



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

SAGE Cygnet Award Application

Name of Institution	Australian Institute of Marine Science
Date of Application	13/03/2025
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Australian Institute of Marine Science

SAGE CYGNET #2

Indigenous Partnerships

	✓	Barrier
[Mandatory] Institution-wide barrier	✓	Flexible Work
[Mandatory] Sub-group barrier		Representation and inclusion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples
[Please select] Institution-wide/Sub-group barrier		
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Note on Language: The Australian Institute of Marine Science recognises the non-binary nature of gender. We acknowledge that the terms 'male' and 'female' refer to biological sex. However, due to system limitations and availability of data, for the purpose of this application, some gendered data has been reported as 'male' or 'female', as historical data has been collected and reported in this manner. We also acknowledge that this binary assumption may not fully represent all the identities of the persons included in these datasets and we recognise the importance of intersectionality when collecting data.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science also acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are two distinct racial groups within the term "Indigenous Australians". For the purposes of this document, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" or "Indigenous" person means any person who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who is recognised and accepted as such by other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This document includes the use of the term 'non-Indigenous' to refer to those who do not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

This document was developed by the Equity, Diversity and Gender Equality team in conjunction with the Indigenous Partnerships team.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the places where AIMS works, both on land and in the Sea Country of tropical Australia. We pay our respects to the elders, present and future; and their continuing culture, beliefs, and spiritual relationships and connection to the land and sea.

AIMS especially honours Traditional Owners as Australia's first marine scientists and carers of Country, and we pay tribute to Traditional Ecological Knowledge, wisdom, and Indigenous perspectives passed from generation to generation, and successfully applied to sustainable environmental management over thousand of years.

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Glossary

AIMS – Australian Institute of Marine Science

EDGE – Equity, Diversity and Gender Equality Working Group at AIMS

AOF – AIMS Officer

ALT – AIMS Leadership Team

P&C – People and Culture Team

FY – Financial Year

IPP – Indigenous Partnership Program

IP Team – Indigenous Partnership Team

CDF – Capability Development Fund

AIMS LMS – AIMS Learning Management System

FPIC – Free Prior and Informed Consent

PMO – Project Management Office

TO – Traditional Owners

1. KEY BARRIER

This Cygnet Award addresses the underrepresentation of Indigenous staff at AIMS, and their inclusion and consultation in research projects. The submission focuses on the development of a more targeted and culturally appropriate approach to supporting Indigenous Peoples as leaders in the community, including at Sea. Specifically, it relates to increasing the sense of cultural safety and belonging among Indigenous staff within AIMS by building non-Indigenous people's cultural capability and competency in the understanding of Indigenous culture, history and contemporary issues, ensuring that the AIMS environment is culturally safe for new and current Indigenous staff.

2. EVIDENCE OF BARRIER

2.1 Context prior the Bronze Award

Prior to and during the Bronze Award application process, AIMS had extremely low Indigenous representation: 2 staff (both men in STEMM fields) identified as being of Indigenous origin as of 30 June 2016, which represented 0.8% of AIMS (total employees= 243, 97 women, 146 men), well below population parity (3.3%) in 2016. There was no Indigenous representation in senior leadership positions and no targeted Indigenous appointments existed at that time. Targeted strategies were needed to support and increase the representation of Indigenous Peoples at all levels and locations.

'So, in the beginning, [...] Communities didn't know who AIMS were or was. Nobody really knew anything about AIMS unless they were from AIMS or had AIMS related projects. [...] The idea of AIMS being 40 something years in the making and not having any presence in the Aboriginal Communities was quite sad to me, you know.' (AIMS Indigenous staff)

2.1.1 Lack of clear and formal strategy

The absence of a clear and formal strategy to include and consult with Indigenous Peoples and communities contributed to the low numbers of Indigenous staff and representation, as no actions were taken to address these barriers. Additionally, this lack of strategy led to insufficient inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in research projects involving their land and Sea, causing concern among staff, which was expressed through surveys sent to all staff and visitors through the Equity, Diversity and Gender Equality (EDGE) group at AIMS in 2017 and 2021 (more information in sections below). A holistic approach was needed to address this barrier and ensure the inclusion of Indigenous communities.

2.1.2 Lack of cultural competency training

Prior to 2021, no cultural competency training had been offered at AIMS, which resulted in a lack of cultural competency among all staff. When interviewing Indigenous staff who were working at AIMS prior to our actions taking place (as no data was recorded at that time), their reflection was clear:

'Knowledge of Indigenous people when I first started was very minimal, like hardly anyone could say that they worked with Aboriginal people, you know, unless they were actual scientists who had to do something with people on Country'. (AIMS Indigenous staff)

'There was a lot of people who were Aboriginal descent, but they didn't identify as an Aboriginal person, you know. [...] they'd say stuff like, 'oh, I know I've got Aboriginal ancestry, but I don't know about my people. So, I just choose not to''. (AIMS Indigenous staff)

2.2 2017 and 2021 EDGE survey findings

In 2017 and 2021, the EDGE Working Group ran a diversity survey to gather diversity data on various topics within AIMS. Demographic data is outlined below:

	2017 EDGE survey respondents	2021 EDGE survey respondents
Total	154 (59.7% of AIMS staff)	220 (74.5% of AIMS staff)
Female	76 (50%)	111 (52%)
Male	74 (49%)	98 (46%)
Other/Prefer not to say	2 (1%)	5 (2%)
Indigenous staff	5 (3.2% of respondents). 3 female, 2 male.	2 (0.9% of respondents). 1 female and 1 male

In both surveys, Indigenous representation was not high, and it seemed that the representation of Indigenous staff could be decreasing.

