



Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

Jan 2025 to Jan 2026



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

Acknowledgement

Australian Football League Cape York (AFLCY) acknowledges the long histories and rich cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Nations people of this land; and we pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the enduring legacy from the continued connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the land, water and air we share in this great nation we call Australia.





KYSHARA ARMSTRONG

‘Coming Together – Healing’

Front cover artwork

The artwork created is titled Coming Together: Healing. It shows the connection between all people, animals and plants and their land/seas/waterways/country. The artwork is significant to me because it shows unity and strength while paying respect to land, seas and country in order to heal and remain connected to culture. The blue and green colours chosen are symbolic of the seas/oceans connected to the Torres Strait Islands while the Aboriginal symbols show families, kinship, travelling and togetherness. At AFL Cape York connection and relationships are important between all young people, staff and families whether you’re Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

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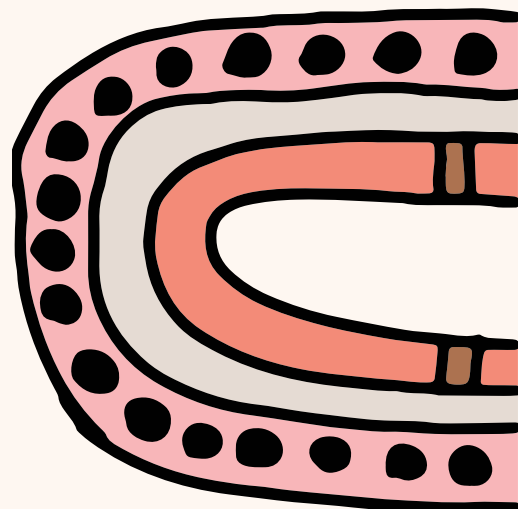
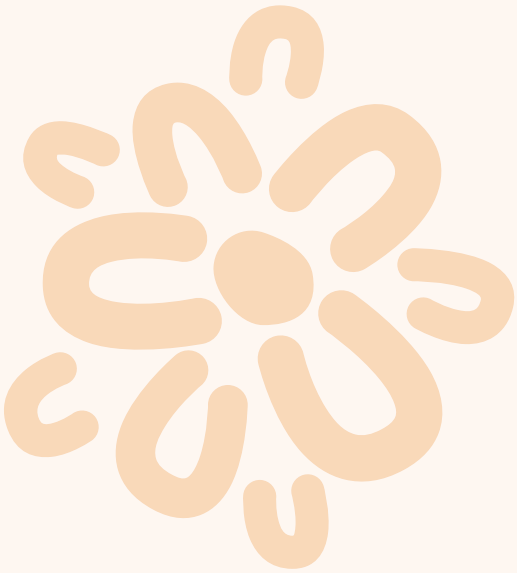
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Our Vision

Our vision for reconciliation is to create opportunities, to inspire and build hope, pride and leadership potential in young First Nations people across Cape York, the Torres Strait, Gulf of Carpentaria and Northern Territory. We provide a safe, inclusive and respectful home away from home to support young people to develop their skills and capacity while maintaining their connection to their communities and culture.

AFLCY is committed to ensuring that opportunities created through our programs and initiatives are culturally appropriate, empowering, and accessible to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, schools, families and organisations. We recognise that to achieve this, we must first look to ourselves to ensure we create a workplace culture that is fair, inclusive, culturally sensitive, safe, and supportive.



Message from our RAP Chair

As a not-for-profit organisation established in 2003, AFLCY has a strong history of engagement with Indigenous communities throughout Cape York, the Torres Strait, Gulf of Carpentaria and the Northern Territory.

Our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to strengthen, built on the key foundations of respect, integrity, honesty, and empathy. We know there is much to hear, learn, share, and be inspired by as we move towards a future that is inclusive and respectful of the oldest living culture in the world.

