

# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

Infrastructure Australia  
May 2020 - May 2021



**Infrastructure  
Australia**

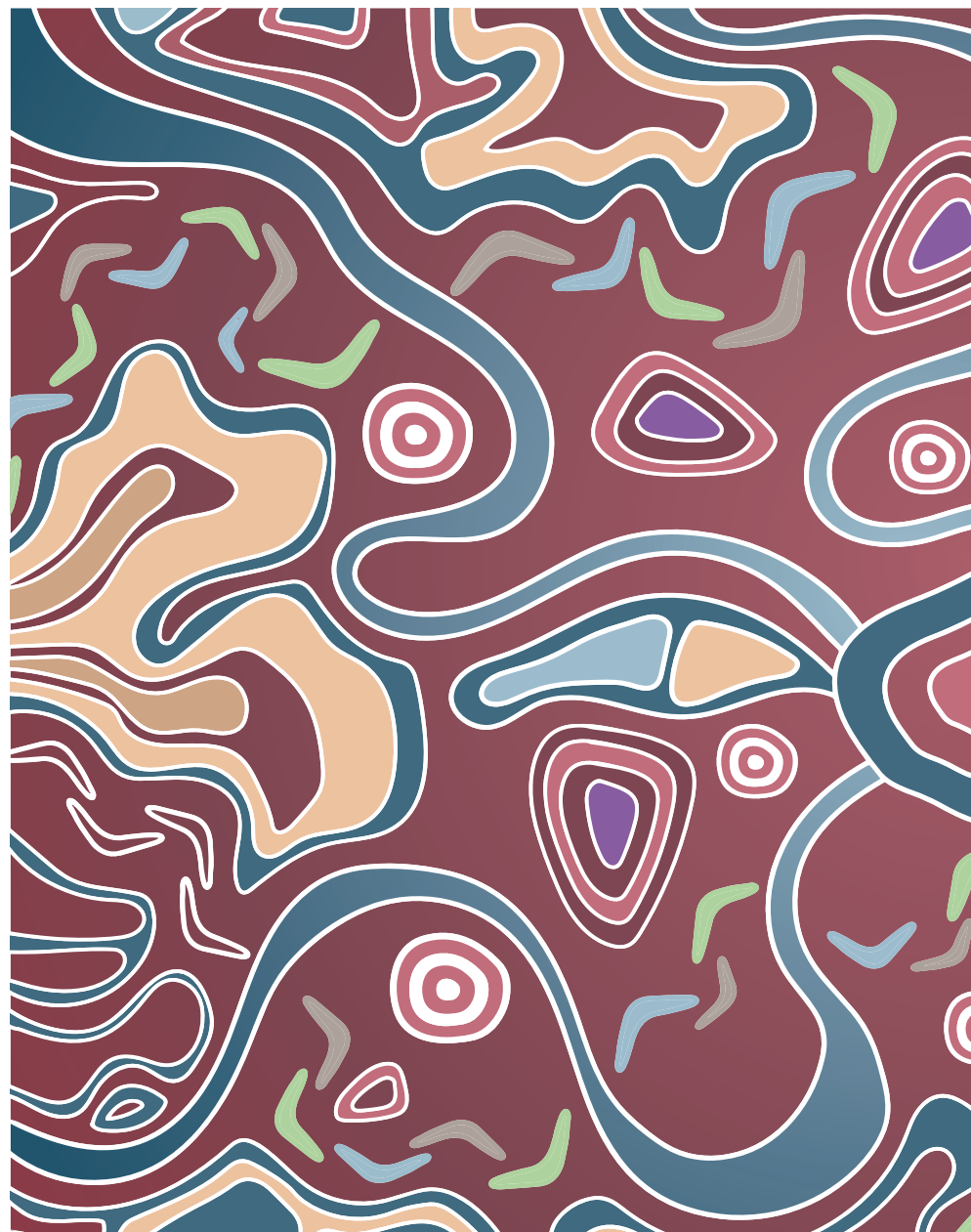


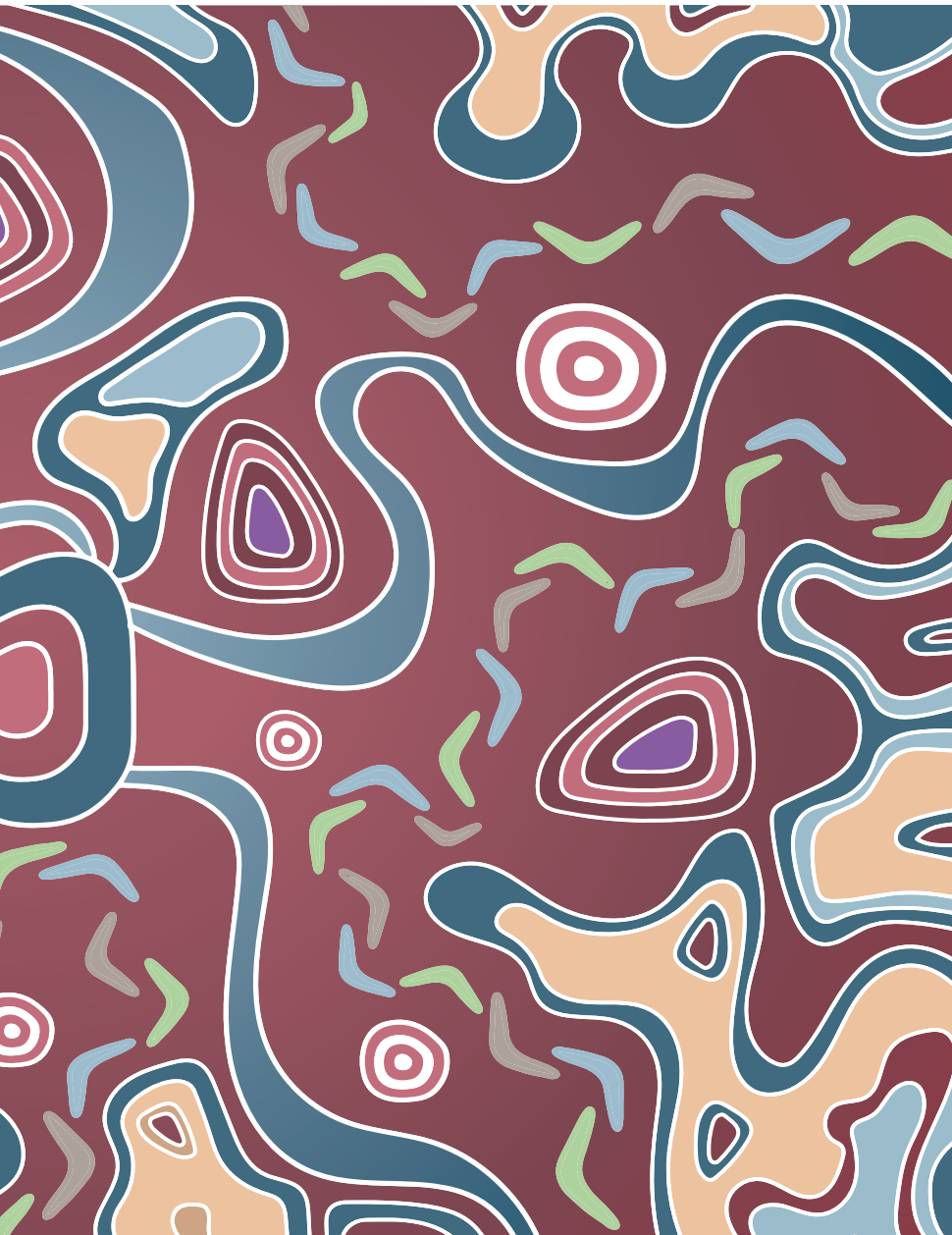
RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN  
**REFLECT**