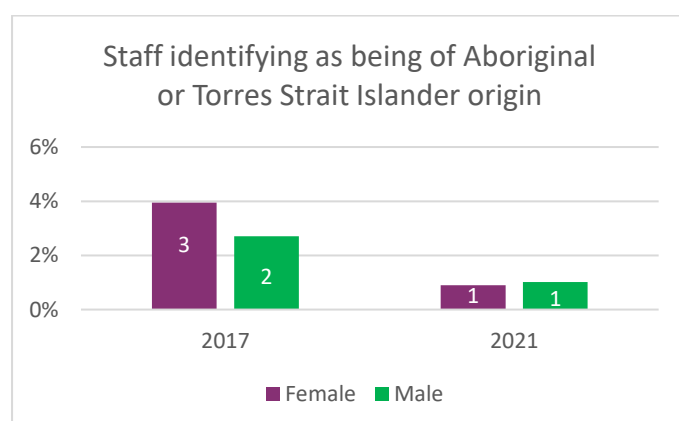


Figure 1: Number and percentage of staff identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin in 2017-2021.

According to People and Culture (P&C) records, the number of staff identifying as Indigenous increased from four in 2017 (3 men and 1 woman) to seven in 2021 (5 men and 2 women). Despite the rise in representation, some Indigenous staff may have felt uncomfortable disclosing this information in the EDGE survey, and reasons for that needed to be explored.

In addition, and even though no specific questions within the surveys targeted Indigenous initiatives or perceptions, when asked the question 'Do you think AIMS has the right mix of cultural diversity?', some of the open answers showed a clear trend:

"More Indigenous employment would be fantastic. AIMS is very culturally homogenous"

"AIMS has diversity from many cultural backgrounds (e.g., Australians and people from overseas). However, there are almost no indigenous Australians working at AIMS."

"Indigenous representation is dismal"

"I am not aware of the exact numbers regarding cultural diversity, but from my observations I feel AIMS is probably white Australian dominated. There are several international people which is good, but these seem to be mostly from developed countries (i.e. US, Europe), there are not many Aboriginal, Asian or Latin American people."

3. PROGRESS (ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS)

3.1 Creation of Indigenous Partnership Program in 2016

In 2015/16 a group of like-minded staff obtained Capability Development Funds (CDF) to establish a Community of Practice and develop AIMS' first Indigenous Engagement Strategy which was adopted by the (then) Senior Leadership Team. The strategy consisted of 53 individual actions built around 5 goals (Governance and management, Staff Cultural Competency, Relationships and understanding, Do more science together, Employment and pathways).

In 2016, it was time to shift gears from engagement to partnerships.

The process of creating the Indigenous Partnership Program (IPP) began with a review of key ethical and code of conduct principles, such as those established by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the United Nations – particularly the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The team worked directly with Indigenous Peoples amongst our existing network of Indigenous science partners, to ensure they were consulted and integrated in the process:
"We learnt a lot about what we had in common, and that the AIMS mission is strongly aligned with Traditional Owners' inherited responsibility and right to manage Sea Country to ensure its care and protection for future generations."

3.2 Inclusion in AIMS Strategy 2025 and 2030

[AIMS Strategy 2025](#) was published in 2018 and included as a key target: (1) – Undertake science collaborations with Traditional Owners in key projects focused on Sea Country. By establishing this ambition, AIMS recognised that greater research impact and value can be created, and new insights gained when AIMS science is interwoven with the knowledge, intuition, capacity, and capability of this country's original marine scientists – the Traditional Owners of Sea Country.

3.2.1 Plan, Policies and Procedures

The IPP is made up of three key documents – a Plan, which was endorsed by AIMS Council in 2019; a policy, which was endorsed by AIMS Council in 2021; followed by a procedure, which was approved by AIMS Leadership Team (ALT) in 2022.

The Indigenous Partnerships (IP) Plan is a roadmap for AIMS to achieve genuine marine science partnerships with Traditional Owners, and to meet the key target in AIMS Strategy 2025 mentioned above. It provides framework in:

1. Preparing AIMS for Indigenous Partnerships.
2. Initiating and undertaking engagement that will lead to new partnerships.
3. Establishing AIMS' reputation as a reliable, trusted and ethical partner for Traditional Owners.

AIMS IP Policy sets out the principles that guide the implementation of the IP Plan. It recognises AIMS mission and engagement with Indigenous Peoples, and it defines key concepts. This policy is complemented by the IP Procedure, which provides guidance and outlines the process and protocols to implement the IP Policy and Plan and is accessible to all staff.

The principle of consent

The IPP enshrines the inherent right of Traditional Owners to be the decision makers regarding what AIMS can and can't do on and to their Sea Country. It does this by requiring us to seek and (hopefully) obtain Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for any new projects that 'intersect' with Sea Country, for example by removing samples, deploying equipment, or doing manipulative experiments either on Country or with samples removed. As the term suggests, FPIC must be obtained prior to a project commencing work on Country. As we apply the IPP to existing ongoing projects, we will begin to seek Free Informed Consent for their continuation. This process is detailed in the IP Procedure.

To cater for the full spectrum of AIMS projects, the IPP has established a 4-tier system to guide staff in the level of engagement that is appropriate for their project. The diagram below summarises the 4 tiers.



Figure 2: Project categories

The IP Plan, Policies and Procedures are available and promoted through the IP SharePoint, reaching 344 views as of 2nd January 2025.

