



Department of **Water and  
Environmental Regulation**

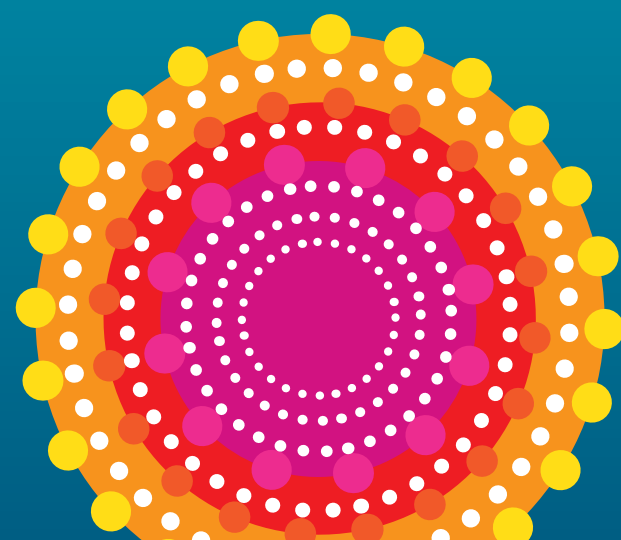
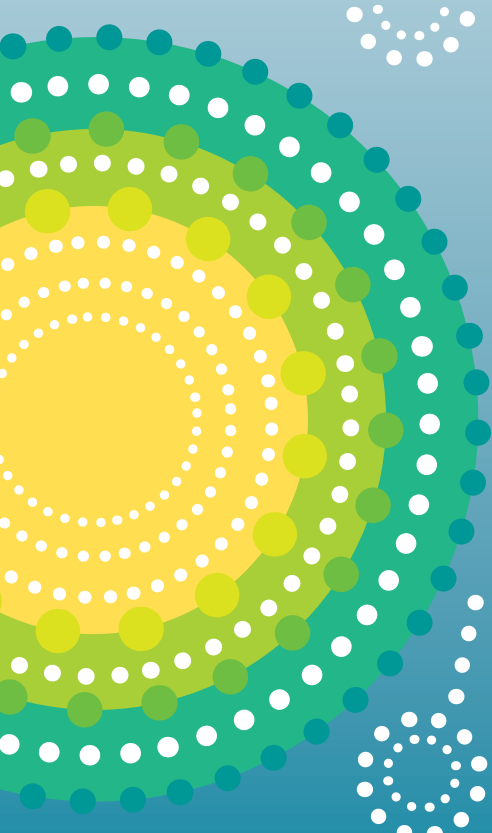
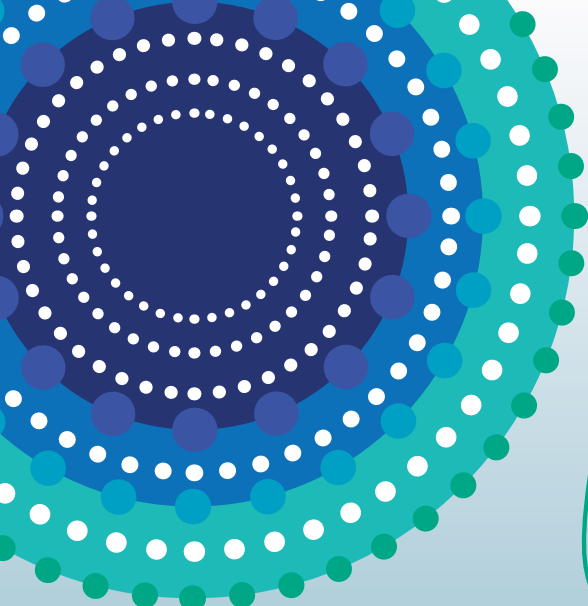


**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**

**INNOVATE**

# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

August 2022 to August 2024



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation of the land upon which we live and work, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise the practice of intergenerational care for Country and its relevance to our work bringing it to life on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja\*. We seek to listen, learn, and genuinely engage and build strong partnerships. We aim to provide sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within our workforce and through our business.

Country is a term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe the lands, waterways, and seas to which they are intrinsically linked. The wellbeing, law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity are all interwoven as one. Working with the community, we move forward with a shared commitment to protect and conserve Country for our future generations.

\*The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's head office, Prime House, is located in Joondalup, on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja. The above acknowledgement of country was endorsed by the department's Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group.

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## PREFACE

Am I the self who locks you out when you come to me in pain  
that the world you fight for is crumbling down  
and you just want to explain,  
or do I let you surround like a wind  
and expose my skin to thoughts  
that once were alien to my world  
but are now of a different sort?

I let my ears and eyes perceive  
without a closing door  
as I open my arms to welcome change  
and dance my feet once more.

The time I take to let your views  
progress to hold my own  
is a broadening, softening expansion of self  
to help me understand, not groan.

Together tomorrow is within our reach  
it must be different from today  
and reconciliation we both seek  
for work and learning and play.

Written by Ray Tauss a member  
of the Department of Water  
and Environmental Regulation.



## JOURNEY TO RECONCILIATION

Paige Corunna, a Whadjuk Noongar woman with Wajarri Yamatji and Palyku ancestral connections, was the talented lead artist behind the artwork contained in this document. Paige has produced this, aged 19, while working in our Corporate Communications branch as part of the WA Public Sector Commission's Aboriginal Traineeship Program.

Paige says:

"This artwork showcases the 'Journey to Reconciliation'. The colourful circles represent some of the pathways to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - unity, listening, learning, communication, respect, opportunities and meaningful relationships.

The white circles represents the different turning points through the journey:

- recognising the journey to reconciliation
- understanding the journey to reconciliation, and
- committing to the journey to reconciliation."



## MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTERS



The McGowan Government is committed to working towards true reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been the custodians of the land and waters of this Country for at least 60,000 years. We are privileged to live among the oldest continuing culture on the planet.

