



Environmental  
Defenders Office

# Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

August 2024 - August 2026





# Artist and artwork profile

Jack Green is a Garrwa and Marra man. He was born in 1953 under a coolabah tree in a creek-bed on Wakaya Country at Soudan Station, a pastoral property in the Northern Territory, where his parents were working and living. Jack's homeland is situated in the Garrwa Country near Robinson River in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria region.

Jack says 'I started painting so I can get my voice out. I want to show people what is happening to our Country and to Aboriginal people. No one is listening to us. What we want. How we want to live. What we want in the future for our children. It's for these reasons that I started to paint. I want government to listen to Aboriginal people. I want people in the cities to know what's happening to us and our Country'.

Jack has been represented in many national exhibitions and awards. His work is also held in a number of significant private and public collections including the Australian War Memorial and The Australian National University Art Collection.

## *Everywhere, all around us are the Dreaming Tracks and Sacred Sites, 2023*

Our Country is alive with sacred sites and Dreaming tracks. They surround us and we sing their songs. In the red section of the painting is the Glyde River. At Catfish Hole there is a sacred site where the Snake came out before moving down to another place, close to the open cut wound at McArthur River Mine. I painted this as a heart, upside down, cos it hurts us, what they've done, digging up and destroying the resting place of the Rainbow Serpent. Here, the mining company working with the government cut the river and diverted the waters. But we know that the river keeps pushing to find its way back. Right where they cut McArthur River, the diggers keep eating slowly into our sacred sites within the mine lease. The Turtle Dreaming, the Gabala Tree and the Barramundi Dreaming, they are all there and they are all in danger. So are our old quarry sites, where tools were made and traded. We can't go to look after them because Glencore keep us out of the mine lease.

Nearby, (in the white section) we have the circumcision ceremony where we make men. At this time we pick up one of the Snakes' song and put the hair belt on, ready to put the boys through the ceremony. In the blue section the Mermaids move across their Dreaming Track with their songs. At the bottom on the right are women painted up singing the Mermaid Song. Everywhere, all around us are the Dreaming Tracks and Sacred Sites.

All the circles in the painting represent the spirits in the land. When you go to these places you feel them. We are fighting to protect them from mining companies and the government. In the yellow section there's a bloke trying to put out a fire while nearby the Dreaming track of the small kangaroo passes by southeast on the way to Kaiana. This symbolises us trying to put out bad agreements government put to us. They stuffed up letting McArthur River Mine happen. We've had enough and we want to put out the way government just keeps talking at us and not listening to us and recognising our rights to land and sacred sites. Their way of working needs to stop like a wildfire needs to be put out.

### **Jack Green 2023**



**Jack Green**

*Everywhere, all around us are the Dreaming Tracks and Sacred Sites, 2023*

# Acknowledgments

## Acknowledgment of Country and Recognition of Self-Determination and First Laws

Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) recognises and pays respect to the First Nations peoples of the lands, seas and rivers of what is now known as Australia. We pay our respects to the First Nations Elders past, present and future; and aspire to learn from traditional knowledges and customs that exist from and within First Laws so that together, we can protect our environment and First Nations' cultural heritage through both First and Western laws. We recognise that First Nations' Countries were never ceded and express our remorse for the injustices and inequities that have been and continue to be endured by the First Nations peoples of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands since the beginning of colonisation.

We pay our respects to the First Nations Elders past, present and future.

EDO recognises self-determination as the right to freely determine one's political status and freely pursue economic, social and cultural development. EDO respects all First Nations peoples' rights to be self-determined, which extends to recognising the many different First Nations countries within Australia and the Torres Strait Islands, as well as the multitude of languages, cultures, protocols and First Laws.

## Acknowledgement of First Nations Peoples contribution to EDO's path towards reconciliation

We acknowledge Garrwa and Marra man, Jack Green, in sharing his artwork towards EDO's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We also acknowledge the First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee (Committee) and First Nations employees in their generous sharing of ideas and expertise in shaping this RAP.

## A Note on Language

We acknowledge that there is a legacy of writing about First Nations peoples without seeking guidance about terminology. We also acknowledge that where possible, specificity is more respectful. For the purpose of this RAP, we have chosen to use the term First Nations. We acknowledge that not all First Nations peoples will identify with that term and that they may instead identify using other terms or with their immediate community or language group.

First Laws is used to describe the laws which exist within First Nations. It is not intended to diminish the importance or status of the customs, traditions, kinship and heritage of First Nations peoples in Australia. EDO respects all First Laws and values their inherit and immeasurable worth. EDO recognises that there are many different terms used throughout First Nations for what is understood in the Western world as 'First Laws'. However, EDO has chosen to use the term First Laws following agreement from the First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee.

