

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

Progress Report

January - December 2025



Acknowledgement of Country



AARNet acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we work upon and connect across, recognising the profound connection to lands, waters and communities where we operate.

We honour the enduring cultural legacy and continuous thread of storytelling and communication of the world's most ancient living cultures.

We extend our respect to the Elders, those who have passed, those who are with us today, and those who will guide us into the future.

Overview and commitment

AARNet's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), launched in May 2025, marks a significant step in embedding reconciliation within our organisation.

The RAP provides a framework to strengthen relationships, respect and opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It supports our commitment to creating meaningful, measurable change and ensuring reconciliation is integrated into how we work across the research and education sector.



The AARNet team at the official launch of AARNet's Reflect RAP in 2025, showcasing the artwork created by Kamilaroi artist Bianca Gardiner-Dodd. Photo: Good Thanks Media.

Reflect RAP launch event

AARNet officially launched its Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) on 28 May 2025 at our Chatswood head office during National Reconciliation Week, marking a significant milestone in our organisation's reconciliation journey.

The event opened with a powerful Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by local Traditional Custodians, creating a moment of grounding and reflection for all who attended. Staff and Board members joined both in person and online, reinforcing the sense of collective commitment across our national footprint.

A highlight of the launch was the unveiling of a bespoke artwork created by Kamilaroi artist Bianca Gardiner-Dodd. Her piece beautifully captures the connection between traditional knowledge systems and AARNet's digital network, serving as a visual representation of the role we play in bringing communities, knowledge and stories together.

The launch was not only a formal commencement of our Reflect RAP, but also a proud and unifying moment, one that brought our people together to acknowledge our responsibilities, celebrate Indigenous culture and reaffirm our commitment to meaningful, long-term reconciliation.



"..a proud and unifying moment, one that brought our people together to acknowledge our responsibilities, celebrate Indigenous culture and reaffirm our commitment to meaningful, long-term reconciliation."

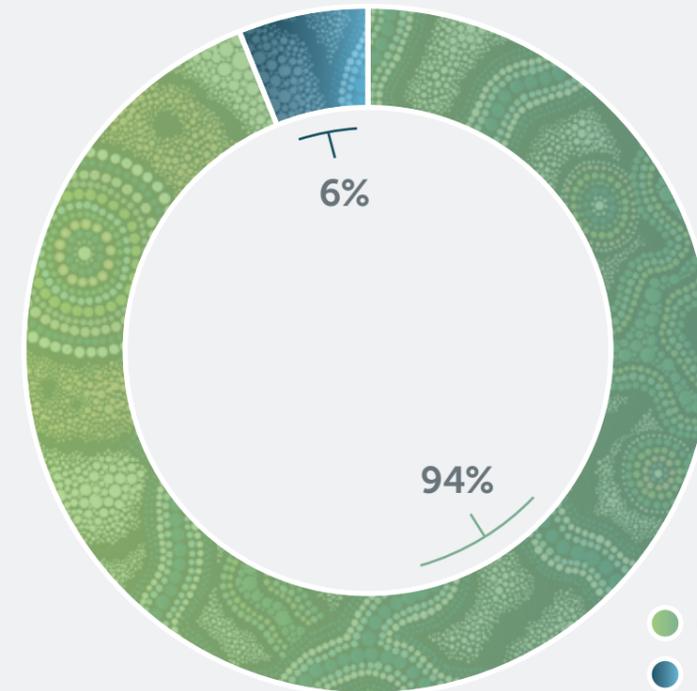


AARNet officially launched its Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) on 28 May 2025 at our Chatswood head office during National Reconciliation Week. Photos: Good Thanks Media.

Progress report

Scorecard

RAP deliverables progress



94%

RAP deliverables have been completed or are on track, reflecting strong progress across relationships, respect, opportunities and governance commitments.



6%

In active progress and relate to:

Developing a business case (roadmap) to increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within AARNet; and

Developing a business case (roadmap) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment pathways within AARNet.

While planning work has commenced for both items, the final documentation is still being completed to ensure accuracy and alignment ahead of the transition to the next RAP stage.

Relationships



Action	Progress
Stakeholder register	A comprehensive register of Traditional Owners and partner organisations has been developed across all AARNet offices, including the Cammeraygal/Gamaragal (Eora Nation) in Sydney and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Corporation in Melbourne.
National Reconciliation Week (NRW) celebrations	Events were held nationally, including a Smoking Ceremony in Brisbane, Didgeridoo Cleansing Ceremony in Melbourne and Bush Tukka sessions in Perth and Canberra. Communications highlighted the 2025 theme, <i>Bridging Now to Next</i> .
Sector partnerships	Engagement has continued with organisations such as AIME, Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA), and ADIA, advancing mentoring, Indigenous data sovereignty, and digital inclusion initiatives.

