

May 2020

AEC Reconciliation Action Plan

Reflect (June 2020 – June 2021)



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The AEC acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to their cultures and to their Elders both past, present and emerging.

Message from the Electoral Commissioner

I am pleased to present the Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2021 for the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

This is the agency's third Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and reflects our continued commitment to enhancing our reputation as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our focus remains on removing barriers to inclusivity in the workplace and fostering a work environment that acknowledges all cultures.

This RAP has an internal focus and outlines the actions we will take and targets we have set to improve opportunities for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and to strengthen and sustain our relationship with communities. It complements the AEC's commitment to increase electoral participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the delivery of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP).

Illustrative of our commitment to reconciliation, this RAP was developed by our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAP WG) which comprises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff from across the country. The RAP WG is responsible for monitoring progress and making adjustments, as required, to ensure we respond to the needs and aspirations of our staff and communities.

I look forward to working with our Executive Leadership Team to actively monitor and evaluate the RAP throughout its implementation across the agency.

Tom Rogers
Electoral Commissioner
Australian Electoral Commission

Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia is delighted to see the **Australian Electoral Commission** continue its reconciliation journey and to formally endorse this Reflect RAP.

Through development of this Reflect RAP, the **Australian Electoral Commission** continues to play an important role in a community of hundreds of dedicated corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have formally committed to reconciliation through the RAP program. RAP organisations across Australia are turning good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

RAPs provide organisations with a blueprint to contribute toward the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity, institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and leadership within and across all sectors of Australian society.

By committing to this Reflect RAP, the **Australian Electoral Commission** will strengthen structures to guide reconciliation initiatives and continue promoting lifelong cultural learning journeys amongst all employees. The **Australian Electoral Commission** will deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions of reconciliation.

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend the **Australian Electoral Commission** on the development of this RAP, and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Our business

The AEC is a statutory authority responsible for administering the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act). The AEC must conduct federal elections and referendums, maintain the Commonwealth electoral roll and administer Part XX of the Electoral Act, which deals with political funding and disclosure. The AEC also provides a range of electoral information and education programs.

The AEC is funded to deliver one key outcome:

Maintain an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters through active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services and targeted education and public awareness programs.

The AEC has a National reach, with just over 90 sites around Australia. We have a regular workforce of 788 APS employees which includes 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (as at 31 August 2019).

Our RAP

The AEC's first RAP, released in 2012, set the foundation for the AEC to engage and work towards reconciliation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and communities. It established a minimum standard for building and maintaining relationships, providing opportunities to engage and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and to establish partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The AEC's second RAP 2016 – 2018, released in May 2016, strengthened our desire to further embed strategies that support the building of relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the provision of opportunities for our staff to deliver culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors.

The AEC's ultimate goal for this RAP 2020 – 2021, our third RAP, is to continue to build momentum for a united approach to reconciliation that every employee supports and actively contributes to the delivery and achievement of the action items. AEC has returned to the Reflect RAP, taking this opportunity to review progress so far, identify further opportunities and maintain momentum in areas of success. The focus of this RAP is to deliver high quality action items that are achievable.

A RAP WG has been established as a subgroup of the AEC's Diversity and Inclusion Network to ensure the actions of this RAP are progressed and will report to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) each quarter on its progress. Members are comprised of AEC employees from diverse roles across various States and National Office branches. The Deputy Electoral Commissioner fulfils the roles of Indigenous Champion and chair of the RAP WG and drives AEC's vision and commitment.

By building and maintaining strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the AEC will play its part in promoting reconciliation in Australia. The AEC acknowledges activities supporting reconciliation can improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes.

Within the AEC, we are committed to improving outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Where our interactions as an agency are concerned, cultural understanding and acknowledgement will aid in education and engagement in Australia's electoral and democratic processes.

Through delivery of the Reflect RAP, the AEC will:

- Strengthen our reputation as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Ensure our staff are culturally aware and equipped to communicate effectively and to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Ensure our services are effective, culturally appropriate and accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Strengthen our relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within which we deliver services.

Key learnings

Clear gains are made by engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in person, and with purpose. Working with community members develops understanding and respect through collaboration, communication and shared goals.

AEC Qld-NT IEPP staff conducted multiple election events for the Torres Strait Regional Authority in 2019. The team travelled to Thursday Island and Ugar and engaged with the local community to ensure candidates understood how to nominate correctly and that all eligible electors had the opportunity to vote. Local community members were employed and trained – as a Liaison Officer, Senior Liaison Officer, and Polling Official, and the team achieved an increase in enrolment of 6.1%. These gains will prove valuable as several elections - with their related employment opportunities - are scheduled for 2020.

David Stuart, IEPP QLD & NT

Communication in language is particularly important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Radio, television and print media are produced in language by communities around Australia, with a key goal of translating information accurately and with appropriate cultural messaging. Translating information regarding our core business and employment opportunities will greatly improve engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, demonstrating respect for culture and a willingness to understand the needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

I was seconded to the Jawun program and based in Miriwoong Country in the Kimberley region of WA. Jawun focusses on Indigenous-led, place-based capacity building. Working with the local community radio station, I witnessed the importance of language and respect in the local community. The radio station worked with the local language centre to develop and deliver content in language which was culturally appropriate, and endorsed by the Elders group. Information provided in language is far more accessible to Indigenous communities, particularly where the written form of language is still in development.

