



**RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN**

REFLECT

Reflect

**Reconciliation Action Plan
January 2023 – July 2024**

**Royal Australian
Historical Society**



Royal Australian
Historical Society

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan January 2023 – July 2024



Our business

The Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) is a member-based organisation that strives to advance education in the field of Australian history. Our goals can be categorised into six main areas.

Educate: to deliver educational programs and publications to members and the community about Australian history that promote the study, writing and dissemination of Australian history, and develop historical expertise in the community that supports history and heritage projects.

Inform: to provide opportunities for Society members and the public to learn about the latest developments in community and local history and heritage through conferences, seminars, lectures, publications and digital-based initiatives.

Support: to provide services that support our affiliated societies in society management and assist members to deliver projects that promote their local and community history.

Resources: to acquire and preserve, for the use of the Society and the public, reference material in any medium considered by the RAHS Council to have a bearing on Australian history, and to maintain the library and History House as core resources that support the RAHS educational and research roles.

Advocacy: to provide leadership to the broader community on history and heritage matters, in particular access to historical records and policies that impact the practice of local and community history.

Governance: to meet all the legal, financial and statutory obligations of the Society and to uphold governance practices that ensure the long-term sustainability of the Society at History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney.

The RAHS currently employs two permanent full-time staff, two permanent part-time staff and two interns. In addition, a range of volunteers also assist with delivering RAHS projects and outreach activities. The activities of the Society are directed by a voluntary Council, which includes formal officebearers, and supported by a range of voluntary subcommittees. None of the current RAHS staff, Councillors or committee members identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.



The activities of the RAHS are primarily focused on New South Wales, although our membership includes individuals located interstate and overseas. Some RAHS members have self-identified as being Aboriginal peoples. Our aspiration is to invite more Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander peoples to join the Society. Our geographic reach has increased due to our investment in digital technologies. In addition to our own members, the RAHS acts as a peak body for local history, family history and special-interest history groups across NSW. These organisations are known collectively as our affiliated societies.

The RAHS is normally based at one location on Gadigal land: History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney. Major building works at these premises over 2022–25 mean that the Society will operate from a temporary location until the renovation of History House is completed.

Our RAP

The RAHS has encouraged the study of Australian history since 1901. We are aware that for the greater part of the Society's existence, 'history' has been almost exclusively defined as the activities of colonisers and settlers from 1788 onwards. We acknowledge that our publications in previous times may have included dismissive or derogatory comments about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that our members' work may have avoided or obscured reference to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, families, cultures and custodianship. We seek to begin redressing these wrongs and the harm that they may have done to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As a prominent organisation and peak body, the RAHS is committed to showing leadership in the study of Australian history. We believe that it is our duty to actively engage in the process of truth telling and reconciliation. The Society and our members possess the means, the materials and the skills to help re-tell Australian history in a way that is truthful, respectful, inclusive and empowering for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Society also holds diverse resources that can assist Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in researching their own families, connections and Country.

We acknowledge that these processes must be undertaken in conjunction with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities, representatives and organisations. It is our desire to work collaboratively and respectfully to share knowledge and to re-shape the way that Australian history is portrayed and understood. It is also our goal in developing a Reconciliation Action Plan to demonstrate the value of this process to our affiliated societies, thereby advancing the process of reconciliation across NSW.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan Champion will be the Society's President. We are a small organisation but our Executive, our wider Council and our office staff will all lead the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan. These sections of the Society will be represented by the President, a Councillor and the General Manager, respectively. Together, they will regularly report on progress in delivering the promises made in the Reconciliation Action Plan. The Society will also invite participation by more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island peoples in taking the Reconciliation Action Plan forward.



We intend to implement our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan through four main activities.

We will make contact with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities, representatives and organisations to seek their guidance and goals in how we can advance truth telling and reconciliation.

We will ensure that our Society adopts respectful and inclusive language, practices and approaches to the past, including acknowledging our own historical injustices toward Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We will build upon our current initiatives to collaborate with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in creating programs and events that advance a reconciliation-based approach to Australian history.

We will share our experiences with our affiliated societies in order to encourage them to start their own reconciliation journey.

To date, the RAHS has commenced the process of reconciliation by introducing an Acknowledgement of Country at all formal meetings and inviting a Traditional Owner or Custodian to perform a Welcome to Country at our major gatherings. We have also undertaken a preliminary identification of books in our library that refer to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories. Since 2020 the Society has also conducted a series of in-person and online workshops on researching Aboriginal family history, which have been developed collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples. In future, these workshops will be expanded to include advice on researching Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander family histories.

Our partnerships and current activities

The RAHS has worked with both Aboriginal peoples and historians who specialise in Aboriginal history to develop a series of 'Finding Your Ancestors' online workshops, which commenced in August 2020. These include the advice and stories of Aboriginal librarians, archivists and community members, in addition to Aboriginal artwork, as encouragement and guidance for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to begin finding their family histories and networks.

The Society has also recently introduced a new library software system that allows us to better identify and share our research resources, including images, manuscripts and books. These resources can be tagged when they include content relevant to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and can also be marked for restriction if they appear to include knowledge or depictions that should not be shared without appropriate cultural authority.





Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. 	January 2023	Councillor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	June 2023	General 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. 	January 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	27 May – 3 June 2023	RAP Working Group member
	<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	RAHS President
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A RAP Working Group representative will host a 'Finding Your Ancestors' event at NRW 2023 and will attend this event. 	27 May – 3 June 2023	RAP Working Group member
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. 	January 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	January 2023	Councillor
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. 	July 2023	President
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	July 2023	General Manager





Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and/or 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/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. 	July 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	July 2023	Councillor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples regarding the Society's cultural awareness protocols for written materials, presentations and events to ensure that they use respectful language, acknowledge problems with past expressions and attitudes, and are inclusive of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. 	August 2023	Councillor
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a grant-funded internship project to review the digitised journals of the RAHS to identify reminiscences and accounts that mention Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and places, as a first step in sharing this information with communities. 	January 2024	General Manager and Librarian
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. 	January 2023	Councillor
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff and members' understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	March 2023	President
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff and members about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	June 2023	President
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce our staff and members to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. To also be shared with members. 	May 2023	General Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	3–10 July 2023	RAP Working Group member
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a timeline of representations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian screen and audio materials during NAIDOC Week. 	3–10 July 2023	Councillor



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	• Develop a business case for employment of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples within our organisation.	December 2023	General Manager
	• Build understanding of current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	December 2023	General Manager
9. Increase Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	• Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	November 2023	Councillor
	• Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2023	General 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.	January 2023	Councillor
	• Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	January 2023	Councillor
	• Establish Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	February 2023	RAP Working Group Chair
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	January 2023	Councillor
	• Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	January 2023	President
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	February 2023	President
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	January 2023	General 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.	30 September 2023	Councillor
	• 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 and June 2024	General Manager
	• Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August 2023 and 2024	General Manager
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2023	Councillor

Contact details

Name: Suzanne Holohan
Position: General Manager and Company Secretary
Phone: (02) 9247 8001
Email: executive@rahs.org.au
Website: <https://www.rahs.org.au/>

Royal Australian Historical Society
 ABN 91 000 027 654

Cover image: Max Dupain, *Girl Reflected in Two Mirrors*, 1930s, State Library of NSW, ON 609/Box 30/no. 68

