



Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

August 2024 – July 2025





Acknowledgment of Country and Traditional Owners

The Australian Foundation for Disability acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their deep connections to land, sea, and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present, and leaders emerging and their continuing cultural, spiritual customs and practices.

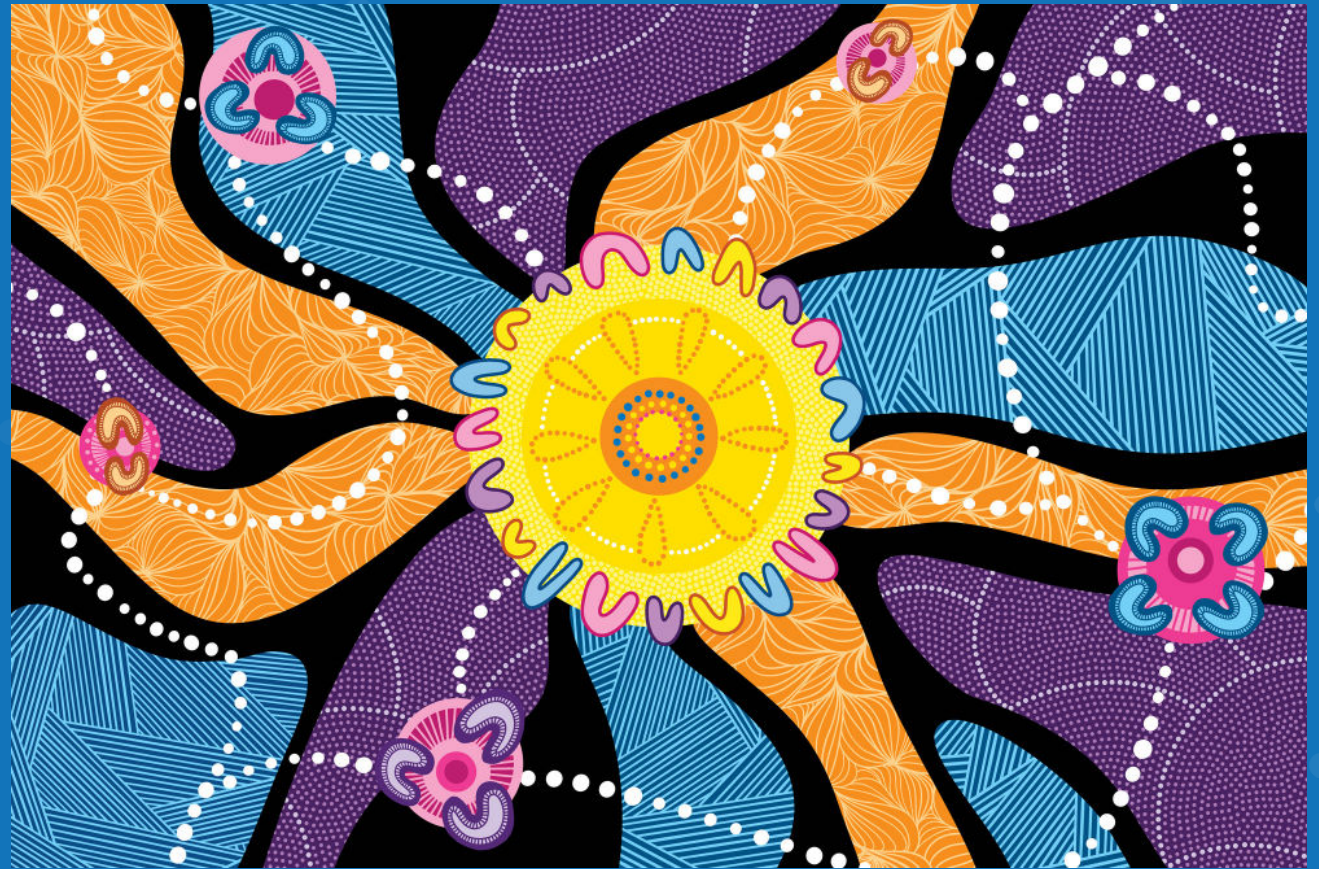
Our artwork

A Brighter Tomorrow, Together symbolises the reconciliation journey of the Australian Foundation for Disability (Afford). While this journey is only just beginning, its trajectory extends far into the future, guided by principles of open listening, two-way learning, and collaborative action.

