

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2024 to July 2026



Sydney
WATER







About the artwork and artist



The artwork was inspired by a topographic patterning of Sydney and connects stories of both saltwater and freshwater people, land sustainability and culture.

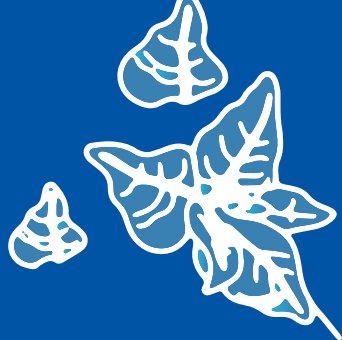
The inclusion of the blue whale and eels represent the native marine life that live in the freshwater and saltwater regions of Sydney's waters.

The Sydney land formations that are illustrated within the curved patterns also feature references to local native plants such as wattles and warrigal greens. These plants are found around different areas of Sydney Harbour as well as other coastal regions and inland rivers throughout Sydney.

The circular patterns represent the many watering holes and meeting places of Traditional Owners, which were used to share knowledge and stories between generations.

Dennis Golding is a descendant of the Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay people from the north-west of New South Wales. He spent most of his childhood living in Redfern and now resides in the south-east Sydney suburb of Little Bay.

Dennis has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) degree from UNSW Art & Design. In addition to creating his own pieces, he has been commissioned to create artworks for a range of high-profile projects including the inaugural Indigenous Wallabies jersey for Rugby Australia, the Indigenous jersey for the Wests Tigers NRL club, the Indigenous jersey for the Sydney Swifts netball club and RAP artworks for the Cancer Institute of NSW and Infrastructure Australia.



Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

Sydney Water respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Sydney, Illawarra and the Blue Mountains where we work, live and learn.

Their lore, traditions and customs nurtured and continue to nurture the waters (bulingang or saltwater and muulii ngadyuung or sweetwater) in our operating area, creating wellbeing for all.

We pay our deepest respect to Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge their deep connections to the land and waters.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we remain committed to working in partnership with local Traditional Custodians to ensure their ongoing collaboration to the future of the water management landscape, learning from traditional and contemporary approaches, while respecting their cultural and spiritual connections.

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A message from our **Managing Director**

It's been a pleasure to witness the strides we have taken towards reconciliation with First Nations people through our inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

I am proud to present our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, outlining our aspirations for the next two years. This document represents our commitment to reconciliation and builds on our first plan.

We recognise and respect the invaluable knowledge held by First Nations people, who have been the Custodians of this land for over 60,000 years and remain as important as ever in the face of the challenges posed by urban growth and climate change. We look to learn vital insights from their deep connection to and care of Country to better protect our natural environment. We want to ensure as Australia's largest water utility, we actively invest in First Nations people and businesses.

I am pleased to have the support of our Board, our executive and our people who share my excitement as we start this next phase of our reconciliation journey and collaborate with our First Nations employees and communities, both within our business operations and throughout our broader sphere of influence to strive towards a brighter future for all.

A stylized blue ink signature of Roch Cheroux.

Roch Cheroux
Managing Director



A message from **Reconciliation Australia**

Reconciliation Australia commends Sydney 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. Sydney Water continues to be part of a strong network of more than 3,000 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 Sydney Water will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Sydney 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 Sydney 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, Sydney Water will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

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

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

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Our vision for reconciliation

Sydney Water is proud to acknowledge the rich 60,000 plus year histories of First Nation peoples and communities and their role as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work, live, and learn. Our vision for reconciliation is to embrace deep listening and learn from First Nations peoples, who have been the first engineers of water and natural resources in this country for millennia.

We respect the ongoing 'Caring for Country' restorative approaches practiced over tens of thousands of years by First Nations peoples and play our part to improve the health of the landscape by recognising and nurturing the value of water in our environment and communities. We aim to blend First Nations knowledge with modern science to manage our waterways and protect the environment in a sustainable way.

Sydney Water is committed to advancing equitable outcomes for First Nations communities; to achieve this, we will partner with First Nations businesses to create economic opportunities and improve employment outcomes within our organisation and through our partner relationships..

Our July 2024 – July 2026 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will focus on three key areas:



Relationships

Connecting our people with First Nations peoples in a meaningful and lasting way to further the goals of reconciliation.



Respect

Learn from and about First Nations peoples' cultures and histories and celebrate wherever and whenever we gather. We will demonstrate respect by listening to and learning from the first engineers of natural resources.



Opportunities

Create ways to generate and sustain opportunities for growth for First Nations peoples through employment, development, and procurement. We will create the space and opportunity to learn from and implement Caring for Country approaches of First Nations communities.



Peter Cooley – proud Bidjigal man, founder of Indigrow – provided the native plants for the gardens at Malabar.

Our organisation

We have an ambitious vision from which we've designed our strategy:

Creating a better life with world-class water services. Water is an essential part of daily life. How we use water helps our city thrive and supports the productivity and prosperity of our economy.

- By delivering world-class water services, we can create a better life for our people, our business partners, and our communities: safe, clean drinking water, tree-lined streets, parks and green spaces, and access to safe, local waterways and beaches for recreation and fun. Our systems provide services to 5.3 million customers and every day we supply 1.5 billion litres of safe drinking water to our customers. We source water from a network of dams managed by WaterNSW, and most of our water comes from Lake Burragorang behind Warragamba Dam. We also source up to 15 per cent of our water from the Sydney Desalination Plant, located at Kurnell.

When wastewater leaves the pipes on your property, it connects with one of our 25 wastewater systems throughout Sydney, the Illawarra and the Blue Mountains, and in some locations, we also supply stormwater services.

