INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND QWWS

BONI ROBERTSON, CATHERINE M. DEMOSTHENOUS & HELLENE T. DEMOSTHENOUS

2010
This research project was funded through Griffith University’s Logan Office of the Provost Community Grants Programme.

The research project aims to assist Queensland Working Women’s Service (QWWS); a community organisation that provides information, referral and support to women who work in Queensland, Australia. Driving the project is a commitment to improve QWWS’s service provision to Australian Indigenous and Migrant working women in Queensland.

The research project was conducted by Indigenous Women’s Research Consortium (IWRC) members\(^1\) out of Indigenous Policy, Partnerships and Community Engagement and the Business School at Griffith University, Queensland. The findings of the research project are presented in two reports:

(i) *Indigenous Women and QWWS* presents the findings of the research conducted by the NIWRC with Indigenous (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander) working women in Queensland; and

(ii) *Reaching Out: Enhancing the accessibility of the Queensland Working Women’s Service (QWWS) for Migrant Women* presents the findings of the research conducted by the Business School with Migrant working women in Queensland.

*Indigenous Women and QWWS* is presented in this document and will be referred to as the ‘current report’.

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\(^1\) The Indigenous Women’s Research Consortium, also known as the IWRC, is an association of universities and Indigenous women researchers from around the world who share a common commitment to excellence in Indigenous research. The IWRC provides a model for cooperative collaboration among Indigenous women in top-tier universities and Indigenous communities, and is committed to raising awareness among the broader research community of the role that Indigenous-driven research plays in optimising and enriching the lives of Indigenous communities.
The current report builds a state profile of all Indigenous working women in the State of Queensland during 2006. It also presents the findings of four yarning circles that were conducted with Indigenous working women from Brisbane, Townsville, Doomadgee and the Torres Strait Islands.

To better provide its service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women the current report recommends that QWWS plan, develop and implement a series of strategies that include the following:

- Appoint Indigenous persons to relevant authoritative committees of QWWS to ensure best ethical practice in service provision to Indigenous women in work;
- Plan, develop and implement an appropriate Indigenous Employment Strategy to ensure the equitable recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff at all levels of QWWS’s operations;
- Evaluate existing training and development programs to ensure the delivery of cultural awareness training to all staff;
- Plan, develop and design a marketing approach that promotes QWWS as a service provider to Indigenous women, and ensure those promotions incorporate Indigenous imagery (e.g., photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and other iconography) and hypertext links to other Indigenous work-related organisations (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Legal and Advocacy Service, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice, Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet);
- Deliver marketing campaigns at strategic locations and events – for example, through Indigenous information and referral service organisations (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Legal and Advocacy Service, First Contact), at local and state annual Indigenous events (e.g. NADOC, Black, Bold and Beautiful Indigenous Women in Leadership events), through Indigenous radio in Queensland (e.g., 4AAA Murri Country), in Indigenous Queensland newspapers (e.g., Koori Mail, The Indigenous Times, & Torres News);
• Look at ways to provide visiting locum services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that lie beyond the greater Brisbane area to ensure improved access to QWWS’s support services; and
• Develop and strengthen inter-agency consultation and engagement across local and state Indigenous organisations, communities, councils and bodies for a collaborative and shared approach to supporting Indigenous “working” women in Queensland.

The current report was finalised in 2009 and launched at Griffith University in 2010.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our sincere thanks go to Griffith University’s Elders-in-Residence Aunty Delmae Barton and Uncle Graham Dillon for cultural direction and guidance on the QWWS project.

We would like to thank our colleagues in the Business School, Griffith University, Dr. Kaye Broadbent, Dr. Janis Bailey, Professor Glenda Strachan and Ms. Susan Ressia, who looked at the ‘migrant women’ aspect of the research for QWWS.

Special thanks to:
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- The Indigenous Research Network, Griffith University;
- The Gumurrii Student Support Centre, Griffith University;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Advocacy and Legal Services, Brisbane;
- The participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; and
- The many others that helped us along the way.
THE RESEARCH TEAM

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Dr. Hellene Demosthenous is a Senior Member of the IWRC and Research Fellow with Indigenous Policy, Partnerships and Community Engagement, who specialises in human behaviour and wellbeing. Hellene was an officer on the QWWS project.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIATSIS</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZSCO</td>
<td>Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZSIC</td>
<td>Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCO</td>
<td>Australian Standard Classification of Occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSI</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSIC</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSIHWWG</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSIWLAS</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal and Advocacy Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Collection District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDEP</td>
<td>Community Development Employment Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadly</td>
<td>Really good, impressive (from, Aboriginal English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IARE</td>
<td>Indigenous Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>Indigenous Coordination Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILOC</td>
<td>Indigenous Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IREG</td>
<td>Indigenous Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murri</td>
<td>Aboriginal person of Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAIDOC</td>
<td>National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>National Health and Medical Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIWRC</td>
<td>National Indigenous Women’s Research Consortium</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHS&amp;W</td>
<td>Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QWWS</td>
<td>Queensland Working Women’s Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSI</td>
<td>Torres Strait Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSRA</td>
<td>Torres Strait Regional Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWC</td>
<td>Working Women’s Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWS</td>
<td>Working Women’s Service</td>
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</table>
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PART 1: INTRODUCING THE REPORT

Part 1 provides an overview of the report, definitions from the literature, the design of the research, and the structure of the report.

Overview

This report is prepared for Queensland Working Women’s Service (QWWS), a community organisation that provides work-related services to women in Queensland. At the current time, there is little, if any, research on Indigenous women’s work-related needs in Queensland. Little has been written on Indigenous working women’s experiences of work in Queensland, and even less has been written on how Indigenous women access information on their rights at work, or how they perceive work-related service organisations like QWWS.