At the heart of Afford, the steadfast commitment to creating a better world beats proudly. This commitment emanates from a central place of inclusivity and support within the artwork, a space where everyone belongs. Afford's core values of kindness, clear, explorer, and team radiate outwardly from this space, positively influencing individuals and communities across Australia.

Afford champions the power of collaboration and believes in the transformative impact of a person-centred approach by exploring an individual's life, opportunities and pathways together. Their grassroots connections with clients are nurtured by mutual respect and empowerment, recognising each individual as the creator of their own journey and empowering them to pursue their dreams. With strength of conviction, Afford rises above challenges and tirelessly works towards equity, ensuring that every person can live a life of equal opportunity and inclusion.

Foundational to Afford's reconciliation journey are the partnerships that will be developed with First Nations networks and communities. As these connections and allyships grow, Afford will be a leading light in creating a brighter tomorrow for everyone.



The artwork, *A Brighter Tomorrow, Together*, was created by First Nations artist and multi-disciplinary creative Alysha Menzel. Alysha is a descendant of the Samsep people of Erub Island in the Torres Strait.

Message from the Board Chair and CEO

Throughout 2023, Afford's Board and leadership team worked through a process to re-invigorate our brand and positioning. As a result, we begin 2024 with a refreshed purpose statement that more closely reflects our work and our ambition for people with disability in Australia.

Our Purpose is 'To create an inclusive world where human rights are realised. A world where people of all abilities come together to share in life's adventure'.

Our Vision is 'To improve the lives of people with disability by prioritising their choices, promoting their rights and exploring possibilities together'.

We acknowledge the inequity, inequality, barriers to opportunity and need for positive change for First Nations people with disability.

Afford will take a crucial first step realising its vision with the publication of a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Through our Reflect RAP process, we will educate ourselves, build our cultural capability and improve the experiences of our First Nations clients and employees.

We will seek opportunities to partner with First Nations communities and organisations and be an ally in the fight for recognition, truth-telling and reconciliation.

We stand by our strategic intent to make Afford a culturally safe place to work for our people, and a culturally competent service provider to First Nations people with disability.

We thank Afford's RAP Working Group for their enthusiasm and commitment to reconciliation. We look forward to working with them and our RAP Champion to deliver the initiatives detailed in this Reflect RAP.

We are proud to endorse Afford's Reflect RAP and commit to this roadmap for implementing lasting change and action that will make a real difference to our First Nations clients, families, employees and their communities.

Carol Bryant
Chair



Joanne Toohey
Chief Executive Officer



Statement from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia

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

Afford joins a network of more than 3,000 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.

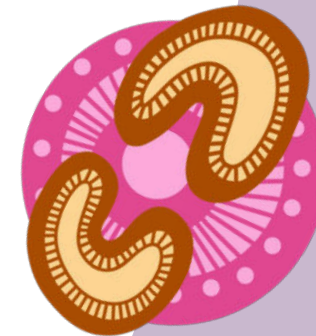
These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

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 Afford 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 Afford, 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



Our business

Afford was established in 1951 by Dr Ross Williams and was originally known as The Poliomyelitis Society of Australia. The charity started at the height of the polio epidemic in Australia and the first site was the Cherrywood Hospital in the Sydney suburb of Turramurra in New South Wales.

Today, Afford provides accommodation, community connection, disability supports and employment services across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia that empower people with disabilities to live the lives they want to, and achieve their personal goals and dreams.

Afford employs over 1 860 people in full time, part time, casual roles or supported employment, and we support around 2 500 clients. Our Head Office is based in Parramatta, New South Wales on Dharug Country. We operate 69 supported independent living homes, 32 community hubs, Disability Employment Services (DES) in five locations, School Leaver Employment Services in four locations and three Australian Disability Enterprises, which provide employment for supported employees.

Afford is primarily located in Greater Sydney on Dharug, Dharawal and Gadigal lands, in regional New South Wales on Gundungurra and Tharawal lands, in South-East Queensland on Yugambeh, Yuggera, Turrbul and Kabi Kabi lands, in Melbourne on Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri lands and in Adelaide on Kaurna land.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees working at Afford is currently unknown, and through our RAP process we will determine culturally appropriate ways to understand this.

