

ITEM 3 DRAFT INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2026-2028

The draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028 (RAP) is a strategic document that includes practical actions to drive our contribution to reconciliation in our workplace and in the work we do for and with community. The draft RAP has been developed in line with Reconciliation Australia’s guidelines and standards.

RECOMMENDATION

Council note the draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–2028.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Sue Savage, Manager Community Culture and Engagement
 Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026 - 2028

ACRONYMS USED IN REPORT

Abbreviation	Meaning
Implementation Plan	Draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028 – Implementation Plan
RA	Reconciliation Australia
RAP	Draft Innovate Reconciliation Plan 2026-2028

BACKGROUND

At its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and non-Aboriginal and non-Torres Strait Islander Australians, for the benefit of all Australians. A Reconciliation Action Plan provides a strategic approach to drive an organisation’s contribution to the national reconciliation movement. Reconciliation Australia (RA) provides a framework to support organisations to develop their Reconciliation Action Plan and those that meet the guidelines receive nationally recognised endorsement from RA. RA’s RAP framework consists of four RAP types; ‘Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate’. Each RAP is designed to suit the stage of an organisation’s reconciliation journey. An Innovate RAP aligns with Council’s current actions, activities and programs. An ‘Innovate’ RAP is delivered over a two year period.

The draft RAP, as prescribed by RA, sets out the reconciliation actions we aim to achieve. To guide how we achieve this, a draft RAP Implementation Plan has been developed. Informed by extensive engagement, the draft Implementation Plan captures reconciliation projects and initiatives that will be delivered by teams across the organisation.

As a result of engagement, our vision has been revised. The draft vision now reflects our commitment to creating a culturally safe workplace.

‘Our vision for reconciliation is a unified and equitable Wollongong.

We are a city that values the living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, understands the truth of our shared history, and lives respectfully on this land.

We aspire to be a culturally safe workplace, where all staff take action to achieve meaningful reconciliation and have genuine relationships with First Nations peoples.’

Conditional approval of the draft RAP has been provided by RA. The draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028 – Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) is not submitted to, or considered by, RA.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed the draft RAP be noted by Council.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

A range of engagement methods have been undertaken to build awareness of reconciliation and inform the development of our draft RAP and Implementation Plan.

- A RAP Working Group was established, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, General Manager, Director Community Services, Director Infrastructure + Works, Senior Manager People + Culture, Talent + Capability Manager, Procurement + Supply Manager, Communications + Marketing Manager, Community Development + Engagement Manager and Community Development Worker.
- Yarning circles and reconciliation workshops were held for staff. Staff spent time listening to Aboriginal Elders which was followed by the opportunity to discuss reconciliation ideas and actions.
- Staff were provided the options to have input via an online survey or postcard.
- Various work locations were visited to discuss the opportunity to participate.
- Conversations were held with:
 - Manager Open Space + Environmental Services
 - Wollongong City Libraries Manager
 - Wollongong Art Gallery Director
 - Operations Manager – Memorial Gardens + Cemeteries
 - Manager Infrastructure + Planning
 - Diversity + Inclusion Specialist
 - City and Culture Manager
 - Environmental Planning Manager
 - Environment + Conservation Services Manager
 - Natural Areas Coordinator
 - Curator Botanic Garden
 - Inventory Supply Coordinator
 - Community Development + Planning Coordinator
- Workshops were held with children and young people.
- Engagement was undertaken with the Aboriginal community including Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal organisations, Aboriginal community groups and identified individuals.
- All projects/initiatives in the Implementation Plan have been suggested and/or agreed to by the lead partner as referenced in the internal Implementation Plan.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Goal 1 “*We are a sustainable and climate resilient city*” and Goal 4 “*We have a healthy, respectful, and inclusive community*”. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan 2035	Delivery Program 2025-2029
Strategy	Service
1.2 Partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in the way we care for the environment.	Community Programs Employee Services Financial Services Engagement, Communications and Events
4.11 Partner with our diverse communities, including Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities on programs and projects.	
4.12 In the spirit of reconciliation, build awareness and understanding of Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, heritage and histories.	