This strategy was further enhanced in [AIMS Strategy 2030](#) (published in 2023), which indicates as a target to '90% of AIMS projects on sea Country are Indigenous Partnership tier Silver, and 10% of projects are tier Gold' by partnering with First Nations Peoples to create new shared research that integrates Indigenous knowledge of sea Country with other sciences.

3.3 Recruitment of Indigenous Partnership team and targeted appointments

With the creation of the IPP and IP team, the need for targeted recruitment emerged not only to increase Indigenous representation but also to develop the key targets in AIMS Strategy and the action plan. For this, a new strategy and recruitment advertising was developed to attract more applicants who identified as being of Indigenous origin, utilising a range of media to communicate our commitment to increasing the participation of Indigenous staff. The strategy included adding an Indigenous Partnerships section in our Careers' external website, so applicants can learn more about our program, as shown below.

Indigenous Partnerships

AIMS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the Traditional Owners of the places where AIMS works, both on land and in the sea country of tropical Australia and pay our respects to the elders; past, present, and future; and their continuing culture, beliefs, and spiritual relationships and connection to the land and sea.

The development of [AIMS' Indigenous Partnerships Plan \(IPP\)](#) is a roadmap for AIMS to achieve genuine marine science partnerships with Traditional Owners. We recognise that greater research impact and value can be created, and new insights gained when our science is interwoven with the knowledge, intuition, capacity, and capability of this country's original marine scientists – the Traditional Owners of sea Country.



Image: K. Green

AIMS is dedicated to promoting marine science and related careers to Indigenous people through measured improvements in recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff.

We are:

- introducing and promoting marine science and STEMM related careers at AIMS to young Indigenous people through work experience placements and participation in immersive programs such as [Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in Marine Science \(ATSIMS\)](#), Aboriginal Summer School for Excellence in Technology and Science, and junior rangers;
- promoting Indigenous training and capacity building within individual science projects, as well as broadly across the organisation to increase/improve cultural competency;
- using Indigenous networks to actively encourage applicants to all advertised job vacancies, including Indigenous-identified positions; and
- professional development and career progression for all Indigenous staff.

Available here: [Equity, diversity and inclusion at AIMS | AIMS](#)

[Working at AIMS](#)

[Read more](#)

In addition to this, targeted appointments were advertised to create and develop the IP team. These appointments were not exclusively for Indigenous staff, as at the beginning of our actions taking place it was not a requirement, so some members of the IP team do not identify as Indigenous. Some of the main appointments advertised for the IP team were Indigenous Partnerships Officer and Indigenous Partnerships Coordinator, as well as some targeted appointments outside of the IP team like RRAP Experimental Research Technician – Indigenous, Aquaculture Assistant – Indigenous, among others.

3.4 Cultural competency training

Since 2021, each year, the IP team has organised face-to-face cross-cultural training with an external provider. This training covers Indigenous history pre and post colonisation, outlining timelines and what happened from Indigenous points of view.

'It was very comprehensive of the history of Aboriginal people in this country and where we stand now. And it was great that it ended in a very positive note of where we're going in the future.' (AIMS staff)

3.4.1 Online training modules

In addition to the face-to-face annual training, all staff have access to two online training modules for AIMS staff to continue to learn about Reconciliation and Cultural Capability. The first training module is hosted in AIMS' Learning Management System (since 2020, 27 women and 22 men have registered for it) to undertake a 'Virtual Reconciliation Walk' and the second one is an external training module provided by AIATSIS, which is an innovative online course developed to strengthen your organisation's cultural capability. It's designed to be informative, interactive and to create a greater awareness of the vast history and cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples.

These trainings have been promoted through the IP SharePoint Site and all staff have access to complete. However, more promotion is needed moving forward, as using just one approach for promoting was not enough to reach expected outcomes. Even though no specific targets were set for the number of staff expected to undertake the training, this is a focus that will be further explored in future actions.

3.5 Creation of SharePoint site

The AIMS IP SharePoint was created in 2023 and holds 401 views within the first year of creation. The site contains the information outlined above for all staff to access, providing context of the IP Team, how it works, policies and procedures, weblinks, news and resources. In addition, it contains a section to make enquires to the IP team for inclusion of Indigenous staff in research projects and, since creation, the IP team has received 37 enquires through this site.

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 Indigenous staff representation

Since the implementation of actions designed to improve Indigenous staff representation, there has been an increase in the number of Indigenous staff at AIMS (Figure 3). Growth has been observed across genders during most years, the largest between 2019-2022. However, between 2022 and 2025 a drop in percentage of Indigenous men is observed due to AIMS exponential growth in the last couple of years, this means that the proportion of Indigenous staff at AIMS did not grow at the same proportion as the overall staff.

