



The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2020 to June 2021



Telecommunications
Industry
Ombudsman

**The Telecommunications Industry
Ombudsman acknowledges the
traditional owners of country
throughout Australia and their
continuing connection to land,
culture, and community.**

**We pay our respects to elders
past, present, and future.**

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Artist acknowledgement

About the artist

Artist, Jasmine Sarin is a proud Kamilaroi and Jerrinja woman with a passion for Aboriginal culture and art. She is a self-taught visual artist and graphic designer who grew up predominantly on the south coast of New South Wales in Nowra and Woollongong. Her business, JS Koori Designs, strives to build and grow a sustainable Aboriginal owned and operated business by celebrating the world's oldest living culture. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman commissioned Jasmine to produce the artwork contained in this document.



"Artist, Jasmine Sarin" by Daniel Kukec



Artwork: Created by Jasmine Sarin

Title: Ngara (2020)

About the artwork

"The centre is you guys, it's everything TIO stands for. Think of the circles as rings in a tree, they carry knowledge and each one is different just as each person that works within TIO is different and brings something unique. Its also representative of the journey TIO has been through thus far.

The connecting lines to the centre link to everything around it. These other circles are the members and providers you work with. As you can see some are bigger than others and some are also faded into the background, this symbolises the changing landscape of providers. The different style of lines represent the different ways dispute resolution takes place and the range of services and recommendations offered to help customers and clients." – Jasmine Sarin

Message from the Ombudsman

The Telecommunication Industry Ombudsman proudly stands with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from all nations across this land and supports the national reconciliation movement. With this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) we affirm our commitment to a just, equitable, and reconciled Australia.

We acknowledge reconciliation starts with everyone.

In a reconciled Australia we can purposefully address racism and inequality, understand and deal with intergenerational trauma, and create a culture of respect and inclusion.

At the Telecommunication Industry Ombudsman, we are committed to courageous conversations, meaningful action, and beneficial partnerships with First Nations people. We want to build stronger relationships and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. And we want to play our part in addressing telecommunication issues faced by First Nations people.

While the complaints we deal with stem from technology, the problems we help solve are human ones, of connecting with each other. At the heart of the problems we deal with there is generally a communication breakdown – people on either side don't fully understand each other's issue or perspective and so are unable to find a way forward. We re-establish communication and help people work things out by providing fair, independent, and accessible dispute resolution services.

Our Reflect RAP is a testimony to our unwavering commitment to know our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and other stakeholders better so we can better deliver our service and work together.

From my country of origin, Aotearoa New Zealand, I share the whakataukī (Māori proverb): 'He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata': At the end of the day, what is the thing that matters most in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

We are on this reconciliation journey as people together and invite you all to walk alongside us.

Judi Jones
Ombudsman



Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman 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 over 2.3 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 Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman 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 Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, 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



Our approach to reconciliation

This Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) represents a deep commitment of our organisation, and all our people, to embrace, respect, and promote inclusion and the cultures, rights, and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

With this RAP, we will focus on building the skills, knowledge, and awareness of our people and colleagues. We want to ensure they understand the long history and contemporary settings and environments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will do this through formal and informal interactions and learning. This will include ongoing cultural awareness and cultural competency training, creating experiences, and making partnerships and connections.

We have a deep commitment to, and respect for, the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – in particular, their inalienable right to effective telecommunications, and their right to resolution of issues and disputes.

Our vision for reconciliation is one where:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples exercise their rights, and
- our organisation has strong, positive, and mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Having mutually respectful relationships is a key factor in meeting our organisational objectives while aligning to our values. These relationships must permeate our workplaces, governance and management, employment decisions, communications, and the plans we make. We made this our goal at the start of our reconciliation journey, and it continues to guide our actions towards reconciliation today.



Our business

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman provides a free, fair, independent, and accessible dispute resolution service for residential consumers and small businesses who have an unresolved complaint about their phone or internet service.

We deal with individual and systemic complaints, resolving them fairly and effectively, and we give information and analysis to community, government, and service providers.

