



Australian Government

Department of Health  
and Aged Care

# **Annual Progress Report:** ***Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*** ***December 2021 – December 2023***

As of December 2022





We, the Department of Health and Aged Care, proudly acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and pay respect to those who have preserved and cared for the lands on which we live, work, and benefit from each day.

We recognise the inherent strengths and knowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples provide to the health and aged care system and thank them for their existing and ongoing contributions to the wider community. We extend this gratitude to all health and aged care workers who contribute to improving health and wellbeing outcomes with, and for, First Nations peoples and communities.

We also recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing connections and relationships to the lands, waters, culture, and community; and pay respect to all Elders past, present, and emerging.

## About the Artwork

Artist interpretation of the Department of Health and Aged Care, our reconciliation journey, and our 100th anniversary. Artwork is titled '100 Years of Health' by contemporary Kalkadoon artist Chern'ee Sutton.





## Indigenous Champion's Message

As Health's Indigenous Champion, I am pleased to present our 2022 Annual Progress Report. The Department of Health and Aged Care (Health) plays a critical role in achieving reconciliation between First Nations peoples and all Australians. We aim to do this by working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to achieve improved health and wellbeing outcomes as outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).

Since launching our *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-23* (RAP), Health has taken significant steps towards reconciliation. In early 2022, we broadened the membership of our RAP Working Group to capture business areas across the department to ensure we consider a wide range of perspectives and identify opportunities to align efforts to advance reconciliation. Throughout the year we completed many RAP deliverables including celebrating and acknowledging First Nations dates and significance and educating staff about First Nations histories, cultures, and achievements. In late 2022, we also stood up the Closing the Gap Steering Committee comprised of senior leaders and First Nations staff to drive transformation efforts in alignment to the priority reforms of the National Agreement.

However, we acknowledge that Health still has a long way to go on our journey towards reconciliation. The 2022 RAP Progress Dashboard at the end of this report outlines our progress so far, including our proudest achievements and focus areas for 2023. Over the next year of implementation, we hope to build on our current momentum to continue progressing meaningful action towards reconciliation and Closing the Gap. I look forward to presenting our next annual report at the conclusion of our RAP in December 2023.



## Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-23

The Department of Health and Aged Care launched our fifth RAP in February 2022, including a video message from the Indigenous Champion encouraging all-staff to take brave action towards reconciliation. Supporting resources including a 'Next Steps Card' and guidance material was published on the internal intranet to assist staff to identify and commit to meaningful action as individuals and teams.

Implementation of our RAP is driven through Health's RAP Working Group which is chaired by the Indigenous Champion and comprised of senior leaders across the business, state and territory office managers, and key stakeholders including First Nations staff representation through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network (NATSISN). In 2022, the RAP Working Group achieved its commitment to meet quarterly to discuss and monitor RAP implementation progress including the alignment of actions to the priority reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Our RAP includes a total of 69 deliverables under 16 high level actions. In the first year of implementation, Health completed 68 per cent of all deliverables, with 19 per cent of deliverables still in progress, and 13 per cent of deliverables not yet commenced due to their timeline for delivery as outlined in our RAP. Our proudest achievements in 2022 include:

- Maintaining a dedicated Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO) Unit comprised of Affirmative Measures – Indigenous (AMI) positions (only open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates) to guide and support Health's reconciliation and employment related initiatives, in addition to providing culturally safe and appropriate pastoral care and advice to First Nations staff and their managers.
- The successful delivery of events and activities for National Reconciliation Week including:



- A flag raising ceremony at our central office on Ngunawal Country (Canberra) including a Welcome to Country from local Ngunawal custodian, Wally Bell.
- Morning tea celebrations with First Nations catering in every state and territory office to commemorate the installation of printed copies of the RAP artwork canvas.
- Local language workshops to teach staff to give an Acknowledgement of Country in traditional First Nations languages in partnership with First Nations providers.