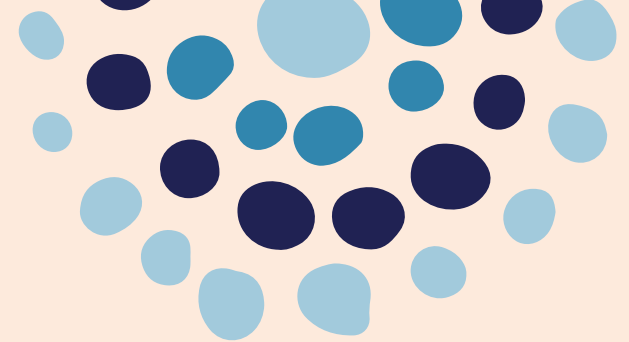
We are committed to taking meaningful steps in pursuing opportunities that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, families, communities, and staff at AFL Cape York. We are only at the start of our journey, and it will require commitment and courage from all of us to achieve a truly reconciled future.

We are pleased to share our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which aims to formalise our commitment to national reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia, and through our sphere of influence.



Jim Davis
RAP Co-Chair





Message from our RAP Champion

AFLCY has made commitments to building respectful, ongoing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the communities where we operate and where we have an influence. Over the last twenty years, our organisation has worked to ensure that the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under our care are given opportunities to gain skills, confidence, an education, and career pathways. We also work closely with schools and our partner organisations and businesses to fulfil our goals in supporting and empowering First Nations people.

In recent times, we have undertaken to improve our commitment to reconciliation in Australia and a greater appreciation of how AFLCY contributes to building positive and enduring relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Learning about the RAP framework has also broadened our perspective on what respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and businesses look like and how organisations like ours can contribute to this positive and progressive step in our collective reconciliation journey.

Starting our RAP process with a Reflect RAP means that as a community-focused organisation and workforce, we have the opportunity to define what our reconciliation journey will look like. Together we will map a path forward that is meaningful to our workforce and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our Reflect RAP aims to formalise our commitment and contribution to national reconciliation. Through it, we have mapped the practical steps AFLCY will take to explore and scope reconciliation actions and initiatives for our organisation.

I am proud to have championed the development of this Reflect RAP across our team and look forward to seeing this work progress over the next 12 months. This Reflect RAP is the formal commencement of our organisation's reconciliation journey and reiterates our ongoing commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, their families, communities, schools, and partner organisations.

One motto of AFLCY is that 'You are never too old to learn and never too young to teach'.

Rick Hanlon
General Manager



“You are never too old to learn and never too young to teach”





“

We try to design cultural programs to help build and support the sense of belonging and identity for our young people. These young people come from a background where they have a very strong sense of who they are, and we help them to stay connected to this through the values and everyday processes of our organisation - to help ensure a culturally safe experience for our young people. Our staff play a vital role in creating a culturally safe space.

Rick Hanlon
General Manager

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Message from the CEO – Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes AFL Cape York to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

AFL Cape York 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 AFL Cape York 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 AFL Cape York, 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



Our Business

Building positive futures for young Indigenous Australians

AFL Cape York House is a not-for-profit organisation, funded under the Federal and State Indigenous Housing Partnership programs and supported by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Indigenous Schooling Support, Education Queensland and the Australian Football League.

AFL Cape York Boys and Girls Houses are purpose-built facilities aiming to provide accommodation as well as educational, employment and training opportunities for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women from some of northern Australia's most remote communities. We operate across 45 Indigenous communities including Cape York, the Torres Strait, the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Northern Territory.

AFL Cape York House aims to provide a culturally appropriate, safe and secure residential environment to ensure every boarding student has the opportunity to transition successfully from secondary school to their future careers, livelihoods and roles as leaders within their communities.

We do this by working closely with individual students and their extended families. We understand that a supportive family-oriented environment, focused on reinforcing positive relationships and building strong skills and character, provides the best structure for students transitioning through secondary school.

To build an enduring legacy, we have established AFL Cape York House Foundation that supports the work of AFL Cape York Ltd, particularly AFL Cape York House for boys and girls. The Foundation's purpose is to 'support students and families participating in AFL Cape York-coordinated programs in the areas of education, wellbeing support, AFL pathways, careers and tertiary pathways, residential care and outreach programs'.

Construction of AFL Cape York House for Boys boarding facility was completed in January 2013 and can support a capacity of 52 young men. AFL Cape York House for Girls facility opened its doors for 48 young women in 2019. On average, AFL Cape York houses 90 Indigenous students at any one time.

