

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE

Innovate
Reconciliation Action Plan

October 2023 – October 2025

WESTERNPORT WATER

Acknowledgement

Westernport Water acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Nations Peoples and that the land, sea and water are of spiritual, cultural and economic importance. We recognise that we provide services on the traditional lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation. The Bunurong peoples have managed the resources on Millowl for thousands of years. We acknowledge them and their continued connection to this place, as we go about managing the water resources today.



Bridge Walk for Reconciliation 2022

Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is one where our shared history is acknowledged, so that we embrace genuine respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as we work to restore and heal lands and waterways and realise the benefits of a diverse and inclusive community and workplace, one that is culturally rich and proud.

Our mission

Together, we will build trust and respectful relationships to enable us to achieve positive social change, and make decisions that reflect the values and priorities of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Celebrating the artwork by Graham Gilbert

Graham is a Wiradjuri man with connections to central New South Wales. He lives with his family in Cowes, on Millowl. Graham grew up on Wiradjuri land in the country town of Condobolin. His totem is the goanna (griiawaa), an animal he has dreamt about since he was a young boy and to which he maintains a strong connection to today. Graham's paintings feature a broad range of native Australian animals. His paintings reflect the connection of animals to their landscapes and often reference the hunter and gatherer lifestyle lived by his ancestors. Graham is a self-taught, colour blind artist who is inspired by the late Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. Graham lives in Victoria with a committed art practice and continues to express his culture through his artwork.

Island Dreaming

"I painted this in my home studio on Phillip Island, the design features Bunjil, the spirit creator, as the central figure, surrounded by a collection of freshwater animals found in the Bass Coast region. The animals are featured in a landscape scene with native trees and oceanside scrub native to the Bass Coast area. I used traditional cross-hatching and x-ray techniques which I have honed over a decade as a professional artist."



Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group members Uncle Anthony Egan with Artist Graham Gilbert and Uncle Jarrod West.

A message from our Managing Director

On behalf of Westernport Water, I would like to acknowledge the Bunurong peoples as Traditional Owners and their longstanding role in the sustainable management of the land and water resources of this beautiful country.



I am proud to present our third RAP and I'm positive that we will build on the successes of the past seven years. We all have a role to play in advancing reconciliation for all Australians.

At Westernport Water, we have actively engaged with and worked closely with the inspirational community members of our RAP Working Group and community to create meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities to protect and celebrate Country and Culture.

Water is essential to the health and wellbeing of communities, the environment, and the economy. Through our second Innovate RAP we will further Traditional Owner participation in land and water management through partnerships.

Our RAP serves as an expression of our commitment to unite with First Nations Peoples and give voice to the true history of the country we love and care for.

Reconciliation remains a key priority for our business, and we commit to delivering each of the actions and deliverables in this plan as we progress on our reconciliation journey and contribute to Australia's national reconciliation movement.

Through care, courage and commitment, Westernport Water will contribute to a better future for the community through the delivery of its second Innovate RAP. We look forward to learning; we look forward to understanding; and we look forward to delivering real outcomes with, and for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Dona Tantirimudalige *(she/her)*
Managing Director, Westernport Water



A message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends Westernport Water on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Westernport Water continues to be part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that Westernport Water will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Westernport Water using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for Westernport Water to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, Westernport Water will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Westernport Water's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Westernport Water on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer,
Reconciliation Australia

Our business

Westernport Water provides drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater services to over 23,331 customers on Millowl (Phillip Island) and the mainland stretching from The Gurdies in the north to Archies Creek in the southeast, covering an area of 300 square kilometres.

The Corporation has one Head Office located in Newhaven and three remote treatment facilities, one located on Pyramid Rock Road (Cowes) and two on the mainland at Coronet Bay and Almurta in the Bass Hills.

The Corporation has approximately 80 employees with four who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The Corporation's recently departed Chair was Rueben Berg a Gunditjmara man and a member of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. Rueben was the first Aboriginal Chair of a Victorian Water Corporation.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people make up 1% (212) of the population. The area we service is considered an iconic tourism destination with 3.4 million visitors to the area annually.

Westernport Water is one of 18 water corporations that report to the State Government of Victoria. We are committed to recognising and supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural and economic inclusion in the water sector. Our Second Innovate RAP is an important corporate commitment that will ensure the organisation continues to build capacity to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in water management.

Our values

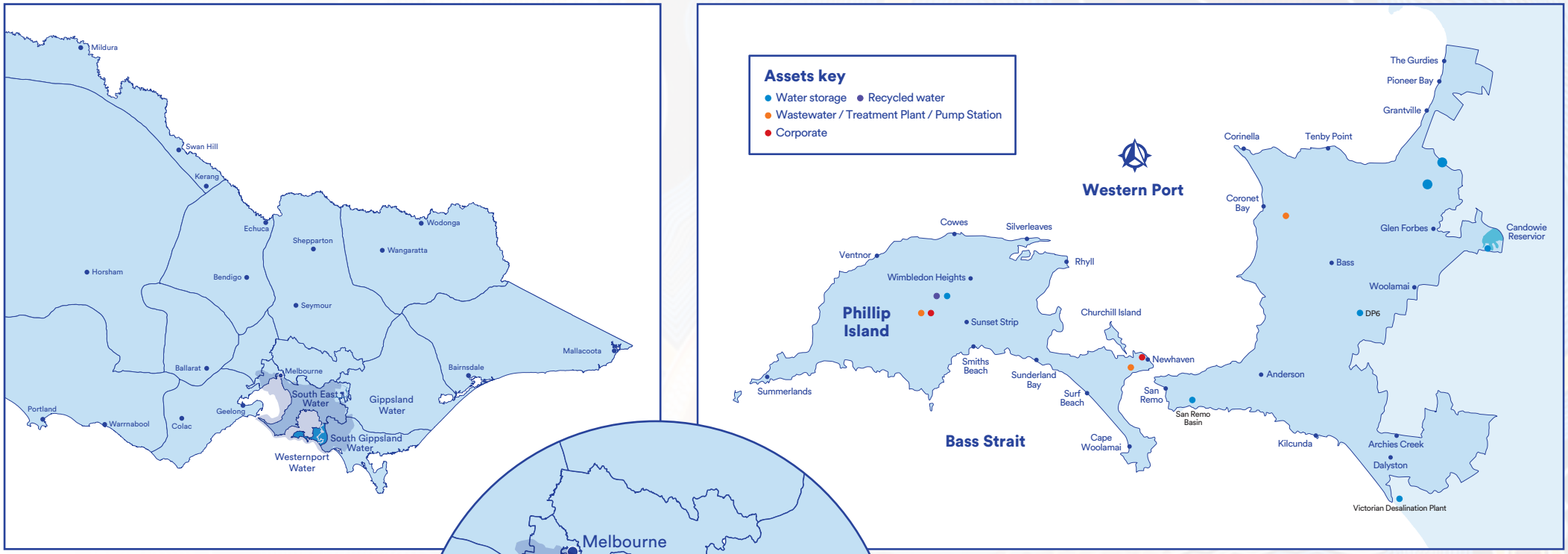
Our values are integral to the way we work to deliver our vision for reconciliation.

