



# REFLECT

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)  
Brooks Community Engagement

July 2022 – July 2023





## About the Artist & the Artwork

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Jodie Herden is a Gomeroi woman from Tamworth, NSW, who shares the narrative of her people and her country with a passion for connection to country and culture through her art. Growing up she was strong in spirit from the connection to country and culture that was passed onto her from her father, aunts and uncles. With more than 30 years professional experience Jodie aims to highlight, educate and share the beauty of her culture.

We met Jodie a few years ago while our staff were volunteering with the Tamworth Land Council through our partner charity Communities 4 Communities which helps the land council's school holiday program. "Jodie was one of the teachers at a local cultural art space that we took the kids to," says Brooks' managing director Lance Brooks.

"We kept in touch and when we decided to commission an artwork for the business, we asked her and she accepted."

Given the free hand of doing what she felt best, Jodie created the artwork featured on the preceding page. She has called it Kindred Spirits. The circular shapes represent people coming together and the blue, orange, yellow that crosses the canvas represents the golden thread of the land and water that is weft through our existence on the planet. "We love the name and the messages in this artwork," says Lance.

"Storytelling through art is my passion. I know it is my ancestors guiding me. With every brush stroke, I feel them, surrounding me, gifting me the images for the artworks and the stories of my culture," Jodie says.







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## Acknowledgment of Country

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*In the spirit and essence of reconciliation Brooks Community Engagement acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.*



# Message from Reconciliation Australia

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Reconciliation Australia welcomes Brooks Community Engagement to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Brooks Community Engagement 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 Brooks Community Engagement 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 Brooks Community Engagement, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

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





## Message from our Director

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To all who read this letter,

On behalf of Brooks Community Engagement (BROOKS), it gives me great pleasure to support the launch of our Reflect RAP and the beginning of our company's reconciliation journey. We are aware this is not an end point but more so a first step in our company's intention in supporting, acknowledging, and striving to be part of our country's reconciliation.

The responsibility of our commitment is big yet also exciting as we join more than 2,200 other Australian companies that have committed to the RAP process.

I would like to acknowledge Mike Butler, our cultural consultant from [www.sydneyharbourelder.com.au](http://www.sydneyharbourelder.com.au), who has done a wonderful job leading and guiding our company. He has really helped our RAP process to challenge and encourage each of us and the way we do things. As a result, I feel the company as well as its people are becoming better allies to First Nations Australia.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge Chloe Tempny as our RAP champion and for her leadership and enthusiasm in assembling our working group. To all our team, thank you for your enthusiasm, commitment, and willingness to support and be part of the establishment of our company's Reflect RAP.

Finally, on behalf of BROOKS, I take this opportunity to pledge our company's commitment and resources to establish and complete our RAP's vision and goals to acknowledge and participate in reconciliation with all First Nations Peoples of this land.

With hope and commitment towards the Future.

**Lance Brooks**

*Founder/Managing Director*

On behalf of

**Brooks Community Engagement**





## Message from Mike

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It's with proper pride that I'm part of this Reconciliation Action Plan. When BROOKS came to me, it's because Lance recognised that having a First Nations voice in its team was something BROOKS wanted. Together I hope we are working out a way to make something already good better.

This is only the start of its RAP process but already changes are happening. I feel confident it will make this business and its people a better ally for First Nations Australians. They have started engaging differently, they understand the land better and are confronting the uncomfortable biases that dictate modern Australia's relationship with its First Peoples.

Importantly they are giving First Nations people a fair go. The biggest success story of the Australian economy is the emergence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned business sector that I'm part of. Instead of being employed by BROOKS we decided that I work with BROOKS. For the first time since colonisation Australia's First Peoples are contributing to the Australian economy as their own bosses. We're pitching for work, we're making the mistakes, learning the lessons from them, creating opportunities and we're free to sink or swim of our own accord. And that, to me, is a freedom that is new for my family and for so many of Australia's first peoples.

