

The background of the cover is an Aboriginal artwork. It features a warm color palette of orange, yellow, and brown. Large, black footprints with white outlines are scattered across the page. Dotted lines in black, white, blue, green, and red meander across the composition. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular motif with concentric rings of dots in orange, white, and black.

Department for
Correctional Services (DCS)

Aboriginal Strategic Framework

2020-2025



Government of South Australia
Department for Correctional Services



Acknowledgement of Country

This document was developed on Kurna land. The Department for Correctional Services (DCS) acknowledges the spiritual connection to country and recognises Kurna people as the custodians of the greater Adelaide region. DCS also acknowledges Traditional Owners across South Australia. We recognise the continuing importance of language, land, culture and spiritual beliefs to all Aboriginal people.

The Department pays respects to Aboriginal people from all other regions of Australia, particularly those who helped contribute to the development of this Framework and who will be involved in, or impacted by, the achievement of its actions.



The painting represents South Australia's desert country. The big circles around the centre are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities. The small circles in the centre of the image represent the Department for Correctional Services. The footsteps are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal communities working together, and the half circles represent our stakeholder Departments and non-Government agencies coming together. Working together we strive for excellence for our staff, prisoners and offenders and our communities.

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Contents

INTRODUCTIONS

Message from the Minister for Correctional Services 4

Message from Chief Executive, Department for Correctional Services 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 5

THE FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT 6

VISION 10

PRINICPLE 10

THEMES 11

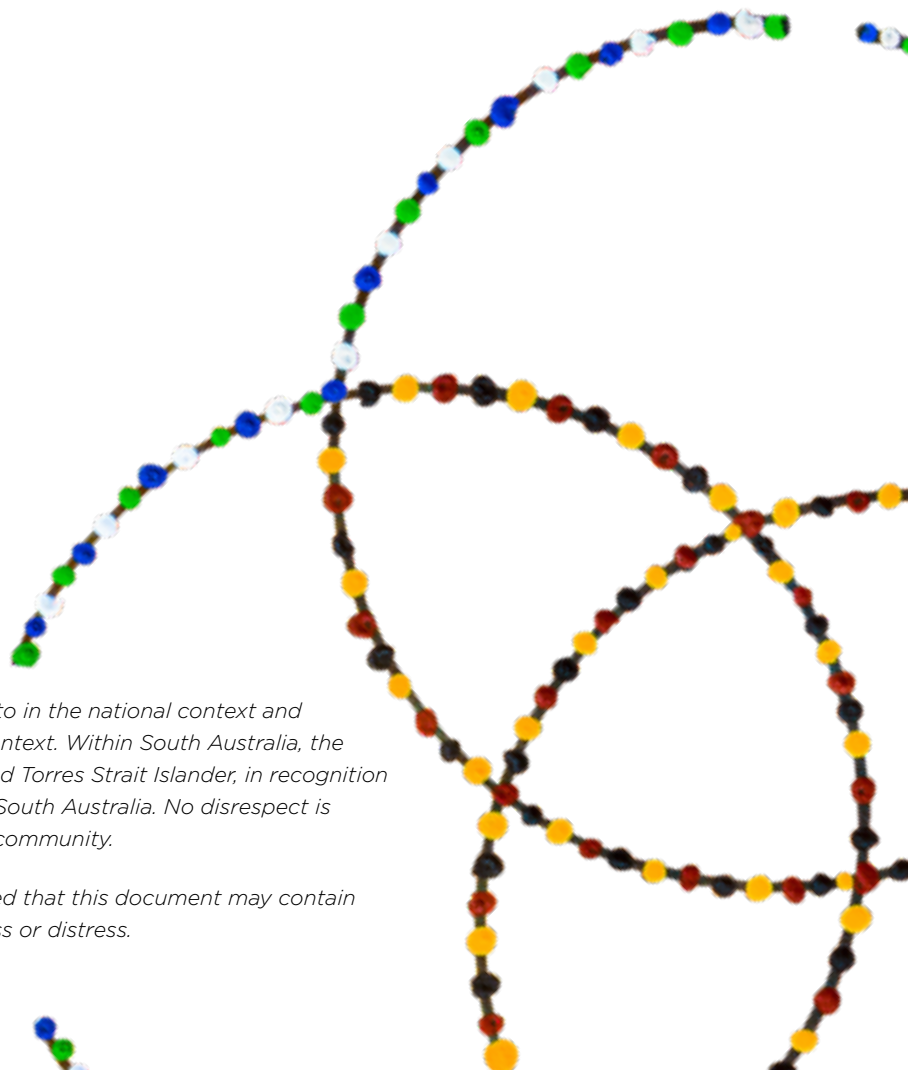
THEME 1: Ensure access to programs and services that are responsive to the unique cultural and gendered needs of Aboriginal offenders 12

