



COMMONWEALTH
OMBUDSMAN



Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

March 2025 – March 2027



Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Date of publication: March 2025

Publisher: Commonwealth Ombudsman, Canberra Australia
© Commonwealth of Australia 2025

Reconciliation Australia and Reconciliation Action Plan logos are trademarked through IP Australia.

Reconciliation Australia Limited (ABN769) (Reconciliation Australia) hereby grants the organisation registered in the RAP Development Process (Licensee) a non-exclusive, non-transferrable, non-sublicensable licence to use the templates and resources supplied by Reconciliation Australia (Licensed Material) during the Term, subject to the terms of this Agreement (Licence).

Table of contents

Commonwealth Ombudsman’s foreword	4	Acknowledgment of Country plaques	17
Reconciliation Australia CEO Statement	6	Lessons learnt from 2020-2022 RAP	18
Commissioned artwork	8	First Nations staff profile: Callan Rogers	19
Our vision for reconciliation	9	First Nations staff profiles: Larina Trussler	20
Our business	10	First Nations staff profiles: Kacey Witt	21
Our Reconciliation Action Plan	11	Relationships	22
RAP Governance	12	Respect	25
RAP Working Group	13	Opportunities	27
Key achievements under the 2020-22 RAP	14	Governance	31
Outreach	15	Contact	34

Commonwealth Ombudsman's foreword



Iain Anderson
Commonwealth
Ombudsman

I am pleased to present the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2025 –2027.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) outlines the innovative activities the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office) will undertake over the next two years. This plan represents the Office's ongoing commitment to ensuring culturally inclusive, high-quality complaints handling and effective outcomes for First Nations peoples.

At the Commonwealth Ombudsman, helping people and improving government is central to our work. The Office serves the community by listening to concerns about government agencies, resolving issues, promoting best practice administration, and engaging with people from communities across Australia.

The actions in this RAP seek to further our commitment to tangibly advance reconciliation through enhanced access to our complaints systems and culturally competent staff. We are committed to engaging with First Nations peoples, communities, and organisations to inform our internal and external facing operations.

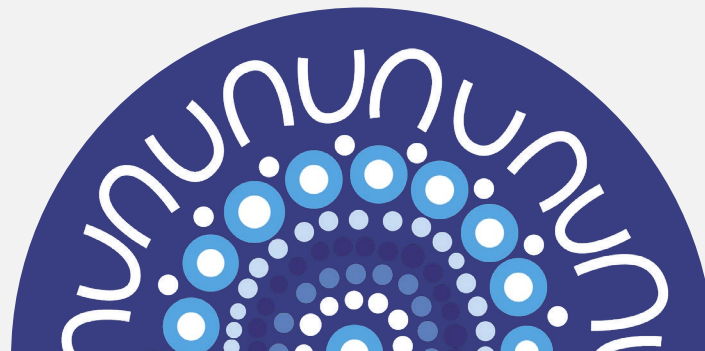
I acknowledge the valuable contributions First Nations staff make to the work of the Office, including in the development of this plan. They have my continued support and commitment to furthering their development opportunities. The Office will ensure a culturally sensitive and safe place of work for our First Nations employees by celebrating First Nations cultures, embracing a culture of respect, and promoting equality.

I also look forward to fostering relationships with community organisations and engaging First Nations' businesses through the procurement of goods and services. The Office will continue its strong focus on delivering cultural awareness training and promoting a workplace where cultural awareness, equality and transparency prevail.



Iain Anderson
Commonwealth Ombudsman

As the first RAP of my tenure and second Innovate RAP for the Office, I am gladdened by the breadth of activities we are undertaking. From the development and implementation of a First Nations Cultural Awareness Strategy for all staff, to the further development of commercial relationships with First Nations' businesses, we have a very full and active two years ahead.



Reconciliation Australia CEO Statement



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

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

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

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by, and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.



