

# Reconciliation Action Plan

## 2012–2014






The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of parched, cracked earth in shades of orange and brown. The cracks are deep and irregular, forming a network of polygonal shapes. The top and bottom edges of the slide feature a decorative border made of rectangular blocks of this cracked earth texture, with white gaps between them.

# Message from the Electoral Commissioner





## In the 50th anniversary year of the Indigenous right to vote I am pleased to present to you our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for 2012 to 2014.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) established the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) in July 2009 to help close the gap in electoral participation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

While the IEPP was established as a specific program to work directly with Indigenous communities, we are equally committed to ensure its objectives are integrated into our mainstream operations, processes and procedures.

Effective engagement is important for all AEC staff: those who deliver services, those who manage programs, and those who develop policies.

This RAP has an internal focus aimed at supporting our staff to gain an understanding, demonstrate a commitment and develop the engagement skills to ensure the AEC is able to deliver electoral services in a manner that takes into account the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Australians wherever possible.

An important priority will be the attraction and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and building a respectful, inclusive workplace culture.

In the spirit of genuine consultation and co-operation, the RAP was developed by a working group comprising representatives from the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program and People Services Branch (PSB). Information was sourced from a range of peak groups representing Indigenous Australians<sup>1</sup>, as well as agencies delivering services to Indigenous Australians, such as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Reconciliation Australia has been consulted in relation to the AEC's RAP.

Importantly, this RAP has been endorsed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees within the AEC, the AEC Consultative Forum (ACF) as our representative staff body, and the Executive Management Group (EMG). I am confident that our RAP will allow us to further develop in areas in which we are strong, re-engage us in areas that present challenges and that it is realistic, given our size, resources and strategic priorities.

The key deliverables include:

- *Building and maintaining respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a particular focus on Indigenous led solutions*

- *Enhancing staff understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories*
- *Supporting employment and career progression opportunities for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Indigenous Businesses*
- *Ensuring that AEC core business planning takes into account the circumstances of with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

I have asked the Assistant Commissioner, PSB, to further develop and monitor progress and outcomes identified within our RAP. Specifically they will provide strategic guidance to the implementation team and play a lead role via the Investing in Our People Program, in promoting an organisational culture in which the RAP is considered and acted upon.

The AEC has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff located in its offices throughout Australia. Managers at all levels have a responsibility to foster workplaces where the diverse skills, abilities and cultural perspectives of individuals are respected. Reconciliation is everyone's business and all employees are responsible for the implementation of this RAP.

Ed Killesteyn  
Electoral Commissioner

<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also referred to as Indigenous Australians.



# Message from CEO Reconciliation Australia





## Reconciliation Australia is pleased to endorse the Australian Electoral Commission's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

RAPs are business plans that use an holistic approach to build meaningful relationships and create an environment of respect and recognition. By developing and implementing their RAP, the Australian Electoral

Commission has joined a community of over 300 organisations, large and small, that have committed to turning good intentions into real actions.

With 2012 being the 50th anniversary year of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander right to vote, it is fitting that the Australian Electoral Commission launches their first Reconciliation Action Plan. Their plan demonstrates a commitment to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve greater participation in our voting system.

I also commend the Australian Electoral Commission on the mandatory inclusion of cultural education in all Individual Performance Plans. Having a greater

understanding of Australia's first people will support all Australian Electoral Commission staff to address the current barriers prohibiting full voting participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Reconciliation Australia thanks the Australian Electoral Commission for taking this important step in reconciliation. On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I wish you well for the important actions you have set for the coming years.

Leah Armstrong  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia

# Our vision for reconciliation

Through building and facilitating strong relationships, demonstrating respect and showing support to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, we can play one small part in reconciliation in Australia. The AEC acknowledges that activities that support reconciliation are likely to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within the AEC as well as contribute to improved opportunities and outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Where our interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as an agency are concerned, understanding and respect will aid in education and engagement in the electoral process.

## Our business

The AEC will encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to realise their full potential by providing a supportive and culturally appropriate workplace.

The AEC implements the Parliament's directives on electoral policy as embodied in the legislation. We have three primary outcomes for which we are funded, namely:

1. Voter entitlement for Australians and support for electoral events and redistributions through maintaining an accurate and up-to-date electoral roll.
2. Access to an impartial and independent electoral system for Australians through the provision of election services.
3. Informed Australians through the provision of information services on electoral matters.

To maximise the accessibility of the AEC's products and services for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to effectively participate in the electoral process, the AEC's key outcomes wherever possible will be delivered in a manner that takes into account the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Our Reconciliation Action Plan

This RAP builds on the AEC Diversity Plan and specifically identifies actions to be taken during the period of operation that will result in increased awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, their diverse cultures and histories and the way in which the AEC can better meet our obligations through identified strategies. The RAP aims to ensure that reconciliation is part of the AEC's core business agenda aligning with the Agencies Strategic Plan, Business Plans and Workforce Management Plan and that action items become imbedded in our approach to business as usual.