THEME 2: Build a culturally competent and responsive workforce 14

THEME 3: Increase Aboriginal economic participation and strengthen partnerships with organisations, businesses and Aboriginal communities 16

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be referred to in the national context and 'Indigenous' may be referred to in the international context. Within South Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of South Australia. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this document may contain images of deceased persons which may cause sadness or distress.



INTRODUCTIONS

Message From The Minister For Correctional Services

I am pleased to introduce the Department for Correctional Services' (DCS) first Aboriginal Strategic Framework 2020-2025 (ASF). The ASF is a key outcome of the 10by20 Strategy, and ensures that DCS programs, policies and supports are culturally safe and tailored to the needs of Aboriginal offenders.

The ASF builds on the progress already made to provide culturally responsive approaches to offender management. It demonstrates the commitment to reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the correctional system and achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities across South Australia.

By continuing to include cultural considerations and by implementing innovative programs and services that address the specific needs of Aboriginal offenders, we will reduce reoffending and the disproportionate number of Aboriginal people in our system. This, in turn, will have a positive impact on the lives of many Aboriginal people, families and communities that are impacted by offending. We will contribute to a safer South Australia.

Hon Vincent Tarzia MP
Minister for Correctional Services



Message From The Chief Executive, Department For Correctional Services

Over recent decades, DCS has implemented a range of initiatives to better address the needs of Aboriginal prisoners and offenders. We have established the Aboriginal Services Unit, introduced Prevention of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (PADIC) Forums, created and implemented cultural rehabilitation programs, and introduced the Aboriginal Elders Visiting Program. To support these initiatives, we have increased Aboriginal employment and grown the cultural capacity of our workforce.

Despite these measures, there continues to be significant overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in our justice system. Whilst DCS alone is not responsible for this indictment, nor able to rectify it in isolation, we have a key role to play. The Aboriginal Strategic Framework 2020-2025 (ASF) creates a road map for our Department and key stakeholders.

The ASF provides a culturally informed approach to addressing the needs of Aboriginal prisoners and offenders. It highlights diversity in Aboriginal cultures and the importance of considering these cultures in our everyday business if we are to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. Key to achieving this outcome are three components: meeting the needs of offenders; increasing the capability of our workforce; and strengthening our partnerships.

I am confident that by working together DCS can improve outcomes for Aboriginal offenders and decrease the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in our system.

David Brown
Chief Executive

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Department would like to thank those people who contributed to this Framework, including external Aboriginal stakeholders, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal prisoners. The Department acknowledges the contribution made by Elders, especially those who are members of the DCS Aboriginal Elders Visiting Program. We thank these Elders for their valued contribution and for travelling with the Department on this journey. Particular thanks is also extended to members of the Aboriginal Reference Group and the ASF Working Group for their time and input to this document.

The artwork used for the cover and throughout this document was created by DCS staff who attended the Aboriginal Staff Forum in November 2019. The staff were divided into three groups to workshop ideas for the ASF Action Plan under the three themes. Each group was also asked to complete a painting to be used in the graphics for the Aboriginal

Strategic Framework, the Aboriginal Strategic Framework Action Plan, the Reconciliation Action Plan and any associated documents.

