

THE WETLANDS CENTRE COCKBURN

Reconciliation Action Plan

2023 - 2024



Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia



INAUGURAL REFLECT RAP

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Wetlands Nyungar moort Beeliar boodja-k kaadadjiny. Koora, yeyi, benang baalap nidja boodja-k kaaradjiny. Ngalak kaadatj dayin boodja, kep wer malayin. Ngalak kaadatj koora wer yeyi ngalang birdiya.

The Wetlands Centre acknowledges the Nyungar peoples of Beeliar boodja, long ago, now and in the future, they care for country. We acknowledge a continuing connection to land, waters and culture and pay our respects to the Elders, past and present.

Our Commitment

Our Reconciliation Vision

Our vision, underpinned by recognition of historic and contemporary injustices towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is to ensure all policies, programs, projects and plans of the Wetlands Centre, recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture and values, and acknowledges that this is essential to ensure the wellbeing of our community, the natural environment and our cultural heritage.

Our Commitment to Reconciliation

The Wetlands Centre is committed to developing meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, based on respect, acknowledgement of historic and current injustices, and a common commitment to work together for the benefit of all Australians.

The Strategic Plan of the Centre embraced as a key objective the development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This will ensure the objectives of the plan are an essential component of the process of monitoring and evaluating the ongoing progress of the organisation towards its strategic goals, and therefore embedding reconciliation in all future decision making processes of the Wetlands Centre.

The Board of the Wetlands Centre recognises that reconciliation has both a symbolic and practical aspect and that through the understanding and acknowledgement of historical injustice, the community can truly value the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as an integral part of our society and collective wellbeing.

As Chair of the Wetlands Education Centre, and Elder in Residence, we are pleased to introduce this Reconciliation Action Plan and believe by working towards the outcomes of the plan, the organisation, and the community it works for will grow stronger in unity and diversity.

Thomas E Perrigo OAM
Chair
Cockburn Wetlands Centre

Marie Taylor
Elder in Residence
Cockburn Wetlands Centre

*Opening of the Wetlands Centre's amphitheatre
– 'Yarning Circle' February 2023.*

Who We Are?



The Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre works to raise knowledge, awareness, understanding and commitment to the conservation of Wetlands, here in Western Australia, across the nation and internationally. This is achieved by promoting, facilitating and delivering community environmental education activities, including on the ground conservation work, curriculum aligned education programs and adult education, training and professional development opportunities.

The Wetlands Centre was established in 1993, by a dedicated group of individuals committed to the restoration and conservation of the Beeliam Wetlands, known to Nyungar people as the Beeliam boodjar (Beeliam land). The Centre is an incorporated association and is managed by a Board of seven community volunteers.

The Wetlands Centre has played a significant role in the restoration and revegetation of land surrounding Walliabup (Bibra Lake) and Coolbellup (North Lake), and operates a native plant nursery to support community conservation initiatives. In addition to on the ground conservation work, the Centre has promoted and delivered community environmental education programs through curriculum aligned activities for school children, School holidays programs such as “Get Wild for Wetlands”, and adult education, professional development and volunteer opportunities. Since 2003, the Wetlands Centre has hosted the annual Wetlands Conference, which is now the largest wetlands focused environmental conference in Australia.

Left: General Manager, Karl Haynes introducing speakers at the Centre’s Reconciliation Week event in May 2023.

Everything the Wetland Centre does is guided by our vision to increase knowledge, awareness, understanding, and commitment to the wise management of our unique natural and cultural environment.

Since 2020 the Centre has dedicated itself to expanding and improving its work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In 2021, the Centre appointed Whadjuk Elder Marie Taylor as our Elder in Residence, and in partnership with Yelakitj Moort began our reconciliation journey with the development of the Centre’s Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

Located in the heart of the Cockburn Wetlands Precinct, Bibra Lake, the Wetlands Centre, currently employs four staff, three of which are engaged through specific purpose grants. The Centre currently employs one Aboriginal person as part of one of these grants.

The work of Wetlands Centre is supported by over 30 dedicated volunteers and the generous annual financial support of the City of Cockburn.



Our Vision

Wetlands are increasingly appreciated and recognised by the local and state-wide community for their scientific, aesthetic, historic, social, and spiritual values.

Our Mission

To connect the community with Wetlands through projects, programs and events which increase the knowledge, awareness, understanding, and commitment to their conservation and wise use within the wider environment.

Our Values

Accountability

Trust

Transparency

Collaboration

Stewardship

Respect

Integrity

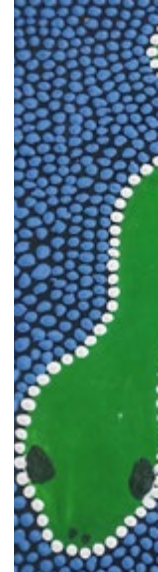
Our Strategic Goals

Leadership: To increase the knowledge, awareness, understanding, and commitment of decision-makers in all aspects of wetlands and environmental education.

