

Economic Participation

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to fully participate in Queensland's society and economy, and enjoy the opportunities and benefits other Queenslanders experience, they need to be able to participate fully in the mainstream economy. Doing so will have major flow on benefits and help close other gaps in life outcomes.

Overview

Addressing the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is a priority for the Queensland Government. Though economic policy and employment programs are primarily the responsibility of the Australian Government, the Queensland Government makes a major contribution through its investment in public services, public infrastructure, enterprise support, tourism promotion

and facilities, trade and industry programs, and in training and employment programs.

The measures which will be used by the Queensland Government to monitor progress, as well as the strategies which will best address the gap between the economic situation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, are presented below.

COAG TARGET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade
Q2 TARGETS	<p>Smart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three out of four Queenslanders will hold trade, training or tertiary qualifications <p>Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halve the proportion of Queensland children living in households without a working parent
PROGRESS MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour force participation • Employment rate • Unemployment rate
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve participation and outcomes in the area of vocational education and training • Support Indigenous participation in Queensland's economy through building sustainable business skills and capacity • Maximise Indigenous employment through government procurement policies • Incorporate Indigenous workforce strategies into all new major COAG reforms • Increase job opportunities and enterprise development for Indigenous people in Queensland in Natural Resource Management services and Indigenous tourism • Development, management and marketing of sustainable tourism in Cape York and Torres Strait, guided by the Cape York and Torres Strait Tourism Action Plan.



The Evidence

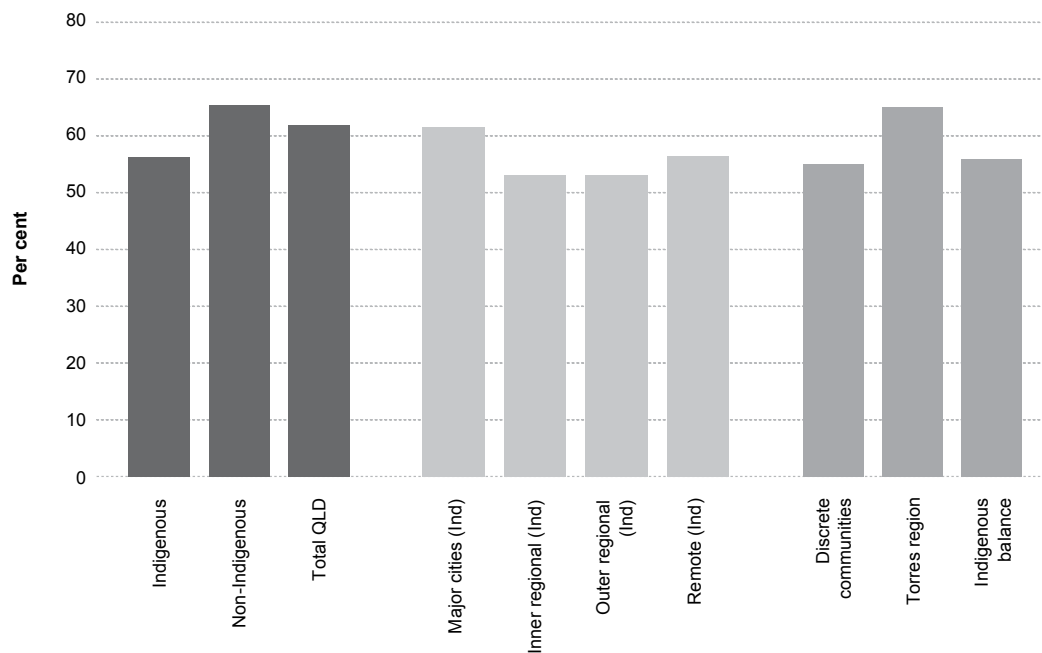
Labour force participation rate

The labour force comprises persons aged 15 years or over who are either employed or unemployed and seeking work. The remainder of the population are not in the labour force. People may not participate in the labour force for a variety of reasons: they may be retired, studying, have poor health, or be discouraged from looking for work because of lack of skills (see *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, 2007*).

