



**AUSTRALIAN
WATER**
ASSOCIATION



Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2023 – August 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Water Association (AWA) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians across Australia, where we live, work and play, for their deep connection to our precious waters and land. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, and the ancestors who have cared for, protected and nurtured Country for many thousands of years.

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About the Artwork

'At the Heart of all Life'

© Amy Allerton

Water is at the heart of all life, from the beginning of creation to creating a vibrant future. Wherever we live, work and play, water flows within us and all around us, connecting us to each other and to Country.

Water is at the heart of ensuring our communities can thrive, economies can prosper and our environments can flourish. The power of water is immense and invaluable, bringing healing to our communities, sustainable solutions to our industries and restoration to our ecosystems.

As AWA connects us together, we collaborate, innovate and share with Elders, community, government and industry to fulfil our roles as caretakers for the water, to ensure that life perseveres.

About the Artist

Amy Allerton is the founder and Director of Indigico Creative, a graphic designer and contemporary Aboriginal artist. Amy is a Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung woman whose family's traditional land is located in the Clarence Valley in a rural area called Cangai in NSW. Amy's identity is strongly grounded in Gomeroi culture, history, dreaming, art and language having been born and raised in Tamworth, NSW, where she still lives with her husband, Rick, and two children.

Amy has been providing graphic design services Australia-wide since 2014, collaborating with businesses and partnering with communities to creatively communicate the stories that bring us together. Amy is driven by her personal and professional vision that every story is given value and a voice, to revitalise communities, reconnect to culture and restore identities to build a stronger future.

A natural progression from designing visual communications in the corporate market, Amy applies her skills in digital illustration to deliver a modern approach to Aboriginal storytelling. Amy's artworks are an extension from her journey of exploring her own cultural identity, bringing her unique ability to speak in colour and imagery to create visual representations of the journeys and values of organisations and communities.



Message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Australian Water Association to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

The Australian Water Association joins a network of more than 2,200 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 the Australian Water Association 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 Australian Water Association, 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



Message from the President and CEO of AWA

On behalf of AWA, we are proud to present our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), our Reflect RAP.

AWA connects people, businesses and governments creating a sustainable water future and we recognise that we have much to learn from our Traditional Custodians, who have protected and nurtured Country from time immemorial. We not only acknowledge their connectedness and affinity to Country, but we extend our deepest gratitude to them for their care and wisdom in sustaining it over millennia.

AWA is dedicated to promoting initiatives that enhance understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their deep-rooted ties to water and Country. We recognise the necessity for increased and more substantive involvement and cooperation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure a sustainable water future. An integral aspect of this dedication and our growth as an organisation is the creation of and commitment to our Reflect RAP.

Our strategic plan supports our industry to develop a better understanding of water and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life and how we can learn from this to create a more sustainable future for all. Through the process of introspection, our RAP will allow us to build new, and strengthen existing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and explore our extensive sphere of influence in the water community to increase awareness about reconciliation across the water sector.

While we have been undertaking a number of initiatives in recent years to support reconciliation, we understand that many more opportunities exist for us to lay the foundations for deeper and more meaningful relationships and reconciliation outcomes in the future.

We acknowledge that we have only started on our journey to reconciliation and the road is long. Our RAP vision is to embed greater awareness of cultural safety and values into all that we do and share our learnings and resources with our members to build trust and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

We are excited to embark on this journey and look forward to working with the water community to honour, celebrate and advance the significant cultural and spiritual connectedness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country.

Peter Dennis
President



Corinne Cheeseman
Chief Executive Officer



Who We Are

We share knowledge, connect people with purpose, and inspire positive change. Our members and communities are connected by water.

AWA is Australia's biggest water network with 5,088* individual and corporate members. We are a member based, not-for-profit and registered charity that is the home for people who care about water. In 2022, we proudly celebrated our 60-year anniversary.

OUR PURPOSE: Inspire and drive a sustainable water future

10 YEAR ASPIRATION: Water is recognised by all as essential to economic prosperity, health, the environment and Indigenous connection to Country.

Our members have diverse careers across disciplines including science, engineering, urban design and planning, operations, consultancy, academia, research, education, communications & PR, community consultation, policy, regulation, people and culture, HR, data analytics, data science, IT, strategy, asset management, integrated urban water management, catchment management, manufacturing, trades and more.