It is therefore essential that we work closely with Traditional Owners in the management of Western Australia's precious environment and water resources.

The McGowan Government has a firm commitment to Aboriginal people and to the Closing the Gap outcomes, and we will continue to direct our efforts towards a future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has a vital role to play in this given its carriage of the state's environment and water resources.

The department recognises the importance of a partnership approach and acknowledges the role of First Nation's people and their significant cultural knowledge and connection to Country and living waters. As demonstrated in this document, it values Aboriginal knowledge and cultural advice and will continue building partnerships and establishing systems for capturing and responding to Aboriginal knowledge in decision-making.

This shared commitment to protect and conserve Country for our future generations is a vital step towards the department's commitment to reconciliation.



Hon Reece Whitby MLA  
Minister for Environment;  
Climate Action



Hon. Dave Kelly MLA  
Minister for Water



## MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR GENERAL



On behalf of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation of the land upon which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise the practice of intergenerational care for Country and its relevance to our work bringing it to life on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja. We seek to listen, learn, and genuinely engage and build strong partnerships. We aim to provide sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our workforce and through our business.

I am proud to present the department's *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024*. This is our second RAP, and it focuses on the key principles of the Uluru Statement and the five dimensions of reconciliation – *unity, race relations, historical acceptance, institutional integrity, equality, and equity* – to strengthen our partnerships, collaboration and understanding to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

We all have a role to play in advancing reconciliation and together we can successfully deliver our RAP commitments. We will continue to build the capacity and diversity of our workforce to drive our reconciliation journey that provides us with a deeper understanding of our Country.

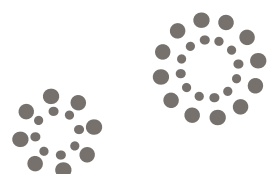
The department is a large and diverse workforce, and our work reflects the Government of Western Australia's priority areas of Closing the Gap Implementation Plan and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, while furthering its commitment to improved water and environmental regulation outcomes.

Following consultation with our key stakeholders and working groups, our RAP has the following high-impact focus areas:

- Strengthen our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, and the local Aboriginal land and sea councils and relevant Traditional Owners through greater understanding and mutual respect.
- Increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and provide career development pathways and leadership opportunities.
- Participate in and contribute respectfully to Native Title negotiations in a way that provides improved opportunities for cultural, social and economic development for Aboriginal communities.
- Develop and implement an Aboriginal Cultural and Native Title Learning Framework and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Strategy.
- Review and implement internal governance arrangements for Aboriginal outcomes that clarify accountabilities and ensure they are fit-for-purpose and streamlined.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who contributed to the development of our RAP which builds on the lessons learnt from the first 2019-2021 *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*. As we continue to drive forward and achieve meaningful change, your engagement is a vital part of our reconciliation journey.

Michelle Andrews  
Director General







## MESSAGE FROM RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation Australia commends the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With over 2.3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. The department continues to be part of a strong network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that the department will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to the department using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on *relationships*, *respect*, and *opportunities* gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for the department to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of the department future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Department of Water and Environmental Regulation on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

**Karen Mundine**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia



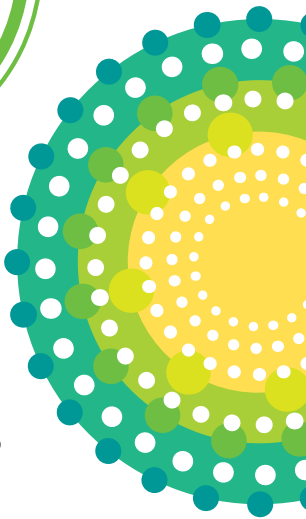
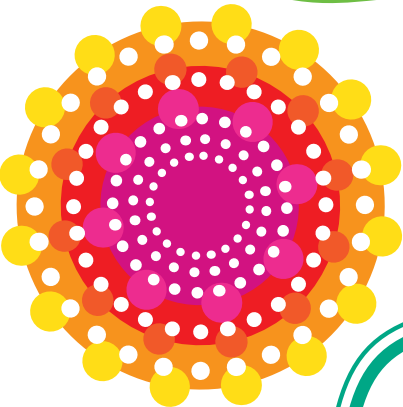


## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (the department) is proud to deliver its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Using guidance designed to help organisations to innovate, this plan develops, assesses and establishes the best approach for advancing reconciliation in our workplace.

To us, this is more than just a document. This is our public commitment to reconciliation. It is an important step on a long journey. It is more than a word; it is about our attitudes and behaviour.

Our plan is the product of lengthy collaboration across our business from people of different nationalities and cultures, all of whom have enriched this document through their experiences and perspectives. We are proud of the 'diversity of thought' this represents.



## OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Our reconciliation vision is to contribute to the cultural, social, spiritual and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Western Australia (WA). We strive to build a future with outcome-based relationships between our department and local Aboriginal-led organisations, leaders and communities, to promote opportunities for a healthy Country and a healthy environment and secure water resources, valued by all, to support a liveable and prosperous WA.

To achieve our vision, we need to listen, learn, and build strong partnerships with Aboriginal stakeholders. Building and developing relationships with Aboriginal peoples and communities will help protect and promote Aboriginal cultures and histories, as well as provide opportunities for social and economic benefit.



## OUR BUSINESS

The department supports WA's community, economy and environment by managing and regulating the state's environment and water resources. We have offices in the Perth metro area and regional areas across our state. As of 30 June 2022, we had 994 employees and 12 self-identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees. We are committed to achieving our reconciliation vision by aspiring to be an organisation that is seen as leading by example, and undertaking positive actions outlined in our RAP on our reconciliation journey. We will continue to develop and strengthen our plan to contribute to improved outcomes, built on genuine partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and leaders to support social, cultural, spiritual and economic outcomes.

