

## INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

**Organisation:** Country Energy  
**Name:** Ms Shannon Minnis  
**Date received:** 4/03/2008

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3 March 2008

Ms Rachel Simpson  
The Director  
The Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Simpson

I am pleased to provide the attached submission for the Standing Committee on Social Issues' *Inquiry into Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* which outlines Country Energy's Indigenous recruitment, retention and development strategies.

Country Energy's strong focus on increasing the representation of Indigenous employees across its workforce began in 2002 with the launch of an innovative *Indigenous Employment Program* – aimed at creating employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians in their local communities.

The program soon became a benchmark for other businesses and in 2006 Country Energy became the first utility in New South Wales to be recognised by the Federal Government as a 'Corporate Leader' in Indigenous employment.

In August 2007, Country Energy launched its *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy* - aimed at building on the successes and providing direction for Country Energy's Indigenous Employment Program.

Country Energy is now New South Wales' largest direct employer of Indigenous apprentices, and employee participation levels have risen to 2.8 per cent of the total workforce - above the New South Wales Government's public sector target of 2 per cent by 2008.

I encourage other businesses to follow suit and implement Indigenous employment and development strategies to overcome Indigenous disadvantage - not as an act of charity, but because it makes good business sense.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Murray".  
Craig Murray  
Managing Director

# Inquiry into overcoming Indigenous disadvantage

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February 2008

Country Energy's Submission for the Standing Committee on  
Social Issues' Inquiry

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indigenous people continue to be under-represented across all New South Wales public sector workforces<sup>1</sup> and Country Energy is taking active steps to address this issue through recruitment and retention, as well as learning and development strategies.

Country Energy has built on an Indigenous Employment Program established in 2002 with the creation of an *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy* that will see an increase in workforce diversity by providing employment and career opportunities for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders living in regional New South Wales.

In 2006, Country Energy became the first utility in New South Wales to be recognised as a 'Corporate Leader' in Indigenous employment by the Australian Government, signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).

Country Energy's win in the 2007 NSW Aboriginal Employment and Business Awards, Public Sector Category, is testament to Country Energy's commitment to the recruitment, training and retention of Indigenous employees.

Country Energy wants to provide long-term career and leadership development opportunities, including avenues to obtain degree level qualifications for Indigenous employees.

<sup>1</sup> *New South Wales Premier's Department, Public Employment Office, Making it our business: improving Aboriginal Employment in the NSW Public Sector NSW Policy Statement (July 2006).*

## ABOUT COUNTRY ENERGY

Country Energy is a leading Australian energy services corporation owned by the NSW Government, with around 4,000 employees serving more than 870,000 customers.

Country Energy manages Australia's largest energy supply network across 95 per cent of New South Wales' land mass and offers retail electricity in five states and territories.

Our product range includes bottled gas, internet services and energy and water management solutions. We also provide reticulated natural gas to around 23,000 customers in southern NSW and water and sewerage services to 10,000 customers in the Broken Hill area.

## INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Since Country Energy was formed in 2001 Indigenous Australians have been employed in a variety of positions across the business, including:

Powerline worker	Electrical technician
Pole and line inspectors	Plumber
Apprentice lineworkers	Apprentice electricians
Administration trainees	Vegetation trainees
Senior Development Management Program	Gas fitter
Information technology	Water treatment
Asset inspector	Electrical worker
Construction project manager	Technical officer
Workplace trainer and assessor	Administration officer
Customer service adviser	Operation compliance officer
Indigenous program coordinator	

Country Energy has created 83 Indigenous apprenticeships since 2001, with 66 Indigenous apprentices currently undertaking a four-year structured training course across the company's network footprint area. Country Energy recently recruited 50 Indigenous apprentices to undertake a four-year structured training program. This program received funding from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEWR) Structured Training and Employment Program ('STEP') – and the Department of Employment and Training New Apprenticeship Centres (DET NAC).

	Aboriginal Employees	Aboriginal Employees as %
Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	119	2.8 (of total workforce)
Apprentices	66**	15 (of total apprentices)

\* All figures as at 27 February 2008

\*\*Figures only include employees who have formally advised that they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

## OVERVIEW OF RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Appointment of an Indigenous Program Coordinator
- Establishment of a pilot vegetation management program employing 12 Indigenous vegetation control officer trainees located in the mid and far north coasts of New South Wales.
- Expansion of the Indigenous Mentoring Program
- Country Energy's *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy* was launched to identify recruitment, development and retention strategies for Indigenous people. The strategy will provide direction to an already successful and progressive Indigenous program.
- Establishment an Indigenous Employee Network, with over 100 Country Energy employees currently participating in the support network.
- Recruitment of 50 Indigenous apprentices to undertake a four-year structured training program. This program has received funding from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEWR) Structured Training and Employment Program ('STEP') – and the Department of Employment and Training New Apprenticeship Centres (DET NAC).
- Indigenous Employee Network Steering Committee formed to provide support and communication conduit to senior management for the Indigenous Employee Network. This Steering committee has regional representation. The Steering Committee formulated a strategic plan and is in the process of implementing its charter.

## INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

As part of its commitment to being a valued part of the community and an employee of choice, Country Energy has developed an *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy* aimed at increasing workforce diversity by providing employment and career opportunities for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders living in regional New South Wales.