In 2006:

- non-Indigenous people were more likely to be participating in the labour force than Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples: 65.4 per cent compared with 56.2 per cent – a gap of 9.2 percentage points: see Figure 4.1
- the participation rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons was highest for those in major cities, followed by those in remote areas, with the lowest participation rates reported for residents of inner and outer regional areas (53.1%)
- participation rates in the discrete communities were relatively high at 55.1 per cent, possibly due to high levels of participation in Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) in these communities. Labour force participation in the Torres region (65.0%) was higher than for the mainland discrete Indigenous communities, and was similar to that for the non-Indigenous Queensland working age population.

Fig 4.1 Labour force participation, Queensland, 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006 (unpublished data). These rates are not age standardised.

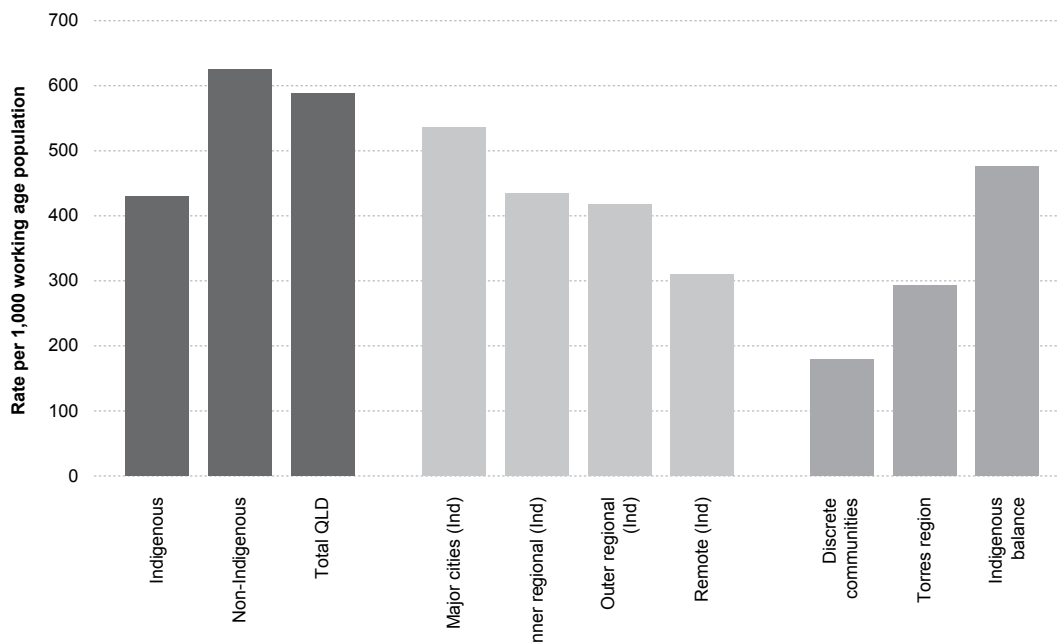
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Employment rate

In 2006:

- non-Indigenous Queenslanders of working age were about 1.4 times more likely than Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of working age to be employed (624.3 per 1,000 for non-Indigenous Queenslanders compared with 433.0 per 1,000 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples): see Figure 4.2
- the employment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was higher in the major cities, and decreased with each increasing level of remoteness, ranging from 536.4 per 1,000 in the major cities to 310.2 per 1,000 for remote areas
- the discrete Indigenous communities reported the lowest rate of employment (179.0 per 1,000), with less than 200 working age persons (15 years and over) employed per 1,000.

Fig 4.2 Employment rate per 1,000 working age population, Queensland, 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006 (unpublished data). These rates are not age standardised.

Note: Community Development Employment Projects participants are not included as employed.

The working age population is aged 15 years and over.

