

Organisational Allyship

What is an Ally?

To make change for a better, fairer, and socially-just society, non-Indigenous allies are needed to help challenge the racist systems and policies that adversely affect the experiences of First Nations Peoples[i]. **Organisations are uniquely positioned** to innovate their internal systems and policies to ensure inclusion, cultural safety, and the promotion of First Nations rights.

“An ally is someone who promotes diversity and inclusion through their own actions.”[ii]

Being an organisational ally means working with First Nations Peoples either internally through engaging with First Nations employees, or externally through community consultation and external contracting, to critically assess whether your systems, policies and procedures align with a model of equity and inclusion.[iii]

How can organisations engage in allyship?

Centre Indigenous voices

It is important that any policies, procedures, programs, or strategies relating to First Nations cultures, languages and peoples, are led and informed by First Nations perspectives. This means a thorough process of engagement, review, and feedback where a variety of First Nations stakeholders are consulted. Stakeholders could include local community, employees, clients, and partnering organisations.

Develop principles

Work with First Nations People in your organisation, where possible, to develop a set of principles that inform how you engage with your local Aboriginal community. If it is not possible to seek advice from First Nations Peoples, you need to research thoroughly about the appropriate process.

Reflect on First Nations employment and retention

To ensure your organisation is a place where First Nations Peoples want to work and grow their career, it is crucial to reflect on how your organisation supports First Nations Peoples in the workplace.

Some questions to ask:

- 1.Are all non-Indigenous staff participating in cultural competency training?
- 2.Do you have a reporting system for incidents of racism?
- 3.Is their First Nations leadership in your organisation?
- 4.Does your organisation celebrate First Nations cultures?
- 5.Does your organisation understand and address **identity strain**?

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What is Identity Strain?

The term identity strain was coined by a team of researchers at the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Research and Education. It refers to *“the strain employees feel when they themselves, or others, view their identity as not meeting the norms or expectations of the dominant culture in the workplace”*. [i]

In other words, First Nations Peoples feel they must adjust aspects of their cultural identity to fit in at the workplace.

Examples

·A First Nations Person feeling pressure to work harder to prove themselves as competent because they are Indigenous

·A First Nations Person being asked not to be outspoken on Indigenous political issues

Workplace obligations interfering with cultural beliefs around Country, family and kinship ties

Developing a Meaningful RAP

Reconciliation Australia’s Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP) can be a thorough and ongoing way to show your organisation is committed to allyship. RAPs require meaningful structural change within your organisation, they are not a tick a box exercise. Organisational learning takes continual time, commitment, and reflection. There are four levels of RAPs: reflect, innovate, stretch, and elevate. These levels should not be viewed as a badge to display. Each RAP level takes years of learning and adjusting and can regress if diligence is lost.

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Remember

-When designing your RAP, you need to dedicate an appropriate amount of resources to ensure a thorough and meaningful design process. **Each RAP action should translate to a practical and positive impact in your local Aboriginal community.**

-Your RAP should benefit your First Nations employees and not cause extra strain. It should be guided by First Nations perspectives, but the work needs to be done by everyone.

Organisation's will most likely make mistakes in the pursuit of allyship. It is the intention for a better, fairer, and more equitable workplace that matters most.

[i] Summer May Finlay, "How to be a good ally", May, 2019, <https://reconciliationnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/recnewsmay2019.pdf>.

[ii] Wishart, I. (2021). How to be an Ally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The Fred Hollows Foundation. Available at: <https://www.hollows.org/au/blog/how-to-be-an-ally> [Accessed Mar. 21AD].

[iii] Wishart, I. (2021). How to be an Ally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The Fred Hollows Foundation. Available at: <https://www.hollows.org/au/blog/how-to-be-an-ally> [Accessed Mar. 21AD].

[i] Ragg, M. and Young, N. (n.d.). 10 ways employers can include Indigenous Australians. [online] The Conversation. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/10-ways-employers-can-include-indigenous-australians-149741>.