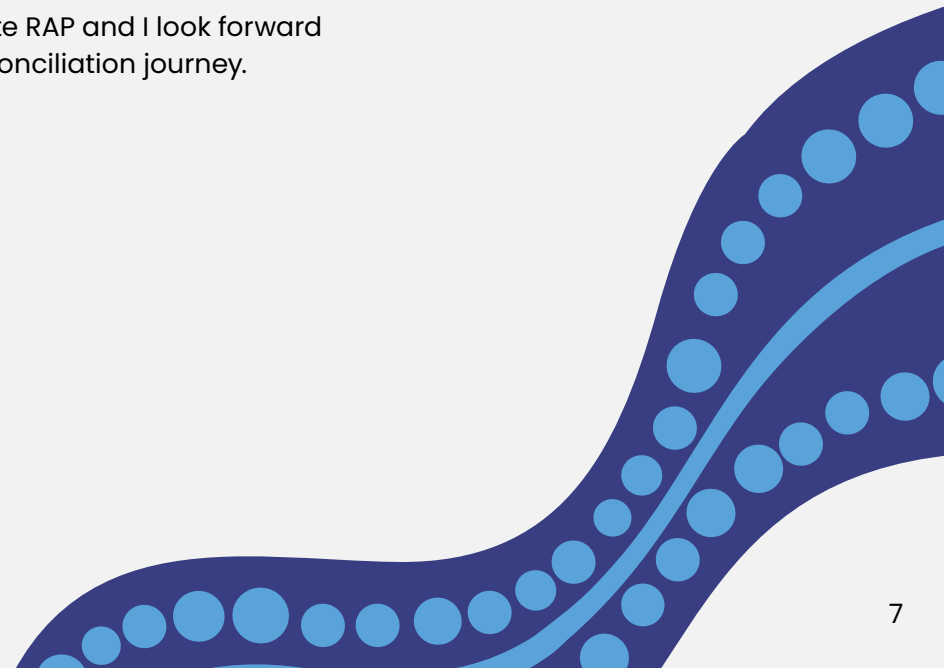
With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman is part of a strong network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



Commissioned artwork

As part of our commitment to reconciliation and cultural appreciation, we approached a First Nations artist to create an artwork for the Office. This artwork is designed by WA based Whadjuk Nyungar Badimia Yamatji artist, Kevin Bynder.

Story of the painting: The centre of the artwork portrays and represents the colours of the Ombudsman. On the outside of the circle are semi circles which represent the women and men that work and have worked at the Ombudsman's Office.

The coloured circles that surround the Ombudsman represent the different sectors such as Overseas Students, VET Student Loans, Defence Force, Private Health Insurance, the Postal industry, and Immigration. All these sectors are represented by the Ombudsman and in the artwork, they are all connected to the centre. The blue features between each sector are the waterways and the Derbal Yerrigin (Swan River). These are created by the Waagyl (rainbow serpent). The red circles represent the businesses and people of our community.



Our vision for reconciliation

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman has an enduring commitment to providing assurance to the public and Parliament and that the entities that we oversee act with integrity and treat people fairly. We enable people to raise grievances about the actions of government agencies and we influence systemic improvement in public administration in Australia.

Our vision for reconciliation is that we will provide open, transparent, fair, and accessible complaint services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; improve our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and service providers; cultivate culturally competent staff across all work functions and locations; and support career development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Our business



The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office) was established by the Ombudsman Act 1976 and commenced operations on 1 July 1977. We have a national presence, with staff in Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's outcome is:

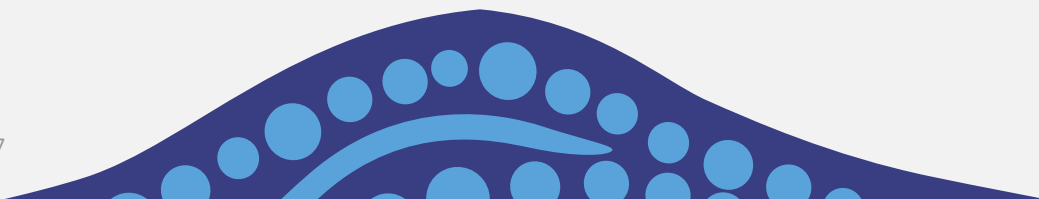
Fair and accountable administrative action by Australian Government entities and prescribed private sector organisations, by investigating complaints, reviewing administrative action, and statutory compliance inspections and reporting.