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The draft RAP presents low organisational risk. Key risks relate to delivery, reputation and cultural safety. These are mitigated through:

- Governance oversight via the RAP Working Group
- Integration of actions into business unit work plans
- Ongoing cultural guidance from Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal organisations
- Resourcing managed within existing budgets where possible
- Annual review to monitor progress and emerging risks.

Overall, the RAP provides a structured, low-risk framework that strengthens Council's cultural responsiveness and supports community expectations.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The draft RAP supports Council's social sustainability goals by strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and promoting inclusive, culturally safe practices. RA provide guidelines for Working Groups and have templates with prescribed actions to meet each stage of the reconciliation journey. Environmental impacts are minimal, with some actions encouraging sustainable procurement and support for Aboriginal organisations involved in land care and heritage protection. Overall, the RAP contributes positively to Council's cultural and organisational sustainability.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The delivery of the draft RAP is primarily funded through existing budgets. Some strategies and actions require us to work differently rather than requiring additional funding. Where appropriate, potential grant opportunities will be pursued.

CONCLUSION

Our draft RAP is a strategic document that consolidates our long-standing commitment to reconciliation. It includes practical actions that will drive our contribution to reconciliation both within our organisation and in the work we do for and with community.



Wollongong City Council

Draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026 - 2028





Image: Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony, Blue Mile Tramway, Wollongong

Acknowledgement

Wollongong City Council acknowledges Aboriginal peoples of Dharawal Country as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, seas, and skies across the areas that we operate. We recognise the unique position this holds in the minds, bodies and spirits of Aboriginal peoples.

We pay deep respect to the Elders resting in the dreaming, to the Elders of today, and to the Elders to come, who will continue to care, protect and nurture Traditional Lands.

Wollongong City Council acknowledges Elders as the holders, educators and protectors of cultural knowledge and wisdom. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures date back 60,000 years, enriched in heritages, languages, storytelling, dreaming, songlines and connection to countries, cultures and communities.

We understand the impact of colonisation and remain committed to ensuring that staff understand our true history as an organisation and nation.

It always was and always will be, Dharawal land.

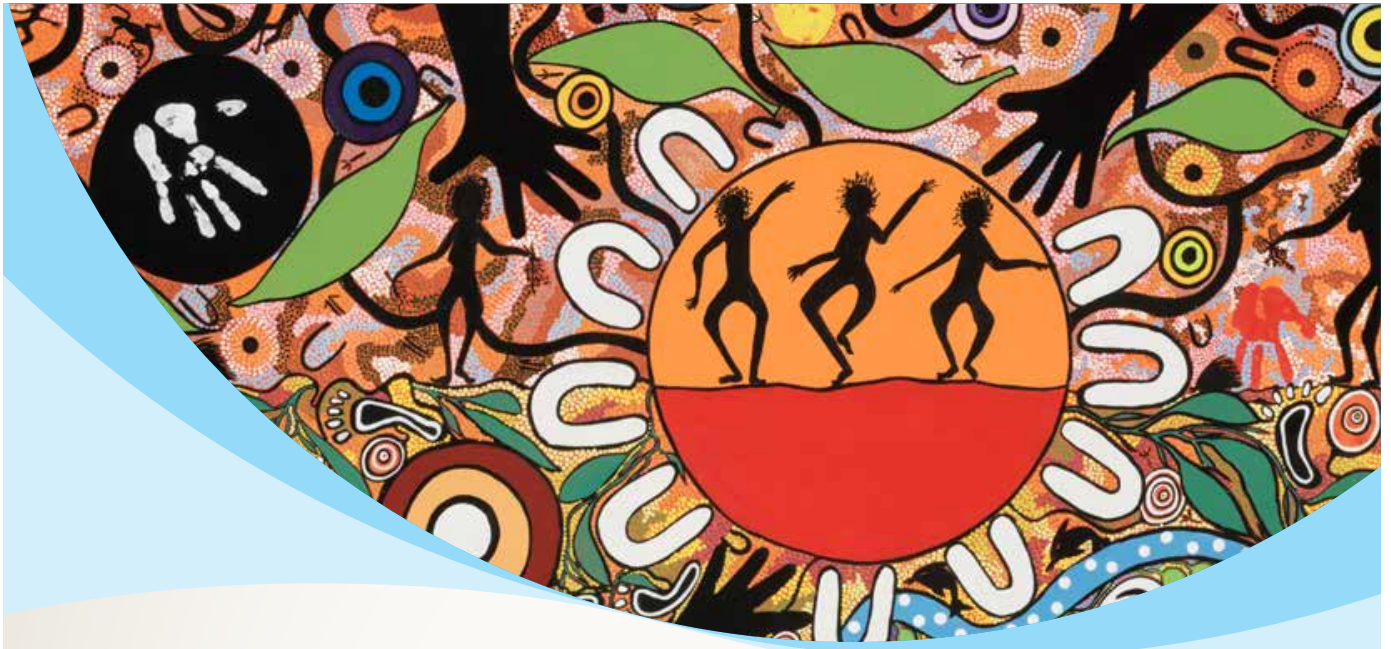
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images of people who have passed away.