Our value statement is **'Together we DREAM'**.
That is, together, we:



Dare to be great

Work well together to go above and beyond
Seek out challenges and take considered risks
Learn from each other and from our failures
Do what we say we will



Respect and inspire

Value our people, consumers, and members
Invest in and empower our people to succeed
Challenge with kindness and dignity for all involved
Be accountable for our words and actions



Evolve and grow

Value each other's experiences, skills, and knowledge
Be impartial, fair, and act with integrity
Collaborate and succeed together
Adapt together when things change



Appreciate and celebrate

Value each other's ideas and opinions
Value our diversity and include all
Have fun and celebrate our achievements
Say thank you



Make it easy

Keep each other informed while being curious
Reduce waste and simplify our processes
Make transparent and clear decisions
Actively collaborate with each other

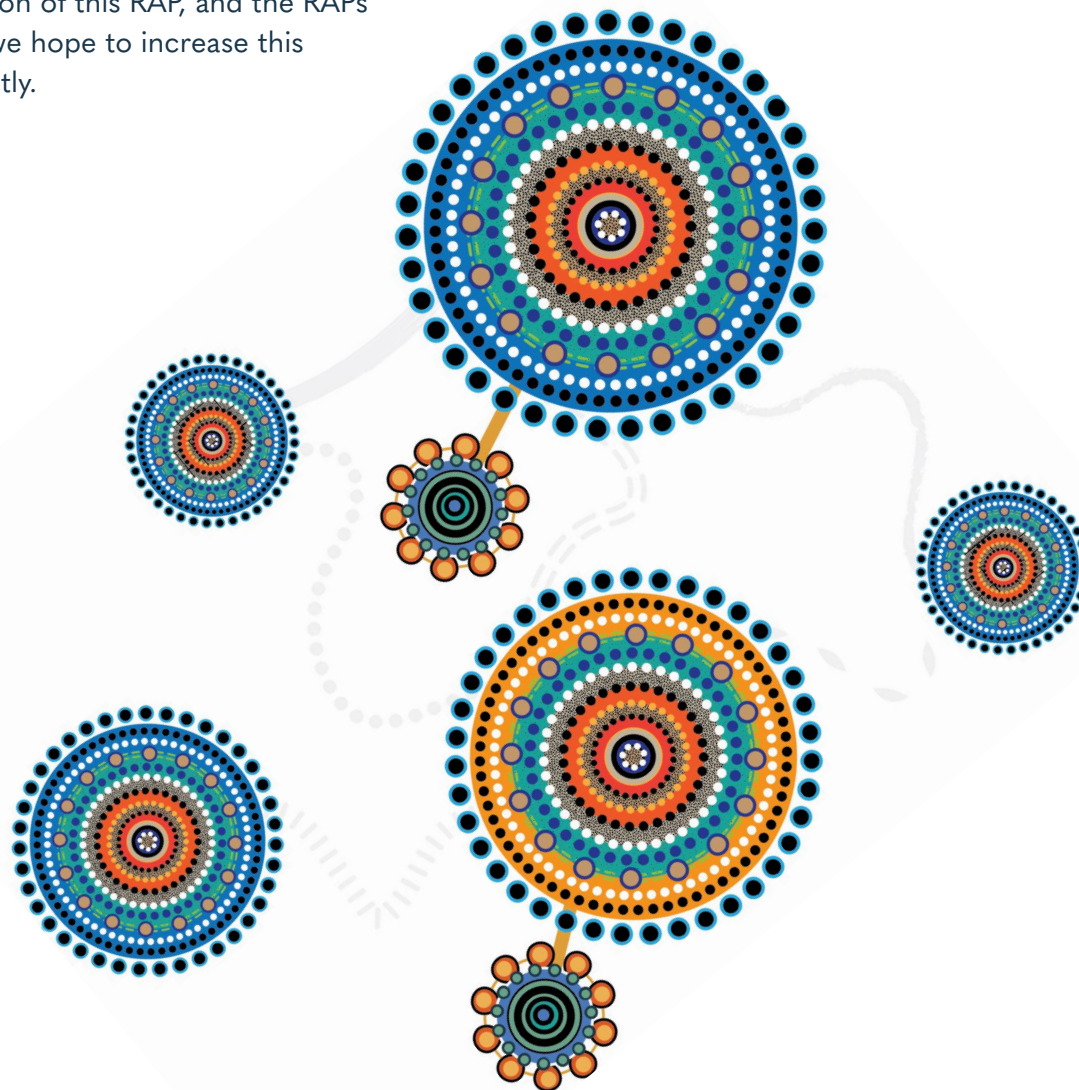
Five goals, aligned to our values, lead our strategy for 2020-23:

1. Work with our members to reduce complaints and improve practices
2. Leverage the power of our people to strengthen our capability and performance
3. Create a great consumer and member experience
4. Expand the services offered with innovative solutions and technology
5. Use our data and insights to influence policy and shape the public debate

We are based in the Kulin Nation, which is now called Melbourne.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Ltd was established in 1993, and is a company limited by guarantee. The Telecommunications (Consumer Protection And Service Standards) Act 1999 requires telecommunications providers to be members of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman scheme and to comply with our decisions.