Formally launched in August 2007 by the Minister for Energy, The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC the *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy* is central to Country Energy's long term program to upgrade the electrical network and improve overall service levels. The implementation of the strategy will ensure that Country Energy can retain locally based, qualified skills to strengthen field crews, renew the network, improve service levels and meet the needs of our customers well into the future.

The strategy identifies four key strategic goals:

- Country Energy will become an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians
- Country Energy will offer employment and training opportunities for Indigenous Australians to reflect the diversity of employees and the communities served by the company
- Country Energy will actively encourage and support Indigenous employees to reach their fullest employment potential
- Country Energy will continually evaluate and measure the effectiveness of strategies implemented to increase Indigenous workforce participation.

The strategy incorporates a range of practical initiatives such as pre-employment training and mentoring, targeted apprentice and trainee recruitment, long-term career planning and leadership development opportunities, including opportunities to obtain degree level qualifications, and a financial incentive scheme to encourage employees to work and live in remote areas of New South Wales.

An implementation plan has been developed to complement the vision outlined in the strategy document, targeting key areas for action to: increase the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees; provide on-

going professional learning and career development opportunities; and, build an environment that affirms and respects Indigenous cultural values within the workplace.

Both the strategy document and the implementation plan identify targets and measures to assess the effectiveness of any actions.

**A copy of Country Energy's *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy* and the *Implementation Plan* are attached.**

## **INDIGENOUS RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION STRATEGIES**

Increased Indigenous participation in the workforce is achieved through a targeted recruitment process that encourages and supports Indigenous Australians to apply for positions with Country Energy.

Actions include:

- Targeting identified positions for Indigenous people each year. An example of this is Country Energy's commitment to recruit at least one Indigenous apprentice in each of its nine management regions as part of its yearly apprentice intake. The aim is to offer the successful applicant a position in their local community and when not viable, as close to their home as possible
- Establishing an application and selection process that actively encourages Indigenous applicants to apply for positions within Country Energy. Advertisements are placed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander publications and are identified as Indigenous employment opportunities. Where an applicant for a position identifies as an Indigenous Australian, an Indigenous Country Energy employee forms part of the interview panel and interviews are conducted at a time and venue that best suit potential applicants. Country Energy's recruitment processes incorporates outreach activities in Aboriginal communities, including visits to schools and the provision of scholarships and paid work experience opportunities, to raise awareness of employment opportunities within Country Energy
- Identifying and addressing potential barriers to Indigenous employees reaching their fullest potential within the company. For example, in circumstances where applicants do not meet the selection criteria for a targeted position, the most suitable applicant will be offered a three month work trial and then re-interviewed or, provided pre-vocational training to assist them to meet the required entry criteria
- Implementing an employee induction process that is compatible with and respectful of the values of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

## **TRAINING/CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR INDIGENOUS EMPLOYEES**

Country Energy provides professional learning and career development opportunities for Indigenous employees to improve their skills and career prospects. Initiatives include the provision of long-term career planning and leadership development opportunities, opportunities to obtain degree level and or accredited training qualifications, and participation in internal training programs.

Examples of accredited training options include:

- Advanced Diploma level through the Electrical Industry Training Package
- Certificate IV in Workplace Training & Assessment
- Certificate IV and Diploma of Frontline Management.
- Engineering Cadetships through Country Energy's partnership with the University of Technology Sydney
- Graduate Engineer Program



- Engineering Scholarship with University Newcastle.
- Development assistance is also provided for any approved course which relates to the workplace.

Country Energy has implemented a number of internal strategies to support Indigenous employees and ensure they are given every opportunity to succeed and progress within the organisation. These strategies include:

- Newly appointed Indigenous employees are offered an opportunity to attend a self-development/work preparation course in addition to the standard employee induction program
- Country Energy's Indigenous Program Coordinator visits all new Indigenous employees and their supervisor twice a year for the first two years of employment
- Indigenous employees have access to a workplace mentoring program
- A structured performance feedback process is established during the employee's probation period to assist in the identification of any workforce participation barriers
- Career workshops are held as part of the Indigenous Employee Network
- Opportunities for supervisory and management experience are incorporated into individual employee career development plans to increase the number of Indigenous employees progressing to middle and senior management levels.

## **SUPPORT / GUIDANCE FOR INDIGENOUS EMPLOYEES**

In addition to the range of support structures outlined in other sections of this submission, Country Energy has established an innovative Indigenous Employee Network to provide support to existing employees and to develop links with Aboriginal communities, networks and agencies to ensure ongoing recruitment opportunities. The promotion and recognition of the Network has also worked to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cultures within the organisation.

Country Energy has also established a financial incentive scheme to encourage employees to work and live in remote areas of New South Wales. While focussed on addressing industry skill shortages in rural and regional areas, the scheme provides additional financial incentives to attract Indigenous employees to the organisation, allowing employees to remain in their local communities while meeting the business needs of the company.

