

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION STRATEGY

Impact report

April 2025



Government
of South Australia

Department for Education

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners throughout South Australia, and we pay respect to the custodians of the lands on which the initiatives to advance the goals of the Aboriginal Education Strategy are being delivered.

We respect their spiritual relationship with Country and acknowledge that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to those living today.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we acknowledge the cultural authority of Aboriginal people of South Australia and across Australia.

Dedication to children and their families

The Aboriginal Education Strategy is dedicated to the children and young people in our communities, all of whom deserve access to high-quality early childhood and school education, and pathways. Aboriginal children and young people have a right to be raised strong in spirit and identity and connected to culture in education and care environments that provide every opportunity for lifelong learning and wellbeing, reflective of Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing, becoming, belonging and being.



Our Goals



Aboriginal children develop foundations for success in the early years



Aboriginal children and young people excel at school



Aboriginal young people are on pathways to success



Our Enablers



Aboriginal Voice Framework

Aboriginal knowledge, perspectives and expertise inform policy and projects system-wide.



Aboriginal Funding Model

Funding arrangements for schools for Aboriginal children and young people are predictable and flexible, supporting improved learning outcomes.



Aboriginal Workforce Plan

An improved level of cultural awareness, understanding and respect across our workforce and within our workplaces; Aboriginal employees feel supported to build their careers and to seek leadership opportunities.



Expert Advisory Panel (under review)

Consultation was undertaken during early 2024 by Lowitja Institute to inform approaches to strengthening Aboriginal governance and oversight of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation.

During 2025, the department is consulting with Aboriginal staff to inform an approach to Aboriginal governance and voice into strategic direction setting.



"It's just a good opportunity for other staff in the department who haven't had that level of policy experience to be able to get involved in this kind of thing, but also just to really emphasise that voice of Aboriginal people, and that we are important and that we are the oldest continuous living culture in the world and we and that we really need to be respected in terms of what we bring to the table."

