



Reconciliation Action Plan 2009

Our vision for reconciliation

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (the department) will continue to enhance relationships with Indigenous Australians, ensuring the diverse needs of the Australian community are represented. This will ultimately enable Indigenous Australians to support and share in the benefits of competitive, profitable, secure and sustainable agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries. Through the attraction, recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australians, the department will be able to draw on the varying perspectives, experience and knowledge Indigenous Australians can contribute.

Our business

The department's role is to develop and implement policies and programs that ensure Australia's agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries remain competitive, profitable and sustainable.

Our policies and programs:

- encourage and support sustainable natural resource use and management
- protect the health and safety of plant and animal industries
- enable industries to adapt to compete in a fast-changing international and economic environment
- help improve market access and market performance for the agricultural and food sector
- encourage and assist industries to adopt new technology and practices, and
- assist primary producers and the food industry to develop business and marketing skills, and to be financially self-reliant.

The department has approximately 5000 employees¹ across Australia and overseas, including policy officers, program administrators, scientists, economists, meat inspectors, veterinary officers and quarantine inspectors. Further, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) is the largest Commonwealth employer of Indigenous people in the Far North region.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

As identified through the previous RAP, the department has succeeded in utilising the Australian Public Service Commission's Pathways Program in both central office and the regions. Celebrating Indigenous events of cultural significance and targeting Indigenous Australians and communities in terms of employment and outcomes of research impacting Indigenous communities have also been successes of the department.

Building on these successes and working to improve additional areas, the focus of this RAP is on good **relationships**, **respecting** the special contribution of Indigenous Australians; and working together to ensure Indigenous children have the same life **opportunities** as other children in this prosperous country. These areas—relationships, respect and opportunities—are considered over the following pages in light of the work of the department.

This RAP was developed by the Indigenous Employee Officer in consultation with Executive Managers and divisional resource coordinators. The RAP was endorsed by the Indigenous Working Group, which represents a cross section of the department, including a representative from the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

¹ This figure includes employees on long term leave

1. Relationships			
Focus area			
Policy and program decisions made by the department may have either a direct or indirect impact on the lives of Indigenous Australians, particularly those involved in the agriculture, fisheries, food or forestry industries. For this reason, building and sustaining good relationships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is vital to ensuring our policies and programs address the needs of the Australian community.			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1.1 To develop and maintain positive relationships with Indigenous Australians - both employees and stakeholders of the department, and Indigenous organisations that add mutual value and benefits to the department	Indigenous Working Group (CPD)	June 2009	Determine a Champion for Indigenous Affairs who will progress Indigenous Strategies at the Executive Level.
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB)	Commencing March 2009	Encourage Indigenous employees to participate in external Indigenous APS Employee Network (IAPSEN) activities.
	Regional HR Managers / Program areas / Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB)	As stories arise / Ongoing	Promote good news stories such as Indigenous employees successfully completing cadet/trainee programs and cultural celebrations, as culturally appropriate, in departmental publications such as <i>inhouse</i> magazine and the <i>AQIS Bulletin</i> .
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB)	Annually - July 2009 / 10	Sponsorship of the NAIDOC Week School Initiative Competitions
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB) / Relevant Staff	As events arise / Ongoing	Relationship building activities hosted by Reconciliation Australia, Indigenous organisations, the public sector and other agencies are attended by relevant staff.
	Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy Program	Beginning January 2009 / Ongoing	Promote AQIS collaborative work with Indigenous communities at important Indigenous festivals such as Crocfest, Kalaac and Garma Festivals, in coastal areas of northern Australia.
	Program Managers	Ongoing	Link with networks and organisations that support Indigenous involvement in sustainable resource management, biosecurity, agriculture, fisheries and forestry.
1.2 Establish and support the department's Indigenous Working Group	Indigenous Working Group (CPD)	January 2009	Working Group established 12 monthly meetings per year (four including SES representatives) Quarterly reports to the Executive Management Team The working group will develop, monitor and approve the Reconciliation Action Plan.