Partnership: To initiate and sustain the widest possible proactive participation, support and engagement with wetlands and environmental education.

Sustainability: To develop and deliver standards, processes, projects, programs, and events that are environmentally, socially, and economically justified.

Governance: To demonstrate best practice in the Wetland Centre's culture, systems, and skills enabling more effective and efficient operations for all stakeholders including members, volunteers, and partners.



Our Reflect Journey

The Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan has been developed in partnership with Yelakitj Moort, under the leadership of Whadjuk Elder Marie Taylor and the guidance of an Aboriginal advisory group established in 2022 to support this endeavour. Whadjuk Elder Robyn Collard facilitated a number of advisory group workshops which have provided creative insights and resulted in the shaping of the reconciliation deliverables of this plan.

Our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan is intended to ensure:

- The cultural capability of our staff, volunteers and governing Board is increased through cultural awareness and competency training along with the active engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Strengthen our collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in delivering the Centre's education activities.
- Promote the Centre and its facilities as a community resource welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are appropriately, respectfully and actively acknowledged as Traditional Custodians of the Land.

The implementation of the Plan will be led by the Centre's Reconciliation Working Group (RWG), which will be made up of the Centres' Elder in Residence, invited members of the local Aboriginal community, senior staff and the Chairperson of the Centre's Board. This group will be established and Terms of Reference confirmed shortly after the commencement of this plan. The RWG is intended

The Wetlands Education Centre began its reconciliation journey in 2021 with the appointment of Elder Marie Taylor as the Centre's Elder in Residence and the endorsement of the Centre's Strategic Plan 2020-2025 which highlighted the need to improve and expand our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the need to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Board of the Wetlands Centre acknowledges the importance of working respectfully, actively and knowledgeably with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Both in terms of recognising the impacts of colonisation, occupation and dispossession of the Traditional Custodians of the land as well as acknowledging the high level of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage significance of the Wetlands where the Centre works.

Left: Nyungar Elder Marie Taylor, Welcoming attendees to Cultural Education workshop held in May 2023.



to meet at least three times over a 12 month period and report directly to the Board of the Centre.

The General Manager of the Centre will act as the RAP Champion and will oversee the deliverables in the RAP.

Partnerships and Projects

In the course of the last two years, the Wetlands Centre has established relationships with Aboriginal people and organisations and undertaken a number of projects that promote reconciliation and engagement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-indigenous Australians.

As part of our commitment to reconciliation, the Wetland Centre initiated and completed two major interpretation projects to enhance community awareness of the Centre, the Wetlands and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage of the Beelir Regional Park.

In early 2023 a ten part podcast series was completed which featured a number of prominent Aboriginal persons sharing their knowledge, wisdom and insights about the Wetlands, and the natural environment more generally. The Podcast series is anticipated to be publically available late 2023.

Along with this, the Centre commissioned the development and implementation of a number of interpretative displays as part of the entry to the Centre. At the heart of the displays is the acknowledgement and promotion of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage values of the place. The Centre's Chairperson was privileged to have received on behalf of the organisation a 'message stick',

created by local Aboriginal artist under the supervision of Marie Taylor. This forms part of the interpretative display.