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About the Artwork and Artists

“Language is incredibly significant within our culture, as in many cultures of the world.

Language gives us our identity of who we are and where clans belong to. The artwork is showing us our cultural connection of the coastline, our special places, our waterholes, and sacred sites.

We are all connected through culture, our ancestors, and ancestral ties. The centre is the meeting place, a place to gather, a place to dance, a place to talk and a place to be connected to each other and keeping culture alive.” Aunty Lorraine Brown.

Image: Aunty Lorraine Brown and Aunty Narelle Thomas





Aunty Lorraine Brown is the premier artist of the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation. Aunty Lorraine is a Yuin/Gunai Kurnai woman born in Bega, one of seven children. Aunty Lorraine views her ability to paint as a gift. She uses bold colours that reflect her coastal upbringing. “We’re East Coast Saltwater People”, Aunty Lorraine says. “My colours symbolise my life. I had a great childhood, great parents and family and extended family”.

Aunty Narelle Thomas is one of Aunty Lorraine’s sisters and they paint together. Aunty Lorraine does the fine work and Aunty Narelle fills in the details. Aunty Lorraine and Aunty Narelle work like professional dancers, one leads and the other follows and no-one steps on any toes. It is clear they have been working together for many, many years.





Message from the Lord Mayor

Welcome to Wollongong City Council's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Wollongong is home to a proud community who consider the city's diversity one of its most appealing features.

To our residents, it's a very real source of pride that Wollongong is an inclusive city that welcomes and supports all who call it home. It's widely acknowledged that the strength of our city lies in what each of us as individuals contribute to the whole.

As a Council and as a community we've been focussed on reconciliation actions for many years. It's a process that takes time, and there is still considerable work to be done as we work together to show our respect for the important contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities make to neighbourhoods, local suburbs and the city as a whole.

This Plan starts with acknowledgement and respect of the ancient, ongoing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Dharawal Country have with these lands and waters. Its purpose is to strengthen and foster meaningful and long-lasting relationships. It does not just guide how we will build these relationships but includes tangible actions that champion local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, demonstrate respect, and create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I encourage everyone in our community to consider this Reconciliation Action Plan and the actions within it. While many are Council-focussed, the steps we do today in the development and delivery of this Reconciliation Action Plan will pave the way for a better, brighter and even more inclusive future for all in our community.

Lord Mayor of Wollongong
Councillor Tania Brown



Message from the General Manager

Welcome to Wollongong City Council's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028. It is with deep pride that Council launches this document, outlining the organisation's firm commitment to honouring truth-telling, embedding cultural safety, supporting self-determination, actioning the closing the gap report, along with listening, learning and being guided by the longest living, continuous cultures in the world.

To date, Council has spent time reflecting on organisational reconciliation achievements and challenges, learning and growing as a collective along the way. We understand that reconciliation is an ongoing commitment with no end date and remain dedicated to continuing our journey alongside community.

Throughout implementation of Council's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-2028, the organisation will ensure the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice is heard, valued, respected and influential across decision making processes, programs and embedded within strategic and annual plans. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are most equipped to have power, choice and control over determining best outcomes for their countries, cultures and communities.