Our sphere of influence beyond our staff includes key stakeholders such as the Australian Government, State Government, local governments, Traditional Owners, Prescribed Body Corporates, Aboriginal businesses and communities, customers such as license holders, and proponents.

The department actively supports empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in every activity and program that we deliver. We recognise, acknowledge and accept that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold great spiritual relevance to freshwater sites, ancient rivers, springs, soaks, jilas, and saltwater, seas and river waterways. This plan is focused on genuinely meeting our commitments to reconciliation.





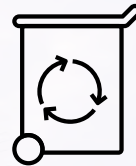
**Our vision** is for a low-carbon WA with a healthy environment and secure water resources for future generations.

This RAP is only one small part of a bigger commitment by our department to ensure we are genuinely inclusive, supporting and advocating for generational change. Other strategies and government priority reforms and targets that drive our work include our Aboriginal Engagement Strategy and Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, and the Closing the Gap WA Jurisdictional Plan, Native Title settlements and our long-term workforce and diversity planning.

## Our Mission



**Water:** We act to ensure our water resources meet the needs of the community, ecosystems, and economic development.



**Waste:** We act to reduce the harmful impact of waste and create a low-waste circular economy.



**Environment:** We strive to ensure environmental values are protected and that development is sustainable.



**Climate:** We act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build a resilient future for all Western Australians.

To achieve our vision, we also need to listen, learn and build strong partnerships with Aboriginal stakeholders. Building and developing relationships with Aboriginal people and communities will help protect and promote Aboriginal cultures and histories, as well as provide opportunities for social and economic benefit.

We aim to be valued as an employer of choice by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples where they can pursue genuine career opportunities across our business in a culturally secure work environment which values their contributions and provides meaningful opportunities to make a difference.





## OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The department recognises the importance of a partnership approach and acknowledges the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their significant cultural knowledge and connection to Country, and living waters such as rivers, springs, soaks, jilas, and saltwater, to protect and manage WA's environment and water resources.

Our RAP is an important tool to outline a clear plan of action to recognise and incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and cultural knowledge into all parts of our business.

The aim of this RAP is to:

- develop a structured framework to build and strengthen our relationship and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities of WA
- develop a more culturally safe and inclusive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members
- clarify and promote our reconciliation actions among staff, stakeholders and Aboriginal people to foster a shared understanding of where we are now and where we aim to be in future.

Our RAP deliverables are built on principles of respect, relationships and opportunities by taking a holistic approach. We look to equip and strengthen our staff capability and ensure support mechanisms are in place to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on Country.

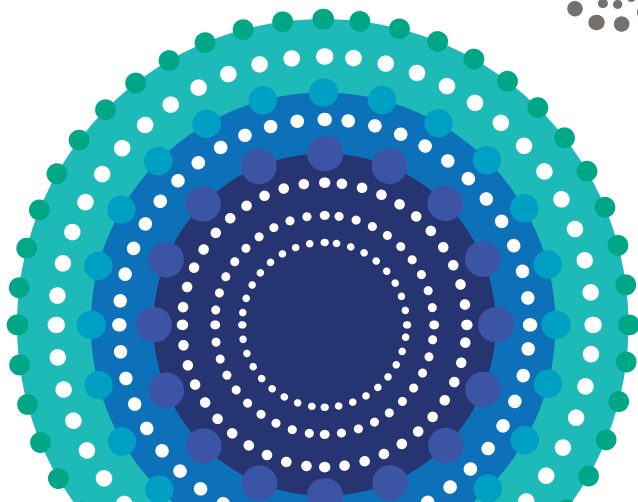






## OUR COMMITMENT

A fundamental principle that underpins our commitment to implement the RAP is to embed reconciliation actions into our business planning and resource allocation process to ensure a robust system is in place to successfully deliver outcomes.



## OUR RAP GOVERNANCE

Our RAP Champion, the Director General, is responsible for leading and driving meaningful change through our reconciliation journey.

The Corporate Executive team will lead the strategic direction of our RAP 2022-2024.

The RAP is implemented by the current governance group which is made up of 19 members, four of whom identify as Aboriginal people. This includes an Aboriginal senior leader who is Chair of the group and is a member of the Corporate Executive team.

To further embed and strengthen our RAP governance, we are currently undertaking a review to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and streamlined to effectively implement Aboriginal outcomes. This will include the restructure of the current RAP working group to a program board to meet our strategic and business outcomes.





## Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group

In 2019, the department established the Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group (AWEAG) and has representation of prominent Aboriginal Elders, leaders and community representatives. This is an external working group Co-Chaired by the Director General and an Aboriginal member. The purpose of AWEAG is to ensure that Aboriginal knowledge, values and needs are considered and appropriately addressed across the department's strategies, policies, programs and planning for the management and regulation of the state's environment and water resources.



## RAP – OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

The department's first Innovate RAP (2019–2021) marked an important step in our reconciliation journey. Encouragingly it is evident that we are more committed today to reconciliation and its principles.

Reflecting on our journey, we continue to learn from our experiences, growing as we have explored ways to deliver our goals to further embed reconciliation in our business. As this document looks to the future, it has been informed by our *Reconciliation Action Plan public report 2021: Our learning, achievements and challenges*.

There have been challenges on our journey – in particular, meeting Aboriginal employment targets and prioritising resources to deliver RAP commitments. However, as we gained experience and insight, our learnings and progress towards our outcomes also accelerated. During these times, we are proud that our department was named as an Inclusive Employer for 2021–2022 by Diversity Council Australia.

Once delivered, this Plan will support and contribute to social, environmental and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Our employees, who have embraced reconciliation activities that promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories, have enhanced knowledge and skills that empower them to deliver better services and work towards a future of reconciliation for all Western Australians.

## OUR DEPARTMENT'S ABORIGINAL SENIOR LEADER



As a Kamilaroi Aboriginal senior leader within the department, I am proud to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we live, work, and thrive. I would also like to pay my respect to Elders past and present for their passed-on knowledge, wisdom and support for communities and the people of WA.