- **Care to make a difference** – because our actions show that we care about who we are, what we do, and each other.
- **Courage to step forward** – because we can achieve great things when we are prepared to step forward.
- **Commitment to do great work** – because we all want to do the best we can, together.



RAP Working Group members meeting at Candowie Reservoir 2023.

Our water service area – Bunurong Country





Bunurong Land Council

Policy and Strategy

Identified in the four sections of this strategy are the guiding documents and directives that encourage participation, self-determination and seek to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in water management and governance: Overarching strategies and policies include:

- Victoria's Water Plan – Water for Victoria.
- Water is Life Strategy 2022 - Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap
- Statement of Obligations key priorities
- Minister for Water Letter of Expectations
- Victoria's Water Act 1989
- Westernport Water's Corporate Plan 2022-27
- Yoorrook Justice Commission

Victorian Water Plan

Water corporations manage a resource that is considered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as one of the most important and sacred, water. We all need water to survive, and the protection and management of our local waterways and sites of cultural significance are an example of where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and water corporations can work in partnership for shared benefit.

'Water for Victoria' sets out the Victorian Government's long-term direction for managing Victoria's precious water resources. The Plan includes a commitment to recognise the values of water for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. By this commitment, Westernport Water will create meaningful opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in water planning and develop respectful relationships to support us in this endeavour.

Additional to the above, an Amendment Bill to the Water Act 1989 was passed. The purpose of the Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Bill was to amend the Water Act 1989 to ensure that Victoria's water resources and waterways are managed in a way that considers Aboriginal cultural values and uses, as well as the social and recreational uses and values of waterways.

Therefore, in performing our functions as a utility provider, Westernport Water will consider opportunities to provide for the above.



Students walk for Reconciliation across the Phillip Island Bridge.

Water is Life – Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap

This strategy is an important step within the state's Water for Victoria policy – a step that supports self-determination in water access and management for Traditional Owners. Water agencies like Westernport Water will have an important role in working with Traditional Owners to implement Water is Life.

Water is Life is a key deliverable from Water for Victoria. It is part of our work with Traditional Owners to increase their access to water and involvement in water management – its focus is to benefit Traditional Owners and the wider community.

Water is Life develops a pathway to genuine, meaningful outcomes for Traditional Owners. Caring for Country and water can deliver thriving cultural economies and benefits for Traditional Owners, existing entitlement holders, and all Victorians.



Water is Life gives us an important framework to create and maintain a careful and considered balance between the rights and entitlements of a range of stakeholders. It represents actual and symbolic respect for the importance of Aboriginal connections to Country.

Water is Life involves changing the approach as it has operated for generations, but this change is necessary, and it can and should be achieved in balance with existing interests.

Water is Life has two parts:

1. Government policy: commitments to support Traditional Owners' access to water and decision making about water access.

2. Nation Statements: prepared by Traditional Owner Groups, they outline aspirations for the water sector, in their own voice. They are not edited, unless with prior consent.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission

Westernport Water supports the Yoorrook Justice Commission's first formal truth-telling process into injustices experienced by First Nations Peoples in Victoria. The important work of truth-telling, truth listening, and making meaningful recommendations for reform aims to address and redress systemic injustice experienced by Traditional Owners and First Peoples in Victoria in all areas of life since colonisation.

Westernport Water has established a system and a process to respond to requests for information and Notices to Produce. At the time of endorsement of this RAP, no formal notices to produce were received by Westernport Water.

Yoorrook will:

- establish an official record of the impact of colonisation on Traditional Owners and First Peoples in Victoria
- develop a shared understanding among all Victorians of the impact of colonisation, as well as the diversity, strength, and resilience of First Peoples' cultures
- make recommendations for healing, system reform, and practical changes to laws, policy, and education, as well as to matters to be included in future treaties.

The establishment of the Yoorrook Justice Commission has taken place in parallel with the treaty process to ensure that treaty is underpinned by a commitment to truth-telling.



Panel Members Rueben Berg, Uncle Richard Weston and Patrice Mahoney discuss the Voice, Treaty, Truth.

Treaty

The Victorian Government is committed to treaty as necessary for supporting self-determination in Victoria. Future treaties could provide a mechanism through which the State can transfer decision-making power and resources to Aboriginal communities. However, separate to the treaty process, the government has begun comprehensive reform to implement its broader commitment to self-determination to ensure it can effectively respond to the aspirations of Aboriginal Victorians.

Westernport Water fully supports creating a better future for all Victorians to enable true self-determination for Victoria's First Peoples. Treaty is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique status, rights, cultures and histories of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians, Westernport Water is committed to acknowledging the truth of Victoria's history and developing positive relationships with Aboriginal Victorians, and the wider community.



