



Education and Training

# Reconciliation Matters

ACT Department of Education and Training  
Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2010–June 2011

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# Chief Executive's message

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the *ACT Department of Education and Training Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2010–2011*. This plan puts into words our long standing commitment to building lasting and positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is also a representation of the respect we have for the custodians of the land in which we both teach and learn, the Ngunnawal people, their ongoing culture and contribution to the Canberra community.

The RAP recognises that reconciliation is a part of everyone's daily business in the Department. It identifies real and practical commitments by staff at all levels of our organisation to promote reconciliation. As you read the RAP, you will notice its foundations are firmly built upon the three core areas of relationships, respect and opportunity.

The RAP is an important partner to the Department's strategic plan 2010–2013 *Everyone Matters*, which displays our strong commitment to closing the learning achievement gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students in the ACT. Measurable actions in the RAP commit the Department to positive and long-lasting improvements in mutual understanding and cooperation with the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in support of this goal.

I am proud to present the Reconciliation Action Plan 2010–11 on behalf of the ACT Department of Education and Training and I look forward to you joining with us on our reconciliation journey.

**Jim Watterston**  
Chief Executive



# Our vision for reconciliation

The ACT Department of Education and Training has a strong commitment to reconciliation as a continuing process that enhances the relationships, respect and opportunities afforded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

All employees will create an educational community that values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) provides us with a basis to work towards closing the gap in educational outcomes by celebrating, understanding and valuing the unique history, heritage, practices and protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our workforce, stakeholders and public education community will develop strong and sustainable relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and work actively to achieve trust, equality and a strong sense of belonging. Each person will strive for reconciliation by examining their individual part in the journey and taking action. We believe that by providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we will promote social and economic inclusion for all.

# Our business

The ACT Department of Education and Training has a responsibility to ensure that all young people in the ACT learn, thrive and are equipped with the skills to lead fulfilling, productive and responsible lives. We achieve this by providing quality teaching that engages all students and supports the development of capabilities for life. The Department ensures all ACT public schools provide positive and success-oriented learning environments to meet each student's academic, social, emotional and physical needs. We provide learning pathways for students resulting in an educated and skilled workforce that meets the present and future needs of the ACT and region. We are a responsive, innovative and high-achieving organisation that delivers on its commitments.

Our organisation values honesty, excellence, fairness and respect. This RAP reflects our strategic plan 2010–2013, *Everyone Matters*, which can be found at [www.det.act.gov.au](http://www.det.act.gov.au)

# Our RAP

The ACT Department of Education and Training began drafting this RAP at the beginning of 2009. It was developed with input from departmental staff, students, parents and unions, and encompasses the many ideas collected during the consultation period. We are committed to ongoing consultation, reviewing and refreshing this living document.

Employees across the Department were invited to give comments at critical stages, and focus groups were formed and held in each school network. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, non-Indigenous and combined staff focus groups provided input, and families from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous heritage were consulted. The ACT Taskforce on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group and Reconciliation Australia provided valuable guidance, advice and leadership in the development of this RAP.

During this process several key documents were reviewed in addition to those discussed in the introduction. These include the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) *Closing the Gap* targets, *Census of ACT Government Schools, Performance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education* and *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators 2009*.

This document is not intended to be exhaustive. This initial RAP document is intended to contain key, measurable targets that can be built upon in future years. We recognise that reconciliation is a journey that may take some time, but the key strategies outlined in our RAP will bring about lasting and genuine change.

This document is a valuable tool in supporting employees of the Department to achieve reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. This RAP covers the period July 2010 to June 2011.

