



Innovate III Reconciliation Action Plan

March 2022–March 2024







Acknowledgement of Country

Melbourne Water respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we rely and operate. We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise and respect the continued cultural and spiritual connections that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and water they have cared for and protected for thousands of generations.

We demonstrate our ongoing commitment to reconciliation through our partnerships with Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as we work together to manage land and water now and into the future, while maintaining and respecting cultural and spiritual connections.



Naarm Baluk (Melbourne River)



Naarm Warri (Melbourne Sea)

About the artworks



Naarm Baluk (Melbourne River) is the beautiful bushland that Melbourne Water lives on. The river running through the centre represents our bloodline/heritage.



Naarm Warri (Melbourne Sea) shows the land and water connected via our bloodline/heritage represented through the red dotted line across the centre.

This is our continued cultural, social and spiritual connection to all lands and waters, and our inherent responsibility to care for and protect them over thousands of generations.



Melbourne Water recognises the five Traditional Lands of the Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, Bunurong, Gunaikurnai and Taungurung peoples. They are represented with the Red circles/campfires with Aboriginal people sitting around (Naarm Baluk) and Yellow Ochre circles/campfires (Naarm Warri). The sixth one being my own personal connection to Victoria. I am of Kurnai and Wotjobaluk heritage, born and living on Wadawurrung Country.



Combining the five major catchments and the three major coastal waters are the eight circles/campfires. Bass Strait, with two more representing Port Phillip and Western Port Bays. The other five represent the Maribyrnong, Werribee, Yarra, Dandenong and Western Port catchments.



The three key plans within Melbourne Water's vision are represented through three waterholes across the bottom (Naarm Baluk) and three campfires connected by the flowing water lines (Naarm Warri). The first is employment and wellbeing, the 2nd is Cultural education and training and the 3rd is the procurement plan.



Sitting together are Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people at every circle/campfire representing the coming together, respect through Reconciliation and the shared responsibility of caring for our land and waterways. Within the Naarm Warri there is 131 representing Melbourne Waters 131 years of caring for the waterways. Another 10 represents the 10's of thousands of years my Ancestors have continued to care for the same waterways. Totalling 141 people sitting at the circles/campfires.



About the artist

Norm Stanley

Norm is a proud Aboriginal man with heritage connected to the Kurnai and Wotjabaluk people of Victoria. He is a musician, artist and storyteller born on Wadawurrung Country and a proud father of five children who were also born and live on Wadawurrung Country. Sharing the love of his Culture is Norm's life passion. He follows in the footsteps of his ancestors by honouring and sharing the stories of land, life and culture through the many different art forms that he practices. Norm has over 25 years' experience in education, music and art.

"Our stories are the oldest stories in the world. Our ancestors passed these stories down to us over thousands of years and across hundreds of generations. Now we have a role to play, we have become the holders of these stories. We are now The Keepers of the flame".



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Traditional Owner Partners

A map of the Traditional Owner Country that we live and work on and Melbourne Water's Service area





Melbourne Water's Connection to Country

Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung represent the majority of the land within Melbourne Water's operating area. Taungurung and Gunaikurnai represent smaller parcels of land bordering Melbourne Water's service area. The Thomson Reservoir, on Gunaikurnai Country, is filled by rainfall received by the surrounding catchment. It transfers water to the Upper Yarra Reservoir, which in turn supplies Silvan Reservoir, with water then distributed across greater Melbourne. Wallaby Creek, on Taungurung Country, is an essential component of Melbourne's water supply system, providing high quality water to greater Melbourne via the Yan Yean Reservoir.

The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) represents Bunurong people's rights and interests and manages the statutory responsibilities of the Corporation. After 185 years, Bunurong people are once again recognised as the rightful Custodians of much of what is now known as greater Melbourne. We pay our respects to and thank our Ancestors and Elders for their words and stories of country as passed down through the families.

Around 10,000 years ago, before the Bay flooded with water, the Birrarung extended all the way out to the heads and out via a large waterfall which covered the entire area in mist. This is how the river earns its early name 'the river of mist'. This part of the river, up to the point the river became fresh water, was Bunurong Country.

Bunurong people were amongst the first Indigenous people in Victoria that were involved in cross-cultural entanglements with Europeans, and though reduced to just a handful of individuals by the mid-1800s, we are still here, and we continue to maintain our cultural obligations to care for the people, the flora and fauna, the lands and the waters within the Bunurong cultural landscape, which is alive with thousands of generations of our stories.



The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) is the Registered Aboriginal Party that represents the Gunaikurnai people, the Traditional Owners of Gunaikurnai Country, as determined by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council under the Aboriginal Heritage Act, 2006. In 2010 the Gunaikurnai people were formally recognised as holding Native Title over areas of Crown land in the Gippsland region. The Gunaikurnai Native Title Settlement Agreement was the first agreement to be reached under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act (2010).

Gunaikurnai land extends from west Gippsland near Warragul, east to the Snowy River, and north to the Great Dividing Range, and including 200 metres of offshore sea territory.

The role of GLaWAC is to further the aspirations of the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners and Native Title Holders through the implementation of the Gunaikurnai native title settlement agreements and the provision of high-quality policy advice. We work under the guidance of the Board of Directors and Elders Council to represent all Gunaikurnai people in native title, cultural heritage, land, water and natural resource management and related employment aspirations and issues.



The Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC)

is the representative of the Taungurung people, the first Nation and Traditional Owners of the Waring (upper Goulburn River) and its tributaries and lands north of the Dividing Range. The Taungurung people have been the Custodians of Country for countless generations, undertaking our cultural obligations to care for Country and ensuring the health of Country as if she is one of our own kin. TLaWC delivers projects for the economic, social and cultural well-being of Taungurung people and for the healing and care of Taungurung Country. TLaWC is responsible for supporting the activation of Taungurung Rights with regards to the following:

- TLaWC is the Registered Aboriginal Party under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic).
- TLaWC is the Traditional Owner Group Entity (TOGE) that represents the Taungurung nation in respect to the Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) entered in to with the State of Victoria under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010.

The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (Wadawurrung)

is the representative body for Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. Wadawurrung supports the fulfilment of Wadawurrung Traditional Owner aspirations and protects their Cultural Heritage in accordance with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (the Act). Wadawurrung was appointed in May 2009 as a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) under the Act. The Wadawurrung RAP area covers over 10,000 square kilometres on the western side of Melbourne and including the major regional cities of Geelong and Ballarat. Wadawurrung Country also includes the start of the Great Ocean Road.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners live by Wadawurrung lore in Caring for Country and all things living as their Ancestors have always done. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners are determined to ensure their cultural authority for looking after our Country is recognised, respected and restored. Wadawurrung want to see cultural knowledge as the basis for the management of land and waters towards the healing of Country and People.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Wurundjeri)

are the representative body of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people. Wurundjeri country includes urban and rural lands and waterways from the inner city of Melbourne extending north of the Great Dividing Range, east to Mount Baw Baw, south to the Dandenong Ranges and west to the Werribee River.

We are the direct descendants of the Wurundjeri men and women who lived on this Country for many thousands of years. In Woi-wurrung, the traditional language of Wurundjeri people, Narrap means Country, and it is our focus to care for our Country. Country is central to our sense of belonging, and embedded in Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung beliefs is the understanding that the natural world is a cultural world.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung interests and aspirations are enshrined in our cultural rights and responsibilities that have been passed down over millennia by our ancestors.

We have strong spiritual ties to the Country of our ancestors, and our oral knowledge shared over thousands of generations guides our practice on Country to this day.

One of the key targets of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation is to provide a holistic approach to managing our traditional Country.





Message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends Melbourne Water on the formal endorsement of its third Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With over 2.3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Melbourne Water continues to be part of a strong network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that Melbourne Water will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Melbourne Water using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for Melbourne Water to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, Melbourne Water will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Melbourne Water's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Melbourne Water on your third Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



Message of commitment from our Managing Director

At Melbourne Water, we understand that water is essential to the health and wellbeing of our communities, our environment and our economy. We recognise that we live and work on the land and waterways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for over thousands of years, and we recognise the strength of connection that Traditional Owners have to Country.