# Acknowledgement of Country

Infrastructure Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We pay respect to their continuing connection to land, and the continuation of their cultural, spiritual and educational practices.

In preparing for the future of our infrastructure, we acknowledge the importance of looking beyond the immediate past to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique history of land management and settlement, art, culture and society that began over 65,000 years ago.





## About the artwork and artist

*Moving Along Pathways* was created specifically for Infrastructure Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan by Sydney based artist Dennis Golding.

The artwork depicts Infrastructure Australia's key elements of transport, communications, water, energy and social infrastructure.

Pathways and river systems are the prominent feature of the artwork. First Nations peoples had formed pathways on land and used river systems as part of their transport and communicating knowledge and stories.

Images of waterholes, campsites and boomerangs are presented within the artwork to acknowledge the cultural practices of technology, places for gathering and formed pathways that continue to be operated today.

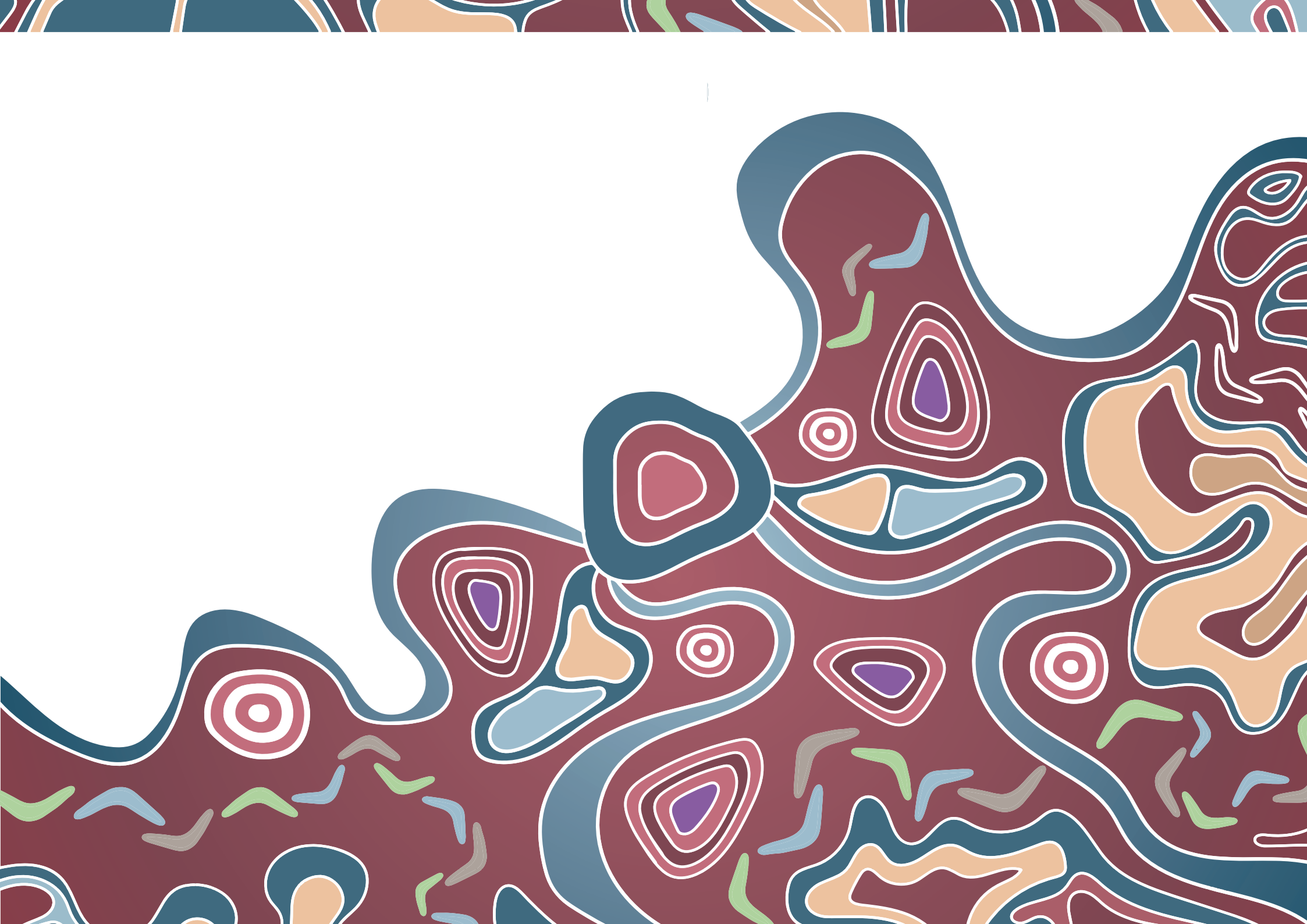
The stories of communication and cultural practice forms a connection between Infrastructure Australia and the embedded history of Aboriginal culture, in which this artwork aims to highlight the importance of history, culture and contemporary practices.

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

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

# Contents

Chair's Foreword	6
Message of commitment from our CEO	7
Our vision	8
Our partnership with Reconciliation Australia	10
The RAP Working Group	11
What we do	12
Our reconciliation journey so far	13
Our current partnerships and activities	25
Action plan	27





# Chair's Foreword

As an independent advisor to the nation, Infrastructure Australia's vision is to improve the quality of life of all Australians through better infrastructure and services.

To make this vision a reality we must confront the continuing disparities in quality-of-life outcomes for the First Peoples of Australia.

In this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, I am proud to present the first steps for Infrastructure Australia's reconciliation journey.