Our current workforce of almost 3500 employees work in various roles from engineers, environmental scientists, production officers to maintenance technicians and corporate and administrative roles. We currently have 37 employees who proudly identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people working in various roles across the business.

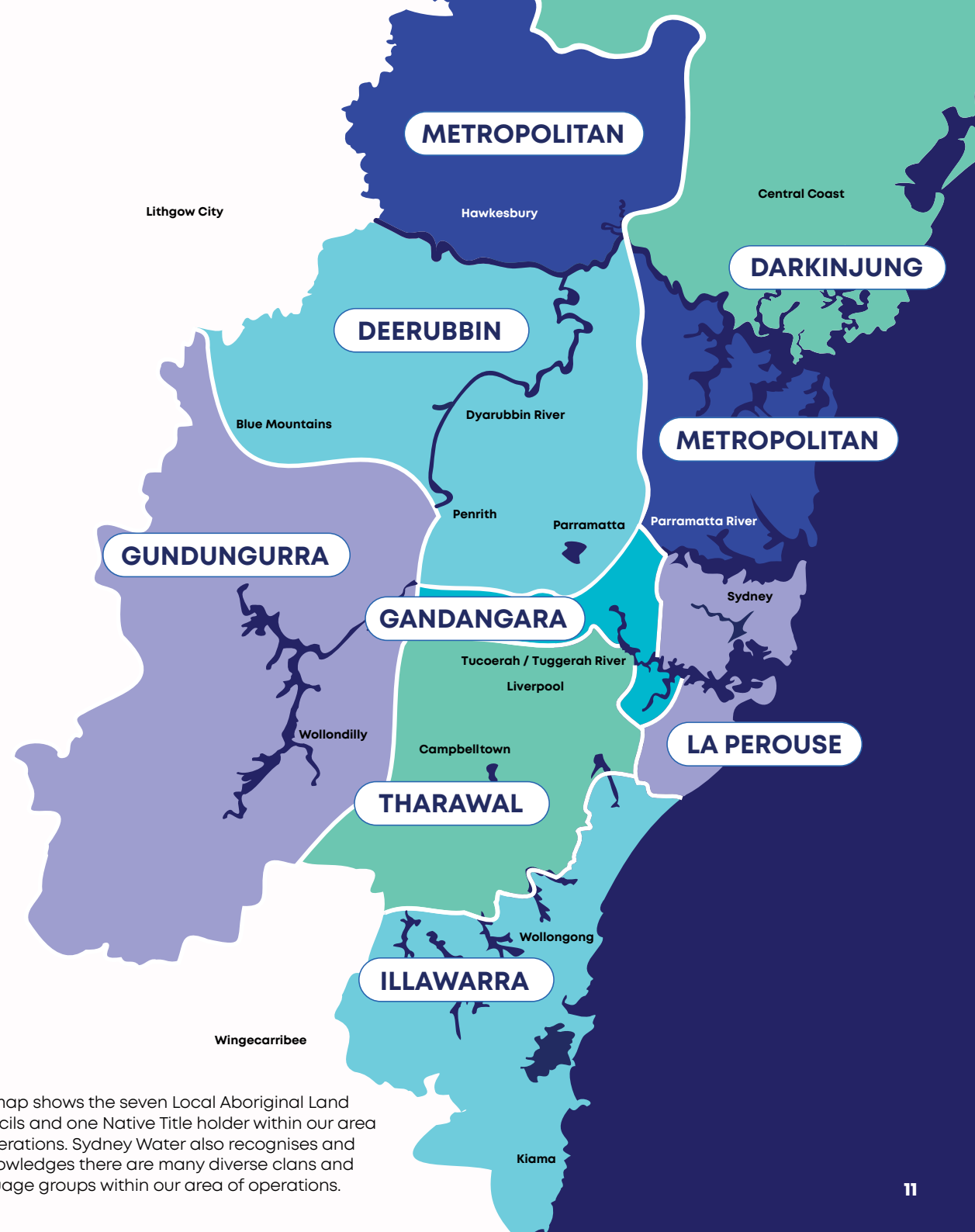
At Sydney Water we recognise water is deeply entwined with First Nations cultures and wellbeing, and we embrace a Caring for Country approach to waterway health. We have embedded a range of initiatives within our organisation as well as in the communities in which we work to demonstrate our commitment to First Nations peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways where we live, work, play and connect.

Some of our highlights, which are described in greater detail throughout this plan, include:

- connecting with local communities through art and other important cultural installations
- growing the First Nations economy through our Aboriginal Procurement Partnership Program
- career-creation measures
- First Nations Cultural Awareness training modules for all Sydney Water people
- Employee-led First Nations Network.

Our organisation maintains strong connections with various stakeholders and industry groups, including Water Services Association of Australia (WSSA) and Australian Water Association. Our proactive approach involves actively seeking opportunities to shape decisions and drive impactful activities. Notably, one of our Reconciliation team members holds a position on the WSAA Reconciliation Committee, further demonstrating our commitment to influence positive change.

We are also promoting reconciliation with our key delivery partners and share with them our progress and encourage them to leverage our RAP to advance reconciliation in their organisations. We have added to our tender process a requirement for contractors to demonstrate their commitment to reconciliation particularly demonstrating their strategies to engage with First Nations businesses, establish targets around First Nations employment and procuring First Nations partners that are certified with Supply Nation or NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSWICC). We will continue to work together to provide safe, affordable, and reliable water services for future generations and to align with First Nations practices to restore our connections with water, land, and each other.



This map shows the seven Local Aboriginal Land Councils and one Native Title holder within our area of operations. Sydney Water also recognises and acknowledges there are many diverse clans and language groups within our area of operations.

