

# Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2023 – June 2026

 Hearing Australia

  
RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN  
**STRETCH**

# Acknowledgement of Country

Hearing Australia would like to acknowledge and pay our respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work.

We pay our respect to Elders past, present, and emerging, and acknowledge the longest continuing culture on Earth.

We extend our acknowledgement and respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we work with and serve, now and into the future.

## Our Commitment

We commit to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in every opportunity to advance their health, wellbeing and self-determination.

We commit to listening, learning, understanding, respecting, and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' diverse cultures and perspectives, and to reflecting this in how we work with the community.

We commit to co-designing our services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, peoples and communities to ensure they are holistic, culturally safe, and free from racism and discrimination, so communities can access the help they need, when they need it.

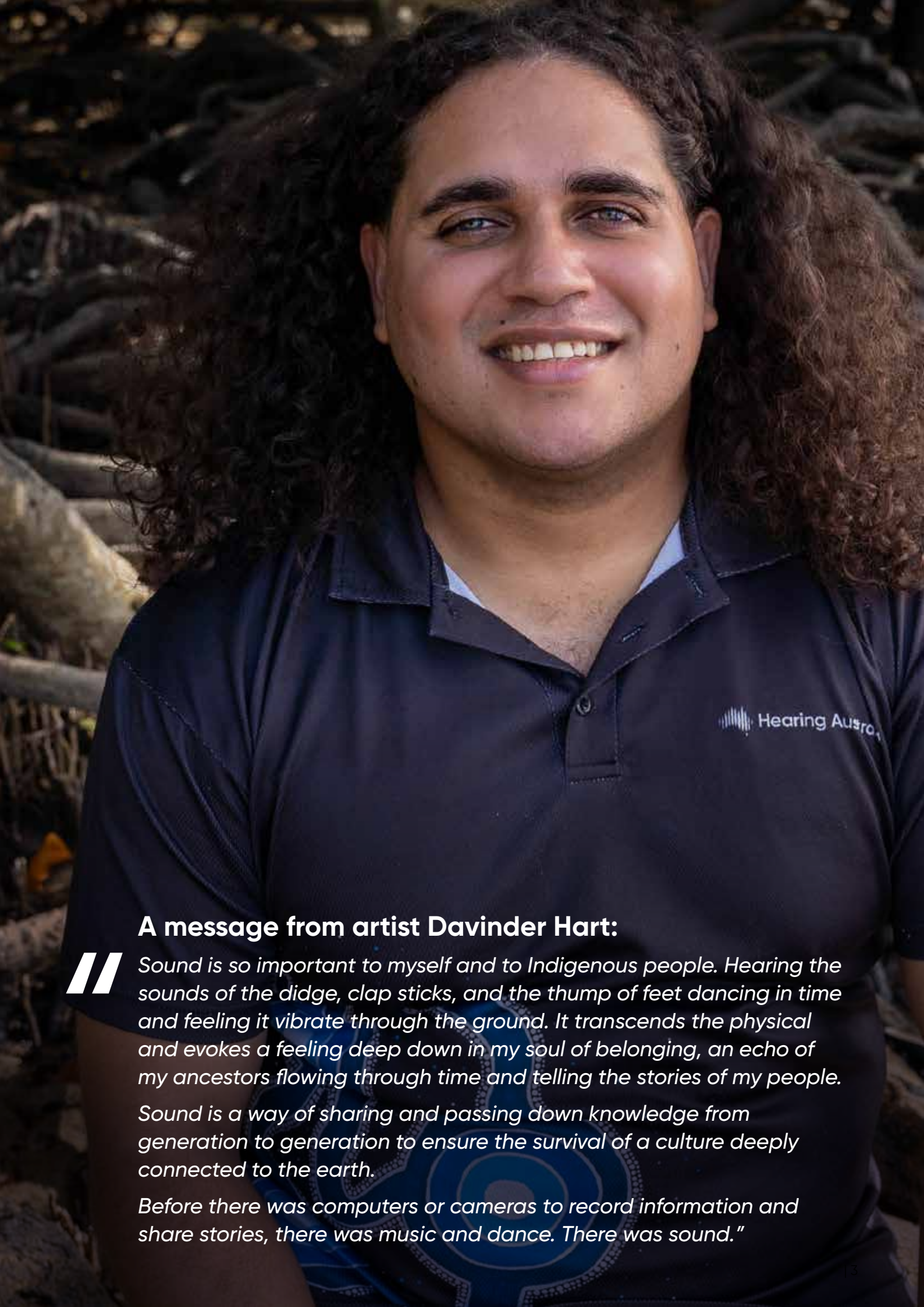
We will continuously improve the way we work and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so that all people feel safe and respected.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers are critical to closing the gap in health outcomes. We are committed to increasing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working with us, particularly in remote and regional communities.

We will demonstrate these commitments in our work across Australia, every day.

We will show this in how we engage with and serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, through our corporate and business planning, and through implementing our Reconciliation Action Plan.