We deliver this outcome by:

- Providing assurance that the Australian Government entities and prescribed private sector organisations the Office oversees act with integrity and treat people fairly.
- Influencing enduring systemic improvement in public administration in Australia and the region.

We achieve this outcome through complaint handling, conducting investigations, inspections, undertaking education activities, encouraging good public administration practices, and undertaking specialist oversight tasks. We also influence improvement in public administration in Indonesia and the Pacific region through collaboration with integrity partners.

Our Office currently employs 273 staff. Of those staff, 10 people self-identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, comprising 3.5% of the workforce. In 2023, the Office employed one graduate from the Australian Public Service Indigenous Australian Government Development Program (IAGDP). The graduate completed the program and graduated in November 2023 and has now moved into an ongoing APS4 position within Human Resources.



Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) provides a public commitment to continuing reconciliation. It includes practical steps to build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, while increasing our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. The RAP is part of our work to make our services more accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our RAP includes the following objectives for the Office:

- **Leadership and Office commitment**
Demonstrating the Office's commitment to reconciliation and encouraging staff members' understanding and awareness of the reconciliation process.
- **Engagement and service improvement**
Continuing to raise awareness of our services and ensure they are accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, regardless of location.
- **Capability and understanding**
Continuing to build our capacity to provide respectful and culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **Opportunities**
Implementing strategies to support and develop our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and a culturally safe workplace, supporting a workforce that reflects the diverse population we serve.

RAP Governance

The RAP Working Group arrangements provide a higher level of accountability across the Office, with all business areas involved in implementing RAP actions.

Our RAP governance includes:

Executive Committee

The executive Committee is comprised of the Office Executives, who provide the overall strategic governance and direction for the Office, including approving the annual RAP activities and budget.

First Nations and RAP Champion

This role is fulfilled by the Chief Operating Officer (also a member of the Executive Committee) and is not an Identified Position. The role of the First Nations and RAP Champion is to support and advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, as well as RAP activities across the Office. The First Nations and RAP Champion provides strategic support and direction to the RAP Working Group.

A Deputy First Nations Champion

The role of the Deputy First Nations Champion is to support the First Nations and RAP Champion, work directly with, and support the work of the Office's First Nations Engagement Manager as well as actively supporting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and RAP activities across the Office. This position is a newly established role and reflects the importance the Office places on practical means to support reconciliation. This is not an Identified Position.

First Nations Engagement Manager (FNEM)

Chairs our RAP Working Group meetings and fills the RAP Secretariat role.

This is an Identified Position that leads the Office through its own reconciliation journey, including through implementation of the Office's Reconciliation Action Plan, to build an environment that is culturally aware and provides the right supports and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Additionally, the FNEM role:

Provides specialised advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, culture and on the experience of, and access to, government services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Ensures the Office's internal complaint handling processes and systems are appropriate and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Provides specialised advice on and helping to coordinate stakeholder engagement and outreach visits.



RAP Working Group

The RAP Working Group consists of the following minimum membership reflecting all business areas.

- First Nations Champion
- Deputy First Nations Champion
- First Nations Engagement Manager
- Director, Communications, Education and Engagement
- Branch Representative, Corporate Branch
- Branch Representative, DIAL Branch
- Branch Representative, Complaints Branch
- Branch Representative, Investigations Branch
- Branch Representative, Policy and Assurance Branch
- Branch Representative, National Student Ombudsman Branch
- Additional volunteer members from across the Office.

