



# **Reflect – Reconciliation Action Plan:** Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector

June 2025 – December 2026





# Acknowledgement of Country

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**The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands. Our office is based on the lands of the Wurundjeri people – the lands on which many of our team members also live and work from home. Other team members live and work on the lands of the Bunurong and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples.**

We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise the deep and enduring connection of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country and their continuing custodianship of the land, waterways and seas.

We proudly recognise First Nations peoples as having the world's oldest living cultures, and acknowledge that the heritage, traditions and customs of Aboriginal communities throughout Victoria are vibrant, rich and diverse.

We respect that Elders and other leaders of Aboriginal communities in Victoria are critical to redressing inequality and disadvantage and improving outcomes for Victorian women. Their leadership includes First Nations women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, non-binary, sistergirls, brotherboys, intersex and queer folk who drive gender equality across Victoria. We thank them and honour their important work.

As we reflect on previous government policies and practices, we acknowledge the continuing negative impacts on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, we recognise and embrace the opportunity to collaborate and work together with First Nations peoples, families, and communities, towards improved economic, social, and cultural outcomes.



# About the artist and artwork

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The artwork in this RAP was created by Melissa Bell, a proud Gunditjimara and Yorta Yorta woman. Melissa's work focusses on her Country and her totem, the long-necked turtle, connecting her to her land and her culture. Melissa says:

**Making art makes me feel connected to my land. To be an Aboriginal female artist, just to put down a beautiful picture from my Country – knowing I can put that down on a canvas and express my Country to other people is amazing<sup>1</sup>**

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"Yarning Circles" is a 2023 piece from Melissa. Melissa shares the following story about what this artwork represents:

Coming together as one, sitting around yarnning under the blue stars.

The artwork and its message resonated with the Commission and our RAP working group. We see our RAP as an opportunity to have meaningful conversations across our organisation and communities, together with First Nations stakeholders, community members and experts in their field. As we foster the spirit of open dialogue and coming together to yarn, share knowledge and ideas, we embrace the opportunity to take our learnings beyond our work and into our personal lives.

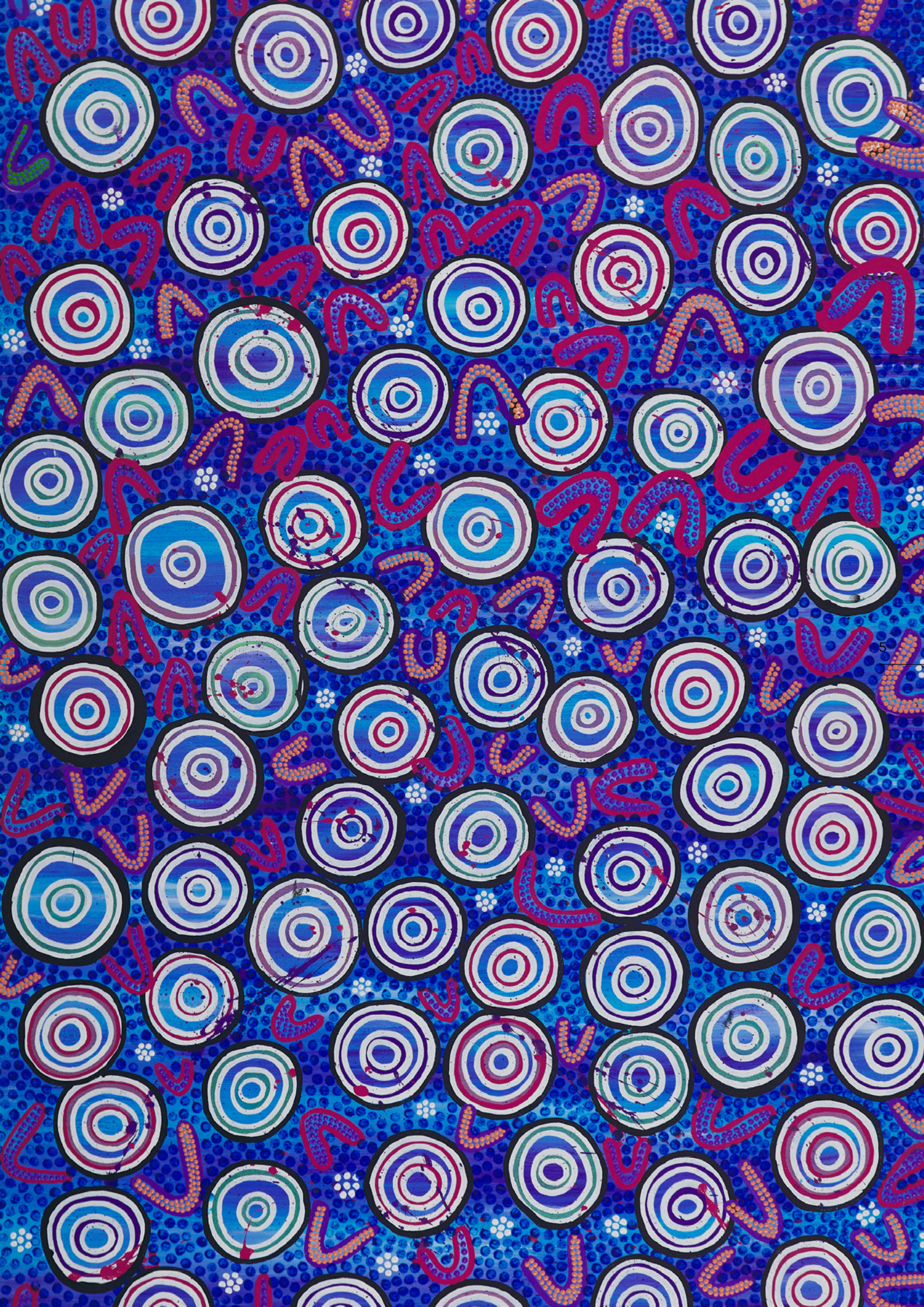
We were connected to Melissa's work through an organisation called "The Torch". The Torch works with First Nations visual artists who are currently or have previously been incarcerated, to provide them with cultural and artistic support and to build the artists' confidence and foster their artistic expression. It also provides practical creative pathways to for artists to pursue further education or to move into the creative industries, post-release.<sup>2</sup>