Hearing Australia

### **A message from artist Davinder Hart:**

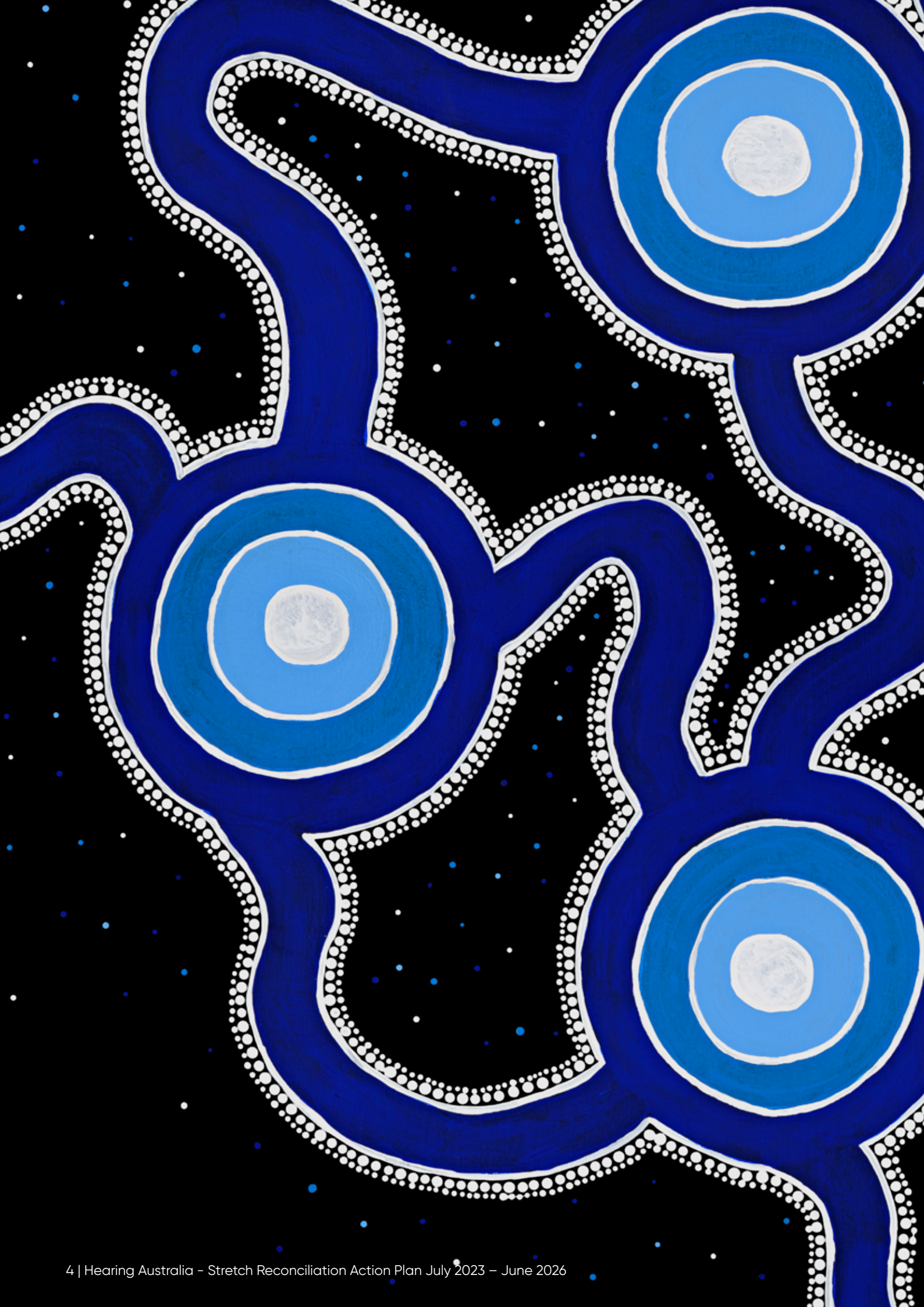


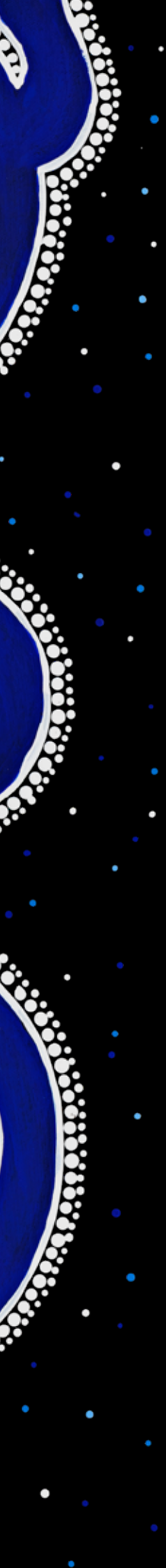
*Sound is so important to myself and to Indigenous people. Hearing the sounds of the didge, clap sticks, and the thump of feet dancing in time and feeling it vibrate through the ground. It transcends the physical and evokes a feeling deep down in my soul of belonging, an echo of my ancestors flowing through time and telling the stories of my people.*

*Sound is a way of sharing and passing down knowledge from generation to generation to ensure the survival of a culture deeply connected to the earth.*

*Before there was computers or cameras to record information and share stories, there was music and dance. There was sound."*







# The story behind the artwork

The artwork is titled 'The Spirit of Sound'. The three circles in the artwork represent Music, Dance and Mother Earth, reflecting the importance of celebrating sound and storytelling.

## The artist

Davinder Hart is an Aboriginal artist who was born in Perth, Western Australia. His family roots connect from Bibbulmun and Katanning in the southwest region of the Noongar people. With knowledge passed down from his uncles and aunties, he is able to tell stories through his paintings. His paintings reveal traditional lessons about the morals, ethics, and values of his culture, as well as his own personal lessons along his cultural journey.



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# Statement by our Chair and Managing Director

We are pleased to present our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan July 2023 – June 2026. We are dedicated to Australia's reconciliation journey and playing our part in healing the injustices of the past. Together, we will weave a future of unity, empowerment, and lasting positive change.

We are deeply committed to improving the systems, services and policies that contribute to positive ear health and hearing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We remain steadfastly committed to reducing the rate of hearing loss in First Nations children by at least half by 2029. This is because we understand the importance of hearing to a child's development and that sound is an integral part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples connection to culture, family, community and history.

We are dedicated to expanding collaboration with First Nations peoples, building greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, providing career and learning opportunities for First Nations staff, and increasing procurement from First Nations businesses. Our focus lies in bolstering the representation of First Nations staff at all levels within our workforce, forging new employment pathways for First Nations students and aspiring audiologists, and intensifying our engagement with First Nations businesses and suppliers.

We will also ensure that our people are equipped to play their part in reconciliation by providing them with ongoing education in cultural awareness and formal cultural learning opportunities. In so doing we will nurture an environment where diversity and different perspectives thrive and contribute to our collective success.

We are aware that statements such as these do not deliver meaningful outcomes unless there is an active and heartfelt commitment to follow through. We are dedicated to meaningful action on reconciliation at all levels, from the Board to frontline staff, to strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.

We look forward to delivering on our commitments in this Reconciliation Action Plan and advancing reconciliation in Australia.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Crouch'.

Ms Elizabeth Crouch AM  
Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Terrell'.

Mr Kim Terrell  
Managing Director



# Message from Reconciliation Australia

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I congratulate Hearing Australia on its formal commitment to reconciliation, as it implements its second Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan July 2023 – June 2026 (RAP).

Formed around the pillars of relationships, respect, and opportunities, the RAP program helps organisations realise the critical role they can play in driving reconciliation across their work and area of expertise.

In the case of Hearing Australia, the organisation has recognised through its reconciliation journey so far the key influence it can have on improving the systems, services and policies that affect ear health and hearing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It did this in its previous RAP by leveraging its research and services directly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, creating innovative projects such as its Spirit of Sound story book to raise awareness about the importance of hearing checks. At the same time, it also implemented targeted initiatives, such as establishing its First Nations Services Unit in 2021 and rolling out its First Nations Action Plan a year later. This approach has been very effective, with Hearing Australia's HAPEE Program assessing over 24,000 First Nations children under the age of seven for ear and hearing problems so far.

