



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**

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**REFLECT**

MAY 2019 - MAY 2020



**LOWER MURRAY  
WATER**

## Message from Lower Murray Water

I am pleased to champion Lower Murray Water's first RAP as both Managing Director and RAP Champion.

We have focused on enhancing our engagement with our customer base over the past 18 months particularly groups not previously involved in discussions on water and project matters in our business.

The relationship with our Traditional Owners is a journey to better understand the value of Traditional Owner cultures, the places and land itself and the water which gives us all life.

We recognise its role as one of the stewards of water resources and the need to work closely with the community to share knowledge and develop meaningful relationships, we have much to learn from each other.

Our first Reconciliation Action Plan 'Reflect' gives the organisation clear direction and strengthens the vision and commitment from our Board and Senior Management and our staff. It's during this journey we will build understanding, trust and commitment from our staff to ensure we can deliver on our vision. Our Reflect RAP shows a commitment to build relationships and strengthen partnerships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure a shared responsibility for our water resource and lands.

Reconciliation and respect go hand-in-hand and require a strong commitment and support from industry and community. We understand this requires understanding and patience to form strong relationships and foster both transparent and honest communications and discussions.

We are pleased to present this, our first RAP on behalf of Lower Murray Water, as we embark upon our reflection and awareness phase towards reconciliation.



Anthony Couroupis  
**Managing Director**  
**Lower Murray Water**



Cheryl Rix  
**Chairperson**  
**Lower Murray Water**



Karen Mundine  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Reconciliation Australia**

## Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia is delighted to welcome Lower Murray Water to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program and to formally endorse its inaugural Reflect RAP.

As a member of the RAP community, Lower Murray Water joins over 1,000 dedicated corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have formally committed to reconciliation through the RAP program since its inception in 2006. RAP organisations across Australia are turning good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and increase pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Reconciliation is no one single issue or agenda. Based on international research and benchmarking, Reconciliation Australia defines and measures reconciliation through five critical dimensions: race relations; equality and equity, institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. All sections of the community—governments, civil society, the private sector, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities—have a role to play to progress these dimensions.

The RAP program provides a framework for organisations to advance reconciliation within their spheres of influence. This Reflect RAP provides Lower Murray Water a roadmap to begin its reconciliation journey. Through implementing a Reflect RAP, Lower Murray Water will lay the foundations for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

We wish Lower Murray Water well as it takes these first critical steps in its reconciliation journey. We encourage the organisation to embrace this journey with open hearts and minds, to grow from the challenges, and to build on the successes. As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation reminded the nation in its final report:

"Reconciliation is hard work—it's a long, winding and corrugated road, not a broad, paved highway. Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality."

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend Lower Murray Water on its first RAP, and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.

## Acknowledgment of Country

The Traditional Owner groups within Lower Murray Water's service region lies within the traditional lands of First Nations Peoples, from upstream moving downstream along the Murray (Mil) through to the Western edge of our region at the Victorian South Australian Border; They are the Barapa Barapa Peoples, the Wamba Wemba Peoples, the Wadi Wadi Peoples, the Tatti Tatti Peoples, the Latji Latji Peoples, the Nyeri Nyeri Peoples, the Ngintait Peoples and the Werigaia Peoples.

Importantly these groups as a collective respect their direct neighbours, the Wiradjuri Peoples, the Nari Nari Peoples, the Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples the Mutthi Mutthi Peoples, the Kureinji Peoples, the Barkandji Peoples, the Maraura Peoples, the Ngarket Peoples, the Wotjobaluk Peoples.

