



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Energy



Reconciliation Action Plan

2016–2019

The Department acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.



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Our vision for reconciliation

Our goal is to be a leader in reconciliation. We will provide an inclusive workplace that fosters respect, understanding and unity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians. We will protect and enhance the cultural identity of Indigenous peoples, ensure their needs and aspirations are attainable while maintaining and enhancing Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

We will do this while achieving a healthy environment, strong economy and thriving community now and for the future.

As an Australian Government Department, our influence spans the nation. Given our environmental role, we are uniquely positioned to recognise and value the experiences, perspectives and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Our work

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy designs and implements policies and programmes, and administers national laws, to protect and conserve Australia's environment and heritage, promote action on climate change, advance Australia's interests in the Antarctic, and improve the health of Australia's river systems.

The Department has responsibility for policies, programmes and legislation that help to sustain and enhance the natural and cultural fabric of Australia. We recognise the significant contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to Australia's environment, culture and heritage. We value the unique relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the ongoing cultural obligation to care for the land, sea, waterways and animal and plant species.

Appropriate consideration and incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their aspirations is critical to achieving our goals. We endeavour to ensure this happens by promoting a supportive, engaging and culturally inclusive work environment that sensitively delivers its work.

Our work is delivered in diverse locations, with the Department having a functional presence across the entirety of Australia and its territories.

As at 31 December 2015, the Department employed 2548 staff, with approximately 4.3 per cent (109) of those being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. The majority of these staff are employed by Parks Australia.

Recognising that a diverse workforce supports better capability, the Department's Indigenous Employment and Capability Strategy has been refined to better support the recruitment, retention, capability and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in other parts of the Department as well as Parks Australia.

Secretary's Message

I am delighted to present the Department's Reconciliation Action Plan for 2016–19.

This Reconciliation Action Plan captures the momentum of our previous plan for 2013–15 and uses its achievements that built on the foundation created by our first plan in 2010–12. Our efforts towards reconciliation are strengthened by our commitment to the Australian Government's Indigenous affairs reform agenda through our cross-cutting priority to contribute to Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

This plan builds on our corporate responsibilities and supports staff to contribute to reconciliation in a direct and personal way. Our maturity is evident as we recognise and value the experiences, perspectives and cultures of Indigenous Australians, especially in the protection and conservation of our environment and heritage.

Indigenous peoples around the country are key custodians of the environment and are vital partners in the Department's work. We strongly support the aspirations of Indigenous Australians to maintain, protect and manage their culture, language, heritage, and land and sea country. We have a strong commitment to working with Indigenous peoples in all our work, whether through increasing and sustaining a strong Indigenous workforce, the procurement of goods and services from Indigenous firms, in the formulation of policy, or the on-ground delivery of programmes.

I encourage all staff to view our plan and to incorporate the principles and practical actions across the Department's policy, programmes, corporate and strategic outcomes in everyday activities and roles. I extend my thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of the plan. I especially thank Reconciliation Australia for their support, our Indigenous Staff Network, our Reconciliation Action Plan Committee and our Indigenous Champion Dr Rhondda Dickson for their hard work and commitment.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer
Secretary

RAP Champion's Message

As the Department's Indigenous Champion, I am pleased to have been involved in the development of our plan. Reconciliation Action Plans are about turning good intentions into real actions by providing practical ways forward together based on respect, relationship building and creating opportunities. For the Department, this means advancing the developments in our two previous plans to continue embedding change in our Department.

During the development of this plan we consulted extensively with staff by holding information sessions and workshops with each division, circulating reconciliation questionnaires and working with the Department's Indigenous Staff Network. The Reconciliation Action Plan Committee also incorporated staff ideas and feedback into the plan for 2016–19.

Our plan also brings together outcomes delivered through the Department's Indigenous Employment and Capability Strategy, efforts under the Australian Government's Indigenous Procurement Policy as well as broader Departmental programmes and policies. Together, our strategies will enhance and progress the Department's important relationships, opportunities and respect between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as contributing to Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

I encourage everyone to support our new Reconciliation Action Plan and get involved in the many opportunities to contribute to these important efforts within our organisation.

Dr Rhondda Dickson

Deputy Secretary

Indigenous Champion

Our plan

The Department understands that to achieve reconciliation and mutually beneficial outcomes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to be effectively involved in all of what we do. In order to do this, sensitive and appropriate engagement is required.

This plan outlines our vision for how reconciliation, consideration and engagement will occur, including the broad suite of initiatives that can be undertaken to realise this vision and the performance measures we will use to evaluate our success. This approach will ensure the Department continues to achieve Indigenous outcomes and focuses its effort into areas relevant to reconciliation at an individual, team and departmental scale.

This plan was developed with significant input from the Department's Reconciliation Action Plan Committee (made up of Indigenous, non-Indigenous, Senior Executive and non-Senior Executive staff), other Departmental staff, the Indigenous Staff Network and Reconciliation Australia.

This plan will be championed by a member of the Department's senior leadership group, Deputy Secretary Dr Rhondda Dickson, and the committee is responsible for its implementation and currency. This document will be a living document that will be revised as necessary.

Timeline

Late 1970's – Joint management of National Parks
1998 – First Indigenous Protected Area declared
2000 – Indigenous Advisory Committee established
2002 – Ask First Indigenous heritage guidelines released
2007 – Working on Country programme begins
2007 – Department releases first IndECS
2010 – Department releases first RAP
2012 – Department releases second IndECS
2013 – Department releases second RAP
2013 – Department releases Indigenous Engagement Guidelines package
2014 – Membership of Supply Nation
2015 – Hosted the first Indigenous Business Trade Show
2015 – Department releases third IndECS
2015 – Departmental Indigenous Special Measures graduate intake
2016 – Department releases third RAP

Relationships

The Department's unique role in protecting Australia's environment and heritage means we can build strong relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. We value this role and will nurture and enrich these relationships by actively engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and openly translating good intent into actions. This will allow meaningful and appropriate connections whilst maximising reconciliation outcomes from our activities.