In addition to this, Council acknowledges that reconciliation reflects a commitment from both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider population. To advance reconciliation, we will support all staff to work

together, recognising an equal responsibility to create a better and brighter future for us all.

Throughout my journey, I have learnt that truth-telling is essential and the first step towards reconciliation and healing. To move forward, we must recognise and accept our shared histories, acknowledge that staff are at different stages of their cultural learning journey, work alongside one another with open hearts and open minds, while fostering genuine relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, organisations and communities.

To drive and transform cultural change, I am committed to providing a visible and supportive leadership that will equip employees with the tools to action reconciliation initiatives both professionally and personally. I recognise that reconciliation is a commitment that extends beyond the workplace and is a responsibility 365 days a year.

While Council listens and learns, we will remain transparent about the organisation's reconciliation work. We will provide progress reports to staff, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, neighbouring Councils and partners within our Local Government Area biannually.

With the permission of local Elders from Dharawal Country,

Didjurgura,

Greg Doyle
General Manager



Message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Second Innovate RAP

Reconciliation Australia commends Wollongong City Council on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With over 5.5 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Wollongong City Council continues to be part of a strong network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that Wollongong City Council will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Wollongong City Council using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for Wollongong City Council to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, Wollongong City Council will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Wollongong City Council's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Wollongong City Council on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



Vision

Our vision for reconciliation is a unified and equitable Wollongong.

We are a city that values the living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, understands the truth of our shared histories, and lives respectfully on this land.

We aspire to be a culturally safe workplace, where all staff take action to achieve meaningful reconciliation and have genuine relationships with First Nations peoples.

Image: Languages of the Land exhibition at Wollongong Art Gallery



The Local Community

Local Aboriginal communities are made up of Traditional Custodians, knowledge holders, language holders, Aboriginal groups and organisations and individuals. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identify themselves according to their cultural and national identities. These identities represent different heritages, languages, cultural practices, spiritual beliefs and geographic areas and are extremely important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

While the Illawarra is made up of three local government areas, Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama, it's important to acknowledge and respect that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, these boundaries do not reflect the cultural boundaries of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- The name Wollongong is said to originate from the Dharawal word Woolyungah, meaning five islands
- 223,411 people call Wollongong Local Government Area home¹
- 6,944 people or 3.2% of our population identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander²

Age

- The average age was 25 years for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people compared to 39 years for non-Aboriginal and/or non-Torres Strait Islander Wollongong community²
- 52.2% of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community were under 25 compared to 31% for the Wollongong LGA population²
- 5.9% of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was 65 and over compared to 18.6% of Wollongong LGA's population²

Income, Education, Employment and Occupation

- The average household income of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was \$1,602 compared to \$1,682 for all households²
- 21.1% have a tertiary qualification compared to 33.8% of our overall population²

Image: Red Room Poetry Workshop



- The most common types of occupations are:
 - Professional
 - Community and Personal Services Workers
 - Technicians and Trades Workers
 - Labourers
 - Clerical and Administrative Workers²

Family

- 31.4% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander couples with children compared to 30.5% of couples for the total population²
- 18.6% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander couples without children compared to 26% of couples for the total population²
- 25.8% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander one parent families compared to 11.7% of families for the total population.²

Housing

- A larger percentage of households were renting - 54.2% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander compared to 31% of all households²
- A larger percentage of households were living in social housing - 19.8% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander compared to 6.3% of all households²
- A lower percentage of households fully owned their home - 14.1% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander compared to 34.2% of all households²
- A similar percentage of households were still buying their home - 28.6% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned their homes with a mortgage compared to 32% of all households²

References

¹ Forecast.id, Population and household forecasts 2021 to 2046

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021, compiled and presented by profile.id



Our Business

Wollongong City Council is the local government authority of the Wollongong Area. Our purpose is to create an extraordinary Wollongong. Our purpose guides us as we work towards achieving our community's vision and goals outlined in *Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 - Community Strategic Plan*.

Our Community's Vision

On Dharawal Country, from the mountains to the sea, we value our natural environment, we respect each other, our past and future. We will be a sustainable, connected, vibrant, and innovative city, with a diverse economy.