BROOKS is part of that. And I'm proud to do it with them.

### **Mike Butler**

*BROOKS Community engagement professional, cultural educator & RAP guidance consultant with [www.sydneyharbourelder.com.au](http://www.sydneyharbourelder.com.au)*





# Our Business

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Brooks Community Engagement (BROOKS) is an independent consulting firm that delivers informed, responsive and respectful community relations services on behalf of a range of prominent private and government clients. BROOKS specialises in the development of vibrant and self-sustaining communities ensuring both our clients and community stakeholders feel respected, empowered and connected, creating mutually beneficial relationships.

Working with a number of community groups, councils, government organisations, charities and developers, our services include research, planning and implementation of a wide range of community relations.

BROOKS currently operates out of Sydney and throughout all of NSW.

## **Vision**

Our vision is for all communities to feel connected, respected, empowered and strong.

## **Philosophy**

Our philosophy is that community connection is the foundation to wellbeing.

## **Mission**

We connect our clients to their communities and their communities with each other to help build great places to live.

## **Values**

We believe that successful community connections are underpinned by;

- Empathetic listening.
- Respectful relationships.
- Social, cultural, emotional and physical wellbeing.

We believe that great places to live are underpinned by;

- An ongoing journey of connection and engagement.
- Acknowledging and building on communities' strengths and nature.
- Mutually beneficial results for businesses, stakeholders and communities.

## **Our Services**

- Community Engagement
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Community Engagement Plans
- Community Research
- Mediation & Conflict Resolution
- Meetings & Workshops
- Events & Projects
- Communications & PR





# All Our People

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## **Lance Brooks**

Managing Director, Community Engagement Professional, Event Coordinator, Mediator

## **Adriana Pielak**

Community Engagement Professional, Stakeholder Engagement and Research Consultant, Event Coordinator

## **Chloe Tempany**

BROOKS RAP Champion, Community Engagement Professional, Event Coordinator

## **Jack Brooks**

Research and Strategy, Community Narrative Consultant, Copywriter

## **Danielle Davis**

Community Engagement Consultant, Communications and PR Specialist

## **Mike Butler**

Cultural Educator, Community Engagement and RAP Guidance Consultant through [sydneyharbourelder.com.au](http://sydneyharbourelder.com.au)

## **Angela Brooks**

Business and Finance Director, Research and Strategy Specialist

## **Rebecca Hansson**

Administration and Finance



## Our RAP

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Developing a meaningful and achievable RAP is something that BROOKS has been working towards for several years. We feel we are at a point in the business that we are able to successfully develop and implement one. We acknowledge the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage and are committed to a workplace that fosters positive and uplifting relationships as well as furthering opportunities, whilst educating our staff and expanding the work we do alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### Implementing our RAP

#### RAP Working Group

- Due to the size of our business we are in a position to have all staff members involved, and a part of the RWG.
- The RWG will meet once a month to discuss the business' RAP, next steps our staff need to take, as well as discussing any relevant material staff have come across in their research, and deem appropriate to share with the RWG.
- This consistent meeting opens up the channels of communication within our business immensely.
- The RWG will be briefed on the requirements of the RAP.
- We aim to maintain that all staff, including those who join the team after our RAP is

being endorsed, will be offered to join the RWG, with the aim of having all staff, at all times, involved in the business' RAP.

