



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**



**Reconciliation Australia**  
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS

A decorative horizontal bar spanning the width of the page, divided into five colored segments: orange, olive green, dark green, blue, and purple. The segments are separated by white curved lines that extend upwards and downwards into the background.

## **Reconciliation Action Plan for 2009–2011**

The background features a light beige color with white, wavy, vertical lines that create a sense of movement. A horizontal bar with a tan background and a white border runs across the middle. This bar is divided into several colored segments: a brown segment, a gold segment, an olive green segment, a dark green segment, a blue segment, and a purple segment. The text is centered in the tan portion of the bar.

**Reconciliation Action Plan for 2009–2011**

## Secretary's Message

It gives me great pleasure to present the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR) inaugural 2009–2011 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The timing for launching DEEWR's RAP aligns with the United Nations General Assembly's proclamation for 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation, and the Australian Government's recent support for the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Reconciliation is part of the unfinished business between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and, true Reconciliation requires real commitment at all levels—organisationally and individually. This RAP reflects my personal commitment and the commitment of the Department to the process of Reconciliation.

The challenge of closing the gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is one of the Australian Government's most important national priorities. DEEWR is at the forefront of the national closing the gap commitment. The Australian Government, in partnership with governments at the State and Territory levels, has committed to achieving six key targets, four of which DEEWR is taking the lead on.

Significant Australian Government investment has been committed to achieving improved outcomes for Indigenous Australians in key areas including early childhood, education, training and skills, employment and workplace relations. Importantly, this investment is against a backdrop of increased uncertainty in the global economy. Strengthening the contribution of DEEWR's mainstream programs in each of these sectors will play an important role in contributing to closing the gap.

The RAP includes a framework for monitoring and reporting on its implementation and I look forward to receiving regular progress reports.

Along with the leadership shown by the Australian Government, the DEEWR Executive is strongly committed to Reconciliation. As a Department we will all embrace this RAP and make our contribution to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and a better future for all Australians.



Lisa Paul  
27 May 2009

## Introduction

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is strongly committed to improving outcomes for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across a range of social and economic measures and to reconciliation between Indigenous and other Australians. This Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is a major stepping stone towards that commitment, publicly setting out our vision for reconciliation and our strategies to achieve this.

As a major Australian Government agency working to build a more productive and inclusive Australia, one of our important responsibilities is to contribute to the delivery of four of the six Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitments to policy targets to Close the Gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. These include achieving agreed targets of:

- providing access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four-year olds in remote communities within five years

- halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade
- halving the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 attainment or equivalent by 2020
- halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

DEEWR is a newly created Department built from three former Departments each with strong track records of working with, and for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our work reaches many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In establishing our new Department, we have explicitly built in those good practice features from our former Departments, particularly where we had made strong progress in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have created an Indigenous Steering Committee to provide strategic direction on programs and policies and are actively enhancing our programs in order to effectively reach more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We are informed by evidence and good practice developed through whole of government experiences and genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders such as in the Murdi Paaki COAG trial. We have established a senior executive role of Indigenous Leader reporting directly to the Secretary and provided senior level support, establishing several new senior Indigenous adviser positions to liaise directly with the Secretary and other staff in DEEWR. We continue to focus on supporting and developing all of our Indigenous staff. Staff who excel in Closing the Gap work are recognised and rewarded through our Secretary's Excellence Awards. We pay attention to the importance of demonstrating cultural awareness and understanding as part of our professionalism as public servants.

This Reconciliation Action Plan re-establishes some of these essential commitments for DEEWR, but aims to take us further as an agency focussed on high performance across this important area of our work.

## **Our vision**

*We will be a leader in achieving a reconciled Australia, working for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

## **Our business and commitment to reconciliation**

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is the key Australian Government agency providing national leadership and services in early childhood education and childcare, schooling, tertiary education, skills and workforce development, employment and workplace relations. We work across government and in partnership with the States and Territories, communities and industry to implement our policies and programs. DEEWR is also a major employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

DEEWR is committed to advancing reconciliation through this Reconciliation Action Plan. We are in a unique position to bring about significant and meaningful change and our RAP builds on our previous

commitments in laying strong foundations for a productive and inclusive future.