In this document Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be referred to in the national context and Indigenous may be referred to in the international context. Within South Australia, the term Aboriginal is used and is inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people.



THE FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT



The ASF is a key initiative proposed by the 10by20 Panel in response to the Reducing Reoffending: 10% by 2020 (10by20) Strategy. The 10by20 Panel recommended that the ASF be founded on a rigorous examination of the key issues that lead to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal offenders in the correctional system, and the barriers to effective economic and social participation for Aboriginal people. The development of an ASF has since been included in DCS Business Plans as a pathway to address the high representation of Aboriginal people in Correctional Services.

To create this Framework, consideration was given to existing departmental documents that already include activities aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal people, such as the DCS Strategic Plan 2018-22, Strong Foundations & Clear Pathways: Women Offender Framework and the Reconciliation Action Plan. In addition, there are a number of relevant cross government priorities that DCS is committed to meeting, such as those outlined in the South Australian Government Aboriginal Affairs Action Plan 2019-2020 and the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

Consideration was also given to Indigenous policy frameworks and similar documents in other agencies and jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally. However, it was recognised that the languages, geography, cultural diversity and experiences of Aboriginal communities in South Australia are unique and, if this Framework is to be meaningful, it requires a tailored response to the specific needs of Aboriginal people in South Australia.

As such, extensive consultation was undertaken to inform the development of the ASF, with input received from external Aboriginal stakeholders, DCS staff (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) and Aboriginal prisoners. The consultation resulted in a large amount of feedback that covered a broad range of problems, issues and ideas. These ranged from specific site based matters to systemic issues affecting the correctional system and society more broadly. A number of common themes emerged and these were used to inform the scope and content of the ASF.



The ASF is supported by a two-year Action Plan, which contains detailed and measurable activities to be undertaken by DCS. The activities included in the Action Plan are based on ideas that were raised through the consultation process to address issues and gaps in our service delivery. Rather than repeating initiatives outlined in existing documents, the Action Plan builds on current activity and enhances existing strategies to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people who have contact with DCS. Two additional Action Plans will be developed, which will build on the progress of the previous plan/s and see us through to the end of the current ASF.

South Australia's Aboriginal population is comprised of a range language groups that are located across the State, in metropolitan, regional and remote locations. Each group has its own language, cultural practices and beliefs that are passed from generation to generation. Unfortunately, Aboriginal cultures and languages have been significantly impacted since European settlement, with languages diminished and cultures compromised.


The policies and practices of the past have contributed to the disadvantage and intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal people today. Over 55,000 Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families across Australia under a range of government policies. Lands were taken, cultural practices were forbidden and communities were devastated. The effects of past events are still being felt today, passed down through the generations, often resulting in behavioural problems, violence and substance abuse. Today, many Aboriginal people experience social and economic disadvantage, with poorer physical and mental health, education and employment outcomes than non-Aboriginal people.



Aboriginal people also continue to be disproportionately represented in the correctional services system. In 2019, Aboriginal people in South Australia were 11.5 times more likely to be in prison than non-Aboriginal prisoners. 48% of the Aboriginal prisoner population was on remand, with 93% of these prisoners spending less than six months in prison. In 2018-19, 31% of the female prisoner population identified as Aboriginal, with 62% of those prisoners on remand.

While in prison, many Aboriginal prisoners struggle to maintain their cultural identity, partly due to their loss of connection to community and country. Many Aboriginal prisoners are also retraumatised by the prison experience.

DCS acknowledges the importance of prisoner placement in maintaining cultural and family ties, and will ensure this is a consideration when determining the placement of any Aboriginal prisoner. In an effort to strengthen family connections, we will explore alternative visiting options and strategies for Aboriginal parents to maintain ties with their children. All prisons will be required to establish safe places for Aboriginal prisoners to conduct cultural business and support their involvement in events of cultural significance. In addition, Community Corrections staff will be provided with support and guidance in relation to supporting Aboriginal offenders in the community.