Our journey

Our reconciliation journey began in 2018 when a group of committed employees gathered to discuss how Sydney Water could demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation. From small beginnings and with the support and direction from our Managing Director in 2019 the tide changed, and things moved quite swiftly which led to development of our first RAP as an Innovate RAP which was launched in 2021.

Our first few years concentrated on activities to build awareness within the organisation of the importance of reconciliation. We started at a foundational base developing our employees, getting to know our community, developing connections and relationships, and looking for engagement opportunities. We formalised our Reconciliation Committee and developed a Terms of Reference which includes an action to reconstitute 50 per cent of the committee every two years.

The committee has executive sponsorship in our Managing Director. We have two co-chairs; an internal Enterprise Leader and our external chair comes from the NSW Department of Transport. We have seven First Nations members on the committee who come from different areas across the business including a Network Operator, First Nations Inclusion Specialist, Culture, Inclusion and Belonging Advisor, Senior Development Consultant, Production

Manager, and Business Support Administrator, Senior First Nations Engagement, Major Projects. Non-First Nations members include our Managing Director, Head of Risk and Audit, Head of Strategic Communications and Corporate and Social Responsibility, Environment and Sustainability Manager, Senior Finance Business Partner, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Manager, Resilience and Climate Change Lead, Customer Experience Design Officer, Senior Advisor Employee Communications and Head of Billing & Metering.

Within our committee we have three working groups who ensure the delivery of our actions:

- Employment
- Cultural learning and awareness raising
- Thriving communities.

Photo by Sydney Water.



**Our Reconciliation
Action Plan 2021–2023
has delivered important
initiatives over the
past two years.**



○ Over 40 per cent of 3500 employees have completed First Nations Cultural Awareness training, a non-mandatory training program that our people choose to do to inform their work.

○ We developed First Nations designed personal protective equipment (PPE) for our people to demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation. The story of the art is “Here, there, everywhere – belonging” which represents our holistic approach to reconciliation, our desire to bring everyone on the journey and connect our people to Country.

○ We embedded a meaningful Acknowledgement of Country in our connections to help us understand the importance and history of the lands and water on which we meet.

○ We embedded respecting, recognising, and celebrating key events such as National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week.

○ Sydney Water’s First Nations traineeships are well underway. The traineeships grow First Nations talent pools through entry-level roles which provide on-the-job training.

○ Sydney Water’s Aboriginal Procurement Participation Plan details our commitment to providing employment opportunities to increase skills and economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and businesses.

○ The First Nations Employee-led Network builds a sense of community and provides a safe forum for discussing workplace challenges and opportunities.

○ We formed a partnership with the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to enable success in advancing in reconciliation.

