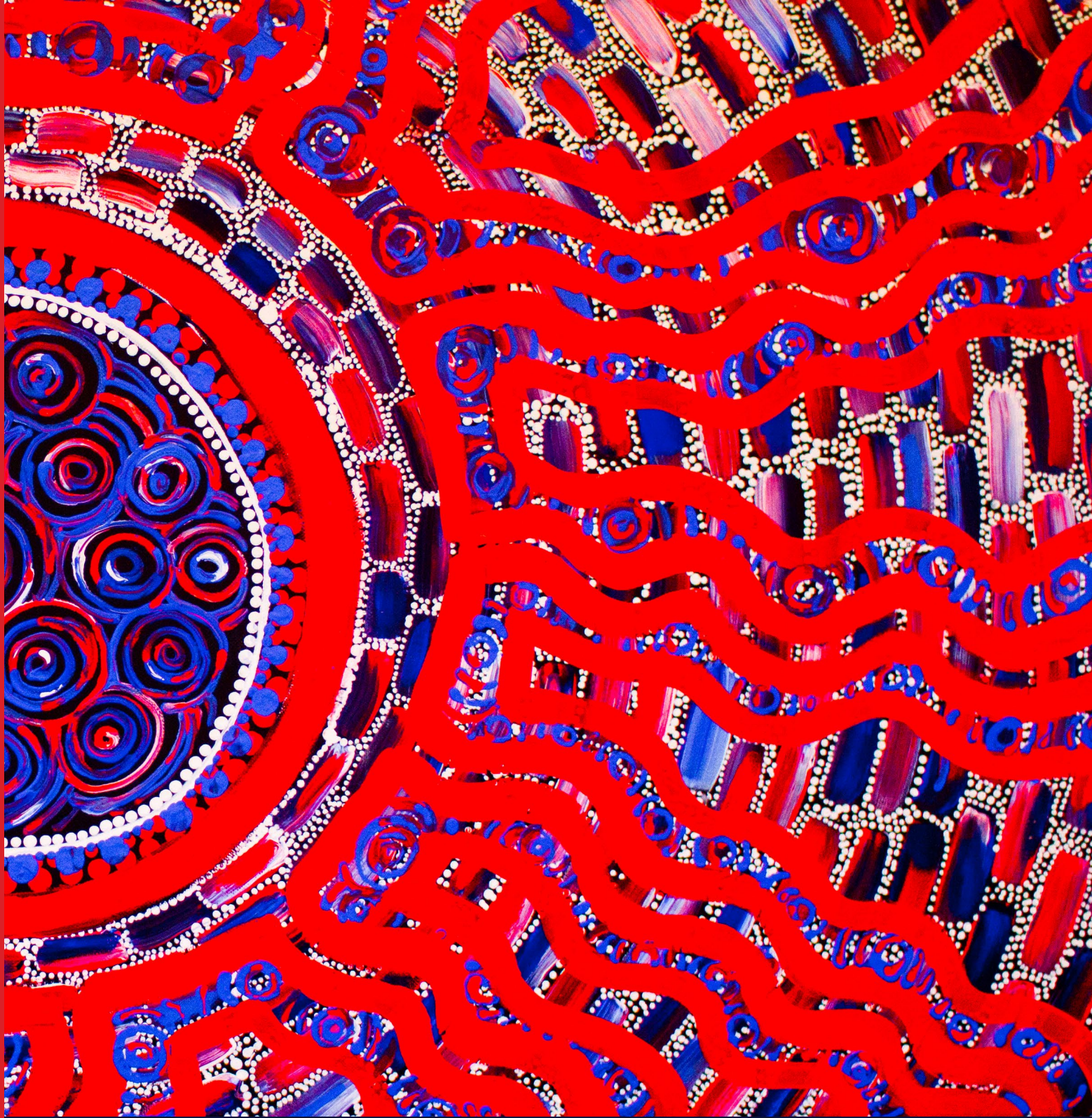




GARI YALA 2

SPEAK THE TRUTH

Synopsis report



Business
School



Centre for
Indigenous People
and Work

proud
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foundation

Centring the Work Experiences of Aboriginal and/
or Torres Strait Islander Australians in 2025-2026



Report embargoed until 11 March 2026

An electronic copy of this Synopsis Report and the Full Report can be read on the Centre for Indigenous People and Work (CIPW) website.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kirsten Gray is a Yuwalaraay/Muruwari woman living on Dharawal country and raising three children. Her artworks are a contemporary and vibrant reflection of her passion for her Aboriginal culture.

'Speaking truth' explores the nature and extent of the contributions made by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in this land for millennia. Long before the birth of the Australian nation, our people were already making significant contributions to their families and communities. It was the contributions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples upon the arrival of the British, which helped transform our country into what it is today. Much of this labour was often unpaid, unrecognised and undertaken in discriminatory and harsh conditions. Nonetheless, it is these ongoing contributions of our people which keep each other, our communities and this country, strong.

ABOUT CIPW

The Centre for Indigenous People and Work (CIPW) is a self-determined, joint initiative of the [UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research](#) and the [UTS Business School](#) that aims to address systemic inequities experienced by Indigenous Australians in the labour and employment markets, including racism, underemployment, and exclusion from leadership positions.

The Centre seeks to reclaim the Indigenous employment narrative through rigorous, industry-based Indigenous-led research, consulting, and partnerships with other stakeholders in the employment community, focusing on policy formulation, law reform and workplace-based solutions.

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Jumbunna
Institute for Indigenous
Education and Research

The UTS Jumbunna Institute was proud to support the development and establishment of the Centre for Indigenous People and Work (CIPW) in partnership with the UTS Business School in 2025, addressing the fundamental, glaring gap – the existence of an ‘Indigenous employment’ sector not informed by Indigenous insight, knowledge, perspectives or experiences. How we work matters. This key area for our people is one that deeply deserves an Indigenous narrative, and that’s precisely why the CIPW and its work are so vital.

The CIPW embeds the underlying ethos of the Jumbunna Institute – for research of Indigenous people to be Indigenous-led and proudly self-determined.



**Centre for
Indigenous People
and Work**

Budyeri kameru

The impact of the first Gari Yala 2020 report was profound. Since its release, we have seen remuneration for cultural load introduced in different workplaces and industries, Indigenous-led survey work embedded in numerous organisations, and Indigenous appointments made to roles that work directly with Indigenous people. These shifts meant we approached this second iteration with great anticipation.

Since Gari Yala 2020, we have also launched the Centre for Indigenous People and Work. Our ambition – that Indigenous people should own the “Indigenous employment” narrative – has increasingly been recognised across the employment community as essential, even if it is not yet fully realised.

Gari Yala remains the only Indigenous-led research in the employment space that uses Indigenous methodologies and is conducted by Indigenous people. We are indebted to the Jumbunna Research leadership – Professor Lindon Coombes and Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt – for their continued advocacy for Indigenous-led research. We are equally grateful to the Gari Yala Expert Panel. We simply couldn’t do Gari Yala without them. It remains a baffling anomaly that employment research is still being conducted without Indigenous standpoint at its core. We appreciate the support of all of these mob who enable this work.

While our original intent was to survey Indigenous employees about the human resource industry’s employee lifecycle, our first Expert Panel redirected us to what truly required attention: the pervasive impact of racism in all its forms – individual, systemic, overt, appearance-based, and more. Our second Expert Panel affirmed this focus. We wish this wasn’t necessary. We also recognise the troubling, growing tendency to “victim-blame” in discussions about racism, including the claim that talking about racism creates it.



NAB Foundation is a proud supporter of the second Gari Yala Report, working in partnership with the UTS Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research and, more recently, the Centre for Indigenous People and Work. NAB supported the first landmark report, published in 2020.

This research aligns with NAB and NAB Foundation’s focus on First Nations economic empowerment. We are pleased to back First Nations knowledge and lived experience to build our understanding of how Australian workplaces shape economic participation, opportunity and security.

Gari Yala actualises this leadership, re-narrating, through a First Nations lens, the experiences of Indigenous people and working to create policies, law reform and workplace change. By listening to Indigenous people, governments and employers can tailor employment programs and conditions to address issues that have benefits for employees and organisations alike.

I’d like to thank the CIPW for their vision in conceptualising this project and all the Indigenous Expert Panel members who gave their time to this project.

Professor Lindon Coombes

Director

**UTS Jumbunna Institute for
Indigenous Education and Research**

These are challenging times for decency, yet we remain guided by our Expert Panel – those who are “on the tools” – and by the workplace experiences Indigenous people are living right now.

Addressing these realities is essential if we are to improve Indigenous workplace experiences and progress the big issues – leadership development, quality work, pay equity, the undervaluation of cultural skills in wage fixing and setting and remuneration and benefit processes, and more.