With these successes, Hearing Australia's new Stretch RAP seeks to go further. Namely, this RAP is characterised by Hearing Australia's plan to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices into its services. One way it plans to do this is by formalising the partnerships it already has with 100 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, making them mutually beneficial two-way relationships from which it can learn from. It is also actively seeking feedback from communities on their experience of its First Nations Services to use insights to inform continuous improvement processes. These initiatives, among others, shows Hearing Australia understanding the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledge for better outcomes for communities.

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend Hearing Australia on this Stretch RAP and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.



Karen Mundine  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia









# Our vision for reconciliation

We envisage a future in which ear and hearing problems do not alter the trajectory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lives. We will work side by side with First Nations colleagues, families, services, and communities towards this goal.

We are committed to a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the ability and support to grow strong in their identity, culture, and language – to be listened to, respected, and to have a strong voice in matters that affect their lives.

We acknowledge the impact of past actions and commit to playing our part in the healing that needs to occur. Our people will walk and work together in respectful and meaningful partnerships towards this future.

## SPOTLIGHT: What does reconciliation mean to our people?

“ To me it means a lot. When I reflect, I think understanding is the starting place, if we have an understanding of the history and the issues, and are willing to join the conversation, then we can move towards a shared understanding. With a shared truth and empathy, we all have the opportunity to contribute to a shared responsibility for the future.”

Rick Wright – General Manager, Southern and Far North Queensland.

“ Reconciliation to me is a journey. It's about acknowledging and celebrating each other's differences. Coming together to close the gap. Encouraging First Nations pride and peoples. To have an understanding and be able to acknowledge each other's cultures and traditions. Building those strong relationships, maintaining the trust in those relationships.”

Felicity Mckenzie – Customer Service Officer at our Customer Support Centre.

“ To be brave and make change. We need to work more closely with Indigenous health groups and communities. And we need to better involve them with our events and initiatives. We need to do a better job of asking what they want and what they need from us rather than what we can simply do for them.”

Matthew Cameron-Rogers – Community Hearing Advisor.

“ Education is power here. To be brave and make change, the next step forward is always right in front of us. We aren't always on the same path, but with each step we're closer in the same direction.”

Rheanna Beer – Clinical Community Advisor, Tasmania.







# Our people

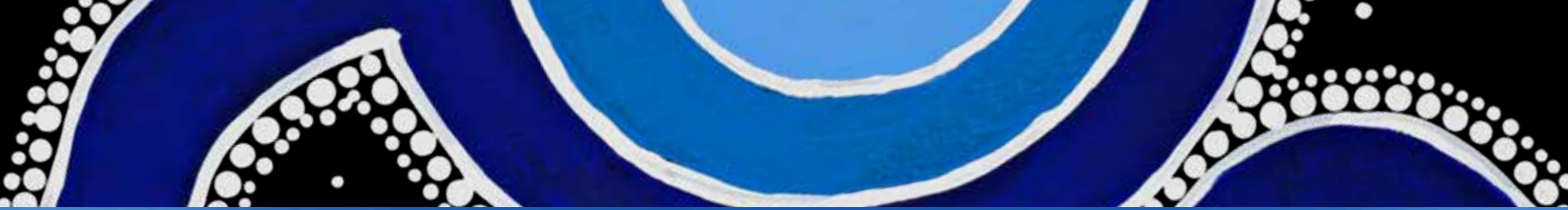
At Hearing Australia, we are proud of our long history working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities nationwide to provide hearing care, and of the steady growth in First Nations people in our workforce. Today, just under 50 of our 1,350 employees are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Collectively, we are committed to strong, respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples for the benefit of all Australians. This forms part of our Commitment to First Nations Peoples and to reconciliation.

We deliver significant services on behalf of the Government and the Australian community. We work with Government and our partners to maximise the benefits of these services and to provide integrated services which makes it easier for our clients to get the help they need.

Our ability to provide high quality hearing support to communities across Australia relies on a workforce which embraces our priorities of 'Delivering Excellent Outcomes', 'Providing Great Value to Government and Partners' and 'Being a High Performing Organisation'.

To ensure that we continue to deliver excellent outcomes for our clients and stakeholders, we are building the capabilities of our workforce while supporting greater workplace flexibility, engagement, wellbeing, and diversity. We are also investing in our people's skills to lift our productivity and effectiveness.







# Our business

Hearing Australia is the largest provider of government funded hearing services in Australia. Established as a corporate Commonwealth entity under the Australian Hearing Services Act 1991, our mission is to provide world leading research and hearing services for the wellbeing of all Australians.

For over 75 years, Hearing Australia has cared for 1.5 million children and adults with hearing loss across the country. In 2021-2022, Hearing Australia provided care to more than 280,000 children and adults with hearing loss, including helping around ten babies each week hear their family's voices for the first time. Services are available via telehealth, online, and in-person, at over 180 Hearing Centres, and in more than 300 communities.

We provide a wide range of information, education, research, and clinical services, including fitting of hearing devices and follow-up services. In all we do, we recognise that building trusting relationships helps people feel safe and comfortable in seeking care, and is vital to reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians.

## Specialist audiology and rehabilitation services

For children and adults who have long term hearing loss, our audiologists work to understand how their hearing impacts their daily life and limits their activities and aspirations. Together they create a plan to address these impacts, including access to hearing devices, practical information, and support to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Our Specialist Audiologists undertake additional training to provide tailored support to people with more complex needs, including individuals with additional sensory, physical, cognitive, or intellectual difficulties, or severe to profound hearing loss.

## Customer and community support teams

We recognise that finding and accessing care is not always easy. Our trained customer support staff help clients access services that are right for them, while also assisting with home technology, and providing hearing device maintenance and repair services. Additionally, our community-based staff travel all over Australia and offer free hearing checks and information sessions, including at GP clinics, pharmacies, nursing homes, and community meetings.

## First Nations Services

In 2021, Hearing Australia established a First Nations Services Unit to better meet the hearing health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families across Australia by providing a more coordinated, culturally appropriate service. The Unit works with health and education services, helping them support the hearing and communication needs of children and adults in their care. We work with children and their caregivers and families to build knowledge on how to prevent, recognise and respond to ear health and hearing concerns. We also refer children for follow-up care as needed.

As well as hearing checks, the First Nations Services Unit provides local training and support services online and in-person. Upskilling and supporting primary health care professionals and early childhood educators to deliver initial hearing screenings is an integral part of the services offered through the Unit.