The RAP will be reviewed and action items updated annually. Progress on implementation of the RAP will be reported to staff, EMG and in the AEC's Annual Report.



# RELATIONSHIPS

## Building and maintaining respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians



**Focus Area:** Indigenous-led solutions; Information sharing; Network building

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Maintain RAP Working Group, with representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other staff representation to sustain focus on AEC RAP	PSB	May 2012	At least 2 meetings per year
Support staff to build and maintain respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and stakeholders of the AEC	IEPP Communications Branch	January 2013	IEPP to make publically available an Indigenous community engagement strategy outlining its approaches to engaging Indigenous stakeholders in each state
	PSB and, in due course, self-managed by the network	June 2013	Establish and support AEC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on line network
Build and maintain respectful relationships between all staff members: among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with their managers; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with the broader APS community	HR Manager & Line Managers	Implemented as standard practice for managers with Indigenous staff by June 2013	Supervisors briefed on support and flexible work practices available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians on engagement including but not limited to attending learning and development activities, Indigenous APS Employee Network (IAPSEN) meetings and pathways alumni events
Address disadvantage in electoral participation through effective and targeted service delivery in relation to: education; enrolment; and participation in electoral processes, by minimising or eliminating (where possible) barriers to use of AEC services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	IEPP	Quarterly commencing July 2012	<p>Areas of high Indigenous population are identified for community visits in IEPP business plans. (Areas of high Indigenous population include locations with distinct groupings of Indigenous families living in close proximity)</p> <p>AEC services to areas of high Indigenous population are informed by IEPP feedback and input</p> <p>Barriers to service delivery in areas of high Indigenous population identified in post-election evaluation are addressed</p>
Celebrate National Reconciliation Week, providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians within our organisation to build strong relationships	All AEC	May 2013	National Reconciliation Week activities promoted and celebrated throughout AEC

# RESPECT

Having an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage



**Focus Area:** Development Indigenous cultural education program; Cultural protocols; Policy integration

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Strengthen internal cross cultural relationships and understanding	PSB	December 2012	Cultural awareness strategy including a protocol for conducting consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people developed and endorsed  Training package developed  Training delivered to all AEC staff, with mandatory inclusion on Individual Performance Plans
Implement and encourage Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/ Custodians and reciprocating a Welcome to Country at all key events and meetings	Internal Communications & Corporate; Web Team	September 2012	Web-based advice on protocols produced
		September 2012	Acknowledgment included in AEC meeting agenda and power point templates
	Line Managers	September 2012	All staff aware of protocols
	Electoral Commissioner (EC)	May 2012	EC will deliver acknowledgement at all significant external events
Review of Gateway training to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives (e.g. induction and stakeholder engagement) training content	PSB & IEPP	June 2013	Gateway review completed
Participation in NAIDOC week by AEC staff.  NAIDOC award included in Rewards and Recognitions program	Internal Communications / IEPP/PSB	June 2013	At least 51% of staff participate in and attend local activities/events
Seminar series topic - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment	PSB	June 2013	APSC Indigenous Liaison Officer and Representatives for the APSC Indigenous employment team or other appropriate speaker invited to speak during the series



# OPPORTUNITIES

## Employment and career progression opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians



**Focus Area:** Indigenous recruitment and retention; Professional and career development; Business opportunities

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Advertise employment opportunities available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including proactive identification and promotion of Indigenous cadetship and graduate opportunities within the AEC	Managers and Recruitment Team	July 2013	Opportunities identified in a range of branches and locations Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is closer to COAG target of 2.7% than previously Targeted recruitment and retention strategies implemented
			More frequent consideration of Special Measures provision and Identified Positions to create employment or promotion opportunities restricted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
Support and utilise business opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entities	PSB	June 2013	Develop a Supplier Diversity guide to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, venues, professionals and services are considered for all procurement activities*
Support the capability and career development of AEC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in achieving their career goals	Line Managers	June 2013	Indigenous staff and managers informed about Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) Career Trek workshops and leadership programs participation in other development opportunities supported and encouraged via targeted advertising and notices via on line Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network
Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media in particular the <i>Koori Mail</i> , the <i>National Indigenous Times</i> and the <i>Torres News</i> when advertising AEC business, news and opportunities	Communications & Recruitment Teams	December 2013	Inter and intranet pages identify opportunities available and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Recruitment Guidelines updated to reference use of Indigenous media in combination with mainstream media

\* refer page 11 – Growing Indigenous Business

## TRACKING PROGRESS AND REPORTING

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Human Resources Self Service to include diversity updating function	HRMIS Administrator	July 2012 From July 2013	Software upgrade implemented Completion of Diversity statistics increase by 5% each year
Regular quarterly reports to EMG and ACF	EMG & ACF	Quarterly from October 2012	Progress reports provided
	PSB	Quarterly from November 2012	Ongoing narrative regarding RAP actions reported in meeting minutes published on intranet
Annual progress reporting	PSB	October 2013	Annual progress on RAP actions published in AEC Annual Report and Reconciliation Australia website
Evaluate RAP and refresh as necessary	Assistant Commissioner PSB	June 2013	Refreshed RAP published

# Growing Indigenous Business

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation (NPA IEP) was established by the Commonwealth and the states and territories to contribute to the COAG target to halve the gap in Indigenous employment outcomes. The Agreement involves complementary investment and effort by the Commonwealth and the states and territories to improve opportunities for Indigenous people to engage in private and public sector jobs through four elements. One of these elements seeks to strengthen current government procurement policies to maximise Indigenous employment.

