



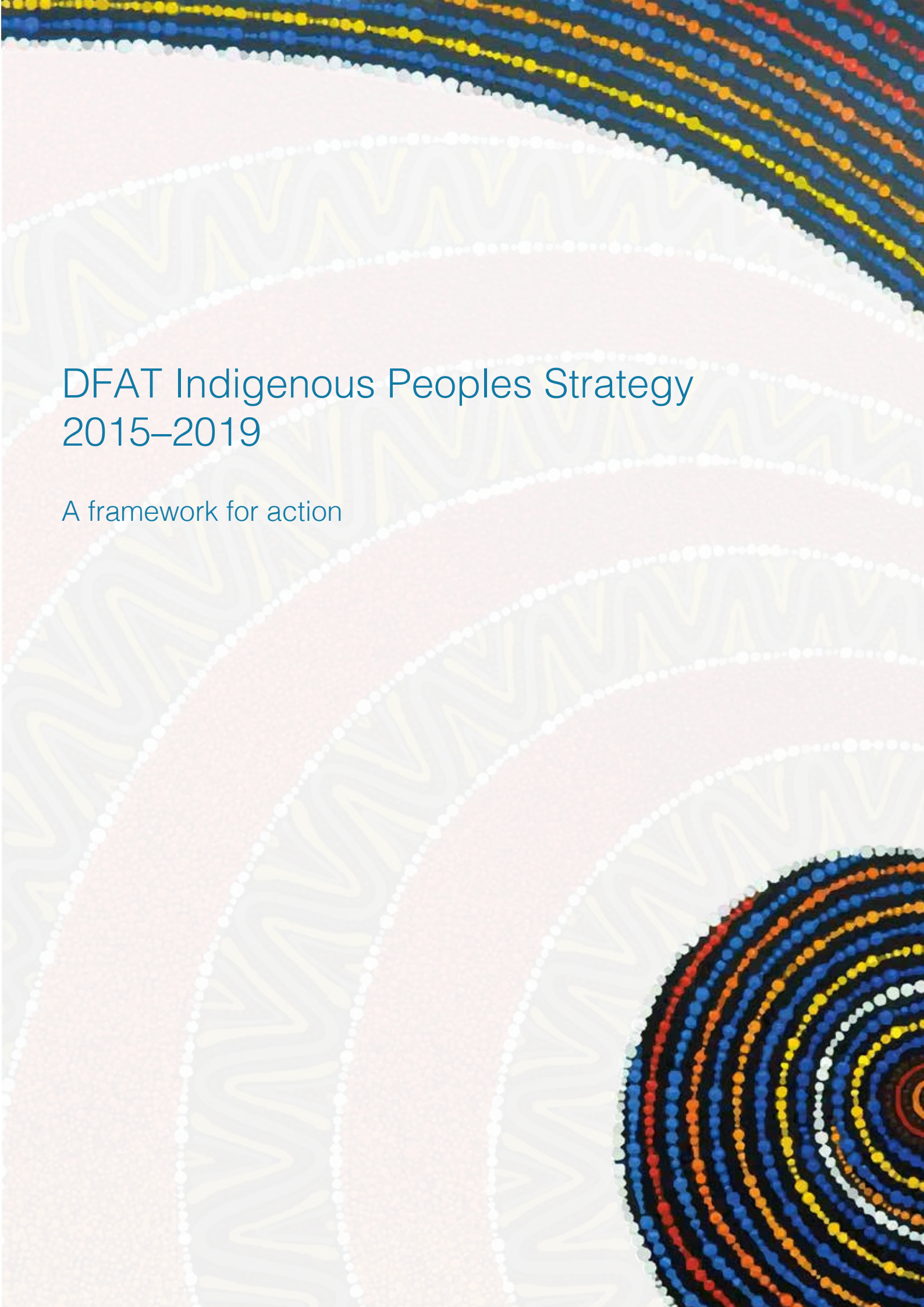
Australian Government  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



# DFAT Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015–2019

A framework for action



The background features a series of concentric, semi-circular bands of dots in various colors (blue, yellow, orange, red, white) that curve from the top right towards the bottom right. Overlaid on these are larger, semi-circular bands with a wavy, undulating pattern in shades of light green and yellow. The overall effect is a vibrant, layered, and organic design.