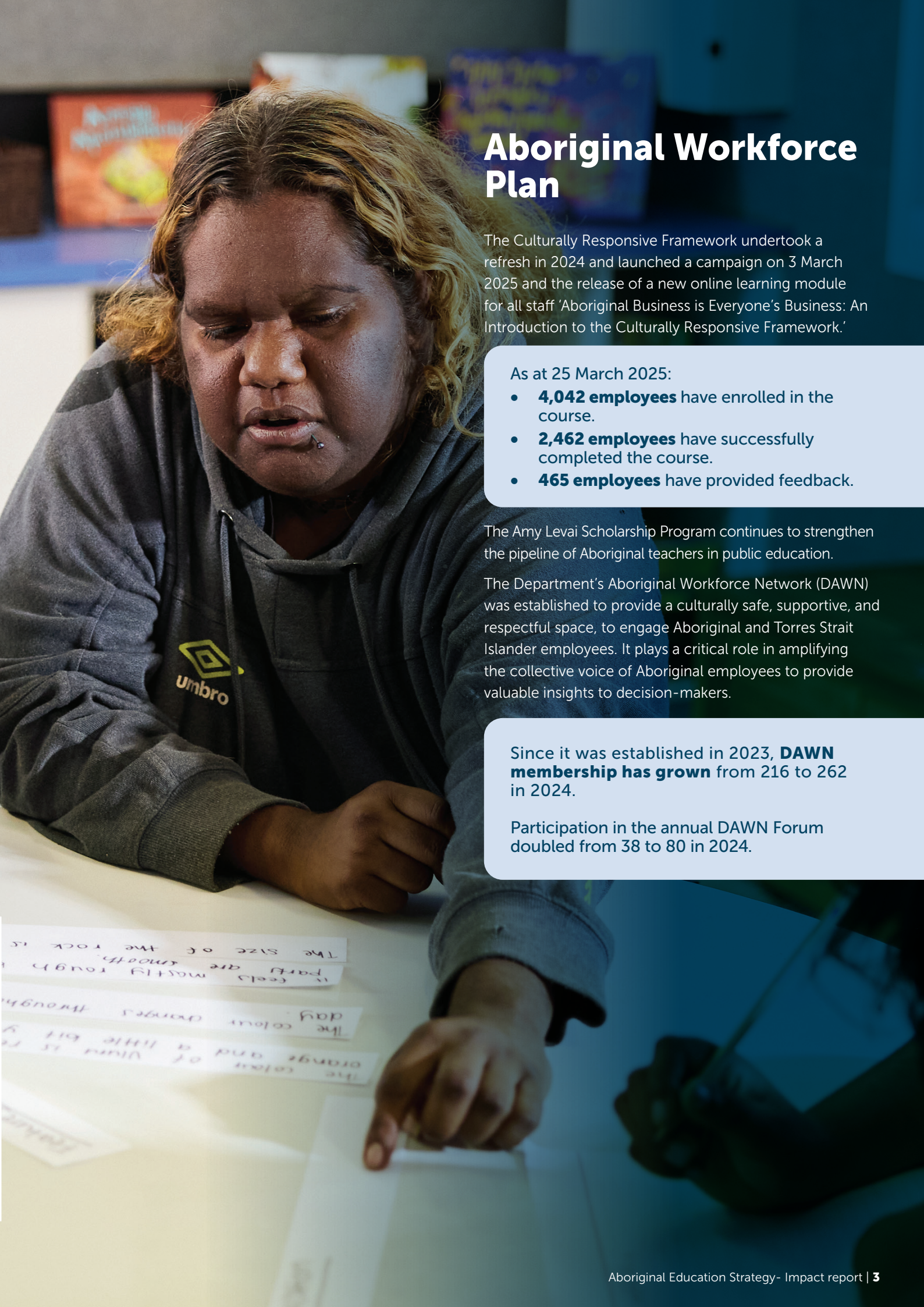
Aboriginal Voice Registrant

"We see the voice framework and the register as being a really, a gift, if you like, and a really fabulous resource that will enhance the work that we do to ensure that we have the voice, representative of, Aboriginal people to help form, shape, refine, change, the programs and the policies that we own and that we deliver."

Policy Project Owner



Aboriginal Voice Framework training, co-developed and delivered by the Department for Education with Tauondi Aboriginal College (2025)



Aboriginal Workforce Plan

The Culturally Responsive Framework undertook a refresh in 2024 and launched a campaign on 3 March 2025 and the release of a new online learning module for all staff 'Aboriginal Business is Everyone's Business: An Introduction to the Culturally Responsive Framework.'

As at 25 March 2025:

- **4,042 employees** have enrolled in the course.
- **2,462 employees** have successfully completed the course.
- **465 employees** have provided feedback.

The Amy Levai Scholarship Program continues to strengthen the pipeline of Aboriginal teachers in public education.

The Department's Aboriginal Workforce Network (DAWN) was established to provide a culturally safe, supportive, and respectful space, to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. It plays a critical role in amplifying the collective voice of Aboriginal employees to provide valuable insights to decision-makers.

Since it was established in 2023, **DAWN membership has grown** from 216 to 262 in 2024.

Participation in the annual DAWN Forum doubled from 38 to 80 in 2024.