## **PROVIDING A CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE WORKPLACE**

Efforts to develop an inclusive organisational culture include:

- Development and launch of an *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy*
- Establishment of an Indigenous Programs Unit and Indigenous Employment and Development Steering Committee, providing a consultative mechanism to implement the strategy across the business and evaluate its effectiveness
- Implementation of a cultural awareness program to assist team leaders and employees achieve an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures and issues, and encourage acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity in the workplace. For example, Country Energy regularly conducts cultural awareness seminars for employees across the business to raise awareness of issues impacting Indigenous employee retention and recruitment levels, as well as general issues faced by customers living in Aboriginal communities located across Country Energy's network footprint area. Cultural awareness training is provided to all supervisors, mentors and managers of Indigenous employees.

- Establishment of an Indigenous Employee Network in 2007, with over 100 Country Energy employees currently participating in the support network.
- Development of dedicated resources to assist Indigenous recruits, such as the Indigenous Apprentice Training Coordinator and Indigenous mentors and workplace trainers.
- Recognition of the value of Indigenous employees by promoting and celebrating their achievements within the company. This occurs via internal and external communication channels, including media releases and articles, Cross Country (Country Energy's internal newsletter), Countrynet (Country Energy intranet site) and by showcasing Indigenous employee achievements at stakeholder events and community functions.

## **DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS**

Partnering with Aboriginal leaders in regional communities to promote employment opportunities with Country Energy is a crucial part of the *Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy*. Country Energy actively participates in career workshops targeting Aboriginal communities across regional New South Wales. Community leaders are invited to participate in functions and events, such as NAIDOC Week celebrations, and Country Energy promotes work experience opportunities for Indigenous school students across the State.

Country Energy actively seeks to sponsor community events that promote Indigenous employment and education opportunities and achievements and, where possible, sponsors school-based educational awards that acknowledge the educational achievements of Indigenous students.

## **CONTACT DETAILS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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# **Country Energy – Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy**

**June 2007**

## Managing Director's Message

I am delighted to introduce Country Energy's Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy 2007.

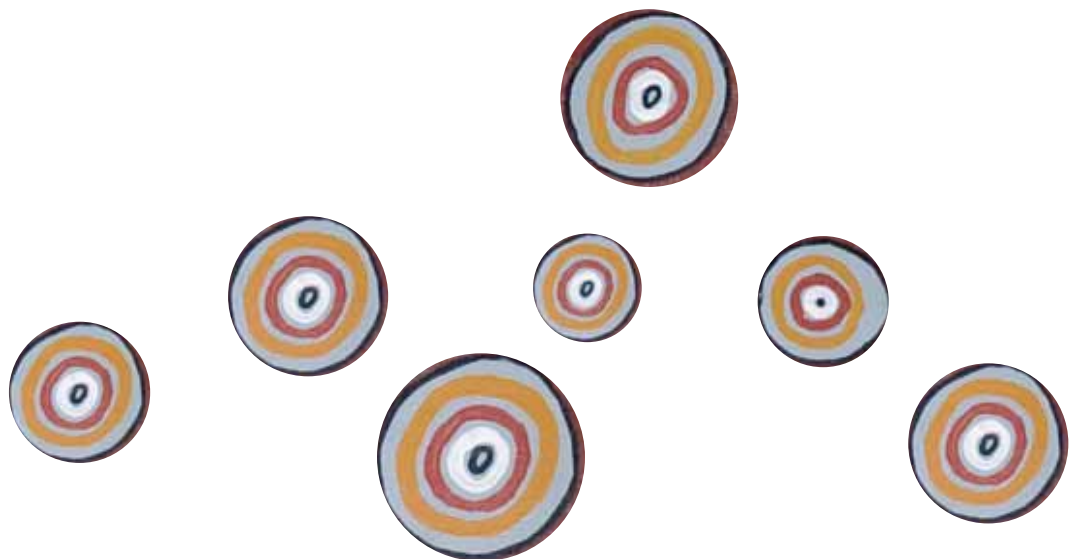
Country Energy is committed to achieving workforce diversity by providing an equal employment environment where people from all backgrounds can work together in reaching their fullest potential. In embracing this strategy, we aim to foster a working environment that provides opportunities for all employees to be enriched by an understanding and respect of Indigenous cultures and values.

The strategy identifies initiatives that will ensure Country Energy attracts, develops and retains skilled, flexible and motivated Indigenous employees. It builds on our successes and sets a future direction that will promote our organisation as culturally inclusive and provide recruitment and career development for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait employees of Country Energy.

I encourage all of us to actively support this strategy.



Craig Murray







## Strategic Goals

# 1

- 1 Country Energy will become an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians.
- 2 Country Energy will offer employment and training opportunities for Indigenous Australians to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities we serve.
- 3 Country Energy will actively encourage and support Indigenous employees to reach their fullest employment potential.
- 4 Country Energy will continuously evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy.

### **Goal 1: Country Energy will become an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians by:**

#### **1.1 Promoting Country Energy as an employer of choice to Indigenous Australians**

Identified positions will be offered in Country Energy's recruitment programmes to Indigenous people.

Links will be established with Indigenous Australians through community groups, schools and training organisations to promote Country Energy's position as a valued and culturally aware regional employer.

#### **1.2 Culture awareness**

Country Energy will provide cultural awareness training for all employees to encourage recognition and respect of Indigenous values and cultures.