Our RAP

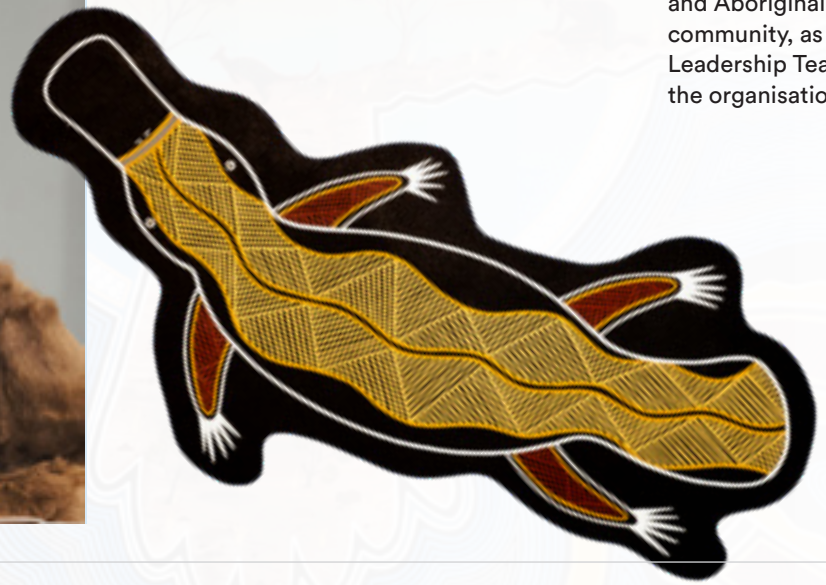
Westernport Water's reconciliation journey has been enriching, creating engagement, and learning opportunities that have been instrumental to building cultural awareness, recognition and understanding in the workplace and within the community. We have developed many meaningful relationships on our journey and are proud of our achievements over the past seven years.

The Corporation in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities has inspired a powerful momentum for reconciliation across the Bass Coast in recent times. The development and implementation of our second Innovate RAP will support its continuation.

To us, our second Innovate RAP is more than just a corporate document, it serves as our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. Developing a second Innovate RAP provides the opportunity to progress on our journey at a sustainable pace with consideration of both internal and external capacity and readiness.

Our second Innovate RAP is the product of much collaboration with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, the water sector, employees from across the business and our RWG members who have all enriched this Plan.

Westernport Water's RWG has both internal and external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, as well as Westernport Water's Leadership Team and employees from across the organisation.



Our RAP champions

Westernport Water's RAP is championed internally by the Manager of Communications and Engagement, and the General Manager of Corporate and Customer is the Executive sponsor of the RAP, supported by the Corporation's Board of Directors, the Executive Team, and our RAP Working Group.

Our RAP Working Group has been the driving force behind the significant achievements, advocating for reconciliation and recognition within our organisation and the community, since we began our journey late in 2015. A list of current RAP Working Group members that champion reconciliation both internally at Westernport Water and within the wider community is provided below:

External Working Group members

Uncle Anthony Egan – Bunurong Traditional Owner, Jarrod West – Bunurong Traditional Owner, Patrice Mahoney OAM – of the Anewan, Nganaywana Nation | NSW (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Member).

Internal Working Group members

Geoff Russell - Manager Communications and Engagement, Sam Weston - Water Treatment Plant Operator, Gareth Kennedy - GM Corporate and Customer, Katrina Knight - Communications and Engagement Officer, Tim Scholtes – Procurement and Fleet Coordinator, Ilse Hall – Technical Officer Engineering and Construction, Leesa Moir –Information Management Officer, Lisa Manning – Human Resources Coordinator.





Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group members.

Our journey so far

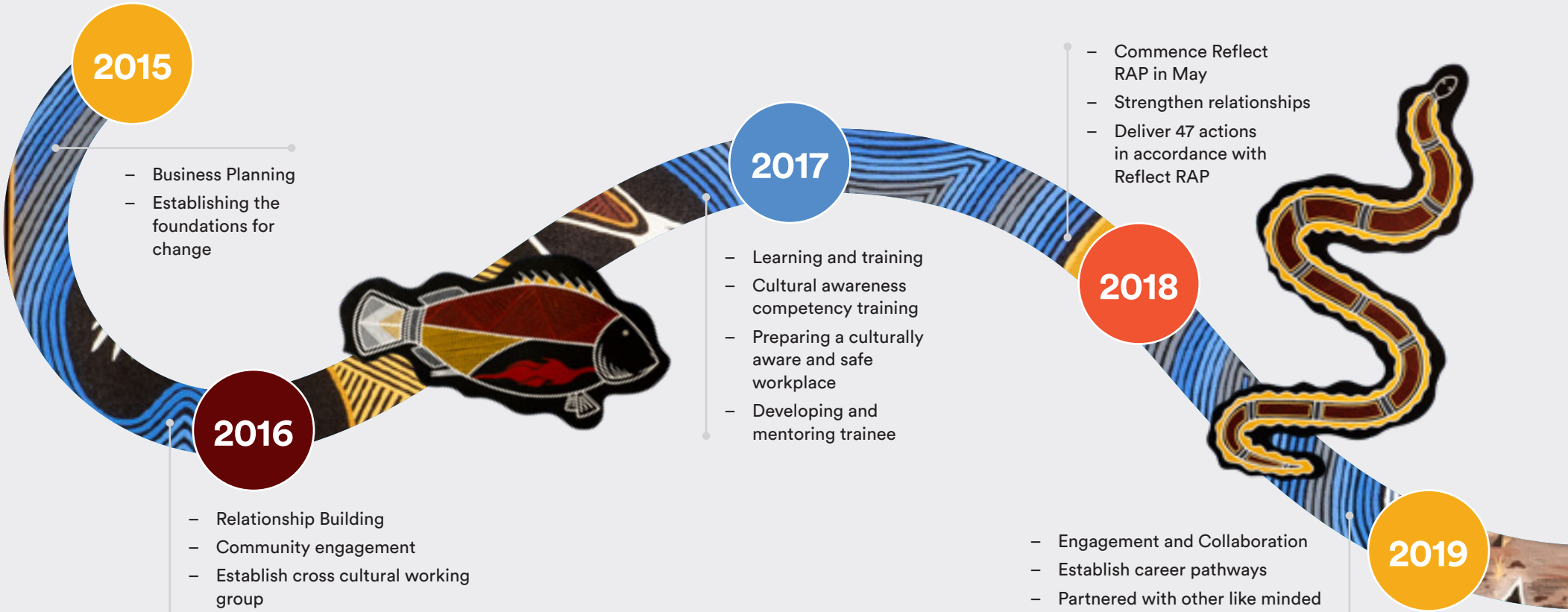
Westernport Water officially commenced its reconciliation journey back in 2015 with the preparation of a business plan to support its commitment to engage with First Nations Peoples and commence its reconciliation journey. From there we:

- devoted two years (2016-17) to relationship building and engaging on the development of our first RAP
- launched our Reflect RAP (May 2018)
- had our Innovate RAP endorsed (July 2020)
- concluded our Innovate RAP (July 2022)
- engaged on our second Innovate RAP (2022)
- endorsed Second Innovate RAP (2023).

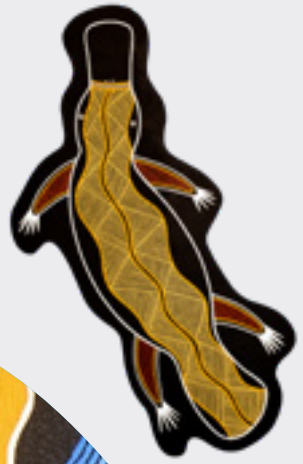
Our journey over the last seven years has been challenging, rewarding and thought-provoking. We have made positive progress, particularly in developing genuine, trusting relationships and improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment opportunities at Westernport Water.

Throughout our journey, employees and stakeholders have acknowledged how they have gained a better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and communities and how this has contributed to creating a welcoming and culturally rich and inclusive workplace while driving social change within the community.

Our Reconciliation journey









2020

- Engagement on Innovate RAP
- First Innovate RAP endorsed July

2021

- Joined the TO and First Nations Water Indsustry Working Group
- Hosted events and engaged online due to COVID-19

2022

- Complete first Innovate RAP
- Hosted record breaking bridge walk
- 100% of staff completed Frist Nations cultural awareness training
- Draft second Innovate RAP

2023

- Second Innovate RAP endorsed
- Reaffirmed commitment to a regional approach to reconciliation with the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network

Latest Achievements

Over the last two years implementing our first Innovate RAP, we have focused on maintaining and strengthening relationships with Traditional Owners and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by listening and growing our understanding of culture, community and connections to Country.

We've reflected on what we have achieved and have been actively working to make changes so that actions and activities become business-as-usual. These actions and commitments are embedded into our key plans and strategies, in the areas of engagement with Traditional Owners, social procurement, diversity and inclusion, recruitment practices, career development, training programs, and cultural awareness. The Implementation of our first Innovate RAP saw the delivery of 76 deliverables completed.

Although we delivered the vast majority of our Innovate RAP deliverables, the challenges and constraints associated with the pandemic, and the inability to meet with Traditional Owners in person made it difficult to progress some deliverables. Our latest achievement highlights include:

Relationships

- Continue to support a regional approach to reconciliation by championing reconciliation at a regional level.
- Reviewed the Working Together Protocols and Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Developed a Draft Empowerment Strategy.
- Engaged with Traditional Owners for Water for Life actions (guided by TO priorities) through the Traditional Owner and First Nations Working Group.

Respect

- 100% (80) of staff trained through a water industry First Nations e-learning module, which featured our previous Chair.
- Partnered with the community and local organisations to deliver NRW activities and supported a record-breaking inaugural Bridge Walk for Reconciliation during NAIDOC Week, with over 1,000 people in attendance.

Opportunities

- Developed Social Procurement Strategy 2021-24 to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.
- Reviewed procurement practices in line with the Victorian Government Purchasing Board expansion.
- Over $355k of services procured in 2022-23 through certified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses in 2021-22.
- Reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network (BCRN).

Governance

- Maintained the balance of RWG membership by attracting two new Victorian Aboriginal people to join, bringing extensive knowledge and experience.
- Maintained internal RAP champions and members from across the organisation to ensure an effective RWG. Adopted a co-designed Terms of Reference to provide current and new members clarity and confidence that the appropriate governance processes are in place to support the RWG to move forward and achieve positive social change.
- Participated in Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.

Learnings

As we gain a deeper understanding of what reconciliation and recognition are, and the important role we play in bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community, we have learned the following:

- flexibility is key to relationship building and moving forward in truth
- be open to change and sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures
- doing things differently gets results and works to overcome differences
- recognition of First Nations Peoples and acknowledgement of past atrocities is fundamental to healing and forgiveness
- embedding actions and deliverables into strategic planning helps to focus the organisation and hold employees to account
- cultural awareness and training for all employees is imperative
- resourcing and funding are essential to ensure outcomes are achieved
- RAP Working Group members require clear roles and responsibilities to embed reconciliation across the organisation.