## SPOTLIGHT: Hearing Assessment Program – Early Ears (HAPEE)

Hearing Australia's HAPEE program provides free diagnostic hearing assessments and follow-up treatment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from 0-6 years of age who do not yet attend full time school. Services include diagnostic hearing assessment and follow-up treatment, building capability of primary health services to manage ear health, and community awareness about the importance of ear and hearing health.

The program was co-designed with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, Department of Health and Aged Care, and stakeholders from the hearing health sector. It is fully government funded and links with, or complements, existing community programs. Consulting with a wide variety of organisations and people helped create a program that is tailored to suit the specific needs of First Nations families and communities.

HAPEE is run on a national basis and operates through a variety of channels including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, government clinics, other mainstream primary care clinics and through interested early education providers. By travelling to urban, regional and remote areas we remove barriers to ensure that our services are easily accessible to families.

As an integral part of the program, Hearing Australia provides support to local services to develop hearing assessment clinics, with our audiologists building capability of primary care and early childhood services staff. To build reconciliation and confidence, Hearing Australia acknowledges the important relationships and support that these clinics provide.



## Preventing avoidable hearing loss in First Nations children

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, ear and hearing trouble starts before they turn two. It's a time when they are learning to listen, yarn and communicate. These skills are important for building relationships, learning culture, and learning in school.

That is why Hearing Australia has committed to reducing the rate of hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by at least half by 2029. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have some of the highest rates of otitis media (middle ear infection) in the world and experience the condition far more frequently and seriously than non-Indigenous Australian children. Checking the ear and hearing health of young children is a critical step to preventing long-term ear disease and hearing loss, with one in four children found to have undiagnosed ear disease or hearing loss, requiring referral to clinical specialists.

Research shows the long-term benefits of supporting and working with local communities. In 2008, just 4.6 per cent of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children we had seen with a hearing loss aged under twenty, had been aided with a hearing device before they were three years old. By 2020, this had lifted to 12.7 per cent, reducing the impacts of hearing loss on their development and education.

## Partnerships to amplify our impact

Hearing Australia is a member of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ear Health Partnership Committee, formed with senior leaders from the Department of Health and Aged Care, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), and other key stakeholders to identify and drive reforms that improve the ear and hearing health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Partnership Committee aims to improve coordination and integration of government funded ear health programs within primary health care and to strengthen the role of the community controlled sector in managing ear health.

## Collaborative research and world leading innovation

Through the National Acoustic Laboratories, our researchers collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and communities to determine what requires research, how to do it, and how to ensure this work brings benefits back to the communities we partner with. We have established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Leadership group to ensure that we adhere to these commitments and that Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing are embedded in our work. Our research translates into advances in hearing loss prevention and rehabilitation policy and practice, which in turn improves health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





## SPOTLIGHT: The Spirit of Sound Storybook

Hearing Australia is proud to have partnered with artist Davinder Hart, of the Noongar nation to develop the Spirit of Sound children's storybook that explores the importance of hearing and sound in First Nations culture. Davinder Hart is an Indigenous artist who was born in Perth, Western Australia. His connections spread far and wide over to the west of New South Wales. He pays his respects to his grandfather (Nudgee) Paul Gordon and his uncles, for with their knowledge passed down he can tell stories through his paintings.

The Spirit of Sound storybook supports parents, educators, and carers to engage with children about what they can hear, encouraging interaction on hearing and promoting dialogue on hearing health. The book is free to organisations who work with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children to raise awareness about the importance of a regular hearing check early in life.

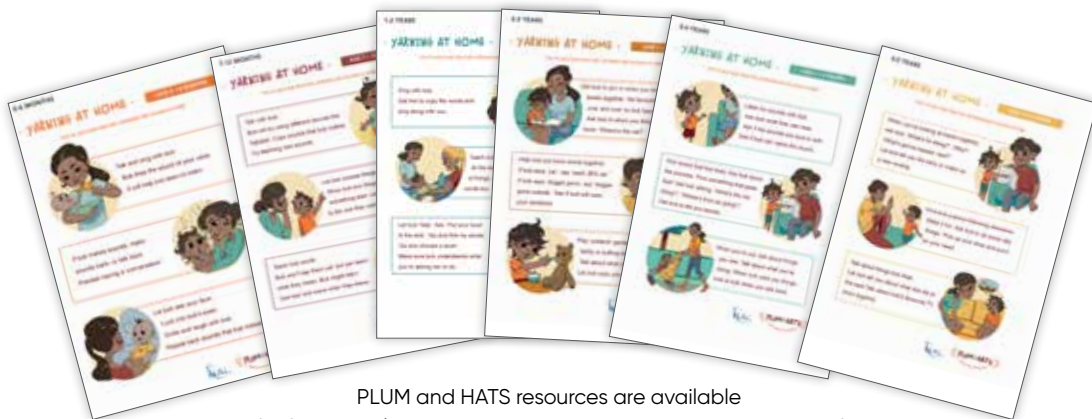
'When we start to listen, we can start to learn' – Davinder Hart





## SPOTLIGHT: PLUM and HATS checklists

It is important to find hearing trouble early. However, it is tricky for families, health practitioners, and educators to know when a young child is not hearing well. Parents are often asked 'Are you concerned about your child's hearing?' but, it's not an easy question to answer: what does 'not hearing well' look like? In 2017, we developed two parent questionnaires for use with parents and carers of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: the PLUM (Parent-evaluated Listening and Understanding Measure) and the HATS (Hearing and Talking Scale). They were co-designed with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal primary health and early childhood professionals. Now, Hearing Australia audiologists and primary health practitioners use the PLUM and HATS as part of their set of assessments to work out which children may benefit from further care.



PLUM and HATS resources are available for free download, and workers can register and make use of supporting online tools and learning resources at no cost at [www.plumandhats.nal.gov.au](http://www.plumandhats.nal.gov.au)





# Our RAP Working Group

Our RAP Working Group guided the development of this RAP by identifying issues and topics of importance, reviewing past successes and challenges, and articulating lessons learned. This group will continue to have input toward, and monitor, the implementation of this RAP.

The Working Group has diverse membership, and holds a commitment to maintain a minimum of 50 per cent representation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members. Membership is drawn from across Australia and throughout levels of our organisation to ensure a broad spectrum of ideas and lived experience of reconciliation are considered.