Over the years, DCS has implemented a range of strategies to respond to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody and under community supervision. Our policies and practices are constantly evolving and expanding to respond to the needs of Aboriginal offenders.

The Department's Aboriginal Services Unit (ASU) was established in 1995 to address the needs of the Department's Aboriginal stakeholders and to monitor the implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC) made in 1991.

The ASU works across the Department, strategically and operationally, to assist in the development of specific strategies for working with Aboriginal prisoners and offenders and the Aboriginal community. The ASU is responsible for the wellbeing of Aboriginal staff and prisoners and provides a cultural lens over the development of programs, services, policies and procedures to ensure they have a positive impact on Aboriginal people.

The ASU actively participates in the growth of partnerships and support for Aboriginal community organisations and other government departments. It also provides targeted services to Aboriginal prisoners, offenders and their families.

The ASU coordinates the Prevention of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (PADIC) Forums, which are held at a different prison across the state every six weeks and are chaired by the Chief Executive. These Forums are directly focused on the wellbeing of Aboriginal prisoners and provide the Chief Executive the opportunity to hear firsthand systemic issues experienced by Aboriginal prisoners.

Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs) are now employed across the Department as a direct response to the RCIADIC, providing a support mechanism and cultural oversight for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders. In addition, Aboriginal people are employed across DCS in operational, administrative, professional and management roles, with Aboriginal employment at 4.5%, exceeding the South Australian Strategic Plan target.

Vision

DCS will enhance rehabilitation outcomes for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders by recognising their diverse cultures and responding to their complex issues and the high levels of intergenerational trauma.

Principles

- Every contact matters
- Cultural diversity is acknowledged, respected and valued
- Cultural impact is considered in everything we do
- Collaborative, positive and meaningful engagement contributes to safer, supported and stronger communities

THEMES



- Ensure access to programs and services that are responsive to the unique cultural and gendered needs of Aboriginal offenders
- Build a culturally competent & responsive workforce
- Increase Aboriginal economic participation and strengthen partnerships with organisations, businesses and Aboriginal communities



THEME 1

Ensure access to programs and services that are responsive to the unique cultural and gendered needs of Aboriginal offenders

DCS implements a range of strategies to address the needs of Aboriginal prisoners and offenders including targeted programs such as:

- Violence Prevention Program – Aboriginal Men
- Our Way My Choice
- Drumbeat

We have increased responsiveness by providing services that are more sensitive to the beliefs, cultures and needs of Aboriginal people. However, there are still gaps related to capacity and sentencing impacts that affect program participation and outcomes. To address this we will invest in programs that strengthen cultural identity, build resilience and promote positive emotional wellbeing.

DCS will also increase Aboriginal participation in rehabilitation programs to reduce reoffending and increase community safety. By expanding our preparatory program, Our Way My Choice, to include a family component and by developing a version for Aboriginal women, we will support the wellbeing of Aboriginal prisoners and increase their engagement in rehabilitation programs. We will also introduce a new criminogenic program for Aboriginal men from remote communities, as well as explore options to deliver gender focussed throughcare and reintegration programs. We will have a gendered response to Aboriginal women in our prison system with a focus on wellbeing and developing skills to enable them to thrive in the community.

Aboriginal prisoners have unique needs, stemming from experiences of intergenerational trauma and ongoing systemic racism. A prominent Aboriginal psychologist, Dr Tracey Westerman has found clear links between experiences of trauma and impulsivity factors, many of which lead to offending behaviours. Programs developed by the ASU incorporate these knowledges and draw on the experiences of Aboriginal facilitators to inform structure, content and engagement with participants.

Aboriginal prisoners have, on average, a higher rate of program attendance and completion than non-Aboriginal prisoners. However, it should be noted that the disproportionately high number of Aboriginal people remanded in custody and serving short sentences continues to impact program eligibility.

By implementing specific strategies, DCS will increase Aboriginal people's access to community based supervision and rehabilitation to support a reduction in recidivism and improved rates of order completion.