# DFAT Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015–2019

A framework for action



## Objective

The Australian Government is committed to providing opportunities to assist indigenous peoples —both in Australia and overseas—to overcome social and economic disadvantages.

Indigenous peoples make up only 5 per cent of the global population; however they make up 15 per cent of the world's poor and about one-third of the world's 900 million extremely poor rural people.<sup>1</sup> Australia's first peoples are one of the oldest continuous living cultures on Earth. The contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to modern Australian society is an enormous part of what makes our country and who we are. The Australian Government is committed to better engagement with its Indigenous peoples to ensure policies and programmes improve their lives and opportunities across the country. Globally, Australia continues to be a strong advocate for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples around the world in international matters which affect them.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is committed to ensuring that indigenous peoples benefit from its work. Through a network of 95 overseas posts in 77 countries, and in partnership with government and non-government organisations, business and community groups in Australia and overseas, DFAT leads the Australian Government's efforts to:

- advance Australia's security interests internationally
- open up new markets and create conditions for increased trade and investment to strengthen Australia's economy and to create jobs
- lift living standards and reduce poverty in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond
- shape the regional and international environment and strengthen global cooperation in ways that advance Australia's interests
- project a positive and contemporary image of Australia as a destination for business, investment, tourism and study
- provide high-quality passport and consular services to Australian citizens.

DFAT has developed a five-year Indigenous Peoples Strategy to align its work on issues affecting indigenous peoples across the foreign policy, aid, trade and corporate objectives for the department. The Indigenous Peoples Strategy provides a framework for DFAT to **work with its partners to advance and promote the wellbeing of indigenous peoples around the world, in line with Australia's national interest**. DFAT will use the strategy to manage for positive results and continual improvement in its work on issues affecting indigenous peoples. DFAT will assess and disseminate lessons from its work to contribute towards evidence and debate about issues affecting indigenous peoples, both in Australia and overseas.

The strategy will be guided by four pillars to achieve this vision:

- **DFAT will work with its partners to influence international policy to advance the interests of indigenous peoples in the international community.**
- **DFAT will strive to deliver international programs that improve outcomes for indigenous peoples.**
- **DFAT will encourage Indigenous Australians to apply for DFAT-funded opportunities to engage in and develop people-to-people links with the international community.**
- **DFAT will ensure an inclusive workplace culture across the department.**

DFAT's Indigenous Taskforce is responsible for monitoring the overall implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Strategy. DFAT will conduct a mid-term review of the strategy in 2017 and a final review in 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2010. 2010 state of the world's indigenous peoples, UN, New York.



## Who are indigenous peoples?

There are an estimated **370 million indigenous peoples in some 90 countries** around the world.<sup>1</sup> Anthropologists estimate that indigenous peoples represent as many as **5,000 different cultures**.<sup>2</sup> Indigenous peoples are commonly the minority population in their respective countries but may also be the majority population in some countries.

Given the diversity of the world's indigenous peoples, **there is no internationally accepted or agreed definition of the term 'indigenous'** and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples instead affirmed that indigenous peoples themselves have the right to self-identify.

The international community identifies indigenous peoples by a series of characteristics **that indigenous peoples have in common to varying degrees** around the world. Former UN Special Rapporteur Martinez Cobo developed the most commonly cited characteristics:

*Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.*<sup>3</sup>

The International Labor Organisation uses the following characteristics for the purposes of **ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples**:

*“peoples in independent countries (who) are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.”*

<sup>4</sup>The 2010 State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report explored one of the more complex questions surrounding indigenous peoples, emphasising that the **concept of “indigenous” is not exclusively defined by European colonisation** and that, for example, indigenous peoples in Africa and Asia may be distinguished from other Africans or Asians because of their:

- special attachment to and use of their traditional lands and territories as the basis for their collective physical and survival as peoples
- experience of subjugation, marginalisation, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination because they have different cultures, ways of life or modes of production than the national hegemonic and dominant model.<sup>5</sup>

Recognising the diverse approaches to identifying indigenous peoples at the country level, DFAT will use the terminology that is appropriate to each context:

- **Domestic:** DFAT will use the terms “Indigenous Australian” or “Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples” when referring to the indigenous peoples of Australia.
- **Bilateral:** DFAT will use whatever terms are utilised by its respective partner governments when referring to indigenous peoples in their territories.
- **Global:** DFAT will use the term “indigenous peoples” when collectively referring to indigenous groups around the world.