On behalf of Melbourne Water, I am pleased to present our third Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Developed in collaboration with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, this RAP will guide our continuing journey towards reconciliation. The RAP is one of the tools we use to hold ourselves accountable, reflect on our journey to date and contribute to building stronger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This RAP will guide Melbourne Water in engaging our people, customers and community in the cultures and histories of the Traditional Owners of the lands

and waters on which Melbourne Water operates. Further, it will assist us in deepening our collective knowledge and understanding of the cultures and connection to Country of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We believe that genuine reconciliation will come from truth telling of our shared histories and through our commitment to long lasting partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We want to make real change by learning from the past, listening to our partners and embedding key actions to continue to build cultural capability across the organisation.

Cultural capability continues to be at the forefront of reconciliation at Melbourne Water. Over our last two RAPs we have focussed on building cultural capability through the development of business partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, delivery of cultural awareness training, improving visibility of cultures across all sites and increasing knowledge and communication around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and days of significance.

In this RAP, we want to continue this important work and grow our cultural capability by further developing our people's cultural knowledge and awareness and by creating a culturally safe and competent workplace that integrates reconciliation into our core business delivery.

Through the activities outlined in this RAP, and through our formal partnerships with the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work, we will further grow our understanding of Traditional Owners' cultures and connections to Country to inform and support land and waterway planning and management.



Nerina Di Lorenzo
Managing Director
Melbourne Water



Our vision and guiding principles

Our vision for reconciliation is for Traditional Owners to be respected as sovereign partners in land and water management.

We will achieve this vision:

- 1 By working in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to care for land and waterways.
- 2 By building cultural capability throughout our organisation.
- 3 Through listening and learning so we can deepen our knowledge and understanding of our partners' priorities and contribute to supporting stronger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

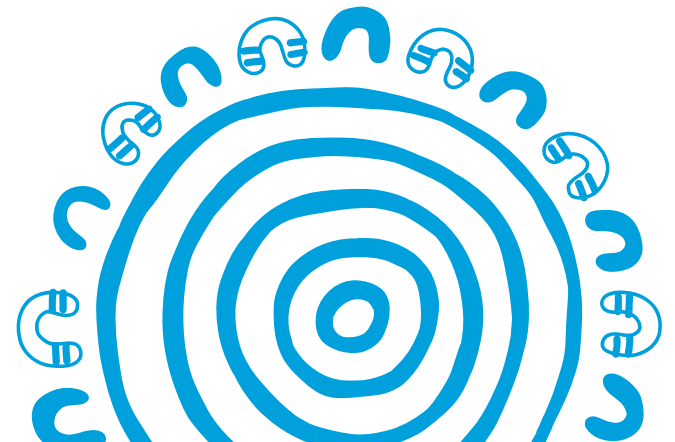
By working together in partnership and collaboration, we can enhance life and liveability for the benefit of all Australians.

Guiding Principles for Reconciliation:

Through the implementation of our RAPs and other reconciliation initiatives we have learnt a lot from our Traditional Owner partners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about what true reconciliation means and how we want to work together in the future.

It is through these lessons learnt we have developed our guiding principles for reconciliation.

- continue to build strong partnership with Traditional Owners, collaborating, listening and be consistent and honest in our approach
 - reconciliation is to be embraced and driven by leaders at all levels of the organisation
 - reconciliation can only be achieved through a whole-of-organisation approach
 - We will not always get it right. We will learn from our mistakes and work together to do better next time
- Melbourne Water's RAP is integral to building and maintaining reconciliation, along with formal agreements with Traditional Owner partners. These agreements aim to build relationships, collaborate, and achieve mutual outcomes
 - understanding that cultural capability is an ongoing journey and that the process of learning builds over time
 - cultural awareness and education for Melbourne Water employees is key to supporting and achieving reconciliation.



Our business

At Melbourne Water, we are driven by a powerful strategic vision that informs everything we do: Enhancing Life and Liveability.

Guided by our corporate values of care, integrity, and courage, we work on behalf of the community to manage and protect our city's major water resources, which in turn underpins life and liveability in the greater Melbourne region.

On any given day we:

- manage water supply catchments
- treat and supply affordable and high-quality drinking water and recycled water
- remove and treat most of Melbourne's sewage
- manage over 25,000km of waterways and major drainage systems in the Port Phillip and Westernport region
- provide integrated drainage and flood management services
- manage parks, gardens, and open spaces for people to gather, exercise, relax and connect with nature and each other
- create and manage outstanding natural community spaces.

Complementing our suite of responsibilities, the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA) officially integrated into Melbourne Water on 1 January 2022. The integration has created a single entity with a shared vision for catchment and waterways management for the Port Phillip and Western Port region. Together, we will support Traditional Owners and communities in the Port Phillip and Western Port region to enhance the health and resilience of its land, water and biodiversity through collaboration, community education and awareness and project delivery.

Listening, learning and evolving

Over the years, our services have adapted and changed to meet the needs and expectations of a growing population.

A quest for multiple benefits has characterised this long history of innovation as we've embraced emerging technologies to ensure efficient delivery of services and sought new opportunities to enhance liveability for all people living in our region.

A partnership approach

We do not do this alone. Our partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are integral to the provision of essential services to our community and caring for our environment. Our partnerships assist us in learning from the binding connection with Country that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to demonstrate through their sustainable management of land and water over thousands of generations.

In addition to working with Traditional Owners, we co-create, co-manage, engage, and collaborate with a wide range of partners including Melbourne's retail water companies, government agencies, local councils, developers, contractors, and community groups.



Our people

As an organisation, we pride ourselves on our supportive and inclusive culture. Our dedicated 1,150 employees engage in meaningful, impactful work across a wide range of fields from engineering to hydrology to education and engagement, and everything in between.

As of November 2021, ten of our employees (0.9% of our workforce) identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. We have an ambitious target to grow this representation to 3% by 2023 through our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and wellbeing retention plan, specifically:

- employment opportunities and mentoring support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all our sites
- establishment of an Aboriginal Staff Support Network.
- Encouraging employment of Aboriginal peoples in broader roles in the organisation
- engaging with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development.

Melbourne Water believes it is the responsibility of all staff to embrace, understand and appropriately recognise the cultures and histories of our Traditional Owner partners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We need to work together to build and enable culturally safe places and continually learn and improve how we do this through our processes and practices.

Many of our people have strong day to day relationships with our Traditional Owner partners through their on-ground work. However, to lead, advise and empower us to build culturally safe places, we have formed dedicated teams and advisory groups with specialised skills and knowledge. The principal teams and advisory groups are:

Our Aboriginal Engagement Team

Our Traditional Owner Relationship Manager, Principal Advisor Aboriginal Engagement and Aboriginal Engagement Support Officer make up our Aboriginal Engagement Team. Together, they develop and implement strategic programs and initiatives to enhance Melbourne Water's engagement with Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in our region.

Our Reconciliation Working Group

Our Reconciliation Working Group was established in 2012 to drive and monitor the implementation of current and future Melbourne Water Reconciliation Action Plans and oversee direction of reconciliation related activities across the business. The Reconciliation Working Group comprises

four General Manager sponsors and eight champions from across the organisation including our Diversity and Inclusion Manager and two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees. The group meets bimonthly to discuss opportunities and ensure that initiatives achieve the change required to strengthen the respect and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices throughout the organisation. Progress on our Reconciliation Action Plan is reported through our Board People, Safety & Remuneration Committee.