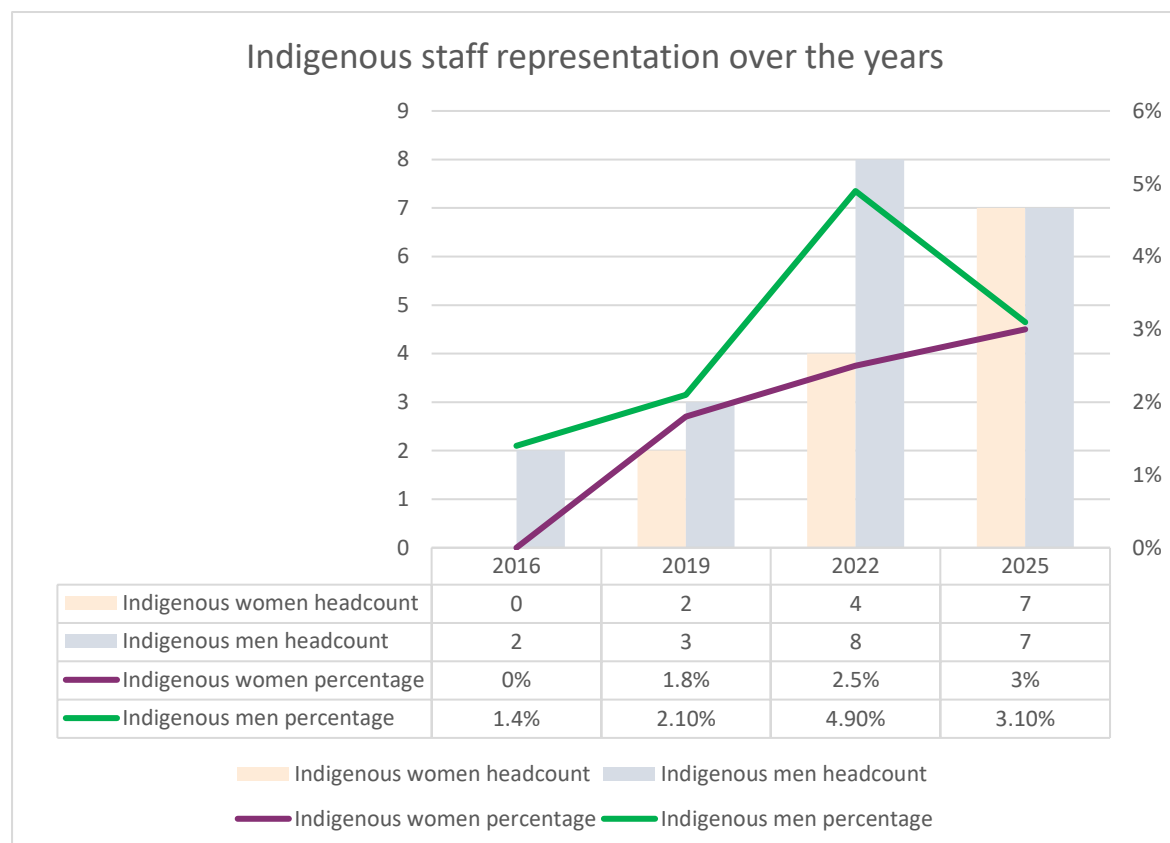


Figure 3: Number and percentage of Indigenous staff representation between 2016 – 2025. Total employees: 2016 women= 97, men= 146; 2019 women= 114, men= 145; 2022 women= 160, men= 163; 2025 women= 234, men= 226.

We recognise that the numbers have gone up, but this is not the case for all AIMS sites as 93% of Indigenous staff are based in Townsville. This will be set as a focus point to explore in future action, as we are looking to expanding Indigenous representation in all AIMS sites.

4.1.1 Indigenous senior leadership representation

As of 2nd January 2025, 2 Indigenous staff are in senior positions (1 women and 1 men). Even though this is still not a high representation, it represents an increase from our baseline data when the number was zero. In addition, as of 2025, AIMS governing body (AIMS Council) appointed its first Indigenous member.

4.2 Recruitment of Indigenous Partnership team

Since actions took place and the IPP started developing, an exponential increase was observed between 2019 and 2022 with a 1.6 percentage point (p.p.) increase in Indigenous appointments for women and a 3-p.p. increase for men, as shown in figure 4.

As mentioned previously, not every person in the IP team identifies as Indigenous, hence the difference in numbers between figure 3 and 4.

