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COLIN  
BIGGERS  
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LAWYERS

Colin Biggers & Paisley

# Indigenous Employment Strategy





Cover artwork was created by artist Anita Ratarra, a Western Arrarnta woman of The Hermannsburg Potters group, Northern Territory.

Anita was ‘born bush’ in the Alukura (women’s camp) near Hermannsburg in 1943. Anita mostly depicts Palm Valley in her work, the home of the Willy Wagtail Dreaming, who turned into a stone in the desert. Palm Valley

is Anita’s grandfather’s Country, and she continues to assert her links with her Country through art.

The Hermannsburg Potters are located approximately 125km west of Alice Springs, Northern Territory. The Potters are a dedicated group of Western Arrarnta artists creating vibrant handmade ceramic pots that encompass collective and individually lived histories in their distinct Country.

Colin Biggers & Paisley relationship with The Hermannsburg Potters began in 2019 and continues to grow and strengthen as we support their programs and artists with pro bono legal assistance, financial grants and in-kind support.

Colin Biggers & Paisley acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work across Australia, and pays our deep respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

## Goals and priorities

Colin Biggers & Paisley is committed to providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with opportunities for sustainable employment, career development, training, support, mentoring and culturally sensitive work environments.

Our Strategic Plan sets out our commitment to facilitate and celebrate inclusion and diversity in our practice. We believe creating an inclusive and diverse workplace enhances our reputation and helps us attract, recruit, retain and engage our people. Recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is part of our commitment to creating an inclusive and diverse workplace.

Colin Biggers & Paisley aims to:

- be recognised as a leader who sets a good example of best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment by the community, legal community and wider business sectors;
- develop strong partnerships with the Indigenous business and community sector to position CBP as an Indigenous opportunity employer;
- provide a range of recruitment, retention and career development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that satisfy the needs of the NSW legal sector and contribute to effective service delivery;
- provide a culturally sound and safe work environment that respects, acknowledges and values diversity of customs, cultures and beliefs;
- recognise and value the variety of ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees learn and acquire skills and experience;
- support the career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees; and
- contribute to the employability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – both within Colin Biggers & Paisley and the general community – by offering not only employment opportunities, but also training and work experience.

## Key principles

Colin Biggers & Paisley:

- is committed to providing access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- recognises the unique skills and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees;
- respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander forms of knowledge and ways of learning or applying that knowledge;
- recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees put their cultural integrity and community reputation at risk when working for Colin Biggers & Paisley;
- seeks to build a network of relations with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and

- recognises and respects any differences in language, cultural understanding and in life experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Best practice guidelines

### Objectives

Colin Biggers & Paisley will strive to use recruitment processes, job descriptions and selection procedures that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Colin Biggers & Paisley will provide supportive, culturally appropriate and sensitive work environments that respect and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### Recruitment

Colin Biggers & Paisley will:

- develop, design and disseminate culturally appropriate job advertisements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific positions;
- where possible, promote all positions through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media such as the Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times;
- where possible, promote all positions through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks including community organisations, support units at education institutions and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment networks;
- promote employment opportunities via email networks as well as by word of mouth and through face-to-face conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the legal sector; and
- consider offering legal and non-legal cadetships and work experience placements to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

### Job descriptions

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific positions and where relevant for other positions, will:

- ensure job descriptions are written in plain English designed to attract a wide pool of suitable applicants;
- avoid jargon or terms that are not familiar to the general public;
- where possible, have job descriptions that focus on abilities needed to do the job, rather than specifying education qualifications. Such descriptions may attract a wider pool of applicants. Colin Biggers & Paisley recognises that life skills may be a more valuable qualification than a university degree; and
- be prepared to be flexible about application periods.

### Selection Committees

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific positions and where relevant for other positions, Colin Biggers & Paisley will:

- provide an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person, or a culturally appropriate person, on selection panels; and

- create a relaxed environment for interviews including:
  - considering providing interview questions to applicants prior to the interview;
  - allowing a support person to attend the interview if required; and
  - allowing the applicant extra time to become comfortable and not feel rushed through the interview.