Reconciliation Working Group Members:

- Gavan O'Neill, General Manager Customer & Strategy
- Anthony O'Shannessy, Chief Financial Officer
- Kirsten Shelly, General Manager Waterways & Catchment Operations
- Paula Jeffs, General Manager People & Capability
- Rhys Collins, Relationship Manager Traditional Owners
- Dean Heta, Principal Advisor Aboriginal Engagement
- Alisa Fisher, Aboriginal Engagement Support
- Jill Sears, Manager Diversity & Inclusion
- Liz Nairn, Team Leader Business Communications & Engagement
- Susan Matthews, Talent Acquisition Manager
- Marlon Rodrigo, Procurement Services Manager
- Jo Farrugia, Manager Organisation Capability & Employee Experience



Our Cultural Advisory

Our newly formed Cultural Advisory community of practice formed in February 2020. This group, comprising staff representatives from all parts and levels of our organisation, supports the Reconciliation Working Group to provide informed feedback and advice on cultural engagement initiatives happening across the business. Members of this group have strong working relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners and are passionate about advocating for our partners and sharing opportunities for involvement with the rest of the business.

Our Cultural Advisory:

- is designed to strengthen and build a culturally capable environment
- provides a sounding board during the development phase of our RAP
- allows for open communication to support and inform our staff working on cultural matters
- provides regular updates to the Reconciliation Working Group about the work happening across our business.





Who we work with

Through establishing relationships, working together, demonstrating genuine respect and creating opportunities, we achieve mutual outcomes with our Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities. We work with Traditional Owner Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) partners and a number of community and non-RAP Traditional Owner partners on projects and programs with shared outcomes.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses

Melbourne Water recognises the importance of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business to build capacity and empower long term sustainability.

Working with Traditional Owner partners

At Melbourne Water, we understand the central role water plays in our communities, environment and economy. We also understand that we live and work on the land and waterways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived on and used for thousands of years, and that sovereignty was never ceded. We recognise the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country.

There are five Registered Aboriginal Parties covering the Melbourne Water service area:

- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Melbourne Water considers Traditional Owner organisations, not as customers or stakeholders, but as sovereign partners in land and water management.

We aim to build on our existing strong relationships with Traditional Owners by establishing co-designed partnership agreements detailing how we will work together to achieve mutual outcomes. We also work across the water sector more broadly to align and streamline priorities. Through these partnerships and conversations, we take an active approach to how we support, fund and walk together on Country.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation of the Wurundjeri are the Custodians and managers of the historical property Coranderrk. Situated on Wurundjeri Country near the confluence of Birrarung and Coranderrk Creek, Coranderrk is significant to Wurundjeri and other Kulin people.

“We want Coranderrk to be a safe place for people to connect - connecting to each other, connecting to the land and reconnecting Aboriginal Australians. What we do at Coranderrk today is reconciliation in practice.”

Melbourne Water works with Wandoon Estate to protect and enhance riverbanks through our Stream Frontage Management Program. Works such as weed control, fencing and planting native vegetation along the Coranderrk (Badger) Creek and Birrarung (Yarra) River help preserve country and cultural practice. These partnerships allow for two-way sharing of traditional and modern ecological knowledge, which is fundamental to adaptive management and learning.





Kinaway Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

We are a Platinum Member of Kinaway, the Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, which is dedicated to supporting Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business owners.

Kinaway works closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, providing support and advice to help improve their visibility and networks. In partnership with Kinaway, Melbourne Water offers mentoring support to members and presents at knowledge sharing forums such as the Kinaway event during Indigenous Business Month.

In July 2019, Kinaway hosted a workshop to share experiences and explore opportunities to drive and embed supplier diversity within the Melbourne Water supply chain. The session was attended by members of our Procurement, Service Delivery, Major Program Delivery, Safety and Diversity and Inclusion teams. Our key delivery partners, as well as other Victorian water retailers, also attended. The workshop was an example of collaboration in action.

Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP)

MMIGP is a community organisation committed to retaining, promoting, and strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity. MMIGP provide programs and activities including Women's Yarning Circles, Men's Groups, Elder networks, and Youth Groups that empower, educate and support community.

"MMIGP, as a gathering place, plays a very important role as being the first point of contact for people trying to connect with identity – it is critical for community connection, networking, for providing a culturally safe place and for supporting self-determination."

As part of National Reconciliation Week, Melbourne Water procured artwork by Traditional Owners for three key regional offices on the lands of the Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri and Bunurong. The themed work includes Land, Fire and Sea. Yakeen Safety Wear (an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business) designed a t-shirt featuring this work for Melbourne Water and MMIGP was engaged to manage the order processing. All proceeds from the sale of the t-shirts were donated to the MMIGP.

The Boon Wurrung Foundation

Melbourne Water enjoys a strong relationship with the Boon Wurrung community through the Boon Wurrung Foundation. The foundation is passionate about recovering lost culture, art and language through knowledge sharing and storytelling. The inclusion of storytelling in key Melbourne Water strategies (such as the Port Phillip and Western Port Flood Management Strategy), helps to revive sleeping language and connect the past with the present.

Winya Furniture

Our Procurement team works with Kinaway to link members with opportunities across the Melbourne Water supply chain. For example, Winya, a certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned business, was engaged by Melbourne Water to re-upholster our worn-out chairs rather than replace them. Winya places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in apprenticeships and long-term roles in manufacturing around Australia. Winya works with remote communities as part of their supply chain network to create work where none exists and work with people in prisons to provide training and improve outcomes.



Our journey towards reconciliation

Melbourne Water has come a long way in our journey towards reconciliation but recognises there is still much work to be done. We are proud of the steps we have taken through the implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plans and through our partnerships with Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.





Latest achievements

Over the last three years we have focused on developing our relationships with our Traditional Owner partners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by growing our understanding of cultures and connections to Country and developing key plans in procurement, employee wellbeing and cultural awareness. Developing these key plans enables us to convert good intentions into tangible actions that become business as usual.

The implementation of our second RAP spanned 2018-2021 during which time we set about delivering 82 commitments across the themes of Respect, Opportunities, Relationships and Governance. Our focus areas were:

- policy and protocols
- First Nations engagement
- cultural immersion
- procurement
- art and acknowledgement
- employment opportunities, and
- First Nations collaboration.

We made considerable progress against these commitments, being able to deliver over 80% of what we set out to achieve. Whilst we are proud of this, we also recognise that some commitments were more challenging, particularly in the areas of employment and retention. Identifying what worked and didn't work has enabled us to reflect on what we need to improve in the future and focus on in our third RAP. It has also helped to shape our Guiding Principles for reconciliation going forward (see [page 8](#)).



Achievement highlights RAP II (2018-21)*



Respect



Relationships



Opportunities



Governance and beyond

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork installed at 5 key office locations	Cultural Fire Plan drafted with 3 Traditional Owner partners	Aboriginal Employment, Retention and Wellbeing plan completed	Cultural Advisory established
429 staff have completed our First Nations E-learn module since its July 2021 launch	Developed networks with Water Industry leaders, including a support network for Aboriginal staff to collaborate on Traditional Owner priorities	Social Procurement Plan completed including provision for Melbourne Water Tenders over \$3M to include the priority social procurement objective 'opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people'	Wara Paring Indigenous Civil Construction Initiative awarded AWA organisational excellence award
Knowledge protocols project with Melbourne University to develop Traditional Ecological Knowledge guide and advisory protocols	Secondment of Melbourne Water Traditional Owner Liaison Officer to Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation	Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Research Agreements signed, totalling \$300K	First Melbourne Water Yaluk Biik Baan event held celebrating art and language.
Cultural awareness training plan in place and embedded in our staff learning and development program	Partnered with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung to undertake Cultural Values assessment at Taralla Creek	Wara Paring Indigenous Civil Construction start-up business launched	Kids Teaching Kids conference held their first ever all student and teacher Smoking and Welcome to Country ceremony organised and funded by Melbourne Water with over 500 participants
NAIDOC week 2020 celebrations with 725 participants attending 4 online events with prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers from across Australia.	Birrarrung Billabong Monitoring on Country Day – a shared learning day with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Narrap rangers, Uncle David Wandin, Melbourne University and Ecology Australia	3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeships commenced in 2019	Melbourne Water staff attended the National Indigenous Fire Workshop hosted by Yorta Yorta at Barmah Forest

*Case studies detailing some of these achievements are found throughout this document.



CASE STUDY POINT AND BE PROUD: THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Melbourne Water proudly supported the production of short film 'Point and be Proud: The Ripple Effect', a powerful documentary which aims to educate the community about the ongoing impacts of racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing.