1. You can read more from Melissa here: [thetorch.org.au/news/artist-insights-melissa-bell](https://thetorch.org.au/news/artist-insights-melissa-bell)

2. You can read more about The Torch here: [thetorch.org.au/what-we-do](https://thetorch.org.au/what-we-do)









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# Commissioner foreword

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**I am so pleased to introduce our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – one of the tangible ways in which we can demonstrate our commitment towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities of Australia.**

Our team members at the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (the Commission) in Victoria are passionate about social justice and human rights. We are proud to be leading the implementation of ground-breaking intersectional gender equality legislation – the first of its kind in Australia. This legislation recognises and addresses systemic causes of inequality. It also recognises that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of culture, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other attributes.

The Gender Equality Act, and our work in implementing it, sets out to enhance economic and social participation, to redress disadvantage and address stigma, stereotyping, prejudice, and violence by way of structural change; and to further promote the right to equality set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Striving for equality and social justice is at the centre of everything we do in the Commission. This defines our culture, the way we work together and with our stakeholders, the way we take care of each other, and our broader involvement in our communities. Our first Reconciliation Action Plan is driven by these values, and we are committed to walking together with the Traditional Owners and Custodians of First Nations – the world's oldest living cultures – as we forge a path to reconciliation.

I am really proud that our first RAP was developed by a committee involving half our team members. It has been exciting to see this coming together alongside all the activities that these team members have been undertaking to educate themselves – and the rest of our team – about the continuing impact of government policies and practices on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, families, and communities. We stand in allyship with First Nations peoples to address these impacts.

We are committed to playing an active role in strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples through our work and for the benefit of our stakeholders and communities. We will review our business practices, continue to increase our awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, and seek the guidance of First Nations peoples in creating and evolving our actions over time.