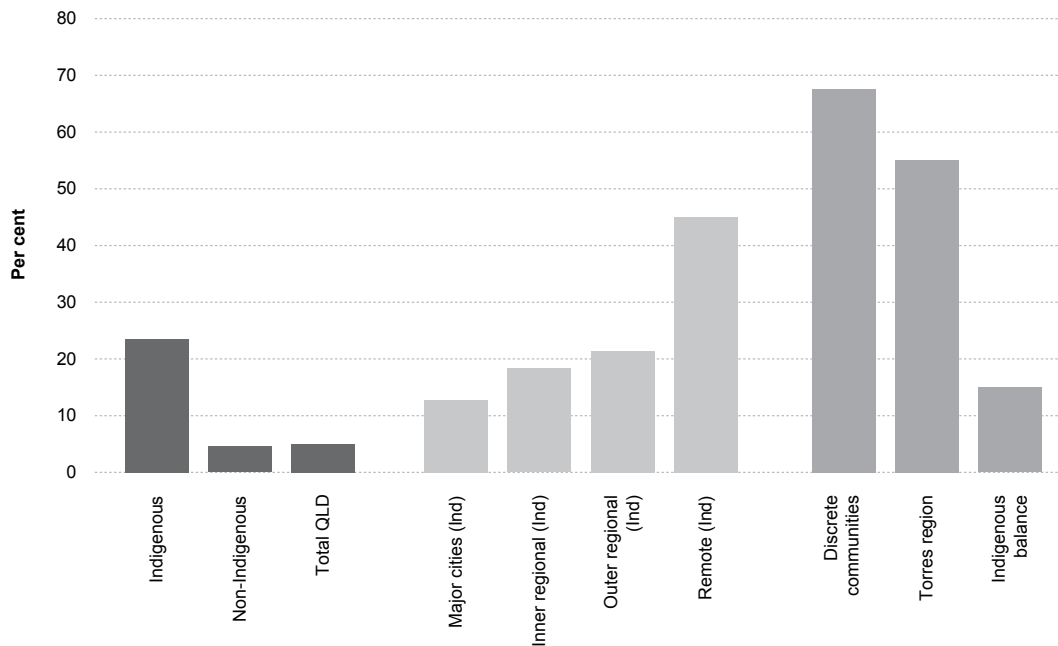


Unemployment rate

In 2006:

- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were significantly more likely to be unemployed than non-Indigenous people: 23.5 per cent compared with 4.5 per cent – a gap of 19 percentage points: see Figure 4.3
- unemployment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples increased with remoteness, with the rate in remote areas more than three times that reported for major cities (45.0% compared with 12.8%)
- the discrete communities reported the highest unemployment rate, with 67.6 per cent of persons unemployed. This was more than four times the unemployment rate for those outside the discrete mainland communities (14.9%), and nearly three times that for the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland (23.5%).

Fig 4.3 Unemployment Rate, Proportion of total labour force, Queensland, 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006 (unpublished data).

Note: Community Development Employment Projects participants are included in the unemployment rate.

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Key Queensland Government actions to close the gap

Participation in the labour market and enterprise development

The Queensland Government is supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders' participation in the labour market and in enterprise development through a number of key strategies. Despite the recent global financial crisis, the Queensland economy remains strong and jobs growth in recent years provides an opportunity for those traditionally unable to access the labour market, including Indigenous Queenslanders to obtain employment.

Roughly 3.3 per cent of the Queensland public sector workforce is Indigenous, slightly higher than their proportion of the population. A growing number of agencies have active recruitment, retention and development strategies in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queensland employeees.

The Queensland Government has also been negotiating, along with other states and territories, with the Australian Government for mainstream national agreements in relation to skills and workforce development and vocational education and training, as well as a **National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation** to close the gap in employment, especially in the private sector where the majority of job opportunities arise. Queensland is also supportive of private sector-led initiatives such as the **Australian Employment Covenant**.

In addition to its mainstream programs, the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry (DTRDI) contributes to strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business capacity, targets partnership and mentoring opportunities, and supports Indigenous enterprise to increase

income generation and employment outcomes. Indigenous Queenslanders' involvement in tourism is also seen as a key enterprise development opportunity. **A whole-of-government strategy for Indigenous tourism** is being finalised as part of the **Queensland Tourism Strategy** to increase Indigenous participation in mainstream tourism and assist Indigenous people develop commercially sustainable tourism ventures.

