

From jobs to careers

What Assessments of Australian organisations tell us about First Nations retention and career mobility

Australian organisations have improved at hiring First Nations people, but far fewer succeed in retaining and advancing them. The evidence points to three changes that matter most.

What the evidence shows

Drawn from the 15xB G.R.O. Assessment® Benchmarking Report 2026, which aggregates Assessments of Australian organisations completed between 2021 and 2026 across sectors and industries.

The Assessment benchmarks organisations across seven Key Impact Areas (Strategic Rationale, Employment, Supplier Diversity, Community Engagement, Relationships and Partnerships, Governance and Leadership, and Cultural Respect), rating each on a six-point scale: Reactive, Foundational, Developing, Emerging, Optimised, Leading.

2.5 / 6

Average maturity of First Nations engagement, between Foundational and Developing. None rated Leading.

57%

of organisations rate Reactive or Foundational overall.

1.4 to 3×

How much faster First Nations employees typically leave than the company average, even where hiring is at or near population parity.

2.2 / 6

Average score for Strategic Rationale. Around two thirds could not say why First Nations engagement matters to their business.

2.9 vs 2.6

Cultural Respect is the highest-rated area; Governance and Leadership is lower. Training is the easy first move. Executive accountability is not.

1 in 3

Assessments where progress depended on one or two individuals rather than a system.

One finding cuts against the common assumption. In the public administration group, representation is falling against 3% targets even where First Nations retention is exceptional. Retention alone does not fix representation. Attraction, progression and accountability must move together.

The three problems we see most, and how to fix them

Jobs are counted, careers are not

THE PATTERN

Recruitment is measured and celebrated. Progression is rarely measured. An organisation can report a strong year while losing most of the people it hired, because reporting captures headcount only.

THE FIX

Before setting another hiring target, baseline retention and progression by cohort: 12, 24 and 36-month retention for First Nations starters, internal promotion rate against the company average, and representation at each management tier.

The why was never documented

THE PATTERN

Where an organisation cannot say why this work matters commercially, activity stays symbolic, budgets stay discretionary, and progress evaporates with leadership change. Without the why, everything else stalls.

THE FIX

Create a one-page rationale linking First Nations engagement to core business priorities, such as workforce supply, market access, community licence to operate or service design. Secure a named executive sponsor and integrate it into the business plan, rather than limiting it to the RAP.

Accountability stops at middle management

THE PATTERN

Cultural learning and events run well because they sit with people who care. Retention and progression stall because no one senior carries a consequence for them.

THE FIX

Add one First Nations retention or progression measure to the executive scorecard and assign it to a named executive. A single measure with clear ownership can drive more progress than a page of commitments managed by middle management.

Benchmark your organisation

The First Nations Readiness Index is a free five-minute self-assessment built on the same seven Key Impact Areas as the 15xB G.R.O. Assessment®.

You receive: a maturity band, a read on where your strategy is creating impact, where it is stuck on activity, and your three priority next moves.

TAKE THE INDEX: scorecard.15timesbetter.com.au

Topaz McAuliffe

Founder & CEO, 15 Times Better
topaz@15timesbetter.com.au
15timesbetter.com.au

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