But the challenge is stark. At the current rate of improvement between the two Gari Yala surveys, we estimate it could take 118 years for Indigenous people to experience workplaces free of racial slurs. This is not only unacceptable – it poses a significant problem for the Australian economy.

We hope this work serves as a catalyst for meaningful solutions.

I am so grateful to Joshua Gilbert, Professor Jane O’Leary and Dr Olivia Evans for their work here, and many thanks to Angela Daley. I also thank Professor Lindon Coombes, Professor Sara Denize and Professor Carl Rhodes for their ongoing support. And of course, many thanks to the NAB Foundation, Kate Betts, Sam Webster and Dino White who are a pleasure to work and collaborate with.

Professor Nareen Young

Associate Dean (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement)

UTS Business School

Professor Indigenous Policy (Indigenous Workforce Diversity)

Director, UTS Centre for Indigenous People and Work

UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

Through truth-telling and evidence, Gari Yala presents a clear case for the importance and opportunity for more culturally intelligent workplaces – with clear, sustainable pathways to leadership, employment and progression. It sets the standard for organisations like NAB.

Sarah White

NAB Group Executive, People and Culture



Acknowledgement of Country

The authors and partners of this report wish to acknowledge the Elders and Traditional Owners of the lands and Nations across Australia and pay our respect to Elders past and present. We recognise that all Elders and mobs in locations across Australia have their own experiences with 'work'. We hope this report ensures mob keep telling our own stories, and that they are heard. *Gari Yala*, speak the truth.

Our thanks

We thank and acknowledge the project's Expert Panel, made up of prominent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. The project has benefited immensely from panellists generously sharing their expertise and insights.

Name	Title/Organisation
Jack Beeton	Executive Director, Literacy for Life Foundation
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Adrian Cheatham	Senior RAP Program Manager, Reconciliation Australia
Matt Roberts Clifton	Senior Consultant, Customer Service Strategy and Planning, National Australia Bank Limited
Dr Lisa Conway	Chair, Australian Public Service Indigenous SES Network
Kiera Donnelly	Indigenous Consultant, Kiera Donnelly
Trent Donovan-Wallace	Head of First Nations Strategy, Ashurst
Vanessa Edwige	Chair, Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association
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Jayde Ward	Director, Philanthropic Services, JB Were
Lara Watson	Indigenous Officer, Australian Council of Trade Unions
Jen Mar Young	Executive Director, Community Partnerships, Aboriginal Affairs NSW

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WHY THIS PROJECT?

Gari Yala (Speak the Truth) remains Australia's only national survey on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' workplace experiences done by mob, for mob.



Centring the workplace experiences of Indigenous Australians

When it was first conducted in 2020 it dragged the National conversation forward, ensuring Indigenous voices were finally starting to be centred in conversations about their workplace experiences. For decades, conversations about Indigenous employment had been driven by research mostly narrated by non-Indigenous people, shaped by inaccurate assumptions and deficit framing, which presented 'Indigenous employment' as low level, low skilled work.

The first *Gari Yala* report changed that – and in so doing provided the truth needed to spark change. By asking Indigenous workers directly, and by ensuring Indigenous leadership, governance, and interpretation at every stage, the 2020 survey reshaped the national employment narrative. It offered, for the first time, a large-scale picture of what Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples were actually experiencing in workplaces across the country. Its findings have since informed organisational policies, reconciliation commitments, and sector-wide diversity and inclusion practice.

Six years on, a follow-up is essential. 'Indigenous employment' continues to be a growing and vital area of focus, yet the National conversation is still largely informed by non-Indigenous data and narratives, deficit statistics, and external, non-Indigenous judgments about what Indigenous workers 'need.'

This *Gari Yala 2* report provides the updated evidence needed to ensure that the employment narrative going forward is informed, shaped, and led by Indigenous people themselves. We remain incredibly grateful for the 1,033 Indigenous people who shared their truth in the 2020 report, and the 1,158 who shared their current truths in 2025.

WHAT WE DID

Speaking the truth: Insights from Indigenous workers

We created *Gari Yala* – which means ‘speak the truth’ in Wiradjuri language – to gain a firsthand understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers’ experiences. The project is Indigenous led and has again been overseen by an Expert Panel of distinguished Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academics and employment practitioners.

The *Gari Yala 2* survey remains an important step in regularly measuring Indigenous people’s real experiences of work from across the country. The survey, currently in its second wave, seeks to:

- be a voice for the diversity of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers, and
- capture the state of play when it comes to workplace cultural safety, inclusion, exclusion, and racism.

To do this, we drew on the insights and experiences of 1,158 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait workers based in Australia who completed the survey between 14 April and 1 June 2025. Their insights, experiences, and recommendations for organisational action are presented in this Synopsis Report. More detailed information on findings and methodology is available in the Full Report.

A call to action

We hope *Gari Yala 2* findings act as a powerful call to action for Australian organisations to create space for truth-telling, listen deeply and act meaningfully on insights shared by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees.

For governments, *Gari Yala 2* findings underscore the need for further policy and legislative action. There is a clear need for a dedicated Racism@Work Inquiry and greater harmonisation of laws that recognise and support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people’s experiences and viewpoints.

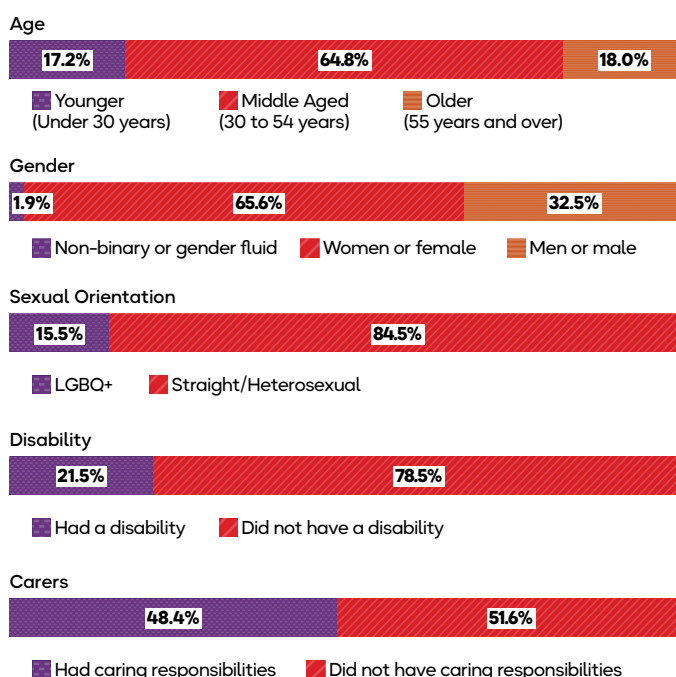
The Centre for Indigenous People and Work can be your partner in action, supporting workplace truth-telling through our deep experience and knowledge of our communities and of employment and workplace dynamics, our Indigenous employment research yarning and other methodologies, and our strategy creation and execution.

Diversity of Indigenous respondents

In this report, we share the views of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees who responded to the *Gari Yala* survey. The findings do not purport to represent the experiences of all Indigenous workers, rather, the experiences of those who participated in the survey. The distribution of respondents is detailed in the images below.



Our sample also reflected diversity in other demographics as outlined in the image below.



SOME IMPORTANT BACKGROUND



Who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in contemporary Australia?

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples constitute 3.8% of Australia's total population,¹ and are a young rapidly growing population. In two decades, we could represent between 4% and 7% of Australia's population, with the proportion of prime working age people (20-54 years) increasing by 57% over that time.²

Today, 57% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (aged 15 to 65) have secured employment,³ and there is growing Indigenous middle class who are 'largely overlooked.'⁴ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people with tertiary qualifications enjoy employment rates of up to 94%,⁵ and our employment rates are higher than non-Indigenous tertiary qualified people.⁶ With growth in the number of Indigenous professionals, it is even more critical that Indigenous perspectives are heard and respected within the context of work and employment participation at all levels.

For over 60,000 years before colonisation in 1788, Indigenous Australians had our own governance systems and community based understandings of 'work.' After proclaiming ownership,⁷ the British used Indigenous labour to build colonial infrastructure, often with limited acknowledgement and through indentured arrangements.⁸ This history continues to inform workplace relationships and attitudes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees, and Indigenous people still experience deep injustices in Australia today.⁹



Our standpoint

This report has been influenced by Indigenous Standpoint Theory,¹⁰ which recognises that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people have essential insights that are often missing in mainstream non-Indigenous organisational thinking. It recognises that any knowledge created about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people is incomplete unless that knowledge creation is led by them and incorporates their experiences.¹¹

In this report, we have therefore deliberately prioritised the perspectives of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers, because they know and understand their experiences of work in ways non-Indigenous people simply cannot. The project was designed and informed by Indigenous academics and practitioners, placing Indigenous understanding and priorities at the forefront of the research and reporting. We also sought to ensure that Indigenous values shaped the work.