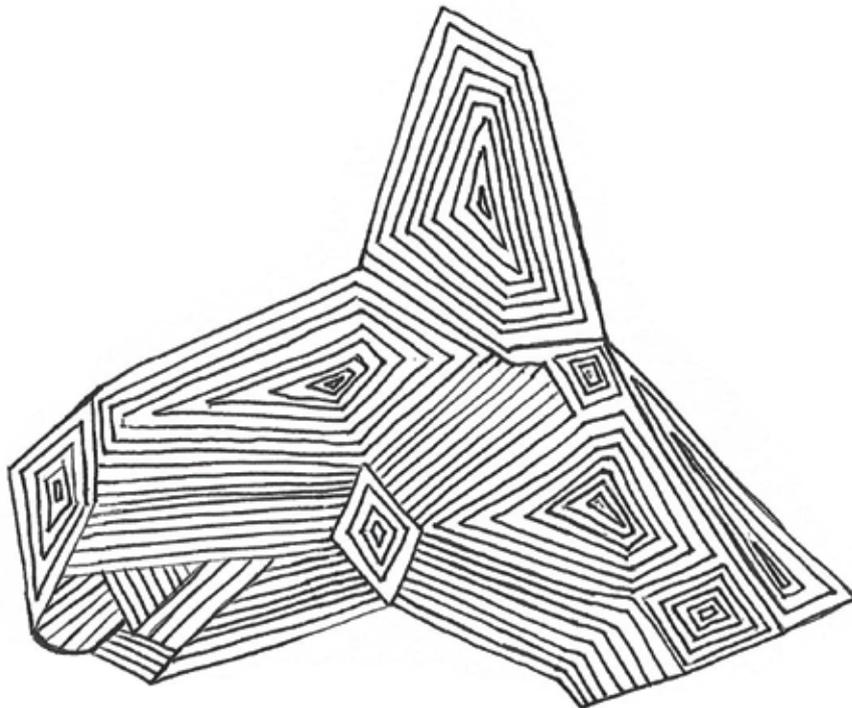
Lower Murray Water proudly acknowledge the Traditional Owners and respect their connection to both their land and waterways.

Importantly, we at Lower Murray Water also acknowledge that the land and water in which we operate, is still the life blood of the Traditional Owners of this land. The stories that connected the ancestors to their world still connect the First Nations Peoples of this area today.

The land and water are to be respected and nurtured, to be in keeping with these First Nations Peoples.

## Acknowledgement of our Traditional Owners

In November 2017, we commenced our journey to reconciliation through the commencement of conversations and the development of our Acknowledgement of Country and RAP. In doing so, we gained a better understanding of how we could form meaningful and engaging relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers and community groups. Lower Murray Water would like to thank the Traditional Owners involved in the development of this, our first RAP and guiding us on this path to reconciliation.



## Artist Acknowledgement

Lower Murray Water would like to acknowledge the artists involved in developing this document, Jackson Wirramanda and Hubert Albacutya (First Peoples of Millewa Mallee).

# Our business

Lower Murray Water provides urban water services to 14 townships via 9 treatment plants to approximately 74,000 customers along the Murray River in Victoria from Koondrook to Merbein. We also provide wastewater collection, treatment and effluent re-use and disposal services to 11 towns via 10 treatment plants.

We service 4,979 customers with river quality water in the 4 pumped irrigation districts of Merbein, Red Cliffs, Robinvale and Mildura, the Millewa rural district and some areas of the waterworks district of Yelta.

We have offices in Mildura (head office), Swan Hill and Kerang and employ approximately 178 staff. Currently 2 staff members identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

In addition to security of supply, public health, water quality and environmental responsibilities, we recognise the crucial economic role of water from a regional and state context.

The region includes the traditional lands of the Barapa Barapa Peoples, Wamba Wamba Peoples, Wadi Wadi Peoples, Tatti Tatti Peoples, Latji Latji Peoples, Nyeri Nyeri Peoples, Ngintait Peoples, and the Werigaia Peoples.

We are committed to the growth and prosperity of our region and recognise the importance of investing in our people to better serve our community.

Our area of operation extends from Kerang to the South Australian border spanning the municipalities of Mildura, Swan Hill and Gannawarra. We recognise that our overall well-being and livelihood is directly linked to the agricultural, tourism, and support industries which form our economic backbone. How we manage our water resources recognises the intrinsic interrelation between this resource and the social and economic fabric of our region. Our focus is not only on our region but state-wide, with water management and conservation practices a key part to the health of our rivers and the communities that rely on them.



Disclaimer: Locations are indicative only

Our priorities and actions derive from our mission, corporate and governance strategies.