I am honoured to work with Corporate Executive to implement our second Innovate RAP to continue strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, and to build mutual respect and create opportunities in line with the three pillars of the RAP framework.

Our RAP has high-impact deliverables that are achievable, tangible, realistic, and have clear accountabilities at the senior level.

It is exciting to be a part of the department's reconciliation journey and work with our leaders and staff to empower and embrace innovative and targeted practices to increase and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent. I am passionate about supporting and developing Aboriginal talent and that means identifying sustainable employment and career development opportunities as this is key for long-term success. To ensure we successfully deliver Aboriginal outcomes, we will continue to build a culturally safe work environment that values the contributions of Aboriginal employees and provides meaningful opportunities to make a difference.

I am committed to implementing the department's internal *Aboriginal Engagement Strategy* which requires a collective effort across the agency. I encourage you to build genuine and respectful relationships and to connect and seek opportunities to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and deliver social, economic and cultural outcomes.

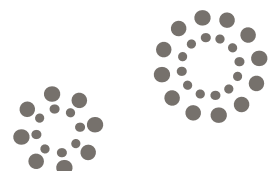
Our RAP empowers our staff to deepen their cultural understanding in an environment based on mutual respect, genuine trust, positive relationships, equality and opportunity for all. We support staff to undertake cultural learning experiences and attend community-based cultural activities. We are committed to finding innovative ways to further embed cultural learning and understanding in our workplaces.

Our department is committed to making a difference to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and actively building capability that leads to self-determination.

We must continue to walk together to achieve our reconciliation vision and create positive and meaningful change.

I urge you to join me and be part of our reconciliation journey.

Nygarie Goyal  
Special Advisor Aboriginal Partnerships and Engagement





# OUR RECONCILIATION JOURNEY - KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TIMELINE

This timeline highlights key achievements of our reconciliation journey and we have embedded reconciliation in our business.

Using the five dimensions of reconciliation - **unity, race relations, historical acceptance, institutional integrity, equality and equity** - we achieved the following milestones.



**27 May 2019**

Minister for Water Hon Dave Kelly MLA launches the department's first Reconciliation Action Plan 2019-2021.



**2019**

The Murujuga Rock Art Strategy is released and establishes a transparent, risk-based, and adaptive framework for managing and monitoring the rock art to protect it from the impacts of anthropogenic emissions.



**2020**

Whadjuk Noongar Aboriginal artist Sharyn Egan is commissioned to create artwork depicting the wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain, for the department's new office building in Joondalup. The artwork is installed on the glass panels on the ground floor.



**June 2021**

In the spirit of reconciliation, our staff achievement awards are revamped and rebranded, and celebrated on a new date. The inaugural Woola Awards and Recognition ceremony takes place on 23 June, the United Nations Public Service Day. Woola (pronounced wool-a) is the Noongar word for 'shout of praise'.



**December 2022**

The department is named as an Inclusive Employer for 2021-2022 by Diversity Council Australia.



**2019**

The Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group (AWEAG) is established. It provides input to the department on policy matters and voices Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives on cultural, historical and contemporary issues in water and environmental planning.



**2020**

The short film clip Bindjareb Noongar Water Perspectives is launched during National Reconciliation Week. The water story is a gift from the Bindjareb Noongar Elders, Traditional Custodians of the Bindjareb Djilba (Peel-Harvey estuary) region.



**February 2021**

Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves for WA are implemented for the first time through the Yamatji Nations Settlement agreement.



**Now**

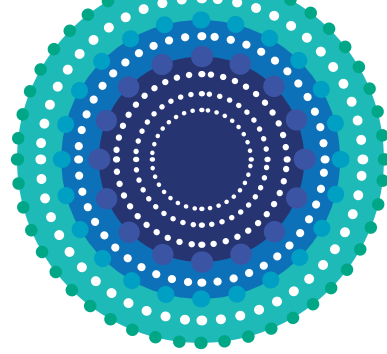
Ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners on the delivery of the Pilbara Environmental Offset Fund (PEOF). The fund aim is to deliver environmental offsets in the Pilbara region of WA. This is done through a strategic landscape-scale approach and building regional programs in local Aboriginal peoples empowerment through ranger groups, so that environmental offset outcomes are greater than the sum of individual offset contributions.







## RELATIONSHIPS – GOOD NEWS STORY



### Ngayintharri Gumawarni Ngurrangga (We all come together for Country)

Murujuga (which means 'hip bone sticking out' in the Ngarluma-Yaburara language) comprises the Burrup Peninsula and the Dampier Archipelago, 1,300 km north of Perth. Murujuga contains more than one million petroglyphs (engraved rock art) of national and international significance. It is also home to key industries that contribute to our economy and employment.

Concerns that the rock art could be damaged by industrial air emissions have led to several independent scientific studies and rock art monitoring initiatives since the mid-2000s.

The department is committed to the ongoing protection of Murujuga's rock art by working in partnership with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC), which represents the Traditional Custodians of Murujuga (Ngurra-ra Ngarli) across five Aboriginal language groups. Through MAC, these groups work together to share their responsibility of caring for Country on Murujuga.

We work closely with MAC staff and have plans to train MAC Rangers to undertake monitoring over the long term. Our department and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions are also working in partnership with MAC to progress the World Heritage nomination of the Murujuga Cultural Landscape. The strategy and monitoring program are important components of this nomination.

In October 2020, our Murujuga Rock Art Strategy Project Leader Naomi O'Hara and other department staff undertook Cultural Awareness Training with MAC Rangers, including a visit on Country. The team learnt that central to Murujuga culture is the concept of RESPECT (Rock art, Environment, Sea country, People, Earth, Culture, Truth). If you respect the land, the land will respect you.



