experiences working with Aboriginal people, and developing on reconciliation initiatives. The Initiatives provide the pathway for DEMIRS to deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal people, and will continue to be refined over time.

**Richard Sellers**

Director General

Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety



# Closing the Gap Implementation Plan

The WA Government is committed to eliminating the gap in life outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

In September 2021 the WA Government published its first Closing the Gap Jurisdictional Implementation Plan. This Plan sets out the actions that the Government has committed to delivering as part of its commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Implementation Plan was developed through collaboration across Government departments and agencies, with crucial input from the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA and the Aboriginal Health Council of WA, which is the only WA based member of the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations.

The National Agreement contains four key Priority Reform Areas for changing how governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and a suite of socio-economic targets to focus efforts to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes.

The WA Government will pursue a phased approach to implementation, with the first phase of the Implementation Plan detailing the actions that are being undertaken and those in development. This first step provides a baseline from which to build, and enables Aboriginal people and the broader public to clearly see how the WA Government will deliver on its commitments.





# Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021–2029 sets out how the WA Government will direct its efforts towards a future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.

The Strategy outlines a high-level framework for future WA Government policies, plans, initiatives and programs that contribute to better outcomes for Aboriginal people, built around genuine partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders, strong accountability, and culturally responsive ways of working.

Importantly, the Strategy provides the basis for WA Government departments (like DEMIRS) to develop specific initiatives to achieve the Strategy's goal - Aboriginal people, families and communities empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.



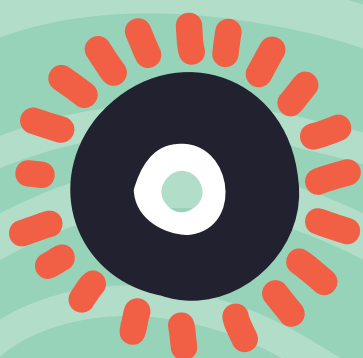
## Context for the Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative

DEMIRS' mission is to support a safe, fair and responsible future for the Western Australian community, industry and resources sector. The department is the lead agency in administering WA's multi-agency regulatory framework. It ensures the State's safety, health, and environmental standards are world's best practice and consistent with relevant State and Commonwealth legislation, regulations and policies.

DEMIRS has been delivering various programs that are consistent with the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. These programs extend across:

- Building and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
- Respectfully acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, histories and rights.
- Creating real opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and career development.
- Increasing our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.

These existing programs provide the foundation for the Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative, and will build upon the existing efforts of DEMIRS.

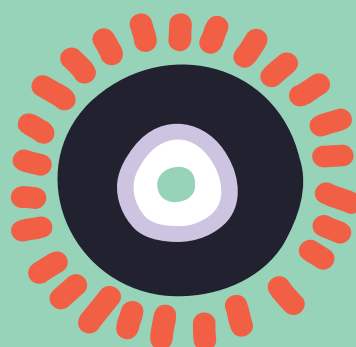


### Case Study: DEMIRS Procurement

DEMIRS has been implementing the whole-of-government policies on Aboriginal-sourced businesses through its procurement processes. This includes the engagement of Aboriginal business, Gee Gie, to trial opportunities for Aboriginal people on Country to map out abandoned mines on their Country.

### Case Study: DEMIRS Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

DEMIRS has been working in the sphere of reconciliation for more than 10 years. Its RAP has provided the framework for its Aboriginal Employment Strategy, cultural awareness programs, and building a supportive and diverse workforce.



# DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative

The DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will build on existing programs, and will guide the department's delivery of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy's goals.

The objective for the DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative is to build capacity to implement sustainably the WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.

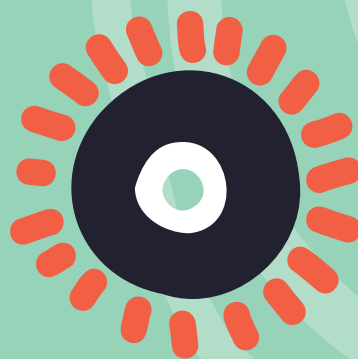
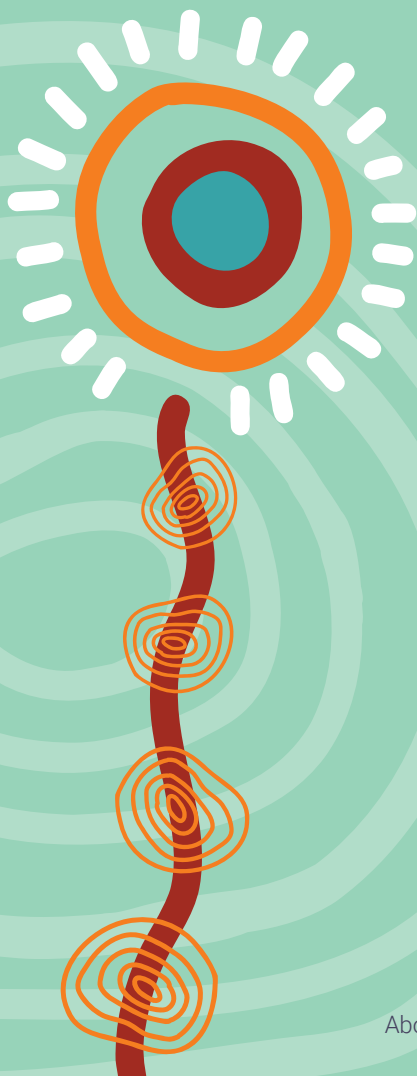
The success of the DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will be demonstrated by:

- policies, practices and administration of resource development being appropriate and respectful of Aboriginal people;
- formal pathways established for Aboriginal people to contribute to the way that resource development is regulated; and
- increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to more than 3.7 per cent.

The DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will be delivered through four components, reflecting the elements in the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy:

- partnerships, shared decision-making, and engagement;
- reshaping government services and systems to work with culture;
- building the cultural responsiveness of the public sector workforce; and
- expanding economic opportunities.

These are in addition to the existing programs being delivered across the department.



## Partnerships, shared decision-making and engagement

Aboriginal people have been saying for a long time that better outcomes will not come from Government-led solutions provided for, or imposed on Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative at DEMIRS will:

- establish an Aboriginal Liaison Forum to share information and inform its business;
- improve information access for Aboriginal people related to activities on their lands;
- establish pathways for secondments, placements and, or exchanges between the Department and Aboriginal corporations to build understanding, trust and knowledge;
- create Aboriginal liaison officers to meet with Aboriginal people on their own Country to share information and inform the business of DEMIRS; and
- ensure that there is coordination across the Department for delivery of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and communicating success and learnings.





# Reshaping government services and systems to work with culture

Culturally responsive staff, services, systems, and workplaces are accessible, effective, welcoming, trusted and safe – in short, they work well for Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will:

- coordinate policy, practice and administration review within DEMIRS to ensure these are aligned to the principles and objectives of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy;
- ensure that DEMIRS is coordinated and resourced to support the reforms being led by other agencies in the delivery of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (e.g. reform of the State's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage laws); and
- promote within the public sector and externally, examples of best practice engagement between industry and Aboriginal people.

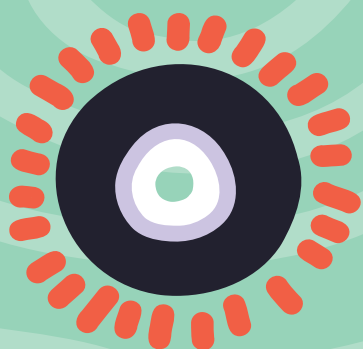


## Building the cultural responsiveness of the public sector workforce

The cultural responsiveness of Government agencies is fundamental to all of the elements of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. It is important that Aboriginal people are well represented and supported at all levels of the public sector – including management and executive – by recruiting, retaining and advancing Aboriginal employees and ensuring agencies are attractive places for Aboriginal people to work.

The DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will:

- establish a new Aboriginal Empowerment Unit, with the majority of positions to be filled by officers identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- create a new dedicated Aboriginal employment scheme for resource sector advice and regulation within DEMIRS;
- provide an advanced cultural training program for DEMIRS officers who travel on Country, to build upon the existing cultural awareness training offered to all DEMIRS officers;
- significantly increase Aboriginal workforce representation and DEMIRS internal workforce capability, offering attractive meaningful career paths for Aboriginal people and developing leaders; and
- identify opportunities to strengthen the cultural responsiveness of our procurement processes, service agreements, programs and services provided to Aboriginal peoples and communities.



## Expanding economic opportunities

Economic participation is critical to providing both secure foundations and rewarding futures. Every State Government agency has a role in finding innovative ways to expand the economic opportunities open to Aboriginal people.

The DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will:

- establish a dedicated program to review policies and practices to specifically identify economic opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate in the resources sector – including greater involvement in the ownership of resource operations;
- support data sharing initiatives across government so that Aboriginal people have access to government-held information that relates to their land; and
- provide coordination within DEMIRS to respond and deliver actions arising from claims made by Native Title holders under the Native Title Act.





## Next steps and getting involved

The implementation of the DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will be phased, and it will take time to deliver all of the outcomes. It is also expected that the engagement with stakeholders will inform the work program – this is an important part of the process and will mean the DEMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative will evolve over time.

During 2022, DEMIRS will commence the establishment of a core Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative team to start the process of coordination and delivery of time critical activities. Planning of the substantial recruitment program will also commence.

The department will establish a communication program to liaise with relevant stakeholders, and this will provide more details on how interested parties can be involved.

In the interim, any queries should be directed to the General Manager Aboriginal Empowerment Unit, DEMIRS at [AboriginalEmpowermentUnit@demirs.wa.gov.au](mailto:AboriginalEmpowermentUnit@demirs.wa.gov.au)







Government of Western Australia

**Department of Energy, Mines,  
Industry Regulation and Safety**

Mineral House  
100 Plain Street  
Perth Western Australia 6004

**Mailing address**

Locked Bag 100  
East Perth WA 6892

**Regional offices**

Goldfields/Esperance	(08) 9021 9494
Great Southern	(08) 9842 8366
Kimberley	(08) 9191 8400
Mid West	(08) 9920 9800
North West	(08) 9185 0900
South West	(08) 9722 2888

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