A note on language

Indigenous. In this report, we use the terms ‘Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples’ and ‘Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people’ (where the ‘and/or’ recognises that some individuals belong to both groups) interchangeably with ‘Indigenous’ to refer to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. However, we recognise that this approach is not without contention. First, these terms do not reflect the diversity of Indigenous Australians, and it is important to remember that many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people prefer to be known by their specific group or clan names, and some by ‘First Nations’. Second, we acknowledge that some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people do not like being referred to as Indigenous, as it is frequently used as a catch-all category, particularly in government and institutional contexts, that risks flattening or erasing the significant diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Nations, and lived experiences. We have therefore, wherever possible, referred to both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people but, where appropriate and sometimes for brevity, we have used ‘Indigenous’. We apologise if this causes any offense – this is not our intention.

Respondents. Where the report refers to ‘respondents’ it is referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents only.

Community. Where the report refers to ‘community’ it is referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.

Racism. This report recognises that for many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, racism at work is endemic. It manifests in systemic and interpersonal ways and has a real and dramatic impact on Indigenous employees. For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people reading this report, the experiences relayed by our respondents may be distressing. However, we felt that this behaviour needed to be named and so we made a conscious choice to call out racism where we heard it from our respondents.



A note on context

This is the second time we have conducted the *Gari Yala* survey. The 2020 survey and research report called on organisations to do more and in doing so accelerated the public narrative. We know from feedback that *Gari Yala* has had an enormous positive impact across the employment community including in a diverse range of Australian workplaces.

In *Gari Yala 2*, we collected survey responses from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers between April and June 2025. Survey responses were influenced not just by the original *Gari Yala* report but also by events occurring in the broader socio-political environment including for example the Voice to Parliament Referendum (October 2023), the United States federal election (November 2024), and the Australian federal election (May 2025).

As with all societal discussions, debates, and movements, these reach into the workplace and influence people’s experiences – both good and bad.

1. SHARING ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER IDENTITY AT WORK

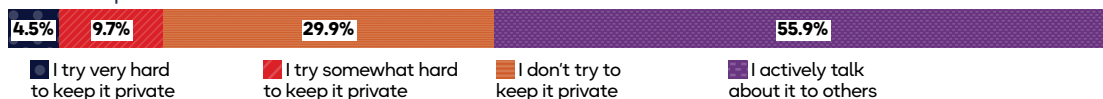
We asked 1,158 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers about their experiences sharing their Indigenous background at work. In all, 86% stated it was important for them to share their identity at work, and the same amount shared their identity at work – 56% actively talked about their identity at work, while 30% did not try to keep it private.

Identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander at work matters

It is important to me to identify as an Indigenous person in the workplace



To what extent do you share your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background with other people in your current/most recent workplace?



The pride and peril of sharing identity at work

"I continue to share because I believe it's the right thing to do. Representation matters and staying visible helps create space for truth, respect and better understanding even when it's uncomfortable."

While many respondents shared their identity out of a deep sense of pride, responsibility, and commitment to organisational change, doing so often brought racial harms – for example, having their identity questioned or challenged, exposure to multiple forms of workplace racism, questioning of competence, lost career opportunities, and rapid increases in unpaid, emotionally demanding work.

"I do not feel safe disclosing I'm Aboriginal due to racism and prejudice. It's about survival."

"The mistreatment [since sharing my identity] has led to depression and mental breakdown and suicidal thoughts."

2. HOW CULTURALLY SAFE ARE AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES?

What is 'cultural safety'?

Cultural safety means Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees can express, practice, and maintain their cultural identity at work without fear of ridicule, discrimination, or marginalisation.

The safety gap

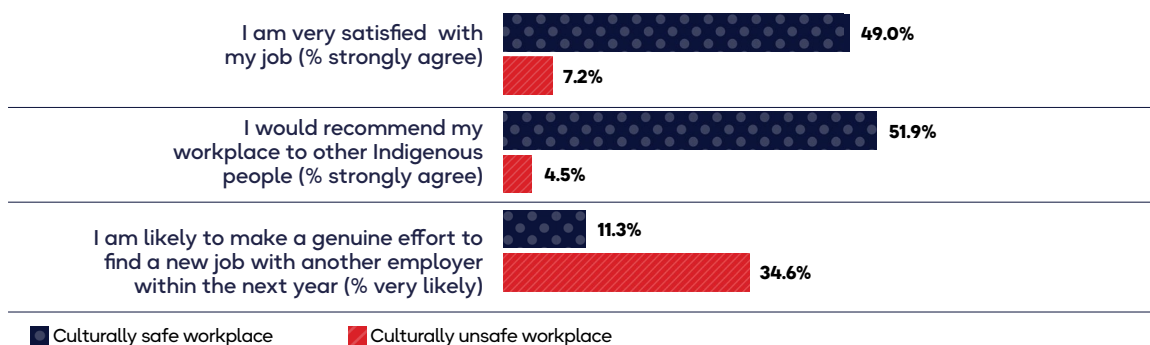
While 86% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees told us it was important for them to identify as an Indigenous person at work, only 40% reported that their workplaces were culturally safe – the majority of respondents reported being either in a culturally unsafe (25%) or only a moderately culturally safe workplace (35%). Evidently, although cultural identity is deeply important to many employees, most are not working in environments where they can express, practise, and maintain that identity without fear of ridicule, discrimination, or marginalisation.

% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers in culturally safe workplaces



Lack of cultural safety has direct, detrimental impacts – we found Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees in culturally unsafe workplace environments are:

- **7 times less likely to be very satisfied with their job** (7% strongly agreed) compared to those in culturally safe workplaces (49%),
- **10 times less likely to recommend their workplace** to other Indigenous people (5% strongly agreed) compared to those in culturally safe workplaces (52%), and
- **3 times more likely to be looking for a new employer** in the next year (35% very likely) compared to those in culturally safe workplaces (11%).



3. WHAT IS THE STATE OF RACISM FOR INDIGENOUS WORKERS?

What is racism?

Racism refers to the unfair treatment, exclusion, or disadvantage experienced by individuals or groups based on their race, ethnicity, or cultural background. As explained in the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework:

- racism can be **interpersonal** (e.g. abuse, harassment, humiliation, exclusion, discriminatory comments) and/or **systemic** (e.g. organisational policies, rules, or practices disadvantage certain racial groups, often unintentionally), and
- racism continues because power and influence are not shared equally across society.

For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, racism is deeply rooted in the legacy of colonisation and continues to affect everyday life, including experiences at work.

This can manifest as anti-Indigenous agendas and sentiment including activities like spreading misinformation and disinformation which intentionally divides and diminishes Indigenous voices.

RACISM IS A RECURRING REALITY

We found that for the majority of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, racism was not an isolated or occasional experience but a recurring feature of their working lives. In all, 58% experienced some form of racism at an average frequency of very often to sometimes.¹²

Racism manifested in different ways, but some of the more common experiences were:

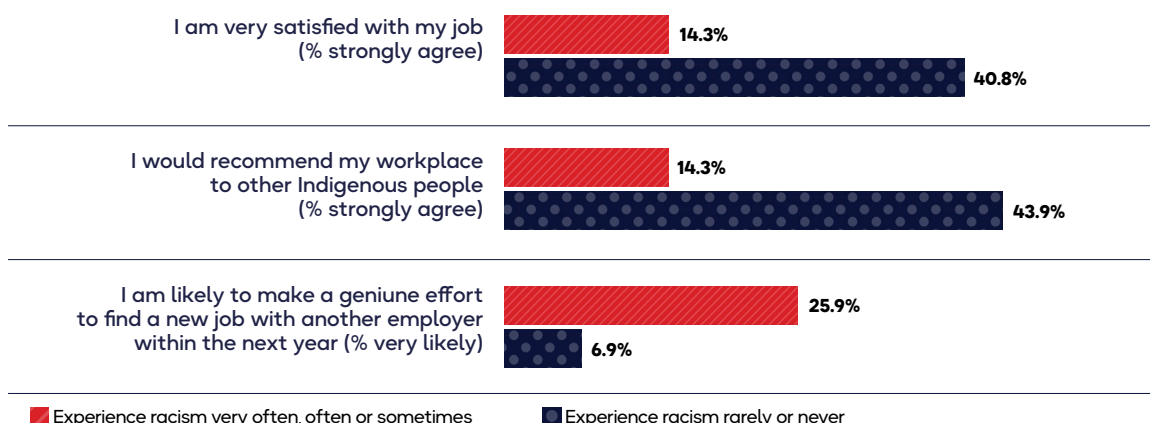
- **appearance racism** (53% received comments about how they look or should look as an Indigenous person very often, often, or sometimes),
- **inappropriate race-based comments and assumptions** (53% reported that non-Indigenous employees made inappropriate comments or assumptions about Indigenous peoples very often, often, or sometimes),
- **not being treated seriously** (41% reported that they felt ignored or not taken seriously by their boss very often, often, or sometimes), and
- **racial slurs and jokes** (40% reported hearing racial or ethnic slurs or jokes about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people at work very often, often, or sometimes).