The role of the RAP Working Group is to advocate and champion the RAP, drive implementation of RAP actions and commitments, report on RAP progress to the Executive Committee and relevant external stakeholders, including Reconciliation Australia. The Working Group is also involved in developing the new RAP for the Office, in consultation with staff and the Senior Leadership Group. All members of the First Nations Employee Network are invited to participate in the RAP Working Group. Currently four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are members of the RAP Working Group.

RAP Secretariat

This position is held by the First Nations Engagement Manager. The role of the secretariat is to schedule meetings including booking appropriate venues and issuing attendance invitations, maintain a register of Working Group actions including the progress of RAP deliverables and annual revision of the RAP Working Group Terms of Reference. The secretariat facilitates staff participation in office events including National Reconciliation Week, Mabo Day, NAIDOC Week, and cultural training activities, with assistance of the RAP Working Group. The secretariat works closely with the First Nations and RAP Champion to arrange RAP Working Group meetings and facilitate the quarterly progress reports for the Senior Leadership Group.

Key achievements under the 2020–22 RAP

Under the previous RAP, the Office achieved the following:

- A First Nations days of significance calendar was developed.
- Staff were engaged in reconciliation activities through participation in our annual First Nations dates of significance activities and increased awareness through our staff intranet and social media channels.
- Developed an Acknowledgement of Country Protocol to be used in the opening address at all internal and external meetings.
- The Office developed contacts for Traditional Owners for Welcome to Country ceremonies for each office location.
- The Office commenced review, and will continue to review under this RAP, Human Resources policies and procedures to identify any barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.
- We increased First Nations supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes, by applying for Supply Nation membership and promoting the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy. This policy has been incorporated into the Finance training program and a factsheet made available on the Procurement intranet page.
- Maintained First Nations staff representation on the RAP Working Group.
- We completed a First Nations outreach visit to the East Pilbara region in Western Australia, including Newman, Tom Price, Paraburdoo, and several remote First Nations communities alongside the WA Ombudsman, The Energy and Water Ombudsman, The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, The Equal Opportunity Commission and The Office of the Information Commissioner (WA). Our primary focus was to raise awareness of the role of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and receive complaints from community members. As a result, several complaints were received and actioned by staff.



Outreach

Community outreach with like-minded agencies gives us the opportunity to engage with remote communities, see how other agencies conduct their outreach activities, and raise awareness of what the Office does and how our services can help people.

We took an opportunity to visit local Aboriginal Community Organisations to raise awareness of the services offered by the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and to strengthen our relationships into the regional communities.

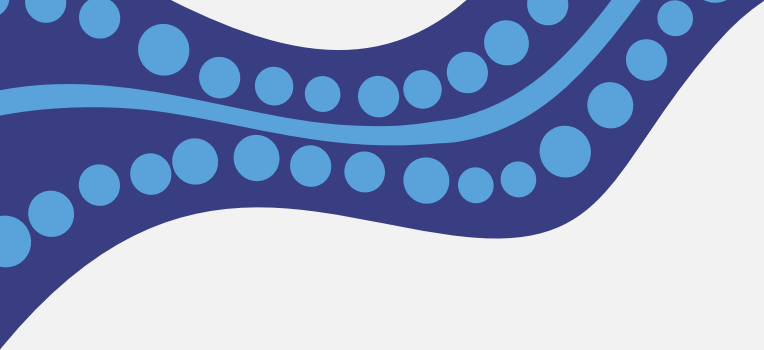
Local Aboriginal service providers, Elders and community members were invited to information sessions, followed by drop-in complaint clinics. The information sessions were well received by the local community, as many people living in regional and remote locations often feel public services are difficult to access as government agencies are generally city based.

First Nations Engagement Manager, Larina Trussler and staff from our Complaints Team participated in information sessions from our Complaints Team drop-in complaint clinics in Newman, Jigalong Remote community, Tom Price, and Paraburdoo in the Pilbara region.