Managers and supervisors of Indigenous employees will be provided with additional education to raise their awareness of issues faced by Indigenous employees.

#### **1.3 Strategic management of cultural diversity**

Managing diversity within our workforce will be aligned strategically with Country Energy's commitment to Equal Employment Opportunities.

#### **1.4 Supporting a celebration of Indigenous culture and identity**

Indigenous employees will be actively supported in maintaining their identity and celebrating their cultures.

Country Energy will also promote and recognise value of self identification by Indigenous employees.



## 2

**Goal 2: Country Energy will offer employment and training opportunities for Indigenous Australians to reflect the cultural diversity of our employees and the communities we serve by:**

### 2.1 Targeting vacancies

A number of vacancies that may be exclusively filled by Indigenous Australians will be identified and made available each year.

### 2.2 Application & selection process

The Country Energy employment application and selection process will be designed to reflect the full potential of Indigenous Australians.

### 2.3 Employee induction

Country Energy will provide an employment induction process that is compatible with Indigenous values. Facilitators will be aware of Indigenous values and address any barriers that may be faced by Indigenous recruits.

### 2.4 Develop support mechanisms

An ongoing support mechanism will be developed by Country Energy utilising mentors and tutors who have an understanding of Indigenous learning and development requirements.

### 2.5 Training of Indigenous employees

Country Energy will conduct an analysis of the needs of Indigenous employees to be considered when designing and conducting training programs.

**COUNTRY ENERGY WILL  
BECOME AN EMPLOYER  
OF CHOICE FOR INDIGENOUS  
AUSTRALIANS.**

## 3

**Goal 3: Country Energy will actively encourage and support Indigenous employees to reach their fullest employment potential by:**

### 3.1 Establishing a networking support system

Country Energy will actively encourage Indigenous employees to establish an Indigenous Employee Network Support System within the organisation, allowing Indigenous employees to share their workplace experiences and provide support and encouragement to existing employees as well as new Indigenous recruits.

### 3.2 Career planning sessions

Individual career planning sessions will be actively promoted to Indigenous employees to assist them in developing their vision for their future professional potential and to inform them of possible career paths within the organisation.

### 3.3 Developing higher level opportunities for Indigenous employees in our organisation

Indigenous employees displaying the potential to undertake leadership roles in Country Energy will be identified, developed and supported. This will include the use of programs such as mentoring and coaching.

## 4

**Goal 4: Country Energy will continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy by:**

### 4.1 Evaluation of strategy effectiveness

A Steering Committee consisting of senior management and Indigenous employees will be established to conduct regular reviews of the success of this strategy.

A database will be developed to provide statistical information on our success in meeting the goals of the strategy. It will also be used to support networking, consultation and record feedback from Indigenous employees.

### 4.2 Regional review

The review established in 4.1 will be conducted in all regional areas of Country Energy and will include Regional General Managers and Area Managers.

### 4.3 Indigenous employee satisfaction surveys

Country Energy will conduct an annual satisfaction survey of Indigenous employees. The results will be recorded and reported to the Steering Committee.

### 4.4 Revising actions identified in the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy

Initiatives identified in this strategy will be reviewed and assessed by the Steering Committee annually. The Steering Committee may then revise and implement improvement opportunities to better meet the goals of the strategy.

### 4.5 Reporting of strategy goals

A comprehensive report addressing the goals of the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy will be prepared by the Steering Committee for presentation to the Country Energy Executive, and inclusion in Country Energy's annual report.

**COUNTRY ENERGY WILL OFFER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS TO REFLECT THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.**

Country Energy values safety, excellence, accountability, teamwork, fun and enthusiasm.

We are an organisation with a high performance culture which values our employees, and we are committed to becoming Australia's leading utility business.

We will achieve this by becoming:

- **A leader in safety**
- **The best network manager**
- **A successful national retailer**
- **A valued part of the community**
- **An employer of choice**
- **A reputable water supplier**
- **A responsible environmental manager**

Country Energy's Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy has been developed to identify recruitment, development and retention strategies to create a stable and productive Indigenous workforce with strong ties to the communities we serve.

This strategy will enhance and contribute to two of the objectives in Country Energy's Strategy Statement by becoming a valued part of the Indigenous communities we serve and being an Indigenous employer of choice. We will build on this by positively influencing our safety performance, customer service, network management, business performance and employee development.

The strategy provides opportunities to form partnerships between Country Energy and Indigenous communities across our footprint area, which spans 95 per cent of New South Wales. It is designed to benefit both Country Energy and Indigenous Australians.

The strategy identifies the goals we aim to achieve and the initiatives we will implement.





**“The Journey”** By Kellie Lane

This story is about our company, Country Energy.

The footprints represent the journeys, or walkabout, of each company: North Power, Advance Energy, Great Southern Energy and Australian Inland, on their way to merging to form Country Energy.

The white lines represent our services – electricity, gas, water and internet – and the land we cover.

The circles represent regional field service centres, customer service centres and offices across our footprint area, as well as our employees, customers and communities.

The black and white ‘U’ shapes represent the diverse employee base within the 4,000 strong workforce located throughout New South Wales.

I am proud to be a part of the journey that is reflected in my painting.