**Dr Niki Vincent**

Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner



# Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia

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## Inaugural Reflect RAP

**Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.**

The Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector joins a network of more than 3,000 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 the Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector 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 Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, 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





# Message from our RAP working group

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**As an organisation, the Commission is founded on the idea of equality. The legislation that we work under is designed to drive meaningful progress towards gender equality in Victorian public sector organisations and communities. It is also the first piece of Australian legislation to explicitly incorporate an intersectional lens. As such, our organisational values and the people who work here are passionate about creating positive social change.**

Our commitment to equality can be seen in the fact that when we established our RAP Working Group, more than half of our team members volunteered to participate. As a gender equality Commission, we know that First Nations women and gender diverse people face compounding experiences of inequality based on sexism, racism and colonialism, and that these combine to create specific forms of disadvantage and discrimination. We're committed not only to working hard to address these inequalities, but also to learning from First Nations peoples, and celebrating their diverse cultures.

We started talking about developing a RAP in 2022. This work is important to us, not only because we're keen to learn more about the history of the local Wurundjeri people and Bunurong people here in Naarm (Melbourne) and to engage with First Nations stakeholders across Victoria, but also because we have a responsibility as a government entity to progress reconciliation.

In the past, government policies have inflicted systemic harms on First Nations peoples. Government data collection has also been used to control or punish First Nations peoples. Given that the Commission collects data relating to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of our legislated work, it's vital that continue to learn and work in partnership with First Nations stakeholders to ensure we practice in a culturally safe and responsive way.

We would like to give a huge thanks to Maria Watson-Trudgett. Maria is a Wiradyuri woman, First Nations Consultant & Aboriginal Artist who sits on our RAP working group. Maria joined us about halfway through our RAP development journey and has made an enormous contribution to our learning and the quality of our RAP. Thank you, Maria, for your knowledge, guidance and encouragement. We very much appreciate your practical advice and belief in our team, and we look forward to collaborating with you, and seeking your guidance on our RAP implementation.

We have already learnt a huge amount on this journey, but we know there's more to do to educate ourselves and move towards meaningful reconciliation. We are looking forward to implementing our RAP in 2025 and growing our understanding and connections.



# Maria Watson-Trudgett

## First Nations Consultant

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**Maria is an Aboriginal artist and Consultant. A Koori woman of the Wiradyuri people and a passionate advocate for positively influencing people's attitudes and awareness of First Nations peoples and diverse cultures.**

Maria is a First Nations Strategic Advisor, with 30 years' experience in community and stakeholder engagement. She has extensive experience of cultural safety principles and a deep understanding of traditional engagement approaches. Maria has guided many organisations through their cultural capability development, by creating and implementing strategic frameworks, Reconciliation Action Plans, including policy review and redevelopment, culturally appropriate language review of documents, programs and websites, culturally safe content and resources creation, community engagement and service delivery, and all programs and initiatives pertaining to First Nations peoples and communities.



**"I am delighted to be engaged to guide the Commission's RAP development and implementation"**

**– Maria.**





# Our vision for reconciliation

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Our vision for reconciliation, aligned with the Gender Equality Act, is that:

**All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. Reconciliation means we walk together with First Nations peoples to achieve this goal.**

It means we acknowledge and celebrate the strength of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and leaders. In particular, as a Gender Equality Commission, it means that we recognise and value the role of First Nations women and gender-diverse people in driving equality, not only in First Nations communities, but for all Victorians.

It means we respect and highlight the wisdom of Elders and other leaders of Aboriginal communities in Victoria, and recognise they are central to improving outcomes for Victorian women and gender-diverse people. It means that as a government organisation, our work is guided by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and their needs. It means we respectfully listen to all peoples and are guided to enable positive change.



# Our business

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## Our vision

A gender-equal  
Victoria for everyone  
– inspiring change.

## Why we exist

The 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence showed that Victoria needs to address gender inequality in order to reduce family violence and all forms of violence against women. In response, Victoria's first gender equality strategy, *Safe and Strong*, was released in December 2016. As part of *Safe and Strong*, the government committed to legislative change to promote gender equality, and as a result the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Act) was developed.

The Act aims to improve gender equality in Victorian public sector, university and local council workplaces as well as in the broader Victorian community. The Act commenced operation on 31 March 2021.

The Act promotes gender equality by:

- ▶ Requiring the Victorian public sector, local councils and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality.
- ▶ Requiring these organisations to consider and promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services.
- ▶ Establishing the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner (Commissioner) to provide education, support implementation and enforce compliance.





## Who we are, and what we do

The Commissioner, Dr Niki Vincent, is supported by 20 staff members (total) employed by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, to assist her to carry out her functions under the Act. We currently do not employ any First Nations staff. We have one office located in Melbourne CBD.

