



Australian Government

Office of Parliamentary Counsel



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

Reflect

Reconciliation

Action Plan

March 2023 - March 2024



Our Reconciliation Artwork

OPC - Celebrating 50 Years

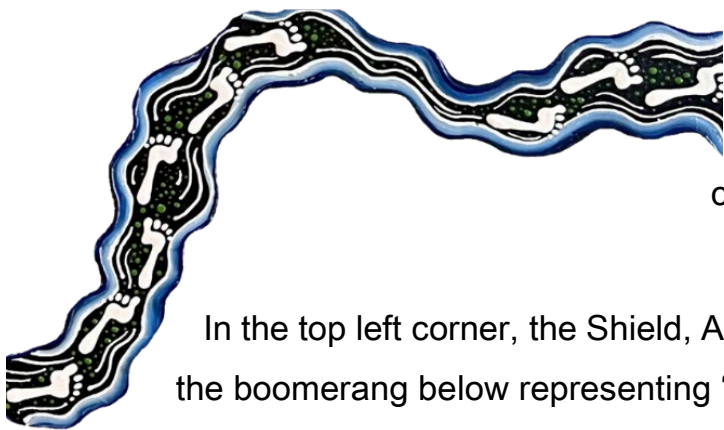


My name is Chern'ee Sutton and I am a contemporary Indigenous artist from the Kalkadoon people from the Mount Isa area in Queensland. This painting is my interpretation of OPC - Celebrating 50 Years.

In my painting the blue, purple, yellow and green community symbol in the centre represents Canberra and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel with the rock wallaby being the mascot for the OPC's official 50 year celebration.

The larger blue community symbol around the outside represents the Ngunnawal people, who's land the OPC work within. The words in the blue circle pay homage to the Ngunnawal people, Baray means Rock Wallaby, Wiragagima means friends and Naraganawali means Wellbeing.

The 8 blue, purple and brown dotted circles in the background represents the 8 States and Territories that the OPC's work spans across and the support that they give to other Government agencies around the nation.



The footprints that walk throughout the painting represents the OPC's journey so far from the past into the future and their commitment to reconciliation.

In the top left corner, the Shield, Axe and message sticks spell out OPC, with the boomerang below representing "1970-2020 Celebrating 50 Years".

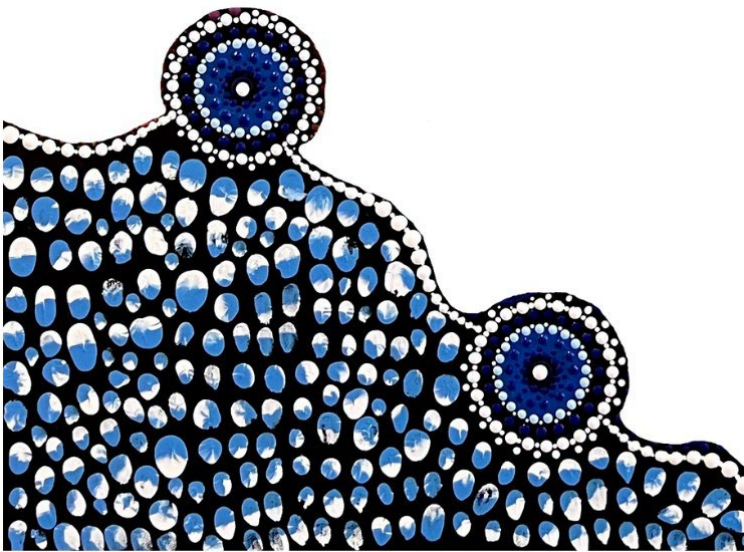
The bottom right corner represents the Indigenous legislation that the OPC has worked on in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the nation, promoting reconciliation with the wallaby footprints symbolising how the OPC is always moving forwards and never backwards.

The Clapsticks, Boomerang and Shield represents the 50 Years that the OPC has been working in Australia.





The yellow, green and purple circles containing the 3 handprints represent the First Parliamentary Counsel in the yellow circle and the two Second Parliamentary Counsels in the Green and Purple circles.



