



# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

October 2022 – October 2023





# Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes AFS & Associates to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

AFS & Associates joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables AFS & Associates to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations AFS & Associates, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

**Karen Mundine**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia



## RAP artwork

### Bloom, 2022

This painting shows the beauty of a network of people and speaks of the relationships made and a community working together.

Each 'petal' is a pathway or network that develops in its own way, and together it creates a beautiful picture. The bloom is thinking about female empowerment and how working together creates strength and beauty.

## About the artist

**Annie Brigdale**  
@artlifeannie

I've always been drawn to colour and pattern. It brings me joy, calms me, gives me balance and helps me quiet my busy mind. I have trained and worked in creative roles such as visual merchandising, floristry and visual art.

Since becoming a mother I've felt the pull to learn more of my Aboriginal heritage and share it with my children so that we as a family can pass this learning and history on to future generations.

This family journey has been alongside my creative path into visual art and painting. During this process I have learnt to listen quietly, observe and grow.

I am a Yorta Yorta woman living on Dja Dja Wurrung country and follow strong Yorta Yorta women before me. I have a creative personality and am an intuitive artist with a strong connection to country through art. I often spend time on the Murray and Ovens rivers, which inspire and renew me.

We are pleased to be setting out our formal commitment towards reconciliation with First Nations peoples in Australia through our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), a Reflect RAP.

**Kate Mannix**  
Chief Executive Officer  
AFS & Associates



## Our RAP



AFS & Associates strive to create a more meaningful place to work and are committed to a sustainable future in all aspects of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. As such, we are formally committing ourselves towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, by developing our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Our Reflect RAP, driven by Melissa Little acting as RAP Champion, will guide us into educating our team and organisation, developing diversity in our

workplace, creating opportunities for First Nations peoples. We seek to develop strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations in our journey towards reconciliation.

Our commitment to reconciliation is supported by our partners and driven by our RAP Working Group, which is made up of team members from every aspect of our business who seek to create a more inclusive and diverse team and community as a whole.

## Our business

AFS & Associates has been an integral part of the Bendigo community on Djaara Country since 1946.

We are a team of approximately 90 professional accountants and business advisors, we are currently unaware of any team members who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

Operating out of Bendigo and servicing Australia-wide, our solid grounding has enabled us to grow into one of the largest

accounting and advisory firms in regional Victoria with a wealth of experience in all facets of business services, audit and assurance, taxation and compliance.

At AFS, we value the contribution and experiences of others. We know that for our culture to thrive, we must continually review and improve our contribution to diversity and inclusion in the broader community and workplace.

We are committed to living our values of treating everyone with equality, respect and fairness and to always grow and improve.

## Our partnerships and current activities



AFS & Associates have had an internal "Aboriginal Business" industry group since 2020. The group gathers every quarter to discuss and educate each other on aspects of business ran by First Nations peoples, and organisations focused on First Nations peoples.

We have serviced organisations Dja Dja Wurrung, Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operatative (BDAC), Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Cummeragunja Health and Development Aboriginal Corp and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation. We look forward to engaging in the services of these organisations to develop the education of our team members on First Nations peoples, histories, languages and traditions.



## Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	February 2023	Partner
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	February 2023	People & Culture Manager Practice Manager
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2023	Chief Executive Officer RAP Chair
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2023	RAP Chair
	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	RAP Chair
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	November 2022 August 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	February 2023	RAP Chair Partner
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	February 2023	RAP Chair
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	March 2023	People & Culture Manager
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March 2023	People & Culture Manager



## Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures histories knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures histories knowledge and rights within our organisation.	July 2023	People & Culture Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	July 2023	People & Culture Manager
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	August 2023	RAP Chair
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	August 2023	RAP Chair
	Review the use of appropriate traditional language in consultation with Traditional Custodians.	May 2023	RAP Chair People & Culture Manager
	Review the Acknowledgement of Country protocols and language across the organisation.	May 2023	Chief Executive Officer People & Culture Manager
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2023	RAP Chair
	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2023	Chief Executive Officer RAP Chair
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2023	RAP Chair

# Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	June 2023	People & Culture Manager
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June 2023	People & Culture Manager
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	June 2023	Practice Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	June 2023	RAP Chair



The AFS Board fully endorses and supports the AFS team and RAP Working Group through our journey towards reconciliation.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	April 2023 annually reviewed	Chief Executive Officer RAP Chair
	Review Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2023	Practice Manager
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	October 2022	RAP Chair
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Review resource needs for RAP implementation.	January 2023 August 2023	Chief Executive Officer Practice Manager
	Continue to engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	October 2022 May 2023 August 2023	Chief Executive Officer RAP Chair
	Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	October 2022 April 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track measure and report on RAP commitments.	November 2022	Practice Manager
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	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 annually	RAP Chair
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	RAP Chair
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	RAP Chair
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's <a href="#">website</a> to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2023	RAP Chair

### Contact details:

Melissa Little  
Marketing & Communications  
Manager | RAP Chair

Phone: 03 4408 5332

Email: [m.little@afsbendigo.com.au](mailto:m.little@afsbendigo.com.au)

61 Bull Street  
Bendigo VIC 3550

[afs@afsbendigo.com.au](mailto:afs@afsbendigo.com.au)

03 5443 0344

[www.afsbendigo.com.au](http://www.afsbendigo.com.au)

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