The functions of the Act are to:

- ▶ Promote and advance the objects of the Act throughout the public sector.
- ▶ Support duty holders (certain public sector organisations with 50 or more employees) to comply with the Act.
- ▶ Provide advice to duty holders about the operation of the Act.
- ▶ Establish and undertake information and education programs for duty holders in order to encourage best practice and facilitate compliance.
- ▶ Undertake research into any matter related to the operation and objectives of the Act.
- ▶ Report to the Victorian Minister for Women on any matter arising from the performance of these functions.

The Act places certain obligations on duty holders. It requires duty holders to:

- ▶ Develop and implement a Gender Equality Action Plan, which includes results of a workplace gender audit and strategies for achieving workplace gender equality.
- ▶ Publicly report on their progress in relation to workplace gender equality.
- ▶ Complete gender impact assessments on policies, programs and services that impact the public.
- ▶ Promote gender equality in policies, programs and services that impact the public.

## Relevant work programs

The Commission has already made progress in various activities and initiatives to prepare for its inaugural RAP. Our commitment to First Nations considerations is deeply integrated into our work programs, as demonstrated by the following actions:

- ▶ Under the *Gender Equality Act*, collecting data on matters pertaining to First Nations peoples is highly encouraged of the organisations that have reporting obligations under the Act. This aims to shed light on systems of privilege and disadvantage across the entire Victorian public sector, with the intention of addressing these disparities in a *Gender Equality Action Plan*.
- ▶ In 2023, we commissioned research into the experiences of Aboriginal women within the Victorian public service. This research has been published on our website and was conducted in collaboration with First Nations scholars, Associate Professor Debbie Bargallie, Professor Bronwyn Carlson, and Madi Day.
- ▶ A dedicated chapter focusing on the experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women in the Victorian public sector appears in our report *Intersectionality at Work*.



# Our RAP

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As a government organisation, the Commission recognises that we cannot truly be a gender equality organisation if we do not actively identify and challenge colonial assumptions within the structures and systems that we operate in. This is why we decided to undertake our own RAP, noting that the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), within which the Commission sits, does not currently have its own RAP in place.

Historical and contemporary data indicates significant disparities in employment outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, compared to non-Indigenous people. This inequality is further exacerbated when overlapped with gender. As such, the Commission has an imperative positive duty to actively apply an anti-racist lens to our work. This will ensure we are taking genuine, concerted efforts to practice in culturally safe and responsive ways. This is important, given the historical role government played in creating and implementing colonialist assimilation policies – the impacts of which persevere in social, economic, and political structures today. As part of our RAP, we aim to explore the notion that patriarchy and colonialism are inherently interdependent and interrelated.

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey, and we commit to taking an active role in creating a just, equal and fair Australia.

The Commission's RAP champion is Alice Dunt, Director and Dr Niki Vincent, Gender Equality Commissioner.

## Working group members

- ▶ **Alice Dunt**, Director (Chair)
- ▶ **Kathryn Smith**, Senior Policy Adviser, Policy, Evidence and Insights (PEI)
- ▶ **Bryony Green**, Senior Policy and Programs Adviser, Stakeholder Engagement and Support (SES)
- ▶ **Maria Watson-Trudgett** (First Nations consultant)
- ▶ **Jessica Megarry**, Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, Policy, Evidence and Insights (PEI)
- ▶ **Margot Paxon**, Manager, Gender Impact Assessment Strategy (GIA)
- ▶ **Kate Farhall**, Manager, Policy, Evidence and Insights (PEI)
- ▶ **Niki Vincent**, Gender Equality Commissioner
- ▶ **Nurul Mahmudah Herbst**, Policy Adviser, Gender Impact Assessment Strategy (GIA)
- ▶ **Luke Talbot**, Data & Program Adviser, Data and Enablement (D&E)
- ▶ **Saing Te**, Senior Policy Adviser, Governance, Reform and Dispute Resolution (GRD)

## Starting out

It is important for the Commission to understand how we can leverage the *Gender Equality Act 2020* to progress the rights of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in its intersection with gender. This includes the support we provide to organisations under the Act, and the questions to be asked when collecting intersectional data and conducting gender impact assessments.