We also found that racism in the workplace comes from across the organisation including peers, supervisors, clients, and leadership alike – though it was most often from co-workers in other teams (22%) and co-workers in their own team (19%).

RACISM IS LINKED TO LOWER JOB SATISFACTION AND HIGHER INTENTION TO LEAVE

We found that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who experienced racism very often, often, or sometimes were:

- **3 times less likely to be very satisfied with their job (14% strongly agreed)** than those who experienced racism never or only rarely (41%),
- **3 times less likely to recommend their workplace (14% strongly agreed)** than those who experienced racism never or only rarely (44%), and
- **3 times more likely to leave their organisation (26% very likely)** in the next year, compared to those who had never or rarely experienced racism (7%).



4. WHAT ARE ORGANISATIONS DOING TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS RACISM AT WORK?

Racism isn't rare – but anti-racism action is

Most organisations are unprepared to prevent or respond to racism at work.

Nearly two thirds of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees (63%) say their workplace provides no anti-discrimination training that addresses racism towards Indigenous peoples.

Even more concerning, 69% said their workplace does not have a racism complaint procedure.

Only one in five (21%) respondents worked in organisations that had **both** a racism complaint procedure **and** anti-discrimination compliance training that addressed racism experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

THESE GAPS MATTER

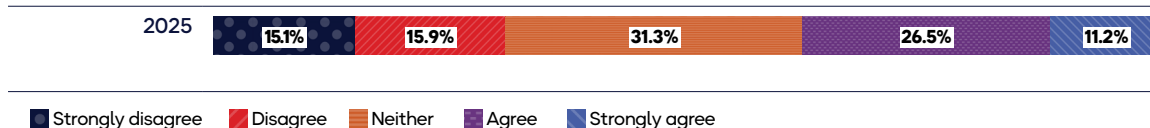
Although complaint procedures and compliance training are not a cure-all, workplaces that had **both** in place showed markedly lower levels of reported racism – 40% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees in these workplaces experienced racism very often, often, or sometimes, compared to 66% in organisations with neither.



WORKPLACE SUPPORT WHEN EXPERIENCING RACISM IS ALSO NOT COMMON

Only 38% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees strongly agreed or agreed that they had the workplace support they needed when experiencing racism at work – 27% agreed and 11% strongly agreed.

I had the workplace support I needed when I experienced unfair treatment and/or racial slurs or jokes at work Islander employees



Many reported that when racism was raised, systems failed to respond effectively or instead punished the complainant.

"We have to stay quiet in the face of racism or be overlooked for opportunities or seen as a problem to be managed out."

5. UNPAID WORKPLACE DEMANDS

What are unpaid workplace demands?

"I didn't want to do any of it because I think that's the organisation's responsibility not mine... I do it because I couldn't live with myself if I didn't. I couldn't stand by watching nothing getting done knowing that I could help. That's how all the progress that's gotten me to this point has been."

Many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees report they have extra (usually unrecognised and unrewarded) demands placed on them at work because they are Indigenous people. For example, they are frequently expected to perform additional, uncompensated tasks such as educating colleagues, managing Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), and organising cultural events.

This has often been referred to as cultural load, colonial load, cultural responsibility and/or identity strain. Reflecting on the literature and lived experiences of Indigenous people following the 2020 *Gari Yala* report, and in consultation with our Expert Panel, we have updated this language to unpaid workplace demands.

Unpaid workplace demands refers to additional unpaid work done by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees which:

- draws on their community, cultural and spiritual connections,
- is beyond the core responsibilities in their position description, and
- their workplace expects them to do.

We decided to adopt the language of unpaid workplace demands on the back of many conversations we had with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people about these terms and the workplace implications. These conversations revealed that:

- previous terms did not clearly articulate Indigenous employees' concerns that they are doing additional Indigenous-related work on top of their usual job and are not getting paid for it,
- some Indigenous people feel a cultural or personal responsibility to do this work, preferring to share the strength of culture rather than seeing it as a load – though there are mixed views, histories, and emotions pertaining to this, and
- the language of cultural or colonial load is deficit-based and doesn't reflect the strengths and benefits Indigenous people bring to the workplace.

Why do Indigenous staff do the work?

The most common reason Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees gave for taking on unpaid workplace demands was because they felt a personal and/or community responsibility (54%).

"If you want to make change step up. And do it in a way that brings whitefellas with you and nourishes and supports other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in your family and immediate grouping."

Other reasons included wanting to ensure the work was done in a culturally appropriate way (52%), the workplace was not effectively addressing the issue (24%), and/or there is no one else available or qualified to do it (21%). Some spoke specifically about feeling they had to take the work on to reduce harm to other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

"Because if I don't, non-Indigenous colleagues without any formal or trained understanding advise companies on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander matters that are damaging to mob and communities."

Unpaid, unseen, and unfair: The 'hidden year' of unpaid work

A major finding of this report is the quantification of unpaid workplace demands. We asked full-time respondents approximately how many hours per week on average they spent on **unpaid** cultural work that was **not** part of their formal workload.

- **One in two (55%) worked at least one or more hours per week unpaid**, working out to an additional (48 hour) week of unpaid cultural work per year.
- **One in three (34%) worked three or more hours per week unpaid**, working out to over an extra three weeks of unpaid cultural work per year, and
- **One in five (23%) worked six or more hours per week unpaid**, working out to an extra seven weeks of unpaid cultural work per year.

These demands accumulate significantly over a career. We estimate that, over a 50-year career, one in two full-time Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees are likely to be working at least an additional year of unpaid workplace demands.¹³

Are organisations compensating additional workplace demands?

Three-quarters (75%) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees said that their organisation did not formally recognise or remunerate these additional workplace demands (48%) or that they did not know if their organisation did (27%).

Only one in four worked in an organisation with a compensation policy or process for recognising these additional unpaid workplace demands:

- 21% said this was **financial compensation** (usually ad hoc payments for time e.g. speaking engagements), and
- 4% said this was **non-financial compensation** (usually providing paid time off, updating position descriptions to include cultural work, or adjusting workload allocation to take into account extra demands).

6. WHAT ARE ORGANISATIONS DOING AND WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

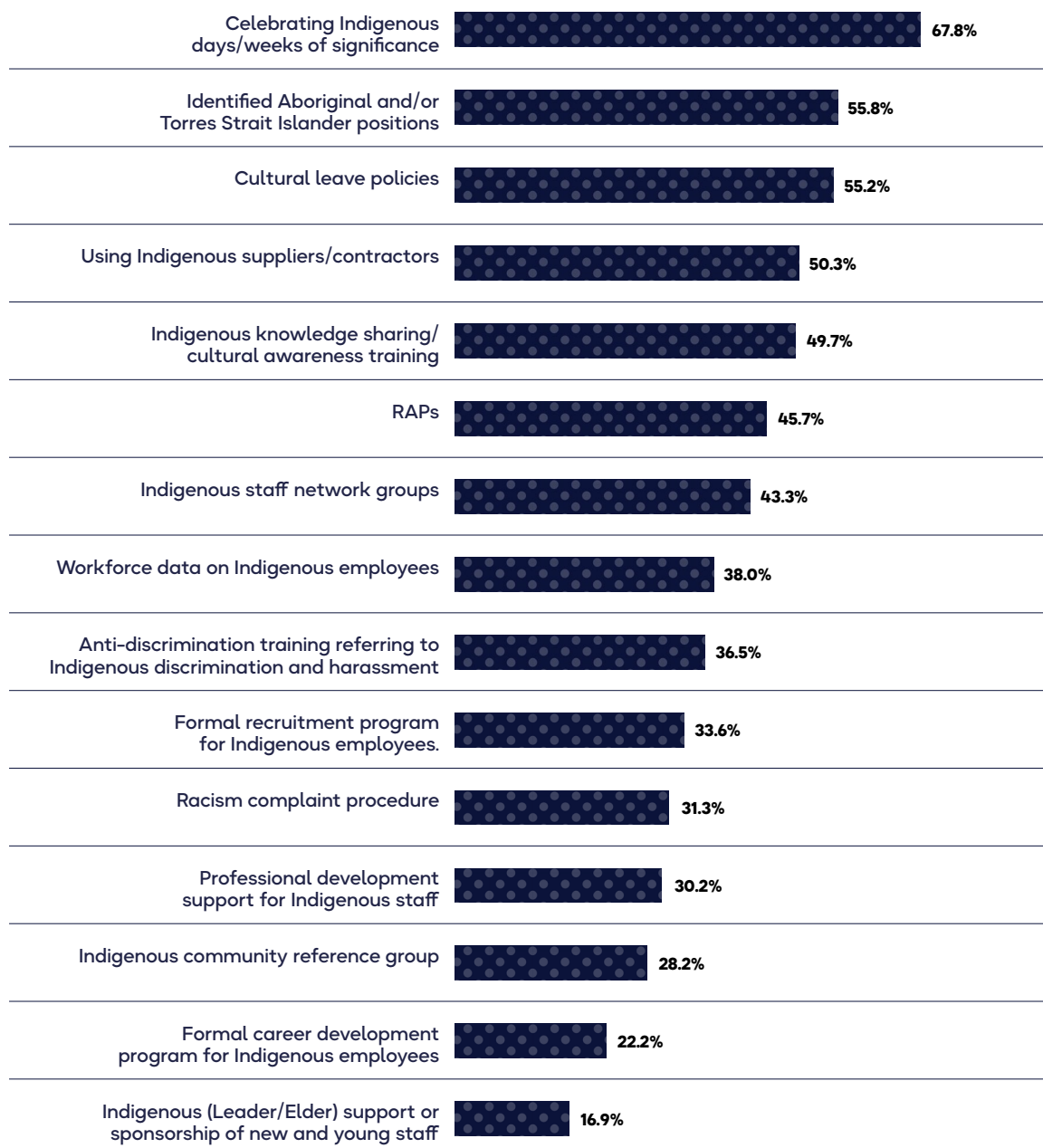
Many employers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are actively engaging in Indigenous-focused initiatives – only 5% of respondents stated their organisation had no initiatives and a third (32%) worked in high-activity organisations (i.e. organisations which have implemented nine or more initiatives).

