

# Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

Australian Press Council

March 2017—March 2019



Australian  
Press Council



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE

## Message from Press Council Chair



I am absolutely delighted that Reconciliation Australia has approved the Press Council's first-ever Reconciliation Action Plan, which documents the objectives and strategies we will employ to promote understanding and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The draft plan was developed by our RAP Committee, comprising staff and Council members. Reconciliation Australia gave us very strong support throughout the process, working patiently with us as we developed a plan appropriate for our organisation. We could not have done this without their expertise and wisdom.

Many of the 900 mastheads that make up the Council have their own RAPs. However, as the body charged with setting media standards of practice, handling complaints and advocating for free speech and press freedom, it is essential that the Council has its own plan to guide our policies, priorities and relationships. Our member publications tell Australia's story, including the hardships faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples as well as their successes. This RAP will help ensure that Indigenous perspectives help shape that narrative.

The challenge now is to make sure that we implement these ambitious plans fully and effectively. There is no doubting the Press Council's commitment to make that happen.

Professor David Weisbrot AM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Weisbrot'.

Chair

Australian Press Council

## Message from Reconciliation Australia CEO

Reconciliation Australia congratulates the Australian Press Council on developing its first Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Press Council is demonstrating its readiness to develop innovative approaches to reconciliation and champion reconciliation at every level of the organisation. It is well placed to continue its progress across the key pillars of reconciliation—relationships, respect and opportunities.

The Press Council displays its dedication to relationship building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations through its goal to celebrate and promote community events such as National Reconciliation Week.

The Press Council champions respect as part of its core values by committing to develop and implement a cultural protocol document for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.

Driving reconciliation through employment and training opportunities is outlined in the Press Council's RAP through its commitment to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultation strategy.

I commend the Press Council on its Innovate RAP. I look forward to following its continued reconciliation journey.

Justin Mohamed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Mohamed'.

Chief Executive Officer

Reconciliation Australia



## The Press Council's vision for reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is to utilise our unique role in the news media industry—in setting standards, handling complaints and advocating for free speech and press freedom— to work towards achieving a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.

Reconciliation Australia notes that: “Reconciliation involves justice, recognition and healing. It’s about helping all Australians move forward with a better understanding of the past and how the past affects the lives of Indigenous people today.” Reconciliation Australia’s RAP program provides a framework for organisations to realise their vision for reconciliation: “RAPs are practical plans of action built on relationships, respect and opportunities. RAPs create social change and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.”

As the independent body responsible for standards setting, complaints handling and advocacy in relation to print and online media in Australia, with a majority of public membership and a brief to apply its standards and carry out its activities in the public interest, the Australian Press Council is firmly committed to embracing and reflecting the knowledge and experience of all Australians, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Australia’s news media routinely identify and report on matters of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. This includes highlighting systemic disadvantages in relation to poor health outcomes, lower than desirable educational outcomes and unconscionable arrest and incarceration rates. More positively, however, Australia’s news media also routinely identify and report on cultural events; archaeological discoveries of historical Aboriginal places and practices; political representation; art and tourism opportunities; achievements in the arts, sport, business, the professions and other fields; and other matters that more accurately reflect the identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia. The provision of both sorts of material is critical to promoting an environment in which all members of the community are moved to embrace and advance the narrative and importance of reconciliation.

## Our Business

The Australian Press Council is an Incorporated Association operating under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009* (NSW), as amended. The Press Council was established in 1976 as an independent, self-governing body, responsible for developing and promoting standards of practice in journalism; handling complaints about material published in Australian newspapers, magazines, online news and current affairs websites and associated digital outlets; and advocating for free speech, press freedom and community access to information. The membership of the Press Council covers more than 900 mastheads (representing 95 per cent of circulation) and most of the major news and current affairs websites. As of late 2016, the Press Council's Sydney-based secretariat had ten staff members, including the Chair, none of whom identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. The Press Council acknowledges that the Gadigal people of the Eora nation are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our office is located, and we pay our deepest respect to their Elders past, present and future.

More information about the Press Council may be found at [www.presscouncil.org.au](http://www.presscouncil.org.au)



## Our Reconciliation Action Plan

The Press Council's Reconciliation Action Plan documents the objectives and strategies that we will employ over the next biennium to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader community. The Press Council's deep commitment to the reconciliation process—with a focus on developing relationships with, and respect and opportunities for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people — led to the establishment of an internal RAP Group in 2015, comprising the Chair, the Executive Director, the then Deputy Executive Director and other staff in the Council's secretariat. The initial RAP Group was later joined by Council member and publisher Chris Graham, who has extensive experience working with Indigenous media and land rights groups. On 14 February 2017, Naomi Moran, a Bundjalung woman from Lismore, NSW and the General Manager of the Koori Mail newspaper, joined the group.

To date, the Press Council's efforts in promoting reconciliation and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been limited to making some initial approaches to a number of relevant publications, such as the Koori Mail and others to encourage them to join. (The Koori Mail officially joined the Press Council in February 2017.) The Chair and senior officers of the Press Council also routinely include an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country at the beginning of significant meetings and events.