**For more information** call Brian McLean on (02) 6589 8870  
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or visit [www.countryenergy.com.au/careers](http://www.countryenergy.com.au/careers)



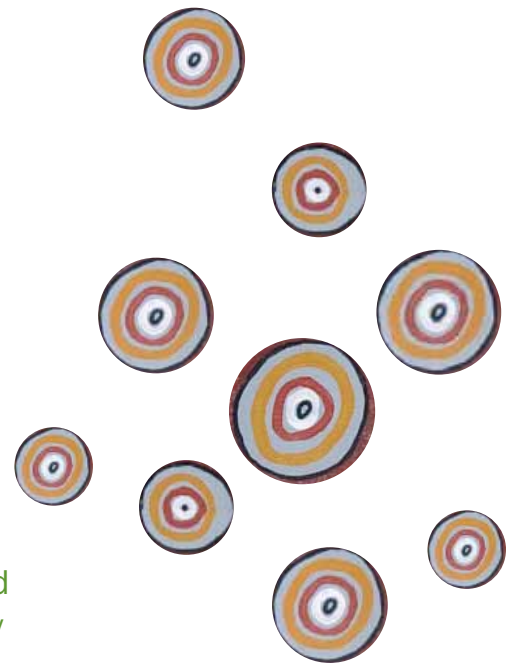


# **Country Energy – Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy**

**Implementation Plan – June 2007**

## Method of Implementation

Country Energy's Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy is an important initiative for Country Energy and Indigenous Communities of rural and remote New South Wales. Both parties will benefit from its success and it can only succeed if both parties participate. It is with this in mind that the responsibility for the implementation of this Strategy is shared between the parties.



### Strategies;

- 1** An Indigenous Employment and Development Steering Committee will be established to allow consultation with key personnel and a participative approach to the implementation of the Strategy.

The Steering Committee will consist of:

- Group General Manager Corporate Services
- Indigenous Program Coordinator
- Regional Indigenous Contact Officers

An Indigenous Community Member from the area where the meeting is held will be invited to each meeting.

The Steering Committee will meet quarterly in different regions to discuss progress of the Strategy and develop additional appropriate actions for implementation.

- 2** A key element to the success of the Strategy will be the establishment of the Indigenous Programs Unit. This unit will be staffed entirely by Indigenous people and direct the day to day implementation of the Strategy.

The Indigenous Program Unit will consist of:

- Indigenous Program Coordinator,
- Support by the Indigenous Employee Network Steering Committee.

- 3** The Indigenous Program Coordinator will report directly to Group General Manager Corporate Services and be responsible for providing advice and assistance to Business Units in their efforts to meet their obligations under the Strategy.

- 4** The Indigenous Program Coordinator will be supported by Regional Indigenous Contact Officers (RICO), one RICO for each region. These officers will be Indigenous employees of Country Energy who hold other positions and will be released when required to carry out their duties under the Strategy.

- 5** The RICO role will include liaison with other Indigenous employees and Indigenous communities in their region. RICO's will report to the Indigenous Programs Coordinator and will provide feedback regarding community and employee needs.

The Indigenous Program Coordinator will advise all Business Units of the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy and action required for implementation.

- 6** Indigenous Program Coordinator will report the achievements of the principal objectives to the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy Steering Committee at the end of the financial year for inclusion in the Annual Report.

### **Success Criteria for Implementation of the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy are:**

- a) Number of positions targeted for Indigenous people per year
- b) Number of targeted positions filled per year
- c) Number of Indigenous applicants for each position targeted under the Strategy
- d) Number of unsuccessful applicants for Apprenticeships targeted under the Strategy who take part in tutorials
- e) Proportion of Indigenous staff with documented Skills Development Program (Target 1.0)
- f) Proportion of Indigenous staff to complete Training and Development Programs on schedule (Target 1.0)
- g) Proportion of Indigenous staff to attend all approved Indigenous Employees Network Workshops (Target 1.0)
- h) Number of initiatives that inform Indigenous communities and educational institutions of the Strategy and its goals
- i) Number of Work Experience Programs conducted for Indigenous students and Indigenous community members
- j) Number of tutorials conducted for members of Indigenous communities that contribute to improved marks in entrance exams
- k) Number of Indigenous staff to have acted in higher positions
- l) Number of Indigenous staff to have gained promotion
- m) Number of private employers and contractors contacted to promote Indigenous employment

- n) Number and percentage of temporary and casual positions filled by members of the Indigenous community
- o) Number of functions for Indigenous people attended by Business Unit Managers
- p) Number of Indigenous employees exiting from organization
- q) Proportion of exit interviews performed with terminating Indigenous staff at which Indigenous Program Coordinator or RICO were present

### **Evaluation**

This Strategy is a living document and additional actions will be added as deemed necessary.

The Strategy's progress will be monitored on a quarterly basis and it will be reviewed internally on an annual basis. There will be a formal review after two years of implementation. Parties involved in the evaluation will include representatives of the Executive of Country Energy, Indigenous Program Coordinator, Indigenous Employee Network Committee and members of Indigenous communities.