Driving this report is a commitment by QWWS to better understand the needs of Indigenous clients and to better understand how to meet those needs. QWWS considers Indigenous working women to be a priority client, and is committed to ongoing improvements to its service provision to Indigenous (and other) women across Queensland.

The current report is being conducted by the National Indigenous Women’s Research Consortium (NIWRC) out of Indigenous Policy, Partnerships and Community Engagement in the Office of the Provost (Logan campus) at Griffith University. The current report:

- gives some background to the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working women in Queensland;
- produces a state profile of all Indigenous “working” women in Queensland;
- provides a regional and demographic profile of our Indigenous participants and their communities;
- reports the findings of the yarning circles conducted in four Queensland communities; and
- presents some strategies for improved service provision to Indigenous ‘working’ women in Queensland.

**Definitions**

The Australian literature uses the term ‘Indigenous’ to refer to persons of ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ descent. We understand that use of the term ‘Indigenous’ conflates the linguistic, cultural, experiential and spiritual differences of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. Where possible, we use the terms ‘Aboriginal’ to refer only to Aboriginal people, and ‘Torres Strait Islanders’ to refer only to Torres Strait Islanders people. However, there are instances where we use the terms ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ interchangeably; particularly where we are discussing the Australian literature.

**Design of the Research**

The yarning circle method was chosen to conduct this social research project. Four yarning circles were conducted in different regions in Queensland: the metropolitan-urban and inner regional Brisbane Yarning Circle, the major urban and outer regional Townsville Yarning Circle, the other urban and very remote Doomadgee Yarning Circle and the rural and very remote Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle.

The yarning circle method offers participants an ‘intimate and closed forum … to share their stories’ (Demosthenous, Robertson, Cabraal & Singh, 2006, p.3). These forums can lead to an evolutionary body of knowledge that is grounded in the data; and, at the same time, provide participants with ‘a real say’ on matters of relevance to them and their work (Calma, 2006).

Using yarning circles also adheres to the protocols set down by the National Health and Medical Research Council 2003/2007, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2000 and Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. Our research was informed by those values and principles, and we remain
mindful of the importance of ensuring ethically-appropriate practice in Indigenous research.

**Structure of the Report**

The remainder of the current report is divided into five parts.

**Part 2** gives some background on Indigenous women and work, and looks at the role of Working Women’s Centres (WWC) in Australia. **Part 3** builds a state profile of all Indigenous working women in Queensland during 2006. **Part 4** provides a regional and demographic profile of the Indigenous working women of the four participating yarning circles from Brisbane, Townsville, Doomadgee and the Torres Strait Islands communities in Queensland. **Part 5** presents the yarning. **Part 6** provides and overview of the gaps in service delivery, and concludes with some recommendations for improved practice in service provision to Australian Indigenous women in work in Queensland.
PART 2: SOME BACKGROUND

Part 2 of the report provides some background information on Indigenous women and work and the role of Working Women’s Centres in Australia.

Indigenous Women and Work

A couple of years ago, a group of Aboriginal women were sitting around yarning about money and money management. An Elder, after sharing a story about a job she had in her youth, where she’d worked as a domestic on a cattle station, suddenly stopped speaking, then said, ‘Come to think of it, I don’t think I got any pay’.

In Queensland, from 1904 to 1987, the government withheld or underpaid wages of Indigenous workers (McGrath, 1997). Following the late 1800s, when the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act was passed, a large proportion of those monies were compulsorily saved into government trust accounts. No consultation took place, and no consent was needed, because the passing of the Act denied the civil rights of Aboriginal people and therefore their rights as workers (McGrath, 1997).

Countless numbers of Indigenous women that worked in Queensland were paid in rations or food scraps or old clothing (Demosthenous, Robertson, Cabraal & Singh, 2006). There were no tribunals or unions to protect the rights of Indigenous women in the workplace. Some women received “pocket money” for their services, while many others never received payment for work performed (Demosthenous & Cabraal, 2006).

In theory, contracts and permits were voluntary. In practice, refusal to work incurred physical assault, banishment to a reserve or imprisonment (Cape York Justice Study Report, 2001, p.2).
For many younger women, who were taken from their families and placed in state and church run institutions, compulsory training in domestic work meant that they could be sent to work as domestics in the homes of cattle station and pastoral property managers and station-hands (e.g., Baker, 1983). As domestics, Indigenous women cooked and cleaned for their bosses, took care of their bosses’ children, and their bosses’ wives, and did so for little or no money (Robertson, Demosthenous & Demosthenous, 2005). So many young women were sent so far from their families and communities, with many of them captives in a life of cruelty and sexual servitude. In 1934, a pastoralist from the edge of the Nullarbor Plains stated that he knew of stations “where every hand on the place had a gin, even down to boys of 15 years of age...” (Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Investigate, Report, and Advise on Matters in Relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines, 1934).  

While there are some positive episodes in history of Indigenous women’s work, historically, Indigenous women have had the most alarming experiences.

Since that time and in more recent years, the Queensland Government has distributed to Aboriginal people one-third of a settlement totaling $55 million dollars in compensation for stolen wages (European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights, 2004). In 2009, the Australian Government identified the under representation of Indigenous people in the workplace as a priority area, and called for an additional 100,000 jobs for Indigenous people within a decade (Ministers’ Media Centre, 2008). A greater representation of Indigenous people in the Australian workplace means a greater representation of meeting the needs of Indigenous workers; in their jobs, and in their workplaces. Within such a framework, the provision of high quality services to Indigenous people will be vitally important, and particularly the services of organisations such as the working women’s centres like QWWS.