The Working Group includes individuals who have displayed strong leadership and commitment to reconciliation and who are committed to championing reconciliation within and outside their work areas. In 2021 and 2022 the RAP Working Group reported through the People Steering Committee, to Hearing Australia's Executive Team, and the Board. Membership includes:

Robin Priddin (ACT)	Chair and Reconciliation Champion, Chief People and Governance Officer
Sherilee McManus (NSW)	Deputy Chair, National Manager Stakeholder Relations, First Nations Unit
David Ford (NSW)	Customer Support Centre Manager, Port Macquarie
Denise Newman (QLD)	Cultural Leader Northern Territory, First Nations Unit
Hannah Berekoven (NSW)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Marketing Specialist
Jodie Varnai (NSW)	Head of Governance
Kim Jones (NSW)	Centre Manager, Tamworth
Kirralee Cross (NSW)	Customer Service Officer, Tamworth
Melita McMeekin (NSW)	Administration Support, HAPEE Program
Rick Wright (QLD)	General Manager, South and Far North Queensland
Rheanna Beer (TAS)	Clinical Community Advisor, Tasmania
Samantha Harkus (NSW)	Research Partnerships, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Hearing Health, National Acoustic Laboratories







## SPOTLIGHT: Rheanna Beer, Clinical Community Advisor

When she began her Administrative Traineeship with Hearing Australia in 2017, Rheanna Beer, a Plangermaireener woman, would never have believed that she would still be working there 6 years later and loving her job more with every passing day.

"This job is actually really cool! We are making an impact and improving the quality of life for so many people." She adds, "I'm not an audiologist, but I am the first step in our clients learning the importance of hearing, I help get them on their journey. It's gripping. It's life changing".

With the support of her mentor, hard work, and passion, Rheanna successfully completed the Certificate III in Business in just eight months. At nineteen years old, she was offered a role as a Community Hearing Advisor with the Devonport Hearing Centre, a role that not only gave her connection to community but allowed her to help people and make a difference.

Rheanna fondly remembers one client she met at a screening event she conducted. This client had told Rheanna that the birds had all gone away from his community. With the screening result he received, Rheanna recommended he have a full hearing assessment. Rheanna saw this client after he had been fitted with his hearing aids. With a smile he told her, "The birds are back and singing."

"I helped make that happen," she smiles.

In 2022 Rheanna successfully applied for a position as a Clinical Community Advisor in the newly formed First Nations Unit and was upskilled in audiometry. This role allows Rheanna to learn more about culture while helping community understand hearing health. She also received the training and resources to be able to help people in the community hear better. "Helping our communities hear better will help keep the culture alive" she says.

As a young girl, Rheanna suffered with otitis media and Eustachian Tube Dysfunction, and this continued right up to high school. The training she received in the First Nations Unit has helped her make sense of her hearing issues in childhood. Her lived experience is allowing Rheanna to form good relationships with community and stakeholders, and she is talking about hearing health with parents, educators, health workers, GP's, and Elders.

Rheanna's dream is to be a professional photographer, and she is surprised that her role as a Clinical Community Advisor is helping her grow not only in the hearing space, but with her photography as well. Rheanna notes, "I was nineteen when I started at Hearing Australia and I'm now approaching my twenty-sixth birthday. Nineteen-year-old me would be so proud to look forward at what I have achieved. Hearing Australia has enabled many things for me, especially by developing my professional skills that has allowed me to run and keep building a successful photography business."

Photo credit: self-portrait by Rheanna Lee Photography





# Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Hearing Australia recognises the injustices, inequities and traumas experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are committed to healing the wrongs of the past and to stopping racism. We aspire to a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are embedded in decision making throughout our organisation.

We have substantial opportunities to contribute to the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health, wellbeing, self-determination, and quality of life. Further, we are well positioned to support the career aspirations, employment and economic capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the country, including in regional and remote communities.

This Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan July 2023 – June 2026 (RAP) has been informed by our learnings, achievements, and challenges to date. It is the result of consultation with First Nations staff, and collaborative discussion and planning with our internal RAP Working Group members, executive team, and staff across the organisation. We held multiple discussions and planning sessions with members of the RAP Working Group through virtual and in-person meetings. Discussions included reflections on the previous RAP, how we can learn from personal experiences, and aspirational discussions about how we as a business can develop RAP actions that we can feel proud of.

## Building on our journey so far

This is Hearing Australia's fifth Reconciliation Action Plan, and second Stretch RAP.

Building on our previous RAPs and commitments to First Nations communities, this RAP focuses on areas where Hearing Australia can have real and sustained impact on national reconciliation through the services we provide, the communities we work with, the partnerships we foster and grow, and our people.

Our first recorded visit to an Aboriginal community took place in the Northern Territory in the 1950s, not long after Hearing Australia's establishment in 1947. The commencement of regular visits to Aboriginal communities occurred at the same time the first Aboriginal community controlled health and legal services were also being established.

Beginning with one Aboriginal employee in 2004, First Nations employees now number 49, or 3.5 per cent of our workforce, and make a significant contribution to our organisation as clinicians, customer, and community support officers, managers, researchers, leaders, and members of our research ethics committee and Board. We appreciate and acknowledge their commitment and guidance on our continued journey towards reconciliation.

Our previous Stretch RAP spanned 2017 to 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic we refreshed and expanded our RAP Working Group and reflected on our lessons and goals for the future. This period of reflection was extremely beneficial in the development of this RAP.

## Achievements

We are proud of what we have achieved through our previous RAP and the changes we have made within our organisation to advance reconciliation. Feedback received from First Nations staff highlight how these have positively affected their experience working for Hearing Australia.

Some key achievements include:

- ✓ Increasing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to 3.5 per cent, from a baseline of 0.6 per cent in 2006.
- ✓ Achieving a cultural competency eLearning completion rate of 98 per cent for all staff. Our audiologists are now trained in culturally safe provision of care, understand the impact of colonisation and past government policies on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and recognise the importance of self-determination and First Nations voice in decision making.
- ✓ Hosting a two day in-person conference for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in 2018, that was highly valued by attendees. The following conference planned for March 2020 was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and held virtually in February 2022. The virtual conference was a huge success, connecting many of our new employees who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to meet.
- ✓ Establishing a First Nations Services Unit in 2021, which has enabled us to better leverage partnerships with Aboriginal communities, stakeholders, and government, to deliver greater value and impact for our First Nations clients and their communities. This includes establishing the HAPEE Program and assessing over 24,000 First Nations children under the age of seven for ear and hearing problems. We also developed the PLUM and HATS screening tools to identify hearing and communication difficulties in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, rolling the use of these tools out nationally in primary health and early education settings.
- ✓ Launching our First Nations Action Plan in 2022, a three-year commitment to significantly improve ear health and hearing outcomes for First Nations children.
- ✓ Launching the Spirit of Sound storybook to support First Nations hearing health. The storybook reflects the importance of celebrating sound and storytelling. It is provided free of charge to organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and raises awareness of the importance of regular hearing checks early in life.
- ✓ Reinforcing the importance of cultural protocols including a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country, at all significant internal and external events. This has been communicated regularly to all staff.