The documentary features former AFL player, Nicky Winmar, bravely talking about the impacts of racial discrimination and bullying on mental health. Winmar famously lifted his jersey and pointed to his skin during a football game in 1993 after being racially abused on the field. He fought against racial discrimination and stood up for First Nations Australians, however the constant bullying took a toll on his mental health and still does to this day.

As part of National Reconciliation Week in 2020, Melbourne Water hosted an online preview screening followed by a panel of speakers including sporting stars Nicky Winmar, Nathan Lovett Murray and Nova Peris, and hosted by presenter and columnist, Shelly Ware. Discussion raised awareness and encouraged conversation on how bullying and racism impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing both on the sporting fields and in the workplace. The discussion was confronting and at times uncomfortable but enabled a necessary hard conversation as an important step towards true reconciliation.

CASE STUDY RESPECT FOR CULTURES

Justine Harland leads a small crew of Natural Resource Managers to improve waterways throughout the Port Phillip and Western Port Bay regions. Justine and her crew work on Country revegetating degraded creek lines to improve water quality, removing invasive plants to increase biodiversity and enhance the natural amenity of community areas. Recently Justine's team had the chance to work on sacred Wurundjeri land.

"We had the pleasure of planting 200 plants along Barnggeong Creek (Brushy Creek), just upstream from its confluence with the Birrarung (Yarra). The plants will replace the invasive Kikuyu grass which had taken over the area. The site is sacred to the Wurundjeri Woman who gathered there to perform "Welcome Baby to Country" ceremonies. For this reason, Melbourne Water now has only female crew members work on this site. I've felt extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to work on such sacred land and I'm looking forward to handing the site over to the Narrap rangers."

Justine Harland
Leading Hand Natural Resource Management,
Waterways and Catchment Operations'





CASE STUDY

CO-DEVELOPING A CULTURAL FIRE PLAN

Learning about how we can integrate traditional Aboriginal land management practices, including the use of cultural fire is an important focus of our land and waterway management programs. As a next step in this journey, Melbourne Water and Traditional Owners worked together to develop a Cultural Fire Plan. Guided by the Victorian Traditional Owners Cultural Fire (VTOCF) Strategy, our 5-year plan outlines the actions we will undertake in collaboration with Traditional Owners to implement the objectives of the strategy on the land we manage. The Plan will enable Traditional Owners to fulfil their rights and obligations to care for Country and achieve mutual outcomes with land managers. It will also support Traditional Owners to establish partnerships, overcome barriers and build capacity and understanding of their culture. The Plan will be trialled, and outcomes monitored, at multiple sites over five years from July 2021.

Cultural burns are part of the practices of Aboriginal culture and are led by Traditional Owners or recognised Aboriginal fire practitioners. They include social and spiritual practices and are governed by the Elders. They provide wide ranging benefits including protecting Country, providing habitat for wildlife and the harvesting of resources. Melbourne Water uses fire to reduce risk to our assets and to protect our precious water supply catchments. Fire is also used to maintain biodiversity in land that needs a fire regime to regenerate and maintain its ecological character. Cultural burning supports these outcomes and cares for Country by reducing fuel load, managing weeds and stimulating regeneration of native plant species.

In March 2020, Melbourne Water staff, supported by Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), hosted a closed planning session with Traditional Owners from the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung. This external collaboration from the commencement of planning and the devolved authorship allows the Traditional Owners to self-determine the content and direction of Melbourne Water's Cultural Fire Plan. Collaborative planning with Melbourne Water staff followed this initial planning session to continue the co-developed process.

Genuine partnership with Traditional Owners

Facilitated by the Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation, the plan was developed through interviews and workshops with representatives from Melbourne Water's Traditional Owner partners:

- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Taungarung Land and Waters Council
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation.

Other stakeholders were engaged through discussions and a workshop with Traditional Owners and representatives from:

- Firesticks Alliance
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- Parks Victoria
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV)
- Fire Risk Consultants.

As part of the implementation process, Traditional Owners have begun to lead pilot cultural burns on Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung land near Mount Macedon and the upper Yarra and options are being explored for Bunurong land on the Mornington Peninsula.





CASE STUDY WARA-PARING, 'COME WALK THE PATH'

The Wara-Paring, 'Come Walk the Path' initiative is a collaboration between Melbourne Water and engineering company Aqua Metro Services (AMS), to establish a civil construction start-up owned entirely by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Launched in early 2021, the start-up, known as Wara-Paring Civil, is a non-destructive digging business with two full time employees and a plan to expand to create safe and sustainable employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people. Through an 18-month training program and mentorship, Aqua Metro Services and Melbourne Water are working with the Wara-Paring business partners to develop their civil construction and general business skills.

Wara Paring Civil's Managing Director, Leon Egan, said that this opportunity will make a real difference to Aboriginal communities.

"We are very aware of the responsibility that has been afforded to us as owners of an Indigenous business and excited at this opportunity. We see ourselves as strong role models within our community.

Our unique experience has enabled us to develop the core capabilities required for business and employee success - along with a shared dream of creating meaningful and sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal Australia."

Leon Egan
Wara Paring Civil's Managing Director

This ground-breaking collaboration to create and support sustainable Aboriginal businesses in the water industry, has been recognised at both state and national levels, winning multiple awards including the 2021 Premier's Sustainability Award for Industry Leader in the Social and Economic Justice Category, 2021 National Australian Water Association Organisational Excellence Award and receiving a Special Commendation from the 2020 World Commerce and Contracting Innovation and Excellence Awards for Delivering Social and Economic Benefit.

The hope is by providing meaningful employment opportunities, training and development and a sustainable pipeline of work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a culturally safe and supportive work environment, others will be inspired to also create positive, lasting, cultural change.





CASE STUDY ENVIRONMENTAL WATER AND TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Environmental water is water managed to improve or maintain the health of rivers and wetlands – including the plants and animals that depend on them. Melbourne Water’s Environmental Water Program ensures a portion of water is reserved for maintaining the long-term health of our rivers and groundwater ecosystems to provide recreational benefits, support irrigation and promote healthy Country.

Melbourne Water acknowledges that Traditional Owners hold cultural knowledge, stories and custodial obligations that the environmental water program can benefit from. Recognising this significant connection, the Environmental Water Program has created an engagement plan to capture opportunities to enhance and progress engagement and collaboration with Traditional Owners. It includes opportunities for:

- Aboriginal values to be incorporated into planning decisions
- relationships to be strengthened through specific projects, and
- knowledge to be transferred to improve understanding of environmental values.

Vision and approach

Vision: Cultural values are recognised and Traditional Owner engagement through self-determination is embedded into the environmental water program.

The environmental water program will achieve this vision through the following goals and approach:

- we will improve Traditional Owner participation in the planning and management of environmental water through their self-determination by **working collaboratively to develop meaningful relationships**
- the Environmental Water program will provide **meaningful opportunities and support for Traditional Owners** to participate in projects and programs that have mutually beneficial outcomes

Measuring success

To understand if we are meeting our vision and to inform the annual Environmental Water Program planning cycle, our implementation program will measure and capture Traditional Owner engagement through metrics such as:

- participation by Traditional Owners in specific projects
- appointment of committee members, and
- inclusion of Traditional Owner information into planning documents.