Infrastructure networks are only as good as the outcomes they deliver for the communities they serve. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, our infrastructure networks continue to fall short in delivering basic quality-of-life outcomes that are taken for granted by other Australians.

The gap in life expectancy in remote and very remote areas between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians is 13.9 years.

Many remote communities have water quality levels that fail to meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. As a result, Australia is not meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6: safe and affordable drinking water for all.

As we recently highlighted in our 2019 *Australian Infrastructure Audit*, poor infrastructure outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reinforce disadvantage and limit opportunities for improvements in quality of life.

More than a decade ago, the Council of Australian Governments committed to decreasing inequality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians through the Closing the Gap targets. Only two targets – early childhood education and Year 12 attainment – are on track to be met. Targets in relation to child mortality, school attendance, reading and numeracy, and employment have not been met and the target in relation to life expectancy is not on track.

Improved infrastructure services are critical to addressing this gap. They can empower communities, be it through improved access to education and health services or opportunities for employment and the development of local industries.

As a trusted advisor to Australia's governments and industry, Infrastructure Australia has a unique opportunity to drive change, and a responsibility to improve and protect quality-of-life outcomes for Australians. It is our role to lead the national conversation on the infrastructure reforms and investments Australia needs.

In this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, we commit ourselves to deepening the value of our advice and our impact for all Australians. We will do this by working to establish ourselves as a trusted partner of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We look forward to establishing strong, mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners who can help us to innovate and deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



# Message of commitment from our CEO

I am proud to launch Infrastructure Australia's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), our commitment to supporting and actively contributing to the reconciliation movement in Australia.

As Chief Executive Officer, I am committed to ensuring our organisation approaches this reconciliation journey with open hearts and minds.

I have been privileged to attend the Garma Festival of Traditional Cultures as a guest of the Yolngu people for the last three years. This experience has expanded my understanding of what reconciliation means and how we can work together to get there.

With this RAP, I am pleased to see Infrastructure Australia taking the first steps on our reconciliation journey.

Establishing ourselves as a trusted partner, who supports and empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, will be a collaborative process. We aspire to build strong relationships, grounded in meaningful engagement, and to open ourselves to communities on a basis of understanding and respect for their histories, cultures and knowledge.

Over the next year, we will focus on learning as an organisation, exploring partnerships in our sphere of influence, and enabling our staff to take practical, actionable steps to contribute to reconciliation.

Across the country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations are developing innovative solutions to improve local quality-of-life outcomes. As an independent advisor, committed to the promotion of best practice, we look to these innovative solutions that deliver on community need.

We are grateful for the relationships we have grown in the development of this RAP and for those yet to come. We are committed to growing these relationships and doing the work to establish the mutual respect and trust necessary to establish ourselves as a partner in reconciliation.

*'komadew*

# Our Vision

Infrastructure Australia is the nation's independent infrastructure advisor.

We advise Australia's governments, industry and the community on the investments and reforms needed to deliver better infrastructure for all Australians.

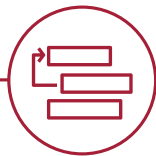
Infrastructure Australia's advice aims to:



improve decision-making on infrastructure matters;



better identify and assess key drivers of infrastructure demand and use;



improve prioritisation of infrastructure projects; and



identify, implement and promote best practice infrastructure planning, financing, delivery and operation.

Infrastructure Australia's vision is to improve the quality of life of all Australians through better infrastructure services.

Supporting and participating in the national reconciliation movement is essential if we are to deliver on this vision.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience systemic disadvantage in quality-of-life outcomes compared to other Australians, across health, education, housing and access to basic services like clean drinking water.

Through this Reflect RAP, Infrastructure Australia hopes to develop our knowledge base and strengthen our advice in areas that impact on quality-of-life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.







## Vision Statement

Improving the quality of life of all Australians through better infrastructure and services.

## Mission Statement

Provide independent advice and long-term infrastructure planning as a valued and trusted partner on best practice and reform.

## Strategic Goals

- 1 Lead and inform debate about infrastructure policies and reforms across all infrastructure sectors.
- 2 Establish a long-term pipeline of nationally significant, productivity-enhancing infrastructure priorities.
- 3 Be a collaborative, trusted advisor to government and industry providing forward-thinking, relevant and practical advice.
- 4 Work collaboratively with proponents to continuously improve the quality of infrastructure investment decisions.
- 5 Develop the capability of Infrastructure Australia's systems and people and ensure Infrastructure Australia meets its legislative obligations.

Photo: Romilly Madew, CEO attending 2019 Garma Festival in East Arnhem land, NT with Melinda Cilento, CEO CEDA and Co-Chair Reconciliation Australia (our hosts at Garma) along with Shirley Chowdhary, CEO the Go Foundation. Garma is Australia's largest Indigenous cultural gathering hosted by the Yothu Yindi Foundation.

# Our partnership with Reconciliation Australia

Infrastructure Australia has developed this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in partnership with Reconciliation Australia.

The RAP program, developed and overseen by Reconciliation Australia, provides a framework for any Australian organisation to support the national reconciliation movement.

