

SEPTEMBER 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2024



RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN REFLECT



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Seizing Opportunities by Sarah Richards

Cover artwork

Independent Schools Australia commissioned contemporary Aboriginal artist Sarah Richards (Marrawuy Journeys) to create this artwork in 2022. It hangs in the boardroom of the ISA office on Ngunnawal land.

Artist's statement: The artwork titled *Seizing Opportunities* is inspired by my *Moments* artwork based on the William Arthur Ward's quote, 'Opportunities are like sunrises. If you wait too long, you miss them.'
Sarah Richards

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Mr Graham Catt
Chief Executive Officer
Independent Schools Australia



Independent Schools Australia (ISA) is pleased to present our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), developed to guide our reconciliation journey for the next 12 months.

This RAP is an important step for ISA, setting a foundation for our reconciliation journey, acknowledging historical truths, and fostering a spirit of cooperation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

ISA is committed to building bridges of understanding and acknowledging the past injustices faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise the significance of this plan and the potential positive impact it can have on our practices and our work in the education sector more broadly.

Our RAP demonstrates our understanding that reconciliation is a collective responsibility that transcends organisational boundaries. It also involves us as individuals embracing the diversity of cultures that have shaped this land for generations and acknowledging the unique perspectives and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At ISA, we aim to create an inclusive environment that respects and values cultural differences. This

RAP gives us a point of reference to compare our intentions to our actions. The actions outlined in our RAP are tangible and practical.

Central to our RAP is the commitment to always consider the impact of education policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our advocacy role.

We also recognise the significance of engaging in meaningful conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, listening to their stories, and incorporating their insights into making decisions. This dialogue can inform our work and practices.

I acknowledge the engagement we have had with Tyrone Bell (Thunderstone) who has shared cultural knowledge with us about the Ngunnawal Country where we live and work as well as the local language.

I would also like to acknowledge and extend my appreciation to the ISA working group that developed this RAP.

Our RAP represents a considered step forward, acknowledging historical truths and working toward a more inclusive future.



Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



Reconciliation Australia welcomes Independent Schools Australia to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Independent Schools Australia 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 Independent Schools Australia 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 Independent Schools Australia, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

OUR BUSINESS

ISA is the national peak body representing the Independent school sector. It comprises the eight state and territory Associations of Independent Schools (AISs). Through these associations, ISA represents 1,209 schools and more than 688,000 students, accounting for approximately 17 per cent of Australian school enrolments.

ISA's major role is to bring the unique needs and contributions of Independent schools to the attention of the Australian Government and to represent the sector on national issues.

Independent schools are a diverse group of non-government schools serving a range of different communities. Many Independent schools provide a religious or values-based education. Others promote a specific educational philosophy or interpretation of mainstream education. A number of Independent schools have been established by community groups seeking to meet particular needs or to reflect the religious values of a community.

Independent schools include:

- Schools affiliated with Christian denominations for example, Anglican, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Uniting Church, Quaker and Seventh Day Adventist schools
- Non-denominational Christian schools
- Islamic schools
- Jewish schools
- Montessori schools
- Rudolf Steiner schools
- Schools constituted under specific Acts of Parliament, such as grammar schools in some states
- Community schools
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community schools
- Schools that specialise in meeting the needs of students with disabilities
- Schools that cater for students at severe educational risk due to a range of social/emotional/behavioural and other factors.

In 2022, there were 17,752 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in 984 metropolitan, regional and remote Independent schools. There were 41 Majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Independent schools enrolling 2,840 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Most Independent schools are set up and governed independently on an individual school basis. However, some Independent schools with common aims and educational philosophies are governed and administered as systems, for example Lutheran schools. Systemic schools account for 17 per cent of schools in the Independent sector. More than four out of five schools in the sector are autonomous non-systemic schools.

Independent schools serve a broad range of students, reflecting the diversity of Australian society and have a strong commitment to supporting quality education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across Australia.

There are nine staff employed in the ISA office in Canberra, including one part time staff. There are currently no staff who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION



Macleay Vocational College in NSW is just one example of an Independent school that supports students to feel a sense of belonging, pride, cultural identity and awareness. This special assistance school re-engages young people who have become disengaged from mainstream school settings.