Planning for Country

Collaboration and participation in decisions on environmental water planning and management



Caring for Country

Bringing together traditional knowledge with new science



Celebrating Country

Connecting, sharing and celebrating Country



Cultural values are recognised and Traditional Owner engagement through self-determination is embedded into the environmental water program

Figure 1: Approach to improve Traditional Owner Engagement with the Environmental Water Program

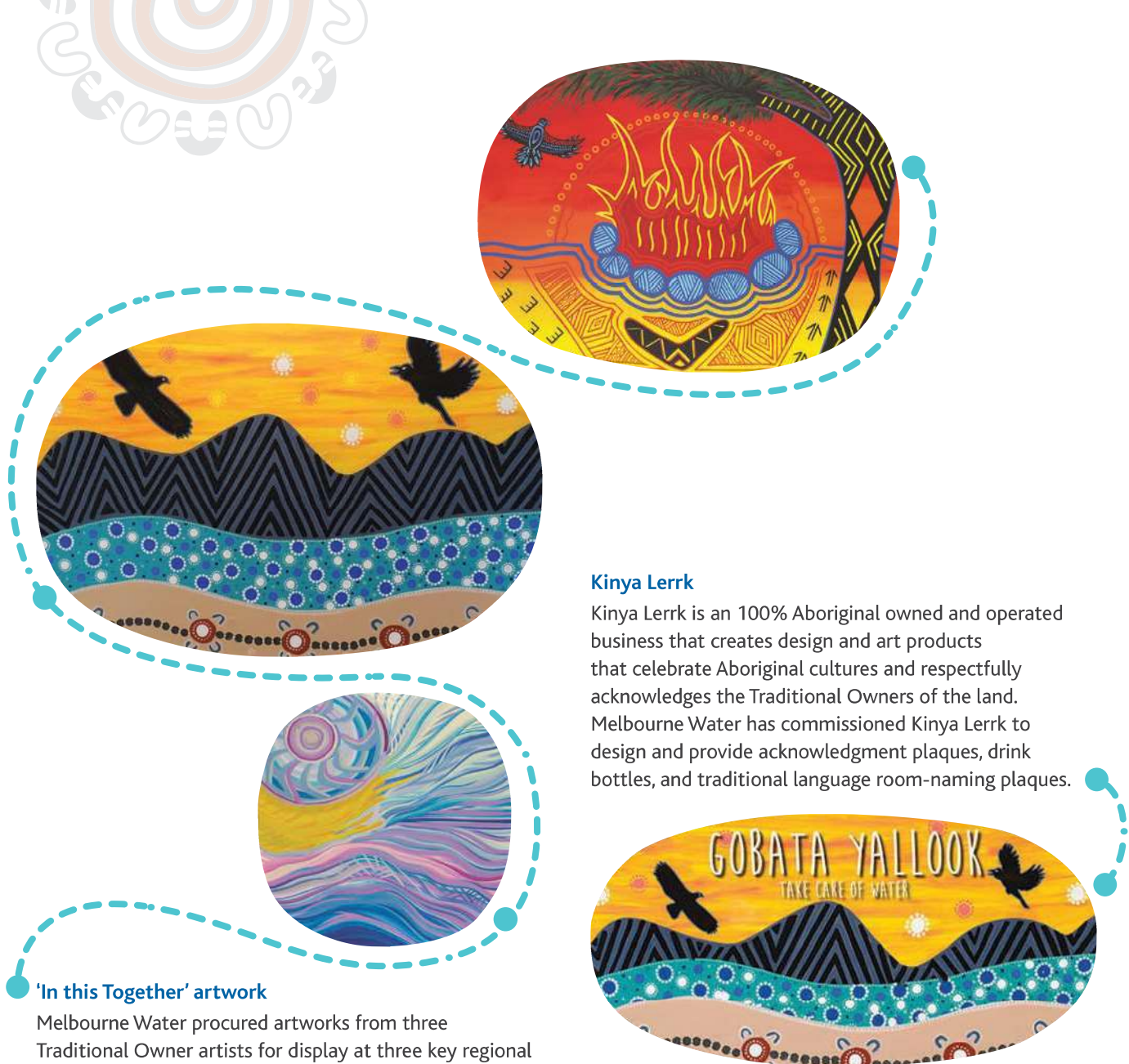


CASE STUDY CULTURAL SAFETY

We strive to be a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for all, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our cultural awareness training plan includes a three-tiered approach comprising an on-boarding eLearn module, training provided by the Koorie Heritage Trust and on Country training delivered by Traditional Owners across our operating area.

We value the power of truth telling and its equal importance to celebrating cultures. Each year, through three weeks of cultural immersion, we aim to improve and foster our cultural safety, knowledge, and connections. These key events include National Reconciliation Week (May/June), NAIDOC Week (July) and our own Melbourne Water celebratory event Yaluk Biik Baan (August).

As a way of further embedding culturally safe principles and making our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and partners feel welcome and recognised, we use Traditional Owner endorsed language for our spaces and in co-delivered projects. We also acknowledge Country in all office foyers/entry locations and display of Aboriginal art in all office locations.



Kinya Lerrk

Kinya Lerrk is an 100% Aboriginal owned and operated business that creates design and art products that celebrate Aboriginal cultures and respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land. Melbourne Water has commissioned Kinya Lerrk to design and provide acknowledgment plaques, drink bottles, and traditional language room-naming plaques.

'In this Together' artwork

Melbourne Water procured artworks from three Traditional Owner artists for display at three key regional offices. Land, by BJ O'Toole from Wadawurrung for the new Western Treatment Plant office at Cocoroc, Fire and Country by Wurundjeri woman Ky-ya Nicholson for the North Eastern Regional Office and Bunurong Sea Country by Adam Maginess for the Eastern Treatment Plant.



Buniya Binak

Melbourne Water commissioned Wadawurrung artist Tammy Gilson to create a Buniya Binak (woven eel trap), which now takes pride of place in the Western Treatment Plant building. Interpretive signage detailing the significance of Eel Traps to the local community will follow.



Yaluk Biik Baan (River Land Water)

To celebrate the International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2020, we hosted Yaluk Biik Baan, an event week designed to increase knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal cultures. With two bus tours, a language forum and an art exhibition, there were plenty of activities for Melbourne Water staff to attend.

The art exhibition, which was the centrepiece of the Yaluk Biik Baan event week, featured artworks from Traditional Owner artists and participants from The Torch, an organisation that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders and ex-offenders through its Indigenous Arts in Prison and Community Program. Volunteers sold 13 paintings from the exhibition, raising over \$4,000 for the Peter Cullen Trust Indigenous Scholarship, which funds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in a Trust program for water and environment managers. Proceeds also went to artists from The Torch, aiding in the opportunity to define new pathways upon release from prison.



Yarning Circles

Yarning Circles provide an opportunity to engage on a range of topics to build knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the steps we can take to create better inclusion. Led by community leaders, these sessions are an opportunity to hear stories and reflect on reconciliation, self-determination, inclusion and Treaty.

It was a privilege to welcome Aunty Irene Norman Wailwan/Wiradjuri Elder and Aunty Daphne Milward - Yorta Yorta Elder together with Kerry Arabena, Karen Milward and Terori Hareko- Samios to Melbourne Water for our Yarning with Aunties. The Yarning Circle provided the perfect opportunity to hear from the Aunties and learn more about their cultures, cultural practices and interests in water.

Jill Sears,
Diversity and Inclusion Manager





Future focus

Although we have come a long way on our journey towards reconciliation, our focus for the next three years is to embed reconciliation initiatives across our business. We want to move closer to making reconciliation business as usual by embedding three key plans:



1 Our Cultural Training Plan

Embedding an ongoing cultural education plan to develop Melbourne Water employees' cultural knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures comprising:

First Nations eLearn

This First Nations Cultural Awareness training was developed in collaboration with other water authorities (including South East Water, City West Water and Barwon Water), with respected members of the Victorian Aboriginal communities and features several Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees from across the water sector.

The eLearn is designed to introduce cultural awareness and build an understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This helps our people build skills to effectively work and communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and create an inclusive work environment.

Koorie Heritage Trust Interactive Workshop

Koorie Heritage Trust are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and managed not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to promote, support and celebrate the continuing journey of the Aboriginal peoples of Southeastern Australia.

In this workshop offered throughout the year, Koorie Heritage Trust provide Melbourne Water staff with a high-level overview of histories and cultures, and past and current issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through this training our staff can deepen their awareness of Aboriginal cultures and identity by making the connection and understanding the impact of colonisation and past policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. Learning about and understanding this shared history empowers staff to help make their workplace more respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Traditional Owner on Country Cultural Awareness Training

Provided by Traditional Owners and delivered on Country across our operating area, this training provides our staff with the opportunity to visit sites of cultural significance. By walking on Country alongside a Traditional Owner Elder, staff gain a deeper cultural understanding of the land on which they live and work. In depth insights, storytelling and the sharing of knowledge and cultural practice, enables staff to advocate for the continued caring of Country and protecting cultural heritage.