## What is a 'Reflect' RAP?

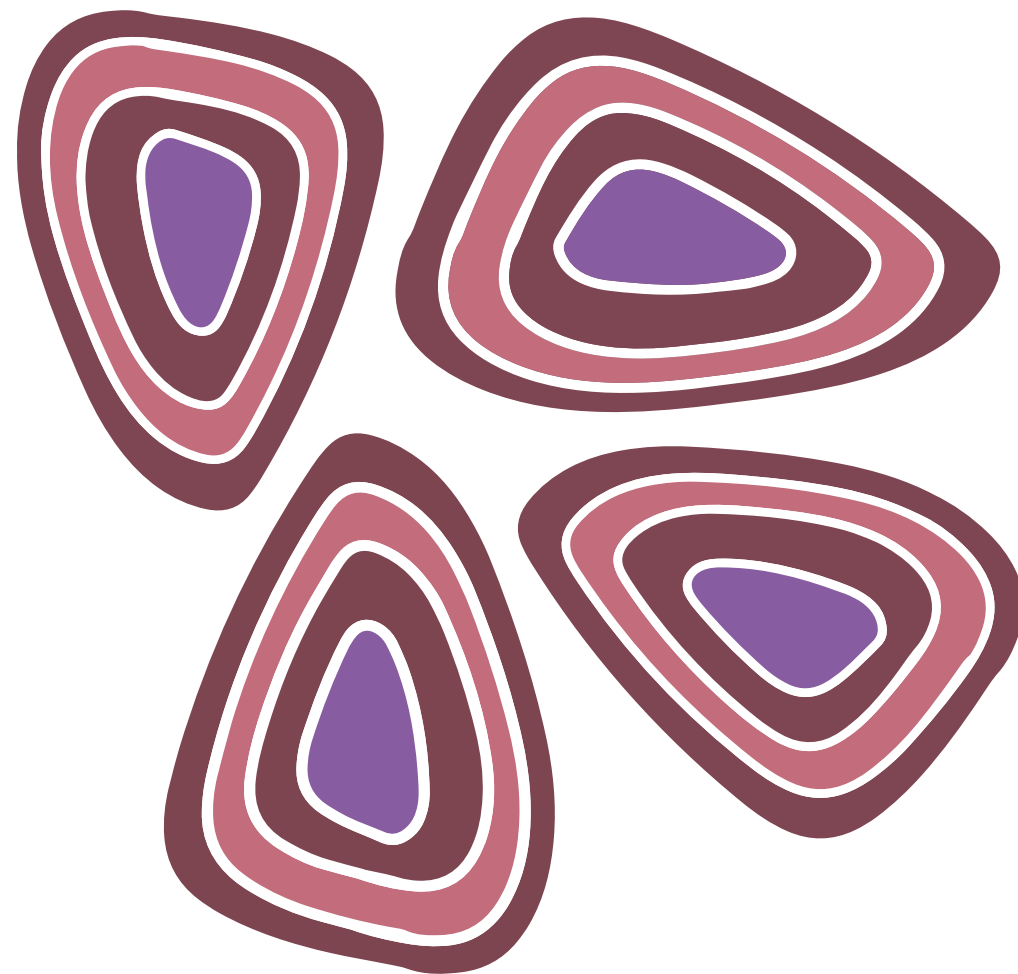
A RAP is a strategic document that outlines the practical actions that will drive an organisation's contribution to reconciliation, both internally and in the communities in which it operates.

There are four types of RAPs: Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate.

Infrastructure Australia has developed a **Reflect RAP** as the first step in our reconciliation journey. The focus of the Reflect RAP is on growing relationships, promoting respect and better understanding our unique offering to the national reconciliation movement.

The commitments we have made in this RAP have been guided by the framework developed by Reconciliation Australia and align with our Corporate Plan.

The foundational work we have outlined in this Reflect RAP will allow us to, in successive RAPs, commit to actions or initiatives that are meaningful, mutually beneficial and sustainable.



# The RAP Working Group

Infrastructure Australia is structured around five core teams: Finance and Business Services; Corporate Affairs and People; Policy and Research; Infrastructure Assessment; and Infrastructure Prioritisation.

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group is a combined task force from across the organisation, and includes:



## Suzannah Carruthers

Administration Officer, Corporate Services



## Chrissle George

Human Resources Advisor,  
Corporate Affairs and People



## Adam Copp

Chair of RAP Working Group; RAP Champion;  
Chief of Corporate Affairs and People



## Elise Newton

RAP Manager; Public Affairs Advisor,  
Media and Communications



## Aleksandra Doherty

Communications and Engagement Advisor,  
Media and Communications



## David Tang

Data and Analytics Advisor,  
Policy and Research



## Ignatius Forbes

Associate Director – Economics,  
Infrastructure Assessment



## David Tucker

Chief of Infrastructure Assessment

# What we do

## Our role and core business

Infrastructure Australia is the nation's independent infrastructure advisor.

As an independent, federal statutory body we play a vital role in providing advice and research to governments, industry and the community on the infrastructure investments and reforms that will benefit all Australians.

Established by the *Infrastructure Australia Act 2008* (Cth), our remit is national in scope and covers broad sectors and industries like energy, telecommunications, transport, water and social infrastructure. Our rigorous and independent analysis identifies infrastructure needs and opportunities, to ensure that our infrastructure funds are spent where they are needed most.

### As part of a five-year policy cycle, Infrastructure Australia has a responsibility to:

- Strategically audit the nation's infrastructure by developing the Australian Infrastructure Audit
- Maintain a credible pipeline of nationally significant infrastructure investments via the Infrastructure Priority List
- Develop a clear roadmap for reform by developing the Australian Infrastructure Plan
- Assess infrastructure business cases that are requesting more than \$100 million of Commonwealth funding

The *Infrastructure Australia Act 2008* (Cth) was amended in 2014 to ensure the organisation's independence from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (then the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development), and to establish the current board and CEO structure.

There are 12 members of the Infrastructure Australia Board, one CEO and presently 27 permanent and contracting staff members who are employed by Infrastructure Australia.

Infrastructure Australia operates from a single office location, near Martin Place in Sydney, New South Wales, on Gadigal land. We fulfil our roles and responsibilities with a strong emphasis on collaboration and stakeholder engagement across the country, which informs our approach to advice and reform.

At the time of writing, Infrastructure Australia does not employ any staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

# Our reconciliation journey so far

Infrastructure Australia has a unique, national platform to drive change, and a responsibility to improve quality of life for Australians.

As a particularly young and small organisation, our path to reconciliation thus far has been limited. However, we recognise that there is an opportunity to use our profile and national voice to further reconciliation.

We welcome the opportunity to engage with Reconciliation Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and stakeholders to improve our understanding of how our organisation can better serve the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and actively contribute to reconciliation.

By better understanding our nation's history, the rich cultures and knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their custodianship of the Australian landscape, we can better understand how our own work impacts on First Nations communities, and draw out further opportunities for collaboration and respect.

## Our work on remote infrastructure

As the nation's independent infrastructure adviser, we know that the issues experienced by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be reinforced by the fact that, in many ways, our national infrastructure planning remains ill-suited to planning for remote and low-density communities.

While the largest concentration of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is in urban areas, there are more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than other Australians living in remote areas (approximately 20% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in rural and remote areas, compared to only 1.7% of other Australians). Additionally, of the approximately 1,000 discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote areas, more than three-quarters have a population of fewer than 50 people.

In our work to shape the national conversation on infrastructure, Infrastructure Australia has used its position as an independent advisor to highlight the challenges in delivering infrastructure solutions in remote communities, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, including in the 2019 *Australian Infrastructure Audit*.

In particular, Infrastructure Australia has sought to improve the quality of remote infrastructure planning through:

1. hosting the Connecting the Dots Conference in Alice Springs in 2012
2. publishing the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Audit* in 2015
3. consulting on our project advisory function
4. our engagement with the Ministerial Forum on Northern Australia and the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group.

# Our work on remote infrastructure

## Connecting the Dots Conference (2012)

In 2012, Infrastructure Australia hosted the Connecting the Dots Conference in Alice Springs. This event brought together policy and planning leaders from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, industry and the Australian Government to explore the future of infrastructure in remote communities.