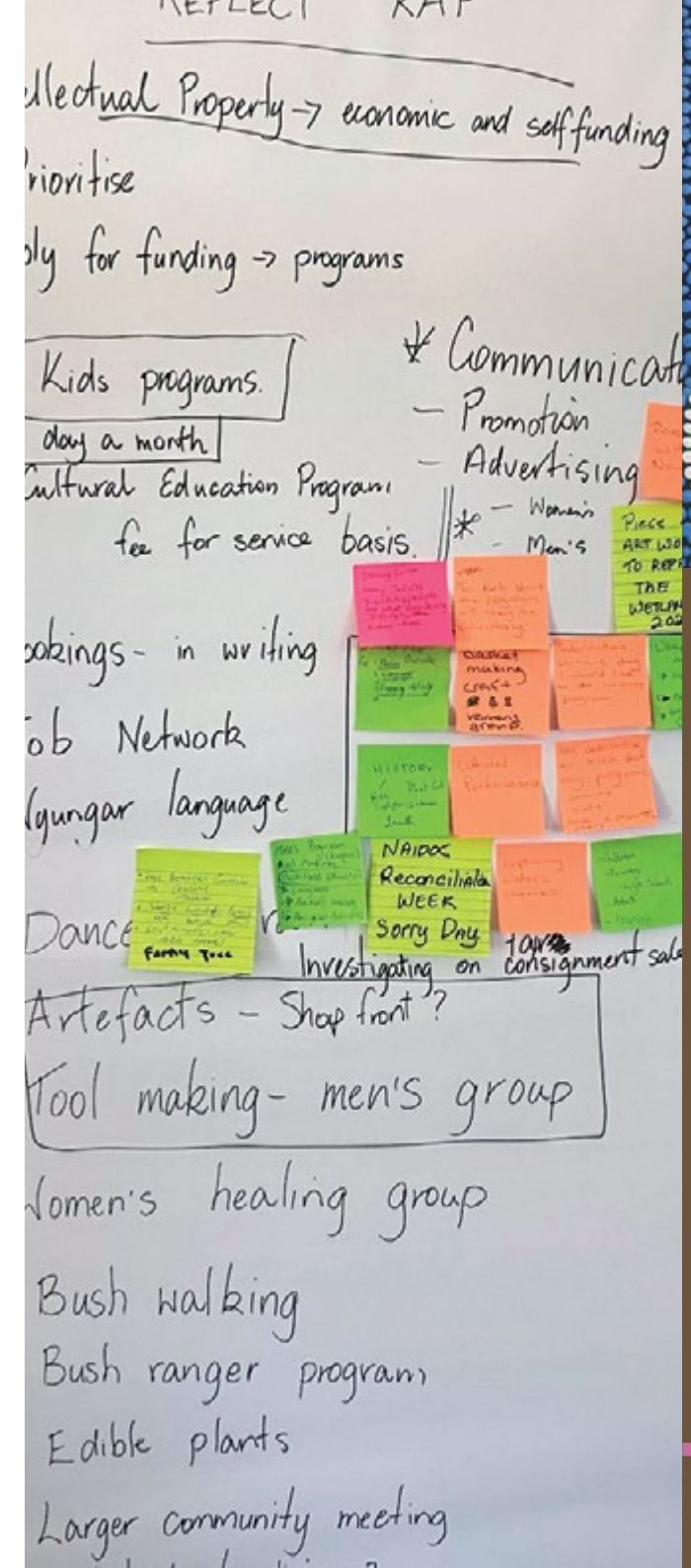
Since 2021, the Wetlands Centre has ensured that every major community event hosted by the organisation is preceded by a Welcome to Country, undertaken by an Aboriginal Elder, and that all meetings, workshops and small seminars are commenced with an Acknowledgement of Country.

The 2022 Annual Wetlands Conference, introduced a half day series of lectures and workshops devoted to reconciliation, this has now been incorporated as a key part of the conference program and in 2023 was retitled 'Truth and Reconciliation' to sharpen our awareness of the historic impacts of occupation and dispossession and their contemporary reverberation.

In late 2022 and early 2023 the Centre invested considerable funds to the refurbishment of the Centre's amphitheatre and is now actively promoting its use as a 'yarning circle'. Along with the refurbishment of the amphitheatre the Centre has undertaken a major landscaping project of land under its control, and has ensured that it acknowledges, reflects and celebrates the six seasons of the Nyungar calendar.

All of the programs and projects listed have included the active engagement of Aboriginal people.

Right: RAP brain storming.





Taking Action

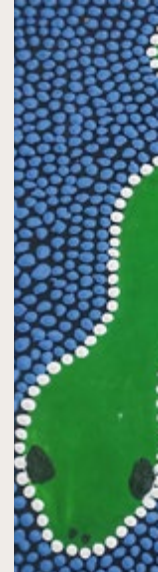


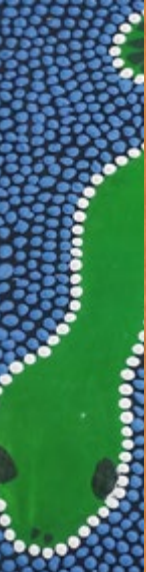
Relationships

The Wetlands Centre is committed to developing meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, based on respect, acknowledgement of historic and current injustices, and a common commitment to work together for the benefit of all Australians.

Wetlands Centre's Elder in Residence, Marie Taylor welcoming people to the 19th Annual Wetlands Conference held in February 2023.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area and those groups involved in environmental education and conservation activity. 	September 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	October 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make contact with those groups identified, and explore opportunities to work together. 	October 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an ongoing engagement with the City of Cockburn's Aboriginal Advisory Group. 	October 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. 	May 2023 & 2024	Administration and Facilities Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	27 May- 3 June, 2023 & 2024	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	27 May- 3 June, 2023 & 2024	General Manager
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a communication plan to raise awareness with our staff and volunteers about our RAP commitments. 	September 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once completed and authorised make the RAP available on the organisations website. 	September 2023	Administration and Facilities Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	September 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	October 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	November 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	December 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson





Taking Action

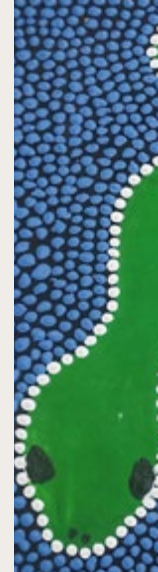


Respect

Through cultural learning opportunities the Wetland Centre will work towards developing a deeper understanding and awareness of the cultural practices and protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and through this promote trust, mutual respect and commitment to our collective wellbeing.