The Press Council's RAP focuses on relationships, respect and opportunities. Increased engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders will yield a better understanding of these communities among staff, allowing them to make informed judgements about the nature and impact of media coverage of those communities and related matters.

The Press Council recognises that while our RAP needs to capture the right spirit, the most important thing is to facilitate the achievement of practical, beneficial outcomes. Consequently, the Press Council commits to:

- encouraging membership by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander newspapers, magazines and online news and current affairs sites;
- engaging and consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, individuals and organisations regarding our work;
- promoting employment and internship opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the Press Council and among constituent members;
- promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence among our staff;
- considering the impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of current and proposed Standards of Practice;
- encouraging the Australian news media to report issues of importance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in a respectful way, especially those that highlight inequality and the need to take active steps reduce it, in order to improve outcomes in education, health, life expectancy, employment and other sectors; and
- endeavouring to promote high quality reporting in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



## 1. Relationships

The Press Council regularly hosts meetings, consultations and Round Tables with community groups, peak associations, experts and individual stakeholders to inform its complaints-handling processes and especially the development of standards, guidelines and educational materials. This engagement will be substantially enhanced by maintaining strong, ongoing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples groups, organisations, scholars and individuals.

### Focus area

To encourage greater participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the work of the Press Council, we will focus on improving engagement and consultation strategies.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1.1 RAP Committee to actively monitor RAP development and implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting.	Chair and Executive Director (ED)	March 2017	RAP Committee to oversee the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP
	Chair and Executive Director (ED)	May and November meetings in 2017 and 2018	APC RAP Committee to meet two or more times per calendar year to monitor and report on RAP implementation.
	Chair, ED and Director of Research and Communications (DRC)	Review in June and December 2017, 2018	All meetings to be noted on the APC website and in the Annual Report.

	Chair and ED	April 2017	Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented in the RAP Committee
	Chair and ED	April 2017	Establish Terms of Reference for the RAP Committee
<b>1.2 Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW) by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. NRW runs from 27 May-3 June each year, marking the anniversaries of the 1967 referendum and the Mabo decision, respectively. 2017 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of these historic milestones in reconciliation.</b>	Chair, ED and DRC	May-June 2017 and 2018	Organise at least one internal event for NRW each year
		March 2017 and 2018	Register all NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's website
		May-June 2017 and 2018	Support an external NRW event. Ensure our RAP Committee participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW
<b>1.3 Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes.</b>	Chair, ED and DRC	June 2017	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders
	Chair, ED and DRC	May 2017, review in December 2017, 2018	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement

	Information Officer	March 2017	Maintain an up-to-date contact database of relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups, organisations and individual stakeholders, and use it to ensure regular contact.
	Director of Research and Communications	March 2017	Invite Indigenous people to participate in APC consultations, roundtables, social functions and other activities, and to make the APC accessible by hosting some of these events in or near local Indigenous communities.
<b>1.4 Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across our business and sector</b>	Chair, ED and DRC	April 2017	Implement and review a strategy to communicate our RAP to all internal and external stakeholders
	Chair, ED and DRC	April 2017, review in December 2017, 2018	Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders
	Chair, ED and DRC	March 2017	Encourage all Constituent bodies to engage with reconciliation by developing RAPs
	Chair, ED, DRC and Information Officer	March 2017	Upload RAP to the APC website
	Chair, ED and Office Manager	March 2017	Provide APC's RAP to all newly recruited staff, interns and Council members as part of the induction process.





## 2. Respect

The Press Council's vision of social equality and inclusion is underpinned by respect for all Australians. Evident respect shown to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will promote trust, foster good relationships and encourage greater engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the Press Council, leading to higher quality policies and processes in the public interest.

### Focus area

Improve the cultural awareness and competence of Press Council staff and ensure the respectful engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in events and processes.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
<b>2.1 Engage employees in cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.</b>	Chair, ED and DRC	April 2017, reviewed annually	Develop and implement a cultural awareness training strategy for our staff and Council members that defines cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our business and considers various ways cultural learning can be provided including online, face to face workshops or cultural immersion.
	Chair, ED and DRC	April 2017	Investigate opportunities to work with Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants to develop cultural awareness training.
	Chair, ED and DRC	April 2017, review April 2018, 2019	Provide opportunities for RAP Committee, RAP Champions and Council members and other key leaders to participate in cultural learning.

	Chair, ED and DRC	March 2017, 2018	All management and secretariat staff to undertake Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training at least once in each two year period.
<b>2.2 Engage employees in understanding the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols, such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, to ensure there is shared meaning</b>	Chair, Executive Director, and all staff	March 2017	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.
		March 2017	Develop a list of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country and maintaining respectful partnerships.
		March 2017, 2019	Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at significant events including any conference or other major public event staged by the Press Council.
		March 2017, 2019	Ensure an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country is included at APC Council meetings, events and public functions.
		April 2017, 2019	Consider engaging local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants and interpreters, as well as being conscious and flexible in the design of consultation processes, so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, perspectives and opinions are understood and valued.