Mission	Corporate Strategies	Governance Strategies
Provide water services in a sustainable, reliable and timely manner	Be customer focused <i>'Right Service, Right Time'</i>	Manage the Corporation in accordance with expected standards of corporate behaviour
Maintain positive and transparent relationships with our customers and other stakeholders	Maintain compliant performance while improving cost-effectiveness of operations and assets	Manage our assets and finances responsibly and sustainably
Contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of our region	increase use of the modernised irrigation infrastructure in the four districts	Provide an engaged and skilled workforce to deliver our vision and mission
	Increase the resilience of services to changing and extreme weather	Provide our services equitably and with consideration

## Growth Through People

We have taken a holistic approach for 'Growth Through People', with long term plans to increase capability, broaden workforce diversity, develop a constructive, high performance culture, provide a fair, equitable and safe work environment, and develop 'bench strength' for key roles to ensure workforce sustainability.

Our 2016-2018 People and Culture Strategy outlines 4 levers to transform the organisation over the next 3 years: organisation design, capability, diversity and communication.

Our strategy aims to enhance business outcomes through diversity, including:

- Increasing innovation and creativity by harnessing diverse thinking styles
- Enabling more efficient and responsive delivery outcomes through increased understanding of the needs of our diverse customer base
- Improving commitment, retention and productivity through improved understanding of individual needs, and effective people practices.

There are 4 key areas to focus on over the next 3 years:

- Gender balance
- People policies, processes and practices
- Generational issues
- Ethnicity

As part of the Victorian Water Industry Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (WI 2020 Strategy) targets were set to create well balanced water utilities with inclusive practices and cultures across the state. A target of 2.5% of the workforce will identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Our Organisations journey to Reconciliation

Our first Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was launched in 2016 and provides inspirational and measurable targets such as number of employees employed with a disability and representation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community plus how as an organisation we can ensure our people are truly representative of our community. Over the last year we reviewed and improved recruitment practices and other human resources related policies and processes to ensure we attract and retain a diverse workforce.

We have also committed to the Water Industry Diversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025. As an industry we recognise the importance of having a diverse and inclusive workforce to enhance the potential of all employees, and ensuring our workforce reflects and understands the backgrounds of our customers and our broader community. Workplace diversity and inclusion harnesses the diverse skills and perspectives of people emanating from their background and the value they add due to gender, age, language, ethnicity, cultural background, indigenous origins, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, working style, educational level, professional skills, work and life experiences, socio-economic background, job function, geographical location, marital status and family responsibilities.

By removing unnecessary barriers, we can enable all employees to enjoy full participation in the workplace, be supported in their development and career, respecting their individual needs. Workplace diversity and inclusion is ensuring respect for all people and is all about removing barriers to ensure all employees enjoy full participation in a workplace which supports the development and achievement of well informed and culturally appropriate business outcomes.

## Our RAP Journey

We have developed this Reflect RAP as we recognise and value the diverse skills, knowledge, abilities and backgrounds of our employees and foster an environment that can ensure our employees feel they are able to share their cultural differences to enhance the organisation's culture.

Our Reflect RAP also forms part of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020 and works collaboratively with our employment strategy and the organisation's aims, values and goals.

We have established relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations including Mildura District Aboriginal Services, local Traditional Owners, art groups and youth services in the Mildura and Swan Hill regions.

A wide variety of the community were involved in the development of our RAP including local First Australian archaeologist and anthropologist Mr Mark Grist, Chair of the First People of Millewa Mallee Ms Janine Wilson, Mallee CMA Indigenous Representative and Wamba Wemba Barapa Barapa man Mr Ken Stewart, Nyeri Nyeri Traditional Owners, Ngintait Traditional Owners, MLDRIN (Murray Lower Darling Indigenous Nations, Mildura Rural City Council and Local Historical Societies.

## Our Vision

Our vision is an organisation that First Peoples trust and can feel welcomed and accepted. The organisation is confident in building strong relationships to obtain better outcomes for the community and environment in water resource management. The cultural and spiritual connections of First Peoples to the surrounding lands and waterways are important and respected by the organisation and its staff.

We have recently begun working with local Aboriginal groups including the First People of Millewa Mallee, Wamba Wemba, Barapa Barapa and Latje Latje First Peoples from our service region to establish connections and create partnerships to achieve greater understanding of the community and traditional lands in which we operate. Over the past 6 months we have held meetings with First Nation's peoples from Wamba Wemba, Barapa Barapa, and First People of Millewa Mallee and also been involved in events and forums involving Traditional Owners and Elders from across the region.