2 Note, the term “gin” was commonly used to refer to, and denigrate, Indigenous women.
The Role of Working Women’s Centres

According to Uebergang, Dear and Dann (2008, p.1), QWWS, and other Working Women’s Centres or WWC’s in South Australia and the Northern Territory, are community organisations [that] support women workers whatever their age, ethnicity or work status by providing a free and confidential service on work relates issues. The WWC’s [including the QWWS] work primarily with women who are not represented by a union, their own lawyer or other advocate.

In fact, almost one-third of all women accessing support from the WWC in the Northern Territory were Indigenous. Of these, more than forty percent received intensive support across a range of matters, including: pay and conditions; termination of employment; workplace bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and assault in the workplace; OHS&W; workers compensation; maternity entitlements; and negotiating with the employers and employment contracts (Uebergang, Dear & Dann, 2008).

The research indicates that the majority of women that have sought the services of their relevant WWC’s ‘work in very precarious areas of work and are both CDEP participants and employees in mainstream employment’ (Uebergang, Dear & Dann, 2008, p.1). Further, it is held that these women are particularly vulnerable to workplace exploitation because of their limited access to information or services to help them address instances of discrimination, and this is often exacerbated by these women’s low paid and/or casual work status. While the scope of problems that Indigenous women face in the workplace cover diverse areas, from the role of kinship in workplace relations to training needs and beyond, research conducted by Uebergang, Dear and Dann (2008) maintained that “in order to maintain a satisfying and healthy job, Indigenous workers require access to a range of services”.

Though there is little research on Indigenous women’s work-related needs in Queensland, Reconciliation Australia have recently run an ad campaign to raise awareness of Australian’s racial tolerance levels. One of their advertisements depicts a Non-Indigenous women’s face and an Indigenous women’s face, with the caption,
“Who would you want to work with” (Lee, 2009, p.74). The author states, ‘THE ANSWER’S NOT ONE TO BE PROUD OF HERE IN THE LUCKY COUNTRY, ANGLO-AUSTRALIANS ARE STILL LUCKIER THAN THE REST’ (Lee, 2009, p.74, emphasis in original). There is much to be known about Indigenous working women in Queensland.

**Summary**

Part 2 of the report has provided some background information on Indigenous women and work and the role of Working Women’s Centres in Australia. The next part, Part 3, builds a state profile of all Indigenous women of working age in Queensland.
PART 3: STATE PROFILE

Part 3 of the report constructs a state profile of all Indigenous women of working age in Queensland in 2006, that is those of 15 years and over. It also sketches comparisons with their non-Indigenous counterparts.

All Women by Indigenous Status

In the 2006 Census, there were 1,576,498 women of 15 years and over, usually resident in Queensland (see Table 3.1). Of these, 92.2% were non-Indigenous, 2.6% were Indigenous and 5.2% did not state their Indigenous status.

Table 3.1 All women of working age in Queensland by Indigenous status – Based on place of usual residence in 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Status</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>% of all women in Queensland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All women(a)</td>
<td>1,576,498</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>1,453,495</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous(b)</td>
<td>40,512</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>82,491</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Excluding females under 15 years of age.
(b) Comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
Source. 2006 Census of Population and Housing Cat. no. 200202.

All Indigenous Women by Labour Force Status

Of the 40,512 Indigenous women of working age usually resident in Queensland during 2006, 50.0% were in the labour force, 45.1% were not in the labour force and the 4.9% did not state their labour force status (see Table 3.2). More specifically, of those in the labour force 43.1% were employed and 6.9% were unemployed.
Table 3.2 All Indigenous women of working age in Queensland by labour force status – Based on place of usual residence in 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour force Status</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>% of all Indigenous women in Queensland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Indigenous women (a,b)</td>
<td>40,512</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>17,473</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>2,786</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in the labour force</td>
<td>18,254</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>1,999</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Excluding females under 15 years of age.
(b) Comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
Source. 2006 Census of Population and Housing Cat. no. 200202.

All Indigenous Women in the Labour Force by Age

Of the 20,259 Indigenous women of working age in the labour force usually resident in Queensland during 2006, over three quarters (77.5%) were in three of the six age categories: that is, 5,672 (28.0%) in 15-24 years; 4,891 (24.1%) in 25-34 years; and 5,138 (25.4%) in 35-44 years (see fig. 3.1).

![Figure 3.1 Frequency of all Indigenous women in the labour force (N=20,259) by age categories (N=6) in Queensland during 2006](image-url)
Further, the frequency of employed Indigenous women in Queensland during 2006 was significantly greater than that of their unemployed counterparts across all six age groups: 15-24 years; 25-34 years; 35-44 years; 45-54 years; 55-64 years and 65 years and over (see fig. 3.2).

![Figure 3.2 Frequency of all employed and unemployed Indigenous women (N=20,259) by age (categories) in Queensland during 2006](image)

Note that the census figures for all 17,473 employed Indigenous women in Queensland during 2006 included Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) participants. Note that CDEP is a “work for the dole” type of traineeship arrangement. Thus, we conclude that the figures for Indigenous working women in Queensland are “artificially inflated.”

**Summary**

Part 3 of the report has provided a profile of all Indigenous “working” women in the State of Queensland, and drawn comparisons with their non-Indigenous counterparts. The report now provides an overview of the regions that the women who participated in our research project come from and it presents their demographic profile.
PART 4: REGIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Part 4 of the report presents a regional and demographic profile that is relevant to the research project.

Indigenous Regions

The yarning circles include women from four Indigenous regions (IREGs) in the state of Queensland: Brisbane (Indigenous Region); Townsville (Indigenous Region); Doomadgee (Indigenous Area); and Torres Strait Island (Indigenous Location).