The outreach program in Esperance was lead by our Deputy Ombudsman, Penny McKay, and First Nations staff member, Callan Rogers.

Callan Rogers
at Esperance
outreach





The Office also engaged with community members in the following ways:

- Unveiling of Acknowledgement of Country plaques and framed commissioned artwork in all our offices, including local Traditional Owners attending the ceremony in most offices.
- Screening of First Nations short films/documentaries using Microsoft Teams videoconferencing so that staff across all offices could attend remotely.
- Welcome to Country by local Traditional Owners on First Nations days of significance including during National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Mabo Day in various offices.

It is worth noting that in previous years most events were held in the Canberra office. However, the RAP Working Group focussed on the importance of increasing cultural awareness across all our offices and facilitated events in all regional offices and events attended by local Traditional Owners in Perth, Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne, in addition to events in the Canberra office.

Acknowledgment of Country plaques

The Office's 2020–22 Reconciliation Action Plan committed to demonstrating respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols.

We committed to achieve this by:

- Promoting the use of our Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country Protocols to all staff for opening addresses at all internal meetings, forums, and external events.
- Inviting local Traditional Owners or Custodians to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocols at significant events each year, such as National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and any other key events.
- Developing and displaying an Acknowledgement of Country plaque at the entry of each office location.

In achieving this, the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group arranged to have Acknowledgement of Country plaques and a framed copy of our commissioned First Nations artwork hung in our offices in Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

The unveiling of the new plaques and commissioned artwork included a Welcome to Country by local Traditional Owners followed by a bushtucker morning tea.

The Welcome to Country in Adelaide was performed by Senior Kurna Man, Michael Kumatpi O'Brien. Michael is a descendant of the Kurna (Adelaide Plains) and Narrunga (Yorke Peninsula) people, and a passionate advocate for Aboriginal culture, language, and history.

A Welcome to Country in Perth was performed by Kevin Fitzgerald. Kevin is a Whadjuk Elder who is a great descendant of Yellagonga (d. 1843), who was a leader of the Whadjuk Noongar people on the north side of the Swan River. Yellagonga was a Noongar clan leader and Whadjuk warrior.



Traditional Owner Senior Kurna Man, Michael Kumatpi O'Brien and Deputy Ombudsman Penny McKay

Lessons learnt from 2020–2022 RAP

The 2020–2022 Reconciliation Action Plan was the Office’s first Innovate RAP and set an ambitious agenda for the Office. The scope and practicality of RAP deliverables provided the Office with considerable learnings on how to practically give effect to our reconciliation journey moving forward.

The COVID-19 pandemic and shutdowns in various jurisdictions over the course of the 2020–2022 RAP impacted the Office’s ability to facilitate events and activities, particularly before IT system upgrades to facilitate large groups attending events remotely via video conferencing. This led to a focus on decentralising events to ensure staff in all offices had the opportunity to attend and engage with reconciliation activities.

During 2020–2022, the RAP Working Group struggled with volunteers to meet the program of work, which was exacerbated by staff attrition rates. Going forward our Deputy First Nations Champion, First Nations Engagement Manager and First Nations Staff Network will be provided with whole-of-agency support to ensure that everyone within the Office is encouraged and able to contribute to our reconciliation journey.

In this RAP, the First Nations and RAP Champion (a member of the Senior Executive Service) will play a key role in harnessing expertise from across the Office to deliver the RAP program of work, enhance cultural competency as an agency, and to provide our unique professional skills to others in the Australian Public Service (APS) to improve their services for First Nations people.

As a result of the 2020–2022 RAP learnings, we are making the following changes to this RAP and its implementation:

- Targeted activities with clear deliverables and key ownership.
- Additional support, including funding to support our First Nations Staff Network and their professional development.
- A focus on internal organisational capacity and on contributing to broader APS reconciliation activities through the provision of complaint handling advice in relation to First Nations People.