Our Community's Goals

To support the achievement of our community vision, collaborative efforts will focus on four interconnected goals:

1. We are a sustainable and climate resilient city
2. We have well planned, connected, and liveable places

3. We foster a diverse economy, and we value innovation, culture, and creativity
4. We have a healthy, respectful, and inclusive community

We provide important services and facilities that improve the day-to-day life of our residents and make our city a great place to live, work and play. Some of our services include:

- Planning, construction and maintenance of infrastructure such as playgrounds, stormwater, shared paths, roads, parking and traffic facilities
- Maintenance of local parks, sportsfields, golf course, pools and beaches
- Waste management and recycling
- Management and preservation of our natural areas
- Regulation and enforcement related to public health and safety, animal control and parking
- Libraries, community centres and community halls

Image: Transition to School picnic



- Tourist parks, leisure centres, Botanic Garden, The Vale Golf Course and Wollongong Art Gallery
- Memorial gardens and cemeteries
- City Centre management
- Community development, cultural development, youth services and community engagement
- Community Transport and Social Support Services
- Heritage, tourism and events
- Emergency management
- Economic development
- Land use planning and development control
- Customer service

We currently have over 1,174 employees including permanent, contract, seasonal and casual staff. As at June 2025, 29 people or 2.5% of our staff identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Staff are employed in a range of services including Parks, Administration, Civil, Information and

Technology, Libraries, Community, Culture and Engagement, Engineering, Recreation Services, Development and Compliance and Communications.

We have a range of identified roles including:

- Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Officer
- Library Cadet
- Civil Engineering Cadet
- Formwork Carpenter Apprentice
- Business Administration Trainee
- Library School Based Trainee

We also have an exemption to advertise and recruit two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for our Cadet, Apprentice and Trainee Program each year.

Around half of our workforce is based at our administration building in the Central Business District (CBD). We also have work sites spread across the city, including at depots, libraries, community centres, pools and beaches.



Our RAP

We have a strong commitment to reconciliation, as demonstrated through our actions and our RAP. We formally began our reconciliation journey in 2000 guided by the development and delivery of our *Statement of Reconciliation and Commitment and Aboriginal Reconciliation and Commitment Action Plan*. We developed our first Innovate RAP and vision for reconciliation in 2021 and this has guided our actions over the past three years.

We have identified that an Innovate RAP remains the most suitable to guide our organisation at this stage of our reconciliation journey. This RAP is made up of a series of actions and initiatives in four key areas: Relationship; Respect; Opportunities; and Governance. Some are new initiatives, and others are standard practice within our organisation.

The development of our RAP 2026-2028 and renewed vision statement has been guided by our RAP Working Group.

Our Plan has been developed with input from staff including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and children and young people. Council staff participated in Yarning Circles with local Elders where they shared thoughts and ideas on reconciliation. Staff also submitted ideas through online surveys and postcards. We engaged with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members through Yarning Circles, workshops and one-on-one conversations. The information collected has been used to inform the actions and deliverables of our RAP Implementation Plan.

Images: Reconciliation Conference



Our Innovate RAP is a strategic document that supports the delivery of Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 - Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan. It includes practical actions that will drive our contribution to reconciliation both within our organisation and in the work we do for and with our community. The Innovate RAP will be supported by a detailed implementation plan. Our RAP Champions, including our Lord Mayor, General Manager and Executive Management Team are providing strong and supportive leadership to guide the implementation of our Innovate RAP. Through the delivery of our RAP, Council will demonstrate leadership to local businesses, service providers and other organisations, encouraging the development of their own Reconciliation Action Plans.





Our RAP Working Group

Our RAP Working Group has played an important role in the development of our Reconciliation Action Plan and will oversee and guide the implementation and reporting phases of our RAP.

Our RAP Working Group consists of:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff (minimum of 3 members)
- General Manager (RAP Champion)
- Director Community Services (RAP Champion)
- Director Infrastructure and Works
- Senior Manager People and Culture
- Talent and Capability Manager
- Procurement and Supply Chain Manager
- Land Use Planning Manager
- Communications and Marketing Manager
- Community Development and Engagement Manager (RAP Champion)
- Community Development Worker

Image: Installation view, Coomaditchie: The Art of Place, 2023, Wollongong Art Gallery, with Love Letters to Coomaditchie, ceramic plates.