**THIS STRATEGY IS A LIVING DOCUMENT  
AND ADDITIONAL ACTIONS WILL BE ADDED  
AS DEEMED NECESSARY.**





## 1

### **Objective 1: To increase representation of Indigenous people employed in Country Energy.**

#### **Action**

- Each year the Indigenous Program Coordinator is to liaise with Regional and Divisional Managers to determine the number of positions to be targeted to meet their obligations under the Strategy.
- In regions where half yearly targets have not been met all entry level vacancies (full time or temporary) will be targeted under the Strategy until the targets are met.
- A minimum of one position per region in bulk recruitments to be targeted under the Strategy.
- Advertising for targeted vacancies in Country Energy to be advertised in the Indigenous media.
- Application forms for all vacancies in Country Energy to include optional question on Aboriginality.
- When one or more applicants for any Country Energy position identifies themselves as an Indigenous person there is to be one member of the selection panel that is an Indigenous employee of Country Energy or a specifically trained representative of Country Energy.
- Any temporary positions deemed by the Indigenous Program Coordinator to be a suitable development opportunity are to be targeted for Indigenous people.

## 2

### **Objective 2: To maximize the number of Indigenous applicants for positions advertised under the Strategy.**

#### **Action**

- All positions advertised under the Strategy to appear in Indigenous specific papers and local papers and media.
- All advertisements for positions targeted under the Strategy to be headed "Indigenous Employment Opportunity".
- Closing date for Strategy positions to be extended for one week longer than other positions.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator to promote positions advertised under the Strategy to local Indigenous organizations; educational institutions, Community Development Employment Programs (CDEP's), Indigenous Employment Centres (IEC's) and Job Network Members (JNM's) in the area where position is located.
- Notification of all vacancies under the Strategy to be circulated to all Indigenous employees of Country Energy.
- Contact person for all positions advertised under the Strategy to be the Indigenous Program Coordinator or a RICO.
- The phone number regarding inquiries in advertisements to be equivalent of local call charge where possible.
- Application workshops facilitated by Indigenous Program Coordinator are to be offered to all potential applicants for positions targeted under the Strategy.
- Where possible all applicants to be interviewed for positions targeted under the Strategy.

- Indigenous Program Coordinator and/or Indigenous employees from local area to attend all Indigenous specific career workshops across rural and remote New South Wales.
- At career expos where Country Energy has a stall Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy is to be promoted.
- Information packages to be developed specifically for Indigenous applicants.
- Career advisors kit to be developed for distribution to education institutions.
- School and community excursions to be hosted in each region when requested.
- Work experience opportunities to be promoted and made available for Indigenous students.
- Work experience program to be tailored to the students' interests.
- Unsuccessful applicants for positions under the Strategy to receive feedback from Indigenous Program Coordinator and if required assisted in forming development program.
- Unsuccessful applicants for positions under the Strategy to be placed on a list to receive news of all up coming vacancies.

**A MINIMUM OF ONE POSITION PER REGION IN BULK RECRUITMENTS TO BE TARGETED UNDER THE STRATEGY.**

# 3

**Objective 3: To establish a recruitment process that provides Indigenous applicants with the opportunity to present them in the best possible light.**

## Action

- In each apprentice intake in each region at least one position will be targeted under the Strategy for Indigenous people. The most suitable Indigenous applicant in the region will be placed as close to their home as possible.
- Apprenticeship entrance test to be suitable to reveal necessary information to select best equipped applicant and assess development needed of unsuccessful applicants.
- Apprenticeship testing for Indigenous apprentices to be held at separate times and venues and will be conducted and supervised by a consistent team of Indigenous employees of Country Energy headed by the Indigenous Program Coordinator or their representative.
- Interview panels for Indigenous apprenticeship positions targeted under the Strategy to be convened by Indigenous Program Coordinator or representative and consist of a representative from the site where the position is offered.
- In each region where positions are targeted under the Indigenous Strategy and there are no applicants who meet the required standard one of the following options should be implemented. Most suitable applicant to be:-

**Option 1:** Given a three month trial followed by a retest and/or re-interview.

**Option 2:** Paid to attend a pre-vocational course with a position offered on successful completion.

**Option 3:** Offered a relevant position (e.g. electricity worker) and be provided with coaching to reach satisfactory standard before acceptance in position.

**NB: Under no circumstances will a position targeted for Indigenous people be filled by a NON-INDIGENOUS person.**

# 4

**Objective 4: To identify and develop members of Indigenous communities with interest and ability to fill positions targeted in local area.**

## Action

- Country Energy will encourage school attendance in communities by providing certificates and/or prizes for Indigenous students who attend every day for a semester and a year.
- Sponsor Mathematics and Science competitions for Indigenous students in local area.
- Promote and make available a work experience program for Indigenous students.
- Provide scholarships for promising students from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue education.
- Work with CDEP's, IEC's and JNM's to facilitate courses that enhance skills, knowledge and suitability of participants.
- Facilitate paid work experience programs for suitable mature aged people when suitable projects become available.
- Conduct regular workshops to provide exposure to Country Energy work practices and ethics for mature aged people and senior years students.
- Unsuccessful applicants who sat for apprenticeship test are to be offered feedback.
- Provide post interview feedback to unsuccessful applicants on ways to perform at a higher level at next opportunity.

- Sponsor and be involved in after school tutoring for Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 in Math's, Science and English where there is a need and the students are interested.