Our journey so far

2019

Sydney Water commits to establishing the RAP

2019

Port Kembla / Shellharbour seawall restoration

2021

First Nations Cultural Awareness module launched

2021

Sydney Water gains Supply Nation membership

2021

Sydney Water gains Yarpa Hub membership

2021

Incorporation of Aboriginal artwork in BAU

2019

Gundungurra Elders lead Executives in on Country immersion

2020

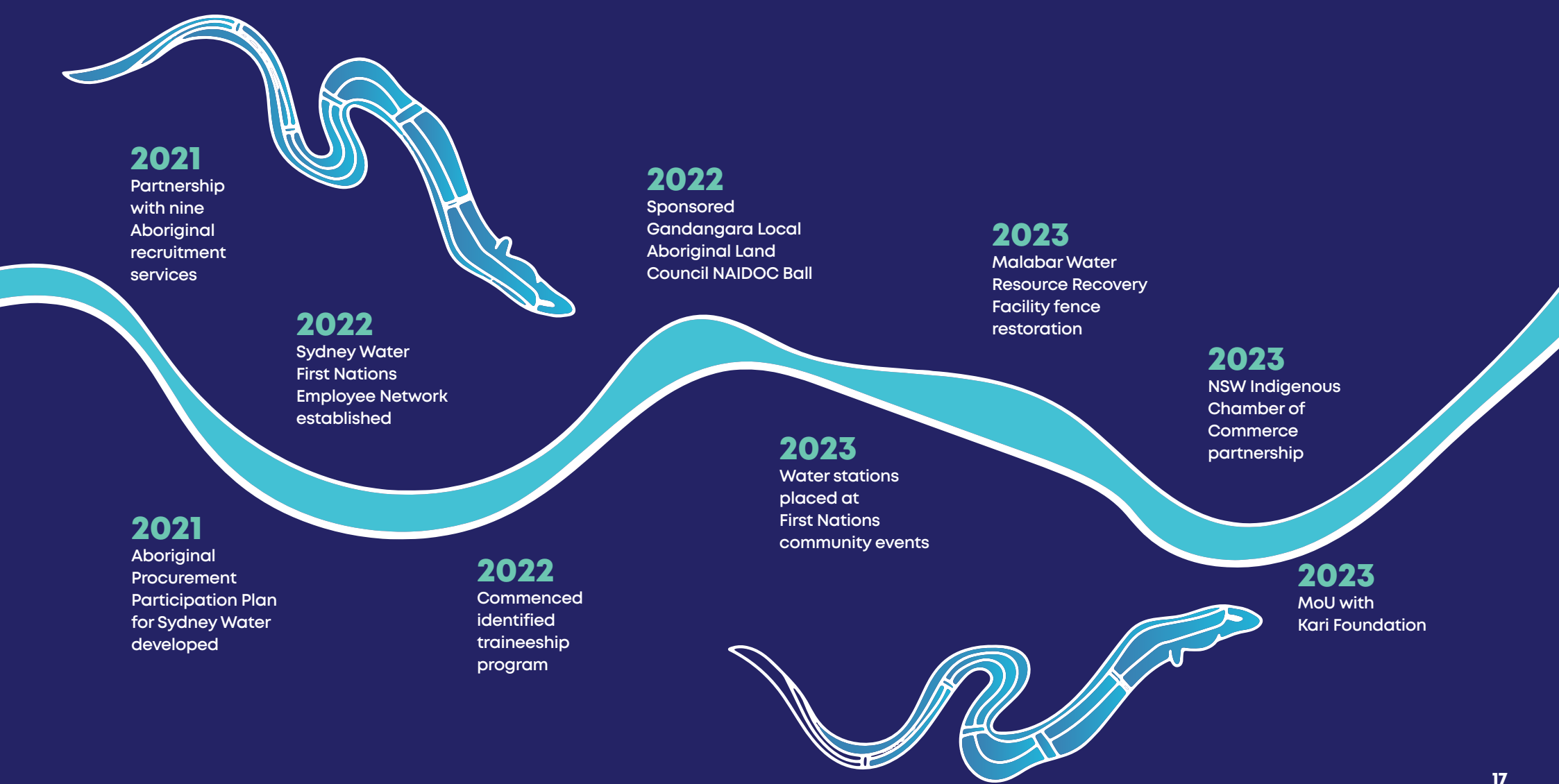
RAP Committee formed

2020

First interns from Career Trackers start

Our reconciliation journey began in 2018 when a group of committed employees got together to discuss how Sydney Water could demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation. From small beginnings and with the support and direction from our Managing Director in 2019 the tide changed, and things moved quite swiftly which led to development of our first RAP at the Innovate Level which was launched in 2021.

Our first few years concentrated on activities to build awareness within the organisation of the importance of reconciliation. We started at a foundational base developing our employees, getting to know our community, developing connections and relationships, and looking for engagement opportunities.



2021

Partnership with nine Aboriginal recruitment services

2022

Sponsored Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council NAIDOC Ball

2023

Malabar Water Resource Recovery Facility fence restoration

2022

Sydney Water First Nations Employee Network established

2023

NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce partnership

2023

Water stations placed at First Nations community events

2021

Aboriginal Procurement Participation Plan for Sydney Water developed

2022

Commenced identified traineeship program

2023

MoU with Kari Foundation

Malabar Fence Renewal Project

The Malabar Fence Renewal Project was a 2 km perimeter project at our Malabar Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF).

The project team quickly realised that Malabar could much more than a fencing project. It provided the opportunity to connect with, and actively involve, First Nations communities in the planning and delivery of the new fence to leave a positive legacy for the community.

The project team engaged early with all stakeholders, including Randwick City Council, La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services, the Gamay Rangers, IndigiGrow and the Gajaga Foundation.

Caring for Country

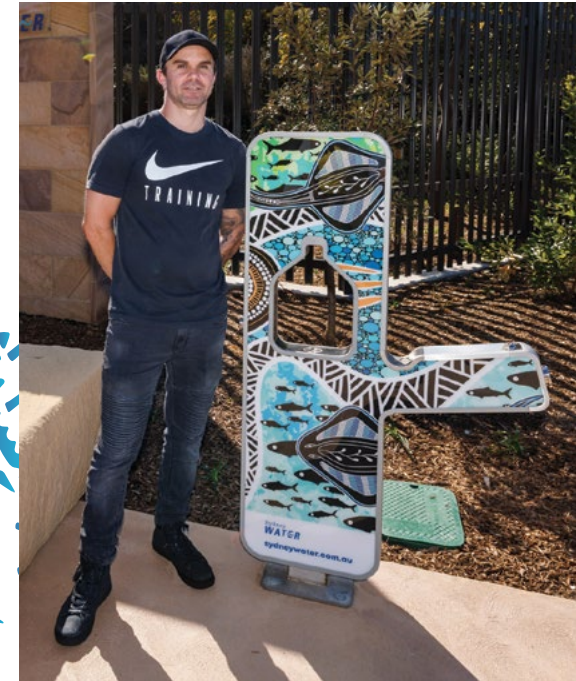
“Our aim was to agree on ways of working together to care for Country. With respect and appreciation for First Nations Knowledge and Connection to Country, we have respectfully incorporated native planting, language, storytelling, and artwork into this project,” said Cath Mullins, Engagement Lead – South. “This has resulted in the construction of a yarning circle, including a water station, an etched walkway, landscaping with native endangered plants and sandstone seating with QR codes linking to stories from Elders that tell the history of the place and plants.”

The specially commissioned artwork has been installed on the water station, etched into the path, and used throughout the WRRF office space.

Creating a legacy with the local community

Talking about the lasting impact of the project, Cath said, “We provided economic opportunities by engaging with La Perouse Aboriginal Land Council, Gamay Rangers, IndigiGrow, Gajaga Foundation and the local artist. Strong and trusted connections and relationships have been established and we look forward to future opportunities to work together.”

The cultural walk officially opened on 30 August 2023, with a special Welcome to Country by Dr Peter MacKenzie, a Smoking Ceremony and Indigenous tucker.



Shane Youngberry, a Dharawal man, is the local artist whose vision of fish and stingrays in nearby Long Bay were then interpreted in the water fountain, walkway and within the facility administration building.



Michael Massih and Peter Cooley - collaborators on the revegetation work at Malabar.

Healthy Ngurra Project



Image by Sydney Water.

Sydney Water partnered with Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association (GAHA) on the Warragamba Dundowra Healthy Ngurra project. The project started over three years ago to clean up the bush, undertake Ecological Burns with Indigenous Fire Practitioners, manage weeds, and facilitate respect and reconciliation, including formalised place naming as 'Dundowra.'