Image: Youth Week Awards

Our Commitment

Diversity is the strength of our city and we are passionate about creating a place where our people feel valued and have a strong sense of belonging.

We are committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and the wider community as we continue our reconciliation journey. We know that reconciliation is everyone's business. We will lead through our actions and be accountable for them.

In partnership with, and guided by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we will:

- Continue to create a connected community that thrives on positive relationships, embraces cultural diversity and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first people.
- Work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when making decisions that affect them.

- Increase awareness and understanding and promote our commitment to reconciliation.

- Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner organisations and work alongside them to improve the experiences of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities.

- Recognise National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, and other days of significance, and encourage the involvement of our staff and community in these events.

- Respect and continue to increase our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's special places and sites of significance.

- Ensure reconciliation is alive in our organisation by increasing our understanding, respect and appreciation of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and experiences.



Image: Nandhi Ngara



- Increase the availability and diversity of employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Wollongong City Council.
- Provide a culturally safe workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Lead and enable our staff and community to work together as we continue our reconciliation journey.

We will continue to work side by side with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure our actions and behaviours are consistent with our commitment.



Image: Local Government Regional NAIDOC Awards, Organisation of the Year Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation

Image: Walk on Country



Current RAP Initiatives

As part of our ongoing commitment to reconciliation we deliver initiatives to support and celebrate our staff and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Some of these initiatives include:

NAIDOC Week Grants

Council provides small grants to not-for-profit groups holding community events during NAIDOC Week. This program aims to get as many people as possible involved in NAIDOC Week and celebrate the histories, cultures, and achievements of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Council staff enjoy attending and assisting at these events.

Peer Collective

Established as a result of our previous RAP, the Peer Collective is open to all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. The Peer Collective aims to connect staff and build relationships as well as increase awareness and understanding throughout our workplace.

Interpretive signage

Interpretive signage is designed in consultation with Aboriginal community and installed at various locations throughout the Wollongong LGA. For example, an information sign is installed along the

Ngaraba-aan Trail at Port Kembla. The sign features the history of commercial fishing by Aboriginal people at Fisherman's Beach. It also acknowledges the fishing practices from Hill 60 which remain unchanged.

Planning with Country and Culture in Mind

As part of our commitment to reconciliation and cultural inclusion, we have updated our Local Strategic Planning Statement to better reflect and celebrate Aboriginal culture, heritage, and connection to Country. This revision embeds recognition of Aboriginal custodianship into our long-term planning framework, ensuring that future growth and development respects and incorporates Aboriginal perspectives, values, and priorities.

Nandhi Ngara

Nandhi (Look) Ngara (Listen) was a community reconciliation artwork project. Supported by an Aboriginal artist, children and young people from local schools created artwork inspired by Reconciliation and NAIDOC. The artwork was printed on banners and flown in the Crown Street Mall from May-August. The students' original artworks were also exhibited in the Curio Gallery.



Image: Tiny Forest planting at Dapto High School

Poem Forest

We partnered with Red Room Poetry to deliver Poem Forest, a free nature writing prize. Students and teachers across Australia are encouraged to use their words to make positive climate action. For every nature poem received Council planted a tree in Wollongong, with 6,400+ trees planted in 2023. This project was delivered with the involvement of local Elders and Aboriginal community members and poets.

Reconciliation Conference

In partnership with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators and community workers, a two-day conference has been held biennially since 2018. The conference fosters connections between Aboriginal Elders and educational and community organisations by sharing stories, histories and cultures. The conference hosts key speakers, Yarning Circles with Elders' and discussions about reconciliation, the importance of Country and the effects of racism.

Illawarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo

In partnership with Illawarra Indigenous Business Network the Illawarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Expo was held in 2023 and 2024 during Indigenous

Business Month. Approximately 300 people attended each expo which hosted 30+ Illawarra/Shoalhaven Aboriginal businesses from sectors such as construction, cultural education, graphic design, photography, policy and engagement.

