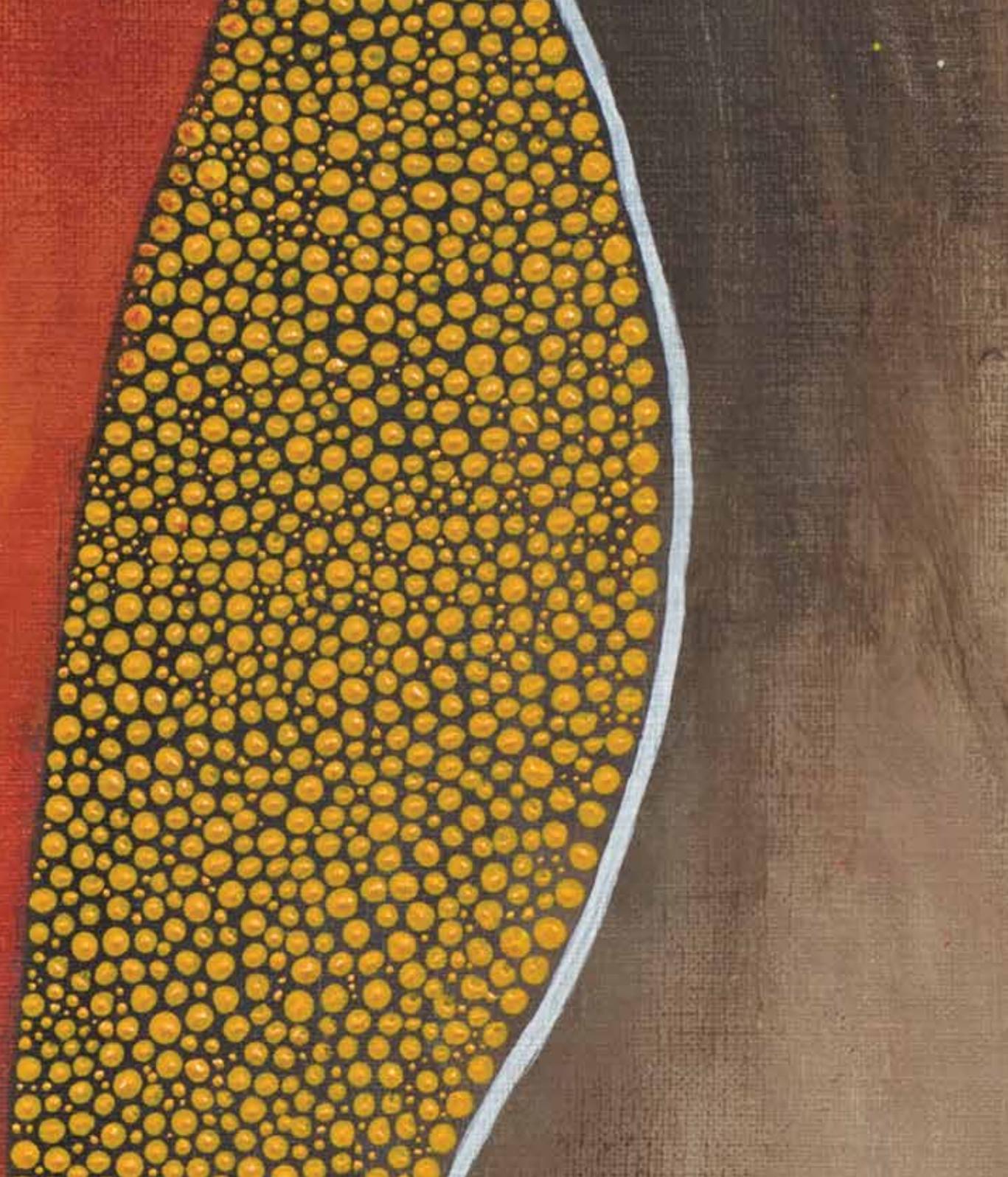




sparke
HELMORE
LAWYERS

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

August 2022 - July 2023



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Sparke Helmore acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and Elders past, present and emerging.