When asked about the experience, Naomi said:

*"It was a fantastic opportunity for me to go on Country with the Rangers, Sarah Hicks and Clinton Walker and to hear their many stories about Murujuga. This helped me to appreciate just how significant and unique the rock art is and the importance of continuing culture."*

*"Listening to stories from Rangers and Elders made me appreciate I was part of something much bigger. It also gave Aboriginal people in Murujuga a voice to speak for their Country. I am excited that through the partnership we will be providing funding that will empower MAC Rangers to be directly involved in the monitoring program and looking after the rock art."*

*"I am looking forward to continuing to work with MAC and the Rangers and investigate how the department can continue to support and build capacity at MAC in its long-term endeavours to manage the Rock Art."*



## RESPECT – GOOD NEWS STORY

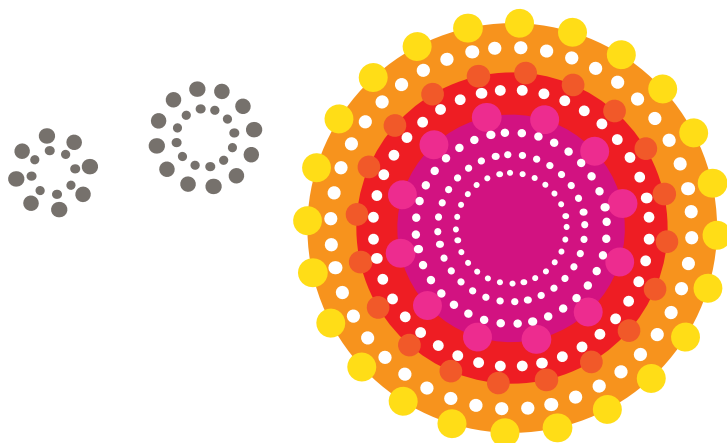
**Our surface water monitoring staff - protecting and preserving sustainable water supplies**



The department recently completed an Aboriginal heritage site survey in consultation with the local Noongar Nations, the Traditional Custodians of the south-west region, and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC). The protection of the heritage site was required as part of capital works to construct a water-gauging station on Manjimup Brook in the south-west. This work was done to ensure ground disturbing activities complied with the Noongar Standard Heritage Agreement.

Ashley Ramsay, Senior Natural Resource Management Officer and the department's principal representative, was working on this project. Ashley said the time spent on-site with Traditional Custodians, listening and responding to their aspirations, has been invaluable. The learnings that have been collectively gained have been critical for successful completion of this priority project.

This project, informed by the Traditional Custodians, ensures that continuous measurements of water flow can be achieved, while being consistent with and respectful of the local traditional season of Waugal (local Noongar language for spirit serpent) and the local six Noongar seasons.







## OPPORTUNITIES – CASE STUDY

### **Our Pollution Response team - protecting waterways and land from environmental hazards**

The department engaged Thuroona Services, an environmental management business operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a reputation as an industry leader in WA, to manage and safely remove hazardous materials.

Thuroona Services cleaned and removed hazardous materials from residential properties impacted by the 2021 Woorloo bushfires. We worked with them to protect waterways by removing the polluting materials, helping to prepare 140 properties for rebuilding as part of our commitment to aid the community recovery.

A key part of this work was the removal and safe disposal of burnt asbestos from buildings and fences across more than 20 properties. As asbestos is burnt, it becomes more mobile (friable) and requires specialist remediation to ensure the area is safe for residents to return to.

Thuroona Services is the only Supply Nation certified Class A (Unrestricted) Asbestos and Class 1 (Unrestricted) Demolition License Holder in Australia. We started working with Thuroona in April 2021 to carry out structural demolition and asbestos clearance of properties as part of the comprehensive multimillion-dollar recovery operation.







## RELATIONSHIPS – CASE STUDY

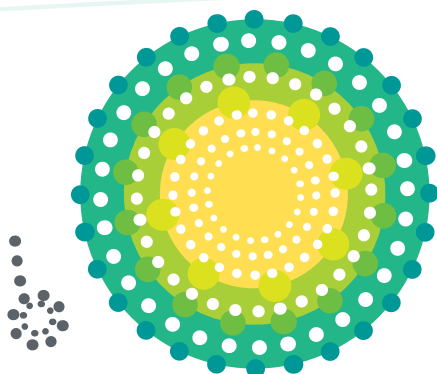
### Bindjareb Djilba (Peel-Harvey estuary) Protection Plan

The State Government committed to developing a protection plan for the Peel-Harvey estuary. Upfront, the department's Malcolm Robb identified it was imperative to ensure that the cultural and spiritual values of the Bindjareb Djilba (Peel-Harvey estuary) were well represented and embedded into the Protection Plan. Also, for Bindjareb Noongar perspectives to resonate in the plans to meet governments statutory and non-statutory requirements as identified in the cultural and spiritual guidelines of the National Water Quality Framework.

Bronte Grant led the department's engagement with a focus group of Bindjareb Elders. From her professional experience, Bronte was aware that Traditional Custodians often face engagement fatigue and 'business as usual' needed to be challenged. The department's engagement with Bindjareb people is an Aboriginal-driven process, with government support, within a framework of Aboriginal control and self-determination.

Bronte said:

*"With strong leadership from our focus Elder group, George Walley and I developed an agreement to place context around the relationship, the way we would do business and what we needed to walk together in the journey for Bindjareb Noongar water perspectives. Our pathway of engagement for this partnership is communicated in the Bring Together Walk Together Aboriginal Partnership Engagement Framework."*



### How the Waters came to be

*One day the Aboriginal people of the Mandurah area found there was no waterways, they went to the beach and danced and sung for the great Waugal to come.*

*Then she came and started to make the Peel Inlet and the estuary, she found that she was carrying eggs and she rested in between the estuary and the sea until she laid them. She laid with her eggs to keep them safe. Then the eggs hatched, and she sent her babies to do the rest of the work because she was tired.*

*She sent one up the Serpentine, one up the Murray and one up the Harvey and that is how they came to be.*

(Gloria Kearing, Bindjareb Noongar Elder)

### Bindjareb Gabi Wonga - Bindjareb Water Story

Bindjareb Noongar baalap kaadadjan, Djilba Gabi ngalang Gabi Wonga. Nyitting yey, nidja yey, benang yey, ngalang Gabi Wonga boola moorditj. Nidja Wirrn Boodja Baalap kaadadjan, doyntj-doyntj koorl wer Noongar Dandjoo, ngalang kaaleepga. Ngalang Gabi waalang, ngalang wirrn waalang, ngalang Noongar waalang, ngalang koort waalang, ngalang kaaleepga waalang.