Respect



Action	Progress
Cultural learning	Over 84% of AARNet employees have completed the First Nations Cultural Awareness Training module developed by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).
Policy implementation	Two new inclusion-focused policies were rolled out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » First Nations Cultural and Ceremonial Leave – Five paid days annually for ceremonial obligations, Sorry Business and community participation. » All Employee Cultural Leave – Option to substitute gazetted public holidays for culturally significant days.
NAIDOC Week celebrations	Offices nationwide recognised the 2025 theme, <i>The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy</i> , celebrating the leadership and contribution of young First Nations people.

Opportunities

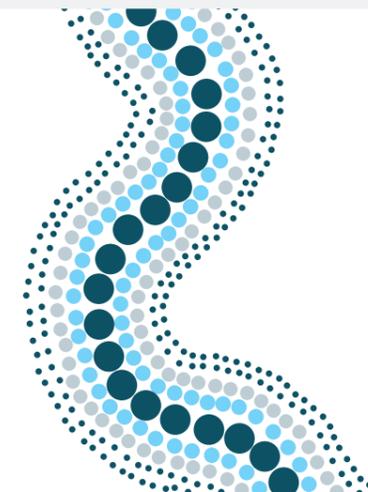


Action	Progress
Employment pathways	Partnerships have been formalised with Baidam Solutions.
Career development	Planning for dedicated First Nations positions within the 2026 Graduate Program and Cyber Academy is underway.
Supplier diversity	AARNet has joined Supply Nation, with work commencing to identify Indigenous-owned suppliers across key operational areas such as catering, design and printing.

Governance



Action	Progress
RAP Working Group	Established with monthly meetings, including representation from First Nations advisor (Brendan Littlechild, IW Consulting) and cross-functional leaders.
Executive Champion	CFO, Jason Stickle continues to lead as Executive Sponsor, ensuring visibility and accountability supported by RAP Chair Cassandra Benn, Business Manager (CEO Office).
Reporting	RAP progress is reported annually to the AARNet Board.



Relationships

Progress



Action	Deliverable	Status
① Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence, starting with AARNet's office locations.	✓
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	✓
	Conduct regular engagement and outreach activities to connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	✓
② Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Promote and circulate information on the meaning of reconciliation, Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and NRW internal and external events to our team.	✓
	Organise NRW celebrations at AARNet offices nationally.	✓
	AARNet RAP Working Group members and Executive Team to participate in at least one external NRW event in their local area.	✓
	Encourage and support AARNet team members to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	✓
③ Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Create and execute a communication strategy aimed at informing both internal team members and external stakeholders about our commitment to reconciliation, our journey towards reconciliation, and the initiatives outlined in our RAP.	✓
	Identify external stakeholders including (members and suppliers) that AARNet can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	✓
	Identify other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	✓
④ Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	✓
	Conduct a review of AARNet HR policies and procedures to identify if existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	✓

Respect

Progress



Action	Deliverable	Status
⑤ Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case (roadmap) for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within AARNet.	🔄
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	✓
	Research, invite and engage with a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultant to conduct a Cultural Competency Survey to ascertain the baseline of cultural competency at AARNet.	✓
	Provide our Executive, Leadership Team and all employees access to cultural competency training.	✓
⑥ Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop a deeper understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters at AARNet's national offices and operational areas.	✓
	Increase our team's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.	✓
⑦ Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Promote and circulate information to our team on the meaning on NAIDOC Week to celebrate and recognise the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	✓
	Promote and encourage AARNet team members to attend NAIDOC Week external events in their local area.	✓
	Organise and host NAIDOC celebrations at AARNet national offices.	✓



Completed/on track



In active progress

Opportunities

Progress



Action	Deliverable	Status
8 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case (road map) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within AARNet.	
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	
	Identify and engage with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment specialist.	
9 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case (roadmap) for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	
	Provide internal education and training for procurement teams and decision-makers on the importance of supplier diversity and how to effectively engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	
	Establish and maintain Supply Nation membership.	
	Leverage our membership with Supply Nation to increase our Supplier Diversity.	