At 1 January 2020, we had 250 employees. One employee identified an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. Through the development and implementation of this RAP, and the RAPs that come after, we hope to increase this number significantly.



Our reconciliation journey

The beginning

In 2012, our reconciliation journey started with research to understand, appreciate, and more effectively respond to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential consumer and small business needs.

Since then, our journey and work has progressed significantly. We have strengthened our context and harmonised with our people's increased awareness of issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



2012

In 2012, we were invited to attend the inaugural conference of the money workers of the Northern Territory. One of the issues discussed at the conference was mobile phone problems in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelands and communities. Many of the attendees at the conference had Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples clients, so they were keen to know about our services and how we could help.

We also spoke with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Department of Families, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs about telecommunications issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers in the Northern Territory and how to raise awareness of us in remote communities.

2013-14

Through 2013-14, we sent surveys to people from organisations in 29 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They included financial counsellors and health and government workers. Almost 60 percent of the 130 people surveyed had heard of us, but told us community residents did not know about our service.

We also undertook significant community consultation by visiting remote communities in Hope Vale, far north Queensland, and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands in South Australia.

We found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers most frequently had problems with poor coverage or service; poor understanding of contracts, their rights, and how much services cost; and large bills they couldn't pay.

Our findings helped us develop the Telco Rights Toolkit: a collection of resources for community workers in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



2015

In May 2015, Ombudsman Simon Cohen launched the Toolkit at Financial Counselling Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' forum. The forum was part of the national Financial Counselling Australia Conference in Canberra. More than 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander financial counsellors from around Australia attended the forum.

The Toolkit has a flipchart, posters, and a brochure showing how workers and community residents can contact us if they can't resolve a problem with their phone or internet provider. The flipchart takes people through two cases – one about a woman with a large landline bill, the other about a man with a mobile phone that didn't work – which were resolved with our help. The posters are in English as well as Arrernte, Pitjantjatjara, Yolngu Matha, Warlpiri, and Kriol. The brochure uses simple language to explain our service. Melbourne-based Indigenous graphic designer Marcus Lee created all the artwork for the Toolkit. Sydney-based Indigenous communications consultancy Cox Inall Ridgeway helped us develop the resources.

In August 2015, we spent a week in the Northern Territory showing the Toolkit to legal and community

service agencies and financial workers. The visit also let us show the Toolkit to money workers at the Northern Territory Conference, who welcomed it.

2017

In August 2017, we started a campaign to raise awareness of our service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential consumers and small businesses in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. A component of this campaign was to develop relationships with Aboriginal intermediary organisations such as community legal workers, money workers and financial counsellors, and members of Parliament.

Also in 2017, we committed to plan, develop, and deliver policies and activities to demonstrate respect for, and recognition of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We agreed we would develop and strengthen awareness and accessibility within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We want Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to understand our work and how we can help with issues about their phone and internet services.

We established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group: people from across the organisation who could give insight and

suggest improvements to offer a better complaint service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

The Leadership Group:

- bought Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, to hang in the office and show our people we are committed to reconciliation
- designed an internal online space to highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander news and events, and give our people resources to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with their complaints
- committed to developing a RAP.

A RAP would give us the framework we needed to plan, develop, and deliver our reconciliation policies and activities.

Following the steps set out in the RAP would support our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and increase our organisation's understanding and awareness of their beliefs, strengths, traditions, connections, opportunities, and challenges.