First Nations staff profile: Callan Rogers



Permission granted for use

Human Resources Assistant
Human Resources,
Corporate Branch

I'm a Dieri man from a First Nations group originating from the far northeast of South Australia, which lies between Lake Eyre in the west and Moomba in the east. I'm from a scattered family across Adelaide, Maree, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Port Lincoln in South Australia and lastly Broken Hill, New South Wales.

I commenced with the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman in October 2022 as part of the last cohort of the Indigenous Australian Government Development Program (IAGDP). I received a great opportunity to start my very first rotation with the Office within the Human Resources (HR) team for a 3-month period. I had previously studied HR many years ago as it was always one of my core interests.

My second rotation was 3 months with Complaints Assessment. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about how the staff on the ground handle extremely complex complaints and how insanely hard the whole team works with incredibly big backlogs of complaints at the time.

I permanently moved back to the Human Resources team in July 2023 as my final rotation and I am now a permanent APS4 Human Resources Assistant.

A highlight of working with the Commonwealth Ombudsman is being part of a much smaller government agency and building amazing relationships with staff, which to me feels like Mob!

My funniest moment with the Office was during my IADGP graduation, when our Chief Operating Officer and First Nations Champion, Lisa Collett, and I were running late and had to make a mad dash to arrive at my graduation ceremony on time – hands down best moment.

First Nations staff profiles: Larina Trussler



Permission granted for use

First Nations Engagement
Manager

Communications, Education and
Engagement

Corporate Branch

I am a proud Badimia Ngadju Woman from Geraldton, Western Australia. My grandmother's family originate from the Midwest, Murchison regions and my grandfather's family originate from the Norseman, Balladonia and Esperance regions.

Prior to commencing with the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman in November 2021, I worked in the Indigenous Affairs portfolio for the Australian Government for over 25 years. Most recently at the National Indigenous Australians Agency and its predecessors, including the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

For most of my career I worked in the Midwest, Murchison and Gascoyne regions of WA, before taking on roles in Perth in 2014. I moved to Canberra in 2017 to take on new roles to further develop my skills when the Indigenous Affairs portfolio was with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. I returned home to WA in 2021 and commenced work with the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman in November the same year as the First Nations Engagement Manager.

My role as the First Nations Engagement Manager has the best of both worlds where I get to participate in community outreach work as part of raising community awareness of our Office and internally, I support our First Nations staff across the

Office to ensure they feel they are appropriately and culturally supported. Additionally, my role is tasked with the development and implementation of our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which includes improving the Cultural Competency of our Office and implementing initiatives to improve First Nations recruitment and retention.

I am proud of our achievements to date, that include the inaugural annual First Nations Employee Network face-to-face workshop held in Canberra in November 2023. This involved bringing our First Nations staff from across the country to Canberra for a two-day workshop, that largely focused on their professional development and how we as a Network engage with Senior Management and other external First Nations Employee Networks.

I feel blessed to be in a role that I thoroughly enjoy, and I am looking forward to the challenge over the course of our new Innovate RAP, to not only deliver on our proposed initiatives but to also embed the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms into the work of the Office.

First Nations staff profiles: Kacey Witt



Permission granted for use

Investigation Officer

ACT & Commonwealth
Investigations

ACT Ombudsman/
Commonwealth
Ombudsman Branch

I am a proud Gumbaynggirr woman from the Mid North Coast of New South Wales from a small town called Urunga. I grew up with a strong connection and relationship with my Country and ancestors.

Prior to commencing with the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman in February 2022, I worked in the Department of Social Services (DSS) for 7 years. During my time with DSS I fulfilled numerous roles, however, two roles I felt very privileged to work in were the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children and the National Redress Scheme as an Indigenous case coordinator.

The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children aims to provide quality quantitative and qualitative data that can give insights into how a child's early years affect their development over the course of their life. As a case coordinator in the National Redress Scheme, I had the privilege of supporting First Nations people that had been forcibly removed from their families because of various historical government policies.

