



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**

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**REFLECT**

August 2024 – January 2026

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

West Australian Opera (WAO) respectfully recognise and honour the Whadjuk Noongar people on whose land WAO is based.

We pay our respects to Elders both past and present from all of the language groups throughout Western Australia.

As WAO journeys on its path of reconciliation we recognise the significant importance of cultural heritage, values, beliefs, and their journey to establishing self-determination.

WAO Acknowledgment of Country is shared on our website and included in our e-signatures

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, work and create, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation, and pay deep respect to Elders past and present.

Kalyakoorl, ngalak warangka (forever we sing)

## CEO, RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA STATEMENT

Reconciliation Australia welcomes West Australian Opera to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

West Australian Opera joins a network of more than 2,500 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 West Australian Opera 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 West Australian Opera, 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



Gina Williams AM as Ngaank Boodja (Mother Earth) in *Koolbardi wer Wardong*. The Noongar opera was written and composed by Williams and Guy Ghouse – a Wesfarmers Arts commission which premiered in 2021.

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## **CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT**

West Australian Opera performs on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja in Boorloo (Perth) and other land that belongs to the oldest continuing living culture in the world.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of these lands and we pay respect to Elders living, emerging and past.

The board of West Australian Opera supports and encourages the advancement of reconciliation through the Reflect RAP which is an important step in this journey.

We have had the honour of collaborating on Noongar storytelling through music and language as part of a partnership with Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse and the teams of First Nations peoples they have enabled and encouraged.

We are immensely proud of the meaningful outcomes these collaborations have delivered.

Andrew Pascoe  
Chair  
West Australian Opera

## EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

West Australian Opera acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we live, work, and create, and particularly the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation on whose land we reside and perform in His Majesty's Theatre in Boorloo (Perth). We pay deep respect to Elders past and present.

We recognise the continuing culture of First Nations people, their art, music, dance, stories, language and spirit. We acknowledge their cultural wisdom, traditions and dreamings. We acknowledge that we live on land that belongs to the oldest living culture in the world.

We embark on this Reconciliation Action Plan with a willingness to learn and listen. We hope to build stronger culture understanding and to achieve positive outcomes toward reconciliation now and in the future.

We are proud of the public artwork outcomes achieved with Kambarni whose beautiful mural work is in the City of Subiaco (*Bran Nue Dae*) and City of Perth in Brookfield Place (*Koolbardi wer Wardong*) and which serves as a permanent mark of respect and reconciliation.

We are proud of the commissioned work achieved with Gina Williams AM and Guy Ghouse and their teams who have created two works in Noongar language (*Koolbardi wer Wardong; Wundig wer Wilura*) which also serve as permanent marks of respect, reconciliation and language.

Our dream is to speak to the heart through the human voice. We want to share the joy of music through opera and the powerful stories opera tells. We are proudly Western Australian and we bring audiences and artists together to celebrate sung stories that are relevant to our people, time, and places.

The excitement of taking your seats for a performance, the anticipation of the curtain rising, and the drama that is set to unfold on stage make live performance such a special experience. In these shared moments of magic in the dark theatre, we are often faced with stories that challenge and change us.

In opera, these stories are often the most passionate portrayals of great emotion. And although from various places and times and sung in various languages, these stories continue to be relevant because they are human stories.

We acknowledge and thank the Whadjuk Noongar Elders, First Nations people, Kamarang colleagues, our stakeholders including funders, partners, donors, audiences, artists, board and staff for thoughtful, respectful and continuing conversations as we all continue this journey toward reconciliation.

Carolyn Chard AM  
Executive Director



## OUR BUSINESS

### **Our vision**

Our vision is to share the joy of music through opera. We bring audiences and artists together to celebrate sung stories that are relevant to our people, time, and places.

### **Our dream**

Our dream is to share the joy of music through opera.

### **Our mission**

We bring audiences and artists together to celebrate sung stories that are relevant to our people time and places.

### **Our Reconciliation Action Plan**

We are committed to the journey of reconciliation through this Reflect RAP.

West Australian Opera was established in 1967 and has been Western Australia's full-time, professional state opera company for over 55 years based on Whadjuk Boodja.

We are the state opera company in Western Australia.

We are based in Boorloo (Perth), Western Australia. WAO offices are located within His Majesty's Theatre. WAO present works and activate spaces across the state in schools, town halls and outdoor locations. In 2023 we shared our songs and stories with over 71, 000 people

WAO employs a core staff of 9 people and can expand to 150+ part-time, fixed-term and casual team members during performances. In 2024 WAO engaged 27 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians, actors and singers..

We seek to present high quality diverse and innovative work that is accessible to the broadest range of audiences across WA.

We seek to increase community presence, awareness, education and engagement with opera.

We seek to develop and present work that can be enjoyed and engaged with by all audiences and collaborate with partners to produce breadth of experience and repertoire that develops capacity in WA.

We seek to nurture and develop talent across all areas of the opera sector.

We believe opera matters and should be accessible for all Western Australians.

We present, sustain, develop and ensure the long-term viability of opera through development pathways for Western Australian artists, commissioning of new work including works that reflect Australia and improved access and participation for audiences across WA.



Elder Barry Winmar held a smoking ceremony ahead of West Australian Opera launching a mural celebrating *Koolbardi wer Wardong* at Brookfield Place.

© The Hybrid Minds



## OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (RAP)

For many years West Australian Opera has engaged with First Nations peoples in the creation of performance and in acknowledgement of Country.