The 3 blue and white dotted circles connected by the spirit trails symbolise the OPC's Office functions which are Drafting, Publications and Corporate Services. The blue dots around the outside in the left and right corners are the many staff who work within the OPC.

By Chern'ee Sutton

Size – 120cm wide X 90cm high

Medium – Acrylic and textured acrylic on canvas



Acknowledgement of Country

OPC acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands in which we conduct our business. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Ngunawal¹ Country, the land on which our office is located.

We are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Introduction

This Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) outlines the steps we will take to prepare our agency for reconciliation initiatives, laying the foundation for successive RAPs. We will scope and develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, decide on our vision for reconciliation and explore our sphere of influence, before committing to specific actions or initiatives. This process will help develop future RAPs that are meaningful, mutually beneficial and sustainable.

¹ OPC acknowledges that, as the name 'Ngunawal' is being translated from oral language, there are variations of the spelling. Ngunnawal and Ngunawal are commonly used and accepted. After careful consideration, the name and spelling 'Ngunawal' has been selected for use in this document.



Reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community, for the benefit of all Australians.

Reconciliation is important to us because we recognise that the majority of Australians are the direct beneficiaries of the removal of land and power from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Reconciliation is an opportunity for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to try to redress the impact on First Nations people of the removal of their land, power, language and culture. We seek to contribute to the goal that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are given a rightful place of their countries.

We do not pretend that all people have equal opportunity in Australia. We recognise that inequality in societies has existed for as long as civilisations have existed. We acknowledge that an impact of colonisation has been to place a burden of intergenerational trauma and grief on many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We seek to begin to see the world through the eyes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, respecting that there are many, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to educate ourselves, and not the responsibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to educate us. We also understand that the unique skills, experience and insights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are invaluable to the work we do. We recognise that they walk in two worlds and their culture is a gift to us.



Our Business

The Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) is an Australian Government agency established under the *Parliamentary Counsel Act 1970*.

We are responsible for drafting and publishing the laws of the Commonwealth of Australia. We draft Bills for introduction into the Parliament, and a wide range of subordinate legislation such as regulations and proclamations for Government agencies. We also publish the authorised, up-to-date version of Commonwealth laws.

Our mission is:

'providing clear, effective and accessible Commonwealth law for all Australians.'

To achieve our mission, we work with instructors from federal agencies to draft proposed laws, amendments and subordinate legislation which will give effect to government policy. We also prepare compilations of legislation as amended and undertake a range of legislative publishing duties, including upkeep and development of the Federal Register of Legislation, which is the authorised whole-of-government website for Commonwealth legislation and related documents.

We acknowledge that some of the laws we draft may impact First Nations peoples, such as laws relating to native title rights. In these instances, we refer draft laws to other federal agencies for review.



Mostly located in one office in Canberra, we are an engaged workforce of around 100 employees that pride ourselves on our commitment to safety, diversity and inclusion. While we are proud to have taken steps to ensure a diverse and inclusive workplace, which is reflected in our positive Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Census results, we know we can do better.

We currently do not employ any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff members² and will work towards increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our workforce as part of our reconciliation journey.



² Based on the 2022 APS Employee Census results (91 respondents resulting in an 85 per cent response rate).