Achievements

'Pakani Arangka'
Aboriginal accommodation
unit at Port Augusta Prison

Programs
tailored for Aboriginal
men and women

Violence
Prevention Program
- Aboriginal Men

Cross Borders
Indigenous Family
Violence Program

Aboriginal Elders
Visiting Program

Future Actions

Incorporate cultural
and spiritual needs

Gender focussed
throughcare and
rehabilitation

Encourage prisoner
connection to children
and family

THEME 2

BUILD A CULTURALLY COMPETENT AND RESPONSIVE WORKFORCE



DCS recognises the importance of having a diverse workforce that better reflects the offenders it manages. With 25% of prisoners identifying as Aboriginal, but only 4% of staff, DCS is focused on increasing the number of Aboriginal employees. It is also clear that not only do we need more Aboriginal staff, but we need them working across the Department, in different directorates and at different classification levels.

Of the 100 Aboriginal staff working for DCS, the majority work in custodial streams supported by a small team who work in the Aboriginal Services Unit in administrative and management roles.

To date, increasing the number of Aboriginal employees in DCS has been largely led through the Department's Strategic and Business Plans. The DCS Business Plan 2019-2020 aims to progress strategies to increase Aboriginal employment to 6%. DCS has employed 17 trainees since 2010 and continue to engage with a not for profit training provider to identify suitable Aboriginal employees to join the Department. The ASU also actively engages with the Aboriginal community to attract Aboriginal people to careers with DCS.

In addition, to attract Aboriginal employees, DCS will promote the positive impact we have on the lives of prisoners and offenders, as well as the interesting and rewarding roles that our staff play. We will develop recruitment resources and engage externally to promote career pathways to DCS, targeting young people and professionals. DCS will encourage all Aboriginal staff to reach their full potential and provide opportunities for those staff who aspire to leadership roles. A particularly exciting initiative has been the implementation of a targeted Aboriginal Traineeship Program, which has seen an intake of 10 trainees across the State in 2020. Participants have been provided with on and off the job training and the support of a DCS staff member that has completed mentoring training. Line managers across the Department have also received training on how to best support trainees.

Most importantly, DCS will build cultural Capability across its workforce. DCS will continue to develop a culturally safe workspace in which all staff are respected and valued for their unique perspectives. Behaviours such as bullying, discrimination and racism will not be tolerated and will be called out. We will ensure that Aboriginal staff are confident that their experiences will be heard and valued. To achieve this, we will continue to deliver mandatory cultural competence training to all staff, increase information sharing and introduce additional mechanisms to support Aboriginal staff.

Increasing the number of Aboriginal employees and building the cultural competence of our staff will result in more culturally responsive management of prisoners and offenders. Staff will be better equipped to recognise and respond to the cultural needs of Aboriginal offenders, and to deliver appropriate programs and services. This, in turn, will equip Aboriginal offenders with knowledge and skills to function more fully in the community, leading to a reduction in reoffending.