## Challenges

We have reflected on the challenges experienced in implementing our last RAP. The learnings from these will inform the way we implement and monitor the actions in this RAP:

- ✔ Not sharing responsibility for implementation across the organisation meant that employee changes in key roles significantly impacted delivery. Taking this into account we have ensured that responsibility for implementation of this RAP is spread across business units and involves people at varying levels, giving us a more balanced and holistic approach to implementation, and more resilience should key roles change over time.
- ✔ Monitoring and reporting on RAP actions in the past was a challenge. This is being addressed by the creation of a new position to help drive implementation of the RAP and implement appropriate processes to document and track our commitments.

- ✔ We identified gaps in our recruitment strategy and scholarships program. Uptake of our postgraduate Audiology scholarships has been low. We have undertaken a review of this program and, under this RAP, will reshape it to create more opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to join our workforce in a diversity of roles.
  - ✔ Finally, we know it can be a challenge to be brave and speak up, so throughout this plan our goal is to inspire First Nations staff to reach out and receive support. We commit to establishing resources, such as a peer mentoring program, to facilitate staff connection, and promote involvement and employment at all levels of the organisation.
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# Relationships

Caring for our clients, our people and the community is at the heart of who we are as a provider of hearing services. We support anyone who needs our help, regardless of where they live or their financial circumstances. We recognise that strong, genuine and meaningful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community is at the heart of reconciliation. We are committed to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in every opportunity to advance their health, wellbeing and self-determination. We commit to understanding, respecting, and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' diverse cultures and perspectives, and to reflect this in how we listen, learn, and work with communities. We will continue to build positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to ensure our services and workplaces are culturally safe, and free from racism and discrimination.

Action	#	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1.1	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to continuously improve guiding principles for engagement.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Managing Director, Head of First Nations Services
	1.2	Review, update and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of First Nations Services
	1.3	Establish and maintain formal two-way partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations including the 100+ Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations we provide hearing services to and relevant peak bodies, such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of First Nations Services
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	2.1	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week resources and reconciliation materials to all staff.	27 May - 3 June 2024, 2025, 2026	Reconciliation Specialist, Head of Communications
	2.2	RAP Working Group members to participate in 2 external NRW events.	27 May - 3 June 2024, 2025, 2026	RAP Working Group Chair and Deputy Chair
	2.3	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in 2 external events to recognise and celebrate National Reconciliation Week.	27 May - 3 June 2024, 2025, 2026	RAP Working Group Chair and Deputy Chair, Chief Operating Officer
	2.4	Organise at least 2 internal National Reconciliation Week events, including at least one organisation-wide National Reconciliation Week event, each year.	27 May - 3 June 2024, 2025, 2026	Reconciliation Champion
	2.5	Register all our National Reconciliation Week events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	27 May - 3 June 2024, 2025, 2026	Reconciliation Specialist
	2.6	Invite external stakeholders to participate in our events to recognise NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2024, 2025, 2026	Reconciliation Champion, MD
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	3.1	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce, including awareness of our RAP commitments.	Dec 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Strategy

Action	#	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence - continued.	3.2	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly by publishing our RAP on our website and utilising social media to highlight key activities and achievements each year during NRW.	August 2023, 2024, 2025	Chief People and Governance Officer, Chief Customer Experience Officer
	3.3	Implement strategies to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Managing Director, Reconciliation Champion
	3.4	Collaborate with 3 RAP and other like-minded organisations to implement innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	December 2025; review March 2026	Reconciliation Champion, Head of First Nations Services
	3.5	Regularly engage with relevant Ministers and government departments to significantly reduce hearing loss and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	June 2024, 2025, 2026	Managing Director, Chief Operating Officer
	3.6	Formally launch our Stretch RAP and including an announcement in an all-staff email from the Managing Director.	November 2023	Managing Director, Reconciliation Champion
	3.7	Display our Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within all of our 170+ permanent hearing centres and head office, maintaining currency by encouraging all staff to reflect on the Commitment annually through an all-staff message from the Managing Director.	December 2023	Head of First Nations Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Marketing Specialist
	3.8	Include RAP and Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in staff induction processes.	September 2023	Head of People Services
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1	Continuously improve our People policies and procedures concerned with anti-discrimination.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Strategy
	4.2	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to continuously improve our anti-discrimination policy.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Strategy
	4.3	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Strategy
	4.4	Provide ongoing education to senior leaders and managers on the effects of racism.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Strategy
	4.5	Senior leaders to publicly support anti-discrimination campaigns, initiatives, and stances against racism.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Managing Director, Reconciliation Champion
5. Strengthen partnerships with external organisations to prevent ear disease and associated hearing loss.	5.1	Work with external stakeholders, including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, education providers, peak bodies and specialist health services providers to successfully deliver our First Nations Action Plan.	July 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of First Nations Services, Chief Operating Officer
	5.2	Establish 2 new partnerships with media and/or key First Nations organisations and services to raise awareness of ear disease and the importance of regular ear checks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to remain connected to sound and culture.	December 2024, 2025	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Marketing Specialist, Chief Customer Experience Officer

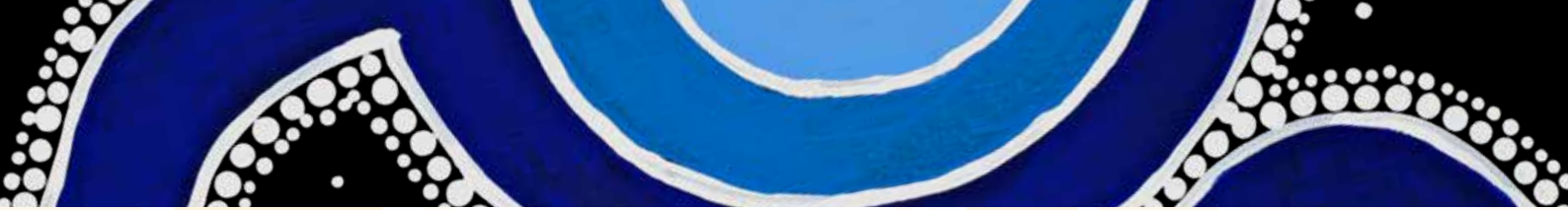




# Respect

Fostering respectful relationships allows us to create an environment that nurtures knowledge sharing and self-determination. We understand the importance of demonstrating respect for the cultures, histories, knowledge and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in everything that we do. We recognise that access to culturally safe hearing services is crucial to improving the overall health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and which contributes to reconciliation. Hearing Australia is committed to supporting community controlled health services to sustain ear health activities, and we acknowledge that this requires flexibility and adaptability to meet the unique needs of each community.