ISA's vision for reconciliation is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have access to quality learning that provides them with equitable educational opportunities. ISA aims to further build and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders nationally, as well as community groups and organisations in the Ngunnawal region.

Responsibility for our reconciliation journey is embedded through recognition, respect and valuing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' cultures, languages and contributions. Truth telling about Australia's histories is essential for our growing awareness of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Building cultural capacity, competency and safety

is imperative for our nation to redress Australia's past and embrace a way forward together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

A significant step towards reconciliation is empowering educators to develop cultural capabilities and gain deeper knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

ISA represents the Independent school sector on key stakeholder groups, influencing national education policy. Our work contributes to the education of all young Australians. We continue to advocate for equity, excellence and inclusive education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

ISA is committed to diversity and equity in education in Australia for all students. We recognise the unique experience in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and the potential influence of our work on education policy that impacts schools and students.

We appreciate that reconciliation is a continual process and our work to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education requires ongoing and meaningful engagement with Country, histories, languages and cultures in our work and workplace. Our RAP will deepen our understanding of working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in our work to realise our vision for reconciliation.

ISA works as a close team and engages widely with stakeholders for advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. We are committed to developing meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and working in conjunction with Elders locally and nationally. This will inform the work of ISA and deepen the relevance of our advocacy.

All staff and leadership are involved in the development and implementation of the RAP. We will evaluate current work practices and develop further opportunities for staff professional

development and cultural training, including professional learning on the Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education platform. We will further improve ISA policy, protocol and work practices so that our actions are meaningful and further highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in relevant aspects of our work.

ISA is keen to continue its reconciliation journey through the RAP. ISA has developed a set of guidelines for Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome to Country and are implementing these in all internal and external meetings. We continually include and embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in our research and submissions, considering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and education throughout our advocacy and representation.

We support education policy that strives to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. ISA acknowledges the importance of reconciliation as an ongoing journey and through our RAP we commit to taking action to further our vision for equitable educational outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.



ISA staff on Country and learning from Ngunawal descendant Tyronne Bell (Thunderstone) 2023

OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND CURRENT ACTIVITIES

ISA is involved in a range of advocacy activities relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in the Independent sector and works closely with AISs for advice, information and support on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues. ISA and the AISs have formed a national ISA/AIS Reconciliation Group, which meets quarterly to discuss reconciliation activities across the organisations.

ISA's engagement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education ranges from advocacy work on school funding with the Australian Government, through to preparing submissions for parliamentary inquiries and assisting individual Independent schools when requested to do so by AISs.

ISA works with the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Reconciliation Australia, the Australian Government Department of Education, and other relevant government departments. ISA also works with other national bodies in the education sector to assist Independent schools with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

ISA collaborates with members through the national ISA/AIS Reconciliation Group, supporting each other with Reconciliation strategies, professional learning and promotion of the Narragunnawali platform in the Independent school sector.

ISA represents the Independent school sector on a range of national committees and in previous years this has included representation on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Boarding Reference Group.

RAP Working Group

There are currently no staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on the ISA RAP Working Group.

The ISA/AIS Reconciliation Group will be advisors to the ISA RAP Working Group. There are members of this group who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Name	Position	RWG role
Graham Catt	Chief Executive Officer	Chair
Tracey Taylor	Director, Education Policy	RAP Champion
Mohit Prasad	Assistant Director, Policy and Research	RAP Champion
Caroline Miller	Director, Policy and Research	RWG member
Ruth Underwood	Director, Governance and Operations	RWG member
Anne Walker	Director, Media and Communications	RWG member
Andrew Donaldson	Manager, Funding and Data	RWG member
Karl Fahey	Data Analyst	RWG member
Gaylee Guest	Executive Assistant	RWG member