We are motivated by the opportunity to create a more sustainable and inclusive water future. A future where our members have the skills, expertise and networks to adapt to an ever-changing climate and where innovation is celebrated and promoted. Where collaboration and deep engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is practiced and expected and where water has a voice in the community, is understood and revered. We are proud to share our knowledge and expertise with our international neighbours as they also strive for a sustainable water future.

Events, awards, technical programs and specialist networks position our members as leaders in innovative water management and we see this Reconciliation Action Plan as a way to ensure that we are also leaders in reconciliation and that our members are also inspired to be reconciliation leaders.

Delivering our member benefits, programs, events and activities is a team of 35 staff. While the majority are located in Sydney on Cammeraygal Country, 6 team members are based interstate in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland. AWA is governed by a skills-based Board of Directors who are also geographically dispersed. We are further supported by 400+ committed and passionate volunteers who sit on a range of committees across the country including our Branch Committees in each State and Territory and the International Water Association Australia, as well as Specialist Networks and Editorial Committees that are national and geographically dispersed. We currently do not employ any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are aware that our membership does include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, however, the number is currently not known. We will work within our RAP to determine culturally appropriate ways to understand this and how we can increase this number by demonstrating that we are a culturally safe Association.

*As of 30 June 2022

Our Values

Passionate
as we advocate
for water
sustainability

Collaborative
as we share
expertise,
knowledge and
solutions

Inclusive
as we seek
innovation, diversity
and equality in
all we do

As we live our values, reconciliation is an important part of our diversity and inclusion strategy. We have a lot to learn from traditional knowledge and perspectives – it is essential to our purpose and our 10 year aspiration. We seek to create a safe and welcoming place where all perspectives are heard.

Our Commitment to Reconciliation

AWA is committed to promoting and developing activities that improve the understanding of First Nations cultures and connection to water and Country. We understand that greater and more meaningful engagement and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is required to achieve a sustainable water future. An important part of this commitment and our learning as an organisation is the development and implementation of this, our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

Our previous and current strategic plans both have a focus on reconciliation. The importance of reconciliation emerged as a strong theme throughout our strategic plan engagement with all stakeholders. From the Board, to our Strategic Advisory Council, volunteers, members and all of our staff, the development and delivery of our Reconciliation Action Plan was seen as vital. Importantly, by being a focus area in our strategic plan, we are ensuring that these reconciliation activities are resourced and funded to deliver on this important commitment.

FOCUS AREA:

Indigenous and Community Collaboration

OBJECTIVE:

We will create a culturally safe space for the sharing of Indigenous water management practices and celebrate collaborations that deliver positive change.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Increased promotion of water, its value culturally and economically and its contribution to liveability.
- New content developed for schools that links to the curriculum, including Indigenous water management and connection to Country.
- Implementation of our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan and an external advisory group to guide programs and collaborations.

While we have been undertaking a number of initiatives in recent years to support reconciliation, we do want to ensure that our reconciliation journey is guided by the expertise of Reconciliation Australia and that we are correctly embedding the principles and purposes of reconciliation within AWA and across our membership base. As AWA and our team go on this journey, both personally and as an organisation, guided by the key actions and deliverables, we acknowledge that some of the actions we may find challenging as we acknowledge injustices and inequities, but that we will be laying the foundations for more meaningful relationships and reconciliation outcomes in the future.

In addition to our strategic goals and the deliverables outlined in our RAP, we also see our RAP journey as an opportunity to:

1. Facilitate deeper and more meaningful engagement with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members
2. Use our influence and reach to increase awareness about reconciliation across the water sector
3. Embed greater awareness of cultural safety and values into all of our activities
4. Share learnings and resources with our members to support reconciliation action
5. Promote the importance of Reconciliation Action Plans to all of our corporate members, particularly small to medium enterprises

As a small organisation we are lucky to be able to engage with the Board, CEO and all AWA team members on the implementation of our RAP. We have a dedicated internal RAP Champion and an internal RAP Working Group to facilitate the deliverables of the RAP. We have nominated our Head of International & Industry Programs as our RAP Champion, and our RAP Working Group has been formed as part of the implementation. Our organisation is small in staff numbers (~35). As we do not have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander internal team members, we have formed a RAP Advisory Group (RAG) in partnership with the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA). Our organisations have many similarities, so it is beneficial to have one group that can oversee the work of both AWA and WSAA.

Our RAP Advisory Group includes staff from AWA and WSAA, our members, as well as other individuals with relevant expertise that can support the implementation of our RAP. We are naming this a RAP Advisory Group rather than Working Group as AWA and WSAA staff will deliver the work for our respective organisations, and so the role of the Group is advisory in nature, as they are not required to play a role in implementing the actions.