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# Message from Reconciliation Australia CEO



Reconciliation Australia commends Environmental Defenders Office on the formal endorsement of its inaugural 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 Environmental Defenders Office 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, Environmental Defenders Office 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. Environmental Defenders Office is part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Environmental Defenders Office's 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 Environmental Defenders Office on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

**Karen Mundine**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia

# Message from EDO's Board Chair and CEO



On behalf of the staff and Board of the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), we are proud to share with you EDO's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

This Innovate RAP formally acknowledges our unwavering commitment to forging a more inclusive, respectful, equitable and harmonious future with this continent's First Nations peoples.

Our vision of reconciliation is of an Australia where the diverse voices and relationships of First Nations peoples with their Countries are prioritised and respected. An Australia where the cultures of First Nations peoples and their unique connections to Country are a source of immense pride for all Australians.

EDO has always championed the principles of fairness and equity and yet, too often we have not sufficiently recognised the historical and ongoing injustices and systemic disparities perpetrated against First Nations peoples, and notably the role of the Western legal system in perpetuating these injustices.

At the heart of our RAP lies a sincere acknowledgment of the impacts of colonisation, dispossession, and the erosion of cultural identity. We acknowledge the role of Western laws and legal concepts – beginning with Terra Nullius – in the dispossession and oppression of First Nations peoples, the destruction of Country, and the intergenerational trauma which persists in Australia. We must confront the past with humility and compassion.

Reconciliation requires dialogue and understanding. As a community legal centre, we commit to meaningful engagement with First Nations communities, fostering

relationships built on trust, respect, and collaboration. We aspire to immerse ourselves in the cultural richness and diversity of First Nations perspectives. By actively seeking input and guidance, we aim to incorporate First Nations knowledge and values into our legal practice.

In our pursuit of justice, we must amplify First Nations voices within our organisation, as well as in the provision of the organisation's legal services and EDO's realms of influence. We commit to fostering an inclusive environment that welcomes and actively promotes diversity. Through recruiting and retaining First Nations talent, providing opportunities for professional growth, and creating spaces for First Nations perspectives in our decision-making processes, we strive to build a community that mirrors the rich mosaic of our society.

The reconciliation journey is illuminated by the light of knowledge. We commit to ongoing education within EDO, ensuring that every member is equipped with a deep understanding of First Nations histories, cultures and EDO's realms of influence. By fostering cultural learning, we aim to create a workplace where everyone is empowered to contribute toward reconciliation.

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey that requires vigilance, self-reflection, and accountability. Our RAP outlines clear, measurable goals and timelines, allowing us to track our progress transparently. Regular assessments, consultations with First Nations communities, and collaboration with partners will be integral to our commitment to accountability. We want to show that our actions speak louder than our words.

This RAP marks an important step in our reconciliation journey. We look forward to implementing our Innovate RAP and working toward a more reconciled Australia.

**Brent Wallace**  
Chair

**David Morris**  
CEO

# Message from First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee

We are delighted to endorse the new RAP for EDO. This plan reflects a genuine commitment to reconciliation. It will enable EDO staff and First Nations peoples to build respectful relationships, create inclusive opportunities, and work together more effectively. For instance, this plan will support future initiatives such as delivering cultural safety, including anti-racism programs for all staff, creating a safe space for everyone, and establishing mentorship and employment opportunity portals.

The RAP outlines four key areas of action:

- relationships
- respect
- opportunities
- governance

The Committee supports other initiatives such as developing cultural competency training, improving First Nations recruitment and retention, procuring from First Nations businesses, and advocating alongside First Nations clients. These initiatives will drive reconciliation through our core business. The Committee is dedicated to promoting and creating meaningful opportunities to establish positive relationships between First Nations and non-Indigenous people. We aim to ensure that First Nations people are respected and valued and have access to justice, resources and services necessary to succeed.

Regular monitoring, review and reporting on the RAP will be vital. We welcome open communication and consultation with staff and the community throughout the RAP process. Feedback will help identify successes and areas for improvement. Regular review and reporting of RAP

outcomes will enable stakeholders to review the effectiveness of the RAP and make adjustments as needed. This will provide a platform for stakeholders to identify issues or disputes which may arise. Regular feedback will also help to ensure that RAP goals are being achieved.