# Relationships

Relationships are at the heart of education. It is our responsibility as the ACT Department of Education and Training to promote respectful relationships within our workforce and between ourselves and our stakeholders. Building respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is the foundation for mutual learning, positive outcomes, and closing the gap in learning and achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Focus area: Consultation, partnerships, mutual learning and support

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. The Department supports the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)	RAP working group	Feb 2011	The RAP working group membership reviewed in February each year
		June 2011	50% of the working group is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
		June 2011	Four working group meetings held
		June 2011	Qualitative research undertaken with staff to assess the effectiveness of RAP actions
2. The Department will engage in consultative processes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to improve relationships	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Section	June 2011	Five meetings of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Group
		June 2011	Eight schools or clusters of schools have partnership agreements with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
	School networks and clusters	June 2011	Twelve schools or clusters of schools have Reconciliation Action Plans
3. All Departmental branches will have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education contact officer	Human Resources	June 2011	<p>Nine (100%) branches have a contact officer</p> <p>Guidelines have been developed for the contact officer role</p> <p>Training has been held for central office contact officers</p> <p>A contact officer network has been established</p>

# Respect

Our Department has a responsibility to grow and nurture effective, responsive and respectful citizens of Australia. We recognise that respecting the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will enhance our responsiveness and inclusivity and strengthen community understanding.

## Focus area: Protocols, cultural understanding and celebration

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. The Department will strengthen its commitment to the implementation of an agreed welcome and acknowledgement of country	Ministerial and Commonwealth Relations  Media and Communications	June 2011	Appropriate use of welcome and acknowledgement protocols have been developed and disseminated throughout the Department  Nine (100%) branches actively using the agreed protocols when hosting meetings and official events
2. The Department will progressively enhance the cultural competence and understanding of all departmental staff through professional development opportunities and appropriate supervision	Human Resources  Learning and Teaching	December 2010  June 2011	Cultural competence course has been developed  110 (20%) of central office staff have trialed the course  110 (20%) of central office staff have provided feedback which has been analysed and reported to senior executive
3. The Department will identify, promote and actively participate in key events and important dates in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar	Media and Communications	June 2011	Calendar of events, important dates and appropriate ways to mark the occasion have been developed and disseminated throughout the Department.  Nine (100%) branches celebrated NAIDOC week  Nine (100%) branches celebrated Reconciliation week

# Opportunities

Creating educational, training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will improve our capacity to deliver outcomes and drive a culture where learning and achievement gaps of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are diminished and closed.

Focus area: Employment, support and professional learning

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. The Department will develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait employment strategy to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in central office	Human Resources	June 2011	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy has been developed</p> <p>An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment coordinator position has been established and recruited</p> <p>A RAP coordinator position has been established and recruited</p> <p>There is an overall increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees from 42 to 48 (0.8% to 1%)</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within central office has increased by two (12%)</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within schools has increased by four (16%)</p>
2. The Department will establish a network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education All staff	June 2011	<p>A network has been established</p> <p>The network has been advertised on INDEX</p> <p>Four meetings of the network held</p> <p>30 participants in support network</p>
3. The Department will develop professional learning to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff	Learning and Teaching	June 2011	<p>An induction program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff has been developed and trialed</p> <p>Four Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff have trialed the induction program and evaluated its effectiveness</p> <p>The induction program is reviewed and reported to the equity and diversity committee</p>

# Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. The Department will monitor the progress of this RAP	Senior executives RAP working group	Quarterly progress review of annual targets	All nine actions are implemented by July 2011 All 32 measurable targets are achieved by July 2011 Department has established a feedback mechanism
2. The Department will report annually on the progress of the RAP	RAP working group	June 2011	Reporting on RAP targets will be made available to the public through the Department's Annual Report Report will be provided to Reconciliation Australia
3. The Department will refresh the RAP annually	RAP working group	Annually each July	RAP 2011–12 will be published RAP will be developed in consultation with Reconciliation Australia
4. The RAP will be available to the public on the Department's website and on Reconciliation Australia's website	RAP working group	Annually each July	RAP is published on Department's website RAP is published on Reconciliation Australia's website



The Bogong moth represents the Bogong time, when different language groups gathered in this area to feast on the plentiful supply of Bogongs. This annual event also enabled exchange between the various clans to carry out initiation ceremonies, reconcile differences and settle disputes.



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