How common are different organisational initiatives?

A wide range of initiatives were implemented in the workplaces of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers we surveyed. The four most commonly reported organisational initiatives (in order of frequency) were:

1. celebrating Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander days or weeks of significance (68%),
2. having identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander positions (56%),
3. having cultural leave policies (55%), and
4. having Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander suppliers/contractors (50%).

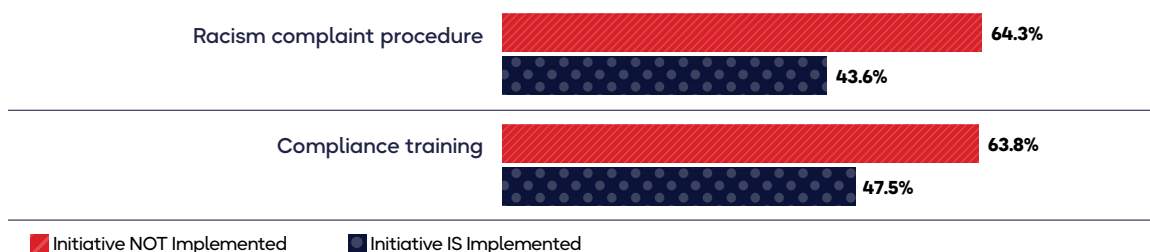
Which if any of the following initiatives does your organisation actively implement?



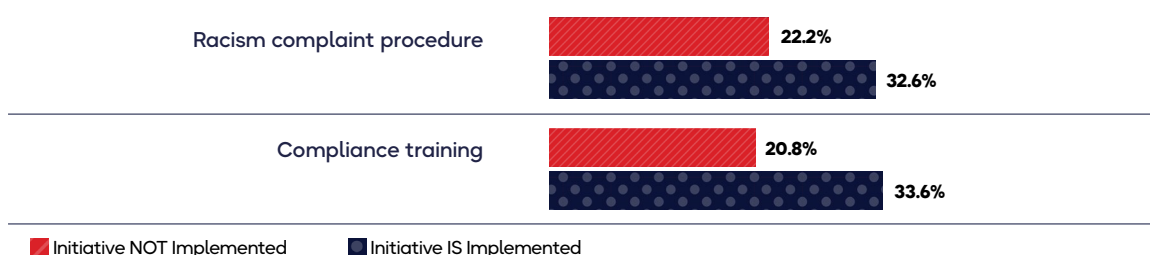
When organisations act, workplaces change – the data prove it

We found that providing racism compliance training and having a racism complaint procedure were strongly linked to lower levels of racism, lower intentions to leave, and higher job satisfaction.

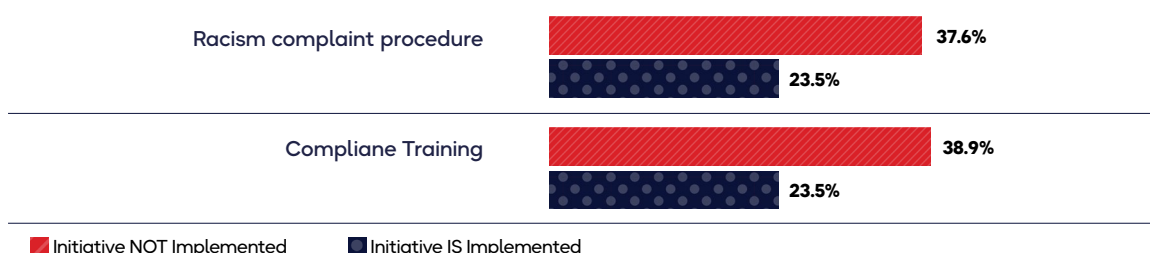
Impact of anti-racism initiatives on level of racism (% experience racism very often, often, or sometimes)



Impact of anti-racism initiatives on job satisfaction (% strongly agree they are very satisfied with their job)



Impact of anti-racism measures on turnover intentions (% very likely or likely to leave their organisation in next year)



But the most effective organisational initiatives are the least used

We also found that the highest impact initiatives were also some of the least commonly implemented in respondents' organisations.

Indigenous career and professional development programs. While having professional development support for Indigenous employees or having an Indigenous career development program were linked to lower rates of racism, they were the 12th and 14th most common initiatives – only 22% of respondents said their organisation had an Indigenous career development program and 30% worked in an organisation that provided professional development support for Indigenous staff.

Racism complaint procedure. Similarly, having a racism complaint procedure was linked to lower rates of racism, yet it was the 11th most common initiative implemented – only 31% of respondents stated their organisation had such a complaint procedure.

Marking dates of significance. On the other hand, the most commonly implemented initiative was marking significant dates (68%). While important, this initiative is generally less strongly associated with lower reported rates of racism than other initiatives which focus on internal policies and practices that shape employees' day-to-day experiences.

This finding suggests that organisations may be more comfortable investing in actions that signal commitment, than in the harder work of changing internal systems, accountability, and everyday workplace culture.

7. WHAT'S CHANGED SINCE GARI YALA 2020?

Six years on from the inaugural *Gari Yala* 2020 report, more than 1,100 Indigenous employees have again spoken truth about what is happening inside Australian workplaces today.

Their message is clear: organisations have made some progress, but not enough. Racism and lack of cultural safety remain widespread, and without organisations deeply committing to truth-listening and truth-acting, meaningful change will remain out of reach.



Six years on, the picture is mixed.

THERE ARE SMALL GAINS

More employees feel safe to share their identity (79% in 2025 versus 72% in 2020) and seven of nine forms of racism have eased slightly (by between 0.4% and 1% per year).

BUT RACISM REMAINS STUBBORNLY HIGH

One in two (53%) Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees still experience inappropriate race-based comments and assumptions. Key markers like unfair treatment (38% in both years), high cultural load (63% versus 64%), and anti racism structures (only 21% of workplaces offering both training and a complaint process in both years) show no progress.

A CENTURY TO SILENCE OVERT RACISM

The pace of change means racism-free workplaces may be 100 years away. At the current rate of change, without further policy or legislative change, we estimate it could take another 118 years for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers to never hear racial slurs and jokes at work. And this is only for racial slurs – there was no reduction in unfair treatment at work, so without positive action, unfair workplace treatment for Indigenous people is unlikely to improve.



10 TRUTHS to centre Indigenous Australians' voices to create workplace inclusion

1.

Commit to unearthing and acting on workplace truths – however uncomfortable this may be.

2.

Ensure any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-related work is Indigenous led and informed.

3.

Develop organisational principles to make it clear how Indigenous community engagement and employment should work in practice.

10.

Look to high-impact initiatives – those that research shows are linked to better wellbeing and retention for Indigenous staff.

4.

Focus on workplace readiness (cultural safety) rather than worker readiness.

9.

Take action to address workplace racism.

5.

Recognise identity strain and educate non-Indigenous staff about how to interact with their Indigenous colleagues in ways that reduce this.

8.