ARTWORK



Extracts of a painting by the artist Rebekah Treacy titled '*Wandering Country*' has been used throughout this document. The original painting is exhibited at Sparke Helmore Lawyers, Sydney office. Not to be reproduced without permission.

'*Wandering Country*' is part of a series exploring the powerful connection between land and people and one's own concept of self. This piece was inspired by stories of Rebekah's mum as a young girl growing up in her country on the remote Tableland Station in the East Kimberley.



ARTIST

Rebekah Treacy is a proud Kija woman who was born in the small town of Derby, in Western Australia. At the age of six, Rebekah moved with her family to Broome where she spent her childhood and youth growing up in a close-knit community. Rebekah completed her primary and secondary education at St Mary's College in Broome and later completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of New South Wales (College of Fine Arts).



Reflect RAP CEO statement – Sparke Helmore Lawyers

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Sparke Helmore Lawyers to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Sparke Helmore joins a network of more than 1,100 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 Sparke Helmore 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 Sparke Helmore Lawyers, 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





Welcome

I am very proud to sponsor Sparke Helmore's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Reconciliation and the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is very close to my heart and I am committed to supporting our firm's progress through the delivery of our RAP.

We have a longstanding history of supporting First Nations communities through our pro-bono activities and this RAP reflects our desire to do more to advance reconciliation in Australia.

As a firm which has an established presence across Australia, we understand that we have a role in supporting a fair and equal opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The development of our first RAP is an important step in formalising and setting a clear pathway for our ongoing contribution to progressing reconciliation across our organisation and wider Australian community.



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Management

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Our business

We've come a long way since our doors first opened in the Hunter in 1882. We've had an office in Sydney since the '60s and we recently opened our ninth office in Darwin adding to our locations in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth, Sydney and Upper Hunter.

We cover five key areas of law – Corporate & Commercial, Commercial Insurance, Government, Statutory Lines of Insurance and Workplace – with more than 30 specialised areas of expertise. We're a truly national, full service and proudly Australian firm that delivers results through deep collaboration with our clients.

Covering a big country needs a big team—we're more than 850 people now and still growing. And in true Australian spirit, we're friendly, approachable and easy to work with. And when you work with one of us, you get the expertise of all of us.

Our vision

Our vision for our Reconciliation Action Plan is that through our diverse teams and inclusive culture, we will encourage innovation, celebrate difference, and enable us to achieve outstanding outcomes for our people, clients and communities.

It's a key priority of our Reconciliation Action Plan to be an attractive and welcoming place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As a firm which has an established presence across Australia, we understand that we have a role in supporting a fair and equal opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While we have been actively involved in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and initiatives for a number of years, the development of our first RAP is an important step in formalising and setting a clear pathway for our ongoing contribution to progressing reconciliation across our organisation and wider Australian community.

The engagement, voice and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on our reconciliation journey is vital, and we are committed to building connection, opportunities and seeing progress across the legal industry. We acknowledge that a meaningful and impactful reconciliation journey takes time. Creating this RAP has helped us to understand where we need to dedicate time and resources and also build our knowledge with the support, guidance and leadership of First Nations communities, organisations and stakeholders.

One of our first priority areas is the development of our RAP Working Group, which will include the appointment of an external First Nations representative to work alongside internal representatives in leading our reconciliation objectives of building awareness, learning, and understanding across our firm.



Our Reconciliation Journey

At Sparke Helmore, we have established relationships with a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

Sparke Helmore is a member of **Supply Nation**. Our membership encourages inclusive practices in our purchasing decisions and facilitates positive collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We work with Supply Nation registered businesses including for office supplies and catering as well as for various skilled tradespeople.

We partner with **Three Rivers Regional Assembly (TRRA)**, via the **National Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances program**, providing ongoing pro bono legal assistance to support local decision making in Aboriginal communities. TRRA is an Aboriginal-led, local decision-making group which was established to ensure that services and programs developed for Aboriginal peoples within the Central Tablelands region are held to account. Delivering culturally appropriate advice is at the heart of what we do for TRRA, ensuring community and stakeholder engagement along the way. This ground-up community engagement is essential to ensuring an inclusive and holistic approach to self-determination.