## RAP Working Group:

The RAP Working Group has been formed to represent and reflect the community and also offer staff from various departments an opportunity to become involved in our reconciliation journey.

### Working Group Representatives



**Anthony Couroupis**  
Managing Director

**Leesa Merrett**  
Manager Communications  
& Engagement



**David Girdwood**  
Executive Manager Southern Region

**Julie Campbell**  
Chief Financial Officer



**Deb Fankhauser**  
Senior Manager Human Resources

**Troy Van Berkel**  
Senior Manager Operations



**Geoff Regester**  
Executive Manager Delivery

**Ashley Nunn**  
Senior Environmental Officer



### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representation



**Jenine Wilson**  
First People of Millewa Mallee

**Mark Grist**  
First People of Millewa Mallee



**Hazel Atkinson**  
Wamba Wemba

**Ken Stewart**  
Wamba Wemba



**Corey Payne**  
Mallee CMA - Aboriginal Water &  
Engagement Officer



## Our partnerships/current activities

### • Community partnerships

We are working closely with aligned organisations including Mallee Catchment Management Authority and Mildura Rural City Council. Both of these organisations have continued to work on developing positive and productive relationships within the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We have also developed ongoing relationships with other supporting organisations including counselling, health service providers, employment providers and local Elders to foster a better understanding of our community and its needs.

### • Internal activities/initiatives

We are currently assessing the needs of staff to develop tailored cultural awareness training and the RAP Working Group is also undertaking the Cultural Competence online course.

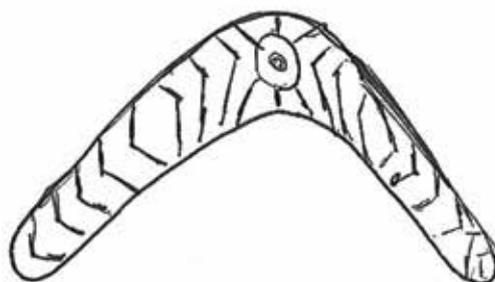
It is proposed that during 2019, we will undertake an Aboriginal Water Assessment and Cultural Heritage Management Plan at one of our land management sites to obtain vital information about areas of cultural significance.



# RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish a RAP Working Group	Strengthen the effectiveness of our RAP Working Group to better enable support for the implementation of our RAP through the development of partnership agreements with other RAP accredited businesses and Recognised Aboriginal Parties to deliver our RAP outcomes	May 2019	Manager C&E
RAP Working Group Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Working group to endorse and ensure implementation of RAP</li> <li>✓ Meeting each quarter to continue to monitor and oversee RAP and report back to Management and Board on status</li> <li>✓ Development of Terms of Reference for Working Group</li> <li>✓ Enable our RAP Champion to form strong relationships within the community to build on the RAP effectiveness through community engagement and partnership programs that focus on our RAP outcomes and building stronger understanding of local issues</li> </ul>	<p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p>	<p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E/ Supported by RWG</p> <p>MD</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p>
2. Build internal and external relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, communities and organisations within our service region that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey</li> <li>✓ Develop formal relationships with Elders within the First Nations groups represented in our service region.</li> <li>✓ Investigate partnership opportunities with relevant stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach that meets the objectives of Aboriginal engagement set out in Water for Victoria</li> <li>✓ Build partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.</li> <li>✓ Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.</li> <li>✓ Identify and support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups through sharing of knowledge at meetings, investigating potential employment opportunities, participation in local events, offering sponsorships, recognition of significant sites managed by LMW with signage.</li> </ul>	<p>May 2019</p> <p>April 2019</p> <p>April 2019</p> <p>April 2019</p> <p>May 2019</p> <p>May 2019</p>	<p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>SEO/ Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p>