Focus on sustainable careers and career development, rather than just short-term appointments.

7.

Consult with Indigenous staff on how to minimise cultural load while maintaining organisational activity.

6.

Recognise and remunerate cultural load as part of an employee's workload.

Our 10 Truths: Is it time for change?

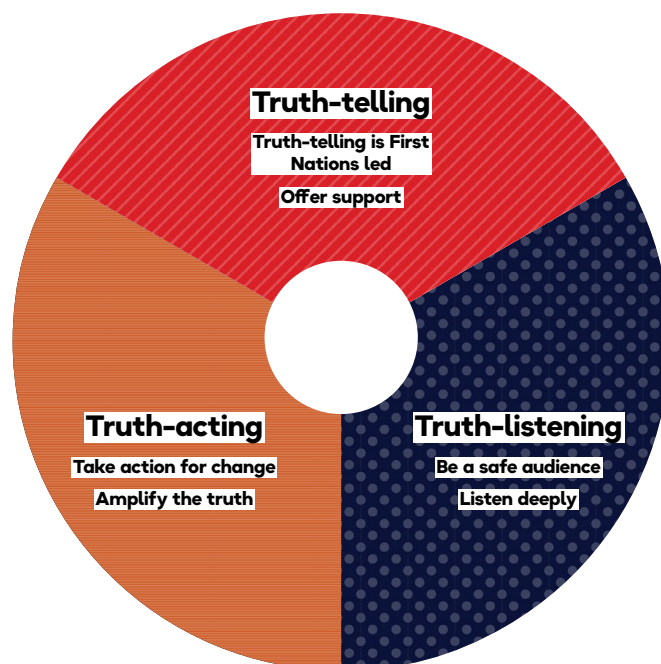
In our 2020 *Gari Yala* report, we offered 10 Truths outlining how organisations can centre the workplace experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and so create more equitable and inclusive Australian workplaces. These recommendations were drawn from the survey findings and respondents' recommendations and so were provided in the spirit of *Gari Yala* – to speak the truth.

Since the first *Gari Yala* report, employment practitioners and policy makers have consistently shared with us that these 10 Truths have been a powerful call to action. They gave workplaces something to reflect on, helped them understand the experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and provided practical actions to implement.

When we reflected on the extent to which these 10 Truths had been enacted in organisations since 2020, we found little progress. As summarised over the page, we found:

- only one Truth showed improvement,
- three Truths showed only slight improvement, and
- six Truths – the majority – have seen no overall change.

It was clear to us that the path forward does not require new mandates, but rather a reaffirmation of these 10 Truths and a deeper organisational commitment to the practice of truth-telling. As Reconciliation Australia's truth-telling framework shows us, this requires not just Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers sharing their truth about their workplace experiences – which they have always done. Importantly, truth-telling requires organisations to deeply listen to and learn from that truth, before acting on that new understanding.



Source: Reconciliation Australia Truth-Telling Framework

Reflecting on our 10 Truths: What progress has been made?

Our reflections below draw on relevant *Gari Yala 2* data (both quantitative and qualitative), supplemented with other data sources. While not an exhaustive investigation, it provides an indicator of the state-of-play in 2025 compared to 2020 when *Gari Yala* was first undertaken. For more detailed information on these reflections, please see the Full Report.

Truth	Status
1. Commit to unearthing and acting on workplace truths – however uncomfortable this may be (IND).	No overall change
2. Ensure any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-related work is Indigenous led and informed	Slight improvement, though tokenism remains very common
3. Develop organisational principles to make it clear how Indigenous community engagement and employment should work in practice.	Improvement
4. Focus on workplace readiness (cultural safety) rather than worker readiness	No overall change
5. Recognise identity strain and educate non-Indigenous staff about how to interact with their Indigenous colleagues in ways that reduce this	No overall change
6. Recognise and remunerate cultural load as part of an employee's workload.	Slight improvement, though recognition and remuneration are not common and cultural load remains high
7. Consult with Indigenous staff on how to minimise cultural load while maintaining organisational activity	Slight improvement, though recognition and remuneration are not common and cultural load remains high
8. Focus on sustainable careers and career development, rather than just short-term appointments	No overall change
9. Take action to address workplace racism.	No overall change
10. Look to high-impact initiatives – those that research shows are linked to better wellbeing and retention for Indigenous staff	No overall change

TRUTH 1: Commit to unearthing and acting on workplace truths – however uncomfortable this may be

STATUS: No overall change

SEVERAL POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Some respondents shared positive experiences of truth-telling in their workplace, in which they felt culturally safe to truth-tell about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people's workplace experiences, and their organisation responded by listening and acting in good faith on what was shared.

"In the forums that I've been in I've seen First Nations staff speak their truths and the organisation has not shied away from this or punished them for what they've said. They are genuinely interested in being a better employer for our mob."

BUT DEFENSIVENESS AND RETALIATION WERE COMMON

(non-Indigenous) organisational and leadership response.

"Unfortunately, in my workplace I feel I was a valuable token to tick boxes but a thorn in their side when I started to call out racism."

TRUTH-TELLING REQUIRES COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP – AND THIS WAS OFTEN LACKING

"When racism occurs in the workplace whether overt or subtle the response of leadership is critical. Unfortunately, I've experienced environments where senior leaders were either unwilling or unable to take meaningful action. Rather than addressing the issue they often became defensive sought to protect the system or distanced themselves from the person speaking up. This kind of leadership fragility sends a clear message: that truth-telling is unsafe and that maintaining the status quo matters more than cultural safety."

Importantly, non-Indigenous leaders were often ignorant about the cultural responsibilities and accountability Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff had to their communities.

"I'm sick of... the looks on people's faces when they hear uncomfortable truths. What they don't seem to realise is that...I have a role which is answerable to the local First Nations Community."

Reconciliation Australia statistics show that between 2020 and 2024, the percentage of non-Indigenous people who believe truth-telling is important for reconciliation has decreased – in 2020, 89% of the general community believed truth-telling was important,¹⁴ while in 2024, 71% of non-Indigenous people believe truth-telling is important for reconciliation.¹⁵



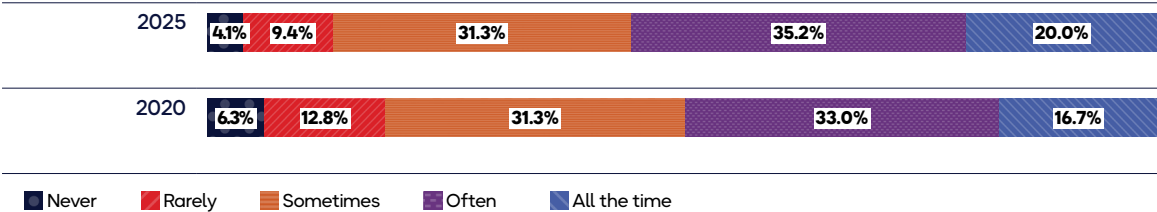
TRUTH 2: Ensure any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-related work is Indigenous led and informed

Status: Slight improvement, though tokenism remains very common

SEVERAL POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

There has been a small increase in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers reporting that roles with an Indigenous focus are filled by Indigenous people all the time or often – from 50% in 2020 to 55% in 2025 (see bar chart below). We also found an increase in respondents saying that their organisation had identified roles – from 52% in 2020 to 56% in 2025.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are appointed in any internal roles with an Indigenous focus



“Since 2020 my industry has stepped up to address Indigenous worker’s concerns and hopes for the future. This encouraged my workplace to make similar changes which is how my role became available aside other identified roles. This power-in-numbers approach has really helped...[and] makes me feel like things are changing.”

BUT INDIGENOUS-LED APPROACHES SEEM TO BE THE EXCEPTION NOT THE RULE

Other respondents shared that organisations continue to hire non-Indigenous people to lead the work. And that organisations often confused “Indigenous-led” with “consulted with.”

“We have white fellas in positions that should be identified positions... this person has no cultural authority responsibility or knowledge to be able to do this. This is unsafe for those staff and totally inappropriate.”

TOKENISM IS VERY COMMON

Respondents’ comments revealed that tokenistic workplace treatment was more common than truly Indigenous-led approaches.

“Being ‘identified’ leads to tokenistic opportunities at work for example ‘Oh you’re Aboriginal, let’s put you on this project’ to later find out that that job had a requirement to place Aboriginal people on it to win the work.”

NO IMPROVEMENT IN VALUING CULTURAL SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Such tokenistic treatment of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff is not surprising given we found decreases or no change in the percentage of respondents reporting that:

- their workplace always values the contributions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (from 25% in 2020 to 21% in 2025), and
- they always feel valued and supported as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee (from 27% in 2020 to 26% in 2025).