*Bindjareb Noongar people's cultural knowledge about our estuary is our water story. From the creation time to the present time, to the future, our water story is a very amazing and important story. The interconnectedness of Spirit, Land and People brings together our cosmology, our sense of place, our homeland. Our waterway health is connected with our own health and wellbeing.*

To yarn about the Bindjareb Gabi Wonga, please message Bindjareb Elders at [bindjarebgabiwonga@gmail.com](mailto:bindjarebgabiwonga@gmail.com)



## Relationships

Building relationships is essential to delivering our strategic priorities to 'share responsibility for water and the environment'. In turn, relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will help to shape, support and enhance our integrated water and environmental regulation processes. This also supports whole-of-government goals involving community and industry. Through collaboration and strong partnerships, we will build a shared understanding of WA's environmental and water issues. We recognise that meaningful relationships require time, effort and trust to successfully thrive.

Department staff in all regions and directorates are encouraged to collaborate closely with local Aboriginal people and their local Aboriginal Land and Sea Councils, Aboriginal communities and groups to consider and implement opportunities to promote reconciliation through our existing programs and services to increase engagement and strengthen relationship building.

### Focus area:

We will continue to develop and share values that are aligned with each other. Led by our own organisational values, we will find common ground through working with open minds and recognising our people and our projects are better when we work together. We will build trust, show we care and make a difference.

- We recognise we can do better by:
  - engaging and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  - acknowledging the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  - understanding the deep spiritual connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with Country.
- We recognise and respect existing traditional governance and decision-making structures that must be considered in the way we engage.
- We will strive for two-way learning and collaboration for better management of the land, air, and water by engaging and involving the appropriate local Aboriginal people/groups, and respectfully including their input and cultural knowledge in our work.

Action	Deliverable	TimeLine	Accountable
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with the local Traditional Owners/Custodians and their representatives and body corporates, community leaders, Aboriginal communities, and corporations.	1.1 Strengthen and continue our partnership with AWEAG on Water Reform, Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves, and other key priorities to ensure Aboriginal cultural, social and economic wellbeing is addressed.	August 2022	Director General
	1.2 Ensure the role of AWEAG is well understood across the department, and they are engaged early and in a proactive and respectful manner.	August 2022	All Executive Directors (as appropriate)
	1.3 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples/groups and research best practices and guidelines that support staff for engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	December 2022	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	1.4 Consistent with the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy and the research conducted on best practice guidelines, develop and implement tools and resources to support staff who as part of their role engage and build relationships with local Aboriginal people, communities, prescribed body corporates and organisations.	June 2023	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	1.5 Participate in and contribute to Native Title negotiations with Native Title parties in a way that provides improved opportunities for cultural, social and economic development for Aboriginal communities.	August 2022	Executive Director Regional Delivery
	1.6 Implement the Murujuga Rock Art Strategy and Monitoring Program in partnership with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation as the Traditional Custodians of Murujuga and its rock art.	August 2022	Executive Director Strategic Policy
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week.	2.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week (NRW) resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2023, 2024	Senior Manager Corporate Communications
	2.2 Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May-3 June 2023, 2024	Director General Chair Aboriginal program board
	2.3 Aboriginal program board members to participate in an at least one external NRW event.	27 May-3 June 2023, 2024	Director General Chair Aboriginal program board
	2.4 Department to organise at least one NRW event each year.	May 2023, 2024	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement
	2.5 Register events on Reconciliation Australia's <a href="#">NRW website</a> .	May 2023, 2024	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement

Relationships				
Action	Deliverable		TimeLine	Accountable
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	3.1	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	July 2023	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	3.2	Identify RAP organisations in the public sector and initiate discussions to share learnings and explore collaboration opportunities.	September 2022	Chair, Aboriginal program board
	3.3	Develop and implement a staff and stakeholder engagement strategy to raise awareness and demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation. This strategy would include regular communications through all department digital platforms to staff and external stakeholders that showcases our reconciliation activities and success stories.	February 2023	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	3.4	Investigate a new award (potentially as a new category in the Woola Awards) to recognise exemplary work of staff contributing to Closing the Gap or RAP initiatives.	March 2023	Executive Director Corporate Services
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1	As part of the development of the Dignity at Work policy, conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs.	September 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	4.2	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination (Dignity at Work) policy.	November 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	4.3	Develop and implement the department's Dignity at Work policy which includes anti-discrimination strategies.	January 2023	Executive Director Corporate Services
	4.4	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	May 2023	Director General





## Respect

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories, and recognise the cultural importance of a partnership approach. We acknowledge the role of First Nations people and their significant cultural knowledge and connection to Country, and living waters such as rivers, springs, soaks, jilas and saltwater, seas and river waterways, to protect and manage WA's environment and water resources. Through respectful consultation with our AWEAG members, the department ensures Aboriginal knowledge, values and needs are considered and appropriately addressed across our strategies, policies, programs and planning for the management and regulation of the state's environment and water resources. We are committed to creating a respectful workplace that is diverse and culturally inclusive, one that empowers our staff to make decisions that contribute to establishing mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and Traditional Owners. The department is committed to contributing to the resolution of native title claims through negotiation and agreement with native title parties to support economic and social development opportunities, facilitate meaningful involvement in land use proposals and support mechanisms to protect cultural heritage. Increasing the capability of our senior leaders to foster inclusive and respectful behaviours, in relation to all diversity groups, aligning our values with our reconciliation vision and to lead by example, is a focus area for our business.