2. Respect

Focus area

Understanding and respecting Indigenous culture and history will enable employees of the department to better interact with the Indigenous community. This will ultimately enhance relationships and assist the department to maintain competitive, profitable and sustainable agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
2.1 To raise cultural awareness and foster a culturally supportive and accepting work environment, specifically, that all staff have a strong understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, land and culture	Supervisor / Human Resources Branch	Ongoing, report on when RAP revised	An increase in the number of Canberra based staff attending Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training .
	Human Resources Branch	Commencing March 2009	An online cultural awareness training session is encouraged for all new staff to complete through inclusion in the Induction Handbook, and all existing staff are encouraged to complete through an e-bulletin article.
	Regional HR Managers	As new staff commence	A "Work with Diversity" module is completed by all Regional AQIS staff as part of their Certificate III in Government. The module concentrates on an overview of diversity in the workplace.
	All staff	Ongoing	Acknowledge traditional owners of the land at the opening of key meetings.
	Area organising event	As required	Hold 'Welcome to Country' ceremonies , led by local Ngunnawal / Ngambri Elders for launches of significant Indigenous initiatives and other significant events, such as NAIDOC Week, sponsored by the department in the central office.
	Human Resources Branch / Public Relations	May and July annually	Recognise and celebrate cultural days of significance , such as NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week. Indigenous speaker invited to address staff and stakeholders. All staff encouraged and supported to attend.
	The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service	Ongoing	Seek permission from Indigenous land owners when undertaking AQIS pest and disease surveys on Indigenous lands.

3. Opportunities

Focus area

The Australian Government aims to be representative of the Australian population. The varying perspectives, experience and knowledge Indigenous Australians can bring to the department can add substantial value to the outcomes of policies and programs.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3.1 To improve the attraction, retention and development of Indigenous employees and to improve accessibility of programs to Indigenous stakeholders	Managers	Ongoing	Provide access to flexible employment options in line with the department's Collective Agreement.
	Human Resources Branch through the Management and Leadership Programs providers	Ongoing	Provide access to coaching as appropriate to Indigenous staff at the DAFF Band 2 and 3 Classification through the Management and Leadership Programs.
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB) / Indigenous Working Group (CPD)	December 2009	Enhance the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Employees through the development of an Indigenous Employment Strategy.
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB) / Indigenous Working Group (CPD)	Ongoing	Promote and encourage participation in Australian Public Service Commission (and other agency and organisations) programs to staff such as secondment and scholarship programs.
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB)	Assessment commences in August annually	Participate in the National Indigenous Cadetship Project (NICP) to provide additional opportunities for Indigenous students to gain valuable work experience within the Australian Public Service.
	Human Resources Branch	March and October annually	Advertise positions for the department's Graduate and Traineeship Programs on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Job Board.
	The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service	Ongoing	Engagement with Indigenous communities to support AQIS surveillance activities in coastal areas of northern Australia. While this interaction may not involve direct employment, the local communities derive benefit through income received from AQIS on a fee for service basis.
	AQIS Far North	Ongoing Commencing January 2009	Advertising strategies for vacancies in the AQIS Far North region include engagement with local Indigenous council and community networks, where appropriate, in addition to placement of vacancy advertising in Indigenous media.
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB)	Commencing March 2009	Maintain an Indigenous recruitment page on the department's website.

	Corporate Policy Division - Policy Development (Strategy & Support) Branch	Projects under former initiative completed by 30 June 2009. Projects under Australia's Farming Future initiative initiated by 30 June 2009. National Indigenous Forestry Strategy and Indigenous Aquaculture Strategy are ongoing	Develop and implement projects to increase the engagement, leadership and representative capacity of Indigenous Australians in agriculture, fishing, forestry and related industries, to strengthen primary industry productivity and build rural, regional and remote community resilience to a changing climate (also includes National Indigenous Forestry Strategy and Indigenous Aquaculture Strategy).
	All managers	Commencing January 2009	Involve Indigenous Australians in programs and policy development to enhance Indigenous opportunities and achievement of departmental business.
	Indigenous Partnerships Team, Sustainable Resource Management	Ongoing	Continue to invest in Indigenous programs through the National Landcare Program.

4. Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
4.1 Ensure the department's RAP remains relevant and the targets outlined are progressed	Indigenous Working Group (CPD) / Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB)	Ongoing commencing May 2009	Annual Review of the department's Reconciliation Action Plan to track progress and expansion of current actions and identify new actions.
	Indigenous Employee Officer (HRB) / Indigenous Working Group (CPD)	March 2009	RAP review and revised RAP published on departmental website under the Indigenous Employment section and on the Intranet under Workplace Diversity. Distribute RAP to all employees via the <i>e-bulletin</i> .
	Human Resources Branch	June 2009 / 10	State of the Service reporting
	Human Resources Branch	August 2009 / 10	Access and Equity Report
	Indigenous Working Group (CPD)	As required	Reporting to the Executive Management Team including updates on RAP actions and other Indigenous matters included on the agenda.
	Corporate Policy Division	The IWG will meet monthly at section head level and quarterly at branch head level	Corporate Policy Division (CPD) has initiated action to set up a departmental Indigenous Working Group (IWG) , which aims to improve coordination and communication of Indigenous programs across the portfolio. It will subsume the intended functions of the previous Indigenous Affairs Steering Committee and Indigenous Affairs Working Group.