Speaking at this event, Professor Patrick Dodson advised us that understanding infrastructure needs in remote communities required ‘an acknowledgement of how current relationships are conducted’ between infrastructure decision-makers and Aboriginal peoples. He presented a positive vision for relationships based on ‘mutual respect and honesty’.

The conference allowed representatives from industry, government and community organisations to share diverse perspectives on the leadership and vision needed to improve infrastructure provision to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## Northern Australia Infrastructure Audit (2015)

In 2015, Infrastructure Australia released its first major audit, the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Audit*, in support of the Australian Government’s White Paper on Developing Northern Australia. It took a detailed look at the infrastructure assets and networks that support the north, and how these could be adapted to support growth.

However, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 22 per cent of Northern Australia’s total population at the time, the focus of the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Audit* was on larger northern population centres. As a result, the many smaller northern Indigenous communities that didn’t meet the population threshold were not included within the scope of the paper.



## Consulting on our project advisory function (2019)

A significant part of Infrastructure Australia's remit is to evaluate and prioritise infrastructure proposals of national significance and provide decision-makers with advice and guidance on specific infrastructure investments that will underpin Australia's continued prosperity.

In 2019, in response to feedback from infrastructure proponents, we began a program of work to review the guidance we offer to proponents of remote infrastructure proposals. This has included:

### Establishing the Assessment Framework Reference Group

Our Assessment Framework outlines for proponents Infrastructure Australia's methodology for assessing nationally significant infrastructure proposals. The Assessment Framework Reference Group is an external stakeholder group that provides input and feedback to maximise opportunities for all jurisdictions to harmonise infrastructure investment appraisal guidance across Australia, and to ensure that using the Framework is practical, efficient and adds value to the infrastructure investment decision-making process.

This group is currently exploring how Infrastructure Australia can better inform proponents, including remote proponents, on how to develop proposals and how we appraise them. This may include further guidance on demonstrating the social outcomes of an infrastructure project and its delivery against national strategic objectives (such as contribution to Closing the Gap targets, a national reconciliation agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*).

### Establishing the Project Appraisal Guidance for Remote Communities Working Group

This external stakeholder group provides a variety of perspectives on the challenges and needs for projects in remote communities. This working group will support Infrastructure Australia's own research study into opportunities to improve the Assessment Framework, to ensure that recommendations from this study are informed by stakeholder input and feedback.

Working collaboratively, the working group will provide advice on appraising remote area infrastructure project proposals that will help proponents to improve the quality of business cases for these projects. The working group has been grateful to receive the advice of the National Indigenous Australians Agency as part of this project.

**Improving the cultural awareness of our staff and building strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders will inform and support this program of work.**

# Our work on remote infrastructure

## Ministerial Forum on Northern Development

Infrastructure Australia has regularly attended the Ministerial Forum on Northern Development. The forum brings Australian Government ministers and ministers from the Western Australian, Northern Territory and Queensland governments together to provide oversight and direction on the development of Northern Australia.

The forum, which is led by the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, has met in:

- September 2017 in Darwin, Northern Territory
- April 2018 in Kununurra, Western Australia
- November 2018 in Mount Isa, Queensland
- December 2019 in Katherine, Northern Territory.

## Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group

A number of our staff have had the opportunity to present to the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group, which provides advice to government about northern Australia matters.

Established in December 2017, the group:

- Helps shape implementation of the northern Australia agenda to ensure it benefits local Indigenous land owners, communities and businesses.
- Supports and advises the Ministerial Forum on Northern Development.

This engagement has allowed us to share the findings of our research, including the findings of the 2019 *Australian Infrastructure Audit*, and to seek feedback and submissions to inform the development of the next *Australian Infrastructure Plan* (due for release 2021).





## 2016 Australian Infrastructure Plan

The 2016 *Australian Infrastructure Plan* highlighted the importance of remote infrastructure to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, one in five of whom live in remote areas (compared to one in 50 other Australians). The Plan advised Australia's governments to implement infrastructure solutions that are well-coordinated, make use of new technology, and support broader reforms to help remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities be more resilient and sustainable.

In the Plan, we acknowledged that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote areas face many of the same infrastructure challenges as remote communities more generally. Rather than comment on remote Indigenous policy, Infrastructure Australia considered itself better placed to advise on remote infrastructure solutions. The Plan suggested that with the right solutions, all remote communities will benefit.

In the Plan, we identified a set of principles to coordinate the delivery of remote infrastructure investments. These principles included the need for early and effective consultation with Indigenous land owners. The Plan argued that services for remote communities are most effective when the community is involved in both their planning and implementation. Indigenous leaders, community members and other local service providers can help identify the infrastructure needs of the community.

The Plan highlighted the need for:

- new technology integrated into infrastructure delivery, to deliver more reliable and affordable infrastructure in remote areas
- better coordination of remote infrastructure funding across governments and business
- targeted infrastructure investments to enable reforms that support Indigenous-led development, improve land administration and use, and create greater certainty for private investment in remote areas.

The Plan also highlighted the opportunity that renewable energy presented to improving quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote areas. One case study pointed to the work of the Pilbara Meta Maya Regional Aboriginal Corporation (PMMRAC) installing renewable energy services to community as offering far-reaching benefits, reducing the reliance on diesel generation and developing local skills and knowledge in new technologies that can be applied to the remote Aboriginal communities that PMMRAC supports.



# 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit

## Taking a community-centred approach to our national infrastructure needs

Infrastructure Australia has a responsibility to strategically audit Australia's nationally significant infrastructure and develop 15-year rolling infrastructure plans that specify national and state-level priorities.

The development of the *2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit* took a new, community-centred and place-based approach to reporting on infrastructure, compared to the *2015 Australian Infrastructure Audit*. It used access, quality and cost as the key measure of outcomes for users. It also included an Acknowledgement of Country.

The 2019 Audit acknowledged that poor infrastructure outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reinforced disadvantage and limited opportunities for improvements in quality of life through vital links to employment opportunities, education, health, recreational and cultural facilities, and other services.