Key areas of focus for us to explore and grow through:

- ▶ **Cultural awareness and cultural safety:**  
Embed a culture of continuous learning and apply our learnings to enable culturally safe working environments.
- ▶ **Recruitment and representation:**  
Recruit Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and actively listen to their cultural perspectives and insights.
- ▶ **Consultation and relationships:**  
Establish and nurture relationships with First Nations stakeholders and collaborate in reciprocal ways using shared practices.

## Current activities

Initiatives related to RAP activities have been underway since late 2022. These have included establishing the RAP Working Group (RWG) in late 2022. The RWG group comprises 13 voluntary team members, including the Commissioner and Director of the Commission. Members contribute to the planning and delivery of activities associated with First Nations recognition, celebration, and RAP-related initiatives. In 2023, this group led Commission-wide engagement with National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities, identified opportunities for learning about First Nations cultures, knowledges and histories, and began to examine and identify present and future roles within the Commission for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, including special measures designated opportunities.

## Learnings, aims and key achievements

It is important to note that the Commission currently does not have First Nations representation throughout our colleagues or team members. We have identified this as a gap and a key focus area to improve on. We recognise our RAP is a guide for positive change and equal opportunity. A tool to support our learning and collaboration with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We are delighted to promote reconciliation within our work and personal lives, and our RAP working group members are passionate about their ongoing cultural awareness journey.

## Next steps

The opportunity for the Commission to complete its own RAP has been profound and we hope to expand from these crucial learnings. We are excited to see the outcomes from our RAP, including in our work promoting gender equality, and to better support the self-determination of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.



# Relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</b>	Identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	October 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Manager, GIA <b>Support:</b> Policy Adviser, GIA
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	December 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Senior Policy and Programs Adviser, SES <b>Support:</b> Data & Program Adviser, D&E
<b>Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</b>	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May (yearly)	<b>Lead:</b> Director <b>Support:</b> Senior Policy and Programs Adviser
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May-3 June (yearly)	<b>Lead:</b> Director <b>Support:</b> Senior Policy and Programs Adviser, SES
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May-3 June (yearly)	<b>Lead:</b> Commissioner <b>Support:</b> Director
<b>Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.</b>	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	January 2026 May 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Commissioner <b>Support:</b> Director
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	December 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Manager, GIA <b>Support:</b> Policy Adviser, GIA
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	December 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Manager, GIA <b>Support:</b> Policy Adviser, GIA
<b>Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.</b>	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	January 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Senior Policy Adviser, GRD <b>Support:</b> Data & Program Adviser, D&E
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	October 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Director <b>Support:</b> Senior Policy Adviser, PEI



# Respect



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	February 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Manager, PEI <b>Support:</b> Senior Policy Adviser, PEI
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation	October 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Manager, PEI <b>Support:</b> Senior Policy Adviser, PEI
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	October 2025 April 2026 August 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Policy Adviser, GIA <b>Support:</b> Senior Policy Adviser, PEI
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	October 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Director
Build respect for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Senior Policy and Programs Adviser, SES <b>Support:</b> Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, PEI
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Senior Policy and Programs Adviser, SES
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2026	<b>Support:</b> Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, PEI





# Opportunities



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	May 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Director
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	April 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Director
Increase Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	October 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Manager, PEI <b>Support:</b> Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, PEI
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	October 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Manager, PEI <b>Support:</b> Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, PEI



# Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.</b>	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	August 2026	RAP Chairs
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	January 2026	RAP Chairs
	Establish Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2026	RAP Chairs
<b>Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.</b>	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	October 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Commissioner <b>Support:</b> Director
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2025 February 2025* August 2026	<b>Lead:</b> Commissioner <b>Support:</b> Director
	Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally in the role of RAP Champion.	September 2025	<b>Lead:</b> Commissioner <b>Support:</b> Director
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2026	RAP Chairs
<b>Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.</b>	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.	August 2025	RAP Chairs
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August 2026	RAP Chairs
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia	30 September 2026	RAP Chairs
<b>Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.</b>	Register via Reconciliation Australia's <b>website</b> to begin developing our next RAP.	September 2026	RAP Chairs

\*Denotes monitoring dates where activities are ongoing in nature.



# Contact us

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## Key contact

### **Alice Dunt**

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