2 Our Employment and Wellbeing Retention Plan

Melbourne Water aims to provide opportunities for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians through targeted employment programs in a culturally safe working environment. One of our key corporate goals is to have our workforce comprise three percent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees by 2023.

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Wellbeing Retention Plan will help us achieve this goal. The plan outlines the actions we will take to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Melbourne Water's workforce and retain our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff through providing opportunities and culturally safe environments.

These actions include:

- employment opportunities and mentoring support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all our sites
- establishment of an Aboriginal Staff Support Network
- encouraging employment of Aboriginal peoples in broader roles in the organisation (finance, IT, engineering, etc.)
- identifying workforce support strategies (external cultural supervisors) to provide support to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees

- developing a program that proactively engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support units in universities and tertiary institutions to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to participate in Melbourne Water internships, scholarships, apprenticeships, and graduate programs
- providing mentoring and support structures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students/graduates placed at Melbourne Water
- ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace and review and prioritise Melbourne Water's policies and procedures and make amendments to support culturally appropriate practice.



3 Our Social Procurement Plan

At Melbourne Water, we are helping to build a fair, inclusive, and sustainable Victoria through social procurement which considers social, economic, and environmental outcomes in all purchasing decisions.

Our social procurement plan incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity through:

- direct means, for example, purchasing goods, services or construction works from Aboriginal businesses
- indirect means, for example, using the tendering process and clauses in contracts with the private sector to seek social outcomes.

Through the implementation of this plan, we are:

- promoting Victorian Aboriginal businesses on the Melbourne Water intranet
- delivering workshops to increase workforce understanding of supplier diversity
- chairing the Social Value in Procurement Working Group across the Victorian Water Sector
- developing commercial relationships with Victorian Aboriginal owned businesses each year
- working with Strategic Suppliers to drive engagement with Aboriginal owned businesses
- embedding procurement policies and procedures to promote the use of Victorian Aboriginal businesses and provide training to support those involved in procurement activities.



CASE STUDY

WURUNDJERI WOI-WURRUNG CULTURAL HERITAGE ABORIGINAL CORPORATION - NARRAP RANGERS

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Narrap Rangers work in Natural Resource Management (NRM), applying traditional knowledge to improve sustainable environmental and cultural outcomes for Country. Narrap is the Woi-wurrung word for Country. Their vision is to create opportunities for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have culturally meaningful, permanent work that supports professional development and the continued management of Country.

The Narrap Rangers are an integral part of leading, developing and managing cultural land management practices in Melbourne Water's scope of works. These include cultural burns, vegetation management, site monitoring and evaluation.

One such collaboration is the Healing Geboor (Macedon) through Wurundjeri Wiiiñ (Fire) project. This initiative aims to reduce weed populations and improve vegetation quality along approximately 11km of waterways and tributaries in the Upper Jackson's Creek catchment in Macedon.

The Narrap Rangers used a combination of manual removal and herbicide application to control weeds at the site. Further regeneration will be fostered through Cultural Burning practices that will stimulate the germination of Indigenous species creating competition for emerging weed species. The team closely monitors and records changes to the landscape, waterways, and vegetation to understand the impacts of their interventions and to adapt or change techniques as required. Data collected through monitoring helps us tell the story of the project. Additionally, monitoring enables us to learn and plan for effective implementation of future projects.

Such burning practices create multiple project benefits including enhancement of local indigenous species, a reduction in local fuel loads, and Traditional Owner connection to Country.



Developing our RAP

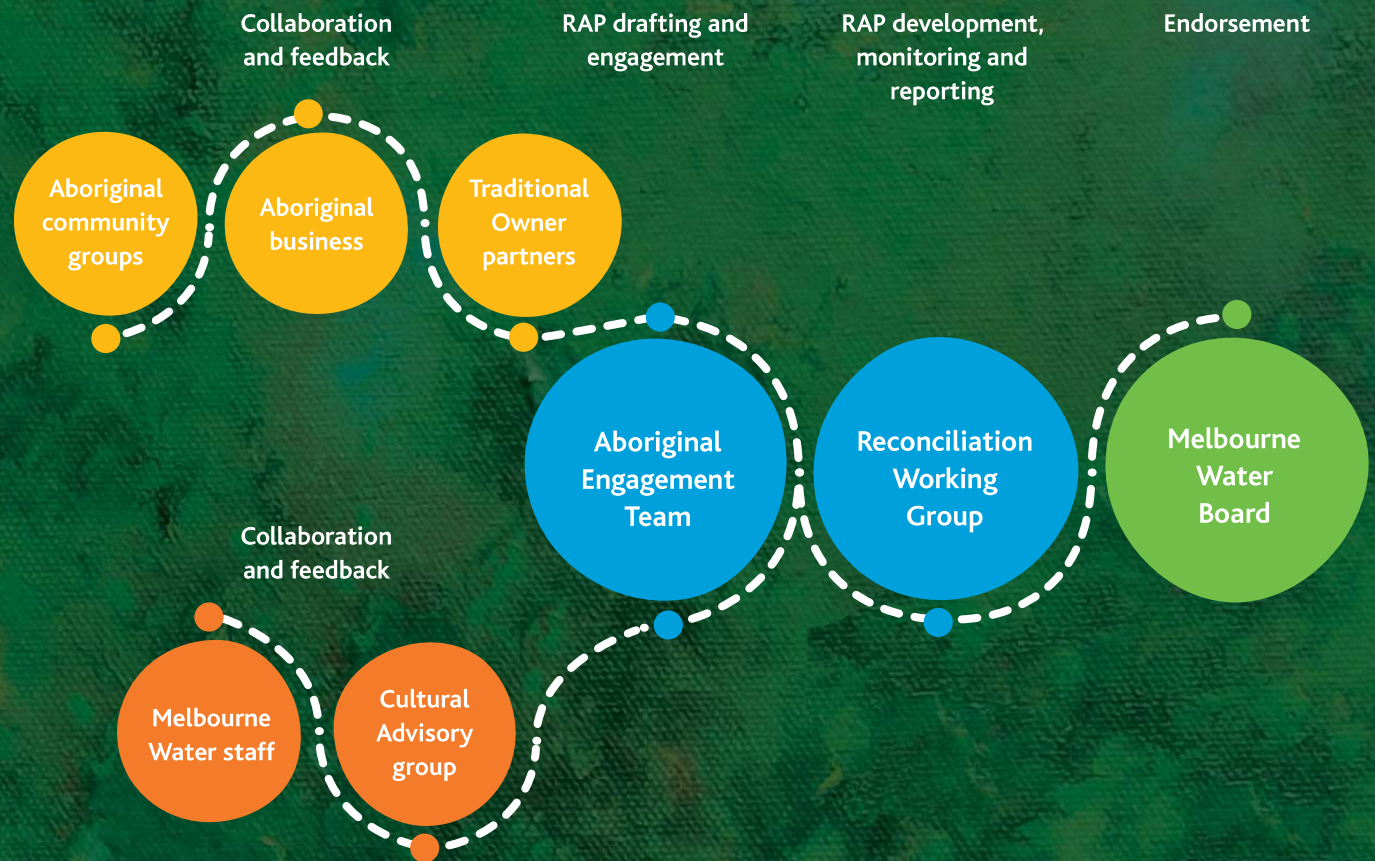
Focusing on collaboration and listening to our partners and people remain fundamental principles guiding the development of our third RAP.

Traditional Owner organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and communities, as well as Melbourne Water staff, were all involved early in the process and given a range of opportunities to provide feedback and shape the direction of the RAP. Specifically, we sought feedback in the form of:

- aspirations for reconciliation at Melbourne Water which helped shape our vision for reconciliation, and
- ideas for actions we could implement to achieve this vision under the RAP themes of Respect, Relationships and Opportunities.

