



Australian Government



*Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs*

Reconciliation Action Plan July 2009 to July 2011

Improving the lives of Australians

Secretary's message

A Reconciliation Action Plan is more than a statement of intent. It is a tangible commitment to the goal of Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. It gives me great pleasure to demonstrate the commitment of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs through this, our third Reconciliation Action Plan.

As Secretary of the lead agency in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I am pleased to note that we have made significant progress in creating an organisational culture that responds to the needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples in their diverse circumstances. This positive change has been brought about by the capability of our staff, and I am proud to lead a department where 9.1 percent of employees are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The involvement of our Indigenous staff members has been integral to the success of the FaHCSIA Cultural Appreciation Program, which will be further strengthened as part of this Reconciliation Action Plan.

At FaHCSIA, resetting the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians begins with Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff working together, sharing their knowledge and expertise. Resetting the broader relationship with Indigenous peoples, groups and communities will be enhanced by our increasingly stronger internal capacity.

The 2009–2011 Reconciliation Action Plan draws on key principles of consultation, engagement and partnership to:

- promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' input into policy development, program implementation and service delivery by making the Indigenous Leadership Program (ILP) database available to FaHCSIA staff
- improve access for Indigenous people to our mainstream programs and payments through appropriate consultation processes, support and a suite of tools, and
- develop guidelines for culturally appropriate and accessible policy and program design and implementation.

Our core business centres on closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, one of the cornerstones of Reconciliation. Innovation, celebrating success, and strengthening our evidence base in order to achieve Closing the Gap targets are critical components of our Reconciliation Action Plan as we enter the sustainable development phase of many of our initiatives. Committing to timeframes and sharing responsibility for implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan across the Department aligns with our obligation and desire to achieve positive long term results.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan was developed by a working group comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. The working group has aspirational goals for this Reconciliation Action Plan. They want it to result in a culturally appreciative workforce, a department that values, acknowledges and respects diversity and actively uses life experience, skills and knowledge as a source of advice on policy and delivery. They intend that the elements of this Reconciliation Action Plan are incorporated into and become integral to individual business plans across the organisation – goals which I fully support.



Jeff Harmer
Secretary

Our vision for Reconciliation

The Department's vision is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, wherever they live, will have the same opportunities as other Australians to make informed choices about their lives, realise their full potential, and take responsibility for managing their own affairs.

Our business

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) is an important source of advice to the Australian Government on social policy. The Department is responsible for a diverse range of programs and services designed to support and improve the lives of Australians. In particular FaHCSIA is working with states, territories and communities on closing the gap in life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This work is underpinned by COAG's National Indigenous Reform Agreement. FaHCSIA provides leadership and policy coordination on Indigenous issues across government, and is working to ensure that Indigenous voices are increasingly heard within government and business.

Resetting the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through genuine consultation, engagement and partnership underpins all Government efforts to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Australian Government is also committed to a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and to providing more ways for Indigenous voices to be heard, through the national representative body, consultation on key policy decisions and through our support for Indigenous leadership. FaHCSIA will develop relationships with Indigenous Australians and communities that are inclusive and properly respectful, and which provide opportunities for Indigenous-led solutions.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

This RAP is FaHCSIA's third, and was developed by a working group comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff from across the Department. Feedback on ideas for actions in this RAP was sought from staff, and suggestions were either incorporated or referred for inclusion in other Departmental business plans.

Our RAP for 2009–11 has a number of prioritised actions that focus on how we operate as an organisation to achieve our vision of Reconciliation. It addresses how we plan to work together to continue building a culture of mutually respectful relationships, an understanding and respect for Indigenous culture, and create improved opportunities for our Indigenous employees.

The working group wanted this RAP to result in a culturally appreciative workforce, a department that values, acknowledges and respects diversity and actively uses life experience, skills and knowledge as a source of advice on policy and delivery. It is intended that the elements of this RAP are incorporated into and become integral to individual business plans across the organisation. The working group is committed to surveying staff as part of the overall RAP evaluation, and incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data into the annual review in line with the Department's commitment to sound evidence based decision-making. This information will be fed into a range of governance bodies including the Executive Management Group, the Research and Evaluation Committee and the People Committee.