Our Reconciliation Journey

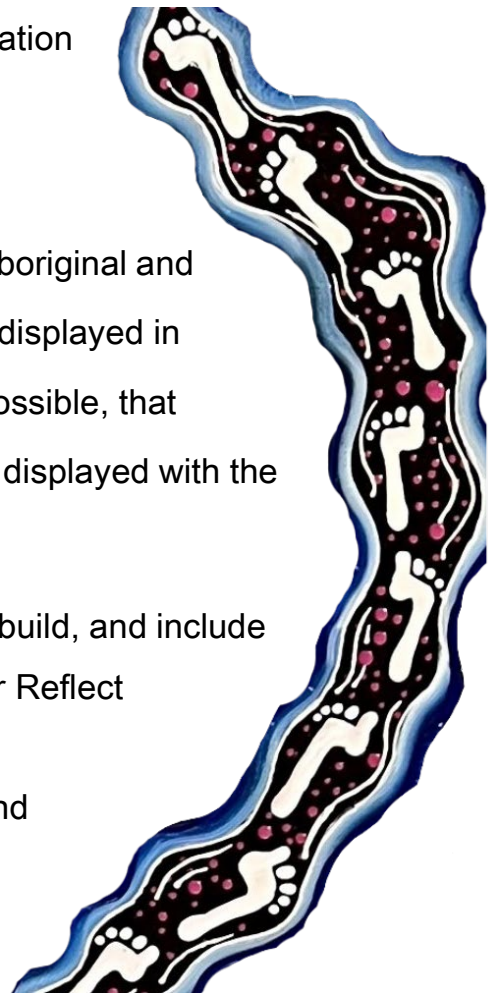
In 2007, we developed our first RAP in consultation with OPC's Senior Management Team and staff, through the Workplace Consultative Committee. In 2011, a new RAP was developed and provided to Reconciliation Australia.

Successful initiatives from these early RAPs include:

- Encouraging staff to attend cultural and reconciliation events such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week.
- Ensuring there is substantial representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art obtained from Artbank displayed in public areas of the office and ensuring, where possible, that information on the artist, work and community is displayed with the art work.

These original RAPs form the foundation on which we build, and include initiatives which continue today and are included in our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

During 2019, the following initiatives were organised and open to all staff:





- An Aboriginal Cultural Tour of Mount Majura. This was arranged through Thunderstone Aboriginal Cultural Services, a Ngunawal organisation that aims to educate the wider Australian community about the culture of the Ngunawal people. The tour provided an opportunity for staff to learn more about the culture of the Ngunawal people.
- A seminar called Choice Words: Statutory Language and Cultural Diversity in Australia. The speakers included Professor Asmi Wood (ANU), Alison Whittaker (UTS), Stacey Nation (Assistant Secretary, DFAT) and Dr Helen Watchirs (ACT Human Rights Commissioner).

In 2020, we celebrated OPC's 50th Anniversary. An important part of our story is an acknowledgement that our work is undertaken on Aboriginal land. To complete our 50th anniversary celebrations, an artwork was created by a contemporary Aboriginal artist with input from a Ngunawal Elder, on whose land we work.

In 2022, we engaged Thunderstone Aboriginal Cultural Services Pty Ltd to teach staff an Acknowledgement of Country in Ngunawal language and to provide a brief history of Ngunawal language and culture.



Our Reflect RAP

As an APS agency, we are committed to ensuring our workforce reflects the diverse community we serve and that our workplace is one where every employee is able to bring their true and whole selves to work. Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022 places high priority on developing a Reconciliation Action Plan. We want to:

- build employee awareness of, connection to and active engagement with diversity and inclusion, including matters that may not affect them personally; and
- develop and build a culturally safe workplace that better understands, promotes and embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures; and
- attract and retain diverse employees including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ensure they have a positive employee experience.

Our vision is for an office that respects and celebrates the histories, cultures and contributions of First Nations peoples.

Our vision describes what we want our agency to be, and this RAP details the actions we will take to realise this vision on our journey towards reconciliation. Our Reflect RAP aims to lay the foundation for future reconciliation initiatives and prepare for successive RAPs by exploring how our workplace can commit to reconciliation.



OPC's Approach to Reconciliation

We understand that reconciliation must be guided by the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and will ensure we consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout our reconciliation journey.

We are committed to undertaking a holistic approach to reconciliation across the five dimensions of race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, historical acceptance and unity.³ We recognise that:

- Reconciliation is everyone's business and every day business.
- An effective RAP is tied to OPC's vision and values.
- Engagement and collaboration with other APS agencies are critical to the success of our reconciliation efforts.
- The lived experiences and insights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including stakeholders, are invaluable in improving the work we do.