Burn workshops were held across five days in 2022 and 2023. Indigenous Fire Practitioners and the Gundungurra community explained to over 100 workshop participants how fire can be used to improve the health of Country, share knowledge, and improve outcomes for First Nations people.

The land contains several important natural assets including flora, fauna, and Aboriginal heritage, as well as being important to the local community as high-value bushland adjacent to the Warragamba township. The burns protect and enhance these natural assets by increasing biodiversity, reducing the dominance of more flammable plant species, and reducing the overall risk from wildfires. This project also provided the opportunity for cultural knowledge-sharing with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to support respect and reconciliation, better outcomes for Aboriginal people and the environment and improvements in existing land management techniques.

This project is a notable example of collaboration, this project saw entities like Fire & Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW Local Land Services Aboriginal Communities, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, WaterNSW, and Wollondilly Shire Council come together to ensure the project's success.

In addition to the burns, dumped wastes have been removed, a yarning circle has been constructed, tree habitat boxes installed, and information gateway and orientation signage has been designed. This signage includes local Aboriginal Art depicting plants, animals and special places found at Dundowra.

These burns have helped Sydney Water employees to understand how Indigenous Fire Management practices and partnering with First Nations communities and organisations can improve the way that important natural assets are managed.

A photograph of a circular stone structure, likely a yarning circle, in a field at sunset. The structure is made of light-colored rectangular stones arranged in a circle. The background shows a line of trees and a bright orange and yellow sunset sky. The foreground is dark and out of focus.

“The Warragamba area is an especially important place for our people. We burn for lots of reasons, it is for ecological reasons but it’s also for the Traditional people from the Country to have a better understanding of a different way of burning. If we all go on the same journey together, it will make it easier for other Aboriginal people across the country to be part of looking after their Country.”

“The other end of the story is that we will have a better outcome for Aboriginal histories, and for people to understand that Aboriginal people haven’t gone away. We’re always going to be managing our Country and our waterways in a respectful and manageable way with everyone.”

“People are a part of the landscape, and people come from Country. That’s why the land and people have been able to be sustainable for 40,000 years or more. Once we start doing this work, you’ll start to see many places become more resilient and more manageable through periods of wildfire and more importantly prepared. Not only will we bring identity back for Country, but we’ll also bring identity back for people, and together, you’ll see improvements socially and environmentally. This is just the seed.”

Aunty Sharyn Halls
Gundungurra Elder

First Nations Employee Network

The First Nations employee network at Sydney Water was established in April 2022 with the support of an executive sponsor. The network meets four times a year and has the following objectives:

- To connect First Nations employees from across all areas of the business to build a sense of community and belonging
- To create a forum and safe space for First Nations employees to increase awareness, improve relationships and discuss challenges and opportunities at Sydney Water
- To act as an additional point of contact for First Nations peoples, issues, and involvement across the business
- To raise awareness of First Nations employee participation at Sydney Water and within the wider water sector
- To improve both attraction and retention of First Nations employees at Sydney Water
- Introduce and create role models for, and within the network that can share their journey and experiences navigating the work environment.

The inaugural meeting, YarnUp, saw 14 employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people come together. For many of the employees it was the first time meeting each other. Some of the employees' initial impressions about the network was "amazing", "being able to connect means so much to me", and "it is a long time coming." Since the first YarnUp the network continues to grow with an average of two new members per session in the first year.

"The First Nations Network has been invaluable to me. I have loved collaborating with mob and learning more about culture, but most importantly to me, it has been the support I have received and felt from mob. I feel more connected at work than ever."

Cheryl Plevy



“It’s really hard to put in words the confidence you gain from yarning together and just being there. I can now bring my whole self to work, and we are all building strong connections. I highly recommend this group.”

Kate Challinger

Aboriginal Procurement Participation Plan



Sydney Water launched its Aboriginal Procurement Participation Plan (APPP) in 2021.

The APPP is Sydney Water's plan to provide opportunities to increase skills and economic participation within the State's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In addition, the APPP is supporting sustainable growth of Aboriginal businesses by driving demand via our procurement of goods and services including services that pertain to our major infrastructure and construction projects. The APPP is woven into Sydney Water's procurement lifecycle with several targets and measurements along with a set of guidelines and a checklist to support the application of the plan.

Our procurement team provided regular updates through the development of the plan, attending Reconciliation committee meetings at critical stages of APPP development.

Throughout the development of the plan, Sydney Water's procurement team sought advice and guidance from colleagues, held themselves accountable to deadlines and supported the broader Sydney Water strategies, especially those related to customer outcomes.

Our procurement team has created a process which provides Sydney Water with a simplified approach to engaging Aboriginal business. The APPP has been developed to assist Sydney Water in actively looking to Aboriginal business to fill a need and contribute to the growth of a First Nations economy in NSW. In addition to the APPP, the procurement team have developed and implemented a dashboard which shows real-time data on the number of contracts and spend with First Nations businesses.





Respect through art

Sydney Water commissioned Dalmarri, an Aboriginal business owned and operated by Trevor Eastwood and Jason Douglas, to create a design for our range of Personal Protective Clothing. The result is a beautiful piece of art that pays homage to our connection to Country.

Themed “Nula Mirrung” – Here, there, and everywhere – belonging the design represents our deep spiritual connections to the environment and waterways, both saltwater and freshwater.