The place-based approach of the Audit also highlighted how the challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were impacted by where they lived. For example, it drew out the unique challenges faced by Australians in developing regions and northern Australia, including extreme weather, higher costs of living, a lack of infrastructure planning and coordination, and how this fed into a large variation in the quality of life and diversity of needs, particularly among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## What the Audit shows

The Audit highlighted that shortfalls in infrastructure services disproportionately affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, reinforcing existing disadvantage and opportunities to empower these communities. The 2019 Audit highlighted, in particular:

- the poor outcomes, particularly for health and education that have resulted from overcrowding in remote areas due to a lack of fit-for-purpose dwellings and supply, with negative impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- the unique challenges in accessing health services experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote areas, compared to other Australians living remotely
- how poor standards of water and wastewater services compound historical hardships and reinforce disadvantage
- the crucial role that arts and culture play in strengthening social inclusion and identity for Australian communities, and in delivering economic empowerment, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

**Of the 180 challenges and opportunities identified by the 2019 Audit, seven refer specifically to outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.**

## Challenges and opportunities identified by the *Australian Infrastructure Audit*

### Challenge 11

In fast-growing cities, many of our most vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, suffer from poor access to services. This can reinforce disadvantage and limit opportunities for improvements in quality of life through vital links to employment opportunities, education, health, recreational and cultural facilities, and other services.

### Challenge 16

Infrastructure can do more to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote communities and rural areas, and to underpin progress towards local and national objectives for improving quality of life. Failing to improve services for First Australians in remote communities and rural areas undermines potential improvements in quality of life and reinforces gaps in inequality and disadvantage.

### Opportunity 19

Development in northern regions could benefit from more detailed information and evidence-based studies of economic opportunities, as well as a better understanding of local needs and values, particularly of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Better information on opportunities and local needs can support more efficient investment and greater benefits for northern communities.

### Challenge 97

Low service densities can limit the provision of accessible, continuous and quality healthcare in rural communities and remote areas. Without action, healthcare outcomes for communities in these areas, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, will continue to be adversely affected.

### Opportunity 121


Arts and cultural infrastructure plays a key role in the social and economic empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Leveraging investment in arts and cultural institutions to promote the collection and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural materials can provide wider socio-economic benefits to these communities, particularly in rural and remote areas.

### Challenge 126

Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing is not meeting the needs of communities, due to overcrowding and poor-quality dwellings. Inadequate housing exacerbates the health, education and well-being outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which are already below those of other Australians.

### Challenge 174

Some remote communities, many with predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, do not have access to reliable and safe water and wastewater services, while monitoring is often inadequate. Failure to address these issues will erode social and physical wellbeing, reinforce disadvantage, and undermine our national and international commitments and objectives.



**These challenges and opportunities will act as the framework for our engagement with government, industry and the community on developing the strategic infrastructure solutions we will deliver in the *2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan*.**

As part of our post-launch Audit engagement, we held roundtables in Rockhampton, Darwin, Broome and Perth to get feedback from stakeholders in Northern Australia. We also sought feedback on the Audit from industry and community organisations and encouraged them to make a submission to inform the Plan.

As at May 2020, we had received seven submissions from experts in the field and community members responding to challenges and opportunities that refer specifically to outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These submissions will form part of the national dialogue on how Australian infrastructure networks can better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and reduce levels of disadvantage.



# Highlighting the crisis in remote housing

Infrastructure Australia believes that housing is at the centre of addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion and disadvantage across Australia.

The 2019 *Australian Infrastructure Audit* found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today face systemic barriers to accessing stable, affordable housing that is suitable to their needs. These housing challenges are often distinct to those facing other Australians, such as overrepresentation in Australia's homeless population, the need for culturally appropriate housing, overcrowding of housing and the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote or very remote areas, where it is difficult and expensive to deliver new housing supply.

The Audit also found that one-quarter of those assisted by specialist homelessness services identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. In 2017–18, there were also 86,100 unmet requests, of which almost three in four were seeking accommodation assistance.

The 2019 Infrastructure Priority List identified remote housing overcrowding as a nationally significant priority.

The Priority List estimated that the combined economic and social cost of overcrowding for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations is expected to exceed \$100 million per annum over the next 15 years based on existing overcrowding rates. In 2014–15, 21% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia were assessed as living in overcrowded conditions, of which 41% were in remote areas.

The Priority List included a proposal, developed by Infrastructure Australia, for a national program to relieve overcrowding and improve quality in housing for people in remote areas by:

- addressing maintenance and utility deficiencies for existing housing stock
- renewing life-expired housing stock
- developing new housing stock.

# Infrastructure Priority List

## Putting the spotlight on infrastructure investments that support reconciliation goals

One of the key ways Infrastructure Australia supports quality-of-life outcomes for Australians is by advising government and putting a national spotlight on the priority infrastructure needs and opportunities that will deliver these outcomes.

We do this through the *Infrastructure Priority List* (IPL), which acts as a key reference document for Australia's governments of the infrastructure

investments that will deliver nationally significant benefits for Australian communities.

The latest IPL, published in February, included six initiatives of national significance that will directly contribute to quality-of-life improvements for Aboriginal communities.

### 1 Indigenous art and cultural facilities program – added in February 2020

In 2020, we identified a national program of Indigenous art and cultural facilities as a Priority Initiative on the IPL. This was identified as a nationally significant opportunity in the near-term (0–5 years).

Art and culture play an important role in empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In addition to meeting the high demand for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and art, these facilities will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists by creating more employment opportunities, improving wellbeing, educating people on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and potentially improving national identity.

### 2 Remote housing overcrowding – added in February 2019

This High Priority Initiative identifies the need to relieve overcrowding and improve quality in housing for people in remote areas as a nationally significant opportunity to improve health, safety, education and employment outcomes. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that 21% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were assessed as being in overcrowded conditions in 2014–15, of whom 41% were living in remote areas.

Good-quality housing underpins all targets in health, education and employment, as well as community safety, as set out in the Australian Government's Closing the Gap strategy (2008).

3

### Land transport access between Karratha and Tom Price – added in February 2019

The IPL identified that the condition of the road linking the key activity centres of Karratha and Tom Price was limiting access and economic opportunities for local communities, potentially reinforcing social and economic inequalities. Our assessment indicated that providing a sealed road that is resistant to weather events will improve access for local/remote communities and businesses throughout the year.

4

### Provision of enabling infrastructure and essential services to remote NT communities (Wadeye, Tiwi Islands, Jabiru) – added in February 2016

This initiative identifies infrastructure problems in three remote regions of the Northern Territory:

- Jabiru, and the Arnhem Highway, which connects Jabiru to Darwin
- Wadeye (Port Keats) and other nearby remote communities, and the Port Keats Road, which connects Wadeye to Darwin
- the Tiwi Islands.

These remote communities lack the infrastructure required for sustainable economic and social development. This initiative proposes a portfolio of upgrades to road infrastructure, as well as a range of essential services and community infrastructure upgrades to support economic and social development:

- road upgrades to improve the accessibility and flood resilience of key road networks
- upgrades to provide new or improved water storage facilities and wastewater management facilities in a number of remote population centres
- upgrades to provide additional public housing and upgrades to social infrastructure, such as community centres and youth centres.