DTRDI administers the **Indigenous Business Development Grant Scheme**, which has two programs that provide funding assistance to build Indigenous business capacity and business establishment and growth. In 2007/08, a total of \$597,000 was distributed to eleven projects, with the largest proportion being provided to North Queensland, the Cape and the Gulf areas. Indigenous Business Development is currently looking at better alignment with major sectoral business opportunities, such as mining, forestry and tourism. In addition, the Department in a partnership arrangement with the Australian Government, funds a **network of Indigenous Enterprise Development Officers**. The network is staffed by Indigenous officers and provides support to Indigenous clients pursuing opportunities in business development.

As part of the Queensland Government's Reconciliation Action Plan, DTRDI organises and hosts the **Annual Reconciliation Business Forum** to build the capacity of Indigenous businesses throughout Queensland. The forum facilitates interaction between Indigenous business owners and successful business representatives, including industry representatives and government stakeholders.

DTRDI has provided over \$1 million into Indigenous tourism projects including support of \$170,000 towards the Lockhart River Aerodrome Motel; \$320,000 into various Indigenous



owned and managed camping ground development projects; and \$95,000 for the Mapoon Turtle eco-tourism business.

In conjunction with the Australian Government, the State Department of Mines and Energy runs the **Working in Partnerships program** to foster relationships and partnerships between Indigenous communities and the mining industry. The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries has a \$1 million state-wide **Enhanced Indigenous Agribusiness project**. This supports business opportunities and economic independence through primary industry taken up as a result of increased access to, or ownership of, traditional lands. An example is Lockhart River Pichiwu Fishing Ltd.

The Department of Public Works' **Repairs and Maintenance Program**, with funding of \$6.3 million in 2007/08, aims to increase community capacity and provide local employment by outsourcing repairs and maintenance in the discrete Indigenous communities to local Indigenous Councils. The program has engaged tradespeople, trainees and apprentices in the communities of Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Palm Island.

The Department of Natural Resources and Water's **Wild River Rangers program** currently employs 20 Aboriginal rangers on Cape York and in the Gulf region, which will increase to 100 from 2009. The rangers provide environmental services by looking after the cultural and natural values of the river systems and contribute to the development of natural resource management capacity and economies.

A new **e-learning resource** has so far helped 27 Indigenous people get jobs in the mining and civil construction industries. The **Jobs for Our Mob CD-ROM** has been designed for Indigenous learners, using culturally appropriate communication. The Myuma Aboriginal Corporation, based in Camooweal in Queensland, identified a need to provide pre-employment skills to Indigenous people in north-west Queensland.

Training initiatives

In 2006, the Queensland Government launched the **Queensland Skills Plan**, backed by an investment of over \$800 million and an additional \$300 million in capital funding. The plan has been developed to respond to the state's workforce needs including building workforce skills. The Queensland Skills Plan continued the successful **Breaking the Unemployment Cycle** initiatives which have helped more than 120,000 Queenslanders into jobs. There are several training initiatives supported by the Queensland Government to promote training outcomes to facilitate employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

The recently released **Positive Dreaming, Solid Futures – the Indigenous Employment and Training Strategy 2008-2011**, provides a new framework for the delivery of employment and training services to Indigenous people in Queensland. This is a partnership between the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR) and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA). The strategy is designed to address a number of priorities aimed at improving outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders in the area of vocational education and training.

Recent training initiatives to assist Indigenous people enter and remain in the workforce include:

- DETA's **VET Revenue General Program** which in 2007 funded 1,563,713 hours of training to Indigenous students through the mainstream public VET system, to the value of approximately \$22.2 million
- DETA works with industry, the community and registered training organisations to match training to the economic needs of Queensland. DETA provides **vocational education and training** to 246,000 students through 13 TAFE institutes from 101 locations across the state, and administers the apprenticeship and traineeship system across Queensland
- the **Training Initiatives for Indigenous Adults in Regional and Remote Communities** is a joint State-Commonwealth

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funded initiative which commenced in 2007 with project funds totalling \$18.1 million over four years