### Focus area:

- Review and implement the Aboriginal Cultural and Native Title Framework, designed to develop and promote local traditional cultural knowledge through training programs; train and equip our staff in cultural safety, respect and knowledge including (but not limited to) when negotiating native title claims with Native Title parties.
- Empower and assist local Aboriginal people and leaders and their representatives in engaging with the department to support and provide valuable local knowledge and input in the preparation for policy documents for water and land management within the state.
- Collaborate with local Aboriginal people and representative Aboriginal Corporations to achieve shared goals.
- Build the capacity of local Aboriginal people and their leaders, and the department's staff, to engage in place-based decision-making and policy development.
- Senior leaders within our business increase their cultural awareness, participate in cultural events, and acknowledge the important role they play in contributing to creating and maintaining a diverse and culturally inclusive work environment.

Action	Deliverable	TimeLine	Accountable
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and cultural protocols, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning and engagement.	5.1 Conduct a review of Aboriginal Cultural and Native Title learning needs and consult internally with Aboriginal staff and externally with AWEAG on Aboriginal cultural learning needs.	September 2023	Executive Director Corporate Services
	5.2 Develop, implement and communicate an Aboriginal Cultural and Native Title Learning Framework.	December 2023	Executive Director Corporate Services
	5.3 As part of the Cultural and Native Title Learning Framework implementation, prioritise provision of training - especially training on Country - of staff who as part of their roles regularly engage and work with Aboriginal people, who are involved in the internal Aboriginal program board or who are responsible for negotiating or implementing Native Title Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).	February 2024	Executive Director Corporate Services
6. Demonstrate respect for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples by observing cultural protocols, language and nationhood.	6.1 Demonstrate respect for local Aboriginal cultures by appropriately supporting dual naming projects initiated by local government authorities that have community support and are endorsed by the Traditional Owners of their local area.	August 2022	Director General
	6.2 Review, update and communicate the department's Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country Protocols.	September 2022	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	6.3 Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance of the department's Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	November 2022	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	6.4 Invite a local representative of the Traditional Owner group to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	June 2023, 2024	Director General
	6.5 Consider and investigate installation of flag poles at the department's head office in Joondalup and regional offices (where the department is head tenant) to display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags alongside the Australian and Western Australian flag.	June 2024	Executive Director Corporate Services
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	7.1 Promote and communicate NAIDOC Week programs to staff and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events, focusing on leaders and members of the Aboriginal program board.	July 2023, 2024	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	7.2 Members of the Aboriginal program board to participate in at least one external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2023, 2024	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	7.3 Review policies procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	

Respect				
Action	Deliverable		TimeLine	Accountable
8. Deliver environmental and water programs that fosters respect for Traditional Owner knowledge and engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	8.1	With advice from local Aboriginal peoples and representative groups, prepare culturally and linguistically appropriate education materials to support engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples regarding the department's WasteSorted programs.	April 2024	Executive Director Strategic Policy
	8.2	Through WasteSorted and Keep Australia Beautiful programs, undertake community visits and outreach programs in local Aboriginal communities and schools that encourage and inspire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and students seeking training and opportunities to work on Country.	June 2023, 2024	Executive Director Strategic Policy
	8.3	Support and contribute to the Environmental Protection Authority's review of the <i>Environmental Factor Guideline - Social Surroundings</i> .	August 2024	Executive Director EPA Services
	8.4	Co-design and establish a whole-of-government Aboriginal partnership for delivery of actions in the Native Vegetation Policy focused on Wheatbelt regional planning. This process would include engagement with Aboriginal stakeholder groups such as AWEAG and the Aboriginal Advisory Council WA for cultural advice.	June 2024	Executive Director Regulatory Services
	8.5	Continue to collaborate and strengthen our relationship with Danjoo Koorliny leaders, Bindjareb Elders and potential partners through the Waterwise program of work to incorporate traditional environmental knowledge in a co-design manner - <i>walking together on the journey to heal the waterways by changing ways of working to better care for Country and create opportunities</i> .	July 2023	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	8.6	Work with Danjoo Koorliny leaders and AWEAG members to consider how to apply and implement outcomes, outputs and learnings from the Noongar Knowledge Project in department policy, programs and projects to best achieve Aboriginal social, economic and cultural outcomes.	August 2024	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement



Opportunities

We strive to be a valued employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in the department requires a collective and sustained effort, and a different way of doing things with stronger accountability.

We will empower our leaders and workforce to do things differently and embrace innovative and targeted practices to recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent. We will identify genuine career opportunities across our business that support the development of Aboriginal talent to ensure a dynamic and diverse workforce. We will provide a culturally safe work environment that values the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and provides meaningful opportunities to make a difference that is critical to successful employment outcomes. We aim to provide sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within our workforce and through our business.

We will continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and contribute to the implementation of the State Government’s Aboriginal Procurement Policy. By improving our support for and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and businesses we can improve knowledge and understanding of and access to our service, and learn more about how to build and strengthen trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the state. We listen, learn and seek opportunities for two-way capacity development to meet the department’s responsibilities and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ aspirations for the future.

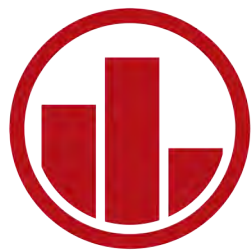
Focus area:

- Continue to attract and retain talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff through targeted employment strategies.
- Extend our supply diversity with emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to create opportunities for new and young service providers.
- Each directorate to have an aspirational target to engage and procure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and to give consideration of the engagement of suitable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business in our programs and projects.

