

Friday 24 April 2020

**Coles employs more than 400 Indigenous team members in four weeks
*Lifts total number of Indigenous Australians employed to 4,800***

Coles has recruited 430 Indigenous team members in just four weeks, providing much-needed employment opportunities at a time when many Australians are urgently seeking work.

The new hires take Coles' total Indigenous workforce to more than 4,800 and marks a significant step towards the company's target of employing 5,500 Indigenous team members by 2023.

Among the hundreds of newly hired Indigenous team members is structural engineer and Newcastle resident Matthew Cox, who was stood down after a downturn in the construction market.

"I was in the state housing sector designing and constructing frames before I was made redundant after a slowdown in the industry," he said.

"I saw a video callout from the Wallsend store manager looking for new employees, so I applied on the Tuesday and was doing my in-store induction the following Monday.

"I'm now in my fourth week at Coles, primarily working in the dairy department, helping to fill and manage stock. The team has been incredibly welcoming and it's nice to get out of the house and have that social interaction. You've just got to keep at it until you find something."

Coles Head of Indigenous Affairs Russell James said the recruitment drive was providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to find work as the economy struggles though the Coronavirus pandemic.

"We're delighted that we've been able to offer employment opportunities to more than 400 Indigenous Australians impacted by COVID-19, many of whom found themselves out of work as a direct result of Coronavirus."

The new team members are among the 12,000 people hired by Coles over the past four weeks to help meet increased demand from customers resulting from COVID-19. The company has worked with business partners including Virgin, the AFL and the Essendon Football Club to provide roles to people who have lost or been stood down from their jobs as a result of COVID-19.

As part of the recruitment drive Coles also called on existing partnerships with Indigenous employment specialists, including Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES), the Australian Indigenous Business Alliance Group (AIBAG), MEEDAC Aboriginal Corporation and Job Prospects.

"We now have over 4,800 Indigenous team members working across Coles, with this most recent intake pushing Indigenous representation to almost four per cent of our total workforce, Russell said.

"We've worked hard to make Coles a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for Indigenous Australians to work, with retention rates for our Indigenous team members above that of the Coles average testament to this."

Coles this week released its [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement document](#) containing commitments to provide more opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and marking 10 years since committing to increase its Indigenous workforce to 3,000 in 2020, up significantly from just 65 in 2011.

The company hit that milestone three years ahead of time in 2017, and by 2019 the number had grown to 4,200 making Coles the biggest corporate employer of Indigenous Australians.

Coles is now working towards employing 5,500 Indigenous team members by 2023, and looks set to meet this target early following the acceleration of new hires over the past four weeks.

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