- The white lines symbolise the sandy banks of rivers, oceans, and inlets.
- The thin lines depict flowing currents, meandering effortlessly upstream and downstream.
- The circles on the waterways represent our trade routes, fishing spots and swimming holes that we all use today.
- The large concentric circle signifies the meeting place of Sydney Water.
- The dots and half-U shapes represent staff radiating out to communities, working together to create a healthy, sustainable future for our waterways and communities.
- The connecting circles and white lines symbolise the Sydney Water plants, water mains, and pipes that provide clean drinking water for all our people and cities.



Water is omnipresent – here, there, and everywhere – a sense of belonging that resonates through this artwork. It is proudly featured on our personal protective equipment (PPE) and lanyards worn by Sydney Water employees.



Network employee Steven Smith wearing PPE with artwork by Dalmarri.

First Nations Cultural Awareness

Julia Bartlett



My name is Julia Bartlett, I'm the Head of Laboratory Services and I've worked at Sydney Water for 17 years.

My first impression of the First Nations Cultural Awareness e-learning module was that it was informative, interactive, and respectful. It helped me gain a greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people. The highlight for me was the quiz-based learning about the statistics of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people in comparison to other Australians in areas like education, health and criminal justice. On a personal note, the learning style allowed me to reflect on my own cultural background and bias, and to explore ways to think and act differently to support the wellbeing and rights of First Nations people in my team, across the business and in my community. Many of our teams engaged in this training as a group during their respective team meetings which allowed for rich discussion and sharing of different perspectives. This approach made it easier for the team to complete the training as many don't have access to their own computer, or they work in the field.

I would rate my level of understanding as being greater for having undertaken this training but with a very long way to go in terms of competence and understanding. The steps I am planning to take to improve this include listening to and following First Nations peoples lead about what is important to them and their community in our area of operations and beyond, and to continue to engage and support the professional development of First Nations employees within the business and the wider community through partners like Career Trackers.

First Nations Traineeships

Corina Button

Dunghutti/Kurnai/Yuin



I commenced my traineeship at Sydney Water in Oct 2022. Prior to Sydney Water I was in the health industry as a nurse and, after spending two years on parental leave, I decided I needed a career change to be more accommodating for a mum of six returning to work. After months of searching, I came across the Identified Traineeships at Sydney Water. Since coming onboard, I have been given multiple opportunities to share my passion, my culture and who I am, not only to my direct team but to many employees across Sydney Water. I have been able to do this by facilitating team-building exercises via First Nations artwork shops, allowing me to teach the wider Sydney Water community about why storytelling and art is extremely important to me and to First Nations communities. Being involved in these opportunities helps promote reconciliation and cultural awareness in a more inviting way. It also allows me to feel more comfortable and accepted within my work environment.

Since joining Sydney Water, I have had numerous opportunities to connect with other First Nations employees through the First Nation Yarnups. These catch-ups bring mobs together to connect and feel culturally supported. During a few of our catchups, we were involved in cultural experiences to allow First Nations employees to connect culturally and with the Land.

One standout opportunity during my traineeship was being invited to the People Leaders Forum. As part of a panel discussion on reconciliation, I gained tremendous personal and professional development. Public speaking has become a newfound strength and advocating for our community – our mob – fuels my drive for positive change. Since that pivotal moment, I've also spoken at various other significant events within the business, sharing my own story as well as the rich history of my ancestors.

Our next phase

We are truly proud of the milestones we have achieved and the progression we have made. Our first RAP has provided a solid foundation for us to develop relationships with First Nations peoples and communities across our operating area. However, on reflection, we felt we could do more. This iteration will push us to do more, to be better.

We aim to continue to strengthen our existing relationships with First Nations communities, businesses, and Traditional Owners and put engagement at the forefront of the work we do on Country. We aim to improve our processes and ensure there are clear guidelines to community consultation and engagement. We will focus our efforts to increase First Nations people's representation across Sydney Water. We recognise the need to engage with young First Nations people early while they are making early career decisions and establish ourselves as an employer of choice for First Nations peoples.



We will look to strengthen our relationships with the high school market to foster interest and excitement in the water sector. We are proud of the success with the First Nations traineeship program which has seen four out of five employees complete their qualification. We will continue to use traineeships as an early career pathway and investigate partnerships with industry organisations and universities to create a pipeline of talent.

We will take a refreshed approach to establishing a mentoring program to support the career development of First Nations employees. By working closely with our Learning and Development team, we will mitigate barriers such as competing priorities, organisational change, and low engagement to ensure this program is successfully implemented within the term of our next RAP.

Another key challenge has been increasing our spend with First Nations businesses and this will be a key focus for Sydney Water moving forward. We will look at opportunities especially in the construction and infrastructure sector with a considerable amount in the pipeline over the next 10 years. We will continue to educate the business around opportunities and will work with key partners like NSWICC and Supply Nations to connect our project managers and contractors with First Nations businesses.



Reconciliation Action Plan Champion Simon Granville

As Co-chair of the Sydney Water Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Committee I am honoured to have the opportunity to lead our efforts in reconciliation. Having been part of the team to develop our first Innovate RAP I have seen the journey we have been on and experienced a personal journey of learning about the importance of reconciliation to First Nations people and our role in it.

We have developed a RAP that provided a solid foundation for us to build relationships with First Nations peoples – within Sydney Water and in the broader community. We have demonstrated respect for First Nations peoples from the clothes we wear to the way we mark our meeting places and forums that enable us to learn about First Nations cultures and histories. We have created opportunities for connecting to First Nations peoples and cultures as well as building the First Nations economy through employment and other avenues.

Our next Innovate RAP will build on our existing efforts as we seek to embed reconciliation into the way we work. I am proud to be part of an organisation that truly sees the importance of reconciliation and invests time, energy, and money into building together for reconciliation now and in the future.