2018

In 2018, the Leadership Group was keen to focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander festivals of remembrance and celebration, and the associated meanings and traditions of these events. National Reconciliation Week activities included an 'intranet takeover' where each day we highlighted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heroes, posted personal blogs from group members, and shared news with cultural significance. Aboriginal owned-and-operated catering company Beautiful Delicious catered a morning tea of Indigenous baked goods and spreads. We screened TED Talks featuring Aboriginal women talking about the issues important to them. The week successfully strengthened awareness across our organisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

During NAIDOC Week, the Leadership Group invited two speakers to talk to our people. Victoria's first Indigenous Magistrate, Rose Falla, talked about her experiences being an Aboriginal woman and a champion of issues. The Western Australia Ombudsman's Principal Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Alison Gibson, spoke of the professional and personal challenges associated with being an Aboriginal woman, and how we can improve our services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



We had met Alison through our membership of the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association's (ANZOA) Indigenous Engagement Interest Group. ANZOA Interest Groups are made up of representatives from ANZOA member offices, and provide a forum to share information and learning on matters of common interest.

We attended, and presented to, the biennial meeting of the Indigenous Engagement Interest Group in Wellington, New Zealand. Meeting face-to-face with representatives of the group was an invaluable networking and connecting opportunity, resulting in Alison's visit to us for both the NAIDOC Week activities, and a presentation to our Executive Team and Operations Team Leaders.

Yabun Festival

From 2014-2016, and again in 2019-2020, we took part in the Yabun Festival in Sydney. Yabun provides a positive social space for audiences to celebrate, share, and immerse themselves in the world's oldest surviving culture. We ran a stall to promote our services. We spoke directly with Indigenous people and the agencies that represent them. The Festival reminded us that we still have a long way to go to make ourselves an accessible, culturally safe, and respectful service.



Relationships

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Create and maintain an active RAP working group to coordinate and monitor the development and implementation of our RAP	Group to meet once a month.	Last Wednesday every month-ongoing	Senior Advisor - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
	Develop a RAP Working Group Terms of Reference.	November 2020	Senior Advisor - EDI
	Oversee the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP.	November 2020	Ombudsman
	Seek Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP Working Group via Expression of Interest out to community.	January 2021	Senior Advisor - EDI
2. Build internal and external relationships	Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.	December 2020	Stakeholder and Media Manager
	Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.	November 2020	Stakeholder and Media Manager
3. Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Encourage and support staff to attend an external NRW event.	May-June 2021	Stakeholder and Media Manager

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff via the Intranet.	May-June 2021	Senior Advisor – EDI and Internal Engagement and Communications Officer
	Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May-June 2021	RAP-WG Chair
4. Raise internal awareness of our RAP	Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness amongst all staff across the organisation about our RAP commitments.	January 2021	Senior Advisor – EDI and Learning and Development Manager
	Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP.	December 2020	Senior Advisor – EDI
5. Raise external awareness of our RAP	Ensure ongoing stakeholder engagement channels, publications, and media such as M News (member news), tio.com.au and the Annual Report make reference to RAP commitments.	January 2021	Stakeholder and Media Manager



Respect

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development	Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.	December 2020	Learning and Development Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation.	December 2020	Learning and Development Manager
	Commit all staff within the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman to receive introductory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander awareness training at induction.	December 2020	Learning and Development Manager
7. Actively participate in NAIDOC Week	Deliver one major internal event for all staff to participate in.	November 2020	Communications and Engagement Manager
	Promote external events to staff and support their attendance.	November 2020	Communications and Engagement Manager
	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.	November 2020	Communications and Engagement Manager
	Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event.	November 2020	RAP-WG Chair

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	Develop a relationship with Reconciliation Victoria for cultural advice and guidance on matters specific to our local area.	December 2020	Chief Strategy and Engagement Officer
	Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our local area.	March 2021	Stakeholder Engagement Officer
	Scope and develop a list of local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisation's sphere of influence.	June 2021	Stakeholder Engagement Officer
	Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols (including any local cultural protocols).	November 2020	Learning and Development Manager
	Invite Elders and guest speakers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to present to Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman staff.	November 2020	Communications and Engagement Manager
9. Explore ways to make Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman a culturally competent and safe service provider	Assess enquiries to Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, dispute resolution processes, and investigations of complaints in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.	March 2021	Assistant Ombudsman, Improvement, Policy and Reporting

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Review best practice by dispute resolution organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	March 2021	Assistant Ombudsman, Improvement, Policy and Reporting
	Conduct a review of disputes lodged by or for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants in the last 24 months to develop our understanding of the effectiveness of our current process.	May 2021	Assistant Ombudsman, Improvement, Policy and Reporting
	Assess Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's current service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	May 2021	Assistant Ombudsman, Improvement, Policy and Reporting



