



Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

March 2026 – March 2027

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Acknowledgement of Country.

The NSW Ombudsman and staff acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands of New South Wales on which our people live and work. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present, and to the children of today who are the Elders of the future. We recognise the ongoing connection to Country, the wisdom and rich cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



'Photograph by Wayne Quilliam'

Content Warning

Our Reconciliation Action Plan talks about the work we do, and some readers may find this confronting or distressing. Some of our work includes:

- Reviewing the circumstances where certain children have died, the government and community service responses (both before and after death)
- Oversighting NSW Government-funded community services, including child protection services
- Monitoring the segregation of detainees in youth detention.

About the Artist.

Aboriginal Artist and Graphic Designer - Lani Balzan

Meet Lani Balzan, a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri people of the three-river tribe. Though her family roots lie in Mudgee, she grew up traversing various regions of Australia, finally finding her home in Queensland, Australia. Lani is an Aboriginal artist and graphic designer specialising in designing Indigenous canvas art, graphic design, logo design, Reconciliation Action Plans Design and document design.

In 2016 Lani was announced as the 2016 NAIDOC Poster Competition winner with her artwork 'Songlines'. This poster was used as the 2016 NAIDOC theme across the country.

With over a decade of experience under her belt, Lani has achieved consistent success throughout the country. One of her biggest aspirations is to strengthen her connection to her culture and contribute to the journey of reconciliation, bringing people and communities together to appreciate the richness of Australia's unique and vibrant indigenous culture. Through her mesmerising art, Lani Balzan continues to make a profound impact, celebrating heritage, and fostering unity in the diverse tapestry of Australia's cultural landscape.

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About The Artwork.

NSW Ombudsman: Strengthening Relationships, Honouring Country

This artwork represents the NSW Ombudsman's ongoing journey towards reconciliation, expressed through visual storytelling that honours Country, community, truth telling and the strength of walking together. Designed to move with the organisation across all four levels of RAPs, the artwork brings together the Ombudsman's values, the OCHRE principles, and the Five Pillars of Reconciliation in one cohesive cultural narrative.

The Central Meeting Place – Integrity, Purpose and 'Better Together'

At the centre of the artwork sits a large meeting place symbolising the NSW Ombudsman. Its concentric rings reflect Proudly Independent, Purpose Driven, Inquiring Minds and the organisation's unwavering commitment to Integrity Always.

The central 'O' represents the Ombudsman itself: a place of listening, oversight and accountability. Energy radiating outward from this hub shows that true impact flows from ethical practice, transparency and respectful relationships. This is the visual embodiment of Better Together—reminding us that reconciliation is achieved through shared responsibility, unity and long-term partnership.

Surrounding Meeting Places – Community Strength, Diversity and Excellence

Numerous smaller gathering elements surround the central space. Each one represents local Aboriginal communities, nations and families across NSW, highlighting Aboriginal diversity.

These gatherings differ in pattern and size to show that communities carry different histories, languages, needs and strengths. The smaller gathering elements also represent Aboriginal excellence—the deep knowledge, innovation and leadership that Aboriginal people bring to issues that government and agencies often seek to solve. Rather than starting from scratch, the Ombudsman's role is to listen, learn and strengthen what communities are already doing well.

The River of Respect – Country, Culture and Connection

The sweeping river running through the artwork represents Respect—for Country, culture, people, ancestors and story. Water connects every part of the landscape, reflecting the interconnectedness of communities and the Ombudsman's work.

Man and woman elements along the banks signify people, families and community structures, linking to Aboriginal diversity and the many perspectives that must be heard. Animal tracks weave through the riverbed, reinforcing the importance of Country as teacher, guide and place of belonging.

The Hand Element of Healing – Truth, Care and Restoring Balance

A single hand element appears in the artwork as a powerful symbol of Aboriginal healing. This hand acknowledges truth telling, past injustice and the ongoing impacts of colonisation. It also represents care, cultural safety and the Ombudsman's responsibility to promote systems that heal rather than harm.

The hand shows that healing is active—expressed through partnership, honesty and a willingness to address systemic inequity.

Footprints of Opportunity – Walking the Path Forward Together

Footprints moving through the landscape represent the shared journey of reconciliation. They symbolise the RAP as an opportunity to walk side by side—where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people move together from reflection into meaningful action.

These pathways reflect the Ombudsman's commitment to equity, participation and co-designed solutions: walking the journey together, guided by truth, respect and courage.

Emu Tracks of Knowledge – Learning, Sharing and Protecting Culture

Emu tracks appear throughout the artwork as a symbol of Aboriginal knowledge, experience and expertise. Emus are purposeful travellers, moving with intention toward resources, learning and growth.