In 2025, the Expo was managed and delivered by an Aboriginal owned business. By having Aboriginal leadership at the helm, the Expo became more than a business event, it became an act of self-determination, capacity building, and community-led economic development.

While we have made meaningful progress in our reconciliation journey, we acknowledge that the journey has not been without its challenges. Key learnings have emerged from these experiences, including inconsistent engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, varying levels of staff cultural capability, and limited integration of RAP actions into core operations. Measuring impact was also difficult due to inconsistent data collection.

We are committed to evolving our practices to ensure deeper, more sustainable outcomes. This RAP will strengthen relationships through regular, respectful engagement, expand tailored cultural learning, embed RAP actions into strategic planning, and introduce improved monitoring tools.





Relationships

Wollongong City Council is committed to working closely with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations, peoples and staff as we embrace this phase of our reconciliation journey. Throughout delivery, we will continue to focus on strengthening the existing relationships we hold, while aiming to establish new relationships along the way. Council is committed to supporting shared connections that are underpinned by honesty, trust and respect.

Through engagement, we will listen deeply to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, remaining guided by their cultural knowledge and wisdom. We understand the principles of self-determination, and the important role local community hold in determining best outcomes for their peoples.

With open hearts and open minds, Council will work alongside local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to provide reconciliation opportunities for all communities who call the City of Wollongong home. We understand the importance of coming together to learn, grow and thrive.

Image: City of Wollongong Awards

Action 1. **Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to strengthen guiding principles for future engagement.	June 2026	Engagement Coordinator
Continue to implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	June 2026	Engagement Coordinator

Action 2. **Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2026 & 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety
RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May - 3 June 2026 & 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety
Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	May 2026 & 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety

Action 3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	April 2026 & 2027	Talent + Capability Manager
Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	27 May - 3 June 2026 & 2027	Communication + Marketing Manager
Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	June 2026 & 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety
Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	April 2026 & 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety

Action 4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2026	Senior Manager People + Culture
Continue to promote our anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	June 2026 & 2027	Employment Relations Manager
Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	December 2027	Employment Relations Lead
Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	December 2026	Talent + Capability Manager





Respect

Wollongong City Council will continue to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Australia. This includes respecting the 60,000+ years of cultural heritages, traditions, dreaming, songlines, storytelling and languages embedded across the nation's land, seas and skies.

In addition to supporting reconciliation broadly, we are committed to improving staff's understanding of local Aboriginal cultures, cultural protocols, histories, rights, wisdom and knowledge. We understand the importance of gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation for Aboriginal peoples who reside on Dharawal Country, recognising the great privilege we hold in working alongside community.

Image: Kugang Djarmbi Reconciliation Action Plan Launch

Action 5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	June 2026	Talent + Capability Manager
Consult local Traditional Custodians and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	June 2026	Talent + Capability Manager
Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff.	September 2026	Talent + Capability Manager
Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	November 2026 & 2027	Talent + Capability Manager

Action 6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	June 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	June 2026 & 2027	Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Officer
Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	April 2026 & 2027	Events + Visual Strategy Manager
Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the beginning of important meetings.	April 2026 & 2027	Manager Customer + Business Integrity

Action 7. **Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
RAP Working Group to participate in external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	November 2026	Employment Relations Manager
Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	July 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager

Action 8: **Strengthen organisational understanding and commitment to cultural safety**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Develop a Cultural Safety Framework	December 2026	Director-Community Services
Implement Cultural Safety Framework	July 2027	Director-Corporate Services