### Orientation and Induction

Colin Biggers & Paisley recognises that:

- orientation and induction is the appropriate opportunity for its managers to:
  - provide a clear outline of job expectations and goals to new employees;
  - discuss the employment strategy principles contained in this document and possible best practice guidelines for upholding the principles (these principles are flexible and new principles should be added if necessary); and
- managers should make a time to have regular conversations with new employees to discuss whether the principles are being met to the satisfaction of employees.

### Employment contracts and conditions

Colin Biggers & Paisley will ensure that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are made aware of Colin Biggers & Paisley’s Leave Policies that provide for cultural and family leave days and that taking these is supported and encouraged; and
- Colin Biggers & Paisley’s HR team will convey to new employees that it recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are experts in their communities and will strive to remunerate these unique qualities accordingly.

### Mentoring

Colin Biggers & Paisley will strive to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees can:

- receive guidance in their professional development from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentor. This could be an internal or external mentor.
- attend and participate in events of cultural significance that support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and cultural connections; and
- attend and participate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networking opportunities.

Colin Biggers & Paisley employees shall be able to:

- select a mentor, discontinue the mentor relationship or change to a different mentor at any time at the employee’s own discretion;



- explore, develop and maintain mentoring relationships that are culturally appropriate and may include various forms of individual, group or peer support relationships; and
- ensure that the mentor relationship is confidential and based on mutual trust and respect.

Mentors should be able to:

- provide useful advice drawing on their own experience and knowledge;
- generate respect and trust in their relationships; and
- communicate openly and honestly about personal and/or difficult issues.

### Retention

Colin Biggers & Paisley will strive to:

- develop employment and career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees through training and professional learning and development;
- provide training to suit the learning styles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in supportive learning environments; and
- ensure managers work out appropriate opportunities in consultation with individual employees. Examples may include:
  - part-time study leave opportunities;
  - flexible working arrangements; and
  - being sent on conference trips (this also provides the opportunity to network).

### Support

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees must be supported in their roles, and the importance of their work must be continually recognised. Managers need to be flexible to the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, while still respecting professional boundaries.

On occasions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees may experience cultural obligations that impact on work. Trust, respect and clear communication can ensure that cultural and workplace obligations are met to the satisfaction of all employees.

Managers should keep an open door policy and a safe and encouraging environment for one-on-one discussions and regularly check in with employees to ensure their care and wellbeing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, like all other employees, are valuable to Colin Biggers & Paisley and they must be continually encouraged and empowered in their roles.

Networking and peer support is important to the wellbeing and morale of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Establishing and/or providing access to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander network is a positive way for Colin Biggers & Paisley to show support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

### Cultural Awareness and Respect

In order to provide an inclusive work environment which respects and values its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, and supports equity in employment, Colin Biggers & Paisley will continue to facilitate and sponsor cultural awareness and respect activities for all employees.

Colin Biggers & Paisley will strive to equip employees with knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language, culture, values, history and contemporary issues and the unique pressures affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. Managers should strive to ensure all employees understand the importance and value of participating.

Employees should use inclusive language and avoid terms that are offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Respectful, voluntary, two-way discussions between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees about their cultural background and expectations are encouraged.

Colin Biggers & Paisley will observe cultural protocols that recognise the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as the traditional owners of the land. This might include acknowledging the traditional owners of the land at the opening of key meetings, including at employees meetings and inviting a traditional elder to do a welcome to country at the beginning of a function.

Colin Biggers & Paisley will recognise cultural days of significance, such as National Reconciliation and NAIDOC Weeks, and celebrate these in the workplace.

## Monitoring and evaluation

### Monitoring

During the induction process, managers should discuss the principles in this Strategy and establish possible best practice guidelines with new employees. A regular time should be set up to discuss the effectiveness of the principles and any changes that need to be made and continually adhered to, even when all seems well.

A regular conversation time will help build and maintain effective working relationships.

Feedback should be openly accepted and welcomed by Colin Biggers & Paisley and discussed with a view to upholding the strategy principles.

### Evaluation

Colin Biggers & Paisley should annually monitor their employee demographics. The success of Colin Biggers & Paisley's Indigenous Employment Strategy may be partly gauged by an increase in recruitment and retention levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait employees.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees exiting Colin Biggers & Paisley will be asked to complete an exit interview.



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