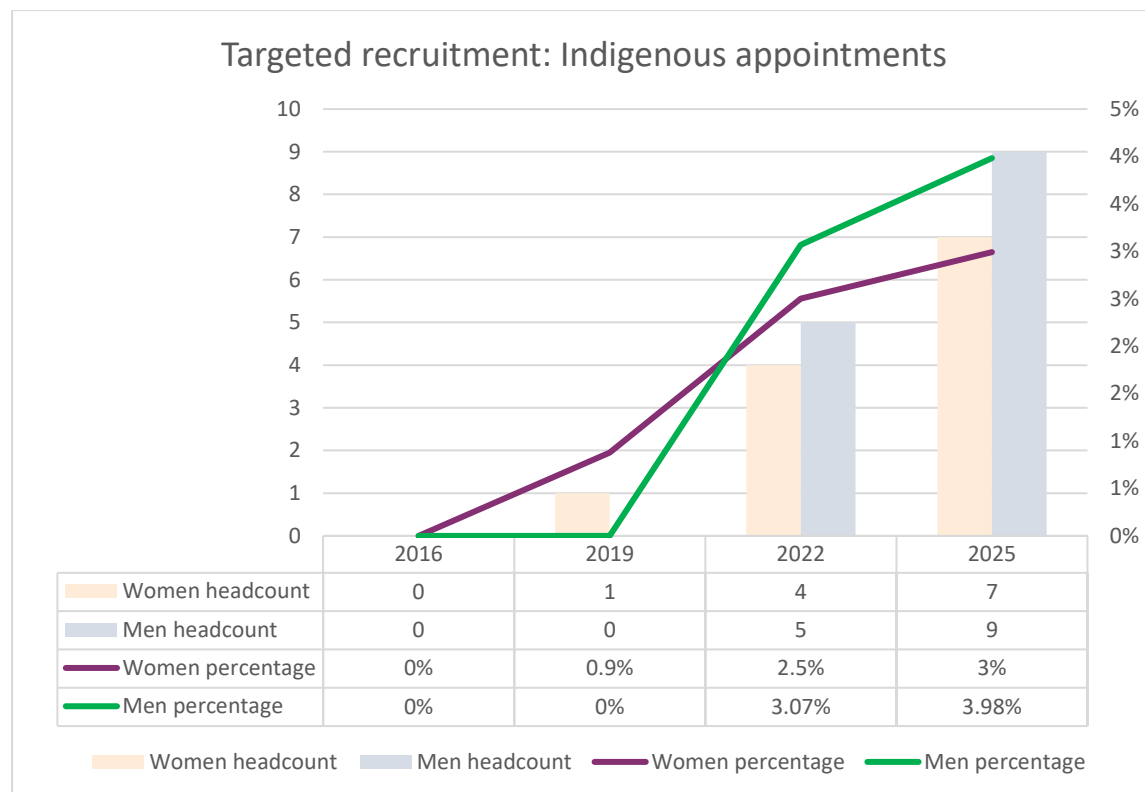


Figure 4: Number and percentage of Indigenous targeted appointments between 2016 – 2025. Total employees: 2016 women= 97, men= 146; 2019 women= 114, men= 145; 2022 women= 160, men= 163; 2025 women= 234, men 226.

In the future, the IP team is looking to organise the team structure in 'Engagement Team', 'Indigenous Futures Team', and 'Indigenous Science Team', with some additional positions ready to recruit and advertise exclusively for Indigenous appointments. Therefore, numbers are expected to increase.

4.3 Inclusion of Traditional Owners in Research Projects: Co-designing long-term monitoring programs on sea Country.

Since the implementation of our actions, Indigenous Peoples have been included in AIMS research, field trips and projects, building strong and productive connections in marine science. We partner with Indigenous Peoples, learning from each other through two-way knowledge sharing of the marine environment, to ensure its future for all.

Some instances of this can be observed in the following projects:

- [Indigenous Futures - building capacity for Traditional Owners in reef restoration | AIMS](#) (see Case study 1 below).

- [Weaving traditional knowledge with western science and tech for integrated coral reef monitoring in the Pacific | AIMS](#)
- [Mapping the Makarda – bringing together science and traditional knowledge | AIMS](#)
- [Science and traditional knowledge going hand-in-hand | AIMS](#)

Our scientists join Indigenous Peoples on-Country, to work together and co-design a customised monitoring framework designed to deliver data on marine flora, fauna or physical observations needed using appropriate tools and techniques. After discussions on what the needs of the local community and their Sea Country are, together, we map out a sampling design that considers practical capacity constraints, and cultural values and protocols to apply the best scientific methods available.

Traditional Owners hold important cultural and spiritual connections to Country, including sea Country on the Great Barrier Reef. These connections power deep knowledge and care for the Reef, and inherent rights and responsibility for its future.

Reducing emissions is critical to ensuring the future of coral reefs around the world. However, good local management and interventions to restore reefs are also required. While the world works towards reducing emissions, AIMS' continues to collaborate with scientists, engineers and Traditional Owners in Australia to develop a suite of approaches to fast-track reef recovery and resilience delivered at large scales.

Training Great Barrier Reef Indigenous Rangers at Heron Island for the 2024 On Country Spawning

In November 2024, Indigenous Rangers from six Traditional Owner groups will gather on Heron Island on the southern Great Barrier Reef on Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang, Byelle and Taribelang Bunda land and sea Country to train in advanced reef restoration techniques developed through the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP).



Participants learn to deploy larval pools - an integral part of the reef seeding process. Image: Phil Schouteten

Indigenous Rangers will be joined by Indigenous researchers, interns and trainees as well as scientists and support staff from AIMS and RRAP to build on their skills in a range of restoration activities, which harness the largest coral reproductive event of the year – mass coral spawning. The Indigenous Rangers will be trained to:

- deploy larval pools
- collect coral larvae from surface slicks
- establish an island-based coral aquaculture system
- deploy coral larvae and coral seeding devices on the reef and
- monitor coral settlement and young corals over time to determine success.

The Indigenous Rangers, interns and trainees will be guided by AIMS' Indigenous training and capacity building team from AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Program and RRAP marine scientists with specialties in coral spawning and aquaculture techniques will provide foundation training in coral restoration and monitoring.

The Indigenous Futures Project

The AIMS-led Indigenous Futures Project works in partnership with Indigenous Ranger groups and the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program. Its goal is to empower Traditional Owners to lead in caring for sea Country through reef restoration techniques developed to help reefs recover and build resilience to the effects of climate change.

This project provides a pilot group of Indigenous Rangers with advanced skills in reef interventions, enabled to lead these activities within their ranger groups for the future of sea Country when and where required.

This three-year project began in 2023 and includes formal accreditation units for participants in Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management. Through the development of accredited training resources, this project lays an important foundation to support future Traditional Owner-led intervention activities and contribute to large-scale efforts to help the future of the Reef.

This training opportunity is funded by the [Traditional Owner Partnership component](#) of the partnership between the Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation

Connections to sea Country

AIMS understands these connections and inherent responsibilities of Traditional Owner groups and seeks to build strong and productive relationships in marine science.

We do this by establishing genuine Indigenous science partnerships with Traditional Owners and are guided by our Indigenous Partnerships Program.

AIMS acknowledges the rights of Traditional Owners to decide what activities AIMS can and cannot do on sea Country through Free Prior and Informed Consent.