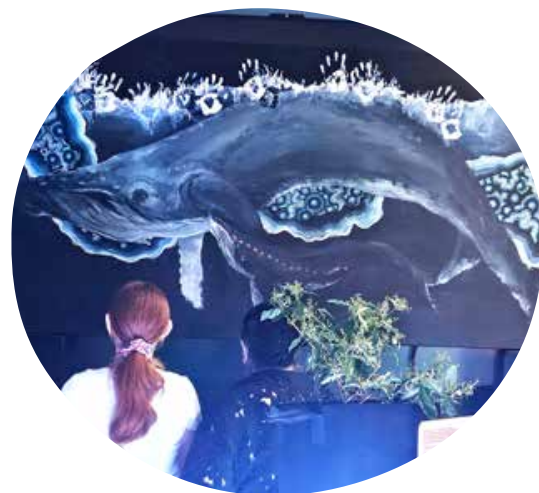


Image: Culture Mix Artist Indie Rose Paterson Curator Jesse Lowe

Action 9: **Recognise and Respond to the impact of 26 January through truth-telling, education, and policy review.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Engage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on the lead up to, during and following January 26	December 2026 & 2027	Director-Corporate Services
Provide educational opportunities for staff regarding the impact January 26 has had and continues to have within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	January 2027 & 2028	Director-Corporate Services
Explore work arrangements for staff on 26 January	January 2027	Director-Corporate Services

Action 10: **In consultation with Dharawal and Wodi Wodi Traditional Custodians or Language/Knowledge Holders incorporate local language, histories and cultures into place and practice.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Implement the Aboriginal Language for Signage Guidelines.	April 2026 & 2027	Director-Community Services
Deliver initiatives to increase where Dharawal language is seen and heard.	April 2026 & 2027	General Manager



Opportunities

Wollongong City Council is committed to supporting an environment that is culturally, spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people. Throughout implementation Council will aim to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. We understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to feel culturally safe throughout their employment and we are committed to being a positive employer of choice.

Wollongong City Council is committed to building on the foundations of the organisation's previous Reconciliation Action Plan. We look forward to establishing our first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee and Engagement Strategy with the support of Council's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and the Aboriginal Reference Group.

Action 11. **Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June 2026	Talent + Capability Manager
Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	June 2026	Talent + Capability Manager
Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	June 2026	Talent + Capability Manager
Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	April 2026 & 2027	Talent + Capability Manager
Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	December 2026	Senior Manager People + Culture
Review the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student workforce summer program.	October 2026 & 2027	Director- Infrastructure + Works

Action 12. **Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	June 2026	Procurement + Supply Manager
Investigate Supply Nation membership.	June 2026	Procurement + Supply Manager
Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	November 2026 & 2027	Procurement + Supply Manager

Action 12. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cont. supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	June 2027	Procurement + Supply Manager
Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	October 2026 & 2027	Procurement + Supply Manager

Action 13. Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the development and review of Council Plans, Policy, and Protocols

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Review and update Wollongong City Council's Child Safe commitment and organisational standards to include Cultural Safety and Cultural Connection provisions.	August 2027	Director-Community Services
Review and update the Disability Inclusion Action Plan to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander intersectionality.	June 2026	Director-Community Services
Review Wollongong City Council's homelessness protocol through a cultural lens.	September 2026	Director-Community Services
Work with Aboriginal community to improve marine carcass management and recognise culturally significant Sea Kin.	December 2026	Director-Infrastructure + Works
Partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in the way we care for the environment.	April 2028	Director Planning + Environment



Image: Illawarra Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander business expo





Governance

We are committed to providing effective leadership and appropriate resourcing to deliver our RAP. We will remain accountable and committed to delivering positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as we continue our journey towards reconciliation.

Image: Aboriginal Reference Group

Action 14. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	April 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	April 2026	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	March, June, September, December 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager

Action 15. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	April 2026	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	April 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	April 2026	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	April 2026	Community Development + Engagement Manager

Action 16. **Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	April 2026	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety
Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	April 2026	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety
Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2026 & 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety
Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	January, April, July & October 2026, 2027 & 2028	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	November 2026 & 2027	Community Development + Engagement Manager
Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	February 2028	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety
Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	December 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety

Action 17. **Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.**

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	May 2027	Coordinator Community Partnerships + Safety



Thank You

Wollongong City Council would like to thank everyone involved for their commitment in developing our Innovate RAP. We would also like to thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Wollongong for their valuable contribution to the city, we look forward to working together, side by side, and a future built on mutual respect and harmony.

Image: Sculpture launch



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On Dharawal Country, from the mountains to the sea, we value and respect each other, our places, past, and future. We will be a sustainable, connected, vibrant, and innovative city, with a diverse economy.

- We are a sustainable and climate resilient city
- We have well planned, connected, and liveable places
- We foster a diverse economy, and we value innovation, culture, and creativity
- We have a healthy, respectful, and inclusive community