Note, the Commonwealth Government uses 30 Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) and the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) to manage the delivery of a range of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around Australia. For Census purposes, the ABS defines Indigenous Regions (IREGs) based on the ICC and TSRA areas. Some ICC Regions are split into two IREGs based on statistical differences with ICC Regions (and to allow for the Australian Capital Territory to be a discrete IREG). IREGs are aggregations of Collection Districts which lie mostly or completely within an ICC or TSRA area. IREGs cover in aggregate, the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. (IREGs have replaced ATSIC Regions used to disseminate data from the 1996 and 2001 Censuses.) Census data, including a range of Indigenous statistics such as Indigenous profiles, are available by IREG. Indigenous Areas (IARE) are aggregates of Collection Districts which represent a population of at least 300 Indigenous persons. IAREs are aggregate to Indigenous Regions, and cover the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. Indigenous Locations (ILOC) are single Collection Districts (CDs) or aggregates of CDs which have a population of at least 80 Indigenous persons. ILOCs are aggregate to Indigenous Areas. ILOCs cover the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps.

Brisbane is the capital city of Queensland. Located on the south-eastern coast of the State, its Indigenous region covers 22324.8 sq. Kms: from Noosa Heads in the north to Tweed Heads in the South and Toowoomba in the West (see Fig. 4.1).
Townsville is a city on the north-eastern coast of the State of Queensland. Its Indigenous region covers 192760.7 sq. Kms (see Fig. 4.2).

Doomadgee is an Aboriginal community in north-western Queensland. This community was originally established as a mission near Point Parker and later moved south to its present location near Nicholson River. It covers 1863.2 sq. Kms (see Fig. 4.3).
The Torres Strait Islands lie in the Torres Strait, the waterway separating Queensland’s Cape York Peninsula and the Island of New Guinea (see Fig. 4.3).

In the main, the Torres Strait Islands are politically part of the State of Queensland.
Demographics

The demographic categories of the Indigenous “working” women of the yarning circles included: Indigenous Region; Indigenous status; age; employment status; industry; occupation and organisation (see Table 4.1). Of the 19 participating Indigenous females of working age, 36.8% were usually resident in Brisbane, 21.1% were usually resident in Townsville, 31.6% were usually resident in Doomadgee and the remaining 10.5% were usually resident in the Torres Strait Islands. The majority of these Indigenous females were of Aboriginal origin (89.5%) and between 25-54 years of age (78.9%). In addition, approximately half of the participants were employed on a casual part-time basis (57.9%), in the health care and social assistance industry (52.6%), as community and personal service workers (47.3%). Also, participation was a good deal higher for employees of non-Indigenous organisations (63.1%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 Demographics of the yarning circles (N=19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All females in sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doomadgee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed permanent full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed casual part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation &amp; food services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific &amp; technical services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration &amp; safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care &amp; social assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described/Not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community &amp; personal service workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical &amp; administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales workers</td>
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<tr>
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(a) The data on age refers to working age, defined as 15 years and over.

(b) The data by industry of employment was coded to the 2006 Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) edition. This has replaced the 1993 ANZSIC edition.

(c) The data by occupation was coded to the 2006 Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). This has replaced the 1996 Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Second Edition.

**Summary**

Part 4 of the report has provided a regional and demographic profile, giving an overview of the regions that the women come from and presented their demographic profile. Next we take a closer look at what these working women have to say to about their experiences of work.
**PART 5: THE YARNING**

Part 5 of the report documents the stories shared in four yarning circles conducted in Queensland: (i) the Brisbane Yarning Circle; (ii) the Townsville Yarning Circle; (iii) the Doomadgee Yarning Circle; and (iv) the Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle. The following presents excerpts from the stories that the women shared in the yarning circles, particularly as they relate to experiences in the workplace, pathways to information, and perceptions of QWWS.

**Experiences in the Workplace**

**Getting work…**

Across all four yarning communities, ‘jobs’ and ‘work’ were identified as being problematic for Indigenous working (and not-working) women. A participant from the Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle summed up the sentiment across all four yarning circles, stating:

*This is where most of our Indigenous women are really having a tough time: jobs. Where’s the job?*

The tough time that many of the women in the yarning circles reported experiencing was finding a job. The women from the Brisbane Yarning Circle said:

*It’s very difficult to get a job.*

*It’s hard to get work.*

A couple of women from the Townsville Yarning Circle explained.

*There’s only a few places to get work here and many of these places are running from government funding.*

*There’s not too many jobs about for the young ones.*
For the women of the yarning circles, and especially the women of the Doomadgee Yarning Circle, there have been few jobs. The women said that a number of government departments and government funded-organisation were planning to set up operations, but they still envisaged problems with regard to securing work. One woman said a lack of ongoing funding to these organisations would mean a loss of jobs. She said,

*Des big gubermen business now. Everywhere you go, you see new business coming up, gubermann business is coming up. Dey give der jobs but no funding no jobs for any of us.*

*Gubermen’ stop funding an’ everthing’s gone.*

When government ceases funding, organisations disappear. So, while there may be jobs available, there is little confidence among the women regarding the longevity of jobs, with subsequent concerns and fears around long-term job security.

While some job opportunities were largely dependent on government funding, jobs in non-Indigenous owned and operated businesses were usually earmarked for the business owner’s family members and so forth.

*Dey got all dere family workin’. No jobs for any us.*

Some women from the Brisbane Yarning Circle also spoke about the problems of getting a job in their metropolitan-urban city. Despite having ‘thousands of jobs’ on offer, one participant explained that being ‘black’ was a problem for employers.