1 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2010. 2010 state of the world's indigenous peoples, UN, New York.

2 Gray, Andrew, 1991, Between the spice of life and the melting pot: biodiversity conservation and its impact on indigenous peoples, IWGIA Document No. 70, Copenhagen, IWGIA.

3 Cobo, M n.d., Study of the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations, United Nations document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/87, UN, New York.

4 Article 1, ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169, Geneva, 27 June 1989

5 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2010, et al



## The pillars

### Pillar 1: DFAT will work with its partners to influence international policy to advance the interests of indigenous peoples in the international community, in line with Australia's national interest

DFAT represents and advocates Australia's interests to foreign governments, and in international and regional organisations. DFAT will use these relationships to advance the interests of indigenous peoples in the international community.

In developing and implementing international policy that may affect indigenous peoples, DFAT will consult with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), the lead agency on Australia's Indigenous affairs policies and programs. DFAT will take into account the linkages between the domestic and international contexts, and will be alert to the way in which policy makers in other countries are approaching similar policy issues. DFAT will remain active in regional and multilateral fora that address issues affecting indigenous peoples.

#### Key activities and targets by 2020

- DFAT's international policy advocacy will continue to be informed by evidence-based analysis of issues affecting indigenous peoples, both in Australia and overseas.
- Where relevant, DFAT will implement and promote Australian Government policies and strategies on issues affecting indigenous peoples in its international work.
- DFAT will continue working with PM&C to influence relevant international and regional policies, resolutions and negotiations to advance the interests of indigenous peoples.
- DFAT will continue advocating the inclusion of issues relating to indigenous peoples in relevant bilateral, regional and multilateral policy discussions.
- DFAT will continue to raise indigenous issues with UN Member States, where relevant, through the Universal Periodic Review process.
- DFAT will work with its domestic and international partners to advocate for international standards that promote the protection of indigenous people's intellectual property.
- Where relevant, DFAT's policy advocacy will promote economic opportunities for indigenous peoples.
- DFAT will work through domestic and international partners to encourage dialogue between indigenous groups and the extractives industry.

#### Key performance indicators

- Satisfaction of ministers and the executive with the quality and extent of DFAT's influence on international indigenous policies, as measured by ongoing feedback from the Indigenous Taskforce and responses on ministerial submissions.
- Extent to which relevant international policies and strategies include issues affecting indigenous peoples, as assessed by the Indigenous Taskforce.



DFAT Indigenous Australian officer, Emily Pugin at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York with Mike Fordham, Assistant Secretary at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Photo credit: Penny Morton, DFAT

## DFAT's international policy

Australia is a longstanding advocate for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the UN system on issues that directly affect them. DFAT works closely with PM&C to represent Australia at peak multilateral meetings dealing with international indigenous issues. These meetings include:

- the UN General Assembly Third Committee, which deals with social issues, humanitarian affairs and human rights
- the UN Human Rights Council, an intergovernmental body within the UN system that is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe, and addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them
- the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which is mandated to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights
- the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which provides the UN Human Rights Council with thematic advice, directed by the council, in the form of studies and research, on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Led by DFAT and PM&C, Australia played a key role in the inaugural World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) held on 22–23 September 2014 in the margins of the UN General Assembly 'Leaders' Week'. The conference was the first UN high-level plenary meeting to focus exclusively on indigenous issues. It adopted an outcome document by consensus that committed all Member States to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples around the globe. Australia supported the ground-breaking inclusion of indigenous peoples in the preparatory processes of the WCIP and contributed to the negotiation of the outcome document.



## Pillar 2: DFAT will strive to deliver international programs that improve outcomes for indigenous peoples

DFAT administers international programs to achieve the Australian Government's foreign policy, trade, aid and economic diplomacy objectives. DFAT will ensure that wherever relevant, DFAT-funded programs will strive to improve outcomes for indigenous peoples and bring into account international best-practice.