WAO wishes to formalise its commitment to embrace Aboriginal culture and involvement.

WAO acknowledges that storytelling through music and performance unites us.

WAO wants to continue the journey of reconciliation by continuing to connect and engage with First Nations colleagues in creation, performance and audience participation.

WAO's RAP Champion is Executive Director, Carolyn Chard AM.

The Board of Directors and staff are engaged and actively supportive of this shared reconciliation journey.

WAO worked with Kambarang Services to develop the RAP, to assist with Elder engagement, and to lead participation in RAP development workshops. This included participation in three workshops including:

1. *Are You RAP Ready* workshop led by Reconciliation WA
2. Cultural RAP workshop led by Danny Ford of Kambarang Services
3. WAO staff and Elders attended a workshop facilitated by Ethan Chadd of Kambarang Services to explore what reconciliation means and ways to achieve this together.

## OUR PARTNERSHIPS

WAO has partnered with First Nations colleagues on artistic projects over many years and this Respect RAP formalises the journey that we have started.

Our journey commenced many years back when Dr Richard Walley AM provided cultural training to staff and offered a Welcome to Country on many occasions particularly at outdoor events such as Opera in the Park.

WAO has closely collaborated with Gina Williams AM and Guy Ghose including the commissioning and production of Noongar language works, *Koolbardi wer Wardong*, in 2021/22/23 and *Wundig wer Wilura*, in 2023/24.

WAO has partnered with the community on artistic projects over many years

The WAO website includes an Acknowledgement to Country on the landing page.

Theatre surtitle screens include an Acknowledgment of Country prominently displayed for all audience members to see.

Every regional performance includes either a Welcome to Country offered by a local elder in language or a formal Acknowledgement of Country as part of the official performance welcome

## OUR VISION

West Australian Opera respects the ancient and contemporary cultures of First Nations people. West Australian Opera hopes that the artform can be meaningful for all West Australians.

West Australian Opera has commissioned work in Noongar language, enabling story telling in language, employing First Nations singers and creatives, and enabling attendance at performances.

We offer Welcome to Country and Acknowledgements as appropriate and we aim to offer smoking ceremonies at relevant times.

We want to embark on this Reconciliation Action Plan with a willingness to learn and listen and hope to build stronger culture understanding and to achieve positive outcomes toward reconciliation now and in the future.

The following vision actions and deliverables consider Relationships, Respect, Opportunities and Governance.



A costume, designed by Peter Farmer Designs, for new Noongar opera *Wundig wer Wilura* by Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse. The Wesfarmers Arts commission premiered in 2024.

© Owen Gregory



## RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Partnerships Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Partnerships Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider ways to establish an Aboriginal Reference Group.</li> </ul>	October 2024	Artistic Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan further productions involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and stories.</li> </ul>	December 2024	Artistic Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples especially Elders to attend WAO events.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Marketing Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider ways to promote and increase awareness of Opera to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples especially young people.</li> </ul>	October 2024	Education Manager
2. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff and members.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Marketing Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey</li> </ul>	December 2024	Artistic Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Acknowledgement to Country on the WAO website to be written in Noongar language.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Marketing Manager
3. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to promote National Reconciliation Week (NRW) to staff and members.</li> </ul>	May 2025	Marketing Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</li> </ul>	May 2025	Partnerships Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.</li> </ul>	27 May- 3 June, <i>annually</i>	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> </ul>	27 May- 3 June, <i>annually</i>	Executive Director
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.</li> </ul>	January 2025	Project Specialist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.</li> </ul>	December 2025	Executive Director

## 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a strategy for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.</li> </ul>	December 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.</li> </ul>	December 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider on country cultural immersion activities.</li> </ul>	December 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.</li> </ul>	December 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. Possibly develop a policy on this.</li> </ul>	November 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to include Welcome to Country at relevant events</li> </ul>	August 2024	Executive Director
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.</li> </ul>	July 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.</li> </ul>	July 2025	Administrator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.</li> </ul>	July 2025	Executive Director

## OPPORTUNITIES

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives, artists, technicians</li> </ul>	September 2024	Artistic Director Production Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>	January 2025	Artistic Director Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to identify professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</li> </ul>	January 2025	Artistic Director Executive Director
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a strategy for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.</li> </ul>	October 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate Supply Nation membership if appropriate</li> </ul>	October 2025	RAP Working Group Chair

## GOVERNANCE

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.</li> </ul>	October 2024	Executive Director Board
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft RWG Terms of Reference</li> </ul>	October 2024	Project Specialist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.</li> </ul>	November 2025 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define resource needs for RAP implementation.</li> </ul>	November 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.</li> </ul>	December 2024	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appoint a senior leader to champion RAP internally.</li> </ul>	December 2024	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.</li> </ul>	September 2025	Audience Insights Manager
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss important RAP correspondence.</li> </ul>	June annually	Partnerships Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.</li> </ul>	1 August annually	Partnerships Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.</li> </ul>	30 September, <i>annually</i>	Partnerships Manager
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register via Reconciliation Australia's <a href="#">website</a> to begin developing our next RAP.</li> </ul>	October 2025	Partnerships Manager



CONTACT FOR PUBLIC ENQUIRIES ABOUT THIS RAP

Email: [administration@waopera.asn.au](mailto:administration@waopera.asn.au) Phone: (08) 9278 8999



A mural celebrating *Koolbardi wer Wardong* by Kambarni at Brookfield Place.

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