



AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2014-2016





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COVER Derek Walker, Indigenous Education Assistant, *Garrigarrang: Sea Country* exhibition. Photo by James Horan.

ABOVE Jonathan Jones shield installation, *Bayala Nura: Yarning Country*, First Australians galleries. Derek Walker, Indigenous Education Assistant. Photo by James Horan.

MESSAGE FROM

KIM McKAY AO



This is the Australian Museum's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), a two-year strategic plan that provides real opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I have a strong personal commitment to ensuring its successful implementation.

The Museum's RAP builds on areas where we believe the Museum can have a positive impact on Australia's Indigenous communities. These areas include our wide ranging education programs, opportunities for employment and training, repatriation of sacred Indigenous material and an ever increasing level of community engagement by our Indigenous staff.

As a result of developing the RAP we have sharpened our focus in all these areas, especially by a shift away from selecting what the Museum believes represents Aboriginal culture. Rather, we have been working with communities to understand, and capture, the intangible heritage that surrounds an individual object, and letting that guide our acquisitions policy, exhibitions and other public programs.

I am proud to say that we have put this into practice in our recent exhibitions, *Bayala Nura: Yarning Country* and *Garrigarrang, Sea Country*. *Garrigarrang* explores the deep connections between Indigenous Australians and the coast through cultural artefacts, stories and ceremonial performances about the sea. The stories about objects in this exhibition are all told in the first person by Indigenous Australians.

Bayala Nura: Yarning Country, is a new permanent gallery celebrating the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, featuring hundreds of objects from the Museum's collections, many of which are on public display for the first time. Shields, spears and weavings complement a large bark canoe created using traditional techniques especially for the Museum's collection. The designs and technologies on display connect cultures to Country, sparking conversations – the 'yarning' in the title – about embracing cultural diversity in contemporary Australia.

We are also committed to providing an Indigenous language interpretation to many of our exhibitions and other public programs in the coming years.

The Museum has approximately 40,000 Indigenous objects from all around Australia. We work closely with Indigenous communities to document, conserve and understand more about these items. While these are readily available within the Museum to Indigenous and other visitors, our collection digitisation program also provides access to them for more remote, "owner-creator" communities.

I sincerely believe that the Museum's RAP includes targets and a clear path to progress in our Reconciliation objectives. It is also timely in the year that our Indigenous Australians gallery has received a significant update for the first time in many years.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CEO

VISION

The Australian Museum's vision for reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is a firm commitment to embrace, promote respect for and celebrate the diverse cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

WHAT WE DO

The Australian Museum is a national museum funded by the NSW State Government, donations and self-generated revenues.

Many of our programs have a national or international focus, with particular emphasis on Australia, the Pacific and South-East Asia.

The Museum is the custodian and provider of access to the oldest and largest natural sciences and cultural collections in Australia.

The Australian Museum is a centre for natural history, Indigenous Australian cultures and other contemporary cultures in our region. Within these fields, the Museum provides research, exhibitions, collection development and public programs.

The Museum has 236 staff of which eight people identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

FOCUS AREAS

The RAP focuses on four key areas:

1 Relationships

2 Respect

3 Opportunities

4 Tracking progress and reporting

OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The intent of this Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is to develop new relationships and experiences to enrich the lives of all Australians.

The development of our RAP began in 2012 with the establishment of a RAP Working Group that included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians. Australian Museum staff then engaged in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and this feedback has been incorporated into the RAP. The RAP will operate across all parts of the Museum and will:

- identify opportunities for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other communities
- affirm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols
- develop an Indigenous Engagement Strategy
- establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group.

The RAP will focus on ensuring that our Indigenous Australian and non-Indigenous staff have ownership of the plan and feel responsible for, and rewarded by, its implementation.

The Australian Museum RAP Champion is Steven Alderton, Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture; and our RAP working group included:

- Scott Mitchell, Head, Cultural Collections, Conservation & Consulting
- Phil Gordon, Project Manager, Indigenous Heritage
- Laura McBride, Creative Producer, Cultural Programs
- Charlotte Galleguillos, Indigenous Education Project Officer.





FOCUS AREA I

RELATIONSHIPS

SUPPORTING NEW AND EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Australian Museum is built on land which has a rich Aboriginal history under its traditional custodians, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. It is important to ensure that these historical ties are celebrated and integrated into everything we do. It is through our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities that we will be able to celebrate and enrich the lives of all Australians.