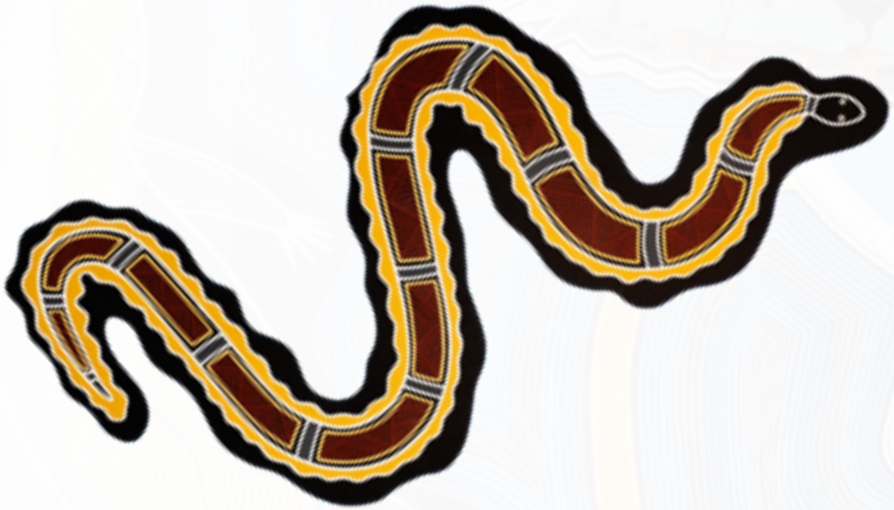
Victorian water sector online training

An eLearning tool was designed by Melbourne Water for the water industry and features interviews with First Nations employees in the Victorian water sector including Westernport Water's previous Chair of the Board Rueben Berg.

A key objective for the water sector is to recognise the values that water has for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians. The water sector is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in Victorian water planning and management frameworks, through consultative structures that address the rights and interests of Victoria's Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.

The eLearning tool was delivered as a part of NAIDOC Week and provided employees with the opportunity to:

- hear from our Board Chair, Rueben Berg, about his perspective of working in the water sector as a Gunditjmara Man
- gain a deeper understanding of how vital First Nations cultural awareness is within the water sector, and for all people living and working in Victoria.
- recognise and understand their part in making sure the water sector continues to be a welcoming and safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- empower employees to support First Nation peoples - to walk this path together.





First Nations cultural awareness

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training sessions are mandatory for employees that work at Westernport Water. One hundred percent of employees have completed training to learn about traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories, and past government policies that have affected Aboriginal peoples, and how these still affect people today.

Learning opportunities are provided internally by Traditional Owners, at events marking dates of significance, through online learning modules and visits to view places of significance allowing employees to develop a deeper respect and understanding of connection to the Country.

Working Together Protocols

The Working Together Protocols were originally developed in consultation with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Westernport Water's RAP Working Group and are largely consistent with the Phillip Island Nature Parks protocols. The protocols were updated in July 2021 to remain consistent with the Nature Parks Protocols and outline how we will work together and support Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to work together, communicate, strengthen relationships and acknowledge the deep connection to Country.

Westernport Water's Working Together Protocols are an expression of our commitment to talk, walk and work together to build trust, respect and strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community that enable Westernport Water to achieve positive social change and lead reconciliation activities within our sphere of influence. The protocols focus on a range of activities and provide clear direction to the Corporation's employees and stakeholders about respectful ways of working and the approved channels and service providers in relation to reconciliation and cultural heritage activities.

Guidelines for an Acknowledgement or a Welcome to Country

The Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country Guidelines have supported employees to raise awareness and build an understanding of the meaning and significance behind the Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Welcome to Country ceremonies provided by Traditional Owners. These processes have been embedded into the day-to-day business activities at Westernport Water and are working to increase awareness of reconciliation and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and achievements in our workplace and the wider community.





Working together

Since the beginning of our journey, we have formed many strong and lasting relationships and partnerships providing mutual benefits and advancing reconciliation. Some of the relationships that have helped Westernport Water to learn, grow and lead include:

- a close working relationship with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation Traditional Owners
- relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
- establishing a regional approach to reconciliation through the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network
- working with the Bass Coast and South Gippsland Reconciliation Group to advance community-led initiatives
- supporting events to show respect by incorporating and acknowledging our shared histories.

Our collective impact

The Bass Coast Reconciliation Network is comprised of like-minded organisations that have come together to deliver common RAP actions and deliverables. Network members have committed to one another to continually consult and share their reconciliation and recognition journeys and work together with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the wider community.

The Bass Coast Reconciliation Network (BCRN) has members from Bass Coast Shire Council, Bass Coast Health, Westernport Water, Phillip Island Nature Parks, Bunurong Land Council, Bass Coast South Gippsland Reconciliation Group and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. Network members have been working in partnership since 2019 to create a shared future of recognition, opportunity and true partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The BCRN is an action-based group of Bass Coast organisations committed to:

- sharing time, resources, and knowledge
- being a conduit for organisational and community networking
- building organisational and community knowledge and understanding of reconciliation
- driving positive social change
- presenting a united ‘organisational’ approach to reconciliation.



The vision of the BCRN

We walk together, side by side, respectfully caring for the Country, Waters and Sea of Bass Coast and Millowl. We create a shared future of recognition, opportunity and true partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We create opportunities for healing through responsible and respectful truth-telling and knowledge sharing.



Achievements of the BCRN

Committed to working together towards shared goals, collaborating and supporting each other via their respective Reconciliation Action Plans the Network has collectively:

- provided cultural awareness and cultural safety training to over 1,000 people
- hosted record-breaking community events marking dates of significance, including the commemoration of Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheener, Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week.
- hosted the first ever Bass Coast Reconciliation Bridge Walk with over 1,000 people in attendance in July 2022
- increased employment outcomes across all organisations
- produced a Welcome to Country video for the Bunurong Land Council
- commissioned many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks
- provided opportunities for shared training
- worked with one another to enhance community projects and events; and
- spent more than $1 million with certified suppliers in the past three years.

Traditional Owner and First Nations Working Group

The working group was formed to make sure the aspirations of the Bunurong peoples are highlighted in water strategies and planning in Bunurong Country and delivered in partnership with the relevant water corporations and government agencies.

The Traditional Owner and First Nations working group comprises representatives from Melbourne, Yarra Valley, South East, Greater Western, Barwon, and Westernport Water. Membership has expanded over time, and future member organisations include South Gippsland, Southern Rural and Central Highland Water.

