INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
July 2017 – July 2019
The Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) is an extremely significant area in Perth. This painting depicts an aerial view of the river which embodies the presence of the Wagyl (the Dreaming serpent). It is known in Noongar creation stories that the Wagyl made the rivers, swamps, lakes and waterholes. The cross hatching patterns (raak) is a painting style from Arnhem Land which is representative of the artists identity within the work.

Green in the Derbarl Yerrigan depicts new beginnings like that of new life in our flora and fauna during Djilba (spring time) as is this RAP for the Law Society of Western Australia.

**The artist acknowledges they are not of ancestry to Wadjuk Noongar country and people and has therefore respectfully used their own ancestral painting styles as to not appropriate Noongar culture. The Derbarl Yerrigan and Wagyl have been used to symbolise Wadjuk Noongar country in Western Australia and the significance they hold in being included in the Law Society of Western Australia’s Reconciliation Action Plan.**

**About the Artist**

“I have grown up all over Australia. My ancestral country is in Far North Queensland, Kooki-mini and Kooki-langi country between Laura and Cooktown and have family connections in North East Arnhem Land, Yolngu country. I am also of Scottish and Solomon Islander ancestry. Growing up I did my schooling and lived in Perth, Arnhem Land and on the mid north coast of New South Wales. Moving around was fantastic, it taught me a lot about myself and my identity. In Perth, I studied a bachelor of arts majoring in communications and media and literature, and then went on to teach in the Indigenous Ways of Knowing major at UWA. Art is in my blood, it is a way I can express how I feel about growing up in two completely different worlds as a young Aboriginal person of today. I also just love the aesthetics of painting. I like to bring together many different painting styles that I have learnt throughout my life, challenging notions of what it means to be an ‘Aboriginal artist’.”

**Reconciliation Action Plans are a step in acknowledging that everyone needs to make change in order to see change. Aboriginal people need to be acknowledged within every industry/area of society, especially in our legal systems in regard to fair and equal representation. I am honoured to be part of this project.**
Message from the President

I am pleased to present to you the Law Society of Western Australia’s Reconciliation Action Plan Innovate 2017-2019. It builds on and acknowledges the work undertaken by the Law Society’s Reflect RAP 2015-2016 to promote reconciliation in Western Australia.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Law Society’s RAP Working Group for leading the development of the plan and Reconciliation Australia for working with the RAP Working Group to review what has been achieved to date and to help us focus on the priorities for the next two years.

I encourage all Law Society members and staff to familiarise themselves with this plan, to implement it proactively and to continue our reconciliation journey together.

Alain Musikanth
President, the Law Society of Western Australia

The Law Society of Western Australia recognises the diverse language groups, kinship structures and customs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities throughout Western Australia. While in this document, reference is made in general terms to Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous peoples, this in no way diminishes this diversity.
Our vision for reconciliation

The Law Society of Western Australia is a signatory to the Law Council of Australia's Diversity and Equality Charter, and recognises that diversity benefits the legal profession and the community. The Law Society is committed to providing access to resources and services to meet the needs of a diverse community.

Our vision for reconciliation is to have a legal profession that recognises, values and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures.

Our business

The Law Society is the peak professional association for the legal profession in Western Australia. The Law Society, which is based in Perth, has approximately 3700 members at July 2016, with 10 members identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Established in 1927, the Law Society is a not-for-profit association dedicated to the representation of its members and the enhancement of the legal profession through being a respected leader and contributor on law reform, access to justice and the Rule of Law. The Law Society is widely acknowledged by the legal profession, government and the community, as the ‘voice’ of the legal profession in Western Australia.

The Law Society is governed by a Council chaired by the President. The Council is assisted in the management of the Law Society by the Chief Executive Officer and Law Society staff.