Completed/on track In active progress

Governance

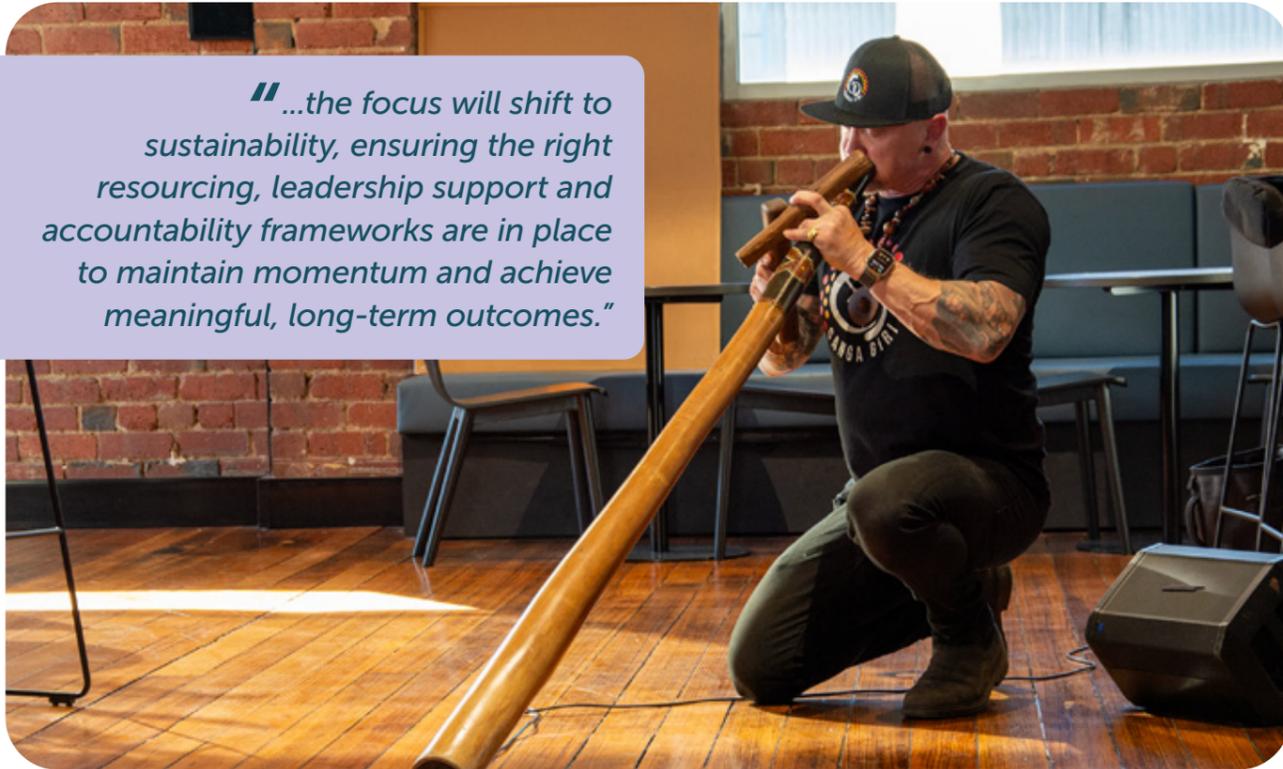
Progress



Action	Deliverable	Status
10 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Establish and maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	
	AARNet RAP to meet monthly to monitor progress on actions and deliverables.	
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	
11 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	
	Engage the AARNet Executive Team in the delivery of RAP commitments.	
	Appoint an AARNet Executive to champion our RAP internally.	
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	
	Identify and build partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and experts to support the implementation of RAP commitments.	
	Incorporate RAP-related KPIs into the CEO's regular performance reviews. Ensure these reviews include progress updates on RAP initiatives, with specific attention to the achievement of set targets and goals.	
12 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Provide regular reporting to AARNet's Board and Members on progress toward RAP-related KPIs	
	AARNet will contact Reconciliation Australia to verify our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	
	AARNet will contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	
13 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	AARNet will complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	
	AARNet will register on the Reconciliation Australia's website when AARNet is ready to begin developing our next RAP.	

Challenges and learnings

“...the focus will shift to sustainability, ensuring the right resourcing, leadership support and accountability frameworks are in place to maintain momentum and achieve meaningful, long-term outcomes.”



While RAP implementation is progressing well, several challenges and learnings have emerged during this early phase.

A key priority is strengthening consistency of engagement across offices to ensure reconciliation activities are embedded both locally and nationally. There is also an opportunity to enhance systems for data capture and impact measurement, particularly in relation to cultural learning participation, supplier diversity and sector partnerships.

We have also experienced challenges in sourcing First Nations suppliers that meet our specific business needs, with a limited number currently available in the market. Similarly, identifying and attracting First Nations talent remains difficult in a highly competitive environment, underscoring the need for ongoing investment in relationships, outreach and longer-term pipeline development.

Internal communications and storytelling can be further leveraged to increase visibility of progress and celebrate achievements across the organisation. As AARNet moves toward the next phase of its reconciliation journey, the focus will shift to sustainability, ensuring the right resourcing, leadership support and accountability frameworks are in place to maintain momentum and achieve meaningful, long-term outcomes.

Photo: The AARNet Melbourne office hosted a traditional didgeridoo cleansing and Acknowledgement to Country as part of National Reconciliation Week celebrations in 2025.

Next steps (January – June 2026)

AARNet’s immediate priority is to complete the remaining Reflect RAP deliverables and ensure outcomes are fully documented ahead of transitioning to the development of an Innovate RAP.

The RAP Working Group will continue to monitor progress and maintain visibility across the organisation, while also beginning the groundwork required to register and shape AARNet’s Innovate RAP.



The RAP Working Group with First Nations advisor, Brendan Littlechild from IW Consulting, at the official launch of AARNet’s Reflect RAP in May 2025. Photo: Good Thanks Media.



Head Office
AARNet Pty Ltd
PO Box 5519
Chatswood NSW 1515
ABN 54 084 540 518

aarnet.edu.au
enquiries@aarnet.edu.au

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