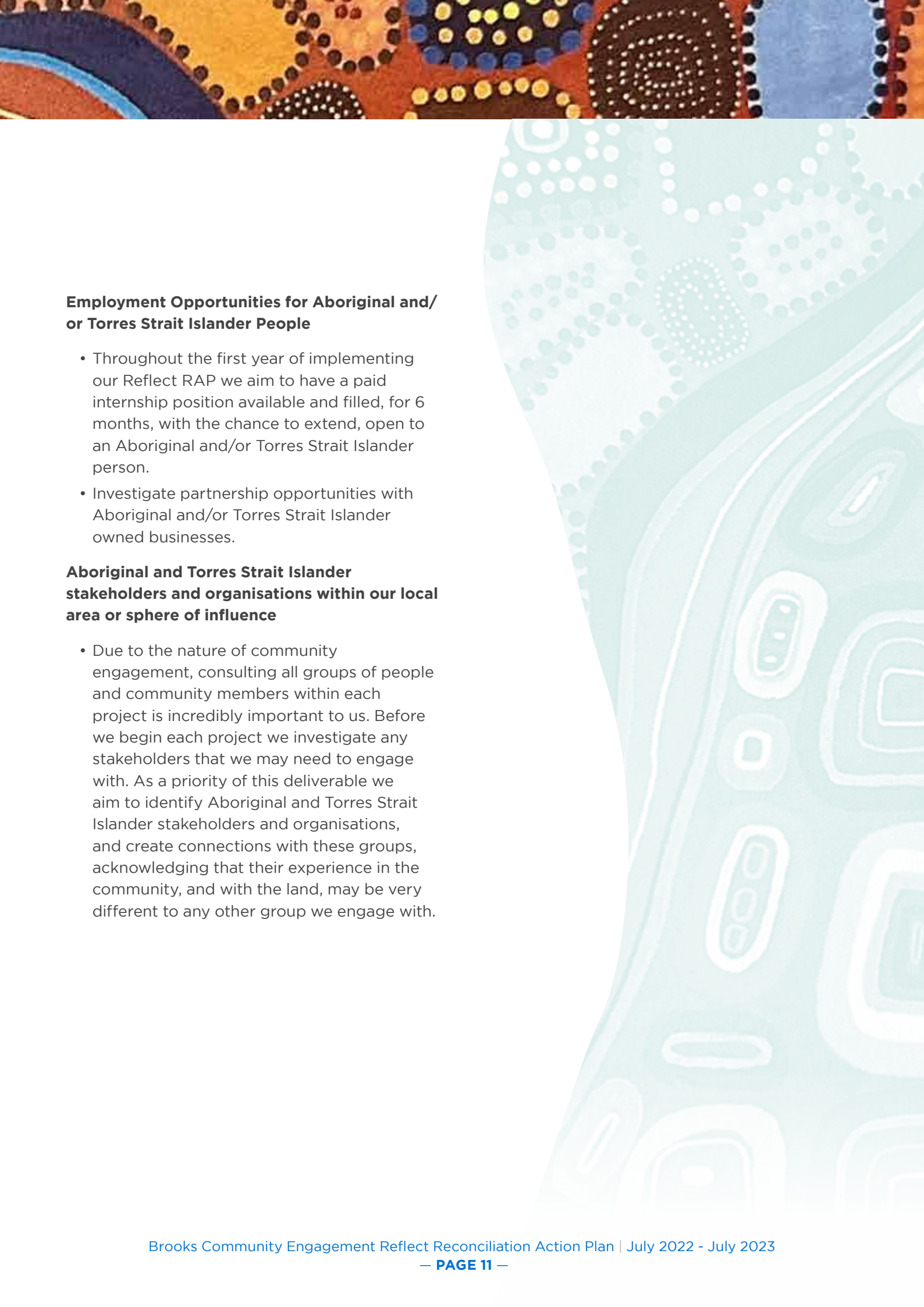
#### RAP Champion

- Our RAP Champion, Chloe Tempany, has been a part of BROOKS since 2019 as a Community Engagement Professional.
- Chloe has been assisted by Mike Butler, our BROOKS RAP Guidance Consultant, in driving and organising our RAP, as well as communicating to all staff about the upcoming integration of our RAP.

#### Internal Information Centre

- If unsure of any information or requirements related to our RAP, staff have an information portal of essential documents such as those provided by Reconciliation Australia, and any other material staff see fit to put on the portal that they have come across.
- We encourage our RWG to share any information they find useful and/or interesting.
- Any new staff will be directed to this portal as part of their induction process.
- This portal is already being utilized and engaged with by all staff members and items such as articles, documentaries, TV series, youtube videos and assorted reading material have been placed in the portal, by multiple staff members.