- We will work together to build respect and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.
- We will ensure that our policies and programs respond effectively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- We will collaborate across the Department and with stakeholder groups, creating inclusive relationships that lead to solutions that are valued and sustainable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.
- We will recruit, retain and develop more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and build the capacity of all of our employees to respond effectively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

## Our RAP

This RAP was developed with wide input from DEEWR's staff and reflects the many views and opinions collected during the consultation process.

DEEWR's RAP Working Group was formed in December 2008, consisting of a diverse range of interested people from across the Department and across States and Territories. The Working Group has played an active role in providing input and reviewing drafts. Guidance on the development of the RAP was also sought from DEEWR's Executive Meeting; People Group; Indigenous Leader and Senior Indigenous Advisers; Indigenous Steering Committee; interim Mura Kaimel—Yarrangi Committee, Indigenous Employee Staff Network and Indigenous Group.

Staff across the Department were invited to give comments at critical stages and through a variety of processes including:

- the creation of a RAP intranet page and a RAP mailbox inviting staff to provide input in February

2009 through a brainstorming template and in March 2009 to encourage comment on the first draft of the RAP

- the conduct of five focus groups at DEEWR's National Office in March 2009
- the conduct of meetings in March 2009 in every State and Territory DEEWR office and in a number of regions
- meetings throughout the process with key DEEWR staff and policy groups, such as the Indigenous, Strategic Policy and People Groups.

The first draft of the RAP was also provided to the Indigenous Group, Stakeholder Engagement Team, to distribute to external stakeholders for comment.

The RAP incorporates many of the comments collected and is a living document that will be regularly reviewed and revised.

**Respect Valuing the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**

Focus area 1.1: Creating a workforce that is responsive to and inclusive of the requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
<p>1. Ensure that staff progressively enhance their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through a professional development framework that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings on commencement of employment</li> <li>• Cultural Training programs tailored to professional needs</li> <li>• Ongoing Professional Learning for individual staff</li> <li>• Specialised Briefings for staff developing new projects or policies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lead Group</b> People Group</p> <p><b>Supporting Group/s</b> Indigenous Leader All Senior Executive Staff</p>	July 2009	Outline of a four stated process is completed
		Oct 2009 and each subsequent year	All new employees and those staff engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have participated in Indigenous Cultural Competency training
		July 2010	Entry level employees and those staff engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have participated in Cultural Training, with regular opportunities to update their knowledge
		July 2010	Employees working in Identified Positions have Individual Performance and Development Plans (IPDP) that address learning and development needs to maintain and grow their skills
		July 2010	Employees in DEEWR who formally identify a desire to work in policy and program delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are provided with support to develop their skills in these areas

July 2010	All relevant work areas ensure Specialised Briefings are implemented
July 2010 and each subsequent year	The implementation of the above is reviewed and modified annually.

**Respect Valuing the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**

Focus area 1.2: Creating an organisation that embraces reconciliation in all its activities

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Develop and implement Cultural Protocols* that give guidance on when, why and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices, celebrations and images can be incorporated into DEEWR activities, events, facilities and corporate communications	<b>Lead Group</b>	August 2009	Cultural Protocols are launched and communicated across DEEWR
	People Group		
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b>	July 2010	System of monitoring is developed on how Cultural Protocols are being used and implemented and what further support is needed
	Indigenous Group	January 2010 and each subsequent year	DEEWR includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events in its annual calendar of events
	Indigenous Leader		
	Mura Kaimel —Yarrangi Committee		

\*These are intended to be high level, supporting adaptation to local circumstances

2. Strengthen people management policies and processes which support DEEWR reconciliation objectives

**Lead Group**

People Group

**Supporting Group/s**

People Leadership Committee

Mura Kaimel —Yarrangi Committee

Parliamentary & Communication Group

July 2009	Whenever people management policies and initiatives are developed or revised, they identify opportunities to support this RAP
July 2009	A communications strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees is established to support implementation of DEEWR's new Collective Agreement
Dec 2009	Evaluate the implementation of the Identified Positions Policy by December 2009
July 2009	Implementation of DEEWR's new Performance Management System provides guidance for supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
July 2009 and each subsequent year	Information is gathered on the experience and job satisfaction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, including on entry, in annual job satisfaction surveys and, where relevant, on exit from the Department