Afford is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider, a not-for-profit organisation and a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

At Afford we say 'you can connect today, and we can explore tomorrow together' – because we are proud to put our consumers at the heart of our work and create environments where independence flourishes, skills are nurtured, and barriers are overcome.

Our RAP

Afford has recently made a commitment to supporting the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through our Human Rights policy. We recognise the inherent value, equality and rights of all people, regardless of their ability or capacity. We stand by this commitment in our refreshed purpose and vision statements.

We know through our work that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people with disability are at greater risk of experiencing harm, and experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than other Australians with disability.

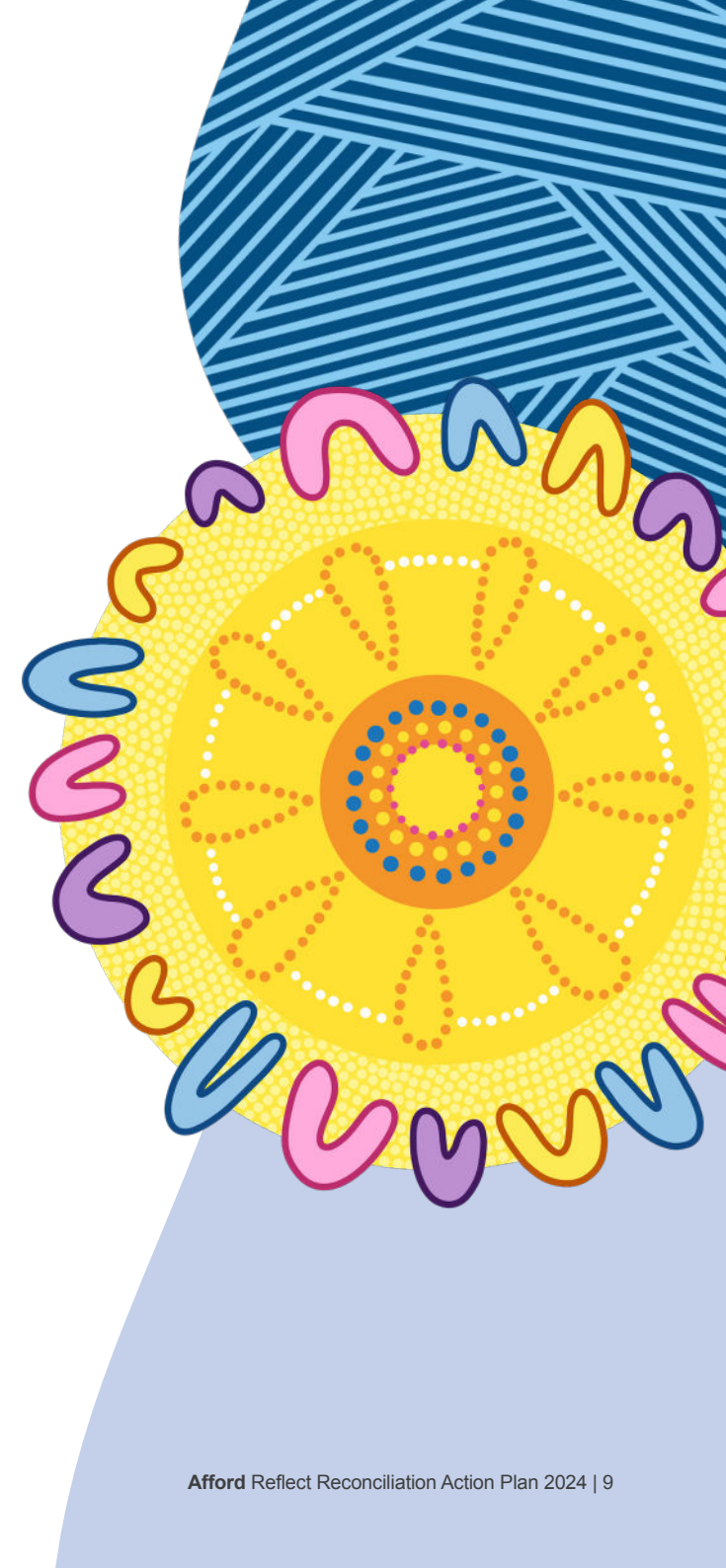
Afford recognises that we are on a path to reconciliation, and now has taken steps to develop our Reflect RAP over the course of 2023 and 2024. This initial advance for Afford is long overdue. It is the first step on our path as we walk with First Nations peoples.