*Getting a job is a major thing when you’re black’.*

One woman said:

*We are judged by appearance.*

Another woman asked:
When do you ever see Murris in the front desk of [5-star hotel chain], or the receptionist in [real estate agency chain]?

One of the women spoke of a time when her son was detained and searched by police in the grounds of a ‘well-known family restaurant’, where ‘he was going for a job interview’. She said:

*He’d just turned 14 years and 9 months and was on his way to his first interview.*

The women acknowledged that while the city ‘has many jobs’ there were many challenges that the women faced when it came to securing work. While the women expressed different concerns about not being able to get a job, many of the women went on to talk about problems that they had faced when they managed to secure work, and particularly the problem of discrimination.

**Discrimination at work…**

A significant number of women we spoke with revealed that they have a tough time ‘at work’; particularly when it comes to discrimination. Across all four yarning circles, most women identified racial discrimination as an ongoing experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, and a serious problem at work.

*There’s always racism in the workplace. In every workplace I’ve worked, I’ve experienced racism.*

*And you know it; talking behind hands, not looking at us, turning away – you know.*

*Calling us ‘creatures’.*

*Still a lotta rednecks aroun’. Everyday is hard when you’re with rednecks.*

*We just sit away.*
Very often, we are guessing why you asked us to do something and not others, and these guesses are coloured by our past experiences. We therefore do not have a complete understanding of your response to our work or personalities. We often socialise at work and make jokingly, whereas these comments are not looked as socialising by non-Indigenous workers. We are judged by those comments on our work performance.

One of the participant’s from the Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle summed up the attitude across all four yarning circles, saying:

You just don’t get the racism in an Indigenous organisation. But, if you work in a non-Indigenous organisation, then everyday is a battle. And, it’s not too bad if there’s other Indigenous people there, but if you’re one of the only ones, then you’re really on your own.

While racial discrimination was reported to be a serious problem in the workplace, one of the participants in the Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle explained that losing one’s job was one way in which management responded to Indigenous work-related difficulties.

Actually going trough dis myself, I have to ask some other Indigenous women if I could work with dem, but they said ‘it’s better off if you transfer, like those ones dere’. But um, tings didn’t work out right. I was dismissed from that job.

Discrimination was an ongoing experience for Indigenous women in the Queensland workplace, and one in need of urgent redress.

**Difficulties with others…**

Given the above mentioned, it is possibly understandable that many of the women expressed an interest in working with others from their cultural and/or racial background.

While the women from the Doomadgee Yarning Circle mostly worked in Indigenous organisations and worked alongside other Indigenous people, many of the women
from the Brisbane, Townsville and Torres Strait Islander Yarning Circles said that they had experienced problems with non-Indigenous bosses and colleagues at some stage in their workplaces.

_So hard sometimes to talk to boss or colleague and I have no understanding of their perspective or what they want or why they want it. Normally a boss or colleague from the same cultural background, they’d don’t take offence. When you ask someone who’s non-Indigenous, they take offence. [They believe] they’re your boss, you shouldn’t question them. I’ve worked with some bosses where it’s very difficult for me to understand what they actually want, because when they asked me to do something, the request is framed in a different way. So, I ask them. And, when I ask them, they treat you like you’re really dumb, you’re really stupid. And they say, ‘why did you ask in the first place’. Then they say you’re confrontational._

In fact, many of the women reported that they had approached their boss or supervisor for help, but not had received it.

_Yes, definitely... a supervisor, I complained three times at [hotel] because they put me up on the smoking floor and I said, ‘look I don’t smoke and after cleaning that floor of smokers I’m coughing and everythin’’ and she never moved me. They don’t care. They just don’t care._

_Tried to approach bosses and supervisors, but they do not help._

_Often it is the bosses and supervisors that are the ones you should never approach._

_Cultural and Language Differences_...

A number of women spoke about cultural and language differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in the workplace, and suggested that the cultures of the organisation often perpetuated workplace problems.
With thuh bosses, I do my job. But, with thuh colleagues, this is something that is so difficult. I was told by one of thuh Indigenous girls, she said, ‘come over here, let’s have a cuppa’. [She said], ‘you see those colour women there, they look down to us. But they got their tricky ways of running to thuh boss. If we do it for them, they wouldn’t be thuh same’. But, we got thuh same certificate, same diploma, same mentality or age or anything, so why can’t thuh boss look down on them instead of looking down on us’.

I don’t think we’re given the same respect as non-Indigenous workers.

We can speak in our accent, whether dey like it o’ not. Dis is how we were taught to speak.

For this woman, the internal organisational culture allowed unequal treatment. Many felt that they were looked down upon, in cultures where some organisations reportedly perpetuate a culture of mistrust and misunderstanding, gossiping and innuendo. Some reported problems with regard to gaining recognition for their skills, and respect of those skills. Some women felt the jobs they did were undervalued by others, including colleagues doing the same work.

Yeah, I recon I went trough dis some time ago. It’s more like working with colleagues. Because when you’re working round here it’s more like when we have family problems, it’s more like depression and stress and you go to work, but colleagues take it wrong. It’s another thing because, as an Indigenous person talking, I’ve seen a lot of things dat really weren’t very good for me. And it didn’t truly put me in a right place myself.

While the woman above was dismissed from her job, some women report that the stress of the workplace led to them tendering their resignations. The findings indicate that, more often than not, these Indigenous women reported resolving problems at work by ‘walking away’.

With all the other problems, it gets too much. I just up and went from one job. I’d been there for a while too.
I refuse to do the work and I just walked out. They’re so awkward to communicate with, and all this shit and left.

Many Indigenous women report experiences in the workplace that indicate the need for ethically-sensitive, culturally respectful practices, so that, as one woman puts it:

So that we really need to see that building a network through two different cultures. We wanna see dat we bring a big happy family; one country, one nation – we wanna see dat. If I don’t know what I am doing, I want someone to encourage me in a loving and kindly way.