Action		Deliverable	Timelines	Responsibility
6. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning.	6.1	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	July 2023, December 2024	Head of People Strategy
	6.2	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	December 2023, December 2024	Head of People Strategy
	6.3	Implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff.	July 2023, December 2024	Head of People Strategy, Reconciliation Champion
	6.4	Commit all RAP Working Group members, Executives, People Strategy and People Services Managers / Leads, senior leaders and all new staff to undertake formal and structured cultural learning.	July 2023, December 2024	Head of People Strategy
	6.5	100% of all staff to undertake formal and structured cultural learning (with a mix of online and face to face learning, depending on staff roles) to embed cultural competency training across the organisation, by including cultural competency training as part of whole of organisation mandatory learning to be completed by all staff.	September 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Services, Head of People Strategy
	6.6	100% new staff to complete online cultural learning module as part of their onboarding.	September 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Services
	6.7	100% of new and existing staff in the First Nations Services Unit to complete comprehensive cultural training (face to face or hybrid).	December 2025	Head of First Nations Services, Head of People Strategy
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	7.1	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	September 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Strategy
	7.2	Implement and communicate a cultural protocol document (tailored for all local communities we operate in), including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	March 2024	Head of People Strategy
	7.3	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at a minimum of 2 significant events each year, including annual staff conferences and leadership forums	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Head of Communications



Action		Deliverable	Timelines	Responsibility
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols - continued.	7.4	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	August 2023	Managing Director
	7.5	Staff and senior leaders provide an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at all public events.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Head of Communications
	7.6	Display Acknowledgment of Country cards in all of our 170+ hearing centres and in meeting rooms at head office.	March 2024	Head of First Nations Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Marketing Specialist
	7.7	Increase uptake of cultural leave among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff by investigating current barriers, educating managers and senior leaders, developing guidelines and monitoring usage.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Head of People Services
	7.8	Include important cultural events in the corporate calendar of events and share with staff on MyHub.	December 2023	Head of Communications
8. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	8.1	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2023, 2024, 2025	RWG Chair & Deputy Chair
	8.2	Review people policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	December 2023	Head of People Services, Head of People Strategy
	8.3	Support all staff to participate in at least 1 NAIDOC Week event in their local area.	First week in July 2023, 2024, 2025	Reconciliation Champion
	8.4	In consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, support 8 external NAIDOC Week events each year.	First week in July 2023, 2024, 2025	Reconciliation Champion







# Opportunities

Hearing Australia is committed to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at every opportunity to advance their health, wellbeing and self-determination. We are committed to developing and implementing strategies which promote equal access to the employment, development and business opportunities we provide, to play our part to close the gap in economic disparities, to increase the diversity of our workforce and respond to the evolving demographics, needs and preferences of our clients. We aspire to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation at all levels and across all functions of our organisation.

Action	#	Deliverable	Timelines	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	9.1	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on the effectiveness of our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	November 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Services
	9.2	Review and update an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Head of People Services
	9.3	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	April 2024, 2025, 2026	Head of People Services
	9.4	Review people and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	April 2024, 2025, 2026	Head of People Services
	9.5	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to be supported to take on management and senior level positions by engaging 5 staff per year in a leadership development program.	September 2024, 2025	Head of People Services
	9.6	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed by Hearing Australia overall from 3.5% to 4.5% and increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in the First Nations Services Unit from 28% to 35%.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Managing Director, Chief People and Governance Officer
	9.7	Reshape our First Nations Scholarships Program to attract internal candidates and create more opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to join our workforce in diverse roles, including greater representation in enabling services, clinical support and leadership positions.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Head of People Strategy
	9.8	Create a buddy system to support new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff settle into their roles and build their social and professional network during the first few months of working for Hearing Australia.	July 2024, 2026	Heads of People Strategy and People Services
	9.9	Establish a peer mentoring program that focuses on career development, informed by feedback from the buddy system and co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.	July 2025	Head of People Strategy
	9.10	Host an annual staff conference for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to connect, engage and build capabilities, to be held face to face every second year.	May 2024, 2025, 2026	Chief People and Governance Officer
	9.11	Include a First Nations person on the recruitment panel for all First Nations identified employment opportunities.	September 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of People Services

Action	#	Deliverable	Timelines	Responsibility
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	10.1	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	March 2024	Procurement Manager
	10.2	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff including placing relevant information on our MyHub intranet.	March 2024	Procurement Manager
	10.3	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers and facilitate active inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses when completing procurement activity.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Procurement Manager
	10.4	Maintain commercial relationships with at least 3 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Procurement Manager
	10.5	Meet an annual procurement target of \$400,000 from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Procurement Manager
	10.6	Train all relevant staff in contracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses through a Supply Nation equivalent organisation.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	Procurement Manager
11. Strengthen delivery of our First Nations services to improve access to our services	11.1	Implement a Customer Satisfaction Survey to seek feedback from communities on their experience of our First Nations Services and use insights from this feedback to inform continuous improvement processes.	September 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of First Nations Unit, Chief Customer Experience Officer
	11.2	Increase access to and uptake of telehealth services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients through formal shared services partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.	July 2024	Head of First Nations Services
	11.3	Extend the Spirit of Sound campaign year on year to continue to raise awareness of ear disease among First Nations families and carers. This includes expanded educational resources, increased community engagement and continued promotion through a variety of channels, such as social media and targeted communications.	March 2026	Managing Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Marketing Specialist, Chief Customer Experience Officer
	11.4	Improve data sharing with Aboriginal community-controlled health services and communities through formal shared services partnerships to better inform service delivery and facilitate more informed decision making by communities.	July 2024	Head of First Nations Services
	11.5	Collaborate with the National Acoustic Laboratories and invest in innovative research that improves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ear health, hearing and communication outcomes.	March 2026	Head of Communication Sciences (NAL)
12. Increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to influence and shape our First Nations services	12.1	Establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group to advise on improvements to our First Nations services and research.	July 2023, 2024, 2025	Head of First Nations Services, Head of Communication Sciences (NAL)
	12.2	Executives to meet with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group at least once per year.	November 2023, 2024, 2025	Managing Director, Reconciliation Champion