Our reconciliation journey to date has focussed on promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and connection to Country, working towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices being represented in our programs and events, recognising achievements in positive engagement and collaboration, and beginning the cultural onboarding of our team. We look forward to continuing this journey and know that reconciliation will make a significant contribution to achieving a sustainable water future.



Supporting Reconciliation - Our Journey to Date

Strategic Commitments

- Indigenous Water, one of 12 focus areas in Strategy'22 (2019 - 2022)
- Indigenous and Community Collaboration, one of 5 focus areas in Strategy'25 (2022 - 2025)
- Indigenous connection to Country part of our strategic 10 year aspiration: *'Water is recognised by all as essential to economic prosperity, health, the environment and Indigenous connection to Country'*
- Development and inclusion of an Acknowledgment of Country on the footer of our latest website (launched Nov 2021) and on our corporate PowerPoint template.

Presenting Culturally Safe Events & Programs

- Engaging with local traditional owners to perform a Welcome to Country at all major events across Australia. At Ozwater, Australia's premier annual water conference and exhibition we also engage with the traditional owners to host an arrival and smoking ceremony to officially open the Conference.
- Translating our Ozwater Conference theme into the local Aboriginal language and incorporating this into all event branding and signage.
- Showcasing the Reconciliation Action Plan artworks from 13 of our Principal members at major events, including Ozwater.
- Partnering with WSAA to host Voices for the Bush, an inaugural national conference hosted on Arrernte country in Alice Springs in August 2022, which brought together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, elders and members of parliament with the wider water community to discuss challenges and solutions for improving water supply and sanitation in rural, remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarships to support emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water professionals to attend national and international conferences.
- National Water Week theme in 2021 was 'Caring for water and Country'. This was supported by the commissioning of Spirit Creative's artist Dennis Golding to produce the artwork "Our Waters" for National Water Week.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander site tours and knowledge sharing featured at a number of state, territory and national events.

Inclusion and Promotion of Indigenous Voices

- Partnering with WSAA to commission 'Talking Water', a video launched during National Reconciliation Week 2020 featuring stories from five Aboriginal elders and custodians from central Australia on their communities' past and present relationships with water, along with a vision for the future.
- A commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander keynote speakers at Ozwater and state/territory conferences to share knowledge on the importance of cultural water values and First Nations knowledge and expertise in planning and decision making, including Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM, Tanya Hosch and Dr Anne Poelina.
- Promoting First Nations content via Water Source, our weekly national news platform; via our Australian Water Awards by recognising outstanding projects and programs; and via our conferences and events with streams dedicated to sharing First Nations content.

Cultural Learning and Awareness

- All staff participation in Aboriginal Harbour Heritage Tour at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney in June 2022.
- Cultural Onboarding course commenced in December 2022 facilitated by Gomeroi man, Dr Phil Duncan.

Recognition of Member Achievements in Reconciliation

- 2019 Best Water e-Journal Paper (in honour of Guy Parker) Winner: Progressing Reconciliation through Indigenous Partnerships within Australian Water Utilities - Michael Thomas, David McKinnis and Shu Brown, Barwon Water
- 2021 National Organisational Excellence Award Winner: Wara Paring Indigenous Civil Construction Project - Aqua Metro Services and Melbourne Water
- 2022 National Organisational Excellence Award Winner: Aboriginal Employment & Retention Strategy, Barwon Water
- 2022 Infrastructure Project Innovation Award Winner (Regional): Mer (Murray) Island Water Network Management Program, Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Talking Water
Kwatja Ngkama



DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
ACTION 1: Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations		
Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence	July 2023	Lead: Content and Education Lead; Support: Member Engagement Manager & RAP Advisory Group
Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	July 2023	Lead: Project Lead – International Development & Trade; Support: Member Engagement Manager & RAP Advisory Group
ACTION 2: Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)		
Circulate Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	Lead: Head of Communications & Corporate Services; Support: Digital Communications and Marketing Specialist
Circulate Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our volunteers and members	May 2024	Lead: Head of Communications & Corporate Services; Support: Digital Communications and Marketing Specialist
RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2024	Lead: Head of International and Industry Programs; Support: Content & Education Lead; Member Experience – Project Manager; RAP Advisory Group
Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2024	Lead: Head of International and Industry Programs; Support: CEO
Host a free NRW event for our members	2 June 2023 & 27 May - 3 June 2024	Lead: Content and Education Lead; Support: Event Manager