We commit to consulting with our communities, empowering those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, and to creating lasting and respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples in all areas of our work. We will work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and communities to increase cultural safety in our services and supports.

Our RAP Working Group includes employees in diverse roles representing all areas of Australia in which we work. We sought First Nations employees to join the Working Group, and our aim is to grow this representation over time.

This Reflect RAP formalises our commitment to reconciliation as an integral part of how we work, and how we deliver on our vision, purpose and values. This commitment will be demonstrated at all levels of Afford.

Our RAP Champion is Leith Sterling, Executive Director, Consumer Experience and Safeguarding and, together with our RAP Working Group, Leith will drive the implementation of our RAP and hold the organisation accountable for delivering on these commitments.



Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group Members



Kym Mafi
Co-Chair

Director Service
Delivery,
NSW West

Leith Sterling
Co-Chair

Executive Director,
Consumer Experience
and Safeguarding

Kirsty Dean

Support Worker,
Noble Park
Victoria

Rebecca Fisher

Support Worker,
Beenleigh
Queensland

Rani Ghosh

Learning and
Development Business
Partner,
Head Office

Eseta Latu

Support Worker,
Logan Queensland

Maria Benton

Head of Brand and
Marketing,
Head Office

Sandra Okeke

Regional Lead,
South Australia

Mariska Tribelhorn

Client Services Manager,
Minchinbury
New South Wales

James Stokes

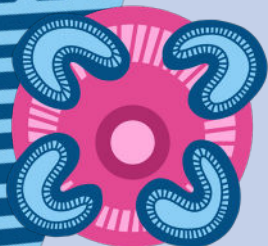
Support Worker,
Penrith
New South Wales

Alessandra Buck

Support Worker,
Minchinbury
New South Wales
(until November 2023)

Joshua Kent

Regional Lead,
Victoria
(until April 2024)



I was super proud to hear that Afford wanted to develop a reconciliation action plan and knew that I wanted to be a part of it. Respectfully building on relationships and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our communities and the wider community is something that I am very passionate about and I look forward to making a difference.

Kym Mafi – Director, Service Delivery, NSW West

I joined the RAP WG as I've been doing volunteer work once a year for a month in the Northern Territory for the last couple of years. As I have learnt the culture and nature of different MOBS and CAMPS I've bonded with many of them in respect and empathy for each individuals old and young even with infants. I've grown to love and appreciate the Land and the people of Australia in giving back to the community when it's needed.

Eseta Latu – Support Worker, Logan, QLD

I have a passion that has always given me the drive to be a part of the support and community that is our First Nations people, I have spent my life within a culture I truly believe in, and want to continue to help in any way I can.

Rebecca Fisher – Support Worker, Beenleigh, QLD

It doesn't matter who you are, where you live, how old you are, or the colour of your skin - everyone should have the same human rights and be treated with dignity and respect. Australia is known to be the "lucky country" but I think in some ways it's far from the truth. We have a long way to go to educate society and breakdown barriers so we stand united as a community. As a member of the RAP Working Group I have the opportunity to honour Australia's history and help build a brighter future for all.

Maria Benton – Head of Brand and Marketing

I am so proud to be a part of Afford's RAP journey. Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a voice and live a life of acceptance and cultural understanding has always been something I have been strongly passionate about. Throughout my studies and career in the health and disability industry, I have delved into the disparities of health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and have never stopped advocating for change. Reconciliation at Afford means I can contribute to moving towards ensuring our organisation is equitable, which means one step closer to becoming an equitable Australia where our first nations people can heal and be united.

Rani Ghosh – Learning & Development Business Partner

I am indigenous. At times during my life I was treated in ways that were wrong but if you ask me I was lucky. My history and culture was not allowed to be talked about I was often told it was all lies and made up. At times I was told and also learnt that if I identify it can lead to discrimination judgment and mistreatment. I am part of this as it's a way for us to accept what happened and move forward. It helps us to learn and educate others about our history and culture. It helps us to talk about issues we have faced, issues we still face and to try make it better, make a difference and do our part towards reconciliation.