## 5

**Objective 5: To raise the retention rate among Indigenous employees to match that of Non-Indigenous employees.**

### Action

- Offers of employment under the Strategy to be delivered over phone by Indigenous Program Coordinator and/or RICO followed by a personal visit to the family by Indigenous Program Manager.
- New Indigenous employees to be given list of Indigenous Employment Network members available for support.
- New Indigenous employees to attend self-development/work preparation course in addition to normal induction.
- All staff in section, where there is to be a new Indigenous employee, are to attend Strategy/Cultural Awareness briefings before employee commences.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator to visit new Indigenous employees and their supervisor twice per year for the first two years.
- Morning tea with other members of Indigenous Employees Network in local area to be arranged within the first month.
- A list of suitably qualified mentors to be compiled for each site of Country Energy.
- New Indigenous employees to be given a list of names and contact details of Mentors who have been deemed to be suitable – so they can meet them and choose their mentor.
- Conditions of probation period to be explained thoroughly.
- Fortnightly feedback by supervisor to be given during probation – if any problems Indigenous Program Coordinator to be advised immediately.
- Monthly feedback by supervisor to be given during probation with RICO in attendance.
- All absences during probation to be reported to Indigenous Program Coordinator as they occur.
- All employees recruited through the Strategy to receive all internal Indigenous Employees Network Meetings.
- Network meetings to be held twice per annum.
- Indigenous employees to have ready access to Indigenous Program Coordinator or RICO to discuss difficulties or perceived problems.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator or RICO to have regular discussions with direct supervisor of Indigenous employees.
- Tutorial assistance to be available on request from Indigenous employees.
- Compulsory tutoring to be given in work time to all Indigenous employees who achieve less than the required level in any assessment. This is to be provided within two weeks of assessment.
- A counseling service, complimenting the Employee Assistance Program will be provided to Aboriginal employees to address both on and off the job issues.
- Special consideration will be given in cases of family bereavement for Indigenous employees.
- A quarterly Indigenous Countrynet Tab will be produced and distributed to Indigenous employees.
- Indigenous employees who have good work ethics but find they are unsuitable for their chosen vocation will, where possible, be offered another choice of employment within the organization.
- Exit interviews to be conducted in the company of a RICO for Indigenous staff in cases of separation.

## 6

**Objective 6: To support Indigenous employees in their efforts to increase their merit based representation at all levels of the organization.**

### Action

- All Business Units to actively train and develop their Indigenous employees.
- Successful applicants for apprenticeships who do not achieve 60% in entrance exam to attend internal tutorials to improve their understanding.
- Each Indigenous employee to be assigned a suitably qualified trainer.
- Career workshops to be held at Indigenous Employee Network Workshops once per year.
- Guest speakers to address Indigenous Employees Networks to provide an insight to possible career plans.
- All Indigenous employees to have equal access to mainstream courses run internally in addition to tailored programs associated with Indigenous Employee Networks.
- Attendance at external short courses that are relevant to the career of Indigenous staff will be encouraged and approved for specific development.
- Additional study leave may be approved for Indigenous employees pursuing studies at recognized educational institutions that will mitigate prior disadvantage and enhance promotional prospects.
- Opportunities to act at a higher level will be provided in a timely manner for Indigenous employees who have progressed well.
- Supervisory positions to be targeted as development programs for suitably qualified Indigenous employees.
- Indigenous employees who are progressing well towards promotion to be offered to “buddy” with person in position similar to position sought.

# 7

**Objective 7: Provide relevant training and ongoing support to all staff of Country Energy to ensure the success of the Strategy.**

## Action

- Specialized training such as Cultural Awareness to be provided for supervisors, tutors and mentors before contact with new Indigenous employees.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator to offer confidential counseling for individuals on demand.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator to visit each mentors/supporter at regular intervals.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator to assist in any conflict resolution between mentor/supporter and employee.
- Mentors/supporters role and successful combinations to be promoted internally and externally of Country Energy.
- Certificates of recognition of contributions to be presented to mentors/supporters.
- A support group consisting of supervisors, tutors and mentors to be formed to assist new supporters in their efforts.
- Celebration and information days will be held where people from different backgrounds can give 'awareness sessions' about their origins and culture.

# 8

**Objective 8: Market the Strategies' potential, progress and successes, both internal and external, to Country Energy throughout the life of the Strategy.**

## Action

- Launch of the Strategy to be publicized in internal and external media.
- Indigenous Employment Newsletter to be developed by Indigenous Program Unit and distributed quarterly.
- Biography and Photo of all new Indigenous employees to be circulated to Indigenous Employee Network.
- Existing Indigenous employees' biography and photo to be circulated to Indigenous Employee Network.
- Indigenous employment success and good news stories to be circulated in internal publications and Indigenous media.
- All positions advertised by Country Energy to include references to successes of Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy.
- All external positions to be advertised in Indigenous media.
- Sponsor events that promote Indigenous Employment and Education in local areas.
- Progress of this Strategy to be reported in Country Energy's Annual Report.
- Indigenous employees given Indigenous flag badge to wear on uniform if they wish.