Action	Deliverable		TimeLine	Accountable
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation through recruitment, retention and professional development.	9.1	Establish an Aboriginal employee yarning circle to support the development of a culturally secure work environment.	August 2022	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement
	9.2	Report biannually, including high-level analysis of risk and opportunity to CorpEx on current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing numbers to support the implementation of the Aboriginal Recruitment, Retention and Career Development Strategy.	September 2022 March 2023 September 2023 March 2024	Executive Director Corporate Services
	9.3	Widen the reach of our recruitment activities to ensure job advertisements target and reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.	October 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	9.4	Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff during the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment, Retention, and Career Development Strategy.	September 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	9.5	As part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment, Retention, and Career Development Strategy, review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the workplace.	September 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	9.6	Develop, launch, and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment, Retention, and Career Development Strategy in order to achieve, as a minimum, the Public Sector Commission’s employment target of 3.7% by 2025.	December 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	9.7	Work towards delivering the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment targets contained in the Green Jobs Plan and continue with the current reporting mechanisms.	June 2024	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement



Opportunities				
Action	Deliverable		TimeLine	Accountable
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support Aboriginal businesses.	10.1	Review current procurement strategies to ensure compliance with the State Government’s Aboriginal Procurement Policy and to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	September 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	10.2	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy to support the implementation of the State Government’s Aboriginal Procurement Policy to award government contracts to registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses (3.5% by June 2023; 4% by June 2024)	December 2022	Executive Director Corporate Services
	10.3	As part of the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- diversify our procurement strategy by proactively supporting directorates in both identifying potential new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and contracting with them, particularly in directorates where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement is minimal</li><li>- increase internal promotion of Aboriginal businesses and consider ways to strengthen the reach and impact to staff.</li></ul>	February 2023	Executive Director Corporate Services
	10.4	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	August 2023	Executive Director Corporate Services

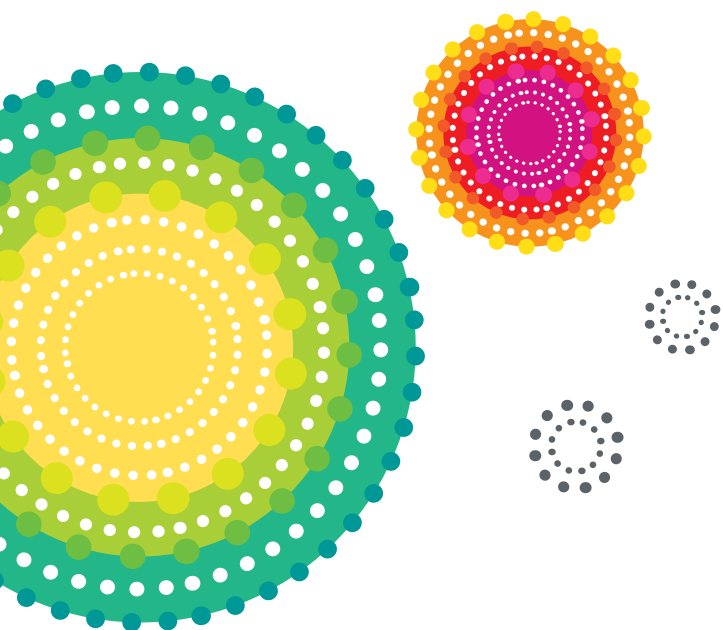


Governance				
Action	Deliverable		TimeLine	Accountable
11. Establish and maintain an effective governance arrangement to drive the RAP.	11.1	Review the current RAP working group to implement and strengthen the governance to an Aboriginal program board. The review will clarify accountabilities and ensure the program board is fit-for-purpose and streamlined. There will be representation from across the department and we will aim to increase and maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Aboriginal program board.	August 2022	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	11.2	Develop and implement a Terms of Reference for the Aboriginal program board.	September 2022	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	11.3	The Aboriginal program board to meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	December 2022 March 2023 June 2023 September 2023 December 2023 March 2024 June 2024 September 2024	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	12.1	The Director General to continue to lead and drive meaningful change as the department's RAP Champion.	August 2022	Director General
	12.2	Define and embed appropriate resourcing needs for RAP implementation through the department's business planning process.	September 2022	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	12.3	Engage our senior leaders and staff in the delivery of our RAP commitments.	September 2022	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
	12.4	Monitor, measure and report progress on RAP commitments to Corporate Executive on a six-monthly basis to enable delivery, risks, barriers and challenges to be addressed in a timely manner. Report RAP progress to staff following Corporate Executive review.	September 2022 March 2023 September 2023 March 2024	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	13.1	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	March 2024	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement
	13.2	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measure Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September annually	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement
	13.3	On an annual basis, publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings.	September 2023, 2024	Chair Aboriginal program board
	13.4	Contact Reconciliation Australia to ensure that our primary and secondary contacts are up to date to ensure we are receiving important correspondence.	June annually	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement
	13.5	Follow up with Reconciliation Australia if we have not yet received our unique reporting link to participate in the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement
	13.6	Provide a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia to help inform the development of our next RAP.	February 2024	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	14.1	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	February 2024	Senior Manager Aboriginal Engagement



## DESIGNING OUR RAP

This document has been a collaborative effort by all involved throughout the process, both internal and external, providing valuable input to the final design of our RAP.



## THANK YOU

We would like to thank our Corporate Executive team for their leadership in embracing, contributing, and championing this plan and also senior leaders, working groups and key stakeholders for helping to set out our reconciliation vision.

We are grateful for the advice and guidance provided by Reconciliation Australia throughout this plan's development and the Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group for their patience, time and feedback on a diverse range of matters. This group continues to provide the department with invaluable counsel. We intend to honour their commitment by delivering meaningful and impactful change.

Change begins here on this page and extends to every aspect of the work we do and the lives we lead.





RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

## CONTACT DETAILS

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