Kirsty Dean – Support Worker, Noble Park, VIC

Fairness, equity and social justice are key drivers for me. Over the course of my career in human services I have seen the impacts of inequitable and unfair systems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. And I have also seen that through genuine commitment to reconciliation, change is possible. I am so looking forward to being part of Afford's reconciliation journey and making our contribution towards a reconciled Australia.

Leith Sterling – Executive Director, Consumer Experience and Safeguarding

While our team is comprised of wonderful individuals from varying and different backgrounds, we all share a common goal: to create and foster a culture of understanding and respect within Afford. I have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of reconciliation and the role I could play within it. Joining has been a rewarding experience, allowing me to contribute to a meaningful cause and assist in building bridges of reconciliation towards a great initiative.

James Stokes – Support Worker, Penrith NSW

Having come from Africa and called Australia home for some years, this country has given me beautiful opportunities of meeting lovely people and working with people that give life meaning in general.

I want to be part of a journey that fosters understanding, unity, and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Australia, I believe that joining the RAP Working Group provides a meaningful opportunity for me to contribute to the ongoing journey of reconciliation, acknowledging the rich cultural heritage of the First Nations people and actively participating in building a society that is not just inclusive but resonates with harmony, a society that encompasses and celebrates the diversity that defines us all.

Sandra Okeke – Regional Lead, SA and VIC

I joined the RAP Working Group because I believe in positive change. Reconciliation to me is focussing on building better relationships, showing respect, and creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. By being a part of this effort, I hope to contribute to a more inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and respected.

Together, we can learn from each other's diverse experiences and work towards a more united and understanding environment.

Mariska Tribelhorn - Client Services Manager



Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
01 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	February 2025	Director Partnerships and Growth
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	February 2025	Director Partnerships and Growth
02 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	March - May 2025	Head of Engagement and Communications
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2025	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2025	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs



Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
03 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	Quarterly, August 2024 November 2024 February 2025 May 2025	Head of Engagement and Communications
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	February 2025	Director Partnerships and Growth
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	August 2024	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs
	Integrate Afford's commissioned reconciliation artwork throughout Afford's sites, brand and marketing communication assets.	September 2024	Head of Brand and Marketing
04 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	November 2024	Executive Director People and Organisational Development
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs.	December 2024	Director, Human Resources



Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
05 Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	March 2025	Director Learning and Development
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	March 2025	Director Learning and Development
06 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	November 2024	Director Partnerships and Growth
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	December 2024	Director Learning and Development
	Develop Afford's Acknowledgement of Country that is respectful and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across our areas of work	September 2024	RAP Working Group member: Support Worker, Pimpama SIL, Qld
	Develop and introduce a protocol for display of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at Afford sites.	October 2024	Head of Brand and Marketing



Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
07 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	March 2025	Head of Communications and Engagement
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area, including through staff meetings and briefings, and through internal social media channels such as Workplace.	June 2025	SD Directors / Regional Leads
	Provide opportunities for clients to participate in NAIDOC week events and activities	First week in July 2025	SD Directors / Regional Leads
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2025	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
08 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff composition to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	March 2025	Director Human Resources
	Review current recruitment and onboarding practices and existing employee documentation and collateral to ensure cultural inclusivity and safety	February 2025	Executive Director People and Organisational Development
	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment models at Afford, including partnerships with RTOs to create pathways for First Nations people seeking qualifications.	June 2025	Executive Director People and Organisational Development
09 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	September 2024	Chief Financial Officer
	Maintain Supply Nation membership and maximise utilisation.	September 2024	Chief Financial Officer



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	August 2024	Executive Director Consumer Experience and Safeguarding
	Implement Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2024	Executive Director Consumer Experience and Safeguarding
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2024	Executive Director Consumer Experience and Safeguarding
	Establish RAP External Advisory Group made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community stakeholders and key representatives	February 2025	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs
11 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2024	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	September 2024	Board, Executive Leadership team
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	August 2024	Chief Executive Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	October 2024	Executive Director Consumer Experience and Safeguarding



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June, <i>annually</i>	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August, <i>annually</i>	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, <i>annually</i>	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs
13 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	October 2025	RAP Working Group Co-Chairs

Contact details

Leith Sterling

Executive Director,
Consumer Experience
and Safeguarding

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RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
REFLECT

afford 

The word "afford" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by a graphic of several white birds in flight.