Relationships

Connecting our people with First Nations people in a meaningful and lasting way to further the goals of Reconciliation. By building relationships with First Nations peoples both as an organisation and at the individual level we can help our people understand the need for and purpose of reconciliation, we can connect them to our reconciliation activities and help them make a meaningful contribution to reconciliation.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations within our operating context.	1.1 Continue to meet with First Nations stakeholders and organisations within our operating area to listen to stories and review our guiding principles and engagement plans.	August 2024	Head of Government, Stakeholder and Community
	1.2 Co-design and implement a First Nations Advisory group to assess and enhance our guiding principles and engagement plans for Major Projects with outcomes reported in monthly Government, Stakeholder and Community Board Report.	January – March 2025	Head of Government, Stakeholder and Community
	1.3 Implement an employee volunteering program that will provide opportunities for our people to engage with and listen to First Nations peoples and cultures.	September 2024	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
	1.4 Co-design a cultural immersion program with Traditional Custodians for employees to engage in deep listening to the stories of First Nations peoples.	March 2025 October 2025	Manager, Learning and Development Diversity Equity and Inclusion Manager
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	2.1 Circulate and promote Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our employees.	April 2025 April 2026	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
	2.2 Reconciliation Committee members to participate in an external NRW event and share their experiences of that event more broadly.	27 May – 3 June 2025, 2026	Chair of Reconciliation Committee
	2.3 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, 2026	Chair of Reconciliation Committee Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
	2.4 Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May – 3 June 2025, 2026	Head of Brand, Media and Marketing
	2.5 Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website .	May 2025 May 2026	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager



Focus area:

Learn the stories that help us support reconciliation.

The stories of how First Nations peoples are connected to the land and waters, the stories of what happened to First Nations peoples through colonisation and the stories of what is making a meaningful change to reconciliation.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	3.1 Implement strategies to engage our employees in reconciliation through training opportunities, volunteering, and other programs.	September 2024	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
	3.2 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly including having our commitments on our website, providing updates in our annual report, and sharing information on our activities through our customer communication channels.	July 2024 July 2025	Head of Brand, Media and Marketing
	3.3 Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	November 2024	General Manager Customer Strategy and Engagement
	3.4 Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation and learn from their experiences whilst sharing ours.	July 2024 July 2025	Chair of Reconciliation Committee
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1 Review People and Culture policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2024 December 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Culture, Performance and Partnering
	4.2 Develop, implement, a formal anti-discrimination policy.	November 2024	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	4.3 Engage with First Nations employees and First Nations advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	October 2024	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	4.4 Educate middle managers and senior leaders on the effects of racism.	December 2024 December 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager

Respect

Learn from and about First Nations peoples' cultures and histories and celebrate wherever and whenever we gather. Respect is critical to people's experience working with and for us and in their interactions with us. The care that First Nations peoples have shown for the land waters gives us lessons about how we should aspire to operate.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning.	5.1 Review and evaluate cultural learning needs and the stories we share within our organisation.	July 2024 July 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	5.2 Continue to consult with local Traditional Owners and First Nations advisors in our operating area on the evaluation and continuous improvement of our cultural learning strategy. We will share with the stories of what we are doing and respectfully take on their feedback as to how we can improve.	July 2025	Diversity Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Learning and Development
	5.3 Tell our people regularly about our cultural learning strategy.	September 2024 September 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Strategic Comms and CSR Head of Learning and Development
	5.4 Establish an ongoing learning program for our field employees so they have solid understanding of First Nations and cultures in our operating area.	July 2024 July 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Learning and Development
	5.5 Explore opportunities to partner with First Nations education providers to deliver content to schools and / or community' to jointly share our experiences.	September 2024 September 2025	Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
	5.6 Provide opportunities for business decision-makers, Reconciliation Committee members, People and Culture managers and other key Enterprise Leaders to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	September 2024 September 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Learning and Development
6. Integrate Acknowledgement of First Nations peoples and perspectives in projects that Sydney Water undertakes.	6.1 Consult, design and implement Acknowledgement of Country signage at Sydney Water sites with relevant First Nations stakeholders.	November 2024	Head of Property Services
	6.2 Consult with First Nations communities to engage appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist(s) for artwork on Sydney Water's community facing assets including our water resource and recovery facilities and reservoirs.	July 2024 July 2025	Head of Property Services
	6.3 Review existing projects and explore opportunities with First Nations artists to develop artwork to be featured on Sydney Water trucks, cars, uniforms, and other applications.	October 2024	Head of Brand, Media and Marketing



Focus area:

Share the stories we need to know.

As we listen to the stories of First Nations peoples, across the organisation we need to respectfully share those stories so all our people can learn about First Nations peoples to help them respect their traditions, cultures and lores.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
7. Demonstrate respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols.	7.1 Increase employee understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	July 2024	Chair of Reconciliation Committee Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
	7.2 Communicate and regularly review and update our cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, and principles for engagement with First Nations stakeholders and organisations within our operating area.	August 2024 August 2025	Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
	7.3 Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate protocol at significant events each year, including National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week celebrations.	July 2024 July 2025	Managing Director
	7.4 Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	July 2024	Head of Strategic Comms and CSR
8. Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	8.1 Reconciliation Committee to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2024 July 2025	Chair of Reconciliation Committee
	8.2 Review our policies and procedures to remove barriers to employees participating in NAIDOC Week.	May 2025 May 2026	Manager of Diversity Equity & Inclusion
	8.3 Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all employees.	July 2024 July 2025	Manager of Diversity Equity & Inclusion Head of Strategic Comms and CSR