The Committee appreciates our role in providing input based on our diverse experiences and knowledge as First Nations peoples from different backgrounds and heritages. Ongoing guidance from Elders and community leaders is essential to ensuring the RAP meets community needs and expectations in challenging environments. A commitment the Committee makes is our promise for continual dialogue and consultation to ensure the RAP is effective and reflective of our commitment to reconciliation. Our Committee also understands the critical importance of keeping our community informed. We are committed to advocating for positive change and better outcomes for First Nations peoples and the staff of EDO.

Overall, this RAP signifies an essential step towards a future where First Nations cultures, rights and well-being are understood, respected, and championed. We hope it inspires reconciliation initiatives across the sector and beyond. Together, we can build relationships, demonstrate respect, create opportunities, and promote good governance for the benefit of EDO, First Nations peoples and Country.

We look forward to collaborating with you to implement the RAP and make meaningful progress in the spirit of ongoing reconciliation.





Photo: Miles Tweedie - Mardathoonera Traditional Custodian Raelene Cooper in Boorloo/Perth

# Non-Indigenous staff responsibility in reconciliation

In 235 years of colonisation, non-Indigenous Australians have caused immeasurable harm to the First Nations peoples of this continent, including committing genocide, dividing and disrupting families and forcibly and brutally obstructing First Nations peoples' cultural practices and ways of being that have sustained communities and cared for Country since time immemorial. This RAP is an opportunity for the non-Indigenous staff of EDO to take responsibility for this history. In doing so, the non-Indigenous staff of EDO commit to undertake the vast majority of deliverables set out in this RAP. EDO strongly believes that reconciliation will provide the greatest benefit to all Australians if non-Indigenous Australians take greater responsibility for the work required to achieve reconciliation. Reconciliation is a journey shared among all Australians, but it is non-Indigenous Australians who have the most to reflect on and redress.

## EDO's view of RAPs

The devastating result of the Voice Referendum has left many Australians questioning whether reconciliation is a viable strategy in Australia. EDO respects the views of First Nations people who lack faith and interest in reconciliation following this heartbreaking result.

With respect for all First Nations peoples who feel this way, EDO is choosing to view this RAP as a way to be held to account by our external community in our pursuit of outcomes that achieve justice alongside First Nations people in the areas EDO can influence. Following this moment of national shame, EDO is strengthened in our resolve to stand with First Nations communities.



Photo: Meg Keene - Galilee Coal Project cultural witnesses Jiritju Fourmile and Lala Gutchen outside Brisbane Magistrates Court

# EDO's vision for reconciliation

EDO envisages a reconciled Australia as one where the diverse voices and relationships of First Nations peoples with their Countries are prioritised and respected. An Australia where, since time immemorial, the unique connections of First Nations peoples with their Countries and their expertise in protecting and caring for their Countries, is a source of immense pride for all Australians.

To realise this vision EDO will undertake meaningful action in this space by:

- supporting the self-determination of First Nations peoples within EDO's sphere of influence;
- working alongside First Nations peoples to recognise the impacts of colonisation which harms and hinders protection of their Countries and cultures;
- taking great pride in, and continuously learning about, the rich cultures, knowledges, and connections of First Nations peoples; and
- centering the voices of First Nations peoples in all our work.



# Our business

EDO is the largest environmental legal centre in the Australia-Pacific, dedicated to using the Western law to protect our climate, communities, wildlife, and culture.

We are an independent, not-for-profit Western environmental law organisation, driven by our vision of a world where nature thrives. We take landmark environmental cases to court and design and advocate for Western laws that better protect our land, air, and water.

Since 1984, EDO's expert team of lawyers and scientists have been working alongside communities across Australia, providing Western legal services for a diverse range of clients – from farmers to bushfire survivors, to community coalitions, to Traditional Owners. Building strong, trusted relationships with communities is a core part of the way we work.

EDO recognises that First Nations justice and environmental justice are inextricably linked. We partner with First Nations peoples as they protect and promote their Countries, cultures and heritage through the Western law, and centre understanding of, and respect for, their perspectives in our work.

As a community legal centre, we hold important relationships throughout the Western legal profession, including with courts, universities, and other lawyers. We work with government, industry, and other environmental NGOs to push for and deliver bold legal solutions for the environment.

We recognise the urgency of this decade of consequence. While the climate and biodiversity crises affect us all, the burdens of environmentally destructive practices are unequally shared between communities and across generations.

EDO plays a unique and critical role in responding to these challenges. Through legal investigation, litigation, legal advocacy, law reform and engagement with communities and the media, our work has the power to influence rapid systemic changes for a healthy, thriving environment, and a more just world.