5

### Upgrade Tanami Road – added in February 2016

The IPL identified that the poor quality of Tanami Road, which links the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory to the Great Northern Highway in Western Australia, was resulting in:

- limited economic opportunities for communities in the region, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- reduced opportunities for employment in remote areas
- reduced access to essential services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Infrastructure Australia proposed this initiative to upgrade and improve flood immunity and resilience for the Tanami Road between the Stuart Highway north of Alice Springs, and the Great Northern Highway at Halls Creek.

6

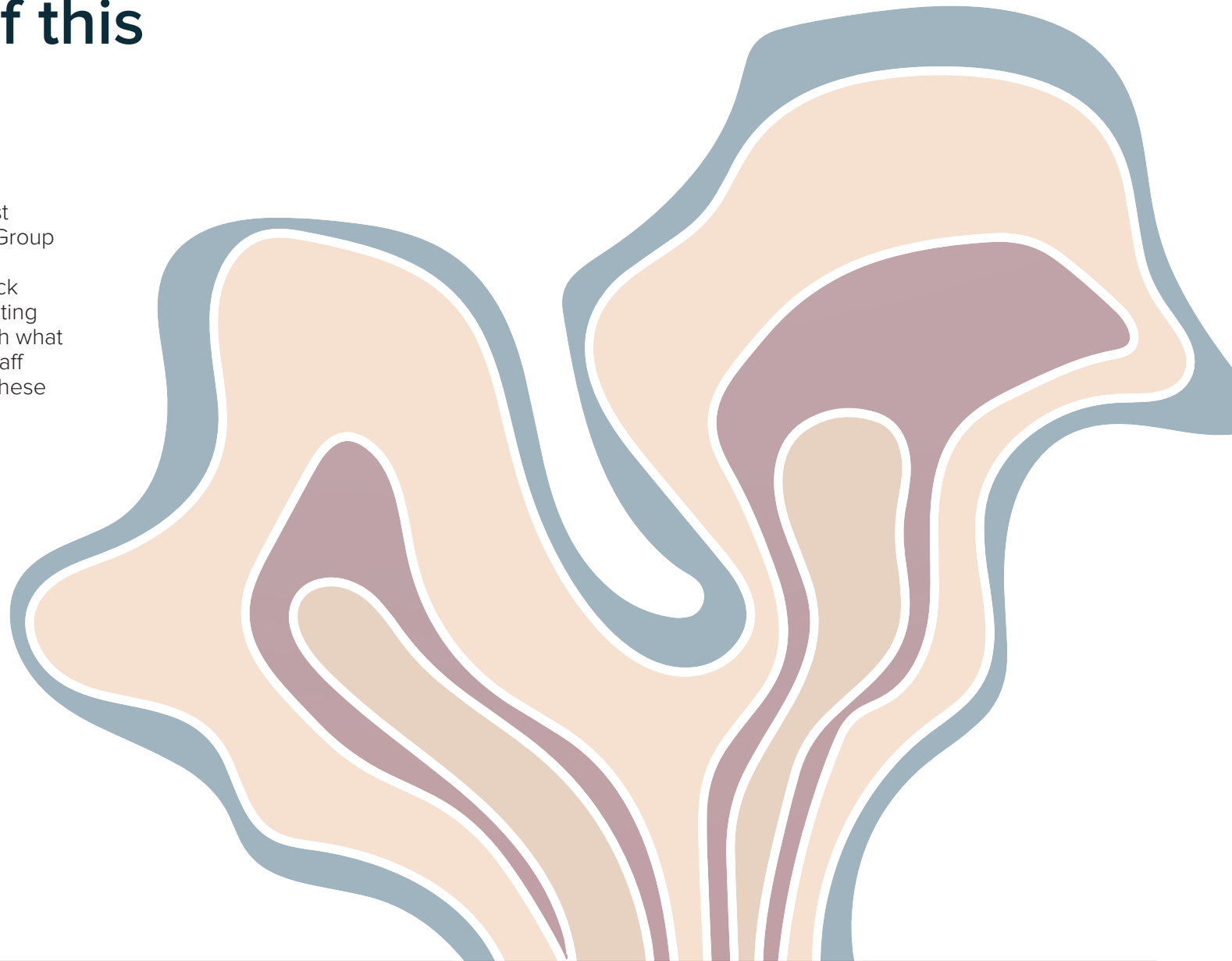
### Improve road access to remote WA communities – added in February 2016

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, approximately 35,000 people live in remote areas of Western Australia. The IPL recognises that many of these areas have limited transport access and poor freight connectivity. Existing roads are generally of low quality and some freight routes are unsealed.

The initiative is for a program of works to improve road access, safety and resilience for remote Western Australian areas. This could include higher-standard road surfaces and bridge and floodway improvements.

# Including staff in the development of this Reflect RAP

In order to ensure all staff feel ownership of and investment in the development of our first Reconciliation Action Plan, the RAP Working Group engaged with staff to seek their feedback on our commitments in this Reflect RAP. Feedback was sought at the organisation's all-staff Creating Connections events, where we talked through what the commitments in this RAP may mean for staff and suggestions they had for strengthening these commitments.





# Our current partnerships and activities

In developing this RAP, we have already seen the benefits of new and strengthened relationships. We have been pleased to engage our staff in the development of our RAP commitments and the design of cultural awareness programs to support their work.

## A new relationship with the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we operate

We have been pleased to develop a new relationship with our local Aboriginal land council, the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) and to have begun discussions about our shared goals. While the COVID-19 health crisis has prevented the MLALC presenting to staff as planned, the RAP Working Group's engagement with the MLALC has already allowed us to better understand their role in the community and how we can best support them. We look forward to collaborating with the MLALC into the future, including as part of in our transition to new offices on Gadigal land.

## Cultural competency training

In January 2020, Infrastructure Australia staff undertook cultural competency training as a critical first step on our reconciliation journey. This training was provided by Arilla, a majority Aboriginal-owned and operated organisation that provides 'training to enable every sector, organisation and individual in the Australian workforce to be skilled and confident in working with Indigenous people and Indigenous projects'.

This training was led for us by Shelly Reys OAM, inaugural Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia and Chair of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE). The training was attended by 18 of 26 staff and feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with requests for further similar sessions that could help staff apply learnings from the training to the practical aspects of their project work.

## Support from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Infrastructure Australia's key partner is the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. We share a network with the Department and due to their size and resources they were able to assist us in our reconciliation journey.

Through the Department, we were able to source staff NAIDOC Week lanyards and Acknowledgement of Country cards, which will be used to commence meetings and worn with security passes. We have met with the Department's RAP Working Group and Indigenous Network in Canberra to seek guidance and share resources.