2. Build internal and external relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Foster and develop relationships with the community through inter-agency project partnerships, in kind support and staff participation in relevant local cultural events to ensure an inclusive and accepting organisation</li> </ul>	June 2019	SEO/ Manager C&E
3. Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff via newsletter, intranet and toolbox meetings</li> <li>✓ RAP Working Group to participate in external events to foster and develop relationships, recognition and celebrate NRW.</li> <li>✓ Encourage our staff to attend NRW events.</li> <li>✓ Develop partnerships with local community and businesses to support and implement local events and recognition of the NRW celebrations</li> </ul>	<p>27 May - 3 Jun 2019</p>	<p>Senior Manager HR</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p>
4. Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Launch our Reflect RAP to our staff and key external stakeholders, including an Acknowledgement of Country.</li> <li>✓ Develop and implement RAP communications plan to all internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>✓ Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP.</li> <li>✓ Provide information and raise awareness of our RAP on our website, including our RAP document.</li> <li>✓ Promote and create awareness about our RAP through our media channels including social media platforms</li> <li>✓ Create a map of our service region and the State to show Registered Aboriginal Parties, which will be available on our website and within publications</li> <li>✓ Engage our senior leaders in the delivery of RAP outcomes.</li> <li>✓ Communicate RAP Strategy to staff</li> </ul>	<p>July 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>May 2019</p> <p>March 2019</p> <p>May 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p>	<p>Senior Manager HR/ Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Supported by RWG</p> <p>Manager C&amp;E MD</p> <p>MD/ Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>MD/ Manager C&amp;E</p> <p>Senior Manager HRT/ Manager C&amp;E</p>





# RESPECT

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development	✓ Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.	June 2019	Senior Manager HR
	✓ Develop and implement cultural awareness training specific to the local area facilitated by local Traditional Owner and education facilities for all staff across our service region including On-Country knowledge sharing and ceremony	September 2019	Senior Manager HR
	✓ Develop a business case for increasing awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements within our organisation.	August 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Communicate and encourage staff to use Reconciliation Australia's Share Our Pride online tool to all staff.	November 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ LMW RAP Working Group members complete online Aboriginal Cultural Competence training	June 2019	Senior Manager HR
	✓ Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation	June 2019	Manager P&C
6. Celebrate/recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates of significance	✓ Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.	July 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Create and communicate dates of significance to staff and encourage attendance	May 2019	Senior Manager HR
	✓ Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting community events in our local area.	July 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2019	Manager C&E
7. Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	✓ Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our local area.	March 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Scope and develop a list of local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisations service region.	March 2019	SEO
	✓ Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols (including any local cultural protocols).	May 2019	Manager C&E

7. Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	✓ Develop, implement and communicate protocols for Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.	June 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Develop and implement Acknowledgement of Country signage in foyer of LMW office's	June 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Erect signage at LMW's treatment plant sites to acknowledge local significant areas within our compound	June 2019	Senior Manager Operatons/ SEO
	✓ Collect information on the Traditional Owners within our service region and acknowledge the Traditional Owners and respect their connection to both their land and waterways through our website, publications and other platforms	June 2019	Manager C&E



## OPPORTUNITIES

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment	✓ Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	August 2019	Senior Manager HR
	✓ Identify current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities.	July 2019	Senior Manager HR/ Supported by RWG
	✓ Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment pathways (e.g. traineeships or internships).	July 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Support educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through work experience opportunities, shared learnings and training opportunities through Latrobe University and SuniTAFE.	August 2019	Senior Manager HR
	✓ Develop a plan and strategy for employing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cadet within the Northern and Southern service region areas of LMW	August 2019	MD
	✓ Investigate an internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional mentoring network.	July 2019	Senior Manager HR
9. Support equal and equitable opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	✓ Support education programs offering work placement and experience through LaTrobe University and SuniTAFE	July 2019	Senior Manager HR
10. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity	✓ Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	September 2019	CFO
	✓ Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	September 2019	EMD



# GOVERNANCE AND TRACKING PROGRESS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Build support for the RAP	✓ Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation.	August 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities.	September 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	April 2020	Manager C&E
	✓ Provide Management and Board updates on RAP implementation progress	November 2019	MD
2. Review and Refresh RAP	✓ Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements.	March 2020	Manager C&E
	✓ Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review	September 2019	Manager C&E
	✓ Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement.	May 2020	Manager C&E

Title	Position
MD	Managing Director
Manager C&E	Manager Communications & Engagement
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
EMD	Executive Manager Delivery
SMO	Senior Manager Operations
Senior Manager HR	Senior Manager Human Resources
RWG	RAP Working Group
SEO	Senior Environmental Officer



For further information please contact us

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