Across all four yarning circles, the women spoke about the need for work-related information, referral and support services. They expressed a need for services that actually support them across a range of workplace matters to build workplace teams and collaborative working environments.

Pathways to Information

The project was interested in understanding the pathways to information that the women from the Yarning Circles took; that is, how Indigenous women accessed information about their jobs and how they found out about their rights in their jobs, the best sources of information; and the opinions and perceptions that the women held on existing work-relevant services.

Information and Work…

When asked whether they wished that they had had more information about ‘the job’ before starting work, many women from each of the yarning circles simply responded, ‘yes’. Many women said that information about work-related rights and services should be included in training induction programs, with information included in training packs.

Should give us information when they do the training.

I wish I had information.
If I knew all the information, I’d feel comfortable. I don’t like to go to training far away.

**Information about Work and Rights...**

When asked where they looked for information about work and rights at work, the women provided a variety of responses.

Some women reported that they had or would approach ‘the unions’ for information.

*The unions.*

*I’ve always been a member of the union, so I can go to the union for information.*

However, some did not see the unions as an effective agency for resolving problems with work. A couple of women commented:

*I’ve never had any help from them. I was having trouble at work and I contacted them, and they never did anything. I think they couldn’t do anything. Their hands are tied, you know.*

*Well actually, the thing here is I tried my very best, but the lifeline that I rang up to give some support, I couldn’t get through. The lines is so busy - the nurses union. So I rang them up, what is my right, but ‘cause the line is so heavy, I mean, they were very busy, and I ask one of my colleagues, what else can I do. There is nothing else I can do. We are just here for today’s bread and butter. I can’t do anything to help me. Where are my rights?*

Others said that they had, or would, approach ‘colleagues’ and/or ‘people at work’ for information about work and rights.

*I’d go to someone who’s been there a while. Someone I trust.*
Admin staff, admin staff at work. But, when you talk to admin staff, I’ve also been targeted by my boss, and asked ‘why you getting legal advice from admin staff’.

Further, a significant number of women across the yarning circles reported that they had, or would, seek information from ‘friends outside the organisation’.

Friends.

Friends in related fields like HR [human resources] or ATSIWALIS [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal and Advocacy Service], or people who have gone through this before.

Finally, some of the women identified ‘the internet’ as a resource for finding out information about work and rights at work. However, most of those with internet access in their jobs felt that:

There’s not much information on some things on the internet.

Others said:

You can be on the internet all day because too much information online, and, no good, come up with nothing.

I’ve looked at my rights on the internet, but it’s always hard to understand; hard to find information and hard to work out what my rights are.

Some accepted that there was information out there, but it was only information, and did not offer support. One woman said:

Nowhere, it’s wasting time. There’s information but no support at all.

Across all four yarning circles, the women spoke about the need for information on work, and the need for access to services that actually support them through to the
resolution of workplace matters; something much greater than referral and counselling.

**Organisations that Provide Relevant Services...**

When asked if they knew of any organisations that provided work-related services, most women in all yarning circles responded, ‘yes’.

Yes, equal rights opportunity, discrimination board, here in Queensland, Aboriginal women’s legal services.

I know of many organisations that provide services to support workers.

There is little tangible support from existing organisations.

No. I’ve got no support networks to fall back on.

I just looked at it [the problem at work] myself, not knowing that something was out there to help Indigenous women, so they could stick to their jobs and take care of their families. But, so for so long I don’t know if there’s anybody out there that could help us.

One woman said,

In a meeting with senior boss, for me to move out of area where I am, I need to know about what requirements, what criteria, what standard, what boxes I need to tick to move on. I was told ‘it’s all subjective’; subjective depending on your boss. Well I had a major problem with that ‘cause you cannot have an organisation that runs on promotions where the head of the section decides, ‘yes you can move on, no you can’t move on, this one’s okay, this one isn’t’. If he doesn’t like you, you’re not going to move on. In my profession, I don’t fit the mould. I’m not a blond-haired, blue-eyed, size 10 [name of profession]. So I don’t fit that category. So I’m not going to get that automatic promotion through the ranks. In this day and age, that’s not acceptable. So that’s my rights at work.
While most of the women knew of organisations that provided work-related services, they did not feel that those organisations were able to provide the support that they needed to resolve workplace concerns. For the women of the yarning circles, being Indigenous did impact the pathways that they followed when it came to seeking support.

**Perceptions of QWWS**

**The name …**

When asked what they thought of the QWWS Brochure (‘Need Advice About Work’) and the website (www.qwws.org.au) most of the participants reported that they had never heard of QWWS.

*I don’t know about them. What is it?*

*I’ve never heard it. Not me.*

*So for how many years all the Indigenous women in the workforce, we’ve never heard about this Queensland working women’s, how come it’s just coming up today?*

While the women across the yarning communities overwhelmingly reported that they did not know of QWWS, one of the women from the Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle was really surprised to hear the letters ‘q’ ‘w’ ‘w’ ‘s’ produced one after the other in the way they were.

*One other thing I wanna ask here is what does Q W S, Q W W S mean? I don’t know. I’m shocked with dat initials. QWWS, I’ve never heard of this name before.*

The woman took her time to read each of the letters in succession, and took care to enunciate each of them on the QWWS brochure - q, w, w, s. She clearly found them confusing, and even meaningless; as she said, ‘they don’t mean anything’. She added,
So is it just for da white Australian women, or is it for dah oh, Indigenous? I’ve never heard of it before.

Commenting on the brochure, one of the women said:

That’s handy and easy.