Goal 1

Aboriginal children develop foundations for success in the early years



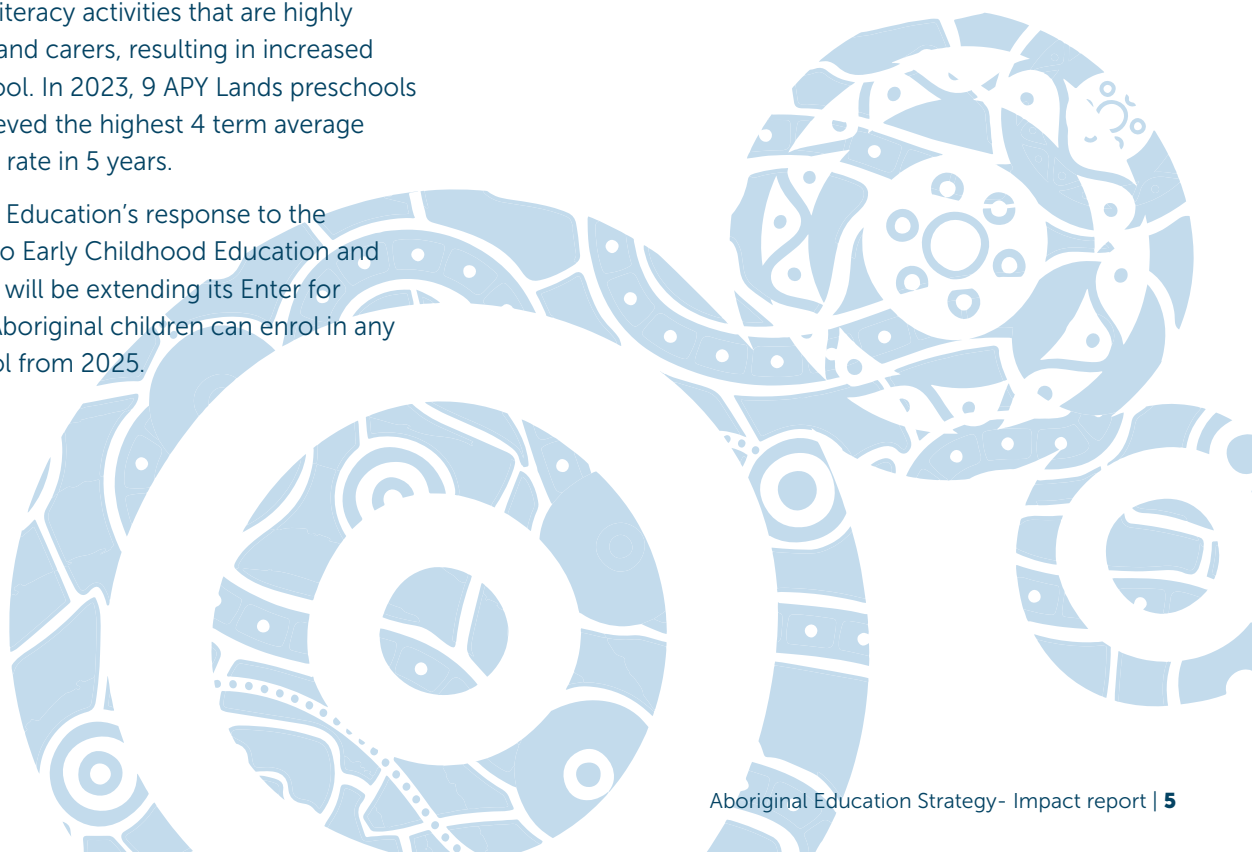
Bus grants to 6 Aboriginal focused preschools continues to support improved attendance and participation for Aboriginal children, aligned to recommendation 20 of the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care. For some sites, the service has also supported the preschool to undertake transition visits to the local school and run a bush kindy program.

1. Christie Downs Kindergarten
2. Flinders Children's Centre
3. Kalaya Children's Centre
4. Kurna Plains Children's Centre
5. Port Lincoln Children's Centre
6. Tinyeri Children's Centre.

Since 2022, an early years engagement officer has worked on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands delivering arts/literacy activities that are highly engaging for families and carers, resulting in increased attendance at preschool. In 2023, 9 APY Lands preschools have collectively achieved the highest 4 term average preschool attendance rate in 5 years.

In the Department for Education's response to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, the Department will be extending its Enter for Success Strategy, so Aboriginal children can enrol in any government preschool from 2025.

Between 2018 and 2023, participation of Aboriginal children in at least 600 hours of preschool in the year before school has grown by 8%.



Goal 2

Aboriginal children and young people excel at school

During 2024, the Standard Australian English oral language and writing proficiency of 57 Anangu students from 5 Anangu schools increased by 3 levels, the equivalent of 3-years growth.

This growth is directly related to the strong commitment of their schools and educators to Professional Learning Communities and coaching through the EAL/D Hub.

Feedback from a participant of a Professional Learning Community for the EAL/D Hub

"Working together and gaining a deeper understanding of our Aboriginal English as an Additional Language or Dialect learners and families. Connection and trust is key."

Teacher – Port Lincoln partnership 2025

"Who would have thought that our culture is now embedded in student learning, this is innovation, connecting old ways into new ways of learning".

Teacher – Port Lincoln partnership 2025

Since June 2024:

- The Priority Learners Team continues to provide tailored support to focus LETs and schools to improve Aboriginal learner achievement.
 - Working with 23 schools (up from 10 in June 2024) and 5 Aboriginal learner-focused networks, collectively enrolling almost 36% of Aboriginal learners in South Australian public schools.
 - Working with 14 schools (up from 10 in June 2024) and 4 networks comprising 4 portfolios, reaching 29.3% of Aboriginal learners in South Australian public schools.
 - Examples of more effective school-wide structures, systems, policies and procedures to support Aboriginal learner achievement are emerging, including the introduction of specific support for early, middle and secondary Aboriginal students in a focus school, and a review of policies by another to ensure they are culturally responsive.
 - There is also evidence of increased engagement with Aboriginal families in focus schools, with Aboriginal family representation on a governing council, and a 'transition to school' event for Aboriginal families of commencing Reception students.
- Through the EAL/D Hub initiative, educators in Focus Schools continue to participate in professional learning to develop their capabilities in culturally responsive, explicit teaching of Standard Australian English for Aboriginal learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EALD).
 - 10 coaches continue working with 21 schools statewide, including 9 Anangu schools.
 - Findings from a 2024 evaluation indicate an increase in teacher capability as described in the Capability Framework-Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners.