For 3 years, I was also the ACT First Nations Representative, my main achievement while in this role was the bi-annual virtual conference and facilitating yarning circles for the ACT network.

I joined the Commonwealth Ombudsman because I wanted to work for an independent oversight body that was committed to improving public administration by Influencing Commonwealth and ACT Government entities through our complaint handling processes, public reports, recommendations, and direct engagement.

On an individual level, as an Indigenous person, I am committed to creating and fostering workplace environments that are more supportive and accessible for other Indigenous people. I do this by using my knowledge, experience and understanding of Indigenous community politics, knowledge systems, views, values, and aspirations. I understand the intricacies and nuances of local communities, the commonalities that exist across Indigenous communities and the barriers that exist for many Indigenous people.



Relationships

Since our establishment, the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman has had a unique and enduring role to provide assurance that government and private sector entities we oversee act with integrity and treat people fairly while influencing enduring systemic improvement in public administration. The purpose of the Office has never been more important.

Our role sees us investigate complaints, review administrative action, conduct statutory compliance inspections, and support government and private sector entities we oversee to improve their practices. Many of the people who seek support from us are vulnerable or are at risk of vulnerability. Positive relationships between our Office and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are important to us because they assist us to build trust and respect and enhance the way we do our business with everyone. This means our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and stakeholders helps make our services better for everyone.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Meet annually with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	December 2025 and December 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations and RAP Champion • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Review and update engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager • Director Communication, Education and Engagement
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2025 May 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Communication, Education and Engagement
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June 2025 27 May – 3 June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations and RAP Champion
	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 27 May – 3 June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations and RAP Champion • Deputy Ombudsman
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May – 3 June 2025 27 May – 3 June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW	May 2025 May 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deputy First Nations Champion First Nations Engagement Manager
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	May 2025 July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commonwealth Ombudsman First Nations and RAP Champion
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	October 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations and RAP Champion
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	October 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deputy First Nations Champion First Nations Engagement Manager
	Promote best practice complaint handling to Australian Government agencies to support practical reconciliation through enhanced service provision to First Nations peoples.	September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Communication, Education and Engagement Commonwealth Ombudsman
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of Human Resources policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Human Resources
	Review and update the anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Human Resources
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Human Resources
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Human Resources First Nations and RAP Champion



Respect

Mutual respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is important to our Office because it helps us build positive relationships, enables us to show consideration and appreciation and subsequently, provides us with a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, histories, knowledges and rights.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director Human Resources• First Nations Engagement Manager
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our Cultural Learning Strategy.	September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director Human Resources• First Nations Engagement Manager
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, Human Resources managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	June 2025 June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director Human Resources• First Nations and RAP Champion
	Develop and implement a First Nations Cultural Awareness Strategy for all staff, including options for online and/or face to face training.	June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Nations Engagement Manager• First Nations Champion
	All staff with management responsibilities will undertake additional cultural awareness training (beyond mandatory online courses) with a focus on responsibility (performance, leave, etc.) for supporting First Nations employees.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Nations Engagement Manager• Director Human Resources• Chief Operating Officer

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations Engagement Manager First Nations Champion
	Review, update, and communicate a cultural protocols document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations Engagement Manager
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	May-June 2025 July 2025 May-June 2026 July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations Engagement Manager
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Operating Officer
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2025 July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations and RAP Champion First Nations Engagement Manager
	Review Human Resources policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director Human Resources
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	July 2025 July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations and RAP Champion



Opportunities

Improved employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development will ensure that we are fostering an organisation that reflects the community we support as well as ensuring there are benefits from diverse perspectives in our workforce. This approach will ensure that our service offering remains relevant to all our stakeholders and will support us to become an employer of choice for First Nations people.