The Department is firmly of the view that Reconciliation is a process between groups of people, rather than an end point.

Relationships

As a department, we aim to build mutually respectful relationships to ensure that our programs and policies address the real needs and aspirations of Indigenous Australians and to reflect the Government's commitment of closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

Focus area: innovative engagement, leadership and results

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
<p>1. Pilot an intensive, sustainable, site-specific engagement model between the Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Group and the Perth ICC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perth ICC staff support and empower selected Indigenous Leadership Program participants in delivering enduring outcomes from negotiated Closing the Gap projects in designated priority sites in Southern WA (e.g. Narrogin, Moora, Mount Barker, urban Perth). 	Perth ICC and Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Group	August 2009	Target communities identified.
		December 2009	Staff pilot program developed and delivered.
		May 2010	Evaluation of staff pilot program completed.
		June 2010	Implementation of pilot program for targeted communities delivered.
		December 2010	Pilot community program concluded. Evaluation of pilot community program complete.
<p>2. Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' input into policy development, program implementation and service delivery by making the Indigenous Leadership Program (ILP) database available to FaHCSIA staff.</p>	Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Group (Leadership Delivery Branch)	July 2009	Database complete and accessible.
		September 2009	Consent obtained from interested ILP participants.
		October 2009	Availability of database promoted to FaHCSIA staff through the intranet.
		June 2010	Use of database as measured by number of times ILP participants are contacted by FaHCSIA staff for input.
		June 2011	Analyse successes and challenges in database use from participants' and FaHCSIA perspectives.
<p>3. Each program and payment area will incorporate appropriate consultation processes into their Indigenous access strategies as part of the development of the Mainstream Framework.</p>	Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination	July 2009	Action plans in place for the introduction of consultation mechanisms.
		December 2009	Action plans implemented.
		June 2010	100% of program and payment areas have consultation mechanisms in place.
<p>4. Inform, promote good news and share learnings through a whole of government publication and radio program for Indigenous communities.</p>	Corporate Support Group (Communication and Media Branch)	June 2009 to June 2011	Five editions of the newspaper published in each year.
		June 2009 to June 2011	Weekly radio program operates over the two year period.
		June 2010 and June 2011	Publication and radio program to be reviewed annually.

Respect

All our staff understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, histories and relationships to ensure that our programs and policies address their real needs and aspirations.

Focus area: celebrating and expanding FaHCSIA's Cultural Appreciation Program success and promoting artistic recognition.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
5. Phase 2 of the Cultural Appreciation Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - include more comprehensive cultural appreciation programs - give priority to new and existing staff working in programs and payments relevant to Indigenous people, and - increase staff awareness of FaHCSIA's work (e.g. policies and programs) with Indigenous Communities. 	Corporate Support Group (People Branch)	December 2009	Development of phase 2 of the Cultural Appreciation Program finalised.
		June 2011	Implementation of phase 2 of the Cultural Appreciation Program.
		June 2011	70% of staff attend.
6. a) FaHCSIA will use best endeavours to ensure all Indigenous art displayed in FaHCSIA will include educative material about the artist and the community/location. b) Develop guidelines for displaying new Indigenous art, including educative material about the artist, the community or location and story. c) Indigenous artwork and educative material more readily accessible to FaHCSIA staff, and used as part of the FaHCSIA environment (e.g. in meeting/ conference rooms).	Corporate Support Group	June 2010	All Indigenous acquisitions/gifts displayed in FaHCSIA that are on the asset register will include educative material about the artist, the community/location and story.
		September 2009	Acquisitions/gifts policy guideline developed to include educative material about the artist, the community/location and story.
		June 2011	Indigenous artwork and educative material more readily accessible to staff.
7. Develop guidelines for culturally appropriate, accessible policy and program design and implementation (mainstream and Indigenous specific) in line with resetting the relationship principles of consultation, engagement and partnership.	Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Group	December 2009	Guidelines are developed, disseminated and promoted.
		June 2010	70% staff awareness of guidelines as measured by staff survey.
		Annual review completed by April 2010 Annual review completed by April 2011	Guidelines are reviewed annually, including assessment of how they are used/implemented.
8. Naming protocol – FaHCSIA buildings and significant meeting/ conference rooms to be attributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader/place names.	Corporate Support Group (Property, Environment and Protective Security Branch and Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Group)	December 2009	Policy and guidelines developed.
		July 2010	Policy and guidelines implemented.