Smoking Ceremony being held as part of the Cultural Education workshop held in May 2023.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. 	January 2024	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	September 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with the Centre's Elder in Residence, develop a cultural awareness and competency training package for staff and volunteers of the Wetlands Education Centre 	January 2024	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all staff and regular volunteers undertake cultural awareness and competency training at least once every two years. 	December 2024	General Manager
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. 	May 2024	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	October 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and display an Acknowledgement of Country in the main entrance of the Wetlands Education Centre and in all public documents, including minutes and agendas of the organisation. 	October 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Acknowledgement of Country is a standard practices for all meetings held or hosted by the Wetlands Education Centre. 	October 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all major community events held by the Wetlands Education Centre have a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony undertaken by an Elder with appropriate cultural approval. 	October 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	June 2023, 2024	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. 	June 2023 & 2024	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	First week in July, 2023 & 2024	Centre's Board Chairperson





Taking Action

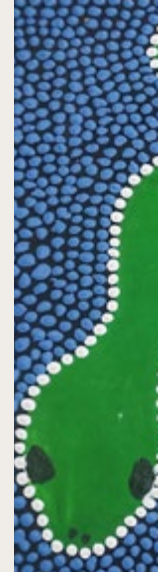


Opportunities

The Wetlands Centre will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and businesses, to identify opportunities and overcome barriers in working together and creating opportunities and partnerships in delivering the Centre's services to the broader community.

Bush Medicine stall at the Centre's Reconciliation Week event in May 2023.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. 	March 2024	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate employment pathways such as traineeships, internships, student placements and volunteer programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. 	March 2024	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a mutually financially beneficial model to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals to utilise the facilities of the Wetlands Centre in delivering cultural and environmental education activities, including developing partnerships in the delivery of those services. 	September 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. 	January 2024	General Manager
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. 	October 2023	Administration and Facilities Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	October 2023	Administration and Facilities Officer





Taking Action

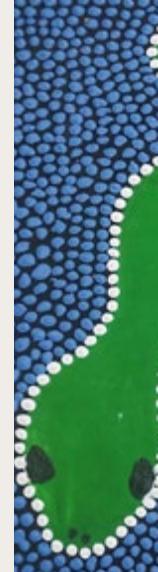


Governance

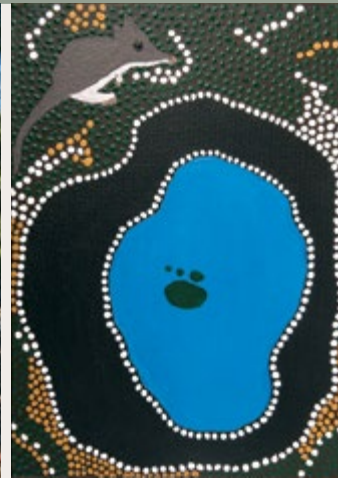
Essential to reconciliation is the achievement of tangible and measurable outcomes for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples and communities. The Wetland Centre acknowledges the importance of delivering on the commitments made in this RAP and is committed to transparency in monitoring and evaluating its performance towards delivering the organisation's first RAP.

Children hand painting as part of the Get Wild about Wetlands School holiday program, April 2023.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation. 	September 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG. 	September 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. 	September 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define resource needs for RAP implementation. 	July 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. 	July 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally. 	July 2023	Centre's Board Chairperson
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. 	September 2023	General Manager
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence. 	June annually	Administration and Facilities Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire. 	1 August annually	Administration and Facilities Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. 	30 September, annually	Administration and Facilities Officer
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. 	August 2024	General Manager



About the artist



Brett Collard Jr.

Brett Collard Jrn is a Balladong / Whadjuk Nyungar artist and artefact maker.

Brett who is also known as Yelakitj, was raised in the Milyirrtjarra (Warburton) Aboriginal community in the Central Desert of Western Australia. He is recognised as a cultural law man of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and is a fluent speaker of the language.

Brett worked with the Centre in preparation of the Reconciliation Action Plan and did the painting of Walliabup (Bibra Lake) and the surrounding wetlands which is on the cover of the RAP.

He is keen to promote art and traditional artefact making as part of our collective journey of reconciliation. Brett can be contacted at yelakiji@gmail.com

THE WETLANDS CENTRE COCKBURN

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