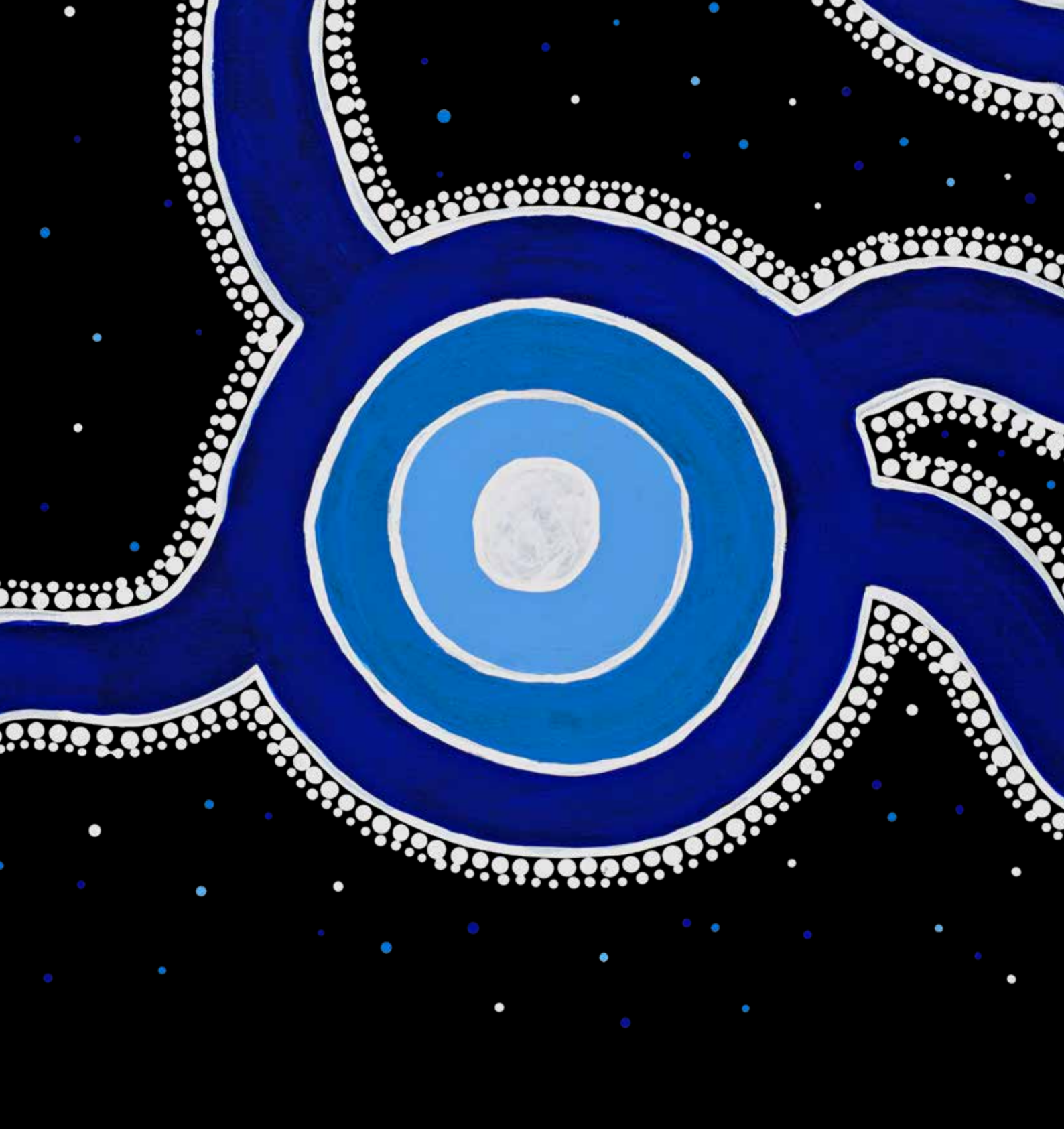
# Governance

Action	#	Deliverable	Timelines	Responsibility
13. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	13.1	Maintain 50% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP Working Group.	October 2023, 2024, 2025	RAP Working Group Chair and Deputy Chair
	13.2	Review and update the Terms of Reference for our RAP Working Group.	December 2024, 2025, 2026	RAP Working Group Chair and Deputy Chair
	13.3	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	February, May, July, October 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026	RAP Working Group Chair and Deputy Chair
	13.4	At least one RAP Working Group meeting per annum to be in-person to foster greater connection and engagement amongst members.	April/May or October 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026	Chief People and Governance Officer
	13.5	At least two RAP Working Group meetings per annum to involve the Managing Director.	April, October 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026	Chief People and Governance Officer
14. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	14.1	Embed resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2023	Chief People and Governance Officer
	14.2	Embed key RAP actions in performance expectations of senior management and all staff.	July 2024	MD, Head of People Services, Head of People Strategy
	14.3	Embed appropriate systems and capability to track, measure, and report on RAP commitments.	September 2023	Chief People and Governance Officer
	14.4	Maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	November 2023, 2024, 2025	Managing Director
	14.5	Include our RAP as a standing agenda item at senior management meetings.	July 2023, 2024, 2025	Chief People and Governance Officer
15. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	15.1	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	Reconciliation Specialist
	15.2	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	Reconciliation Specialist
	15.3	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	Reconciliation Specialist
	15.4	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	February, April, July, October 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026	RWG Chair & Deputy Chair
	15.5	Report RAP progress to the Board annually.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	RWG Chair & Deputy Chair
	15.6	Publicly report against our RAP commitments annually, outlining achievements, challenges and learnings.	March 2024, 2025, 2026	RWG Chair & Deputy Chair
	15.7	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2024	Head of People Strategy
	15.8	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	May 2026	Chief People and Governance Officer

Action	#	Deliverable	Timelines	Responsibility
16. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	16.1	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	September 2025	Head of People Strategy
17. Continuous engagement with the Board and Executive on our RAP.	17.1	Actively work to ensure that Hearing Australia's Board has at least one member who identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander and invite the First Nations Board member to be a co-Champion of our RAP.	September 2023, July 2025	Managing Director
	17.2	Ensure all existing and new Board members and Executives attend at least one outreach visit to an urban, regional or remote community once per annum.	December 2023, 2024, 2025	Managing Director, Chief Operating Officer







For more information contact  
Hearing Australia's Reconciliation Specialist.

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 **Hearing Australia**



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

**STRETCH**