RELATIONSHIPS



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	Continue to identify and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence such as education bodies and Elders.	Nov 2023	Assistant Director, Policy and Research
	Research best practice that supports partnerships by engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Feb 2024	Assistant Director, Policy and Research
2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	Data Analyst
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 Jun 2024	Data Analyst
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 Jun 2024	Data Analyst
3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	Sep 2023	CEO
	Maintain and build relationships with external stakeholders so that our organisation can continue to engage with them on our reconciliation journey.	Feb 2024	Director, Education Policy
	Positively influence education policy through advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in ISA reports, submissions and representation, based on available research and feedback from AISs.	Jun 2024	Director, Education Policy Director, Policy and Research
	Review communications and engagement strategy to include promotions of reconciliation.	Feb 2024	Director, Education Policy Director, Media and Communications
	Continue to engage with the Narragunnawali program through the national ISA/AIS Reconciliation Group and promote reconciliation to our stakeholders.	Mar 2024	Director, Education Policy Director, Media and Communications
	Continue to identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could continue to approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	Jan 2024	Director, Education Policy
	Promote Narragunnawali awards through the national ISA/AIS Reconciliation Group and social media.	When announced	Assistant Director, Policy and Research Director, Media and Communications
4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	Apr 2024	Manager, Funding and Data Director, Governance and Operations
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to ensure cultural safety and identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Apr 2024	Director, Governance and Operations

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	Continue to conduct an annual review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Dec 2023	Assistant Director, Policy and Research
	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and knowledge and rights within our organisation.	Jan 2024	Director, Education Policy
	Identify tangible ways for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	Sep 2024	Assistant Director, Policy and Research
	Provide cultural competency training for all staff including professional learning on the Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education platform.	Sep 2023	Assistant Director, Policy and Research
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, skies and waters within our organisation's operational area.	Oct 2023	Director, Education Policy Assistant Director, Policy and Research
	Continue to implement Acknowledgment of Country on website, social media email signatures and reports/publications.	Sep 2023	Director, Media and Communications
	Display an Acknowledgment of Country at our office site.	Oct 2023	Director, Governance and Operations Chief Executive Officer
	Continue to provide an Acknowledgment of Country at all staff meetings and external meetings.	Sep 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including staff feeling confident in meaningfully Acknowledging Country organising a Welcome to Country.	Oct 2023	Director, Education Policy Assistant Director, Policy and Research
7 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning and importance of NAIDOC Week.	Jun 2024	Director, Policy and Research
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	Jun 2024	Director, Policy and Research
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week of July 2024	RAP Working Group

OPPORTUNITIES



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development	Develop an employment policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attraction, development and retention within our organisation.	Dec 2023	Director, Governance and Operations Executive Assistant
	Host a link to Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali website.	Dec 2023	Director, Media and Communications
	Include 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are encouraged to apply' on all job advertisements.	Sep 2023	Director, Governance and Operations
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Dec 2023	Director, Governance and Operations Assistant Director, Policy and Research
9 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	Research effective procurement strategies in similar organisations to understand best practice for our future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	Dec 2023	Director, Governance and Operations Executive Assistant
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Dec 2023	Executive Assistant

GOVERNANCE



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RAPWG) to drive governance of the RAP	Maintain a RAPWG to govern RAP implementation.	Jul 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	Draft terms of reference for the RAPWG.	Jun 2024	Director, Education Policy
	Collaborate with First Nations people on the national ISA/AIS Reconciliation Group to provide feedback and input into our RAP.	Nov 2023	Director, Education Policy
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAPWG.	Jun 2024	Director Education, Policy Assistant Director Policy and Research
11 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Jun 2024	Chief Executive Officer Director, Governance and Operations
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Jun 2024	Chief Executive Officer
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	Jun 2024	Chief Executive Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Jun 2024	Assistant Director, Policy and Research Data Analyst
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.	Jun 2024 (and annually)	Executive Assistant
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 Aug 2024 (and annually)	Executive Assistant
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 Sep 2024 (and annually)	Director, Education Policy
	Receive endorsement from the Board on the RAP.	Jul 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	Provide updates of the RAP progress at Board meetings.	Jul 2024	Chief Executive Officer
13 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	May 2024	Director, Education Policy

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