During our short history of offering residential care for secondary students we have seen up to 40 Indigenous graduates successfully complete year 12 studies. In almost every case, AFL Cape York staff assisted graduates with commencing permanent employment or traineeships.

“ I have a greater appreciation of the diversity of Indigenous cultures in northern Australia as a result of my role here. ”

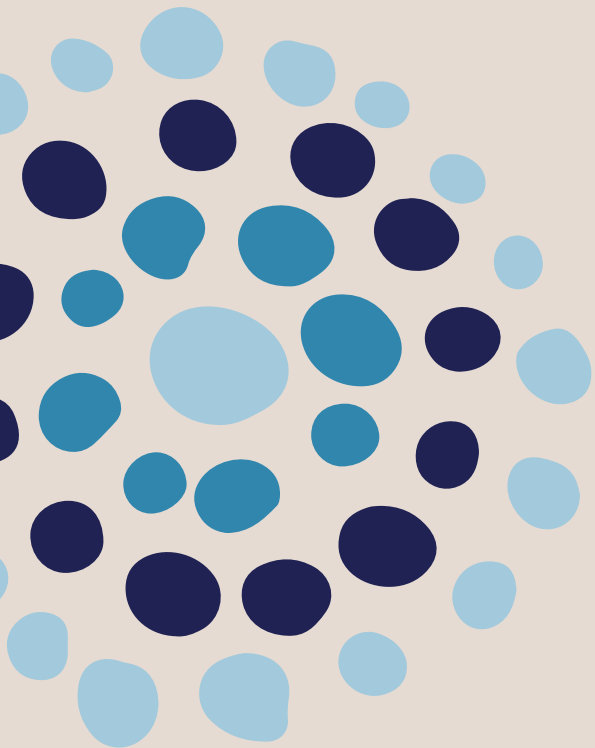
“ Being immersed in culture with our young people, learning how they communicate, the importance of family and community and relationships has been a significant part of my experience at AFLCY. If we don't have a relationship with our young people, we can't achieve strong educational outcomes for them. This is fundamental for Indigenous young people. Without these strong relationships, motivation and compliance with the education system tends to be low. ”



Our Team

To support our operations and activities, we have a culturally diverse workforce of around 80 employees across our organisation. 47% of our staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

“Improving our transparency and inclusivity is vital and will help us to become better at what we do. The cohort of people that we serve at the moment is very diverse so our team and management need to reflect that cultural diversity”



Our Values

Our values of commitment, compassion, consistency and professionalism are embedded in our Strategic Plan 2020-2025. These values guide how we perform our work across the AFLCY team. We respect one another, recognising that our success depends upon the strength and cohesion of our team. We create an inclusive environment that reflects the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, skills, ideas, and perspectives of everyone we support and work with. Respect, integrity, honesty and empathy are important values that align with our objectives for reconciliation.



COMMITTED

We rise to every challenge and do what we say we will do - we own the outcome. We thrive on pushing the boundaries beyond what we have done before to achieve the extraordinary for our people, partners and the community.



PROFESSIONAL

Respect, integrity, honesty, empathy and work ethic earns us the right reputation.



COMPASSIONATE

We work as one team because together we achieve better outcomes. We bring out the best in each other by embracing our diverse range of ideas, skills and backgrounds to achieve individual and shared success. We celebrate our wins and always have each other's back.

CONSISTENT

We love what we do. Passion, energy, fun and perseverance is at the heart of our organisation and is what drives how we work.





Our Achievements

Inspiring Success

We have witnessed great success from students navigating through boarding and secondary schooling with all our past 40 graduates completing Queensland Certificate of Education requirements. Further highlighting the success of our graduates is the number of students transitioning through to tertiary levels and meaningful employment. Furthermore, we partner with some of Australia's most prestigious universities, including the University of Sydney, Bond University and James Cook University. These relationships have resulted in 10 students moving into tertiary studies.

Factors underpinning this success relate to the culture at AFLCY and the holistic nature of the services provided to support young First Nations people to transition into education, work, career pathways and/or tertiary levels of education.



"Our service should be about our relationship with these young people and strengthening their culture as a core part of our service delivery."