These tracks reflect gathering knowledge — sitting, listening, learning from Elders and community experts. They also represent the need to protect Aboriginal cultural and intellectual property, reinforcing the Ombudsman's responsibility to uphold data sovereignty, cultural authority and informed consent.

Shield Element of Leadership – Strength, Protection and Cultural Authority

A shield element appears in the design to represent Aboriginal leadership. The shield carries the meaning of strength, responsibility and the cultural authority of Elders and community leaders who guide decision-making and protect community wellbeing.

Its presence reminds us that lasting change occurs when Aboriginal-led solutions are prioritised, resourced and respected from the beginning.

Symbols of Governance – Embedding Cultural Ways of Knowing and Doing

Man/woman elements, Elder symbols and Country patterns represent Governance as grounded in Aboriginal cultural frameworks. Governance is not only organisational—it is cultural, relational and connected to Country.

These symbols acknowledge that Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing should inform systems, policies and decision-making structures within the Ombudsman's work.

Dots of Truth, Unity and Institutional Integrity

Thousands of dots spread across the landscape represent story, Country and connection.

- ⇒ White dots symbolise truth telling and historical acceptance.
- ⇒ Blue and teal dots represent healing, safety and shared responsibility.
- ⇒ Grouped clusters reflect unity and the shared national identity shaped by the world's oldest living culture.

The strong central place and connected elements reflect institutional integrity — the Ombudsman's commitment to lead with fairness, independence and justice.

Overall Story – A Journey from Reflection to Action

This artwork tells a story of growth, learning and transformation. It reflects the NSW Ombudsman's commitment to:

- ⇒ strengthening relationships
- ⇒ embedding respect
- ⇒ creating opportunities
- ⇒ honouring truth
- ⇒ and ensuring culturally grounded governance.

It represents a journey that begins with reflection and moves boldly into action — a journey that continues across all four RAP levels, guided by integrity, partnership and the enduring strength of Aboriginal culture.

NSW Ombudsman – Reflect RAP Commitment.



Paul Miller
NSW Ombudsman

I am proud to introduce the NSW Ombudsman's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). It is an important step forward in our reconciliation journey.

The NSW Ombudsman is committed to pursuing fairness for the people of New South Wales and promoting accountability in public administration. As we reflect on that role, we recognise the importance of broadening and deepening respectful and inclusive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Reflect RAP is about listening, learning, and laying the foundations for long-term change. It asks us to deepen our understanding of First Nations histories and cultures, and to consider how we can contribute to reconciliation in practical, thoughtful ways — both within our organisation and in how we engage with the broader community.

At the heart of our Strategic Plan 2025–30 is our purpose: to pursue fairness for the people of New South Wales. Our RAP reinforces this commitment by fostering trust, enhancing inclusion, and ensuring our services are culturally safe and accessible to all.

Across our functions, we have long been working to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through complaint handling, oversight and community engagement. Our RAP builds on these efforts by providing a clear framework to approach this work with greater intention and marking the beginning of a deeper journey towards becoming a more inclusive, culturally responsive organisation.

Message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia.

Reconciliation Australia welcomes NSW Ombudsman to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

NSW Ombudsman 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 over 5.5 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 NSW Ombudsman 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 NSW Ombudsman, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer



Our Purpose.

The NSW Ombudsman is an independent integrity agency that pursues fairness for the people of NSW. We strive to ensure that those entrusted with public power and resources fulfil their responsibilities and treat everyone fairly.

Government agencies touch and impact the lives of the people of NSW every day, and we are there to make sure those interactions are fair. Government is complex and people need to have confidence that someone is holding government agencies to account if their actions are unreasonable, wrong or unlawful.

We are that someone. We are the organisation that shines a light on serious wrong conduct in the delivery of government services. Our ultimate goal is that everyone receives the right services and fair treatment from the agencies we oversee.



Our functions can be broadly grouped into the following 3 categories:

Complaints and Investigations

Facilitating and handling complaints about, and where necessary investigating, the conduct of public authorities and community service providers.

Systems Oversight and Reviews

Oversighting compliance and performance of specified NSW Government and community sector programs and systems through monitoring, auditing, inquiries, conducting reviews and reporting. This includes our role to monitor and assess Aboriginal Programs.

People, Performance and Sector Improvement

Delivering tools, guides and other resources, and providing educational and training services, to support capacity building by public authorities and community service providers.

‘Photograph by Wayne Quilliam’



We work to help resolve problems at an individual level, as well as looking at the bigger picture to promote system improvements in public administration and in the delivery of community services. We are confident in the knowledge that our work will give voice to the individual and bring fairness and balance to how the government delivers to the public it serves.