I’d be havin’ somewhere to go if I’d had trouble at work. Pamphlets from work are a good way. They’re handy cause you can just carry ‘em in your backpack an’ your always got ‘em on ya, or ona disc, that way they’ll stay dry (laughs).

Yarning about the website …

In the yarning circles where computing and internet access was available, participants were given the opportunity of navigating the website. A number of comments about the site, including the QWWS homepage, are re-presented below.

The green floating thing is annoying. It’s hard to focus when you read.³

That’s not fa us.

It’s too white.

The women identified a range of concerns with the website’s homepage. While some complained that the ‘green floating thing’ (Paid Parental Leave Petition) was distracting, others complained that the site’s colour scheme (predominately, purple, white and green) was not designed with Indigenous women in mind. Many of the women stated that the site was ‘too white’. Their use of the phrase ‘too white’

³ Note, at the time that this Report was completed, the ‘green floating thing’ (Paid Parental Leave Petition) had been removed from the homepage.
suggests that the colour scheme was better suited to a non-Indigenous target client group, rather than an Indigenous one.

In addition, a number of the women named the site’s use of the Venus symbol (♀) as further evidence that the site was not designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in mind, but for ‘white women who hate men’. None of the women that we spoke said they ‘liked’ the design of the site.

After some time negotiating the site, one of the Brisbane participants summed up the sentiment of the women in her yarning circle when asked whether the website would encourage her to use the service:

No, not really. It’s never comfortable to talk about concerns at work, and the website does not appeal to my need for ensuring confidentiality and trust.

While confidentiality and trust are important concerns for online providers and users, the way in which this woman is using these terms is quite specific. For this woman, confidentiality and trust were not associated with online matters of privacy, security and identity, but were seen as traits of the individuals providing the services. As the talk unfolded, it became clear that the lack of ‘all things Indigenous’ translated into a lack of confidentiality and trust in the organisation to provide services to Indigenous women, as the talk below reveals.

After logging on to QWWS’s website and perusing the homepage, members of the Brisbane and Townsville Yarning Circles first chose to look at the ‘Staff Profiles’ page. ‘Clicking on’ the ‘Staff Profiles’ link led into lively discussions about the importance of having Indigenous employees in organisations, particularly when seeking to provide services to an Indigenous clientele.

Have a look at the site, no photos of anyone working there – just names, nothing else.

There’s no indication that QWWS provides services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working women; no acknowledgment of traditional landowners;
no reconciliation statement; there’s some useful links, but none that are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisations; and there’s only a single reference to Aboriginal people in the section on funding.

It does not have any Indigenous staff and therefore fails to make a good impression.

All in all, a number of disparaging remarks were made about the site, with some commenting that the only reason that the organisation sought to provide services to Indigenous women was to strengthen its funding position.

Yarning about approaching QWWS …

Some of the women reported that they would consider approaching QWWS to seek their support with concerns at work.

Yeah, definitely; because I’m working and I’m a woman (laughs).

I recon I’d feel more comfortable going to a women’s service. It wouldn’t matter to me if they weren’t Murris ’cause for them women to be in that service they’d have gone through cultural awareness training to be able to perform their jobs to other women, that’s why they’re there ’eh?

We need something like this.

My Indigenous sisters and I, we have been struggling at work so dis is a good ting.

However, other women said that they would not consider approaching QWWS at the current time. One woman said:

Indigenous women always approach other Indigenous women. If they don’t have Indigenous women working for them, there’s not a hope in hell of me going anywhere near them. Nobody who’s non-Indigenous in that organisation will understand what I’m talking about.
One of the workplace issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client is the problem of racism. The very nature of the problem would cause the worker problems. You go to them to get help because you cannot get time off from work. You’ve got plenty of time but you can’t get time-off for family. And, first you’ve gotta teach the person the cultural reason you’re entitled to time-off, before you can even begin to explain the nature of the problem being reported, ‘time-off for family’.

It’s a non-Indigenous organisation, why would they understand anything.

Another woman explained,

Our referrals are through word-of-mouth. I don’t know anyone who’s ever been to them, I never heard of them, why would I go there? All of my working life, I’ll be referred to an organisation by another Indigenous organisation and they’ll come with me.

While all of the women of the yarning circles said that they and other Indigenous women that they knew had a great need for help with their concerns about work, it is important to note that the women articulated a preference for being accompanied by their friend to the QWWS.

Yarning about the services …

When asked whether the women thought that there were others in their cultural group who may have found this type of service useful, there were mixed responses. The women acknowledged that Indigenous women did need support when it came to the workplace.

Yes. Many women in my cultural group have the need for support in terms of bad workplace experience: explicit and implicit discrimination, subtle innuendoes of not being invited, pay issues, cultural misunderstandings, feeling alienated.
Yeah. Any other Murri woman for racial discrimination, pay, working extra hours and not getting paid and tha’.

However, many of the women felt that QWWS was not in a position to provide the support Indigenous working women needed.

One woman was interested in the services on offer. She said:

I’d like to go there and jump on a computer; look for a job, do up my resume and send it off. I used to go use the computers down at [organisation name] but they’ve stopped it now. I’ve been to the [foundation] but they’ve only got a couple of computers. But they’re not for looking for work on, they’re for people who were put into institutions, but a few people jump on them ones. It’d be good to get support to get a job.

**Yarning about access…**

Talking about how a situation in which the women found themselves wanting to make contact with QWWS, the women produced a variety of responses. An equal number of women across the groups preferred to ‘ring’, with others saying that they would ‘go in to the office’.