Opportunities

As an employer and the lead agency in Indigenous Affairs, we value our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and encourage them to contribute to all areas of Departmental management and policy in order to meet the needs and aspirations of our Indigenous customers. We aim to continue our proactive recruitment and development of Indigenous staff by reducing barriers to employment, maximising support and providing opportunities for them to advance their careers in the Department and in the APS generally. In particular, FaHCSIA values innovative strategies to improve Indigenous peoples' access to mainstream programs and capitalise on success.

Focus area: evaluation, evidence, employment innovation and accessibility

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
9. Undertake an evaluation of actions completed in the RAP including exploring potential for qualitative and quantitative data sources such as information accessible through the current or future staff surveys.	Corporate Support Group (Ministerial, Parliamentary and Secretariat Support Branch and People Branch)	November 2009	Review of potential data sources completed.
		September 2009	Evaluation of 2008–09 actions submitted to RAP Steering Committee.
		September 2010	Evaluation of 2009–10 actions submitted to RAP Steering Committee.
10. Develop a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy that will focus on career development, leadership and recruitment, especially entry level and school based opportunities. <i>Evaluation processes are embedded in new workforce strategy. Evaluation of initiatives will include, but not be limited to, the use of workforce data from quarterly HR metrics reports and the annual APS State of the Service report.</i>	Corporate Support Group (People Branch)	August 2009	New strategy launched.
		June 2011	Strategy milestones are met and regularly reported.
		June 2011	Maintain our current lead position in the APS in the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the Department (currently at 9.1%).
11. Target entry level and school based opportunities in promoting the Department as an employer of choice to universities and high schools with a high population of Indigenous students. <i>Evaluation processes are embedded in the new workforce strategy.</i>	Corporate Support Group (People Branch)	December 2009	Develop and implement a communication strategy that complements the FaHCSIA Graduate Program.
		June 2009	Offer up to 10 positions in our 2010 Entry Level Program.
		June 2011	Offer up to 12 school based traineeships each year.
12. Improve access to our mainstream programs and payments by Indigenous people through development, endorsement and promotion of the Indigenous Mainstream Framework, supported by a suite of implementation, planning and reporting tools.	Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination	December 2009	Framework promoted widely.
		June 2011	Tools promoted and accessible.

Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
Quarterly monitoring and reporting of progress to EMG.	Corporate Support Group (Ministerial, Parliamentary and Secretariat Support Branch)	October 2009 January 2010 April 2010 October 2010 January 2011 April 2011	Progress reports provided to EMG.
Annual report to Reconciliation Australia.	Corporate Support Group (Ministerial, Parliamentary and Secretariat Support Branch)	July 2010 July 2011	Annual Progress Report published on Reconciliation Australia and FaHCSIA websites.
Reconciliation Action Plan refreshed and provided to Reconciliation Australia.	Corporate Support Group (Ministerial, Parliamentary and Secretariat Support Branch)	July 2010 July 2011	Updated Reconciliation Action Plan published on Reconciliation Australia and FaHCSIA websites.



The 2009–2011 FaHCSIA Reconciliation Action Plan working group

Pictured: Robyn Forester, Peter Bass, Jennifer Pitcher and Jim Ramsay. **Not pictured:** Anne Davies, Judith Davis-Lee, Bridget Dowling, John Gibbs, Sia Gilmore, John Glynn, David Henri, Benny Mills, Trish Mu, Abby Phillis, Lorraine Rogge.