It has been an important forum to share and learn together about our engagement with Traditional Owners, to facilitate collaboration, build capability and work in a coordinated way. A key focus this year has been the Water for Life strategy.

During the year the focus for collaboration included the implementation and ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners for Water for Life actions (guided by Traditional Owners priorities), employment and economic development opportunities, evaluated and embedding reconciliation actions and Treaty advancement (in particular the Yoorrook Justice Commission).

The group recognises the importance of having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership involved in conversations about how we engage and work with Traditional Owners and the broader First Nations community. As part of planning, the group hosted events with member organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members and other key staff, creating opportunities to meet and share their respective stories and learnings while working in the water industry.



Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group members. Sam Weston, Uncle Anthony Egan, Patrice Mahoney OAM, Paul Patten.



Bunurong Traditional Welcome to Country Smoking Ceremony.

Employment diversity

Diversity and inclusion are an intrinsic part of how we do business at Westernport Water. It is woven through all that we do. It links our strategies and plans, guides our behaviours and values, and drives our relationships with the community.

We choose to challenge ourselves and our practices. We will question, examine and test ourselves, always looking for opportunities to do better and be better. In delivering on our commitment to challenge ourselves and be an industry leader we will strive to build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability of Westernport Water at individual, managerial and whole-of-organisation levels.

We will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, and work to enhance the career options and experiences of our current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, creating genuine jobs that lead to careers in the water industry. Read more in our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-24 (Link).

Sam Weston commenced his traineeship with Westernport Water in 2017 and was an integral part of the Environment & Product Performance Team. Sam completed his qualification in Conservation & Land Management in 2018 and while working Sam has progressed towards completion of his university degree in Fisheries & Aquaculture. After completing his studies in 2018 and finishing his traineeship, Sam was promoted to the position of Land and Water Officer and now works as a Water Treatment Plant Operator producing drinking water for the community and safeguarding the region's water supply.

Quotes attributed to Sam Weston

"I feel fortunate to be able to come to work and know that I am playing a role in managing Country and Water, with respect to Bunurong peoples that have done so for many generations."

"Over the past 5 years, Westernport Water has provided me with great mentors in the water industry, and opportunities that have allowed me to carve out a career in water and complete my studies."

"In my current role as Water Treatment Plant Operator, I'm responsible for providing safe, great-tasting drinking water to our customers and I get to work with a good bunch of people."

"I look forward to the challenge of how we manage water resources sustainably in the future, working together, and supporting meaningful outcomes for Traditional Owners' access to water and self-determination where possible."

Engagement principles

Self-determination – we will encourage participation and self-determination in water management.

Empower – where possible we will empower Traditional Owners to progress the land and water management interests of Bunurong People.

Sharing – we will share knowledge and information related to natural and cultural resource management and support opportunities to connect with and support collaborations and initiatives.

Assure openness and transparency – we will build trust and remain open to feedback to strengthen relationships, build trust and learn from one another.

Partnerships – we will work in partnership with the Bunurong Land Council and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations on projects to support participation in water resource management.



Relationships

Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, Traditional Owners and organisations we will strengthen, sustain mutually beneficial relationships and deliver shared community benefit.

Focus Area

Our Community 'Be a valued member of our community.' This means that we will communicate and engage effectively and openly with all areas of the community and build strong partnerships focused on shared benefits.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Bunurong Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians and organisations.	1. Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations to review and develop working together protocols.	May 2024	Chair RAP Working Group (RWG)
	2. Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Dec 2023	Manager Communications & Engagement (MCE)
2. Build relationships by celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	1. Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our employees.	May 2024, 2025	MCE
	2. RAP Working Group members to work with the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network and participate in an external NRW event.	May 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	3. Encourage and support employees and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	4. Organise at least one NRW event each year.	May 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	5. Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's **NRW website**.	May 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	6. Publicly acknowledge and promote NRW.	May 2024, 2025	MCE
	7. Invite local schools to participate in and attend NRW activities and events.	May 2024, 2025	Communication Engagement (CE) Officer
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	1. Update and maintain strategies to engage all employees to drive reconciliation across our workforce.	May 2024, 2025	MCE
	2. Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	Jun 2024, 2025	MCE
	3. Implement strategies and procedures to positively influence external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes. This may include tendering, social procurement and sponsorship.	May – Jun 2024, 2025	GMCC

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	4. Collaborate with the Registered Aboriginal Party and other like-minded RAP organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	Mar–Apr 2024, 2025	GMCC
	5. Attend all Bass Coast Reconciliation Network meetings providing the community confidence and consistency in one united regional body.	May 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	6. Lead the regional reconciliation collaboration by Co-Charing the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network for one year.	May 2025	Chair RWG
	7. Monitor the collective impact of the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network by monitoring common goals and initiatives.	Sept 2023, 2024	Chair RWG
	8. Provide resources and funding to support the delivery of the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network regional reconciliation events.	May–Jun 2024, 2025	MCE
	9. Engage with and support other water corporations and local stakeholders to engage in the reconciliation movement and develop Reconciliation Action Plans.	May 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination policies and strategies.	1. Conduct a review of HR policies, procedures and practices to assess existing anti-discrimination provisions to keep people safe.	May 2024	Executive Manager People, Culture & Safety (EMPCS)
	2. Review, update and communicate the anti-discrimination policy for our organisation and educate our workforce about the effects of discrimination.	Jun 2024	EMPCS
	3. Provide Mental Health First Aid training to the Leadership Team to enable them to identify, assist and respond to the impacts of racism if required.	Feb 2024	EMPCS
	4. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on, and continuously improve on anti-discrimination within our organisation.	Feb 2024, 2025	EMPCS
	5. Provide mandatory education opportunities for senior leaders/managers on the effects of racism, through unconscious bias and diversity and inclusion training.	Feb 2024, 2025	EMPCS
	6. Senior leaders to publicly support anti-discrimination campaigns, initiatives or stances against racism.	May 2023, 2024	Managing Director (MD)
5. Explore partnership opportunities with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC)	1. Enter a formal partnership through the introduction of a Service Agreement to support the aspirations of the Bunurong Land Council.	May 2024	GMCC
	2. Explore shared training and look at capacity-building opportunities to deliver tangible benefits for the Bunurong Community and Aboriginal Victorians.	Dec 2023	GMCC



Respect

We will demonstrate and promote respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the actions in our RAP, be culturally sensitive when managing water and environmental resources, and support self-determination in water access and management for Traditional Owners.