<b>2.3 Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their culture and communities by celebrating NAIDOC Week and other dates of significance. (NAIDOC Week is held annually in the first full week of July.)</b>	Chair, ED and DRC	March 2017 and March 2018	Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week
		March 2017	Develop a calendar of significant events to be celebrated and/or acknowledged on the APC website and in Annual Reports
		July 2017 and 2018	Provide opportunities for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in a local NAIDOC Week event
<b>2.4 Support relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander newspapers, magazines and websites through subscriptions and other means.</b>	Chair, ED and DRC	Review in March 2017, 2018'	Note on the APC website, in the Annual Report, and elsewhere as appropriate the support provided to Indigenous newspapers, magazines and websites and journals through subscriptions and other means.



### 3. Opportunities

The Press Council is committed to creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be involved as Council members, staff members, interns, committee members, panel members, consulted stakeholders, and contracted service providers and suppliers.

#### Focus area

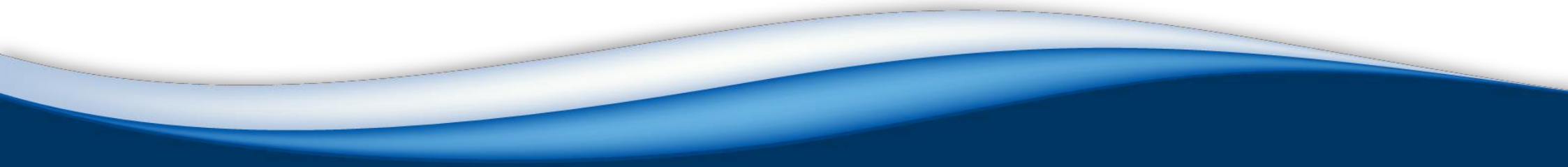
The Press Council's permanent workforce is small and stable, but where vacancies occur there will be a genuine effort to promote the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. On a more routine basis, the main focus will be on recruiting for internship positions, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in consultation and advisory processes; and enhancing the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Council members, staff members, committee members, panel members, consulted stakeholders, and contracted service providers and suppliers.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
<b>3.1 Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our workplace</b>	Chair, ED and Office Manager	April 2017	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy
		Review in March 2019	Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies and professional development.
		Review March 2019	Advertise all vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, through educational institutions and through external community stakeholders.
		March 2019	Collect information on our current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to inform future employment

		June 2017	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace.
<b>3.2 Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through training pathways.</b>	Chair, ED, DRC and the Office Manager	December 2017, review June 2018	Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to apply to the APC's internship program by ensuring that opportunities are made known to the institutions and advertised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
		December 2017, 2018	Record the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interns applying to the APC intern program and the percentage of successful applicants, in order to inform future planning and opportunities
<b>3.3 Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations about APC Standards and Guidelines.</b>	Chair, ED, DRC, Standards Director and Complaints Director	April 2017, review in April 2018, 2019	Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultation strategy for each issue, where relevant (eg the development of specific standards, guidelines and educational materials; or possible changes to the complaints handling process).
	DRC, Information Officer	April 2017, review April 2018, 2019	Report all significant consultations on the APC website, in the Annual Report, and to the RAP Committee, listing in detail the organisations and individuals involved and the tangible outcomes of the consultations.

	DRC, Information Officer	April 2017, review April 2018, 2019	Provide feedback to First Australian communities and groups following APC consultations, roundtables and projects through the APC website, the Annual Report, and through direct communications (e.g. email or newsletters), published articles, conferences and seminars.
	DRC, Information Officer	April 2017, review April 2018, 2019	Establish and maintain an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultation section on the APC website.
<b>3.4 Identify opportunities to engage with and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers of goods and services</b>	Chair, ED, Office Manager	March 2017	Review procurement policies and procedures to identify barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to supply APC with goods and services
		March 2017	Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services
		November 2016	Develop one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned business
		March 2017	Investigate Supply Nation membership
<b>3.5 Encourage membership in the Council from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander print and online publications</b>	Chair, ED and DRC	April 2017, review April 2018, 2019	Recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander print and online publications as members of the Press Council, such as the Koori Mail, the National Indigenous Times and Land Rights News.

		April 2017	Recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as independent journalist members of Council, public members of Council or Adjudication Panel members.
		April 2017	Apply for membership of the Media Reconciliation Industry Network Group (MediaRING).





#### 4. Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
4.1 Report RAP achievements, challenges and learning (internally and externally)	Chair, ED and DRC	December 2017,2018	RAP Progress report to be included in each Annual Report and published on APC website
		December 2017, 2018	Report on RAP progress internally
4.2 Report RAP achievements, challenges and learning to Reconciliation Australia	Chair, ED and DRC	September 2017, 2018	Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually
		May 2018	Investigate participating in the RAP Barometer.
4.3 Review and update RAP	Chair, ED, DRC and RAP Committee	June 2018	In partnership with Reconciliation Australia, develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements.
		March 2019	Send draft to Reconciliation Australia for formal feedback and endorsement.



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