The firm partners with **Indigenous Business Australia (IBA)**, which focuses on providing individuals and small First Nations businesses with access to finance. This project is ground-breaking because it aims to invest in the financial success and economic independence of First Nations peoples. For us, the project involves providing independent legal advice on the legal obligations attached to director guarantees for loans. IBA provides loans to small First Nations businesses that may not otherwise be able to access finance through the mainstream banking system. Without this independent legal advice, finance cannot be provided to these businesses. The project aims to ensure the greater economic independence and success of First Nations communities.





Since our first clinic in March 2016, we have held 24 First Nations Wills Clinics and have assisted more than 325 First Nations clients with the preparation of over 770 estate documents. Sadly, our Wills Clinics have been significantly impacted by COVID-19, with our clinics on hold since 2020. With COVID-19 and its travel restrictions, we had to create new pathways to ensure our remote clients still had access to wills, however nothing beats face-to-face. As much as we're offering a legal service, the Wills Clinic program is about trust-building, finding connection, community and sharing stories. We are busy planning and are excited to resume our First Nations Wills Clinic program in 2022.

We also take referrals for pro bono legal assistance from community legal centres and community organisations. These referrals involve providing legal assistance to First Nations organisations as well as First Nations individuals. From time to time we also offer secondments to these organisations. For example, we recently sent a lawyer on secondment to Aboriginal Legal Service WA.

Internally, we acknowledge and celebrate NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week annually through our culture and identity employee network and internal communications teams and are committed to engaging our people on our work to address the social and economic inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Series of photos from Jabiru Wills Clinic experiencing the outback, June 2019.



Relationships

Building strong and meaningful relationships with First Nations communities and organisations is paramount to the success of our RAP. Through this pillar we will focus on enhancing our network of connection to enable us to deliver on our commitments.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. 	May 2023	Business Development and Marketing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	May 2023	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to partner with First Nations' organisations working within First Nations communities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Three Rivers Regional Assembly; – First Nations run not-for-profit organisations and Local Aboriginal Land Councils. 	June 2023	Pro Bono Legal Programs Manager
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. 	April 2023	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	27 May- 3 June 2023	Chair, RAP Working Group



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	27 May- 3 June 2023	Chair, RAP Working Group
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all Partners and employees. 	September 2022	Head of Marketing and Communications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and strengthen our current partnerships with Legal Aid's Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities (CLSAC), Aboriginal Legal Service, and Indigenous Business Australia. 	June 2023	Pro Bono Legal Programs Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our firm can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	September 2022	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	September 2022	Business Development and Marketing Director
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	December 2022	Director of People and Culture Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of People and Culture policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	December 2022	Director of People and Culture Operations and OD



Respect

Connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and the future is important to many of our people and clients. Through this pillar we will commit to celebration and building understanding through education.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. 	October 2022	Director of People and Culture Operations and OD
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	October 2022	Director of People and Culture Operations and OD
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by embedding the observation of cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters in the areas our firm is located. 	September 2022	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase our people's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	September 2022	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and share information amongst our Partners and employees about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	June 2023	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage all Partners and employees to participate in NAIDOC Week by promoting external events taking place in our communities nationally. 	July 2023	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure our RAP Working Group participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	July 2023	Chair, RAP Working Group



Opportunities

Our legal and business expertise enables us to create opportunities for the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within our communities. Through this pillar we will explore areas such as recruitment, pro bono activities and procurement.