Focus areas:

Our Community 'Be a valued member of our community.' This means that we will communicate and engage effectively and openly with all areas of the community, provide care for customers and build strong partnerships focused on shared benefits.

Our Customers 'Provide products and services that meet customer expectations for quality, accessibility, and affordability.' By empowering customers with accessible services and information to manage their water use, while providing care for customers experiencing hardship.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	1. Based on employee survey results and feedback, conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Sep 2024	EMPCS
	2. Consult Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform the cultural learning sections of Westernport Water's Learning and Development Plan.	Mar 2024, 2025	EMPCS
	3. Implement and communicate a cultural learning plan for our employees in-line with Westernport Water's Learning and Development Plan.	Aug 2024	EMPCS
	4. All RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership employees to undertake structured cultural learning.	Mar 2024	MCE
	5. Ensure all staff receives cultural awareness training every two years in line with the Cultural Learning Plan.	Mar 2024	EMPCS
	6. Support employees to participate in events and activities to improve knowledge and support cultural learning.	Jun 2024, 2025	EMPCS
	7. Actively support the Yoorrook Justice Commission's first formal truth-telling process into injustices experienced by First Nations Peoples in Victoria by responding to Notices to Produce once received.	Sep 2023	ET
	8. Actively support First Nations employees by sharing information about the Yoorrook Justice Commission, yarning circles and information relating to employee wellbeing and support resources.	Sep 2023	EMPCS
	9. Support First Nations employee wellbeing, through our Employee Assistance Program provider, Converge International, and provide access to culturally safe First Nations-led support resources.	Sep 2023, 2024	EMPCS



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by observing cultural protocols.	1. Increase employees' understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols. Educate and empower employees to give an Acknowledgement at the commencement of events and meetings in line with the guidelines.	May 2024, 2025	MCE
	2. Communicate and embed cultural protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country by promoting and educating all employees on expectations.	May 2024, 2025	GMCC
	3. Invite the Registered Aboriginal Party to provide a Welcome to Country at significant events, in accordance with the Guidelines for employees.	May 2024	MCE
	4. Work with the community on other appropriate cultural activities to support significant events.	May 2024	Chair RWG
	5. Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important events and meetings.	Mar 2024, 2025	GMCC
	6. Review the established Working Together Protocols and Guidelines for Welcome to Country ceremonies and giving an Acknowledgement and communicate to employees.	Sep 2023	MCE
	7. Ensure the Acknowledgement of Country plaque or displays at all Westernport Water sites are consistent.	Sep 2023, 2024	MCE
	8. Ensure an Acknowledgement is on every new permanent plaque.	Sep 2023, 2024	MCE
	9. Maintain cultural leave for dates of significance through the Enterprise Agreement.	May 2024	EMPCS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	1. RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	3 Jul 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	2. Review HR policies and procedures to identify and remove any barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	Oct 2023, 2024	EMPC
	3. Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all employees.	Jul 2024, 2025	MCE
	4. Publicly acknowledge and promote NAIDOC Week through all corporate communications channels.	Jul 2024, 2025	MCE
	5. In consultation with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, support an external NAIDOC week event each year.	Jul 2024, 2025	MCE
9. Ensure community support activities are respectful of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture and histories.	1. Review sponsorship applications and requests for funding to ensure they align with and promote reconciliation values and opportunities for shared learning.	Jul 2023, 2024	MCE
	2. Proactively seek sponsorship opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	Dec 2023, 2024	MCE
	3. In recognition that Australia Day represents a day of mourning and reflection for many Victorians rather than celebration, we will promote Clause 36.2 of our Enterprise Agreement that allows an employee to substitute another workday for the Australia Day public holiday.	Jan 2024, 2025	MCE
	4. Share education materials internally to educate and inform staff about 26 January.	Jan 2024, 2025	Chair

Opportunities

Westernport Water is privileged to manage water and environmental resources on Bunurong Country and we commit to working collaboratively with Traditional Owners, organisations and communities to explore opportunities for increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in land and water management to support self-determination.

Focus areas:

Our People 'Be an innovative corporation with a reputation that is valued by current and prospective employees. We want our organisation to reflect the diverse community we serve through inclusion, participation and engagement.

Our Customers 'Provide products and services that meet our customers' expectations for quality, accessibility and affordability. By empowering customers with accessible services and information to manage their water use and providing flexible payment options for customers experiencing hardship.