➤ **ACTION 1.1** Establish a RAP Working Group, comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Museum staff, to support the RAP's development and implementation.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
June 2014 – June 2016

Note To meet at least twice per year

RAP Working Group
May 2014 – April 2016

Provide opportunities for Australian Museum staff to have input in the ongoing implementation of the RAP.

➤ **ACTION 1.2** Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group. This will be made up of 4 to 5 experienced cultural practitioners and/or Elders who will provide advice and feedback on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, collections and exhibitions.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
December 2015

Invite local, experienced and influential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be part of the Australian Museum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group.

➤ **ACTION 1.3** Communicate the Australian Museum's RAP to all employees and stakeholders as part of the Museum's Corporate Strategic Plan.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
June 2014

Publish the RAP on the Australian Museum website

Executive Director & CEO
July 2015

Ensure the RAP appears in the Museum's Annual Report and CSP

➤ **ACTION 1.4** Celebrate National Reconciliation Week by providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and other staff to build relationships.

RAP Working Group
27 May – 3 June 2014, 2015

Organise an annual morning tea to celebrate National Reconciliation Week taking into account the national theme and resources made available by NRW, and invite all Australian Museum staff and volunteers.

➤ **ACTION 1.5** Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and key stakeholders to build stronger, meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships.

Creative Producer – Cultural Programs
May 2014 – April 2016

Engage with two new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups per year – one regional and one metropolitan.

Project Manager Indigenous Heritage
May 2014 – April 2016

Create better access to the collections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Head, Cultural Collections, Conservation & Consulting
May 2014 – April 2016

Complete at least one new collection acquisition project each year in collaboration with relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities.

Creative Producer – Cultural Programs
May 2014 – April 2016

Explore the potential to work with community-based organisations to deliver cultural awareness programs to at-risk Indigenous youth, including incarcerated young people.

Project Manager Indigenous Heritage
May 2014 – April 2016

Explore the use of collaborative arrangements with knowledge centres and other locally based community resource providers in the digital repatriation of cultural collections content to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.





FOCUS AREA 2

RESPECT

REFLECTING NATIONAL IDENTITY

Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, land and histories is important to the Australian Museum. We acknowledge and respect the contributions made by Australia's First Peoples.

➤ **ACTION 2.1** Engage staff in understanding the protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country ceremonies to ensure that there is shared meaning behind the ceremonies.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
July 2014

Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document for Australian Museum staff to guide and inform them when to provide an Acknowledgement of Country and when to engage an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Elder to provide a Welcome to Country.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
December 2015

Identify at least one significant event for which a Welcome to Country from a traditional Elder will be included.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
July 2014

Establish a Welcome to Country budget for use in events and programs.

➤ **ACTION 2.2** Provide opportunities for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their culture and community through attending relevant events and functions, and to increase their professional development opportunities and networks.

Executive Leadership Team
July 2014

Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week events.

Executive Leadership Team
July 2014

Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in local NAIDOC Week events.

RAP Working Group
July 2014

Identify local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events (such as National Reconciliation Week & NAIDOC events) and ensure that staff are informed about them through staff meetings and the Intranet noticeboard.

➤ **ACTION 2.3** Engage employees in cultural learning to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.

Head, Human Resources
December 2015

Investigate creating a certified e-learning module for all new staff to complete as a part of their induction training.

➤ **ACTION 2.4** Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through the display of creative arts.

All staff
July 2014

Display and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork and cultural material.

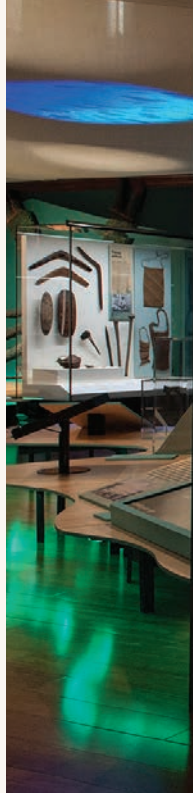
Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
June 2016

Include Aboriginal language terms more widely throughout the Museum's cultural and scientific displays.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
June 2016

Incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material throughout all Museum displays and exhibitions including natural history and scientific displays.





**Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
May 2014 – May 2016**

Invest resources in the Australian Museum's Indigenous Australians gallery ensuring its relevance and meaning for both visitors and Indigenous Australian communities.

**Creative Producer – Cultural Programs
December 2014**

Hold an annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander event.

**Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
December 2014**

Provide professional development opportunities for Indigenous researchers, artists and cultural practitioners.

> ACTION 2.5 Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy

**Creative Producer – Cultural Programs
December 2016**

Build a database of artists, researchers, community members and teachers to ensure open communication channels.

**Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
December 2016**

Invest in more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

**Creative Producer – Cultural Programs
December 2014**

Develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and other Arts organisations which undertake Indigenous programming.

**Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture
June 2016**

Implement an Integrated approach for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives across the Museum.

> ACTION 2.6 Continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to repatriate ancestral remains and secret/sacred objects.

**Project Manager Indigenous Heritage
June 2014 – June 2016**

Proactively engage with communities around Australia about the repatriation of ancestral remains and secret/sacred objects in the Museum's collections. This will be achieved by continuing the work of Phil Gordon, Project Manager Indigenous Heritage, and Mariko Smith, Collection Officer – Repatriation.

**Project Manager Indigenous Heritage
June 2014 – June 2016**

Support international efforts to repatriate ancestral remains from overseas museums to communities in NSW.

ABOVE LEFT Mariko Smith,
Collection Officer Repatriation.

ABOVE RIGHT *Garrigarrang:*
Sea Country exhibition,
Indigenous Collections.





FOCUS AREA 3

OPPORTUNITIES

PROMOTING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

Providing education and employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations is a priority for the Australian Museum. We believe this to be integral for supporting greater economic participation and social inclusion and allowing the Museum to directly benefit from increased access to diverse skills and knowledge.

➤ **ACTION 3.1 Investigate opportunities across the Museum for increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.**

Executive Leadership Team December 2014

Establish baseline data for existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the Australian Museum.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture December 2014

Develop, implement and communicate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy for Australian Museum.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture June 2014 – June 2016

Identify more targeted positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders across the Museum, 'mainstream' positions that are filled using advertising and recruitment strategies that maximise applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Executive Director & CEO June 2016

Create at least one additional identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander position. This is to be an identified position in accordance with Part 9A of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* whereby Aboriginality/Torres Strait Islander heritage is a genuine occupational qualification.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture December 2016

Arrange for long-term training of one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff member in leadership, to provide participation and experience in working across departments, with the Assistant Director Public Engagement and with other arts organisations in order to build capacity for a future a leadership role in the arts.

Assistant Director, Public Engagement & Culture December 2016

Explore the potential, and develop a business case, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cadetships at the Museum.

➤ **ACTION 3.2 Continue to maintain an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Trustee on the board of the Australian Museum.**

Executive Director & CEO May 2014 – May 2016

Currently Robynne Quiggin is the Aboriginal member of the Trust. When her appointment ends, the Museum will advertise an identified Trustee position which can only be filled by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person to ensure continued compliance with the *Australian Museum Trust Act 1975*.

➤ **ACTION 3.3 Investigate the mutually beneficial opportunities that increased supplier diversity will provide to the Australian Museum.**

Executive Leadership Team July 2015

Investigate becoming a member of Supply Nation, which links organisations with certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers to help sustain a vibrant and prosperous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business sector.

Executive Leadership Team May 2015

Review and reform procurement strategy, policy and processes to ensure and sustain supplier diversity.





➤ ACTION 3.4 Continue recruitment practices that support applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates for all positions.

Head, Human Resources
July 2015

Include text in all Australian Museum recruitment material that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply'.

➤ ACTION 3.5 Implement a work experience program targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary and tertiary students.

Executive Leadership Team
May 2016

Establish a program in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students work with Museum staff to gain professional experience while adding value to their studies through access to our collections.

ABOVE Jimmy Smith, Interpretative Officer, Australian Museum.

RIGHT TOP Left to right: Derek Walker, Dion Peita, Jack Gray and Logan Metcalfe.

RIGHT BOTTOM Left to right:
Robynne Quiggin, Australian Museum
Trustee; Laura McBride, Creative
Producer, Australian Museum;
Amanda Reynolds, Co-curator
Garrigarrang: Sea Country exhibition.





FOCUS AREA 4

TRACKING PROGRESS AND REPORTING

➤ **ACTION 4.1** The RAP is reviewed, reported on and updated annually

Executive Director & CEO

June 2016

Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.

Executive Director & CEO

May 2016

Make the RAP a standing agenda for staff meetings to ensure it remains on target.

➤ **ACTION 4.2** Refresh and update Australian Museum RAP

Executive Director & CEO

June 2016

Refresh and update the Australian Museum's RAP based on achievements and learnings from this RAP and send to Reconciliation Australia for review.

OPPOSITE TOP *Garrigarrang: Sea Country* exhibition.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM Indigenous Engagement tour by Phil Gordon, Aboriginal heritage projects, Australian Museum.

ABOVE Pukumani Poles, Australian Museum Indigenous Collection.





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