- Exceeding our Indigenous procurement target of 99 contracts totalling \$6.9 million, reaching 128 contracts totalling \$33.3 million in the first half of FY21/22.





- The successful delivery and live stream of the annual Secretary's NAIDOC Awards on Ngunnawal Country (Canberra) including a Welcome to Country from local Ngunnawal Custodian, Jude Barlow.
- Increased staff participation rates in the biennial Workplace RAP Barometer Survey from 2020 with improved results highlighting higher rates of awareness of our RAP, higher rates of engagement and participation in RAP related initiatives, and improved perceptions of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- Naming our Therapeutic Goods Administration Fairbairn site buildings in local Ngunnawal terms in partnership with Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians and hosting a launch event including a Welcome to Country from local Ngunnawal custodian, Tyrone Bell, a



Gulgana and Yarwan Gawar QR Codes



digeridoo performance from Cheydin Reid, and Acknowledgement of Country plaques featuring QR codes where staff and visitors can listen to the Acknowledgement in Ngunnawal language.

- Building names are: Yarwan Gawar (pronounced *Yarr-one Gah-wah*) meaning 'strong' 'heart' and Gulgana (pronounced *Gool-ghana*) meaning 'to protect'.

- Successfully piloting an AML recruitment process to test innovative and culturally appropriate attraction and assessment strategies designed to remove barriers to First Nations employment and improve recruitment outcomes including place-based job advertisements and Yarning Circle Group Interviews facilitated by our ILO Unit.

While we are proud of these achievements, Health recognises that there is still work to be done to achieve reconciliation in Australia. Over the second year of implementation, Health aims to leverage our momentum and achieve:

- Increased First Nations staff representation in our workforce through the development and implementation of a First Nations Employment and Retention Action Plan in alignment to the *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020-24* to provide opportunities for career development and advancement.
- Strengthened cultural integrity of our workplace through the development and implementation of a Cultural Learning Strategy in alignment to Health's Workforce Strategy to grow the competencies required to deliver culturally safe policies and programs in genuine partnership with First Nations peoples and communities.
- Improved RAP implementation progress reporting through the delivery of our RAP Communications Strategy, publishing quarterly and annual reports to ensure Health maintains accountability to all-staff, our portfolio agencies, First Nations partners, and the Australian public throughout our journey towards reconciliation.



## Contact Us

You can keep up to date with our RAP implementation progress by [visiting Health's website here](#). Alternatively, you can contact us via email at [Inclusion@health.gov.au](mailto:Inclusion@health.gov.au).



## Overview

Health's RAP includes a total of **69 deliverables under 16 high level actions**. Of the 69 deliverables, as of 31 December 2022:

- **47 are complete,**
- **13 are still in progress,** and
- 9 have not yet commenced due to their timeline for delivery.

## Highlights

Health's proudest 2022 achievements include:

- **Exceeding our Indigenous Procurement targets** in the first half of FY21/22, entering into 128 contracts totalling **\$33.3 million**.
- Increased **staff awareness and engagement** with RAP related initiatives including celebrating and acknowledging First Nations dates of significance.
- Naming our Fairbairn building sites in Ngunnawal terms: **Yarwan Gawar** (pronounced *Yarr-one Gah-wah*) meaning 'strong' 'heart' and **Gulgana** (pronounced *Gool-ghana*) meaning 'to protect'.

## 2023 Focus Areas

Over the next year of implementation, Health aims to:

- **Increase First Nations workforce representation** to 5 per cent of APS4-6, 5 per cent of EL1-2, and 3 per cent of SES (senior executive) by providing opportunities for career development and advancement through a First Nations Employment and Retention Action Plan.
- **Improve workplace cultural integrity** by providing cultural learning tailored to the health and aged care context through a Cultural Learning Strategy.
- **Improve RAP reporting processes** by publishing quarterly and annual progress reports through our RAP Communications Strategy.



**Health.gov.au**

All information in this publication is correct as at May 2023.