*Ring the 1800 number.*

*If I did contact QWWS, I would do so by phone.*

*Making an appointment, communicating face-to-face.*

*Speaking face-to-face.*

*Go in and see them. But there’s no address.*

One of the women from the Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle commented:
We like to be taken there. The person who recommends us will take us there.

So, not only did women want to be able to go into an office, some women wanted to be accompanied to the office by the friend recommending them to the service. In fact, ‘getting there’ was a very interesting theme across the yarning circles.

Many of the women spoke about a lack of branches or offices throughout Queensland, which meant that having a physical presence was an important factor. One woman asked:

*How many branches have they got here in Queensland?*

One of the women from the Doomadgee Yarning Circle joked about the distance of the Brisbane location to her workplace in Northern Queensland:

*Yeah, have a feed and go walkabout.*

Further, the women from the Doomadgee Yarning Circle also spoke about problems accessing the internet, computers, telephone, and so on. For those women, having telephone contact it is not always easy, and it is even more difficult when it comes to having internet contact and email communications, as these require greater infrastructure to be operational. For some of the women, this was exacerbated by a lack of computing literacy.

Overall, the yarning revealed that there was a lack of awareness of QWWS and the services it offers.

**Summary**

Part 5 of the report presented many of the themes shared in the Brisbane Yarning Circle, the Townsville Yarning Circle, the Doomadgee Yarning Circle, and the Torres Strait Island Yarning Circle. The women spoke about experiences in the workplace, pathways to information, and perceptions of QWWS, expressing a need across a range of workplace matters.
Part 6: Strategies for Improved Practice

Part 6 of the report provides strategies for improved practice. It includes an overview of the gaps in service delivery, and concludes with some recommendations for improved practice in service provision to Australian Indigenous women in work in Queensland.

Gaps in Service Delivery

In terms of gaps in service delivery, it is clear from the stories that the women in the yarning circles shared that they need support across a range of matters, including: access to jobs, workplace discrimination, negotiating and interacting with employers and co-workers, recognition of skills and pay, and so forth. The women’s experiences of the workplace revealed that they were particularly vulnerable to workplace exploitation, as many lacked the resources to articulate and promote their own interests, held insecure positions (e.g., low paid and/or casual jobs) and in workplaces where the organisational culture perpetuated workplace problems. Across all four yarning circles, the women spoke about the need for work-related information, referral and support services. They expressed a need for services that actually support them across a range of workplace matters.

Further, there were gaps in service delivery in terms of the women’s access to information. The women of the yarning circles followed a variety of pathways to information about their jobs and their rights in their jobs. Most women approached colleagues for information and or friends outside the organisation for information about work matters. Others, who had computing and internet access, went online to search for relevant information. Many of these women felt that the information available was inadequate and unsuitable for them. Across all four yarning circles, the women spoke about the need for accessing information on work and rights at work, and the need for accessing culturally suitable services.

The women also identified a number of gaps in service delivery by QWWS. The stories shared by the women reveal that they had not heard of QWWS. So, while the
service was on offer to all Queensland working women, the Indigenous women that we yarnd with were not aware of the organisation or its services. Further, a number of women felt that the lack of an Indigenous presence at QWWS was a deterrent to approaching the organisation. Though a small number of women thought that cultural awareness training of non-Indigenous staff was an appropriate way to reach an Indigenous client base, a significant number of women recommended that Indigenous persons be employed at QWWS to provide culturally appropriate support to Indigenous clients.

Covering the whole of Queensland is an enormous task, and the lack of QWWS offices, branches or access points, that is, physical premises across the State, presents a serious challenge in terms of service delivery to women in different regions, areas and locations. Further, some areas and locations do not have the necessary infrastructure to effectively run the internet, computers, telephones, and so on. For those women residing in rural and remote and very remote parts of the State, access to functioning telephone facilities is not a given, and it is even more difficult when it comes to having internet contact and email communications, as these require greater infrastructure to be operational. However, many of the women who said that they would approach QWWS would do so by either telephone or in-person. All in all, the findings of the yarning circles indicate that Indigenous women need advice, support and advocacy services when it comes to working in Queensland.

**Recommendations for Improved Practice**

All of the Indigenous women who participated in the yarning circles were of the opinion that an information, referral and support service for women in work, or looking for work, like QWWS, was much needed.

To better provide that service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women we recommend that QWWS consider the following recommendations:
• Appoint Indigenous persons to relevant authoritative committees of QWWS to ensure best ethical practice in the provision of services to Indigenous women in work;

• Plan, develop and implement an appropriate Indigenous Employment Strategy to ensure the equitable recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff at all levels of QWWS’s operations;

• Evaluate existing training and development programs to ensure the delivery of cultural awareness training to all staff;

• Plan, develop and design a marketing approach that promotes QWWS as a service provider to Indigenous women, and ensure those promotions incorporate Indigenous imagery (e.g., photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and other iconography) and hypertext links to other Indigenous work-related organisations (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Legal and Advocacy Service, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice, Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet);

• Deliver marketing campaigns at strategic locations and events – for example, through Indigenous information and referral service organisations (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Legal and Advocacy Service, First Contact), at local and state annual Indigenous events (e.g. NADOC, Black, Bold and Beautiful Indigenous Women in Leadership events), on Indigenous radio in Queensland (e.g., 4AAA Murri Country), in Indigenous Queensland newspapers (e.g., Koori Mail, The Indigenous Times, & Torres News);

• Look at ways to provide visiting locum services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that lie beyond the greater Brisbane area to ensure improved access to QWWS’s support services; and

• Develop and strengthen inter-agency consultation and engagement across local and state Indigenous organisations, communities, councils and bodies for a collaborative and shared approach to supporting Indigenous “working” women in Queensland.
REFERENCES


NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S RESEARCH CONSORTIUM