

Section two

# Role design and job descriptions

Information Pack:  
Aboriginal  
Culturally  
Responsive  
Recruitment in  
Early Education



## Why should we co-design job roles with Aboriginal staff or Community members?

Aboriginal co-design is a collaborative process where Aboriginal peoples are involved from the start in the design, development and delivery of programs, policies, services, or systems that affect them.

Rather than being consulted after decisions are made, Aboriginal peoples are equal partners and decision-makers throughout the process.

Co-designing job roles with Aboriginal staff or Community members ensures that positions are appropriate, relevant, and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal peoples and Communities. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach, co-design recognises the value of Aboriginal knowledge systems, lived experience, and Community priorities.

### Key benefits include

- Ensuring roles are aligned with the strengths, needs, and aspirations of Aboriginal Communities.
- Valuing Aboriginal cultural knowledge and lived experience as essential components of role design.
- Increasing Community confidence and participation through inclusive, transparent processes.
- Enhancing recruitment outcomes by creating roles that are culturally safe and appealing to Aboriginal candidates.
- Strengthening long-term retention and impact by designing roles that reflect genuine partnership and purpose.

## How does using plain English help in recruitment?

Writing job advertisements and descriptions in plain English helps make work opportunities easier to understand, more welcoming and more accessible for everyone, including Aboriginal peoples. Using complicated language, formal terms or jargon can confuse or deter people, especially those who are not used to formal job processes or who speak English as a second language.

### Here are some useful tips:


- Stay away from complex words or workplace jargon.
- Make sure the candidate understands what you're asking and why it's relevant.
- Consider rephrasing the question or asking follow-up questions, seeking to understand, rather than sticking to rigid examples.
- Ask relevant questions with 'real world' practical examples.
- If you don't understand a word the candidate uses, ask politely and explain why you're asking.
- Use diagrams, pictures, or videos where necessary, especially when explaining new ideas, instructions, or words.

### Why it matters:

- Using plain English, pictures and videos, makes job advertisements and position descriptions easier for more people to understand.
- Supports inclusive hiring by focusing on real-life skills and what someone can actually do.
- Encourages people with strong Community or lived experience to apply, even if they don't have formal qualifications.
- Helps remove confusing or formal language that might turn people away.
- Builds trust by showing the organisation respects clear and honest communication.

### Tips for communicating with Aboriginal employees

- Be mindful of the words you use, whether you're speaking, writing, or using body language. Keep your message simple and clear.
- Avoid copying or imitating the way Aboriginal peoples speak, including Aboriginal English. It is not considered respectful and will not help build trust or make someone feel more comfortable.
- Understand that silence is okay. It doesn't always mean someone doesn't understand, sometimes it's just part of how Aboriginal peoples communicate.
- Let people speak in their own time. Do not interrupt or talk over an Aboriginal person; always wait your turn to talk.

 Read more about: [Communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#)

## Should we remove qualification requirements?

Yes, where qualifications are not essential to performing the role, they should be removed or made optional. Many Aboriginal peoples possess strong cultural knowledge, Community leadership, practical experience, and life skills that are just as valuable, if not more so, than formal qualifications.

Removing unnecessary requirements and qualifications such as driver's licences if the staff member is not required to drive as part of their role helps to lower perceived barriers for Aboriginal peoples.

### Key considerations

- Reviewing roles to identify whether qualifications are genuinely required for safe and effective performance.
- Recognising cultural knowledge, lived experience, and Community involvement as valuable qualifications in their own right.
- Including clear descriptions of desired skills and attributes, rather than relying solely on formal credentials.
- Supporting candidates to develop required qualifications on the job where needed, through training or mentorship.
- Encouraging applications from Aboriginal peoples who may not meet formal criteria but demonstrate strong potential and Community connection.

### What can we ask for instead of formal qualifications?

Instead of requiring formal qualifications, organisations can focus on the practical skills, knowledge, and lived experience that are directly relevant to the role. This approach recognises that many Aboriginal candidates bring deep Community insight, cultural understanding, and hands-on experience that may not be captured through certificates or degrees. This may include:

- Practical experience gained through Community work, volunteering, or caring roles.
- Cultural knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal protocols, values and ways of working.
- Strong communication and relationship-building skills, especially in culturally diverse or Community settings.
- Problem-solving and adaptability, particularly in challenging or changing environments.
- Commitment to Community and demonstrated leadership or advocacy roles.
- Willingness to learn, with opportunities for on-the-job training or professional development.
- Personal values that align with the organisation's mission and support inclusive, respectful practice.


## Why is it important to value lived experience and cultural knowledge?

Valuing lived experience and cultural knowledge is essential for building a workforce that is inclusive, effective, and genuinely responsive to the needs of Aboriginal Communities.

Aboriginal peoples bring unique strengths through their connection to Country, culture, Community, and identity. These insights cannot be taught through formal education alone. These lived experiences shape how people engage, communicate, and lead, particularly in roles that involve working with Aboriginal peoples or Communities.

### Practical ways to demonstrate lived experience

- Including cultural knowledge and Community ties as essential criteria in job descriptions, especially for Community-facing roles.
- Treating lived experience as equal in value to formal qualifications in the recruitment process.
- Creating pathways for Aboriginal staff to lead and mentor based on their cultural strengths.
- Acknowledging the importance of identity, kinship, and Community roles in shaping professional expertise.
- Providing culturally safe environments that support the ongoing sharing and application of cultural knowledge in the workplace.

 Read more about: [Integrating lived experience: Three approaches to bringing out the lived experience in your organisation](#)

