

2025 First Circles Leadership Program Wraps Up!

Workshop 4 – Building Skills and Reflection

Members returned to Darwin for the fourth and final workshop with a strong sense of pride in what has been achieved so far. Reflections from earlier sessions highlighted both personal growth and collective learning, with members identifying key skills they have already applied in their communities – as well as areas they wish to strengthen moving forward.



Strengthening Written Communication

It was a productive week, with program members taking part in a writing workshop delivered by *Communicate NT*. The session focused on:

- Writing clearly and concisely
- Unpacking punctuation
- Using plain English

These practical exercises helped participants build confidence in communicating their ideas and initiatives effectively.

Alumni Support and Mentorship

2024 Alumni members Alec Bidwee, Sally Sena and Geri Narul joined Workshop 4 to mentor and support participants as they prepared for their Cabinet presentation. Their insights and encouragement provided valuable guidance for members entering the final phase of the program.

Keynote Presentation: Building Aboriginal Business

A regular highlight of each workshop has been the keynote presentations. This session featured Anthony Hale, a proud Larrakia/Anmatyerre man, who shared an overview of the Business Builder program and how Impact North supports Aboriginal businesses through mentorship and networking opportunities.

Anthony also facilitated an interactive activity on business skills and tools, sparking exciting ideas among participants – including:

- Launching a café in West Arnhem to cater to the growing tourism market
- Expanding community-delivered horse therapy services to support disengaged young people in the Big Rivers region



Communicate NT facilitator, Jo Robertson with First Circles members



Anthony Hale, Head of Community and Strategic Relationships for Impact North facilitating group discussions

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Haydon Staines yarning about leadership in community



First Circles members pictured with staff from Aboriginal Investment NT

Continuing Growth Through Education

aCommunity Precinct, where keynote speaker Haydon Staines, First Nations Educational Leadership Coordinator at CDU's Teacher Education Hub, spoke about the importance of continued growth through education and training. His message reinforced the power of learning as a lifelong journey for both individuals and communities.

Exploring Investment and Grant Opportunities

To close out the week, members met with staff from Aboriginal Investment NT, an Aboriginal-controlled corporation that supports community-led initiatives through investment and grant programs.

The session offered valuable insights into funding opportunities, particularly the Community Quick Response Grants, which can support:

- Cultural events
- Sports equipment for local teams
- Small infrastructure projects
- Community training workshops

These discussions inspired members to think strategically about how funding can strengthen and sustain community-driven projects.



Connecting Through R U OK? Day

Members also took the opportunity to recognise R U OK? Day by joining staff from the Chief Minister and Cabinet (CM&C) office for a morning tea.

The event encouraged open conversation and connection, reminding everyone of the importance of checking in with one another. Fun was had by all during a lively game of 'Human Bingo', which helped members and staff get to know each other better in a relaxed and



engaging way.

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Workshop 5 – Members Finalise Their Speeches

As the program drew to a close, Workshop 5 focused on preparing for the Cabinet presentation – the culmination of the year’s work and learning.

This year’s presentation centred on personal stories and positive achievements emerging from the regions, with members showcasing how their leadership journeys have influenced change and inspired new opportunities within their communities.

Participants also reflected on the road ahead, exploring pathways beyond the First Circles Program and how they can continue to grow as leaders and community builders.

In preparation for their Cabinet presentation, members rehearsed their speeches before a CM&C guest panel, who provided constructive feedback – highlighting opportunities for enhancement while recognising the members’ confidence, clarity, and presentation skills.

First Circles Members Presentation to NT Cabinet

On Tuesday 7 October 2025, First Circles members had the honour of presenting to Northern Territory Cabinet Ministers on the following key topics:



- Personal stories of growth
- Successful regional stories
- Members’ future goals beyond the First Circles Leadership Program

Cabinet also heard from Alumni member Geri Narul, who shared a recorded video message reflecting on her leadership journey since completing the program in 2024.

Despite a few pre-speech nerves, members spoke with confidence and authenticity, expressing their aspirations to continue exploring leadership opportunities for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Their stories reflected strength, vision, and the growing influence of emerging Aboriginal leaders across the Territory.



NT Cabinet Ministers and the 2025 First Circles Members

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Cabinet Presentation photo gallery



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Reception Event – Celebrating the 2025 First Circles Members

An evening of celebrations was held at the NT Indigenous Business Network (NTIBN), bringing together First Circles members, their families and invited guests to mark the completion of this year's program.

Following a 'Welcome to Country' delivered by *Larrakia* woman *Jeaneen McLennan*, the Hon. Steve Edgington MLA, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, congratulated the 2025 First Circles members on their hard work and commitment throughout the program.

Minister Edgington presented members with plaques in recognition of their achievements and dedication to the program.

This year, 11 Aboriginal leaders from remote communities across the Northern Territory participated in the program to develop and expand their leadership skills. Over a six-month period, commencing in April, members attended five workshops, including the presentation to Cabinet.



Members completed the program with a strong sense of pride in what they have achieved. Reflections shared during the presentation and reception highlighted both personal growth and collective learning, as members identified the key skills they have already applied in their communities, as well as areas they wish to strengthen moving forward.

Their focus remains on practical applications of knowledge, community-led initiatives, and exploring opportunities beyond the First Circles Leadership Program.



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Reception Event photo gallery



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Congratulations 2025 First Circles Members!



Corben Mudjandi
Jabiru



Casey Smiler
Jilkminggan



Lateesha Coombes
Wurrumiyanga



Patricia Puruntatameri
Pirlangimpi



Kevin Dumoo
Wadeye



Stacey Davis
Ltyentye Apurte



Veronica Peters
Ltyentye Apurte



Simone Baker
Jilkminggan



Selma Smiler
Kalkarindji



Terrence Wilson
Yuelamu



Zelda Dhamarrandji
Galiwin'ku

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Supporting Aboriginal leaders from across the Territory

Do you know an Aboriginal leader from a remote community in the Territory?

The Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet are calling for expressions of interest to the
2026 First Circles Leadership Program

The program aims to identify, mentor and support emerging Aboriginal leaders from remote communities across the Northern Territory.

You can nominate yourself or someone you know

Nominations close: 14 November 2025

For more information and how to apply, visit:
aboriginalaffairs.nt.gov.au/first-circles



aboriginalaffairs.nt.gov.au