DFAT has released its *Reaching indigenous peoples in the Australian aid program: guidance note* to assist staff and implementing partners to give effect to this Strategy in the aid program.

### Key activities and targets by 2020

- DFAT will establish a 'Community of Practice on Indigenous Issues' to facilitate collaboration and share evidence-based lessons between organisations working on domestic or international issues affecting indigenous peoples.
- Wherever relevant, DFAT programs will strive to improve outcomes for indigenous peoples.
- DFAT will strengthen its internal reporting systems to better disaggregate data on indigenous peoples, particularly in regard to the overseas aid program.
- Where DFAT's overseas aid programs may have an impact on indigenous peoples, DFAT will strive to:
  - consult with indigenous peoples on decisions that affect them;
  - use evidence-based analysis of issues specifically affecting indigenous peoples to inform the concept, design and evaluations of the aid investments;
  - provide meaningful opportunities for indigenous peoples to participate in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programs delivered in indigenous communities.
  - identify and address barriers, on an ongoing basis, that may prevent indigenous peoples from accessing and equally benefiting from the aid program, including indigenous women and girls and indigenous peoples living with disability.
  - establish and monitor measures to mitigate potential adverse impacts of its programs on indigenous peoples.
  - disaggregate data so the impact of Australian aid on indigenous peoples can be readily determined.

### Key performance indicators

- DFAT systems explicitly recognise, manage and report on aid investments that impact on indigenous peoples, as evidenced by changes to the Aid Programming Guide, Investment Design Guidance and AidWorks.
- DFAT has appropriate systems and procedures to avoid and mitigate potential adverse impacts of its aid investments on indigenous peoples, as evidenced by changes to the Aid Programming Guide, Investment Design Guidance and AidWorks.
- Extent to which DFAT is collaborating with domestic counterparts on indigenous issues, as measured by the Community of Practice on Indigenous Issues.





*AVID (Classic Wallabies Exchange) volunteers building keyhole gardens at a Children's Eco Training School in the Greater Acornhoek region, South Africa. Photo: Australian Volunteers International and Michael Galluzzo*

## Volunteering overseas

Indigenous Australian volunteers are underrepresented in the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program. In July 2014, DFAT released the AVID Indigenous Participation Framework, which seeks to address barriers to the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the program. The framework is designed to underpin the work of the AVID program delivery partners: Australian Volunteers International, Scope Global and Australian Red Cross.

Under the framework, the AVID delivery partners are pursuing a range of strategies to increase the participation of Indigenous Australians in the program. These include tailoring volunteer assignments, and modifying recruitment and selection methods to improve access for Indigenous Australians. The strategies will recognise informal or trade skills, and acknowledge the value of Indigenous heritage when working with local communities in developing countries. The delivery partners are also providing additional program and peer support for Indigenous volunteers.

DFAT (through AVID) recently supported the Eidos Institute and the Classic Wallabies Exchange to implement a successful group assignment for six young Indigenous Australians to volunteer in South Africa, based on the framework. The group travelled to South Africa in July 2014, where they undertook a five-week assignment at the Mahlathi School in Limpopo Province, facilitated by the local nongovernment organisation Children's Eco Training. Working with 300 students, the volunteers transformed a barren schoolyard into 29 keyhole gardens to provide students with healthy meals each day.

Since 2012, DFAT has also provided support to Australian Volunteers International to manage the International Indigenous Volunteer Network. The network connects Indigenous peoples with international experience, and seeks to increase Indigenous participation in international volunteering, and promote the contribution made by Australian Indigenous peoples to international communities.



### Pillar 3: DFAT will encourage Indigenous Australians to apply for DFAT-funded opportunities to engage in and develop people-to-people links with the international community

The Australian Government is committed to building people-to-people links and economic cooperation between Australia and the world. DFAT provides a number of programs dedicated to supporting the development of networks and relationships that facilitate knowledge exchange, understanding and cooperation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and between Indigenous Australians and their counterparts in the international community.

DFAT will work with domestic partners to encourage Indigenous Australians to apply for, and participate in, DFAT-funded opportunities to perform, study, volunteer or work overseas. DFAT will disaggregate data to track, monitor and improve participation.