Some of the initiatives include the:

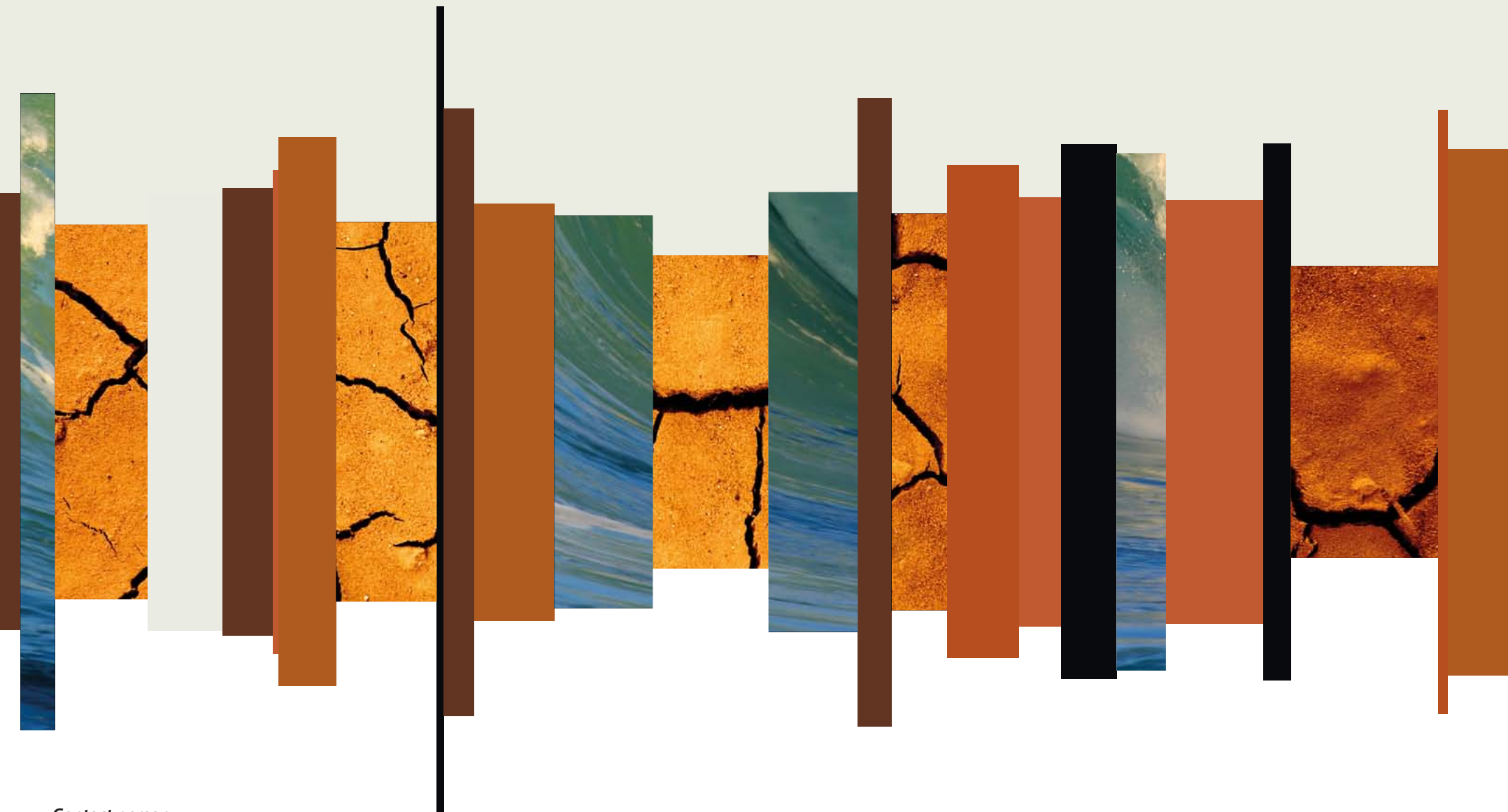
1. establishment of an Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council (AIMSC)
2. revision of the Indigenous Opportunities Policy (IOP)
3. exemption from the mandatory procurement procedures under the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines (as amended from time to time) for the procurement of goods and services from small and medium enterprises with at least 50 per cent indigenous ownership.

The above procurement exemption aims to:

- provide increased opportunities for greater access to the Australian Government procurement market for all Indigenous SMEs;
- raise awareness among officers undertaking procurement of the Government's commitment to the Closing the Gap strategy on Indigenous disadvantage; and
- complement implementation of the enhanced IOP administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

For full details please refer to the following link. <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/finance-circulars/2011/02.html>





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