



Australian Government
National Indigenous
Australians Agency



NIAA

Terms of Reference

First Nations Advisory Group
on Employment Service programs

Version 1.0

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



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REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Author	Approved By	Comments
1.0	27 April 2026	NIAA	FNAG and Minister for Indigenous Australians	



CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

1. Employment is a critical determinant of health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity for First Nations peoples. It delivers significant social and economic benefits at the individual, family, community, and national levels, and directly contributes to achieving all Closing the Gap socio-economic targets.
2. In March 2024 the Minister for Indigenous Australians (the Minister) established the First Nations Reference Group (on remote employment services) to provide advice to the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Government on the design and implementation of the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program and a new remote employment service, now known as the Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES), in order to improve employment opportunities for First Nations peoples.
3. With both RJED and RAES now operational, the Minister has decided to build on the FNRG by establishing the First Nations Advisory Group on employment service programs (FNAG) to strengthen the new programs, influence broader Government employment and workforce reforms that impact both remote and non-remote, and consider initiatives to increase the number of First Nations peoples in jobs.
4. On advice from the members, the Minister has agreed to name the group the First Nations Advisory Group on employment service programs (FNAG).
5. This Terms of Reference sets out the scope, priorities, membership, responsibilities and administrative arrangements of the FNAG.

SCOPE

6. The FNAG will provide advice to Government on the continuous improvement of the new remote employment services, broader employment and workforce reforms and initiatives to increase the number of First Nations peoples in employment.
7. FNAG will maintain open lines of communication with the First Nations Economic Partnership's Working Group on Employment and Career Pathways and the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee to ensure there is no duplication of effort across these groups, and that the work of each group is complementary.

PRIORITIES

8. In consultation with the FNAG, the Minister has agreed that the group will provide advice on the following areas of focus:
 - a. Reform of employment services (design, investment, viability, procurement and capability)
 - b. Development and implementation of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning frameworks and continuous improvement for RJED and RAES
 - c. Non-remote employment strategy where job growth and skills development are essential to breaking long-term unemployment cycles for First Nations peoples; and
 - d. Initiatives to enhance employment service engagement with business and industry groups.

TERM

9. The FNAG will be effective from April 2026 and continue up to 30 June 2027.
10. The Minister for Indigenous Australians may agree to extend this group.

MEMBERSHIP

11. The Minister has invited member organisations, and sector representatives, appointed to the First Nations Reference Group (March 2024 to April 2026) to become members and confirm their representatives for the First Nations Advisory Group.
12. Member organisations and individual members are appointed by the Minister.
13. Representatives nominated by member organisations will be agreed by the Minister and Co-chairs.
14. The FNAG members must be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. In addition, members must have experience/expertise in employment services, workforce development, skills and training and/or business enterprise and be able to share perspectives of what community wants.
15. Members must maintain continuity of representation who attend scheduled meetings regularly, as this is essential for the effective functioning of the FNAG. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings without prior notice to the Secretariat or valid reason may result in:
 - a. Review of membership status by the co-chairs;
 - b. Possible removal from the group at the discretion of the NIAA in consultation with the co-chairs.
16. As vacancies arise, co-chairs, through consultation with stakeholders and agreement by members, nominate replacements to the Minister for endorsement and appointment.
17. Co-chairs will be nominated by the group and formally agreed and appointed by the Minister.

THE MINISTER

18. The Minister for Indigenous Australians is the responsible Minister.
19. FNAG will consult with the Minister in the development of priorities, annual workplans and key deliverables.
20. FNAG will meet with the Minister at least three times each year to formally present advice and recommendations.

GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION

21. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) will participate in the FNAG in an exofficio capacity. As an exofficio participant, the NIAA may contribute advice, guidance and subject matter expertise to support the functions of the FNAG; however, the NIAA will not hold any voting rights and will not participate in decision making processes requiring a vote.
22. NIAA will nominate a Senior Executive Officer to represent the Agency.
23. Representatives of relevant Government agencies and complementary First Nations advisory groups will participate in an advisory capacity to ensure a cohesive approach with other areas of Commonwealth policy and investment that support individual wellbeing and readiness for employment or support workforce development and remote economic development opportunities.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

24. Members are expected to operate under the following principles:
 - mutual respect
 - probity
 - professionalism
 - collaboration

- proactive avoidance of material conflicts of interest.

DECISION-MAKING

25. The FNAG will take an informed consensus approach with respect to the advice provided to the Government. This process requires the careful consideration of all relevant matters, drawing on expert advice and ensuring full and frank discussions of the diverse perspectives and views held by members.
26. Final decisions, acceptance of advice and recommendations provided by the FNAG and from wider consultations will rest with the relevant Commonwealth Minister.
27. Where matters under consideration require Ministerial or Cabinet-level decision-making, Commonwealth Government representatives will explain the relevant approval pathways. Efforts will be made to provide as much transparency as possible around how the FNAG recommendations will be considered in these processes.
28. Where possible Commonwealth Government decisions relating to funding, policies, or programs affecting First Nations peoples, the rationale for those decisions—including where recommendations are not adopted—will be communicated clearly to the FNAG.

ANNUAL WORKPLAN

29. Co-chairs, in consultation with members and the Minister, will agree an annual workplan which will outline clear deliverables and timeframes.
30. Deliverables are to be submitted in written or visual formats, including but not limited to reports, papers or presentations and must clearly outline the advice and/or recommendations provided by the FNAG to the Government.
31. The Annual Workplan is to be reviewed and updated at each FNAG meeting.
32. Once developed, each Annual Workplan will be attached as an addendum to this Terms of Reference.

Administrative Arrangements

CO-CHAIRS

33. The FNAG will be co-chaired by two members of the FNAG and a representative of the NIAA to operate in that capacity for the term of the group.
34. The two member co-chairs will be elected by majority vote.
35. Members can elect by majority vote a new co-chair should the existing co-chair need to step down or the majority of the FNAG consider a change in the co-chair is needed. Members will agree and communicate the circumstances by which a chair or co-chair could vacate or be requested to vacate the position of chair. These circumstances might include insufficient participation/attendance at meetings or breach of contract, including non-disclosure of a conflict of interest.
36. In addition to chairing, the co-chairs will participate in discussion, lead on the forward workplan, and agree meeting agendas.
37. The co-chairs may agree to invite individuals with specialist expertise to participate in meetings or provide out of session advice, from time to time, in consultation with the FNAG Secretariat.



MEETINGS

38. A schedule of face-to-face meetings will be endorsed by FNAG once the annual workplan has been agreed. These meetings will cover the period of the annual workplan (July to June) and be attached as an addendum to this Terms of Reference.
39. In addition, the Secretariat, at the direction of co-chairs, will schedule and convene virtual sessions for up to two hours in length, to progress deliverables outlined in the annual workplan. FNAG Members will be provided a minimum of 10 days' notice of these meetings and there is an expectation that all members attend.
40. The FNAG will meet with the Minister for Indigenous Australians at least three times a year, to provide advice and discuss progress on deliverables. The Minister may choose to meet with FNAG more than three times a year.
41. Out-of-session items will be circulated to members by the Secretariat.
42. The FNAG can request through the Secretariat to:
 - a. invite individuals with specialist expertise or representatives from Commonwealth Agencies to participate in or present information on specific policy issues at meetings.
 - b. Conduct sessions with targeted stakeholders including but not limited to youth, disability, employment providers.
43. Information provided to members and discussions during meetings should remain confidential.
44. The FNAG may choose to issue a communique following a meeting.
45. The FNAG will be provided with meeting papers at least five (5) business days prior to each meeting so that members can adequately prepare for meetings.
46. The notes and action items from each meeting will be circulated to members for endorsement as part of the briefing papers for the next regular meeting.
47. Meetings will be recorded by the Secretariat to assist with the development of meeting notes. Recordings will be for the use of the Secretariat only and will not be shared with anyone outside of the Secretariat team. Consent for recording will be sought from meeting attendees at the beginning of each meeting.