Our Community 'Be a valued member of our community.' This means contributing to community wellbeing through opportunities that support social and recreational benefits.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	1. Continue to build an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Dec 2023, 2024	EMPCS
	2. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees through our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Program.	Dec 2023	EMPCS
	3. Communicate and implement the Corporation's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to address recruitment, retention, and professional development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Jun 2024	EMPCS
	4. Broaden advertising and communications approach for all vacancies, not just declared positions, in order to attract as many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander candidates as possible.	Jun 2024, 2025	MCE
	5. Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to further remove any barrier to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	Dec 2023	EMPCS
	6. Establish an open expression of interest for potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Dec 2023	EMPCS
	7. Provide skills training opportunities through scholarships, vocational education, work experience, and traineeships.	Jun 2024, 2025	EMPCS
	8. Provide Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee development opportunities in the water sector.	Jul 2024, 2025	EMPCS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	1. Communicate Westernport Water's 2021 – 24 Social Procurement Strategy.	Sep 2023, 2024	Manager Strategy Performance Governance (MSPG)
	2. Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to employees.	Sep 2023, 2024	MSPG
	3. Review and update procurement practices to encourage the procurement of goods and services and to address barriers to procurement from Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Sep 2024	MSPG
	4. Identify and provide opportunities to Victorian social enterprises and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses to work with Westernport Water.	Sep 2023	MSPG
	5. Use Supply Nation, Kinaway or the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) businesses to seek certified suppliers.	Oct 2023	MSPG
	6. Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Jul 2024, 2025	MSPG
	7. Explore and develop opportunities for business arrangements with Bunurong Traditional Owners and Aboriginal enterprises.	Dec 2023	MSPG
14. Build capacity and engagement opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in water management.	1. Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to participate in water sector initiatives by providing flexible work arrangements.	Dec 2023, 2024	EMPCS
	2. Co-design a capacity building program to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in land and water management.	Feb 2024	EMPCS
	3. Explore opportunities for work placement supported by a customised training program.	May 2024	EMPCS
	4. Support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees to participate in the Victorian Water Industry Network opportunities.	Jul 2024, 2025	EMPCS

The following commitments are solely a matter for Westernport Water and the Bunurong Land Council – Registered Aboriginal Party

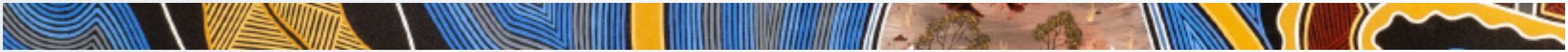
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
15. Make sure the aspirations of the Bunurong peoples are highlighted in water strategies and planning	1. Engage with Traditional Owners on the benefits of Aboriginal Waterway Assessments and other tools developed by Traditional Owners.	May 2024	Climate Change and Environment Advisor (CCEA)
	2. Investigate opportunities to incorporate Traditional Ecological Science in water and catchment management at Westernport Water managed waterways.	May 2024	CCEA
	3. Explore with the Bunurong Land Council on how we can support the delivery of their Country and Species Plans.	Dec 2023	GMCC
	4. Engage with the BLCAC on programs for improving local or regional environmental issues.	Dec 2023	CCEA
16. Empower Traditional Owners (the Bunurong) to participate in water planning and management	1. Identify cultural values and the aspirations of the Bunurong people in water management and planning.	Dec 2023	Manager Water and Wastewater Treatment (MWWT)
	2. As a crown land manager, we will work in partnership with the Registered Aboriginal Party to ensure Traditional Owner rights are recognised in the sustainable management of public land, by: Considering unallocated water and how this resource may be shared to support cultural and/or environmental outcomes and ensure Traditional Owner rights are recognised through an agreement.	May 2024	MWWT
	3. Identify opportunities to enable access to waterways where Westernport Water has management responsibility.	May 2024	MWWT
	4. Increase the role for Traditional Owners in environmental water management and ownership via pilots, projects or studies.	May 2024	CCEA, MWWT

Governance and reporting

Focus area:

Our Business 'Maintain the integrity and value of our business through sound governance and financial management. We will plan for the future through strategic business planning and regularly find ways to reduce costs and become more efficient.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	1. Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.		Chair RWG
	2. Maintain and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.		Chair RWG
	3. Meet at least four times per year in accordance with the annual RWG meeting schedule to drive and monitor RAP implementation.		Chair RWG
	4. Invite greater employee participation on the Working Group by annually issuing an Expression of Interest.		Chair RWG
	5. Develop at least two RAP Working Group members to be reconciliation champions.		Chair RWG
2. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments	1. Embed resource needs for RAP implementation into key strategies.	Jan 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	2. Engage our senior leaders and other employees in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Feb and Jul 2024, 2025	Chair RWG
	3. Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Sept 2023, 2024	Chair RWG
	4. Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	Sep 2023	GMCC
	5. Build an appropriate RAP budget for the implementation of actions and initiatives.	Mar 2024, 2025	MCE
	6. Develop an annual RAP calendar inclusive of events and working group meetings.	Jan 2024, 2025	MCE



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	1. Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	May 2024	MCE
	2. Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	Aug 2024, 2025	MCE
	3. Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 Sep 2023, 2024	MCE
	4. Provide monthly progress reports through the corporate reporting tool, and half yearly reports to senior leaders and Board.	Apr, Sep 2024, 2025	MCE
	5. Provide an annual RAP update highlighting achievements, challenges, and learnings.	Sep 2024, 2025	MCE
	6. Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings annually.	Sep 2024, 2025	MCE
	7. Participate in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	Jun 2024	Chair RWG
4. Develop our next RAP.	1. Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Sep 2024	Chair RWG

Thank you

We acknowledge and thank the following people and organisations for their knowledge and guidance through the development of Westernport Water's Innovate RAP 2.0.

- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Bunurong Traditional Owners, Jarrod West and Uncle Anthony Egan
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Community, Bev Munro and Aunty Patrice Mahoney OAM
- Westernport Water's RAP Working Group, Board of Directors and Leadership Team
- Bass Coast Reconciliation Network RAP partners Phillip Island Nature Parks, Bass Coast Health, Bass Coast Shire Council, Bass Coast South Gippsland Reconciliation Group and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members.

Contact details

Name: Geoff Russell
Position: Manager of Communications and Engagement
Phone: 0413009636
Email: grussell@westernportwater.com.au

T 1300 720 711 | F (03) 59564101

Westernport Water

2 Boys Home Road, Newhaven, Victoria 3925 Australia
Email: **westport@westernportwater.com.au**
westernportwater.com.au

Bunurong Land Council

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE



Large community gathering for NAIDOC Week in 2022.

WESTERNPORT WATER

2 Boys Home Road
Newhaven 3925
Victoria, Australia

T 1300 720 711 **ABN** 63 759 106 755
westport@westernportwater.com.au
westernportwater.com.au