Our functions are conferred to us by Parliament, primarily through the *Ombudsman Act 1974*, the *Community Services (Complaints, Reviews & Monitoring) Act 1993*, and the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022*.

Monitoring Aboriginal programs

We monitor and assess Aboriginal programs under Part 3B of the *Ombudsman Act 1974*. In addition to monitoring Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment (OCHRE), the Ombudsman may now also monitor and assess any Government programs primarily directed to the health, or cultural, economic, educational or other wellbeing, of Aboriginal persons or communities.

OCHRE commits the NSW Government to working with, and in support of, Aboriginal communities by building strong working partnerships which have at their heart respect for local Aboriginal culture, leadership and decision-making.

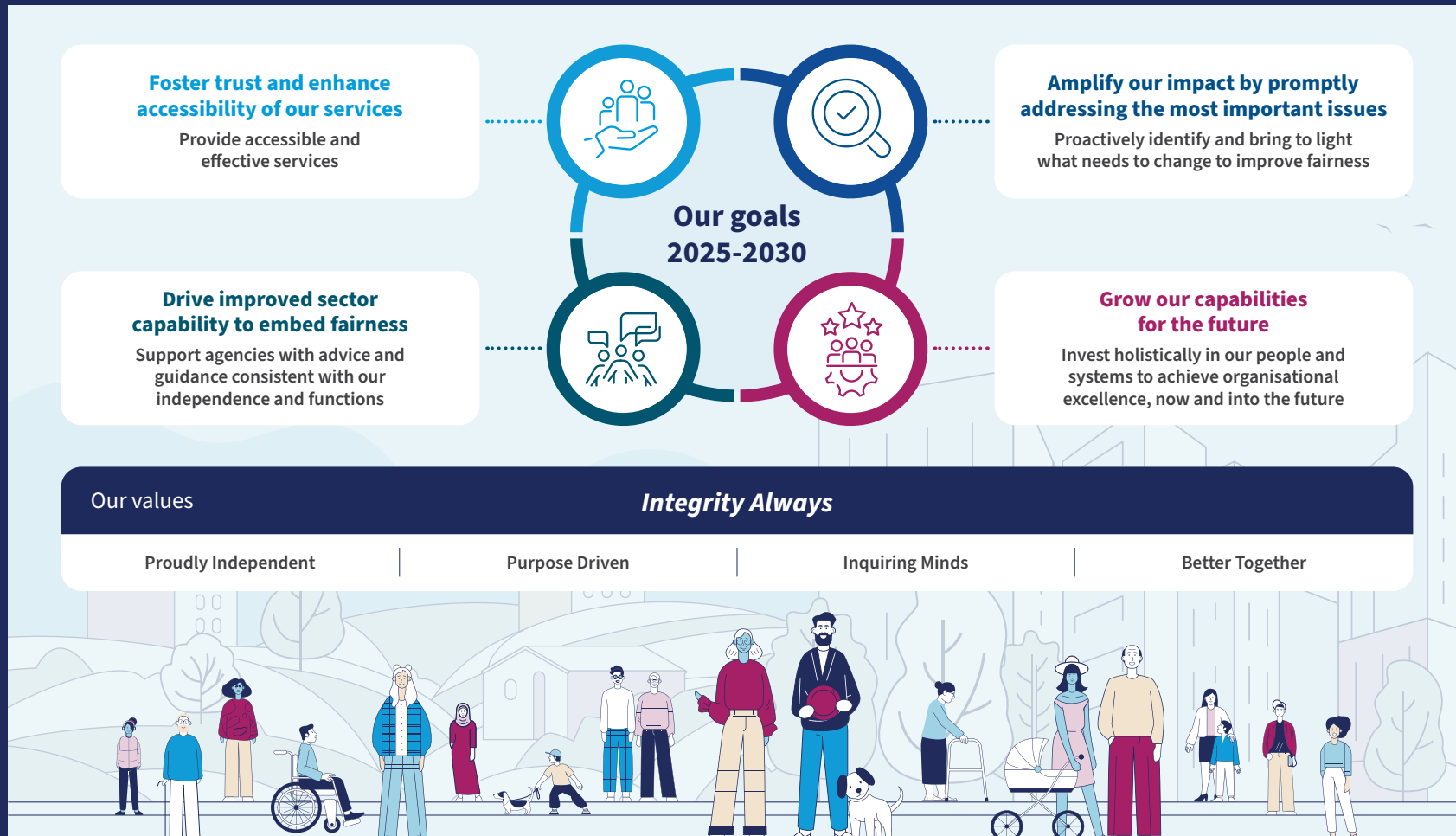
Our Office monitors and assesses OCHRE by engaging with key stakeholders, visiting communities and attending community forums. We have developed our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) actions and deliverables with careful consideration of the OCHRE Practice Principles of:

- ⇒ **Aboriginal leadership**
- ⇒ **Aboriginal diversity**
- ⇒ **Aboriginal healing**
- ⇒ **Aboriginal Excellence**
- ⇒ **Aboriginal knowledge, experience and expertise.**

Our strategic goals and our values.