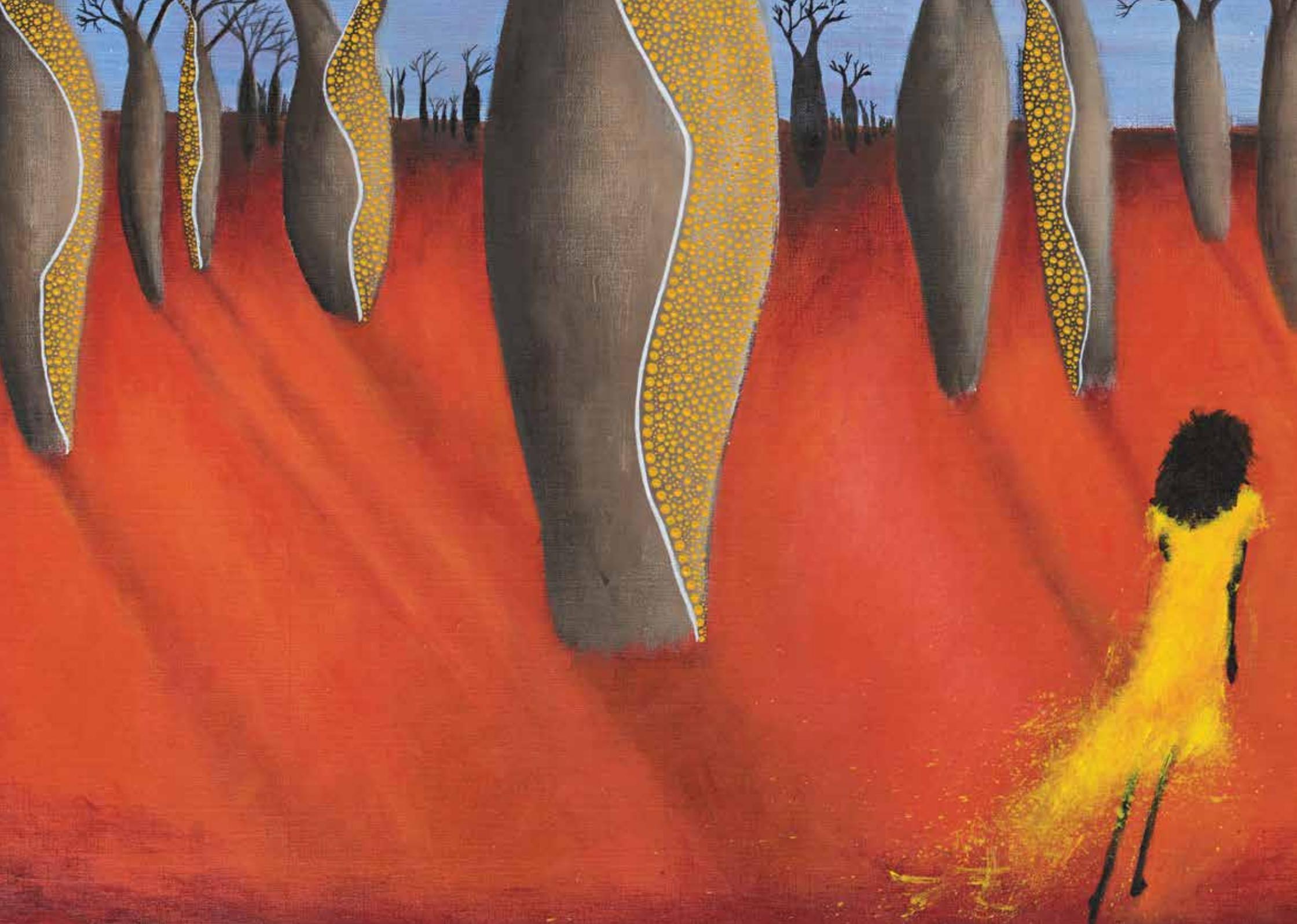
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	• Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across all areas of our firm.	June 2023	Head of Talent Acquisition
	• Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation at our firm to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2022	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	• Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	September 2022	Director of Office Services and Premises
	• Develop a list of potential opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, and communicate this to staff.	September 2022	Director of Office Services and Premises
	• Maintain Supply Nation membership.	June 2023	Director of Office Services and Premises



Governance

This pillar will play the important role of keeping us accountable against our progress and also acknowledge and celebrate key milestones on our journey.

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.	August 2022	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager
	• Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2022	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2022	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2022	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager
	• Engage Board and senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2022	Chief Operating Officer
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	August 2022	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager
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.	September 2022	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	March 2023	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager





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