#### Key activities and targets by 2020

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (a public diplomacy program) will continue promoting and exchanging ideas around Indigenous Australian cultures. It will facilitate activities and initiatives that promote a broad range of Indigenous cultural, scientific and sporting activities overseas.
- The Australian Volunteers for International Development program will continue tailoring overseas volunteer assignments, and recruitment and selection methods to improve access for Indigenous Australians. The program will provide additional program and peer support for Indigenous Australian volunteers.
- DFAT will conduct targeted outreach to inform Indigenous Australians and organisations about DFAT-funded opportunities to engage overseas, including:
  - the New Colombo Plan, which offers opportunities for undergraduate students to study in the Indo-Pacific region, and come back to Australia with new perspectives and ideas to add to the productivity and prosperity of Australia
  - the Australia Awards Fellowships program, which offers Australian organisations the opportunity to deepen and broaden existing links with leaders and professionals in developing countries, to advance priority foreign affairs and development issues of shared interest at the national, regional and subregional levels
  - the International Relations Grants Program, which provides competitive grants to foster people-to-people and institutional links—bilaterally and regionally—in support of the Australian Government’s foreign and trade policy goals, and to project a positive image of Australia.

#### Key performance indicators

- Increased number of Indigenous Australians applying for a DFAT-funded opportunity supporting people-to-people links overseas, as assessed by DFAT’s Indigenous Taskforce.
- Increased number of Indigenous Australians participating in a DFAT-funded opportunity supporting people-to-people links overseas, as assessed by the Indigenous Taskforce.
- Feedback from Indigenous Australian participants about the quality of their experiences with a DFAT-funded program.
- Number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander public diplomacy annual activities.
- Quality of DFAT’s outreach to inform Indigenous Australian communities about opportunities to perform, study, work or volunteer overseas, as assessed by the Indigenous Taskforce.



*Fashion by Indigenous Australian designers—Grace Lee, Leticia Shaw and AKIN Collection—is modelled during NAIDOC 2014 celebrations. Photo credit: DFAT*

## Supporting Indigenous Australian artists

DFAT aims to promote and exchange ideas around Indigenous Australian culture through its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, a public diplomacy program.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program supports the development of networks and relationships that facilitate knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian culture. It supports activities and initiatives that promote a broad range of Indigenous cultural, scientific and sporting activities overseas, including:

- touring the flagship Message Stick visual art exhibition to more than 20 countries since 2011; this is the first Australian visual arts exhibition to tour Africa extensively
- providing support for the 60 Indigenous-specific events that occurred at overseas posts from July 2013 to June 2014
- funding delegates from NITV (National Indigenous Television) to attend the World Indigenous Broadcasters Conference in Canada in June 2014
- partnering with the Sydney Opera House to support the Tri Nations Boomerang Concert performance at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Arts Festival in June 2014
- hosting the first Indigenous international cultural visits program; three North American festival producers were guests at the Australian Performing Arts market in February 2014, which showcased the professionalism and creativity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture makers
- providing funding for a range of Indigenous professional and artist residencies, and performing arts (dance, theatre, music) and visual art projects overseas.

The 2014 DFAT Secretary's NAIDOC reception featured three fashion collections by Indigenous designers: Grace Lee, Leticia Shaw and AKIN Collection (see photo above). The collections made their debut at the inaugural Australian Indigenous Fashion Week in Sydney in April 2014. Each collection drew inspiration from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, with feathers, macramé, desert and coastal colour ways, and art incorporated into contemporary fashion design.



## Pillar 4: DFAT will ensure an inclusive workplace culture across the department

DFAT is committed to ensuring that the department has an inclusive workplace culture that is supported by best-practice corporate policies and processes. Recognising the unique position of Indigenous Australians as the first peoples of Australia, and the Australian Government's commitment to reconciliation and closing the gap on Indigenous Australian disadvantage, DFAT will operate targeted strategies and programs to support reconciliation with Indigenous Australians and to support the recruitment, retention and career development of Indigenous Australian employees in the department. DFAT is also committed to sharing knowledge with Indigenous Australian communities through the temporary placement of DFAT staff into Indigenous Australian organisations.