## Respect Valuing the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Focus area 1.3: Playing our part in heightening community understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Proactively support the placement of positive stories about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including outcomes of DEEWR's programs, in internal publications and promote possible uptake of information in external media	<b>Lead Group</b> Parliamentary & Communication Group	July 2009 and each subsequent year	All relevant DEEWR publications highlight, in each edition, best practices and achievements in closing the gap
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b> Delivery and Network Group (State Managers) Indigenous Group All Senior Executive Staff	July 2010	A strategy to promote wider media uptake and exposure of our successes (including television, radio and print) is developed, implemented and evaluated. As part of this strategy, mainstream media trends for coverage of relevant positive stories relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are monitored

2. Ensure easy and ready access to information about DEEWR's programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

**Lead Group**

Parliamentary & Communication Group

**Supporting Group/s**

Delivery and Network Group (State Managers)  
Indigenous Group  
All Senior Executive Staff

July 2009 and each subsequent year

There is a single entry portal on DEEWR's external web site that provides information on all services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including links to other Departments, and consideration is given to how to provide this information to people without internet access

July 2009 and each subsequent year

Information on DEEWR's programs, networks, services and career opportunities for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is consolidated and made easily accessible through a single entry point on DEEWR's internet home page

## Relationships Indigenous and other Australians working together for positive outcomes

Focus area 2.1: Building strong, mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and individuals

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Continue to identify and build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a core component of our work	<b>Lead Group</b> Research Analysis and Evaluation Group	July 2009 and each subsequent year	Document the diverse range of processes for collaborating and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and individuals that are already in place at national, state, regional and local levels to assist in the development of the Knowledge Bank and the Consultation Guidelines
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b> All DEEWR Staff	July 2009 and each subsequent year	Progress in building relationships is evaluated, including through feedback on stakeholder surveys
2. Scope and plan an internal Knowledge Bank of information on communities and programs, issues, risks and solutions, principles and methodologies drawn from experience, previous consultations, evaluations and reviews	<b>Lead Group</b> Research Analysis and Evaluation Group  <b>Supporting Group/s</b> Indigenous Steering Committee	July 2011	A pilot program for a Knowledge Bank component is established, with protocols developed for adding and accessing information at all levels of the organisation, from those working in the field to those setting national strategy

## Relationships Indigenous and other Australians working together for positive outcomes

Focus area 2.2: Embedding consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as core to successful outcomes

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Develop consultation guidelines* that provide a framework about how and when to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in policy, program design and delivery  <i>*These are intended to be high level, supporting adaptation to local circumstances</i>	<b>Lead Group</b> Research Analysis and Evaluation Group  <b>Supporting Group/s</b> Indigenous Steering Committee  All Senior Executive Staff	July 2009	Guidelines are implemented setting out consultation principles and standards, and include elements such as timing, ongoing communication, post implementation assessment, and key outcomes summaries for data gathering
		July 2010	Expanded project management processes and methodologies are developed, which embed the Consultation Guidelines
		July 2011	Case studies to support best practice are readily available to staff through the Knowledge Bank

2. Establish clear processes for engaging effectively with DEEWR Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and committees	<b>Lead Group</b> Strategic Policy Group	July 2009 and each subsequent year	Indigenous representation occurs at Executive Management, SES Forums and People and Leadership Committee
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b> Indigenous Group Delivery and Network Group (State Managers)	July 2009 and each subsequent year	All key decisions are made in consultation with the most appropriate of: the Indigenous Leader, Indigenous Senior Adviser; the Indigenous Steering Committee; Mura Kaimel—Yarrangi Committee, Indigenous staff networks or other DEEWR Indigenous representative positions and committees
		July 2009	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are provided with the opportunity to identify in the Individual Performance and Development agreement if they wish to be formally engaged in and supported in an Indigenous policy and program development role
3. Encourage external service providers working with DEEWR to demonstrate how they are working towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	<b>Lead Group</b> Legal, Investigations and Procurement	July 2009	Current tendering and procurement processes across the full range of DEEWR activities are reviewed to identify how they can be strengthened, encouraging actions such as: existence of a Reconciliation Action Plan or contracting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander companies and/or employees
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b> All Senior Executive Staff	July 2010	Modified procurement and tendering processes are implemented