The graph below shows the number of projects that are in each tier. We can observe an increase in the number and percentage of projects that are in Silver and Gold tier, which represents a positive impact of our actions. Bronze had been the top standard but is slowly going down due to the Silver tier becoming the top standard. This means that we are building genuine relationships and partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and communities, through obtaining FPIC and co-designing together innovative science.

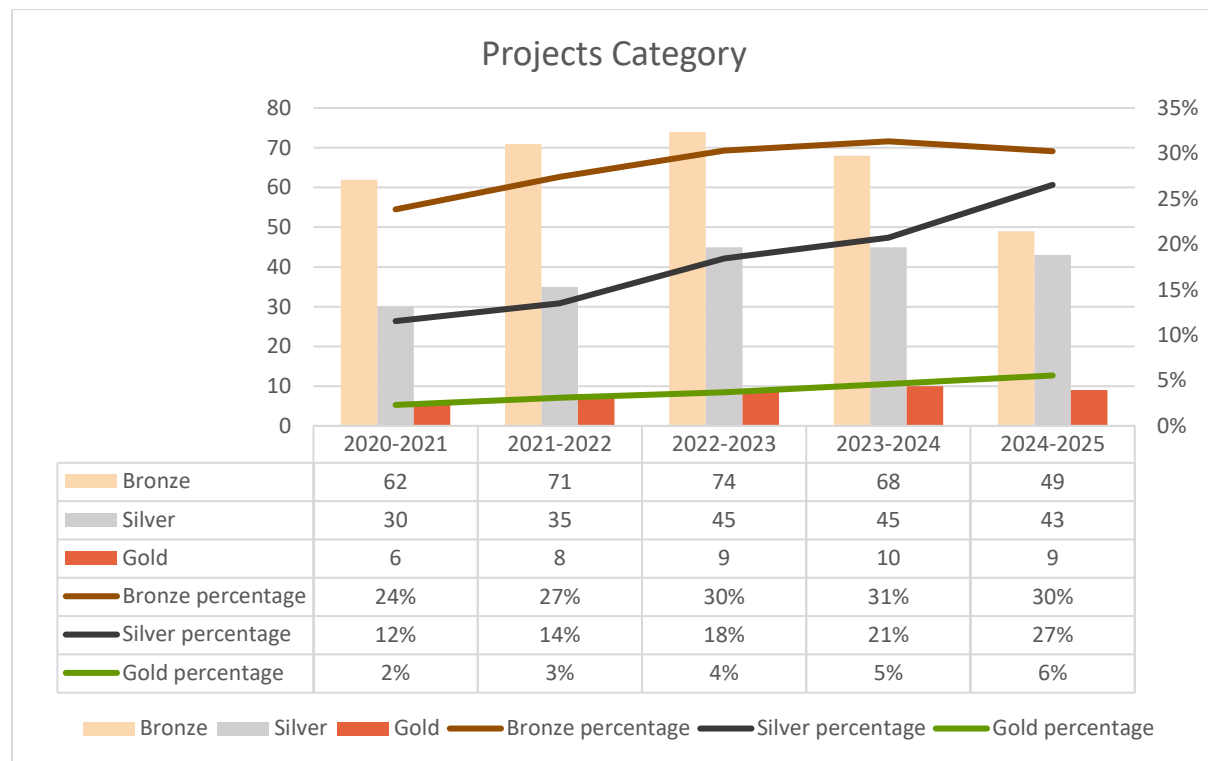


Figure 5: Project categories (tier) for between 2020-2025. Total projects: 2020-2021FY= 260, 2021-2022FY= 259, 2022-2023FY=244, 2023-2024FY= 217, 2024-2025= 162.

This data is tracked through the PMO system and the target for 2030 is to have 90% of AIMS projects in Sea Country in tier Silver and 10% in tier Gold.

As of 2024, data has been recorded regarding the number of hours that staff from other teams engage with the IP team, through the 'Incidental Indigenous Engagement' option in timesheets. Figure 6 shows a snapshot of this for 2024-2025 FY. This data will be used as a baseline for future years, expecting a higher number of people and hours to engage with the IP team.

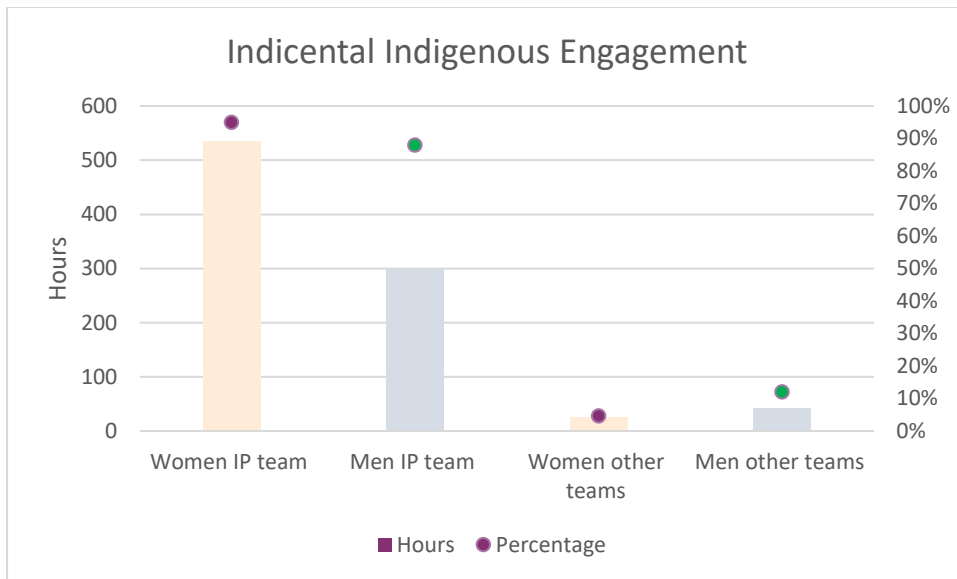


Figure 6: Number and percentage of hours that staff spent engaging with the IP team 2024-2025.