TRUTH 3: Develop organisational principles to make clear how Indigenous community engagement and employment should work in practice

Status: Improvement

DOUBLING OF ORGANISATIONS WITH ACTIVE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS

Reconciliation Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Framework provides employers with a clear set of organisational principles that guide meaningful Indigenous community engagement and employment. In the past five years, the number of Australian organisations which have an active Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has doubled:

- in 2020, there were roughly 1,100 organisations with active RAP,¹⁶ and
- this increased to 2,283 organisations in 2025.¹⁷

This clearly demonstrates a growth in organisations who have meaningful organisational principles guiding their Indigenous community engagement and employment.

BUT GUIDING FRAMEWORKS ARE FAR FROM WIDESPREAD

While the growth in organisations using the RAP framework to guide their Indigenous employment practice is encouraging, it remains far from standard business practice.

- In 2025, over 3,000 organisations had formalised their commitment to reconciliation through RAP, and 2,283 organisations had an active RAP (i.e. reported on their RAP to Reconciliation Australia).
- But there were close to 1 million employing businesses in Australia.¹⁸

CULTURALLY INAPPROPRIATE PRACTICE IS COMMON

Many respondents talked of their (non-Indigenous) organisation being ignorant about culturally safe and appropriate ways of doing Indigenous community engagement and employment, and of their guidance often being ignored and/or blocked.

"People tell me to stay in my lane – when I suggest something it goes unheard."

"My attempts to facilitate better cultural safety were met with strong resistance and it wasn't until after I had quit over issues with racism that I found out about other First Nations staff in our team who did not identify at work because [similar] matters that concerned them."

"[It] is embarrassing when working in Indigenous communities [as the Department] still has a white saviour/paternalistic way of putting people into these positions."



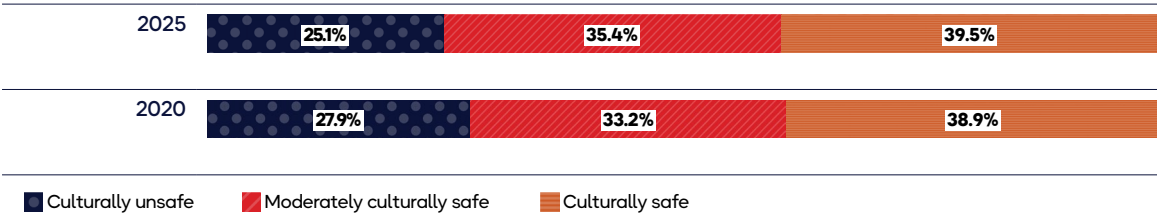
TRUTH 4: Focus on workplace readiness (cultural safety) rather than worker readiness

Status: Little overall change

LITTLE CHANGE IN OVERALL CULTURAL SAFETY

While there were some small improvements for specific cultural safety-related questions, there was no change in overall cultural safety¹⁹ of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers. In 2020, 39% of workers experienced cultural safety at work compared to 40% in 2025.

% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers in culturally safe workplaces



SOME POSITIVE EXPERIENCES WERE SHARED BY SOME RESPONDENTS

For example:

“My initial experience was not very positive but as my workplace has aged and become more culturally safe my experiences have changed, and it has become safer. My agency is now starting to embed cultural safety into all areas, and this is making a real difference with how safe I feel.”

BUT CULTURALLY UNSAFE WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES REMAIN COMMON

Many respondents spoke of experiencing racism when they shared their identity, this racism being left unchecked, and requests for support and/or initiatives to improve cultural safety being ignored.

“They refused to implement identified roles despite 14% of the client population identifying as Aboriginal. They defunded the cultural liaison role I was working in. They ignored me when I said a cultural safety plan was needed.”

“My experience has shifted significantly. I feel culturally unsafe in my current role. My identity is often treated as tokenistic, and I’ve experienced interactions that feel patronising and culturally inappropriate... As a result, I now work from home unless I am required to be on campus as it is currently the only way I can manage my wellbeing in this environment.”

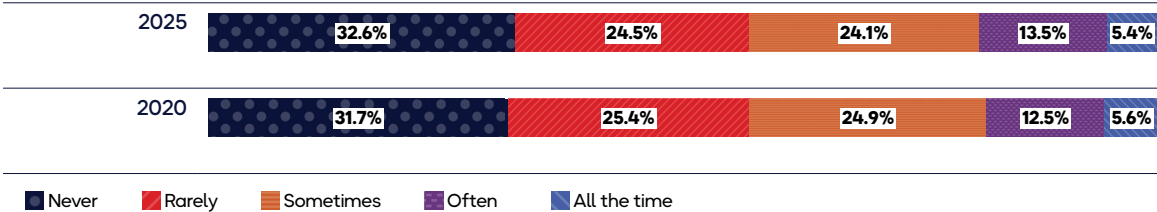
TRUTH 5: Recognise identity strain and educate non-Indigenous staff about how to interact with their Indigenous colleagues in ways that reduce this

Status: No overall change

NO IMPROVEMENT IN IDENTITY STRAIN

Between 2020 and 2025, there was no change in the percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers who said they were asked to do something that made them compromise their cultural integrity – in both years, 43% reported that this happened all the time, often, or sometimes.

I am asked to do something that compromises my cultural integrity



IDENTITY STRAIN CUTS DEEP

Many respondents spoke of the hurt and harm they experienced when their Indigeneity was repeatedly challenged by non-Indigenous people.

“Why Am I Not Blak Enough for non-Aboriginal people? ...non-Aboriginal people question who I am... instead of being accepted for all of who I am I often feel like I have to prove myself...I’ve heard it too many times: ‘You don’t look Aboriginal’ or ‘Are you really Aboriginal?’ These comments may sound harmless to some, but they cut deep. They question something sacred. What many don’t understand is that Aboriginality is not about how someone looks – it’s about connection. To culture. To Country. To community. You don’t get to measure that from the outside... [This is about] making space for the diverse realities of Aboriginal identity. We are not all the same and that’s not something to be fixed. It’s something to be celebrated.”

Others spoke of the strain of having to constantly educate non-Indigenous workers about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“You become the poster child for Aboriginal events, or you get a million questions and asked to speak for mob. OR people presume you got the role due to your Aboriginality not your qualifications.”

TRUTH 6: Recognise and remunerate cultural load as part of an employee's workload

Status: Slight improvement, though formal recognition and remuneration are not common and cultural load remains high

ORGANISATIONS ARE STARTING TO CONSIDER CULTURAL LOAD

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees' comments indicated some organisations have become more aware of cultural load since 2020.

"We've been calling out cultural load, and the organisation is becoming more coherent about what this is and not placing this expectation on our First Nations staff."

"[While] I do feel that there is an increased expectation to take on the cultural load, I will acknowledge that the workplace is trying to change this."

BUT FORMAL ORGANISATIONAL RECOGNITION IS NOT COMMON

Most respondents (75%) said their organisation did not formally recognise or remunerate cultural load (48%) or that they did not know if their organisation did (27%).

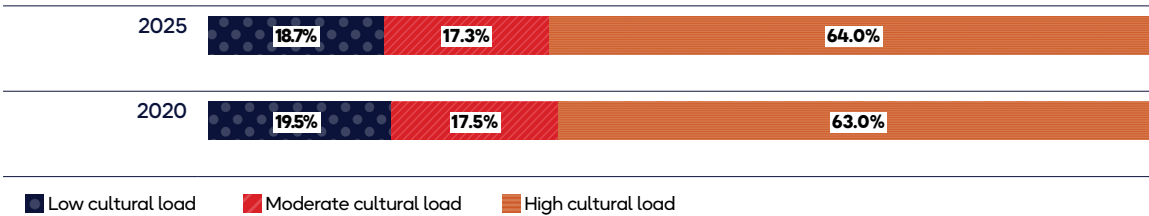
Formal financial recognition. Overall, 21% of respondents were in organisations that provided some financial compensation for additional cultural responsibilities and contributions (usually through ad hoc payments for time).

Formal non-financial recognition. A further 4% of respondents worked in organisations that compensated employees in a non-financial way (e.g. providing paid time off for attendance or some form of paid leave, updating position descriptions to include cultural work, or adjusting workload allocation to take into account cultural load).

BUT HIGH CULTURAL LOAD CONTINUES

In 2020, 63% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees reported having high cultural load and this remained unchanged in 2025 (64%). The bar chart below shows this notable lack of change in cultural load.

% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers with high, moderate and low cultural load



The lack of change in cultural load between 2020 and 2025 was reflected in many respondent comments.

"The cultural load is evident when I'm expected to be the sole expert on all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander matters in the workplace. It's unfair as it's not my job to educate everyone single-handedly and it feels like an extra burden imposed due to the lack of understanding and proper training in the organisation."

