

Part 4 DEEWR's commitment to reconciliation

DEEWR recognises that reconciliation is part of the unfinished business between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians, and that true reconciliation requires real commitment at an organisational and individual level. The DEEWR Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) contains actions, timelines and measurable targets under the three themes of respect, relationships and opportunities as defined by Reconciliation Australia

The RAP Implementation Sub-committee monitors the progress of actions and oversees the implementation of the RAP. It consists of branch and group managers from across all clusters of the department who meet monthly. Two members of the committee, Russell Ayres and Sue Saunders, received special recognition from the Secretary in her 2011 Excellence Awards for their efforts in reconciliation.

Representatives on the sub-committee chair working groups within their clusters. These working groups are composed of individuals who promote reconciliation and develop strategies and solutions for achieving actions and targets in the RAP. During the year, the working groups organised a number of events, including morning teas to acknowledge the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, barbecues to raise awareness of the RAP and seminars to highlight issues of concern to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The dedicated DEEWR RAP Team provides secretariat support to the RAP Implementation Sub-committee. The team also organises events to celebrate reconciliation, communicates the plan throughout the department and works to raise staff awareness of the RAP and how it can be part of daily work.

RAP communications

DEEWR highlights the importance of reconciliation in various communications products. The internal departmental newsletter *d'vine*, published each month, includes reconciliation-themed content in each issue.

A number of resources are available to staff, such as RAP posters that feature quotes from staff who are enthusiastic about making a difference and colourful postcards that provide ideas on how staff can promote reconciliation in their work areas and a RAP intranet page.



Sample reconciliation-themed postcard and posters

Growing and learning

DEEWR is committed to providing its staff with opportunities to learn about the culture and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The department released guidelines for welcome to country and acknowledgment of traditional owners to increase staff awareness of cultural expectations and sensitivities. The Indigenous Business in DEEWR Onboarding program was developed and implemented in December 2010. The seven-module program reflects the department's commitment to ensuring that all new and existing staff have access to information about the culture DEEWR seeks to support. There are numerous sources of expertise available for

staff to contact, including the Indigenous Adviser to the department's People and Organisational Development Group, the Indigenous Leader and the National Mura Kaimel – Yarrangi Committee.

Creating space for reconciliation

There has been a move in DEEWR towards creating spaces that reflect the experiences of individuals on their reconciliation journeys. In 2010 the People and Organisational Development Group designated one of its large meeting rooms to house a range of resources including fact sheets, artworks, videos, books and a reflections board on which people are encouraged to write their personal views on reconciliation. The Journey Room was officially opened on 29 October 2010 and is a commitment to supporting a deeper awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history.



The People and Organisational Development Group's Journey Room.

The Brisbane state office opened its reconciliation Journey Wall on 27 May 2011 during Reconciliation Week. The wall provides an opportunity for staff to express their thoughts about reconciliation and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Brisbane staff were invited to decorate a tile from the wall with a personal message to express their contribution to reconciliation. The surrounding walls are decorated to represent people from different areas around Australia and the world through saltwater, freshwater, rainforest and desert colours. Staff were commended for their contributions to the wall and reminded of the hope that such initiatives can deliver.



Brisbane office's Journey Wall, and staff contributing to its development

Commemorating and celebrating days of significance

NAIDOC Week

National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week is always a big event in DEEWR. The theme for 2010 was 'Unsung Heroes—Closing the Gap by Leading Their Way'. The week commenced on 4 July 2010 with a Family Day run by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies where DEEWR had a stand. An official flag-raising ceremony was held

on 5 July 2010 and Aunty Jannette Phillips gave the official welcome to country. On 7 July 2010 Senator the Hon Mark Arbib, Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development, met with staff from his portfolio areas over morning tea. DEEWR also had the pleasure of hosting an art exhibition in its national office. Participants of the Billabong to Beach program produced the artwork and kindly donated their work to the Queensland state office. The Billabong to Beach program gives young people pathways to further training and opens up employment opportunities.

The Tertiary, Skills, International and Indigenous Strategy cluster commemorated the anniversary of the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples with a lunchtime barbeque on 11 February 2011. Celebrity chef Mark Olive spoke about bush tucker and his passion for cuisine inspired by native ingredients. Katrina Fanning, Branch Manager, Program Development and Support Branch, received an Individual RAP Champion award for her strong involvement in the RAP. The Public Sector Employment Team received the Team RAP Champion award for their work on enhancing and sustaining public sector employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



DEEWR staff member Mladjenka Maric with chef Mark Olive.

The Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care held a seminar on 16 February 2011 to commemorate the anniversary of the Apology. The event was streamed live to DEEWR offices nationally and featured motivating presentations from Shona Chapman of the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, DEEWR's Indigenous Leader Kevin Brahim and Deputy Secretary Michael Manthorpe.

National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week, between 27 May and 3 June 2011, is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history and culture and to reflect on the journey towards reconciliation. To celebrate the week in DEEWR's national office, the RAP Team organised, with the Wiradjuri Echoes, art and jewellery workshops and an Aboriginal dance and didgeridoo performance. There was a lunchtime film screening of *One Night the Moon*. Staff also enjoyed a thought-provoking presentation from Dr Chris Sarra of the Stronger Smarter Institute during a seminar opened by traditional Torres Strait Islander dancers Zenadh Kes Mari and hosted by Indigenous Leader, Kevin Brahim. Ara Cresswell from Reconciliation Australia also provided an inspiring commentary on reconciliation through her presentation of the results from the National Reconciliation Barometer. Celebrations extended across all offices with morning teas, traditional dancing and special guest speakers.



Torres Strait Islander dancers Zenadh Kes Mari performing at DEEWR's national office during National Reconciliation Week.

Beyond Billabong

Beyond Billabong is an innovative organisation that empowers highly disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth with life skills to make positive life choices and provides pathways to further training and employment opportunities. Boyd Curran, Chief Executive Officer of Beyond Billabong, spoke about the program at a special seminar during NAIDOC Week 2010 in DEEWR's national office.

The Beyond Billabong program was developed to assist youth with significant social and life skills barriers by providing coordinated servicing in partnership with other service providers to address those barriers. Participants learn horsemanship and livestock handling skills for pathways into the pastoral industry as well as life skills that will assist them in their role as future leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The program builds participants' self-confidence and pride in their achievements.

The DEEWR Queensland state office has provided the program with access to industry and service providers. The success of this ongoing partnership between the department and the Beyond Billabong group has resulted in improved capacity and direction for the organisation, which is now an Indigenous Employment Program Employment Panel member under the reformed program.

The future of reconciliation in DEEWR

The new DEEWR RAP 2011–2014 will be launched in late 2011. The plan will further the department's commitment to reconciliation by continuing to draw on the unique strengths of the organisation in terms of location, sphere of influence and the diverse nature of its work. The second RAP will be designed to enhance engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples and have tangible relevance to every staff member within the department.

First Indigenous Australian Rhodes Scholar

In December 2010 DEEWR Indigenous Youth Mobility Program participant Rebecca Richards became the first Indigenous Australian Rhodes Scholar in the prize's 108-year history. Over the years Rebecca has participated in many DEEWR programs, including the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme, the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program and the Indigenous Cadetship Scheme. Rebecca was supported by the program to complete a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and anthropology at the University of Adelaide.

Now based in Canberra, Rebecca is undertaking a cadetship at the National Museum of Australia in anticipation of her departure later in the year to Oxford University, where she will undertake a Masters of Philosophy in material anthropology and museum ethnography. On completing her study Rebecca hopes to come back to Australia and work in repatriation of cultural objects and remains at an Australian museum.