Jawun participant 2019 – Danielle Paterson

Our partnerships/current activities

- 6 events were hosted for National Reconciliation Week 2019 and AEC collaborated with other organisations on external events.
- NAIDOC Week Awards were presented to employees and teams who contributed significantly to service provision, reconciliation and engagement with Indigenous communities and organisations.
- AEC accessed immersion opportunities for AEC employees via the Jawun program, which is administered by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC).
- AEC engaged in 15 formal partnerships and 30 informal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations during the previous reporting period.
- AEC contracted with 6 Supply Nation business during the reporting period.

Relationships

Building and maintaining respectful and sustainable relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is core to our values and the way we do business. It enables us to better understand needs and aspirations and to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the electoral system and democratic processes.



Relationships			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. This could take the form of being guest speakers or attending local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander celebrations and events. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations both formally and informally on shared objectives. 	June 2020, June 2021	Chair, RAP WG
2. Build and maintain relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. 	27 May-3 June 2021	Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO) Chief People Officer Director, Communications

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event and host or organise events where opportunity presents. 	27 May-3 June 2021	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW, using flexible work arrangements. 	27 May-3 June 2021	Chair, RAP WG Indigenous Champion
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. 	June 2020	Indigenous Champion Director, Disclosure, Assurance and Engagement (DAE)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	June 2020	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	June 2020	Chair, RAP WG
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	December 2020	Chief People Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	December 2020	Chief People Officer

Respect

We will strive to foster an inclusive and respectful workplace environment in which our staff acknowledge and have an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage.



Respect			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote cultural awareness training within our organisation through compulsory cultural competency learning available via the AEC's Learning Hub. 	June 2020, June 2021	Director, National Training &

Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.			Education Unit (NTEU)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominate for cultural immersion opportunities for AEC employees via the APSC's Jawun program, which is administered by the Australian Public Service Commission. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and assess the AEC's cultural learning needs and identify opportunities to increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights 	November 2020	Director, NTEU
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's reach through AECs cultural protocols document. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP WG
7. Acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	June 2020	Chief People Officer Director, Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. 	June 2020	Chief People Officer Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the NAIDOC Awards as part of the AEC's rewards and recognitions program. 	June 2020	Assistant Commissioner, Corporate Services Branch
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	First week in July 2020	Chair, RAP WG

Opportunities

We strive to provide employment opportunities and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to build the diversity of our workforce while contributing to the greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures.



Opportunities			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build an understanding of the AEC's current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing profile to inform strategies to recruit, retain and provide professional development opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. 	July 2020	Chief People Officer Director, NTEU Director, Roll Management and Community Engagement Branch (RMCE)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training or resources to recruitment panels which covers cultural competency and inclusivity. 	July 2020	Chief People Officer Director, NTEU Director, RMCE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce to 2.5% in line with the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 	June 2021	Chief People Officer
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes in line with APS-wide strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	November 2020	Director, Commercial Law and Procurement (CLP)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain procurement processes requiring Supply Nation searches for relevant procurement activities. 	June 2021	Director, CLP

Governance



Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a RAP WG to govern RAP implementation, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representation. 	July 2020	Indigenous Champion

governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Terms of Reference for the RAP WG. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP WG 	July 2020	Chair, RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, endorse and launch the RAP 2020-21. 	June 2020	Chair, RAP WG
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define resource needs for RAP implementation and engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. 	June 2020	Indigenous Champion Chief People Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. This will be covered in the Terms of Reference of the RAP WG. 	July 2020	Chief People Officer Chair, RAP WG
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. 	30 September 2020	Chief People Officer
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. 	December 2020	Chair, RAP WG

Artwork - Journey

This artwork is a visual representation of the individual's journey and the journey of the nation. It speaks to both the individual and the nation and represents a parallel between the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and political journey in this Country.

As the journey travels across the country, water springs up through the dusty sands of time, representing the emergence, strength and resilience of history, culture and knowledge that has always been present and becomes a part of the national dialogue.

Artwork collaboration David Williams, Jenna Lee and Rachael Sarra



Artist Bios

DAVID WILLIAMS - A proud Wakka Wakka man, David has been a practicing artist for the last 15 years.

His first solo exhibition was held in 2004, and he went on to have his first international exhibition in Sweden in the same year. David now has his works hung overseas in private collections in Italy, Spain, England and Germany.

While predominantly using acrylic on canvas, David began exploring other mediums, which extended to the use of design to communicate. He began experimenting with vector-based graphics as a foundation for his artwork, which had a wider ranging commercial application. His artwork subsequently extended to a series of publications and other areas. Through artwork and design, David strives to educate others about his people and his culture, hoping that one day there will be a better understanding across the mainstream population of Australia.

JENNA LEE - Jenna is a proud Larrakia woman with a Bachelor Degree in Visual Communication Design from the Queensland College of Art, and TAFE qualifications in Visual Art and Contemporary Craft. Jenna has been a member of the Gilimbaa team since 2013 when she joined as a University Intern, and is now a full time Graphic Designer. Jenna specialises in Layout and Document Design, in particular designing for maximum accessibility for visual and reading impaired audiences. Her design is strongly influence by her heritage and

she has begun exploring traditional artwork styles, drawing on the rich artistic practices of her Larrakia ancestors.

RACHAEL SARRA - Rachael Sarra is a proud Indigenous designer from the Gurang Gurang/ Bunda people. Graduating from the Queensland College of Art with a Visual Communication Design degree with majors in Typography and Socially Responsive Design. Rachael has come from a strong freelance and agency background specialising in concept development, illustration and campaign development with special consideration around cultural awareness.

Contact Details for our RAP

For more information about what the agency is doing to meet its RAP obligations contact People Services at reconciliation@aec.gov.au or on (02) 6271 4488.