Photo: Kikki Starr





In *Tipakalippa v Santos* EDO represented Tiwi Traditional Owner Dennis Tipakalippa to ensure the Australian Government gives **RESPECT** to First Nations peoples' connection to Sea Country when making decisions about offshore gas projects. In an historic victory, the Court found Tiwi Islanders must be consulted about potential impacts to their Sea Country.

Noongar woman, Casey Kickett was appointed as the inaugural Director of EDO's First Nations Program to guide the approach and **GOVERNANCE** of our work alongside First Nations Communities. The First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee work closely with the Director to ensure that this governance is self-determined and community driven.



## Our staff and locations

EDO operates eight offices nationally on the unceded lands of First Nations peoples. We recognise that these First Nations communities practise laws that come from the land and are crucial for the renewal and sustenance of life and the land itself.

EDO is governed by the Board, who drive the strategic direction of the organisation, as well as manage risk. EDO's Board includes two First Nations members, one of whom is also the Chair of the First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee.

The Committee is an external representative body from six different First Nations / Countries, who bring their individual areas of expertise, lived experiences and knowledge as First Nations people to guide EDO in areas of work involving First Nations peoples and communities.

We employ over 100 people across Australia in legal, scientific, communications and administration roles. Like many not-for-profit organisations, EDO's success also relies on the help of dedicated volunteers and students who regularly assist us. We thank our 150 volunteers from the past year, including student legal placements, pro bono science experts, and barristers.

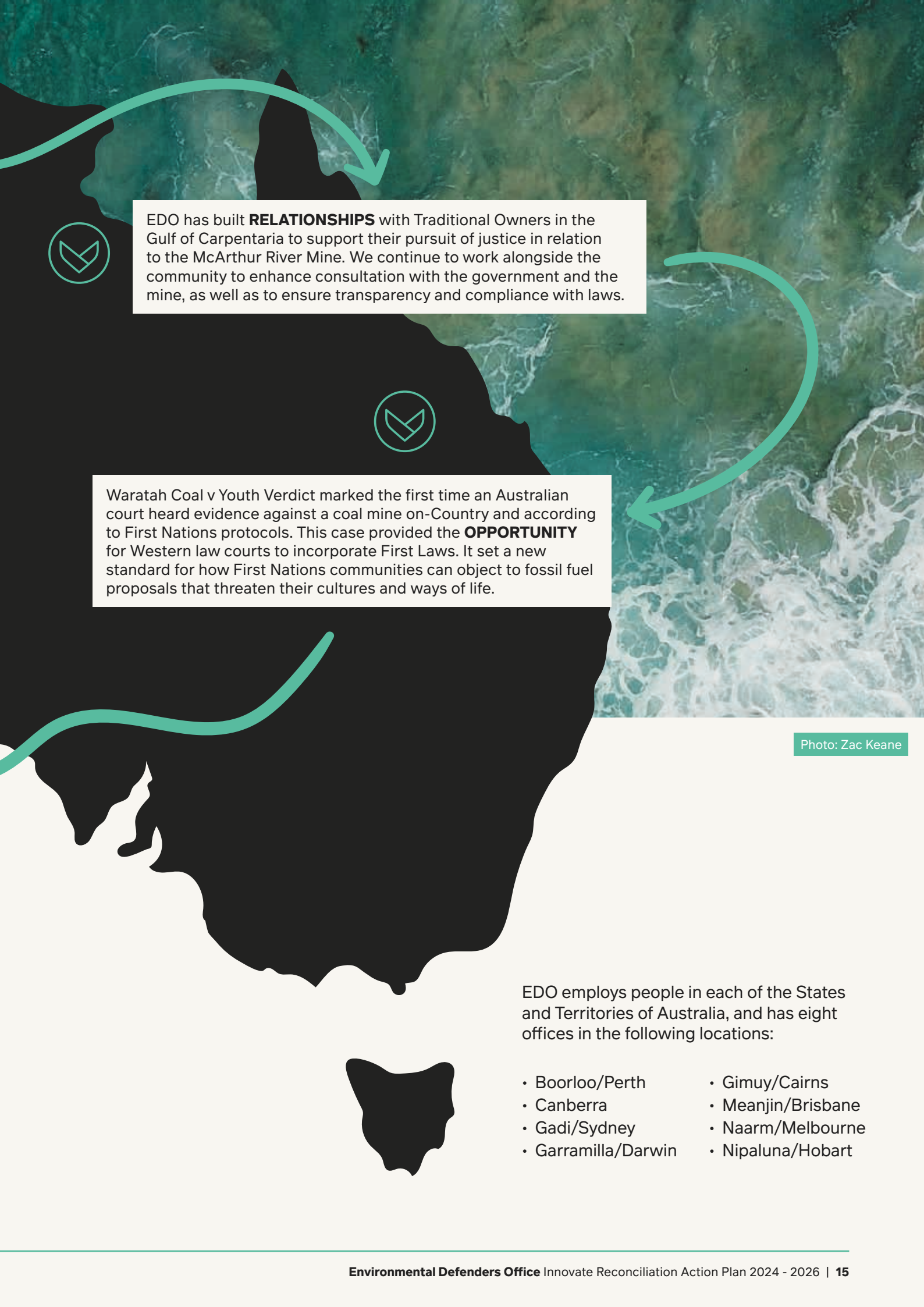
Currently, six team members have identified themselves as First Nations people. EDO is committed to creating meaningful opportunities to increase our First Nations workforce, at all levels of the organisation.