- Indigenous employees to be provided with Indigenous theme T-shirt to wear at functions.
- Awards for achievements by Indigenous employees to be presented annually.
- Supporters badges to be available to be worn on uniform of supervisors, mentors and tutors if they wish.
- T shirts to be developed for marketing in Indigenous communities.
- Articles to be contributed to Indigenous media regarding successes or initiatives under the Strategy.
- Indigenous employees encouraged to be involved in Community activities and celebrations.
- Each Field Service Centre and Shop-front to promote NAIDOC Week.
- Indigenous employees and management to be involved in NAIDOC and Reconciliation celebrations.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator and/or Indigenous employees to promote Country Energy at all Indigenous specific career markets in their area.
- Indigenous Program Coordinator and/or RICO to promote Country Energy Strategy to Community Organizations and Educational Institutions.

**PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN  
GAINING SUITABLE PREMISES  
TO RENT FOR INDIGENOUS  
FAMILIES MOVING TOWNS  
TO TAKE UP EMPLOYMENT.**

# 9

**Objective 9:** To form partnerships with other interested parties to improve the future outlook for Indigenous communities of rural and regional New South Wales.

### Action

- Country Energy to promote Indigenous employment to other employers in their area.
- Country Energy to sponsor Indigenous events and encourage employee involvement in community activities that promote interaction.
- Conduct community visits and Indigenous Elders afternoon teas to Country Energy sites.
- Sponsor Indigenous specific self-development courses for school leavers and unemployed in remote communities.
- Country Energy to work with Police Citizens Youth Club or similar organizations in remote areas to improve Indigenous participation in organized programs.
- In remote areas Country Energy to form partnerships to facilitate skills development courses with project that creates interest among Indigenous youth.
- Encourage all contractors engaged by Country Energy to employ Indigenous people.
- Wherever possible Country Energy to structure outsourcing contracts that will be attractive to local Indigenous business.

# 10

**Objective 10:** To raise the profile of Country Energy as an Indigenous friendly organization and employer of choice in Indigenous communities of rural and regional New South Wales.

### Action

- Encourage Indigenous employees to participate in community promotions.
- Support educational and health related initiatives in communities.
- Promote NAIDOC and other significant Indigenous days in Service Centres.
- Develop a community calendar each year promoting local Country Energy Indigenous employees and members of the community in each site of origin.
- Facilitate or sponsor initiatives to provide social and learning outlets for local Indigenous youth.
- Distribute promotional goods to Indigenous students and community members. E.g. rulers, pens, t-shirts.
- Organize and support community social days and nights promoted and conducted by Indigenous employees.
- Indigenous employees to be available to give motivational talks at educational forums for Indigenous people.
- Conduct visitor days for members of Indigenous communities.

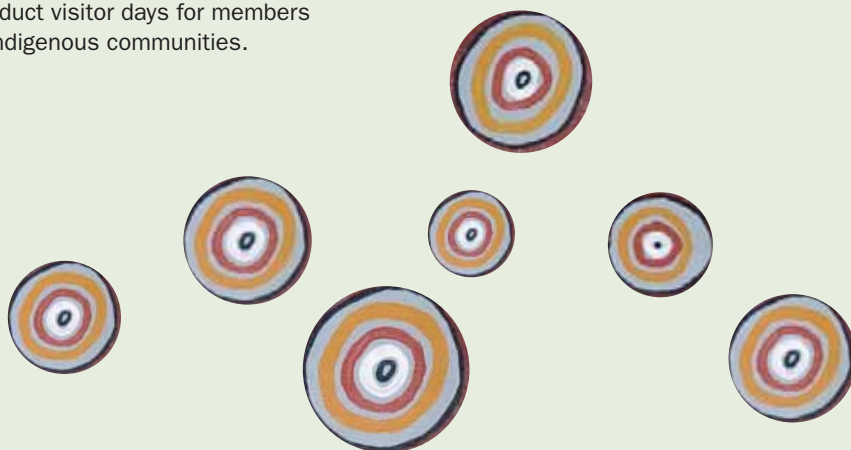
# 11

**Objective 11:** To achieve all defined success criteria for implementation of the Strategy in all regions each year of the Strategies' life.

### Action

Indigenous Program Coordinator to:

- Liaise with Regional Managers.
- Assist with identification of positions to be targeted.
- Assist regions with selection of candidate for targeted positions.
- Provide/facilitate Cultural Awareness programs for all staff in all regions.
- Assist local management with career planning for Indigenous employees.
- Prepare coordinated report on achievement of Country Energy's Indigenous Employment & Development Strategy for annual submission to General Manager Corporate Services.





# 12

**Objective 12: Promote and market Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy to all Country Energy employees.**

**Action**

- 1) The Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy to be promoted and marketed in all Country Energy internal publications.
- 2) The Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy made available to all employee of Country Energy via Countrynet.
- 3) A copy of the Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy to be available in a prominent position in all sites.
- 4) Indigenous Employment and Development Strategy information to be included in all induction programs and included in information folders.
- 5) Interviews for all promotions inside the organization to include a question on Strategy involvement.
- 6) Indigenous Program Coordinator to be available to all Business Units to advise and assist with queries relating to the Strategy.



**COUNTRY ENERGY TO PROMOTE  
INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT TO  
OTHER EMPLOYERS IN THEIR AREA.**



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**countryenergy**