Opportunities

Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment	Develop a proposal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	November 2020	General Manager People and Culture
	Identify current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities.	November 2020	Talent, Acquisition and Reporting Specialist
	Include the statement "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply" in all Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman recruitment advertising.	November 2020	Talent, Acquisition and Reporting Specialist
	Engage with existing and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development.	January 2021	General Manager People and Culture
	Build relationships with organisations who can assist with the identification, recruitment, and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates and staff.	November 2020	General Manager People and Culture
11. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity	Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	March 2021	Chief Financial Officer
	Develop a proposal for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	March 2021	Chief Financial Officer

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Investigate advertising channels to create awareness of Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Engage with media agencies to discuss production and online broadcasting of awareness raising activities for Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman services.	December 2020	Digital Communications and Multimedia Manager
	Identify and make contact with partner organisations such as NGOs, government, Ombudsman agencies and marketing agencies who can distribute the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman 'Telco Rights Toolkits'.	January 2021	Stakeholder and Media Manager



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Build support for the RAP	Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation.	November 2020	Senior Advisor EDI
	Define systems and capability needs to track, measure, and report on RAP activities.	November 2020	Senior Advisor EDI
14. Track ongoing progress of RAP against deliverables	Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2021	Senior Advisor EDI
15. Review and Refresh RAP	Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges, and achievements.	June 2021	Senior Advisor EDI
	Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review.	September 2021	Senior Advisor EDI
	Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement.	October 2021	Senior Advisor EDI

Contact details

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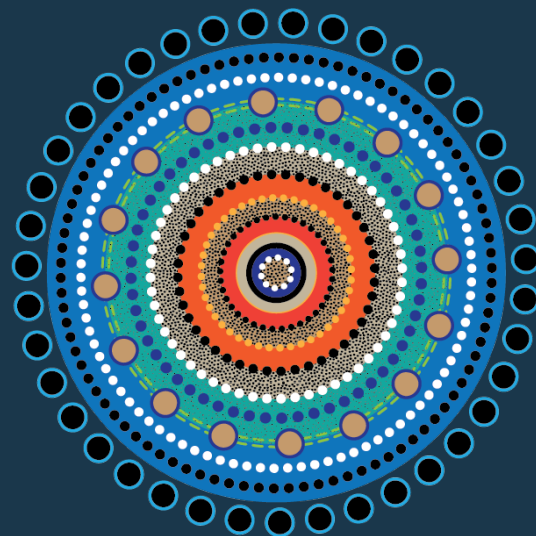
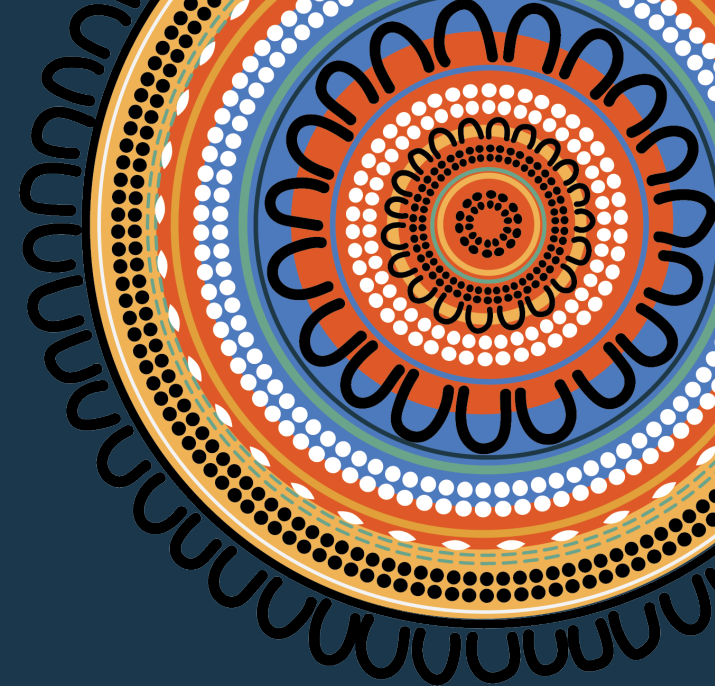
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