- Since June 2024, the number of active collaborations with Aboriginal language organisations and owners has grown from 6 to 10, supported by \$291,000 in grant funding.
- For 2025, \$907,000 has been distributed to schools to support Aboriginal learners in years R to 6 to learn their or another Aboriginal language; \$245,000 distributed to schools to support Aboriginal languages programs for all students in years R to 12.
 - Since 2019, the number of schools with an Aboriginal languages program has grown from 46 to 63 in 2025.
 - Since 2019, the number of Aboriginal languages programs in schools has grown from 48 to 74 in 2025.
- Anangu Educators continue to access Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara teaching materials and resources and to access professional learning in the WARU synthetic phonics program. to support their work in delivering a culturally affirming and locally meaningful education for their children.
- With funding support from the Department for Education, the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Education Committee has established an Anangu Resource Development Unit, which has produced 17 teaching and learning resources in first languages for Anangu.
- Teaching and learning resources across multiple learning areas have been developed with Aboriginal Communities, supporting growth in educator confidence in delivering Aboriginal contexts in the curriculum.
 - Feedback from trial schools indicates that students are highly engaged in learning about Aboriginal contexts, and form a deeper understanding of key concepts.

A Kurna curriculum Scope and Sequence, the first of its kind in Australia, has been in development through a partnership between Kurna language owners and the Department for Education over 4 years.

In November 2024, the resource was soft launched on Country by Kurna Warra Karrpanthi Aboriginal Corporation and Ngarrpadlarna Mila Aboriginal Corporation, for pilot implementation during 2025 and 2026.

The pilot will be led by Kurna language owners in partnership with the department, and is supported through the Commonwealth Department of Education's First Nations Languages Education Program.

"The WARU resources and online workshops have supported our school in developing a first language program... It has enhanced Anangu voice within our school which has led to the development of the "Patilpa Room" a classroom space dedicated to Anangu Culture and Language..."

This has been a wonderful shift in culture, and our Anangu students now have Anangu teachers up the front of the class delivering the lessons."

Principal, Anangu School June 24

Goal 3

Aboriginal children and young people are on pathways to success



During 2024, there continued to be a high uptake of Aboriginal Pathways programs by Aboriginal students across regional and metropolitan schools.

These SACE aligned programs support, engage and provide secondary Aboriginal learners with the opportunities in career exploration, discovery and immersion to inform meaningful and successful pathways into further education, employment and training post-secondary education. High expectations of engagement and academic achievement are embedded in all programs underpinned by cultural safety and responsiveness whereby Aboriginal culture, identity, community, connection and leadership are fundamental to the success of the programs.

In 2024, 1264 students participated in South Australian Aboriginal Secondary Training Academy Programs and 632 in Workabout.

SAASTA expanded from 22 Academies in 2023, to 26 Academies in 2024.

"As someone who grew up with little to no knowledge about my culture, SAASTA has given me the opportunity to explore this and learn new things about my family. I strongly believe that if it weren't for the SAASTA program, I would not be on the journey to complete my SACE. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this extraordinary program."

Female Year 12 student Port Pirie High School.

'Collaborating with the Workabout Centre has been a valuable experience for me as an Indigenous student. It has provided me with numerous opportunities, including completing a first aid course and obtaining my White Card. Throughout my high school years, the program has been instrumental part of my education in developing my leadership and confidence, enabling me to achieve my academic goals. Their continuous support has been a significant advantage in overcoming the barriers that I have faced in accessing courses and programs.'

Denzel James Year 12 student at the Avenues College in 2024. Denzel pursued a pathway into university to study law.



Workabout Program supported 12 students from Playford International College and Kurna Plains School to participate in the First Nations Roads2Civil Program, delivered by Civil Train SA, equipping them with essential skills for civil construction apprenticeships.



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