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
ACTION 3: Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence		
Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff	June 2023	Lead: Head of Communications & Corporate Services; Support: Digital Communications and Marketing Specialist
Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to our members	June 2023	Lead: Head of Communications & Corporate Services; Support: Digital Communications and Marketing Specialist
Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey	July 2023	Lead: Content & Education Lead; Support: Member Engagement Manager & RAP Advisory Group
Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey	July 2023	Lead: Head of International and Industry Programs; Support: RAP Advisory Group
ACTION 4: Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies		
Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination	November 2023	Lead: Executive Assistant to the CEO; Support: CEO & RAP Advisory Group
Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs	November 2023	Lead: Executive Assistant to the CEO; Support: CEO & RAP Advisory Group

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
ACTION 5: Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning		
Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation	August 2023	Lead: Content & Education Lead; Support: Event Manager & RAP Advisory Group
Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation	August 2023	Lead: Content & Education Lead; Support: Event Manager & RAP Advisory Group
ACTION 6: Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols		
Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area	February 2024	Lead: Member Engagement Manager; Support: Volunteer Branches & RAP Advisory Group
Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols	June 2024	Lead: Content & Education Lead; Support: Member Experience Project Manager & RAP Advisory Group
Increase volunteer committees' understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols	September 2023	Lead: Head of Member Engagement and Experience; Support: Manager, Membership and Programs
Conduct consultation with RAP Advisory Group and other key stakeholders on the wording in our organisation's strategy (Strategy'25), which uses 'Indigenous'. Following consultation make required changes to the Strategy and across the organisation to ensure AWA is demonstrating respectful language	December 2023	Lead: Head of Strategy & Innovation / Deputy CEO; Support: CEO

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
ACTION 7: Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week		
Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week	June 2023 & June 2024	Head of International and Industry Programs
Raise awareness and share information amongst our members about the meaning of NAIDOC Week	June 2023 & June 2024	Lead: Head of Communications & Corporate Services; Support: Digital Communications and Marketing Specialist & RAP Advisory Group
Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area	June 2023 & June 2024	Lead: Event Manager; Support: Digital Communications and Marketing Specialist & RAP Advisory Group
RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event	First week in July 2023 & first week July 2024	Lead: Head of International and Industry Programs; Support: Content & Education Lead; Member Experience – Project Manager; RAP Advisory Group



Opportunities

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
ACTION 8: Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development		
Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation	June 2024	Lead: Project Lead - International Development and Trade; Support: Member Engagement Manager - QLD
Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities	February 2024	Lead: Head of International and Industry Programs; Support: Content & Education Lead
Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on volunteer committees and Board to inform future strategy to grow representation	November 2023	Lead: Head of Member Engagement and Experience; Support: Manager, Membership and Programs
ACTION 9: Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes		
Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses	April 2024	Lead: Head of Events, Awards & Digital; Support: Event Manager
Investigate Supply Nation membership.	April 2024	Lead: Project Lead - International Development and Trade; Support: Member Engagement Manager - QLD



Governance

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
ACTION 10: Establish and maintain an effective RAP Advisory Group (RAG) (external) and RAP Working Group (RWG) (internal) to drive governance of the RAP		
Form a RWG to lead and govern the RAP implementation	June 2023	Head of International and Industry Programs
Maintain a RAG to advise RAP implementation	Review: January 2024	Head of International and Industry Programs
Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG	August 2023	Event Manager
Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG	May 2024	Head of International and Industry Programs
Review and update Terms of Reference for the RAG	Review: January 2024	Head of International and Industry Programs
Maintain and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAG	Review: January 2024	Head of International and Industry Programs
ACTION 11: Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments		
Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	June 2023	Lead: Head of International and Industry Programs; Support: Member Experience – Project Manager
Continue to engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments	July 2023	Head of International and Industry Programs
Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally	Review: January 2024	Lead: CEO; Support: Head of International and Industry Programs
Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2023	Lead: Member Experience – Project Manager; Support: Head of International and Industry Programs

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
ACTION 12: Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally		
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 annually	Head of International and Industry Programs
Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August, annually	Head of International and Industry Programs
Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	Member Experience – Project Manager
ACTION 13: Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP		
Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	May 2024	Head of International and Industry Programs

More Information

We welcome your feedback and enquiries about our Reflect RAP.

For further information please contact:

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