### Key activities and targets by 2020

- DFAT will develop and implement best-practice corporate policies and procedures that respect diversity, pursue excellence and innovation, and remove administrative barriers that may affect the full and equitable participation of Indigenous Australian employees.
- DFAT will continue supporting the Indigenous Employees Network as the department's representative body for Indigenous Australian employees.
- DFAT will continue implementing, monitoring and evaluating its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- develop and implement an Indigenous Employment Strategy, and dedicated employment and career development pathways to specifically support the recruitment, retention and career development of Indigenous Australian employees.
- facilitate opportunities for staff to volunteer on paid time in Indigenous Australian communities, and will support staff who volunteer.
- provide opportunities for its staff to learn more about Indigenous Australian issues.
- DFAT's Indigenous Taskforce and Indigenous Champions will continue:
  - monitoring the development and implementation of Indigenous-related policies, strategies and programs in the department
  - advocating Indigenous issues at senior levels across the department and the Australian Public Service.

### Key performance indicators

- Improvement in staff survey results for Indigenous Australian employees.
- Extent to which DFAT's corporate policies and programs are removing administrative barriers and are inclusive of Indigenous Australian employees, as assessed by the Indigenous Taskforce.
- Number of staff volunteering in Indigenous Australian communities.
- Progress with meeting the APS target for Indigenous employees.
- Progress with implementing the RAP and Indigenous Employment Strategy, as assessed by the Indigenous Taskforce.



*Damien Miller, current Australian Ambassador to Denmark, Norway and Iceland, in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, in 2009.  
Photo credit: DFAT*

## Career opportunities in DFAT

Indigenous Australian employees in DFAT have been helping to shape the department's work around the world, including in Afghanistan, Fiji, Denmark, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, Vietnam and Kenya, and at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. In May 2013, Damien Miller became Australia's first Indigenous Australian to be appointed as a Head of Mission, taking up the post of Australian Ambassador to Denmark, Norway and Iceland.

Indigenous Australians interested in a career in DFAT are encouraged to apply for one of the many job opportunities in the department. These include 'mainstream' recruitment opportunities as well as 'Special Measures' programs which are only available to Indigenous Australian applicants:

- The Indigenous Traineeship Program is a 15-month training and development program that combines practical, on-the-job training with completion of qualifications, which may include a Certificate III or IV, or Diploma in Government Administration. Trainees are employed as ongoing employees and undertake placements in a range of work areas across the department.
- The Indigenous Cadetship Program provides Indigenous undergraduate students with financial assistance during their studies and practical work experience during their university breaks. Cadets are employed as ongoing employees. On successful completion of their studies, cadets are offered a permanent placement in the department.
- The Graduate Program commits the department to offering a number of positions to Indigenous Australian applicants. Graduates undertake a two-year professional development program in Canberra, combining work placements with formal training modules, academic courses and regional travel.



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### **The artist**

Natalie Bateman belongs to the largest Yuin family on the Far South Coast of NSW. Her great great grandmother is Emily Jane Gagoo Walker, her husband is Ted Stewart and their totem is "ambaara" black duck. Natalie loves raising her three children in her tribal homeland Narooma where she connects with her land and nourishes the energy that the land gives.

### **The meaning of the artwork**

Curled in the hand is the earth, it is surrounded by water and sun dot work. Eight limbs branch out from the palm of the hand, representing the Millennium Development Goals, giving it light on the journey and symbolising growth, set back barriers, and achievements. Deep earth reds that fade to orange represent the depth to assist globally. Yellow ochre and browns are the colours of our ancient culture. White dots represent work done by the people, goodness, assistance, aid, universal.

### **Cover images left to right:**

A model in a dress by Indigenous Australian designer, Leticia Shaw. Credit: DFAT

Members of the Wagga Torres Strait Islander Dance Company with DFAT Secretary Peter Varghese, Deputy Secretary Ewen McDonald, Deputy Secretary Gillian Bird, Ngunnawal Elder Jannette Phillips and members of the Indigenous Employees Network. Credit: DFAT.

David Williams performing the didgeridoo for a young audience at the Australian International School Bangkok. Credit Korbua Laorujjinda, DFAT

Myungu Koekaper, a dance group from the Torres Strait in Australia, with Australia's High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, Deborah Stokes, to launch NAIDOC Week at the Australia High Commission in PNG. Credit Lorraine Ponifasio, DFAT

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