To capture this feedback, meetings, one-on-one conversations and online workshops were held along with a dedicated online engagement site, YourSay, where people could leave comments, engage with others and draft specific actions they would like to see. The variety of ways in which people could contribute to the process and have their say was designed to meet differing preferences for giving feedback and resulted in a wide cross section of views being heard.

More than 90 suggestions for actions were received, synthesised and fed directly into our RAP. We also received meaningful aspirations which helped shape our vision.





Traditional Owners

At the beginning of the RAP development process, we met with all five of our Traditional Owner partners to identify their priorities and aspirations and to seek direction on how they would like to be involved in the process and shape our next RAP. They told us they would like us to:

- build cultural awareness amongst our people and provide opportunities to get to know and understand our Traditional Owner partners
- use the RAP as an educational opportunity for our people and stakeholders to learn about Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and communities
- consider the impacts RAP actions may have on Traditional Owner resources
- focus on actions that build capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, including formal partnership agreements, sustainable funding opportunities and involvement in whole-of-cycle planning for Melbourne Water projects and initiatives. It was important to our Traditional Owner partners that we consult with them throughout RAP development and seek endorsement of our RAP prior to lodgement with Reconciliation Australia.

Melbourne Water acknowledges the rights of Traditional Owner partners to self determination, to ensure the communities they represent are able to meet their social, cultural and economic needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses

Making an impact by supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses has emerged as an area of focus for our organisation. The involvement of these businesses in developing our RAP was seen as integral to this process.

We held two online consultation sessions with more than 30 representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses attending. We also invited businesses to contribute via YourSay, our online engagement site.

They told us they would like us to:

- increase the uptake and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses engaged as part of our overall procurement strategy
- seek out business opportunities that tangibly support economic growth in communities
- expand on procurement spend to include service-based industries
- have greater involvement in developing procurement strategies across multiple sectors.

This feedback helped to inform actions within the RAP, particularly under the theme of Opportunities and provided valuable insights for our Social Procurement Plan.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

We invited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to tell us their aspirations for reconciliation at Melbourne Water. Two in-person consultations were held and community members were also invited to contribute via YourSay, our online engagement site. They told us they would like us to:

- look for volunteer opportunities to build capacity for community
- create initiatives, workshops and partnerships that support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to set them up for success
- focus on an employment approach that highlights opportunities across the business, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified roles or labour roles
- develop initiatives that support innovative projects such as the use of Melbourne Water land to support a business or PhD project.





Melbourne Water Staff

We extended an open invitation to Melbourne Water staff, welcoming their involvement in the development of the RAP. This participation was particularly enabled by our online engagement site as well as through wide promotion internally to get people involved. We also held dedicated online workshops and targeted discussions with our Reconciliation Working Group and Cultural Advisory Group.

From more than 50 contributions, our people told us they want to see:

- on country cultural awareness training to foster genuine connection and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- secondment opportunities that build capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, foster on ground relationships, and build awareness among our staff
- improved visibility of Aboriginal businesses and social enterprise in procurement processes
- continuation and growth of joint management programs across the Melbourne Water Service area (e.g., Narrap Rangers, Cultural Fire Plan)
- more events and cultural learning opportunities outside NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week (yarning circles, walks on Country, family days).

Through engaging our staff more widely using our online engagement platform, it helped us reach a new audience of internal participants. The site showcased recent highlights in our reconciliation journey and gave staff the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of our RAP and broader reconciliation journey. Although not all visitors to the site gave feedback, it brought the RAP to the forefront of their minds; a step towards making it part of everyday business.

The engagement also helped us understand that more is needed to communicate deliverables and outcomes within the RAP because some of the action ideas we received were already being implemented.





Relationships

We recognise that we live and work on the land and waterways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for over thousands of years, and we recognise the strength of connection that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to Country. We will develop and maintain mutually beneficial and strong relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes for Country. These relationships will be strengthened by learning from the past, listening to our partners and embedding key actions to continue to build trust and cultural capability across the organisation.



Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	a. continue to meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement	General Manager Customer & Strategy	July 2022, November 2022, July 2023, November 2023
	b. continue to develop and implement our engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	General Manager Customer & Strategy	June 2022
	c. co-design self-determined partnership agreements with Traditional Owners including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation • Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation • Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation • Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation • Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation These agreements aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • document formal arrangements in terms of how Melbourne Water and a Traditional Owner Organisation work together in relation to management of waterways • agree on priority activities and how to promote success • align water plans with Traditional Owner Country Plans • support use of Melbourne Water land for cultural purposes. 	Chair of the Reconciliation Working Group	July 2022, November 2022, July 2023, November 2023
	d. develop a range of opportunities for Cultural Leaders to meet Melbourne Water Leaders to build relationships and identify specific engagement strategies (including Melbourne Water Board of Directors engagement opportunities with Traditional Owner groups)	General Manager Customer & Strategy	July 2022
	e. develop and offer secondment opportunities of Melbourne Water employees to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. This aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners whilst ensuring our staff are able to strengthen relationships and gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and traditions	General Manager People & Capability	July 2022, July 2023



Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	f. promote and be involved in water industry partnerships to facilitate joint efforts on how to best work together with Traditional Owner partners	General Manager Waterways and Catchment Operations, Service Delivery	March 2022
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	a. circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff	General Manager Customer & Strategy	May 2022, May 2023
	b. Reconciliation Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	General Manager Customer & Strategy	May and June 2022 May and June 2023
	c. Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW	General Manager Customer & Strategy	May 2022, May 2023
	d. organise at least three NRW event each year	General Manager Customer & Strategy	May and June 2022 May and June 2023
	e. register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website	General Manager Customer & Strategy	May 2022, May 2023
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	a. implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation so that actions and outcomes become business as usual	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	b. all senior leaders to contribute in the implementation of strategies to drive reconciliation throughout the organisation	Managing Director	March 2022
	c. the Cultural Advisory will continue to meet monthly to discuss and plan cultural engagement initiatives across the business. Updates, feedback and advice will be reported to the Reconciliation Working Group	General Manager Customer & Strategy	Monthly from March 2022 to March 2023
	d. communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly via our website, print and social media platforms	General Manager Customer & Strategy	Quarterly (2022 March, June, September, December; 2023 March, June, September, December)
	e. explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes (water industry partnerships)	General Manager Waterways and Catchment Operations, Service Delivery	July 2022, July 2023

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	f. collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	General Manager Customer & Strategy	July 2022, November 2022, July 2023, November 2023
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	a. conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs	General Manager People & Capability	July 2022
	b. implement and communicate our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2020-2025) for our organisation	General Manager People & Capability	March 2022
	c. engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2020-2025)	General Manager People & Capability	March 2023
	d. educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	General Manager People & Capability	March 2022
5. Strengthen relationships by proactively engaging in local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' activities within our operating context	a. identify, for Melbourne Water employees, volunteering opportunities that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects and activities	Chief Finance Officer	March 2022
	b. establish regular meeting cycles with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to share knowledge and support reconciliation	General Manager Customer & Strategy	June 2022
	c. invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to participate in at least 4 Melbourne Water activities and events including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melbourne Water yarning-up sessions with Elders and Community Leaders • launch of the RAP • NAIDOC Week. 	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022



Respect

We will foster a culture of genuine recognition of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples unique relationship with the land and waterways, and their valuable knowledge of Caring for Country. We will grow our cultural capability by embracing the knowledge, values, lore, traditions and cultural practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so that it becomes embedded in our daily business and operations.



Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning	a. conduct annual reviews of cultural learning needs within our organisation	General Manager People & Capability	June 2022, June 2023
	b. continue consultation with local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of our cultural awareness strategy	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	c. embed our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Training plan which sets out to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. define cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our businesses ii. include our First Nations eLearn module as essential on-boarding for all new staff iii. provide site specific cultural inductions across Melbourne Water operational sites iv. provide opportunities for Melbourne Water staff and Board to undertake Cultural Awareness Training with Traditional Owner partners v. participate in walks on Country and significant place tours with our Traditional Owner partners vi. consider various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face to face workshops and cultural immersion) and the training needs of our different business areas (field staff, customer facing). 	General Manager Customer & Strategy / General Manager People & Capability	March 2022
	d. ensure all RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff participate in formal and structured cultural learning as outlined in our Cultural Awareness Training Plan	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022, March 2023
	e. host an annual event (Yaluk Biik Baan) to increase knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures	General Manager Customer & Strategy	August 2022, August 2023
	f. promote and share calendar of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events to Melbourne Water staff and Board.	General Manager People & Capability	March 2022, March 2023

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
2. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	a. increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols and support staff to involve cultural ceremony as part of business as usual	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	b. review our cultural protocols for Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country, ensuring correct terminology and language use (include tribal and language maps) and communicate across the business	General Manager Customer & Strategy	July 2022, July 2023
	c. continue to consult with Traditional Owner Elders on Welcome to Country processes and smoking ceremonies conducted at Melbourne Water sites	General Manager Asset Management Services	March 2022
	d. include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	e. permanently display an Acknowledgement of Country plaque at all Melbourne Water office and work locations	Managing Director	March 2022
	f. increase frequency and prominence of Aboriginal language use across all sites, places and waterways, and on related practices, including developing interpretative signage in local Aboriginal language/s	Managing Director	March 2023
	g. ensure an ongoing statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners in Melbourne Water's Branding protocols including digital and virtual platforms	General Manager Customer & Strategy	June 2022, June 2023
	h. develop a plan for the purchase and use of Aboriginal art for Melbourne Water sites, venues, branding and water stories to promote cultural safety.	Managing Director	June 2022, June 2023

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	<p>i. Embed Traditional Knowledge protocols developed through self-determined Research Agreements so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Owners are involved at all levels of waterway management – planning, prioritisation and delivery • Traditional Owners have the resources and expertise to support a self-sustaining 'waterway business' • Traditional Owners are included in planning and prioritisation processes as early as possible • where possible, waterway management programs are designed to match the existing capability of Traditional Owners and participation increases their capability for involvement in future programs • the internal collaborative processes of Traditional Owners are supported with time and/or resources by waterway management partners. 	General Manager of Integrated Planning / General Manager Waterways and Catchment Operations, Service Delivery	March 2022
	<p>j. invite local Elders, community leaders and Traditional Owners to collaborate on cultural projects (Possum skin cloak) with our employees and partners to share cultural perspectives on managing the waterways and to improve local relationships.</p>	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
3. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<p>a. RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event</p>	General Manager Customer & Strategy	July 2022, July 2023
	<p>b. review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week</p>	General Manager People & Capability	June 2022, June 2023
	<p>c. promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff</p>	General Manager Customer & Strategy / General Manager People & Capability	July 2022, July 2023
	<p>d. provide the history and information about NAIDOC to our employees at events and on the intranet.</p>	General Manager Customer & Strategy	July 2022, July 2023



Opportunities

We value the traditional knowledge and intrinsic connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land on which we live and work. Melbourne Water strives to embrace this traditional knowledge to inform and support land and waterway planning and management. Through our business partnerships, Social Procurement plan and formal agreements we will create opportunities and support ongoing employment, professional development and procurement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.





Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	a. build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities	General Manager People & Capability	June 2022
	b. endorse and embed our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Well-being Retention plan that supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment opportunities and mentoring support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all our sites • establishment of an Aboriginal Staff Support Network • encouraging employment of Aboriginal peoples in broader roles in the organisation (finance, IT, engineering, etc.) • engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on recruitment, retention and professional development. 	General Manager People & Capability	March 2022
	c. review HR and recruitment procedures and policies so they align with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing and Retention plan and ensure there are no barriers to current and future employees	General Manager People & Capability	June 2022, June 2023
	d. increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce to at least 3%	General Manager People & Capability	June 2022, June 2023
	e. actively promote and advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders (Relevant search terms, utilise Koori Mail and Indigenous Times).	General Manager People & Capability	March 2022
2. Melbourne Water will support the professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students/interns.	a. provide mentoring and support structures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students/ graduates placed at Melbourne Water	General Manager People & Capability	December 2022
	b. review and consider options for students to participate in Melbourne Water internships, scholarships, apprenticeships and graduate programs	General Manager People & Capability	July 2022
	c. offer at least 1 identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander placements annually.	General Manager People & Capability	December 2022 and December 2023
3. Create cross-cultural environmental learning opportunities within our communities.	a. support Traditional Owner groups to increase cultural knowledge across the non-Indigenous community via citizen science events and education programs	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	b. develop and include an Aboriginal cultural education program within the school visits program to the Western Treatment Plant (WTP), Eastern Treatment Plant (ETP) and Edithvale wetlands and waterways	General Manager Customer & Strategy	July 2022
	c. identify how we can best use cultural practice in Melbourne Water's heritage and landscape work in catchment and land (e.g. indigenous plants – traditional uses for agriculture).	General Manager Asset Management Services	March 2022
4. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	a. endorse and embed our Social procurement plan which aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement our Social Procurement eLearn across Melbourne Water (with a mechanism established to check completion of any required social procurement training by buyers) • include the priority social procurement objective 'opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people' in Melbourne Water Tenders over \$3M • encourage direct sourcing by requiring inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses in specified categories (Catering) • work with Melbourne Water Strategic Suppliers to drive social outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses • include social procurement in industry and tender briefings (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions for inclusion in the Whole of Government Social Procurement Annual Report). 	Chief Finance Officer	March 2022
	b. maintain membership with Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Victoria Ltd and investigate Supply Nation membership	Chief Finance Officer	June 2022, June 2023
	c. maintain and promote, on the Melbourne Water intranet, the list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services	Chief Finance Officer	March 2022
	d. review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses	Chief Finance Officer	July 2022, July 2023
	e. develop at least two commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander – owned businesses each year	Chief Finance Officer	July 2022, July 2023
	f. invite six Aboriginal owned businesses to attend Procurement Team meetings and share their story / business model	Chief Finance Officer	July 2022, July 2023
	g. continue to host supplier diversity workshops to increase our workforce's understanding of supplier diversity.	Chief Finance Officer	July 2022, July 2023



Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	a. maintain Aboriginal Engagement Team, Cultural Advisory and RWG to oversee and support the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	b. maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022, March 2023
	c. annually review our Terms of Reference for the RWG, including membership and RAP actions responsibility	Chief Finance Officer	March 2022, March 2023
	d. meet bi monthly to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	General Manager Customer & Strategy	January March, May, July, September, November 2022, 2023, 2024
2. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	a. the RWG will ensure the RAP is consistent with and complementary to Melbourne Water strategic plans	Managing Director	March 2022
	b. define resource needs for RAP implementation	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	c. engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	d. review and maintain our RAP reporting tool which tracks, measures and reports on RAP commitments	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
	e. maintain internal RAP Sponsor and Champion membership from senior management.	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2022
3. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	a. contact Reconciliation Australia to ensure that our primary and secondary contacts are up-to-date to ensure we are receiving important correspondence	General Manager Customer & Strategy	June 2022, June 2023
	b. follow up with Reconciliation Australia if we have not yet received our unique reporting link to participate in the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire	General Manager Customer & Strategy	August 2022, August 2023



Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	c. complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia	General Manager Customer & Strategy	September 2022, September 2023
	d. report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly via the Intranet and at each Board People, Safety & Remuneration Committee meeting	General Manager Customer & Strategy / General Manager People & Capability	Quarterly (2022 March, June, September, December; 2023 March, June, September, December)
	e. publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually	General Manager Customer & Strategy	June 2022, June 2023
	f. investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	Chief Finance Officer	March 2022, 2024
4. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	a. register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP	General Manager Customer & Strategy	April 2023
	b. liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements	General Manager Customer & Strategy	September 2023
	c. send draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review and feedback.	General Manager Customer & Strategy	March 2024

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