As an organisation, we understand there can be no environmental justice without justice for our own staff and community, especially First Nations peoples. EDO established the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee in 2020 to support EDO's efforts to become a diverse and inclusive workplace supporting a highly skilled, engaged and effective team.

Supported by the advice of our staff, community and peers, JEDI created and is implementing its JEDI policy and strategy to champion EDO's values and principles of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion at all levels of EDO, both internally and externally.

One way JEDI does this is by identifying important and meaningful dates where EDO can publicly stand up for justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as demonstrate support for marginalised or structurally disadvantaged communities. This Cause Calendar and its relevant communications and activities are managed and developed by JEDI, with collaboration from the First Nations Working Group and EDO's Affinity Groups (there are currently three - the Global Majority Affinity Group, the Disability Affinity Group and the LGBTQIA+ Affinity Group).





EDO has built **RELATIONSHIPS** with Traditional Owners in the Gulf of Carpentaria to support their pursuit of justice in relation to the McArthur River Mine. We continue to work alongside the community to enhance consultation with the government and the mine, as well as to ensure transparency and compliance with laws.

Waratah Coal v Youth Verdict marked the first time an Australian court heard evidence against a coal mine on-Country and according to First Nations protocols. This case provided the **OPPORTUNITY** for Western law courts to incorporate First Laws. It set a new standard for how First Nations communities can object to fossil fuel proposals that threaten their cultures and ways of life.

Photo: Zac Keane

EDO employs people in each of the States and Territories of Australia, and has eight offices in the following locations:

- Boorloo/Perth
- Canberra
- Gadi/Sydney
- Garramilla/Darwin
- Gimuy/Cairns
- Meanjin/Brisbane
- Naarm/Melbourne
- Nipaluna/Hobart

# Our journey toward reconciliation

EDO has a long history of working alongside First Nations peoples as colleagues, clients, and partners. The first EDO office was established in 1984 and in 2019 we became unified in our journey to reconciliation when eight separate state and territory EDOs merged to form one national organisation.

## Strengthening policies for a culturally safe and inclusive workplace

- First Nations cultural competence training was provided to all staff in June 2021 through the Centre for Cultural Competence Australia. EDO has since created a Cultural Safety Training Plan, and this training is now compulsory for all EDO staff and sits as the first level of training in the plan.
- A Cultural Safety Policy was adopted by EDO in 2023. Alongside this Cultural Safety Policy sits a Cultural Safety Training Plan, which stipulates how EDO will move beyond cultural awareness through to cultural safety. As an organisation, EDO is moving beyond cultural awareness and is aiming to become a culturally sensitive organisation by the end of 2025. EDO began this journey in 2023 by partnering with Kind Enterprises to roll out three sessions of anti-racism training.
- Cultural leave, Sorry Business and Ceremonial leave are now included in EDO's leave policy.
- Our Recruitment and Selection policy includes a provision for better reaching eligible First Nations candidates. The policy requires that positions are advertised through at least one of the following streams: First Nations media, networks, and communities.

## A self-determining First Nations Program for EDO

- The First Nations Program, established in 2020, represents a paradigm shift for EDO. It reflects our view that First Nations peoples' knowledges and cultures are central to the protection and restoration of nature and our belief that First Nations' justice and environmental justice are inextricably linked.
- The purpose of the First Nations Program is to work with and advocate for the rights of First Nations peoples in EDO's work. The Program is being co-designed by the First Nations Director and the Committee.
- EDO welcomed Casey Kickett in her role as First Nations Director in June 2022.