- the **Cape York Employment and Training Strategy** assisted 700 people in 2007/08 to undertake training in a diverse range of qualifications including construction, conservation and land management, engineering, agriculture, business, tourism and hospitality in the Cape York region
- the **First Start program** whereby Indigenous Councils and organisations can access \$1 million in subsidies to employ Indigenous people as trainees. This provided 94 traineeship opportunities in 2007/08
- the **Youth Training incentive** which provides up to \$4,000 in incentives to employers to provide opportunities for young people to combine senior secondary education with workforce experience. In 2007/08, 273 Indigenous students undertook a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship as a result of this incentive
- the **User Choice program** which works in conjunction with the Australian Apprenticeship system and assists by paying for the cost of training delivery for the 'college' component of training for apprentices and trainees under certain circumstances. In 2007/08, it assisted 1,193 Indigenous apprentices and 1,522 trainees
- the Queensland and Australian Governments both contribute to the **Joint Indigenous Funding Pool** to target education and training opportunities for Indigenous people and improve vocational education and training outcomes for Indigenous students. In 2007, contracts to the value of \$3.8 million were awarded to seven private providers and two TAFE institutes, enabling approximately 650 Indigenous people to receive training in areas as diverse as primary health care, business, broadcasting, community development, performing arts, horticulture, conservation and land management in Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) levels II to Diploma.

The Department of Main Roads (DMR) funded the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship to Employment Initiative** \$240,000, as a partnership between the

Department, the Jagera Daran Indigenous community and Greening Australia (Queensland). Under the initiative, trainees completed a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management in October 2008 and, additionally, completed high-quality landscaping, environmental management and basic civil construction work on numerous DMR-owned green areas around Brisbane.

Skills and workforce development opportunities

The **Skilling Queenslanders for Work** initiative is funded around \$80 million per year to assist those Queenslanders most disadvantaged in the labour market to achieve sustainable employment outcomes. Under this initiative the Queensland Government's **Indigenous Employment Strategy** has a strong focus on developing the skills needed for work, providing access to jobs, and assistance through mentorship and other support. For example:

- the **Customised Employment Assistance program** offers a mix of paid work placements, job preparation, accredited vocational education and training, formal recognition of skills and post participation support for job seekers and assisted nearly 670 Indigenous people in 2007/08
- in 2007/08, a network of **Indigenous Employment and Training Managers** and 40 **Indigenous Employment and Training Support Officers** assisted 3,100 Indigenous apprentices, trainees, vocational students and jobseekers with their participation in the labour market.

The Queensland Government is also supporting the participation of Indigenous women in the workforce. For example:

- the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE has engaged up to 14 Indigenous women in a nine-month, full-time pre-vocational **program for non-traditional career paths** – such as automotive, engineering and construction industries
- the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE has engaged up to 20 Indigenous women in the Mackay and Rockhampton regions for a **construction industry related training program**.



The government sector directly contributes to improved workforce participation through its **Indigenous Employment Policy** (IEP 20%) which created 203 jobs on 18 civil and 16 building projects during 2007/08.

The **Wal Meta Unit** in the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations has facilitated 94 Indigenous individuals in obtaining employment in the public sector.

CASE STUDY: Mining Opportunities in the Gulf

The 1997 Gulf Communities Agreement between the State Government, Zinifex Century Mine and local Traditional Owners provided opportunities that led to the establishment of Waanyi Mining Services Pty Ltd. The business goals of Waanyi Mining Services are to provide employment and training opportunities for local Indigenous people.

In 2005 the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry provided a \$150,000 Indigenous Business Establishment grant to Northern Project Crushing, one half of a joint venture company set up by Waanyi Mining Services Pty Ltd to provide crushed aggregate to the Century Zinc Mine, 250 kilometres north-west of Mt Isa. Century is the second largest zinc mine in the world based on zinc production.

In 2007, due to gaining additional contracts with Century Mine to provide Indigenous workers and hire out equipment, Waanyi Mining Services received a \$500,000 Indigenous Business Development Program grant as a contribution towards purchasing a CAT front end loader. The equipment has increased the company's income base significantly and brought forward the buy-out of the joint venture.

Waanyi Mining Services has expanded its services and its customer base over the last four years to include the Queensland Department of Main Roads and local shire councils, establishment of a labour hire pool service, contracts around mining rehabilitation and, recently, the buy-out of the joint venture company itself. Plans for the near future include a mobile mining school utilising one of only four mining operations simulators in Queensland.

The company presently employs more than 40 people, with about 25 local Indigenous people working full-time.