³ Reconciliation Australia, The State of Reconciliation in Australia (June 2018), at https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ra_stateofreconciliation_report_a4_revised-2018.pdf



We acknowledge that we are still at the beginning of our reconciliation journey, and that our cultural awareness and competence will grow as we continue. We will learn together in good faith, having the bravery and honesty to recognise when we have fallen short due to our immaturity. We recognise that as individuals, we start from different places and learn at different paces. When one of us falls short, we will lift each other up and embrace the learning that comes from the experience of making a mistake. And although at times it may be uncomfortable, we commit to honesty and truth-telling.

We will prioritise key actions including:

- promoting reconciliation through our sphere of influence;
- increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning;
- improving employment outcomes by increasing the recruitment, retention and professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- providing appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.



Our Partnerships and Current Activities

We are committed to strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations. Some examples of our current activities include:

- participating in APS-wide initiatives such as the Jawun program actively looking to procure with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses under the Indigenous Procurement Policy;
- developing and promoting our Acknowledgement of Country signature block;
- celebrating days of significance including National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and National Sorry Day;
- providing opportunity for staff to complete cultural awareness training;
- ensuring there is substantial representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art obtained from Artbank displayed in public areas of OPC.



Governance

The following positions and groups have specific responsibilities for implementing, maintaining and reviewing our RAP:

- **First Parliamentary Counsel** is the main advocate for implementation of the RAP.
- The **Senior Executive Service (SES) Champion/s** is responsible for championing reconciliation at the executive leadership level and ensuring that it is everyone's business.
- The **Director, People Services** is responsible for supporting the RAP Working Group (RAPWG) and leading the development, management, review and evaluation of the RAP, as well as reporting on its progress.
- The **People Services team** is responsible for leading the development, management, review and evaluation of diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- A **RAP Working Group** has been established, and is responsible for informing the development, implementation and evaluation of the RAP.
- All **supervisors** are responsible for championing diversity, inclusion and reconciliation in their teams, leading by example and setting expectations for inclusive behaviour and practices.
- All **employees** are responsible for championing diversity, inclusion and reconciliation in OPC, respecting and actively including one another.



Our RAP Working Group (RAPWG)

Our RAPWG is made up of people from across OPC who are passionate about reconciliation, including members of the Senior Management Team. We will explore opportunities to increase the representation of First Nations people in our RAP Working Group, as we currently have no First Nations representation.

Stephen Campbell

General Manager, Corporate Services, OPC Diversity Champion, People Committee member

Aasha Swift

General Manager, Publishing

Sue Pedder

Director, People Services (chair), Corporate Services group, People Committee member

Donna Della-Ca

Executive Assistant to Aasha Swift and Steve Campbell, Corporate Services group

Dixie-Lee Lange

Senior Human Resource Advisor (secretariat), Corporate Services group

Declan Kerlett

Publishing Officer, Publishing group

Amanda Thomas

Assistant Drafter, Drafting group

Naomi Carde

Senior Drafter, Drafting group



Contact Details

For public enquiries about our RAP, please contact:

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E: stephen.campbell@opc.gov.au





Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

March 2023 - March 2024

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Relationships			
Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	1.1 Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	May 2023	General Manager, Corporate Services General Manager, Publication Director HR
	1.2 Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	September 2023	General Manager, Corporate Services Director HR
	1.3 Investigate how other Australian Government organisations, including small agencies, consult and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	April 2023	Executive Assistant and Senior HR Advisor
	1.4 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials with our staff.	May 2023	Executive Assistant and Senior HR Advisor



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	1.5 RAPWG to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2023	Lead: HR Director Support: HR Team
	1.6 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	Lead: HR Director Support: HR Team
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	1.7 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	March 2023	Lead: First Parliamentary Counsel Support: HR Team
	1.8 Publish our RAP on our website and intranet.	March 2023	Lead: HR Director Support: Business Operations Team
	1.9 Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2023	Senior Drafter Assistant Drafter
	1.10 Identify, network and collaborate with similar APS agencies to share information and build innovation in our reconciliation journey.	March 2023	Senior Drafter Publishing Officer
	1.11 Identify RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey	March 2023	Senior Drafter Publishing Officer
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	1.12 Research best practice policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	July 2023	General Manager, Corporate Services Executive Assistant
	1.13 Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	June 2023	HR Director