The Law Society currently employs 40 staff members. Presently, the Law Society does not have any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, but does have an Indigenous Legal Issues Committee and an Aboriginal Incarceration and Justice Reinvestment Working Group.
As the peak body of the legal profession in Western Australia, the Law Society recognises that it has the opportunity to affect real change through raising awareness of its commitment to reconciliation, resulting in the profession considering ways in which they can contribute to reconciliation.

The Law Society acknowledges the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, holding a special place in Australia’s history, present and future.

The Law Society believes in celebrating cultural diversity and acknowledges that it is through developing relationships that long lasting reconciliation will be achieved.

By joining the RAP programme, the Law Society commits itself to:

- Contributing to increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the legal profession;
- Promoting greater respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures within the profession;
- Building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- Developing the discourse around legal issues which disproportionately adversely affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
- Advocating with the Law Council of Australia for the Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Law Society’s RAP Working Group is responsible for championing, establishing, implementing and maintaining the Law Society’s RAP. The RAP Working Group is comprised of the following members: Chair, Greg McIntyre SC, Council member, David Price, CEO of the Law Society, Krista McMeeken, Noongar woman and Convenor of the Law Society’s Indigenous Legal Issues Committee, Sue Langmair, PA to the Executive and President, Aíne Whelan, General Manager – Programmes, and Joanna Blackley, Lawyer – Policy & Advocacy and RAP Co-ordinator/Champion.

The Law Society is proud to have achieved some important goals during its Reflect RAP journey. The Law Society has established the RAP Working Group, started a strategic campaign titled ‘Closing the Gap’, and developed Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocol documents for Law Society events. Recruitment and procurement policies have been developed to ensure that it is known that the Law Society welcomes applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants and considers Aboriginal owned companies when doing business. The induction pack for new employees now includes information regarding our RAP and associated undertakings.

In 2016-2017, as a part of the Law Society’s strategic campaign ‘Closing the Gap’, nine policy statements were published regarding the legal issues contributing to the increasing incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Western Australia and called on both sides of government to respond to these statements. The policy statements are available on the Law Society’s website at lawsocietywa.asn.au/law-reform-and-advocacy/#closing-the-gap.

For National Reconciliation Week 2016, the Law Society participated in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs Banner Project by sponsoring a banner that was displayed on St Georges Terrace, Perth, promoting reconciliation.

The Law Society’s General Managers have formed a group to develop a strategy for ongoing Cultural Awareness Training for staff.

The creation of the Law Society’s RAP webpage has enabled promotion of the RAP and participating law firms RAPs, to encourage Western Australian law firms to develop their individual RAPs.

The Law Society looks forward to building on our achievements in the next two years, guided by the Innovate RAP.
Relationships
Building strong relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is important to the Law Society as relationships are central to promoting participation in the legal profession and greater respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures within the legal profession and, by extension, within the legal system of the State and the Commonwealth, in which the legal profession participates.

RAP Working Group (RWG) actively monitors RAP development and implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting

**Deliverable**

- RWG oversees the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented on the RWG.
- Meet at least twice per year to monitor and report on RAP implementation.
- Establish Terms of Reference for the RWG.

**Timeline:** Internal morning tea to launch RAP in August 2017. Meetings to be held in April, July and October, and also when required. RAP WG Terms of Reference to be established by November 2017.

**Responsibility:** Chair, RAP WG

Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW) by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians

**Deliverable**

- Organise at least one internal event for NRW each year.
- Register our NRW event via Reconciliation Australia’s NRW website.
- Support an external NRW event.
- Ensure our Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.
- Download Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and circulate to staff.
- Extend an invitation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to share their reconciliation experiences or stories at an event of the Law Society.
- During NRW, subject to funding, participate in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs Street Banner Project.

**Timeline:** 27 May–3 June, 2017 & 2018

**Responsibility:** Chair, RAP WG

Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes

**Deliverable**

- Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.
- Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.