**Opportunities**    **Driving results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through practical and creative solutions**

Focus area 3.1: Finding solutions and delivering results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all of DEEWR's activities

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Ensure all DEEWR policies and programs specify how they are working to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	<b>Lead Group</b> Finance Group	July 2009	Every new program or policy contains an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes statement and participation targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b> Indigenous Steering Committee	July 2009	All Group Business Plans have measures relating to achieving quality outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are reviewed annually
	All Senior Executive Staff	July 2010	Every new program incorporates an evaluation strategy that includes community feedback and mechanisms for continuous learning and collection of data. Programs are continuously refined and outcomes tracked through this process

2. Programs and policies have scope for tailored strategies to meet the requirements of metropolitan, urban, regional, remote and very remote communities	<b>Lead Group</b> All National Program Managers	July 2010	Processes for sourcing and collecting data are in place that inform the differentiation of programs to meet specific community requirements
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b> Indigenous Steering Committee All Senior Executive Staff	July 2010	Existing Program Guidelines are reviewed to ensure they allow flexible solutions
		July 2009 and each subsequent year	Solutions are based on qualitative and quantitative evidence, including local and international best practices
3. Align our work to ensure DEEWR delivers on COAG Closing the Gap targets	<b>Lead Group</b> Strategic Policy Group	July 2009	Processes are in place for monitoring and evaluating progress against COAG specific targets
	<b>Supporting Group/s</b> Research Analysis and Evaluation Group Indigenous Steering Committee	July 2009	Processes for cross departmental and external collaboration in meeting COAG Closing the Gap targets are established and operating smoothly
		July 2009 and each subsequent year	DEEWR Closing the Gap COAG targets are being met

**Opportunities** Driving results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through practical and creative solutions

Focus area 3.2: Becoming an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Implement whole of career strategies that increase the recruitment, retention and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	<p><b>Lead Group</b> People Group</p> <p><b>Supporting Group/s</b> Indigenous Leader Mura Kaimel—Yarrangi Committee</p>	July 2010	<p>A Mura Kaimel—Yarrangi Implementation Plan is developed and funded annually to support delivery of the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 330 staff by June 2010, reviewing the percentage increase on an annual basis thereafter</li> <li>• achievement of employment equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, particularly at Executive and SES levels</li> <li>• annual increases in recruitment through entry level, cadet and graduate programs</li> <li>• increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working across all Groups by June 2010</li> </ul>

- July 2009 DEEWR's induction processes gather data to assist in improved recruitment and retention and provide information on committees, policies, social networks and other support mechanisms for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and their supervisors
- July 2010 A career advancement process is established for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, including a mechanism for tracking and measuring advancement
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## Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Develop implementation plans that underpin the RAP	Finance Group	July 2009	Implementation Plans created Baseline measures established to inform assessments
2. Review departmental governance committee objectives to align them with RAP objectives	Executive Management Committee	July 2009	Revised objectives released as required for Mura Kaimel—Yarrangi Committee, People and Leadership Committee, and Indigenous Steering Committee
3. Monitor progress and support implementation	Finance Group	July 2009 and each subsequent year	Regular meetings of RAP Working Group review progress
4. Progress on RAP monitored by Executive Committee	Executive Management Committee	6 monthly	RAP progress reports presented to Executive Meeting include progress, achievements, barriers and milestones
5. Progress reported to staff on DEEWR internet and intranet sites	Finance Group	annually	Information on RAP progress communicated to staff
6. Progress report on the RAP in DEEWR's annual report	Finance Group	annually	Report includes examples of completed actions

7. Report to Reconciliation Australia	Finance Group	annually	Report is prepared on time and lessons learnt informs refreshed RAP
8. Review and update RAP annually	Finance Group	annually	Staff, stakeholders and Reconciliation Australia are consulted in the development of new actions for the DEEWR RAP.

Further information on the Department's RAP can be found at [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)