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
			Support: Senior HR Advisor
2. Respect			
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning	2.1 Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	September 2023	First Parliamentary Counsel
	2.2 Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation, ranging from cultural awareness to cultural capability, confidence and immersion activities.	June 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	2.3 Review and promote cultural awareness, capability and immersion training in our Agency, to underpin our aim that cultural competency training will be completed by all selection panel members by 2023 and all supervisors and staff by 2024.	November 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols	2.4 Carefully and sensitively develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area / office.	July 2023	Publishing Officer Executive Assistant
	2.5 Increase our understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including protocols relating to Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.	March 2023	First Parliamentary Counsel
	2.6 Include a sign in our foyer and information on our websites acknowledging the land on which we work.	April 2023	Assistant Drafter Publications Officer
	2.7 Review OPC's Acknowledgement of Country and signature block for all staff acknowledging the lands on which OPC operates	April 2023	First Parliamentary Counsel



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	2.8 Continue to engage with local Traditional Owners to conduct Acknowledgement of Country in Ngunawal language and provide training to staff.	March 2023	Executive Assistant Senior HR Advisor
	2.9 In consultation with local Traditional Owners, arrange to have Acknowledgement of Country in Ngunawal language printed on a card and issued to staff who have completed training and have been provided permission to use the Ngunawal language .	April 2023	Executive Assistant Director People Services
Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	2.10 Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	Executive Assistant Senior HR Advisor
	2.11 Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2023	Executive Assistant Senior HR Advisor
	2.12 Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	First Parliamentary Counsel
	2.13 RAPWG to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First Week in July 2023	Executive Assistant Senior HR Advisor
3. Opportunities			
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development	3.1 Seek support from Attorney General's Department to progress initiatives for recruitment, development and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	April 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	3.2 Explore opportunity to participate in the 2023-24 Indigenous Australian Government Development Program and the Indigenous Apprenticeship Program.	March 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	3.3 Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing when applicable to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	November 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	3.4 Put structures in place to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees' participation in portfolio Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee networks.	August 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	3.5 Investigate opportunities and initiatives to support and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees' professional development opportunities.	July 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	3.6 Internally and externally promote our procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	February 2024	General Manager, Corporate Assistant Director, Finance
	3.7 Maintain, review and promote our Supply Nation membership to investigate how we can support better supplier diversity.	April 2023	General Manager, Corporate Assistant Director, Finance
	3.8 Monitor and review procurement spending with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	April 2023	General Manager, Corporate Assistant Director, Finance
	3.9 Develop a strategy to increase procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	October 2023	General Manager, Corporate Assistant Director, Finance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
4. Governance			
Maintain an effective working group to drive the governance of the RAP.	4.1 Maintain and review our RAPWG to govern RAP implementation.	March 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	4.2 Develop and maintain effective Terms of Reference for the RAPWG.	March 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	4.3 Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAPWG.	February 2024	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments	4.4 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	4.5 Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	March 2023	General Manager, Corporate General Manager, Publication
	4.6 Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2023	Senior HR Advisor Executive Assistant
	4.7 Maintain and internally promote our Reconciliation Champion/s.	March 2023	General Manager, Corporate General Manager, Publishing
Build accountability and transparency through reporting	4.8 Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June 2023	Senior HR Advisor



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally	4.9 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link to access the online RAP Impact Measurement questionnaire.	August 2023	Senior HR Advisor
	4.10 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2023	Senior HR Advisor
	4.11 Engage all staff to provide feedback and input on our RAP and our Reconciliation journey.	July 2023	Lead: HR Director Support: Senior HR Advisor
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	4.12 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2023	HR Director Senior HR Advisor
	4.13 Identify potential long-term reconciliation goals for future RAPs and endeavour to connect them to current actions.	July 2023	Senior Drafter Assistant Drafter

Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

OPC joins a network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards 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 also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables OPC to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC), welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