Achievements



Future Actions



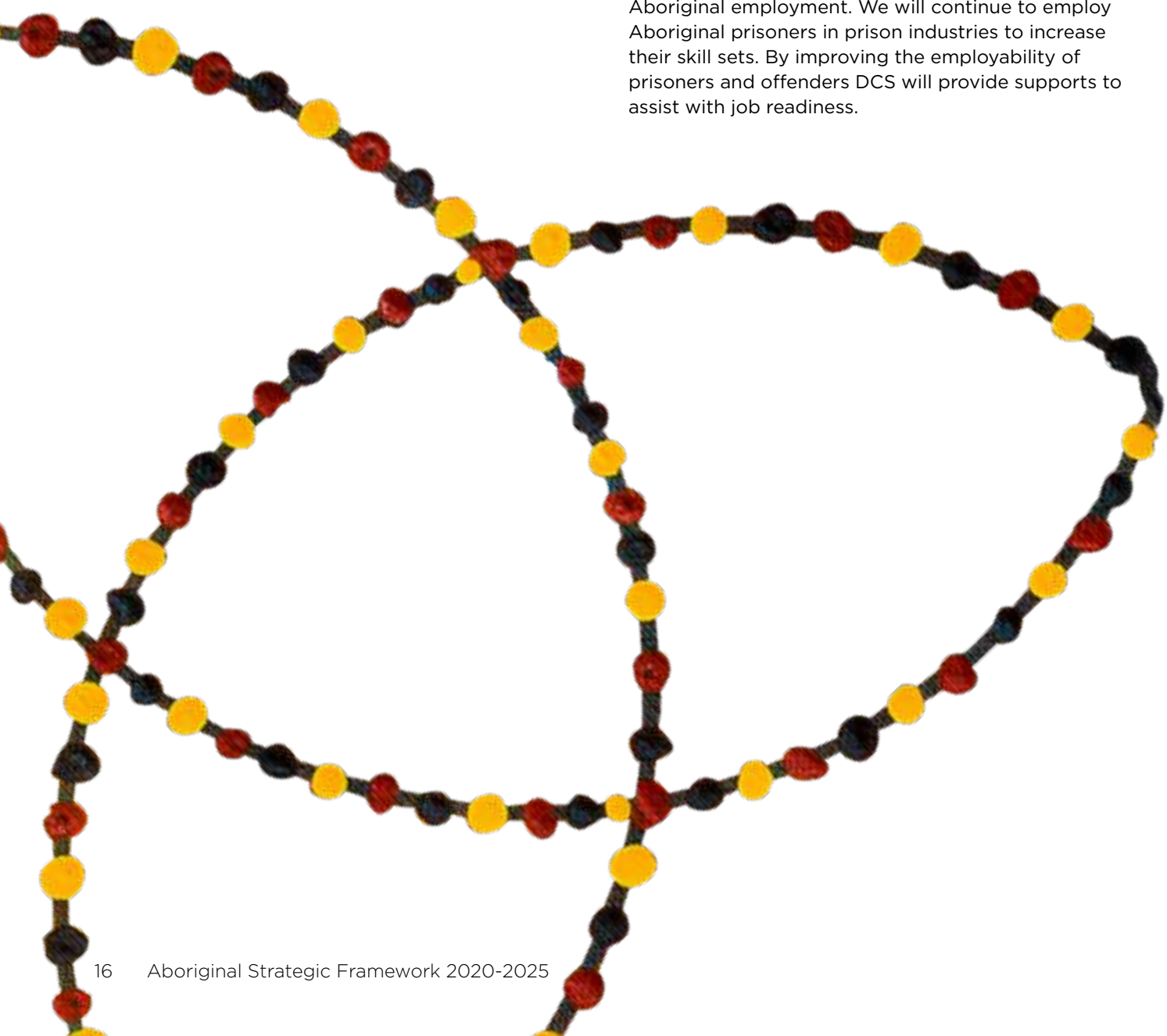
THEME 3

Increase Aboriginal economic participation and strengthen partnerships with organisations, businesses and Aboriginal communities

The overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in correctional services is a complex problem that DCS cannot solve alone. As such, we are committed to working with our partners and stakeholders to address the challenges we face and achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders.

We will expand our partnerships and harness the expertise of external organisations to deliver culturally appropriate services and programs to Aboriginal prisoners and offenders. We will also develop relationships with Aboriginal communities to assist us to provide programs and services that are culturally sensitive and improve outcomes for their people. By meeting the specific needs of Aboriginal prisoners and offenders we increase their ability to positively contribute to Aboriginal communities and the wider South Australian community.

DCS is in a unique position to increase Aboriginal economic participation due to its purchasing power. By introducing a number of Aboriginal focussed procurement processes, DCS will increase the purchase of goods and services from Aboriginal businesses and businesses with certain levels of Aboriginal employment. We will continue to employ Aboriginal prisoners in prison industries to increase their skill sets. By improving the employability of prisoners and offenders DCS will provide supports to assist with job readiness.



Achievements



Future Actions





For further information, please contact:

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