PROXIES

48. Members may nominate a proxy to attend meetings on their behalf when they are unavailable. The following conditions apply:
 - a. Approval of Proxy: All proxy nominations must be approved by the Co-Chairs prior to the meeting.
 - b. Notice Period: Members must provide a minimum of 10 working days' notice when nominating a proxy, unless exceptional circumstances arise.
 - c. Notification Requirements: Members must provide the name, role, and contact details of the proposed proxy when submitting their request for approval.
 - d. Responsibilities of Proxy: Approved proxies will be able to participate in discussions but will not have authority to make decisions on behalf of the member they represent.

QUORUM

49. A quorum shall comprise at least fifty percent of the membership plus one.

- a. If both member co-chairs cannot attend, the meeting will be deferred. If the co-chairs are present, but there is no quorum, members can continue the meeting noting out of session feedback will be sought from members who were unable to attend.

WORKING GROUPS

50. The FNAG may convene short-term working groups as required.
51. Working groups will be chaired by a FNAG member and may include external/independent members.
52. The chair of the working group will report on the working group's progress to the FNAG at each meeting.

INFORMATION

53. The Government will ensure that the FNAG is provided with all relevant information, data, and indicative timelines in a timely and reasonable manner. This provision is intended to enable the FNAG to undertake its responsibilities effectively, including reviewing, assessing, and formulating informed advice.
54. The Government will maintain open communication channels with the FNAG and will promptly notify the group of any significant changes to information or timelines that may impact its advisory role.

SECRETARIAT

55. NIAA will provide a Secretariat for the FNAG who will be responsible for managing the forward workplan, coordinating meeting agendas and briefing papers, quality assurance, note-taking and managing the action and conflict of interest registers for full meetings, workshops and working groups.
56. The Secretariat will work with the co-chairs to manage requests and submission of out-of-session advice.
57. The co-chairs can direct the Secretariat to undertake tasks such as writing correspondence to the broader group.
58. The FNAG will be supported by the Secretariat with travel and other arrangements (including sitting fees) for representatives' attendance at meetings as outlined in the Member Agreement.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

59. Members of the FNAG are required to complete Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality forms on appointment to the group.
60. Standards of conduct will be detailed in the Member Agreements.
61. Some members may be current funding recipients or employed by organisations that receive Commonwealth Government funding. If there is a declared conflict of interest, the NIAA Secretariat will record the details in a register and manage in compliance with the 'FNAG Conflict of Interest Policy' to ensure any competitive advantage is minimised.
62. FNAG members must declare any private interests or relationships that could influence or could be perceived to influence advice provided by the FNAG, or advice provided to the NIAA, in the conflict-of-interest declaration form at any time for the duration of the term.
63. The declaration or updating of conflicts of interest will be a standing item at FNAG meetings. Conflicts of interest declared during a FNAG meeting will also be recorded in the meeting minutes and added to the conflicts of interest register managed by the NIAA Secretariat for the FNAG.

64. Where required, a co-chair will excuse the member from the FNAG consideration of the relevant item(s) or the whole meeting if required. Details of potential or actual conflicts of interest declared by members and action taken will be recorded in the minutes.
65. If a member becomes aware of an actual or perceived conflict of interest, the member must notify the FNAG Secretariat immediately and fully disclose relevant information. The FNAG Secretariat will determine what action is reasonably required to mitigate any such conflict.

AMENDMENTS AND REVIEW

66. These Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the FNAG annually.
67. Amendments to the Terms of Reference are subject to agreement from the NIAA and Minister for Indigenous Australians.