4.4 Face-to face cultural competency training outcomes

2021 was the first year the training was conducted and experienced the highest participation rate (27% for women and 17% for men). In the following year, both the number of participants and the percentage of overall participation declined. This trend may be attributed to individuals who had already completed the training feeling it was unnecessary to attend again. However, in 2023, the number of participants returned to initial levels, although the percentage did not, due to the significant growth at AIMS over the past few years. The reasons for not conducting the training in 2024 are unknown. However, we are committed to expanding this training as we continue to grow, which will be detailed in our further action section.

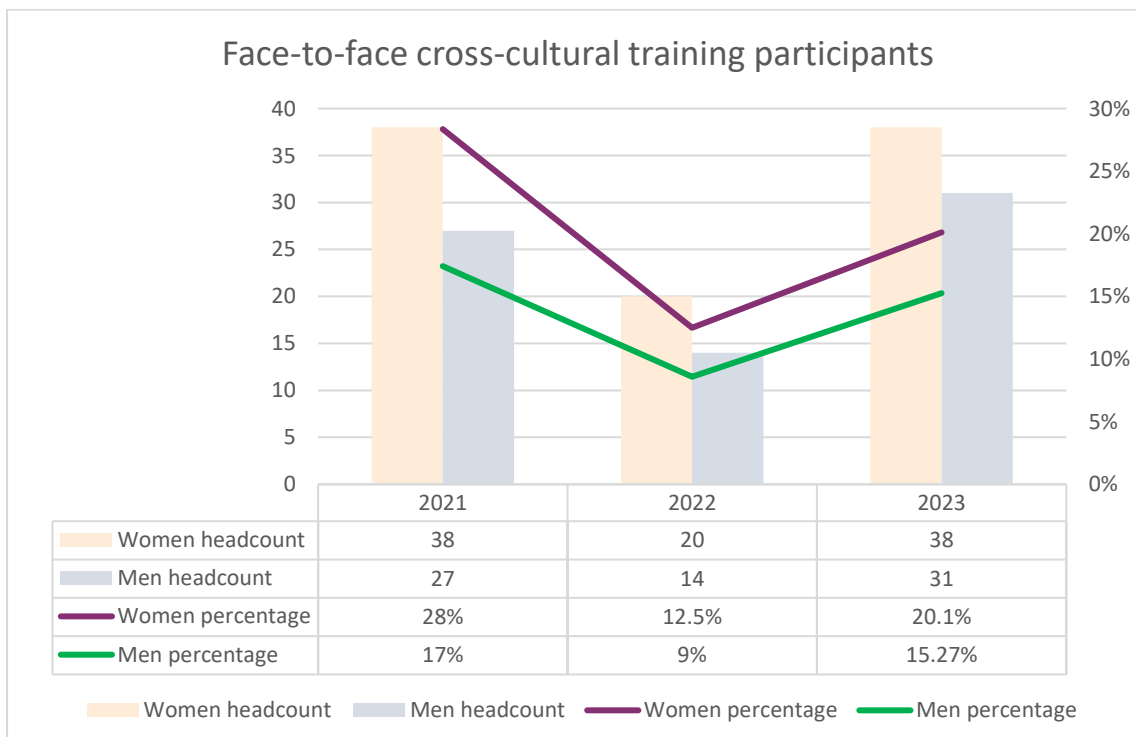


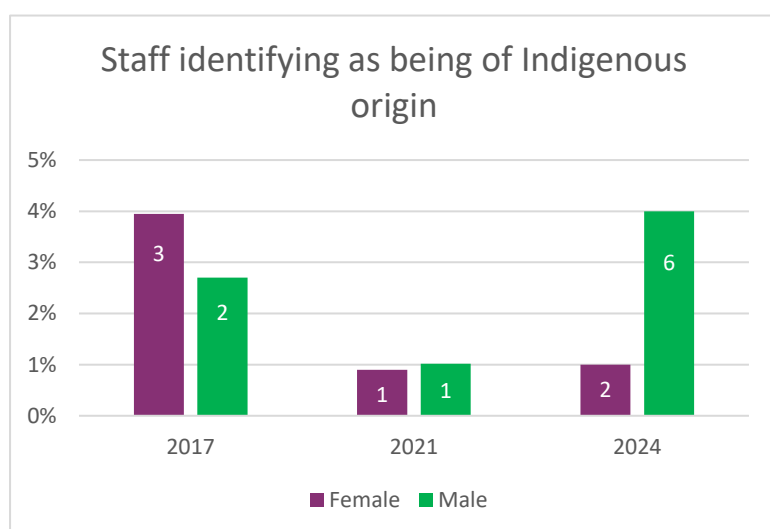
Figure 7: Number and percentage of face-to-face cultural training participants. Total employees: 2021 women= 134, men= 155; 2022 women= 160, men= 163; 2023 women= 189, men= 201.