Photo: Deleee Cook

## First Nations Working Group

- The First Nations Working Group (formerly First Nations and Indigenous Peoples Program Working Group) was established in July 2020 to provide advice from the perspective of First Nations staff on internal matters.
- The Group engaged Dr Anne Poelina via her consultancy Madjulla and Dist. Professor Larissa Behrendt via University of Technology Sydney's Jumbunna Institute to review EDO's provision of legal services to First Nations and Indigenous Peoples in Australia and the Pacific, identify what gaps exist within EDO, and make recommendations for establishing a self-determined First Nations Program.
- The Jumbunna and Madjulla reports were shared with staff in June 2022 and followed by presentations from Madjulla and the Jumbunna Institute.

## First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee

- The Committee is a representative national group of people from six different First Nations Countries, who bring their lived experiences and knowledges to guide EDO in its areas of work which involve First Nations peoples and communities, including internally.
- The Committee was one of the key recommendations from the Jumbunna Report.
- The first Committee meeting was held Nov/Dec 2022.
- EDO acknowledges that the Committee is in an early stage of development and will take time to establish how it will work with the EDO, including how EDO is best to develop relationships of trust and respect with the First Nations communities we work with.

## Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023

- EDO's first strategic plan after becoming a national organisation in 2019 identified four Strategic Goals, Goal 3 being: "To empower First Nations and Indigenous Peoples and centre understanding of and respect for their perspectives in our work."
- At the time of writing, EDO is developing a new strategic plan, building on the foundation that has been laid in the areas of enduring relationships and partnerships, increasing internal capacity and capabilities and truth telling.



# Our RAP

Our RAP embodies our belief that we cannot truly work to defend the environment without partnering with the experts of knowing and protecting Country - First Nations peoples, who continue to defend and care for their Countries as they have done for millennia.

EDO has chosen to be ambitious in our reconciliation goals by advancing directly to an Innovate RAP - an aspiring commitment to build more respectful and meaningful relationships with First Nations Communities, engage staff more deeply in reconciliation, and embed our RAP commitments into our core business. Our RAP is a vital step for ensuring we act on our intention to improve the way that we work with First Nations peoples.

We acknowledge that the Western legal system has been the basis of the oppression, genocide and injustices experienced since colonisation. To achieve our reconciliation vision requires recognition of this, as well as recognition of the expertise of First Nations peoples in their own laws.

We commit to recognise the sovereignty of First Nations peoples and their rights to self-determination and control of their lands and waters. As representatives of the Western legal system, we commit to supporting the empowerment of First Nations peoples to use the Western legal system in a way that best serves the needs of their communities. The empowerment of First Nations peoples is essential for a safer, more holistic, and more just legal system for all Australians.

Our RAP is an opportunity to formalise our commitment to the ongoing journey of reconciliation and be held publicly accountable by Reconciliation Australia, our clients, and the EDO community in taking meaningful action to advance reconciliation and support First Nations self-determination.



Photo: Anissa Terry

**EDO's RAP Working Group is grateful for the following members:**

**Current**

**Casey Kickett**

Director, First Nations Program  
RAP Co-Chair  
Noongar woman

**Catheryn Cheetham**

National Operations Coordinator  
RAP Co-Chair

**Vanessa Bartholomew**

Marketing and Media Specialist

**Jessica Border**

Solicitor

**Asha Keaney**

Solicitor

**Annemarie Kohn**

Head of Philanthropy

**Christina Meyers**

Legal Administrator

**Kirstiana Ward**

Managing Lawyer

EDO's RAP Champion is CEO, David Morris.

**Former**

**Margaret Shanafield**

Scientific Officer

**Meg Lamb**

Senior Solicitor

**Elise Broadfoot-Mills**

Solicitor

**Revel Pointon**

Managing Lawyer

The RAP Working Group would like to thank Mollie O'Connor for stepping in as a First Nations Co-Chair of the RAP Working Group whilst our permanent First Nations Co-Chair was on leave. We would also like to thank Jessica Xavier, our Content Specialist, for her assistance in writing EDO's RAP.

# Relationships



We recognise that strong relationships are the foundation for understanding and respect between First Nations peoples and other Australians. Relationships are a pathway for healing and creating a future together that supports First Nations justice.

We are committed to building and maintaining strong and trusted relationships and partnerships with First Nations peoples, and deepening our understanding of the needs and perspectives of First Nations clients and working meaningfully with them to meet the needs and desires of their communities.

This pillar of our RAP guides the way we engage with First Nations stakeholders and organisations, and how we create a culturally safe workplace and service. It sets out how we will build relationships as we promote and celebrate reconciliation.