The Office is committed to increasing employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, providing career development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff; building and maintaining a culturally safe, accessible, and respectful workplace; and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in the procurement of goods and services. We are committed to ensuring that our services are accessible, open, and transparent for everyone.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources • Chief Operating Officer
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources • Chief Operating Officer
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources
	Review Human Resources and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources • First Nations and RAP Champion
	Update Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman leave guide to clearly define entitlements under cultural leave and ensure supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff understand the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural leave e.g. sorry business, NAIDOC leave.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources
	Review recruitment policy and processes to strengthen requirements for First Nations Affirmative Measures processes.	June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources • Chief Operating Officer
	Subject to available operating budget and equitable access to opportunities, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional development opportunities.	December 2025 December 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Champion

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Further support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees through the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) First Nations Employee Network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OCO First Nations Employee Network (FNEN) to meet face to face once a year, for the purpose of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual meeting to select a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson - Meet with the Ombudsman - Leadership development/training for FNEN members - Support networking • Face to face mentoring 	November 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Champion • First Nations Engagement Manager
	FNEN to identify a schedule of proposed masterclasses to support career progression for First Nations employees.	December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager • Director Human Resources
	The Office to participate in appropriate Australian Public Service (APS) First Nations traineeship/graduate employment programs.	April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Human Resources • Chief Operating Officer
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Finance
	Review Supply Nation membership annually.	December 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Finance
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director Finance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	July 2025	• Director Finance
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	December 2025	• Director Finance
II. Improve the cultural safety and accessibility of our services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Scope the establishment of affirmative measure positions within the Complaints Branch, to support the Office's approach to complaint handling for First Nations peoples.	December 2025	• Senior Assistant Ombudsman, Complaints • Chief Operating Officer
	Facilitate a review of Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) First Nations complaint handling processes and Better Practice Guide for Complaint Handling to promote safety and accessibility in complaint handling services.	September 2026	• Commonwealth Ombudsman



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	March 2025 April 2025 June 2025 August 2025 October 2025 December 2025 February 2026 April 2026 June 2026 August 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Nations Engagement Manager
	Review and update Terms of Reference for the RWG.	June 2025 June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Nations Engagement Manager
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	March 2025 April 2025 June 2025 August 2025 October 2025 December 2025 February 2026 April 2026 June 2026 August 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Nations Engagement Manager

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2025 July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations and RAP Champion • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	May – June 2025 July 2025 May – June 2026 July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations and RAP Champion • Deputy First Nations Champion
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2025 January 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth Ombudsman
	Maintain an internal First Nations and RAP Champion from senior management.	March 2025 January 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth Ombudsman
14. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Survey.	August 2025 August 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2025 September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	June 2025 September 2025 December 2025 March 2026 June 2026 September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations and RAP Champion • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings, annually.	October 2025 October 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy First Nations Champion • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2025 May 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager
15. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager

Contact

For enquiries about this plan, email the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman at media@ombudsman.gov.au.

If you would like to make a complaint or obtain further information about the Commonwealth Ombudsman, contact us:

- online at ombudsman.gov.au
- by phone on 1300 362 072 (note this is not a toll-free number and calls from mobile phones may attract additional charges)
- in writing at GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601
- in person at one of our office locations listed below:
 - Adelaide – Level 11, 25 Grenfell Street
 - Brisbane – Level 22, 215 Adelaide Street
 - Canberra – Level 5, 14 Childers Street
 - Sydney – Level 20, 60 Castlereagh Street

Services available to help you

First Nations people can contact us on our Indigenous line at 1800 060 789.

If English is not your first language and you require a translating and interpreting service, the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) is a free-of-charge service available on 131 450.

If you are Deaf/deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech communication difficulty, you can use the National Relay Service (NRS) to contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Visit the [National Relay Service website](#) or phone 1800 555 727.



COMMONWEALTH
OMBUDSMAN



Helping people,
improving government

ombudsman.gov.au