Some further feedback received from attendees through informal conversations and interviews to measure impact of the IP team (detailed in Impact section):

'I attended the Cultural training that was delivered by the Knights brothers. And I really enjoyed that. I learnt a lot from that'. (AIMS staff)

'It was really nice to hear his perspective and that was really useful. I think someone, especially coming from overseas, totally different culture, totally different way of looking at things and the interactions of the planet and a little bit of history about, you know, colonisation and the adversity that Traditional Owners have faced on that kind of intergenerational trauma that exists [...] See the world through their eyes and stuff. It was good. I think it was a really good training session. I think I highly recommend all staff do it, to be honest.' (AIMS staff)

4.5 2024 EDGE survey results



Results showed a slight increase of staff identifying as being of Indigenous origin compared to previous years, but no clear trend can be observed based on staff who completed the survey. As no specific questions in the 2024 survey targeted Indigenous representation, this will be explored in further actions with the purpose of obtaining qualitative data.

Figure 8: Number of staff identifying as being of Indigenous origin. Total respondents= 326, 176 female (54%), 144 male (44%) and six prefer not to say (2%)

5. IMPACT

To measure the impact of our actions, in 2025, Indigenous staff and non-Indigenous staff were consulted on their perceptions and experiences working at AIMS, through 1-on-1 interviews (n=10, 4 women, 6 men). Participants' roles at AIMS varies from Senior Indigenous Partnerships Coordinators to Indigenous Partnerships Coordinators, as well with science-focused roles who interact closely with the IP team. Specific role names will not be provided to ensure confidentiality. Further relevant demographics and metrics were not collected in this occasion but will be explored for future stages.

These interviews were conducted by a member of the IP team and the focus was on measuring the impact of our actions and what else can be done.

Main topics discussed were a noticeable increase in Indigenous representation over the years, and that it has been positive. However, it was noted that there is still room for increase in representation in other AIMS sites (as majority of Indigenous staff are Townsville based) as well as in senior and executive leadership positions.

'I would say our representation has definitely improved in terms of that. We got more staff. So, because we have more Indigenous staff within AIMS, then I suppose our voice is represented in the sense that you've got more Indigenous staff interacting with non-Indigenous staff' (AIMS Indigenous staff)

'From my point of view, it's increased since I've started three years ago. I think it could be better across the whole organisation, to be honest. You know, I think especially in senior leadership' (IP team member)

'I would say since I started 2020, certainly the Indigenous Partnership team has grown a lot as far as I can tell and that would include Indigenous representation. And I think maybe even outside the Indigenous Partnership team. Definitely a positive upwards trajectory' (AIMS staff)

In addition, inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and their consultation in research projects was recognised, as well as the impact this have had in both the AIMS culture and in the Indigenous communities.

'I would say generally most of our non-Indigenous staff, I reckon 80% of them are actually embracing what we're doing, and they want to do what we're doing. And what we're finding is when we go and do some significant work with the community and they're involved in that work, they actually get just as much out of the cultural side and that actually helps them do their science better 'cause [sic] they understand all the history of that local area from a Traditional Owner point of view and it actually. Yeah, like some of the feedback we get from our scientists, with the Woppaburra Coral Project, which is a project's been going about four or five years, is one of our big projects. They said, it's changed my life. I never used to know about Traditional Owners and now everything they do; they're always thinking well. So, for us that's a win because then we know we got someone in our corner backing us up.' (AIMS Indigenous leader)

'We went from not doing it [recognizing Traditional knowledge] at all to, you know, to developing the IP policy [...] and protect, our People's intellectual property, you know?

So that's the other big thing that came through the last few years as well'. (AIMS Indigenous leader)

Some of other key messages to improve the inclusion and awareness of Indigenous Peoples is to have site specific training, meaning to have local Indigenous Peoples of the areas we are working in deliver the information; as well as more information available on social events and where they can take families.

More information about the impact and the work we have done in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and communities on research projects and Sea Country is available in AIMS external website: [Indigenous partnerships | AIMS](#)

6. FURTHER ACTION

Reference	Rationale/ Evidence	Actions & Outputs	Timeframe (start & end)	Person/Group responsible for implementing action	Senior Leader accountable for action delivery	Desired Outcomes/ Targets/ Success Indicators
1	Not enough data collected when conducting face-to-face cultural training in each location.	Create a guide with requirements to collect data, including intersectional data, and use it as a reference to collect data on participants every time a training is offered.	Start in 2025 when next annual cultural training is conducted and maintain for every training.	EDGE to provide guide to IP team and IP team to make sure the data is collected accordingly.	EDSD	Increase completion date by 20% due to accurate collection data process.
2	Not enough promotion of online training courses, staff not aware of them, therefore, low completion rates.	Start promoting through email and SharePoint site to all staff. Include as a voluntary training module to all new starters in onboarding process.	Start promotion for current staff in 2025 and include as voluntary for new starters by the end of the year.	IP team in collaboration with EDGE team responsible for promotion. P&C responsible to send to new starters.	CFO	50% of staff to complete online training by the end of 2026 and 70% by the end of 2027.
3	No targeted questions in EDGE surveys to measure staff perceptions on Indigenous Partnerships Program.	Include specific questions to staff about their perceptions on the Indigenous Partnerships Program and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.	Next EDGE survey expected to be distributed in 2026-2027.	EDGE Working Group.	CFO	5-7 new questions in EDGE survey with at least 60% response rate among non-Indigenous staff and 70% among Indigenous staff.
4	No monitoring of ALT members or senior staff completing cultural training.	Provide cultural training specific for senior/executive roles.	To be explored in 2026.	IP team	CFO	65% completion rate in training for senior roles.