Strategic purpose

We pursue fairness for the people of NSW



This is from our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan



‘Photograph by Wayne Quilliam’

Our Reconciliation Vision.

Through reconciliation, we want to contribute to a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural interests are championed through strong connectivity, meaningful inclusion and unwavering trust.

We are committed to fostering reconciliation and supporting the self determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, by ensuring their voices are heard, respected and acted on.

Through collaboration and culturally informed practices, we strive to achieve better outcomes that reflect and honour the rich heritages and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of New South Wales.

Our Commitments.

The actions and deliverables are separated into four areas: Relationships, Respect, Opportunities, and Governance:



Relationships.



Strong, respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the foundation of meaningful reconciliation. We are committed to creating space for open dialogue, truth telling, and fostering genuine connections that are built on trust, shared learning and mutual respect.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	March 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	May 2026	Director, Corporate Services
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June 2026	RAP Project Manager
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 June 2026	NSW Ombudsman
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Continue communicating our commitment to reconciliation, both internally and externally, inform stakeholders of our responsibilities within our RAP.	May 2026	NSW Ombudsman
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Explore opportunities to promote reconciliation through our delivery of external training and community engagements.	August 2026	Director, Strategy, Governance, Risk and Data
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Learn more about culturally safe ways and best practices in truth telling to explore ways in which we could participate.	September 2026	Deputy Ombudsman, Aboriginal Programs
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	October 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Conduct a review of our HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	February 2027	Director, Corporate Services
	Raise awareness of NSW Ombudsman expectations on what constitutes appropriate behaviour in the workplace, including the negative impact of discriminatory and racist behaviours.	February 2027	Director, Corporate Services

Respect.



Respect is demonstrated through everyday actions that honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and perspectives. We continue to learn, reflect, and grow as an organisation ensuring cultural awareness is not just an initiative but part of who we are and how we operate.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and 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.	November 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	April 2026	Head of People and Culture
	Develop a cultural capability training plan to include in NSW Ombudsman employee on boarding program. This will include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training and e-learning content specific to Stolen Generations with a trauma informed lens.	November 2026	Head of People and Culture
	Build understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through recognition and celebration of cultural events across the organisation	April 2026	RAP Project Manager
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop guidance resources to support staff to identify the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters within the context of their work.	July 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Continue to increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	April 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Maintain the Acknowledgement of Country on the NSW Ombudsman's website and published reports.	April 2026	Director, Strategy, Governance, Risk and Data
	Continue to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork for email signature blocks with Acknowledgement of Country the office stands on.	April 2026	Director, Strategy, Governance, Risk and Data
	Update and enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols guide to educate and inform staff on effective engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and apply protocols internally.	September 2026	Director, Corporate Services
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and 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	Director, Strategy, Governance, Risk and Data
	Continue to promote staff participation in NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in your local area.	June 2026	Director, Strategy, Governance, Risk and Data
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2026	RAP Project Manager

Opportunities.



We are focused on creating pathways that support the growth, employment, and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop and refine business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	January 2027	Head of People and Culture
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	December 2026	Head of People and Culture
	Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee value proposition to better promote employment opportunities.	December 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network for NSW Ombudsman	May 2026	Head of People and Culture
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Investigate opportunities and build a business case to strengthen procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	June 2026	Head of Finance
	Introduce Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property terms in procurements.	July 2026	Head of Finance
	Review and embed NSW Aboriginal Procurement Policy with our internal procurement policy.	June 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	March 2026	Director, Corporate Services

Governance.



Accountability and leadership are key to delivering on our commitments to the peoples of NSW. Through informed decision making, transparent processes and ongoing public reporting, we ensure that our actions have real impact and that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are meaningfully utilised in our governance structures and processes.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a Reconciliation Working Group to govern RAP implementation	March 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the group.	March 2026	RAP Project Manager
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Reconciliation Working Group.	March 2026	Director, Corporate Services
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2026	Director, Corporate Services
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	March 2026	NSW Ombudsman
	Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	March 2026	NSW Ombudsman
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	April 2026	Director, Corporate Services
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	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	RAP Project Manager
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact survey.	1 August Annually	RAP Project Manager
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September Annually	RAP Project Manager
	Communicate our RAP progress to internal and external stakeholders	August 2026	RAP Project Manager
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP	December 2026	RAP Project Manager

NSW Ombudsman RAP representative

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