"Cultural learning and exchange is something we should be helping to drive and facilitate actively."



Sustaining Opportunity

We are proud of the achievements of our students both at school and on the sporting field and we are keen to ensure that we continue to create opportunities that build capacity and deliver beneficial outcomes for our young people. We strive to do what we can to help our students make strong choices and take positive steps towards a rewarding life that contributes to the wellbeing of their own community and the broader Australian society.

Sustaining this level of assistance is a financial challenge, especially given that many of the families we support have low combined incomes and live in remote, geographically isolated communities across northern Australia. The access to essential goods and services such as fresh fruit and vegetables, telecommunications and education are not the same as they are in regional and major centres. For most of our students to attain educational and learning parity with mainstream Australia, we recognise that more focused resources need to be invested in improving educational equity.

Our governance framework is strong, built on integrity, diversity, engagement and inclusiveness, which has enabled us to achieve successful outcomes supported by local, State and Federal governments. The next stage for the Foundation is to build relationships with the corporate and philanthropic sectors so that we can take up further opportunities. It is critical to build a sustained funding base that will enable the provision of services to more students and families. This is where AFL Cape York House Foundation steps in.

We value the support of partners and sponsors, which has helped our students achieve so much. We believe it is important for us to be proactive and to build a more diverse and sustainable funding base that will allow many more students to enjoy the same benefits and the opportunity for positive futures.



Our Reconciliation Action Plan

AFLCY is committed to working towards and achieving genuine and sustained reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider Australian community. We aspire to contribute positively to race relations in Australia. We see this RAP framework as a way to measure and formalise our commitments to support reconciliation for which we are then accountable.

AFLCY recognises the enduring and unique connections to land and waters that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have, and we celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's ongoing contributions to Australia's political, economic, and social landscapes. Through the implementation of the RAP our organisation is seeking to develop a deeper shared understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures, histories, and contributions.

AFLCY acknowledges that the impact of colonisation, public policy, racial discrimination and prejudice has had a major effect on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that they continue to suffer disadvantage, prejudice and racism as a result. Through the implementation of this RAP, our organisation is seeking to understand, identify, and ultimately remove the systemic barriers to participation and instead work closely with our First Nations people to create opportunities for change.

The focus of our work across northern Australia and the culture we have fostered within AFLCY is already aligned with the many objectives and principles of reconciliation. We recognise that we need to deepen our understanding of and commitment to reconciliation and to take others with us on this journey, to heal past traumas and injustices and to bring hope and opportunity for future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our young people are the catalysts of change.

"We need a way to ensure there is an Indigenous lens over the strategies we are creating."

"We need to move away from the idea of young people having to fit their environments. We need to adapt our mindsets, environments and expectations to empower our young people."

Our Partnerships, Relationships & Engagements

Developing enduring partnerships and respectful relationships with First Nations people, staff, students, families and communities is at the core of our work at AFLCY. Our collaboration with key partners, agencies and service providers supports our success at AFLCY. We also benefit from and rely heavily on the support and commitment from government and non-government agencies (private service providers, sponsors, investors and local businesses) to amplify the benefits of the work we do in AFLCY and support the opportunities for our youth.

Stakeholders

Contractors, suppliers, business partners and networks, sponsors, AFL International and media.

Core Partners

Young people, families/ students, staff and their families, communities (remote and local).

Partners

Schools, medical services, Federal/State/Local Government, AFL, local businesses, councils, sporting clubs, Eagles FC.

AFL Cape York

Despite the lack of a formal framework to promote reconciliation, AFLCY's purpose and values naturally align with the principles of reconciliation.

The organisation has actively promoted reconciliation through the following internal programs and initiatives, amongst other things:

Employment of a Cultural Support Coordinator to support the staff and students at AFLCY to create a culturally safe environment and to enhance student wellbeing

Camping trips and visits to communities by AFLCY staff to pick up and drop off students and gain a deeper insight into their backgrounds and culture

Implementation of a Cultural Program to engage students and Elders in cultural activities and knowledge sharing

Establishment of a Dance Team within AFLCY to share and express the cultural diversity of Indigenous students and promote a sense of pride in their culture

Roll out of cross-cultural awareness training for staff employed within AFLCY

Participation in NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week activities

Establishment of a Cultural Committee to oversee planning, program design and delivery by AFLCY, including in relation to this Reconciliation Action Plan

Support for and sponsorship of the Cape York boys and girls AFL teams

"If our pillars embraced culture then the entire organisation's priorities and logic, as well as its metrics and actions, would need to reflect and prioritise cultural and spiritual wellbeing."