Action	Target	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Reconciliation Action Plan Committee actively monitors the plan's development and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the development, endorsement and launch of the plan. Ensure there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the committee. Meet at least three times per year to monitor and report on the plan's implementation. Appoint an internal Indigenous Champion from the Executive Board. Update Terms of Reference for the committee. 	February, June and October annually	Department of the Environment and Energy's Indigenous Policy Team
2. Celebrate National Reconciliation Week to strengthen and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and other staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise 10 internal National Reconciliation Week events each year. Allocate corporate funding of up to \$25,000 per annum Register our National Reconciliation Week events via Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week website. Encourage staff and senior leaders to participate in events to recognise and celebrate National Reconciliation Week. 	27 May – 3 June, annually	National Reconciliation Week/NAIDOC Week Committee

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Action	Target	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Maintain and leverage mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and review Indigenous Engagement Guidelines to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. • Meet with two local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to input into Indigenous Engagement Guidelines review. • Commit to establishing two formal two-way partnerships to build capacity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and/or communities relevant to our sphere of influence. • Engage in 15 development and secondment opportunities under the Jawun programme. • 100 per cent of divisions have an Indigenous outcome in their Division Plans. 	30 June 2017	Department of the Environment and Energy's Indigenous Policy Team
4. Raise internal and external awareness of our plan to promote reconciliation across our work and sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and review a tailored strategy that communicates our plan to all internal stakeholders and external stakeholders in a manner that encourages participation. • Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders. • Our senior leaders engage in the delivery of the plan's outcomes. 	30 June 2016	Department of the Environment and Energy's Indigenous Policy Team

Respect

Valuing the experiences, perspectives and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is critical to appreciating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. We will ensure that we consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes in all that we do and continue to provide a respectful environment where these cultures can be celebrated through acknowledgement and understanding.

Action	Target	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement and review cultural awareness training strategies for our staff which defines continuous cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our business and considers implementing various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face to face workshops or cultural immersion).• 50% of staff (and 100% of new staff) undertake cultural learning activities, whether online, face to face cultural workshops or cultural immersion learning activities.• Encourage all committee members to undertake cultural learning activities appropriate to their level of experience.• Encourage all senior executive undertake cultural learning activities appropriate to their level of experience.• Provide opportunities for senior executive to increase their understanding through direct engagement.• Promote the Reconciliation Australia's Share Our Pride online tool to all staff.• Explore embedding a cultural awareness Key Performance Indicator in staff performance plans.• Metrics for Indigenous outcomes to be routinely supplied to Departmental Executive. For example, progress on employment or procurement targets.	30 December 2018	Indigenous Development Coordinator/Department of the Environment and Energy's Indigenous Policy Team

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Action	Target	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities by embedding cultural protocols as part of the way our organisation functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and communicate a cultural protocol document for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. Invite a local Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country for at least 4 significant events. Acknowledgement of Country provided according to protocol document. Maintain and review a list of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country. 	30 December 2016	Department of the Environment and Energy's Indigenous Policy Team
7. Celebrate NAIDOC Week and provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with culture and community during NAIDOC Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure policies and procedures in the new Enterprise Agreement do not create barriers to staff participating in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. Allocate corporate funding of up to \$25,000 per annum Support and provide opportunities for all staff to participate in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events in the local community. Hold 10 internal NAIDOC Week events. Senior staff to acknowledge NAIDOC Week and its importance. Participate in two external National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week community events. 	First week of July, annually	National Reconciliation Week/NAIDOC Week Committee

Opportunities

Achieving an increased representation of capable and engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees remains a business imperative in our efforts to protect and preserve the environment. We will support Indigenous careers to create a diverse and skilled workplace that promotes appropriate professional and personal growth.

Action	Target	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment to 4.5%.• Implement, review and update Indigenous Employment and Capability Strategy, which includes professional development.• Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development and Indigenous-specific workplace support mechanisms.• Improved qualitative feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees that indicates a satisfaction with workplace support and development.• 100 per cent of recruitment panels include Indigenous panel members for Special Measures and Identified positions.• Implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional mentoring network.• Continue to advertise all job vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media where appropriate.	30 June annually	Indigenous Development Coordinator

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Action	Target	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement whole-of-government Indigenous Procurement Policy (as a member of Supply Nation).• 0.5 per cent of services procured by the Department are from Indigenous businesses for the 2015–16 financial year.• 3 per cent of services procured by the Department are from Indigenous businesses by 2018.• Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services.• Develop fourteen commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.• Continue active Supply Nation membership.	30 June 2016 and 30 June 2018	Corporate Strategies Division

Tracking progress and reporting			
Action	Target	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Report achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the RAP Impact Measurement Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. Investigate participation in the RAP Barometer. Develop and implement systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on the plan's activities. 	30 September annually	Department of the Environment and Energy's Indigenous Policy Team
11. Review, refresh and update the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, refresh and update plan based on learnings, challenges and achievements. Send updated plan to Reconciliation Australia for formal feedback and endorsement. 	30 March 2018	Department of the Environment and Energy's Indigenous Policy Team

If you would like to discuss the contents of this plan or need clarification regarding its contents, please contact the Department at: IAC@environment.gov.au

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