## Action 1 - Establish and maintain relationships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Meet with local First Nations stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	April 2026	Lead – Director, First Nations Program
Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.	July 2025	Lead – Director, First Nations Program
Board to participate in annual formal gathering with First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee.	November 2025	Lead – CEO

## Action 2 - Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff via our dedicated Reconciliation intranet page.	May 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May- 3 June 2025, 2026	Lead – JEDI Chairs
Register all EDO NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	April 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Working Group

## Action 3 - Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	June 2025	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Provide all staff with 6 monthly updates on the RAP implementation.	May and November 2024, 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Review existing legal policies in relation to prioritising the engagement of First Nations peoples for our work.	March 2025	Lead – Policy Owner and Director
Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	May 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of Marketing and Media
Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	November 2024, 2025	Lead – Head of Marketing and Media & Director, Fundraising, Marketing and Communications
Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	March 2025, 2026	Lead – Director, First Nations Program





Photo: Bang Media - Gimuy Walubara man Jiritju Fourmile performing a smoking ceremony with his daughter in Gimuy/Cairns.

**Action 4 - Promote positive race relationships through anti-discrimination strategies**

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Continue to review HR policies and procedures to identify and update, as required, existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Review all anti-discrimination policies for our organisation to ensure First Nations peoples’ safety at work is upheld.	March 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Engage with First Nations stakeholders to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	June 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Educate all staff on the effects of racism.	September 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture

**Action 5 - Improve First Nations’ accessibility to justice and to EDO’s services**

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Create a National Cultural Heritage Guide at Commonwealth level.	March 2026	Lead – Director, First Nations Program
Review existing Client Feedback policy and ensure that feedback mechanisms provided are accessible to First Nations clients and stakeholders. If necessary, create specific First Nations feedback system.	November 2025	Lead – Legal Directors & Director, First Nations Program

# Respect



This pillar of our RAP acknowledges the importance of truth-telling about the ongoing harm and racism which is perpetuated by the Western legal framework as we work towards a reconciled Australia. It is about taking great pride in, and continuously learning about, the rich cultures, histories, and connections of First Nations peoples.

We are committed to supporting First Nations peoples to have their voices heard and participate in decision-making. We strive to support First Nations clients as they claim their right to manage their Countries and cultures.

We recognise that First Nations peoples hold ancient wisdom and knowledges about their Countries, and that respecting the deep relationships First Nations peoples have with their land, sky and waters is fundamental for rebuilding a world where nature thrives.

## Action 6 - Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledges, and rights through cultural learning

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	July 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Consult First Nations Strategic Advisory Committee to inform our cultural learning strategy.	June 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture & Director, First Nations Program
Develop, implement and communicate a yearly cultural learning strategy, to drive the Cultural Safety Training Plan Document for the EDO team.	August 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	October 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Board to participate in face-to-face cultural awareness training. Such training to be contextually relevant to Directors' role within EDO.	May 2025	Lead – CEO
Explore ways to identify First Nations experts.	March 2025	Lead – Director, Science
Request a First Nations organisation that sits within the environmental, legal or not-for-profit space similarly to how EDO does, to present to EDO their organisation, history, importance and ways of working	February 2025	Lead – Director, First Nations Program
Review our First Nations Place Names Database on a yearly basis to ensure relevant dual naming in all internal and external communications where appropriate.	July 2025, 2026	Lead – Director, First Nations Program
Continue to implement the Cultural Safety Training plan.	July 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture

## Action 7 - Demonstrate respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	May 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Develop, implement, and communicate cultural protocols document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	February 2025	Lead – Director, First Nations Program
Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	July 2025, 2026	Lead – Executive Assistant to CEO and Board Secretariat
Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings. *Important meetings to be guided by the Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols to be created.	August 2025, 2026	Lead – Meeting Chair
Install a plaque in each office acknowledging the Traditional Owners.	April 2026	Lead – National Operations Coordinator





Photo: Gryffyn M

**Action 8 - Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week**

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	March 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	July 2025, 2026	Lead – JEDI Co-Chairs



# Opportunities



EDO understands that protecting and caring for Country is an intricate personal and cultural obligation for many First Nations peoples. We also recognise that the mainstream environmental movement has failed and excluded First Nations peoples for decades.

We commit to improving the way we recruit, retain, and support the career development of First Nations staff. We will embed a procurement strategy that supports First Nations businesses. EDO will also develop a funding strategy to resource and grow our work with First Nations peoples.