Our RAP Working Group

Bernard Singleton Jr

Luana Healey

Sodyla Kris

Otis Gowa

Phillip Billy

Angie Bowie

Simon Burgoyne

Jim Davis

Our RAP Co-Chairs

Jim Davis

Rick Hanlon OAM

Relationships			
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.	January 2025	Human Resources Advisor/ Manager
	· Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	February 2025	RAP Champion
	· Organise and hold an annual conference in Cairns for families, students and staff to come together to identify how to best support the cultural wellbeing of students and long-term outcomes for their future.	Annually	RAP Champion and RAP Working Group members
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	· Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May – June 2025	RAP Working Group members
	· RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May – June 2025	RAP Working Group members
	· Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May – June 2025	RAP Champion
	· Engage residents in the Cairns community in NRW events and opportunities.		Senior Managers
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	· Communicate our commitment towards reconciliation with staff, residents and their families.	Ongoing	Human Resources
	· Develop more culturally appropriate communications materials featuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, families and communities that AFLCY serves.		RAP Working Group members
	· Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.		RAP Champion
	· Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	July – December 2025	RAP Champion and Working Group members
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	· Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	July – December 2025	Human Resources
	· Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.		RAP Champion and Working Group members
	· Identify and rectify systemic barriers to reconciliation within AFLCY and introduce positive targets, measures and initiatives to promote the objectives of this RAP.		ALL

Respect			
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.	December 2025	RAP Champion
	· Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.		Human Resources
	· Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency component for the staff induction program.	July – October 2025	RAP Champion
	· Build on existing cultural awareness training so that it becomes an ongoing learning opportunity and is delivered annually.		Human Resources
	· Embed a Cultural Program in the organisation’s policy framework to create enduring commitment to its delivery.		RAP Working Group members
	· Design the content for the Cultural Program in collaboration with Elders, Indigenous staff and students.	December 2024 – June 2025	RAP Champion and Working Group members
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 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.	September 2025	RAP Working Group members
	· Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	November 2025	RAP Champion and Working Group members
	· Ensure that appropriate cultural protocols are acknowledged, respected and adhered to by AFLCY staff and residents.		ALL
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week and other cultural events and ceremonies.	· Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week and other events that are marked by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	June 2025	RAP Working Group members
	· Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2025	RAP Working Group members
	· RAP Working Group, staff and residents to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2025	ALL

Opportunities			
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. 	June – September 2025	Human Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen recruitment processes and update candidate information packs to try to attract more Indigenous people to apply for positions within the organisation and to prioritise the skills and qualities needed to create a culturally safe environment for students. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure recruitment processes are more inclusive of Indigenous people (e.g. Indigenous reference committee to make decisions alongside other panel members). 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. 	September – December 2025	Human Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff training is fit-for-purpose and empowers staff to best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in a culturally safe and appropriate way. 	January 2025	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with career progression to middle and upper management roles, and continue to strengthen succession planning and retention strategies for Indigenous staff. 	March 2025	
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. 	January 2025	RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	August – November 2025	Finance Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of supplier companies reporting on Indigenous engagement and inclusion in employment, sub-contractor activity, and supply chain spend with Indigenous businesses. 	December 2024 – April 2025	RAP Champion
			Finance Manager

Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	• Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	July 2025	Lead: RAP Champion
	• Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.		
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.		
	• Support the transition of RWG members to formal governance structures for the organisation.	July 2025	Lead: RAP Champion
	• Ensure diverse Indigenous representation on the AFLCY Board.		
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2025	Lead: RAP Champion
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Ongoing	Lead: RAP Champion
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	November 2025	Lead: RAP Champion
	• Encourage all staff to identify improvement measures and KPIs that are aligned with achieving strong cultural outcomes.		
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	RAP Champion
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2025	RAP Champion



CONTACT DETAILS

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