## Updating our procurement practices

Infrastructure Australia now uses Supply Nation as a procurement tool to increase our rates of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. In 2019, this enabled us to source new staff apparel from Yilay Group, an Indigenous design and manufacturing company, and to incorporate designs by Bundarra, and Aboriginal clothing supplier that features artwork from Indigenous artists.



## Collaborating with Artbank

In the interest of raising staff engagement with our reconciliation program and as a sign of our respect for the cultural and artistic contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we have worked with the Australian Government's Artbank to change all of our leased artworks to works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

To support our staff to understand the significance of these artworks, we engaged a representative from Artbank to present to all staff on the stories behind them. This has created a fitting working environment for the development of this RAP.

## Updating our communication practices

We updated the Infrastructure Australia Writing Style Guide in 2019 to reflect best practice for inclusive language, including guidance on culturally appropriate language and considerations when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or practices. This allowed us to improve the standard of our communications.

## Collaborating with the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group

To inform our policy and project advisory work in northern Australia, we have reached out to the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group, which comprises senior Indigenous leaders from the three northern jurisdictions. We have been grateful to consult with this reference group as part of the 2019 *Australian Infrastructure Audit* and we look forward to collaborating with them on the development of the *Australian Infrastructure Plan*, due for release in 2021.

## Learning from other RAP organisations

We were fortunate to have Tim Moggridge and Michael Betteridge from NRMA visit our offices during National Reconciliation Week 2019 to talk to us about their experiences as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their organisation's work towards reconciliation.

In developing our RAP, we have been grateful to draw on the expertise of Elle Davidson, the Indigenous Engagement Leader at GHD Consulting, who coordinated the development of that organisation's Reflect and Innovate RAPs. It was invaluable to draw upon her insights into the RAP process and GHD's vision for reconciliation as we commenced our own reconciliation journey.

# Action plan



## RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess our current level of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.</li> <li>Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.</li> <li>Engage with and develop our relationship with at least five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.</li> <li>Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders on how Infrastructure Australia's practices could be adapted to achieve shared goals.</li> </ul>	September 2020	CEO and RAP Chair
		December 2020	CEO and RAP Chair
		May 2021	RAP Chair
		May 2021	RAP Chair
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</li> <li>Host an internal event for staff and senior leaders to recognise and celebrate NRW and consider opportunities to engage local Aboriginal-owned suppliers for the event.</li> <li>Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> <li>RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.</li> </ul>	May 2020	RAPWG Chair and CEO
		May 2020	CEO, RAP Champion and CFO
		May 2020	RAPWG Chair
		May 2020	RAPWG Chair, RAPWG
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.</li> <li>Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.</li> <li>Identify and engage with RAP and other like-minded organisations to collaborate with us on our reconciliation journey.</li> <li>Include a copy of our RAP in new starter induction packs.</li> </ul>	May 2020	CEO, Executive Leadership Team, RAPWG Chair and RAP Manager
		September 2020	RAPWG Chair
		September 2020	CEO and RAP Chair
		May 2020	Human Resources Advisor
4. Build support for the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drive internal engagement with and awareness of the RAP as a senior leader.</li> </ul>	May 2020	RAP Champion
5. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.</li> <li>Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.</li> <li>Develop an internal communication strategy that supports the organisation to visibly model a culturally safe working environment.</li> <li>Report on these activities to the People and Culture Committee (a sub-committee of the Infrastructure Australia Board).</li> </ul>	October 2020	CFO, Human Resources Advisor
		November 2020	Human Resources Advisor
		July 2020	Chief of Corporate Affairs and People
		January 2021	Chief of Corporate Affairs and People



## RESPECT

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	• Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	August 2020	Chief of Corporate Affairs and People and CFO
	• Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	July 2020	Chief of Corporate Affairs and People
	• Conduct a lecture series open to all staff to hear from experts in our field about the real world implications our work has for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	January 2021	Chief of Corporate Affairs and People and RAP Manager
2. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	• Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	June 2020	RAP Chair
	• Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	June 2020	Office Manager
	• Consult with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council on appropriate cultural protocols for transitioning to new offices, including a Welcome to Country and recognition of local culture and language in the office design.	July 2020	Office Manager
	• Engage local Traditional Custodians to conduct a Welcome to Country as standard protocol for any large-scale public event managed by Infrastructure Australia.	June 2020	Office Manager
	• Introduce a standard protocol for an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all official Infrastructure Australia Board meetings, Executive-level meetings and all-staff meetings, as a minimum.	July 2020	CEO
	• Explore appropriate cultural protocols to observe for visits on Country.	May 2020	Director – Stakeholder Engagement
	• Continue to comply with the guidelines as set out in the Infrastructure Australia Writing Style Guide for using inclusive language and communications practices that show respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	May 2020	Associate Director – Media and Communications
3. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	• Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning and significance of NAIDOC Week.	July 2020	Chief of Corporate Affairs and People
	• Host an internal event for staff and senior leaders to recognise and celebrate NAIDOC Week and consider opportunities to engage local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned suppliers for the event.	July 2020	Chief of Corporate Affairs and People
	• Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in external NAIDOC Week events.	July 2020	CEO and RAP Champion
	• RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2020	RAPWG Chair



## OPPORTUNITIES

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	• Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	September 2020	Chief of Corporate Affairs & People and CFO
	• Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	January 2021	Chief of Corporate Affairs & People
	• Explore partnership opportunities to support staff to engage in skill sharing and mutually beneficial professional development with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	May 2021	Chief of Corporate Affairs & People
2. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	• Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	November 2020	CFO
	• Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2020	CFO



## GOVERNANCE

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	• Form a RAP Working Group to govern RAP implementation.	May 2020	RAPWG Chair
	• Draft a Terms of Reference for the RAP Working Group.	May 2020	RAPWG Chair
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representation on the RAP Working Group.	July 2020	RAPWG Chair
	• Hold regular RAP Working Group sessions to track progress against deliverables.	May 2021	RAPWG Chair
2. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	May 2020	RAPWG Chair and CFO
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	May 2020	RAPWG Chair
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	May 2020	RAPWG Chair
3. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2020	RAPWG Chair
4. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2020	RAPWG Chair

For public enquiries about Infrastructure Australia's  
Reconciliation Action Plan, please contact:

**Adam Copp**

RAPWG Chair, RAPWG Champion and Chief of Corporate Affairs & People

[Adam.Copp@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:Adam.Copp@infrastructure.gov.au)



Designed by Spirit Creative Agency,  
a majority owned Indigenous business  
registered with Supply Nation.  
[www.spirit.sydney](http://www.spirit.sydney)