**Timeline:** July 2019

**Responsibility:** Chair, RAP WG

Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across our business and sector

**Deliverable**

- Implement and review a strategy to communicate our RAP to all internal and external stakeholders.
- Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders.

**Timeline:** July 2019

**Responsibility:** Chair, RAP WG

Develop relationships, actions and targets with local stakeholders to promote reconciliation

**Deliverable**

- Explore opportunities to support the ‘Recognise’ campaign through functions and publication to members of events and information related to the campaign.
- Support the Western Australians for Recognition Perth Committee, including by members of the Law Society also being members of that Committee and contributing to its work.
- When the appropriate opportunities present, champion the RAP programme to the legal profession of Western Australia.

**Timeline:** July 2019

**Responsibility:** Chair, RAP WG
Respect
Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, histories and rights is important to the Law Society as a better understanding and appreciation of values and culture supports mutual respect, diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

Engage employees in cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements

Deliverable
- Develop and implement a cultural awareness training strategy for our staff which defines cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our business and considers various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face-to-face workshops or cultural immersion).
- Investigate opportunities to work with local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants to develop cultural awareness training.
- Provide opportunities for RWG members, RAP champions, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in cultural training.
- Promote the Reconciliation Australia’s Share Our Pride online tool to all staff.

Timeline: July 2019
Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer

Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their culture and communities by celebrating NAIDOC Week

Deliverable
- Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.
- Provide opportunities for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week.
- Support an external NAIDOC Week community event.
- Contact the Western Australian NAIDOC Week Committee to discover events in the Western Australian community and promote to staff and members and their employers.

Timeline: 2-9 July 2017 & 2018
Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer

Engage employees in understanding the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols, such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, to ensure there is a shared meaning

Deliverable
- Develop a list of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country and maintaining respectful partnerships.
- Invite Traditional Owner’s to provide a Welcome to Country at the commencement of significant Law Society events involving members and employees.
- As per the Law Society Acknowledgement of Country Policy, encourage the Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of important external and internal meetings.

Timeline: July 2019
Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer

Develop actions to promote our vision for reconciliation.

Deliverable
- Provide information sessions on RAPs to members.

Timeline: July 2019
Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer
Opportunities

Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities are important to the Law Society as our contribution will assist with closing the gaps that exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our workplace

Deliverable

- Amend the Law Society’s Recruitment Policy to ensure that it includes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Strategy.
- Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander external stakeholders and/or partnerships to provide information on effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and retention strategies.
- Explore feasible ways to advertise job vacancies to reach potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants (eg, social media, through networks).
- Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace.

Timeline: July 2019

Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer

Investigate opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity within our organisation

Deliverable

- Review procurement policies and procedures to identify barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to supply our organisation with goods and services. Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services.
- Develop one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned business.
- Investigate Supply Nation membership.

Timeline: July 2019

Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer

Develop opportunities to promote our vision for reconciliation.

Deliverable

- Continue to offer, subject to funding, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Law Student Mentoring Programme.
- Through Law Access Ltd and the pro bono legal services stakeholder forum, encourage and develop the capacity of members for pro bono legal assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.
- Continue to support the development of the Francis Burt Law Education Programme’s ‘Let’s Put Our Heads Together’ project designed to engage with Aboriginal Youth to encourage understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities through film making and story-telling.

Timeline: July 2019

Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer
Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia

**Deliverable**
- Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.
- Investigate participating in the RAP Barometer.

**Timeline:** 30 September 2017 & 2018, May 2018

**Responsibility:** Chief Executive Officer

Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings internally and externally

**Deliverable**
- Publically report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings.

**Timeline:** July 2018 and 2019

**Responsibility:** Chief Executive Officer

Review, refresh and update RAP

**Deliverable**
- Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to review, refresh and update the RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements.
- Send draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal feedback and endorsement.

**Timeline:** October 2018

**Responsibility:** Chief Executive Officer
For more information about this RAP please call (08) 9324 8600 or visit lawsocietywa.asn.au