TRUTH 7: Consult with Indigenous staff on how to minimise cultural load while maintaining organisational activity

Status: Slight improvement, though recognition and remuneration are not common and cultural load remains high

SOME ORGANISATIONS ARE TRYING TO CONSULT TO MINIMISE CULTURAL LOAD

Some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees talked of how, since 2020, their organisation was trying to minimise Indigenous staff's unfair cultural load and was consulting about this.

"We had consultation with all Indigenous staff to identify issues in our workplace around racism, cultural load and things of that nature."

SOME LEADERS, MANAGERS, AND TEAMS ARE INITIATING DISCUSSIONS

Occasionally, respondents noted that consultation was being driven by senior executives. Others commented on how their manager and/or team was understanding and proactive in their supportive and that this was key to ensuring cultural load was effectively navigated.

"There is a shift in our Executive and Senior Management Team to distribute the load/ responsibility regarding Reconciliation rather than it sitting with First Nations staff to do the heavy lifting or help educate staff. It is everyone's responsibility."

"I'm lucky. My place of work is very aware of the cultural load...[and] I have a manager who is very aware of cultural load."

CONSULTATIONS ARE SOMETIMES LEADING TO CHANGES

Several respondents commented that discussions and consultations were leading to cultural load being embedded in policies (e.g. RAPs), non-Indigenous workers developing their cultural capability to help share the load, and work being more effectively resourced.

"More identified positions have been created where cultural load is factored into their roles taking some pressure off other staff members."

BUT ELSEWHERE, CULTURAL LOAD STAYED HIGH AND EVEN INCREASED

While organisations may have started consulting about and addressing cultural load, this has not yet translated into reduced cultural load for respondents overall – in 2020, 63% of respondents had high cultural load compared to 64% in 2025. For many, the load had amplified because organisational aspirations around Indigenous work had increased but organisational resourcing had not kept pace.

"I feel expectations are higher in the workplace [but] there are limited First Nations employees employed so the load always goes to the few."

"Cultural load understanding is slowly improving across the workplace at the higher levels...[but] you have to take things on to keep abreast of things to ensure it's culturally appropriate. Because the First Nations work force is just not there to spread the load."



TRUTH 8: Focus on sustainable careers and career development, rather than just short-term appointments

Status: No overall change

LACK OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES REMAINS THE MAIN REASON INDIGENOUS STAFF LEAVE

In both 2020 and 2025, lack of career opportunities and lack of career development were the two main reasons Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers gave for intending to leave their employer in the coming year.

What is the main reason for your intention to find a new job within the next year?	2020	2025
Lack of career opportunities/promotion	21.1%	18.3%
Lack of career development	19.3%	17.3%

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS REMAIN UNCOMMON

In 2020, only 25% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees reported that their organisation had a formal career development program for Indigenous employees, and this fell to 22% in 2025.

DEAD-END JUNIOR LEVEL ROLES ARE COMMON

Many respondents spoke of organisations needing to provide career paths for entry-level Indigenous staff (particularly those in identified roles) to ensure they weren’t permanently stuck in junior roles. They also spoke of being pushed into and/or “pigeon-holed” in (non-identified) cultural roles with career “ceilings.” This resulted in their broader skill set including leadership capabilities being overlooked and so promotion opportunities being denied.

“More effort could be spent supporting junior employees to undertake some career development / planning and supporting upskilling and/or internal mobility to allow them to build new skills not get stuck in junior roles permanently.”

“Being pigeonholed into cultural roles often means that my other leadership strengths like strategic thinking, facilitation, governance, organisational development, are overlooked. As a result, career opportunities can be missed. I’ve seen First Nations staff passed over or boxed in because organisations fail to see the full breadth of our capability.”

“Once they know [my identity it] makes it impossible to be recognised for your skill set or gain career advancement.”

TRUTH 9: Take action to address workplace racism

Status: No overall change

NO CHANGE IN ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITY

In both 2020 and 2025, only approximately one in three Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people worked in organisations:

- with a racism complaint procedure (31% in 2025 and 33% in 2020), or
- with anti-discrimination compliance training that included reference to Indigenous discrimination and harassment (37% in 2025 and 36% in 2020).

In both years, only one in five (21%) respondents worked in organisations that had both a racism complaint procedure and anti-discrimination compliance training that addressed racism experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

ORGANISATIONS STILL FOCUS MORE ON MARKING SIGNIFICANT DAYS THAN ADDRESSING RACISM

In both 2020 and 2025, marking days of significance was by far and away the most common initiative – 70% of Indigenous employees reported that their organisation marked such days in 2020 and 68% in 2025.

In contrast, in both years, anti-discrimination training referring to Indigenous discrimination and harassment and racism complaint procedures were between the 9th and 12th most common initiatives – complaint procedure (31% in 2025 and 33% in 2020) and compliance training (37% in 2025 and 36% in 2020).

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT WHEN FACING RACISM REMAINS LOW

In both 2020 and 2025, it was not common for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers experiencing racism at work to have the workplace support they needed.

- in 2020, 33% strongly agreed or agreed they had the workplace support they needed when experiencing racism at work, rising to 38% in 2025.
- This was offset to some degree by the percentage of Indigenous workers who strongly disagreed they had the workplace support they needed increasing from 12% in 2020 to 15% in 2025.

Many respondents' comments showed how far Australian workplaces have to go to effectively respond to and prevent workplace racism.

"People who called out racism were often isolated, discredited or made to carry the burden alone. The systems in place claimed to support equity but lacked the integrity and accountability to respond when it mattered most."

"I experienced both racism and retaliation after a bystander reported inappropriate behaviour directed toward me. Rather than addressing the conduct the response resulted in my removal from the team and ultimately led to my resignation."

TRUTH 10: Look to high-impact initiatives – those that research shows are linked to better wellbeing and retention for Indigenous staff

Status: No overall change

NO INCREASE IN PREVALENCE OF HIGH IMPACT INITIATIVES

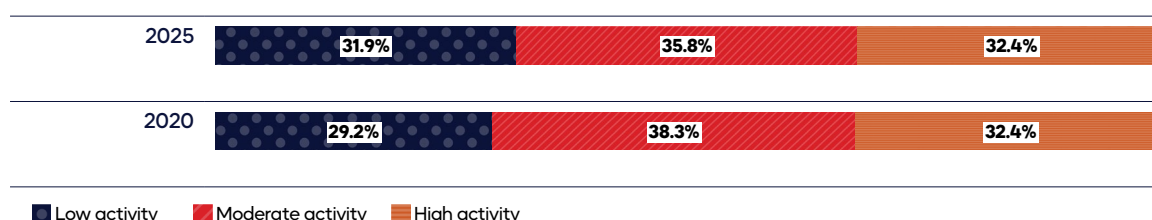
In the inaugural 2020 *Gari Yala* survey, we identified five Indigenous-related high impact initiatives. Of these five initiatives, all except compliance training have decreased in prevalence – and compliance training only increased by 1%.

Prevalence of high impact Indigenous-related organisational activities		2020 %	2025 %	Change
1.	Celebrating Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander days/ weeks of significance (e.g. NAIDOC Week)	70%	68%	-2%
2.	Anti-discrimination compliance training referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander discrimination and harassment	36%	37%	+1%
3.	Racism complaint procedure	33%	31%	-2%
4.	Formal career development program for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees	25%	22%	-3%
5.	Indigenous (Leader/Elder) support or sponsorship of new and young staff	20%	17%	-3%

NO INCREASE IN OVERALL ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVITY

We also found no notable increase in overall Indigenous-related organisational activity since 2020 (see bar chart below).

% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers in high activity, moderate activity and low activity organisations



ENDNOTES

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- 11 Allen, B. J. (2017). Standpoint theory. In Y. Y. Kim (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of intercultural communication* (p. 2). John Wiley & Sons.
- 12 We created an overall measure of racism from all nine measures of racism included in this study. Respondents with an average score of 2 or below out of 5 were categorised as having experienced racism “never” or “hardly ever”, while those with an average score above 2 were categorised as experiencing racism “sometimes”, “often” or “very often”.
- 13 This estimate was derived by establishing that 55.1% of full-time Indigenous employees whose formal role did not involve Indigenous workplace matters worked at least one or more hours per week unpaid on cultural work (38.5% of these workers actually worked 3 or more hours and 23% worked 6 or more hours). Using the most conservative estimate (i.e. 55% of the cohort working an additional work week each year), this suggests that, extrapolated over a 50-year working life, one in two full-time Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees are working at least an additional year of unpaid workplace demands.
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- 18 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025, August 26). *Counts of Australian businesses, including entries and exits, July 2021 – June 2025* [Statistical release]. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/business-indicators/counts-australian-businesses-including-entries-and-exits/latest-release>
- 19 We measured overall cultural safety by creating a mean cultural safety score from six cultural safety-related questions.