Opportunities

Create ways to generate and sustain opportunities for growth for First Nations peoples through employment, development, and procurement. A diverse and inclusive organisation benefits both us and our customers through ensuring what we do and how we do it represents the community we serve. Ensuring that we create opportunities for First Nations peoples not only furthers our ambitions for reconciliation but also brings to us thousands of years of knowledge and experience of the land and waters we are operating with.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations recruitment, retention, and professional development.	9.1 Build understanding of our current First Nations staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2024 September 2025	Workforce Planning and Insights Head of Learning and Development
	9.2 Engage with First Nations employees to consult on our recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy. Develop an action plan on agreed outcomes and implement.	July 2024 July 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Learning and Development
	9.3 Regularly review our First Nations Employment Plan to ensure steady progress and outcomes across the employment lifecycle – developing the employment pipeline, recruitment, retention, and professional development.	July 2024 July 2025	Talent Operations Manager Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	9.4 Continue to advertise job vacancies with specialised agencies to effectively reach First Nations stakeholders.	July 2024	Talent Operations Manager
	9.5 Review recruitment and employee lifecycle procedures and policies to remove barriers to First Nations employee participation in our workplace.	September 2024 September 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Culture, Performance and Partnering
	9.6 Support First Nations employees to take on management and senior level positions.	July 2024 July 2025	Talent Operations Manager Head of Culture, Performance and Partnering
	9.7 Increase the percentage of First Nations employees employed in our workforce.	September 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Talent Operations Manager
	9.8 Consult design and implement an employee value proposition to support the attraction of First Nations people.	September 2024	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Head of Culture, Performance and Partnering
	9.9 Increase our recruitment and early entry pathways to include school students and school leavers	August 2024	Head of Learning and Development Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	9.10 Design and implement a First Nations employee mentoring program to support the career development of First Nations employees	July 2025	Head of Learning and Development



Focus area:

Share the stories of the opportunities we are creating.

We believe that the stories we tell are the culture we create. By telling the stories of our work on reconciliation we will embed the passion and ambition for reconciliation in our culture. It will make it clear to our people the importance of reconciliation to our strategy and ambitions and enable them to feel and be part of that ambition.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
10. Increase First Nations supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	10.1 Regularly review our First Nations Procurement Strategy monitor progress to objectives.	August 2024 August 2025	Head of Procurement
	10.2 Continue annual membership of Supply Nation ¹ .	August 2024 August 2025	Head of Procurement
	10.3 Maintain partnership with the NSW (New South Wales) Indigenous Chamber of Commerce Inc. ²	May 2025 May 2025	Head of Procurement
	10.4 Communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from First Nations businesses to employees.	August 2024 August 2025	Head of Procurement
	10.5 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from First Nations businesses.	August 2024 August 2025	Head of Procurement
	10.6 Identify, establish, and maintain commercial relationships with First Nation's businesses; and seek out opportunities to increase relationships across Sydney Water area of operations.	July 2024 July 2025	Head of Procurement
	10.7 Review annual target of dollar spend with First Nations businesses, and consider additional annual targets, such as percentage of contracts awarded.	August 2024 August 2025	Head of Procurement
	10.8 Actively review the forward program of major projects (\$>50m) for opportunities to both shape the projects themselves or the benefits to First Nations businesses and communities from those investments.	July 2024 July 2025	General Manager Finance Head of Major Projects Head of Procurement
11. Collaborate with First Nations people to improve the health of Country and waterways.	11.1 Establish a First Nations engagement plan.	March 2025	Head of Major Projects
	11.2 Collaborate with Traditional Custodians to ensure their participation and involvement in decision-making in water management.	July 2024 July 2025	Head of Major Projects
	11.3 Undertake stakeholder analysis and mapping to inform the engagement plan.	September 2024	Head of Major Projects
	11.4 Develop a culturally safe EOI process and communication pathways that shares detailed information on project works on Country for interested First Nations peoples is culturally safe.	September 2024	Head of Major Projects
	11.5 Develop and implement ICIP policy that protects and maintains cultural protocols, of knowledge sharing, story of Country and relevance of sites of the local community and Traditional Custodians.	August 2024	Head of Major Projects

¹ Sydney Water became a member of Supply Nation in 2020. ² Sydney Water became a partner with the NSWICC in 2023.

Governance

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
12. Establish and maintain an effective Reconciliation Committee to drive governance of the RAP.	12.1 Maintain First Nations representation on our Reconciliation Committee.	July 2024 July 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	12.2 Continue to apply a Terms of Reference for the operation of the Reconciliation Committee.	July 2024 July 2025	Chair of Reconciliation Committee
	12.3 Reconciliation Committee to meet six times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	June 2024 – June 2026 Review July 2024 July 2025	Chair of Reconciliation Committee
13. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	13.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	13.2 Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2024 August 2025	Chair of Reconciliation Committee
	13.3 Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	September 2024 September 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	13.4 Maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	July 2024	Chair of Reconciliation Committee
14. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally.	14.1 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request a unique link to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	August 2024 August 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	14.2 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2024	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	14.3 Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly via our Diversity Index and employee communication channels.	Quarterly, Review July 2024 July 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	14.4 Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings, annually through Sydney Water's website and annual report and other relevant channels.	October 2024 October 2025	Head of Brand, Media and Communication
	14.5 Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	April 2026	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
15. Continue our Reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	15.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager
	15.2 Submit a Traffic Light Report on our RAP to Reconciliation Australia to support the development of our next RAP.	December 2025	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager



More information

We welcome feedback and enquiries about our RAP.

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Sydney
WATER

SW 269 06/21 publication number

Our RAP has been designed and printed by the
Spirit Group, a Supply Nation certified business.

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