### **Employment Opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People**

- Throughout the first year of implementing our Reflect RAP we aim to have a paid internship position available and filled, for 6 months, with the chance to extend, open to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Investigate partnership opportunities with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence**

- Due to the nature of community engagement, consulting all groups of people and community members within each project is incredibly important to us. Before we begin each project we investigate any stakeholders that we may need to engage with. As a priority of this deliverable we aim to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations, and create connections with these groups, acknowledging that their experience in the community, and with the land, may be very different to any other group we engage with.



# Our Reconciliation Journey

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## Corporate Partnerships

BROOKS has experience in mediation and community engagement regarding culturally sensitive and complex issues such as protection of land and land use. Our clients have included the NSW government, local councils, developers that partnered with local land councils and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These projects have enhanced our understanding and awareness of the frequency and severity of issues surrounding land rights. We have explored dispute resolutions such as building keeping places, returning rights of the land back to its traditional owners and consulting traditional owners on the best course of action.

## Internal Activities/ Initiatives

Prior to implementing our RAP, BROOKS has been increasing cultural competency and awareness amongst our staff. We acknowledge that the more our staff know in relation to reconciliation and overall cultural competency, the more meaningful our RAP can be, both individually and collectively as a business. Some of these activities include staff completing weekly tasks to increase their knowledge on reconciliation such as watching documentaries, various reading material, self-reflection and company discussions about teachings.

Additionally, all staff are encouraged to complete the Cultural Competency course through the National Centre of Cultural Competence.

## External Activities/ Initiatives

BROOKS' Founder and Managing Director, Lance Brooks, is also the Founder of Communities for Communities (C4C). C4C was established in 2002 after Lance had the idea to uplift communities through focusing on their talents and strengths. Lance has a passion to bring together communities and see them grow to reach their full potential, and it is with this mantra that he has been able to make a huge difference to communities both locally and overseas. C4C's most recent work involved connecting with the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council to assist in running a free school holiday program for local kids in Tamworth. Multiple team members of BROOKS have participated in this program on multiple occasions over the last few years. As part of this trip BROOKS staff learned about the Kamilaroi people and the history of Tamworth.





## 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.	July 2022	Cultural educator
	• Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	July 2022	Cultural educator
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	• Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2023	Community Engagement Professional
	• RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May 2023 - 3 June 2023	Community Engagement Professional
	• Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May 2023 - 3 June 2023	Community Engagement Professional
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	• Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	July 2022	BROOKS RAP Champion
	• Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	Aug 2022	Community Engagement Professional
	• Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	Aug 2022	Community Engagement Professional
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	• Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	Aug 2022	Cultural educator
	• Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Aug 2022	Cultural educator



<b>RESPECT</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
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.	Aug 2022	Cultural educator
	• Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Aug 2022	Cultural educator
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	• Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	Aug 2022	Community Engagement Professional
	• Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Aug 2022	Cultural educator
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.	July 2022, 2023	Managing Director
	• Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	First week in July 2022, 2023	Managing Director
	• RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2022, 2023	Community Engagement Professional
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
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 within our organisation.	July 2022	Managing Director
	• Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2022	Cultural educator
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.	October 2022	Managing Director
	• Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2022	Cultural educator





## 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 2022	BROOKS RAP Champion
	• Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2022	BROOKS RAP Champion
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	July 2023	BROOKS RAP Champion
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2022	BROOKS RAP Champion
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2022	BROOKS RAP Champion
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2022	BROOKS RAP Champion
	• Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	July 2022	BROOKS RAP Champion
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	Cultural educator
	• 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 2023	Cultural educator
	• Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August 2023	Cultural educator
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia’s website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2022	Cultural educator

For further information about this RAP please contact

**Lance Brooks**

BROOKS Managing Director

**0407 223 939**

[lance@brookscommunityengagement.com.au](mailto:lance@brookscommunityengagement.com.au)