A key part of achieving environmental justice in Australia is the self-determination of First Nations peoples. By working with First Nations peoples as colleagues, clients and partners, EDO can learn from and better work alongside First Nations peoples as they seek justice and lead in looking after their Countries, for the benefit of all Australians.

## Action 9 - Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations recruitment, retention, and professional development

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Build understanding of current First Nations staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	January 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Engage with First Nations staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	July 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Develop and implement a First Nations recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	July 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach First Nations stakeholders.	August 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to First Nations participation in our workplace.	October 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Increase the number of First Nations staff.	May 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Require leadership and others involved in recruitment to undertake training around recruitment of First Nations peoples.	May 2025	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Identify opportunities to raise the number of First Nations members of EDO to a minimum of 5% of EDO's total membership.	June 2025	Lead – Board Chair
Provide First Nations peoples the opportunity to incorporate First Nations knowledges into EDO's Science Team via a Two-Way Science paradigm.	March 2026	Lead – Director, Science & Director, First Nations Program

## Action 10 - Increase First Nations supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Develop and implement a First Nations procurement strategy.	January 2025	Lead – Senior IT Manager
Investigate Supply Nation membership.	July 2025	Lead – National Operations Coordinator
Develop and communicate opportunities for the procurement of goods and services from First Nations businesses to staff.	July 2025, January 2026	Lead – National Operations Coordinator
Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from First Nations businesses.	July 2025	Lead – Senior IT Manager
Develop commercial relationships with First Nations businesses.	October 2025	Lead – Director, Finance and Operations
Procure a First Nations business at least once a year (not including Welcome to Country).	February 2025, 2026	Lead – Director, First Nations Program

**Action 11 - Sustainably resource EDO's internal and external work in relation to First Nations peoples and communities**

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Create 3 new connections to funders interested in funding First Nations work.	March 2025	Lead – Head of Philanthropy
Include First Nations concepts in grant applications related to First Nations work.	June 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of Philanthropy & Director, First Nations Program
Include an additional 2% increase in at least 2 funding applications per year, where those funding applications apply to Australia, to sustain First Nations work, staffing and governance of EDO.	June 2025, 2026, 2027	Lead – Head of Philanthropy & Director, First Nations Program & Director, Finance and Operations
Establish 2 streams of tied funding for EDO's First Nations work.	June 2025	Lead – Head of Philanthropy & Director, First Nations Program
Include at least 1 identified role in all funding being requested which relates to First Nations communities or concepts.	July 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of Philanthropy & Director, First Nations Program
Develop a funding strategy for EDO's First Nations work.	August 2024, 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of Philanthropy & Director, First Nations Program
Update EDO's Fundraising Policy to reflect EDO's commitment to funding First Nations work, and how to fund First Nations work.	July 2025	Lead – Director FMC & Director, First Nations Program

**Action 12 - Leverage EDO's privilege to enable First Nations peoples to connect and have their voices heard**

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Offer First Nations clients the opportunity to speak at parliamentary hearings EDO is invited to.	December 2025	Lead – Legal Directors
Offer First Nations clients the opportunity to speak with decision makers when EDO is invited to meet with them.	December 2025	Lead – Legal Directors
Ensure First Nations clients attend at least 6 meetings with decision makers and/or parliamentary hearings.	December 2025	Lead – Legal Directors
Provide First Nations peoples the opportunity to share their stories to drive and respond to law reform.	April 2025	Lead – Head of Policy and Law Reform

# Governance



EDO commits to strengthening our internal structures and processes to embed our RAP commitments in all our work and continue our reconciliation journey in the most meaningful way.

## Action 13 - Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Maintain First Nations representation on the RAP WG.	February 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Maintain, apply, and review the Terms of Reference for the RAP WG.	November 2024, 2025	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	Feb, May, Aug, Nov 2024, 2025 and 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs

## Action 14 - Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2025, 2026	Lead – Director, Finance and Operations
Engage EDO senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	September 2024, July 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Include RAP responsibilities in performance reviews.	May 2025, 2026	Lead – Head of People and Culture
Define and maintain appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	September 2024, August 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	February 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Include commitments in EDO's RAP as part of annual strategic planning and incorporate them into the annual budget.	March 2025, 2026	Lead – Board Chair



**Action 15 - Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally**

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
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, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August annually	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	Feb, May, Aug, Nov 2024, 2025, 2026s	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings, annually.	February 2025, 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs & Head of Marketing and Media
Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	March 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs
Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	May 2026	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs

**Action 16 - Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP**

DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	November 2025	Lead – RAP Co-Chairs



# Environmental Defenders Office

If you would like further information on EDO's Reconciliation Action Plan, please contact us.

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