

Environment Protection Authority

# Reconciliation Action Plan 2014–16

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## **Reconciliation Action Plan 2014–16**

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This publication incorporates the unique artwork of Verna Lawrie, a Mirning and Kokatha descendant to show the coming together and partnership between the EPA and Aboriginal people. Verna's art is from a number of pieces the South Australian Government purchased the rights to use in publications from the Ceduna Arts Centre.

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# Contents

Abbreviations .....	1
Message from the Chief Executive .....	3
1 Our vision for reconciliation .....	4
2 Our business .....	5
3 Our Reconciliation Action Plan 2014–15 .....	6



# Abbreviations

**AARD**

**CEGAA**

**DEWNR** Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources

**DFEEST** Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology

**EPA** South Australian Environment Protection Authority

**NAIDOC** National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee

**RAP** Reconciliation Action Plan

**WSUD** water sensitive urban design



## Message from the Chief Executive



I am very proud to present the Environment Protection Authority's first Reconciliation Action Plan.

This is an important document for the EPA, developed as part of our commitment to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to maintain, protect and manage their culture, language, land and heritage.

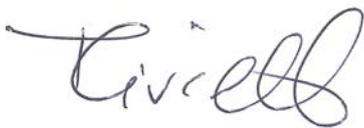
The EPA is committed to developing meaningful relationships with, and opportunities for, Aboriginal people. This plan is a sign of that commitment and incorporates our existing work with the Aboriginal community, while setting ourselves new targets to expand our reconciliation efforts.

Through our Reconciliation Action Plan we intend to ensure our services are accessible by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, that we involve with and engage with Aboriginal communities, and that we seek to create employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. To do this, it is important that our staff are culturally aware and are equipped to communicate effectively and work with Aboriginal people.

Our inaugural plan focuses on three key areas: employment, engagement, and cultural awareness.

We strongly support the vision to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and recognise the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of Australia.

I hope you will take the time to read our plan, and we welcome your comments and feedback.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Circelli', written in a cursive style.

Tony Circelli  
Chief Executive  
Environment Protection Authority

# 1 Our vision for reconciliation

The EPA recognises South Australia's Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the state's lands, water, plants and animals, commonly known as country, and that country is central to the social, cultural and spiritual lives of Aboriginal people. The EPA is committed to working with Aboriginal people to progress our key environmental goals to achieve a better environment, protected for all South Australians.

This plan will help us to strengthen and build positive relations with Aboriginal people, provide a framework for how reconciliation can advance our organisational objectives and identify what we can do to contribute to and promote reconciliation in Australia.

The EPA contributes to sustainable development, addressing issues such as water sensitive urban design, noise, air quality, water quality and site contamination. We are committed to genuine engagement and as part of this commitment, we actively inform and consult with Aboriginal groups in urban and rural areas to achieve improvements to the environment.

## 2 Our business

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) influences and regulates human activities to protect and restore our environment. We are responsible for the protection of air and water quality, and the control of pollution, waste, noise and radiation. We work with the community, industry and governments to achieve a healthier environment and a prosperous and sustainable future. The EPA is responsible for administration of the *Environment Protection Act 1993* and the *Radiation Protection and Control Act 1982*, and also exercises responsibilities under other South Australian planning and environmental legislation.

The EPA delivers environmental and public health protection through identifying, prioritising and addressing the most significant potential or actual environmental harms. These harms are identified through ongoing assessment of the state of the environment and analysis of global, national and local environmental trends and ongoing pressures. Our vision is developed from key inputs within South Australia's Strategic Plan priorities and the government's seven strategic priorities. We work with key partners to continue to identify and address pressures with specific, efficient and effective interventions.

In this context the EPA's short to medium term pressures are the environmental and human health risks and impacts associated with:

- major point sources of pollution and waste
- South Australia's legacy issues, particularly site and groundwater contamination and the interface of industry and residential dwellings
- increasing urban and infrastructure development and renewal
- inappropriate or illegal management of wastes and resource recovery
- broader issues of statewide significance, eg management of the River Murray, potential impacts of renewable energy, and impacts of climate change
- expansion of mining in South Australia and its associated infrastructure.

The EPA main office is located in Adelaide with a regional office in Mt Gambier. EPA Officers travel across South Australia.

At the development of this RAP, the EPA employed 216 FTE with three people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, making up 1.2% of the total number of employees. Our commitment, in line with South Australia's Strategic Plan is to reach a target of at least 2% Aboriginal employees.

## 3 Our Reconciliation Action Plan 2014–15

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is championed by the EPA Executive.

An initial draft RAP was submitted in 2013 to the Chair (CEGAA) with the undertaking that the EPA would continue to build upon this early version.

Since then a start-up RAP group comprising internal staff has reviewed the initial draft plan. The group identified further work that the EPA is undertaking including Aboriginal engagement and contributed to reconciliation. The group also improved and expanded the strategies within the initial draft plan.

Employee and manager representation within the start-up group came from the following branches within the EPA:

**Operations Directorate:** Regional Delivery and Operations Planning  
Water Quality  
Compliance

**Strategy and Business Directorate:** Office of the Executive  
People and Capability

In developing the RAP, consultation was also carried out in conjunction with Errol Lovegrove, Project Officer Reconciliation, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR).

Although this is the first RAP, the EPA has a long standing history of pursuing opportunities to engage with Aboriginal people on key environment projects and programs as listed below.

### 3.1 Development and implementation of the Adelaide Coastal Water Quality Improvement Plan

Adelaide's coastal waters are being affected by pollution associated with discharges from wastewater treatment plants, industry and stormwater. In 2013, the EPA completed the development of a water quality improvement plan to address these issues. During the development of the plan, the Kurna people were consulted and their views on cultural aspects of water quality (eg Healthy Country = Healthy People) were incorporated into the strategies within the plan.

Their holistic view of 'country' also influenced the design of the catchment-to-coast approach that was the basis for a funding submission to the Australian Government 'Caring for our Country' program, to support the implementation of the water quality improvement plan.

The EPA is now actively working with the Kurna people to ensure that water sensitive urban design (WSUD) projects are planned and implemented by project partners (local government, state agencies and the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board) in a way that is consistent with Aboriginal cultural values.

Agreed environmental values for the Adelaide Coastal Water Quality Improvement Plan can be viewed at <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/indigenous-cultural-spiritual-values-water-quality-planning>.

### 3.2 Establishing community agreed environmental values to inform future EPA regulation

For most of the past 150 years since European settlement, Lake Bonney South East (SE) has been the largest freshwater lake in South Australia. The lake has been polluted by the discharge of large amounts of nutrients and contaminants from pulp and paper mills for over 70 years. Smaller volumes have entered the lake from the Millicent wastewater treatment plant, as well as stormwater and large agricultural land drainage from the Millicent area.

The EPA has been working closely with key stakeholders in the last 20 years to identify options to avoid or minimise the release of wastewater into the lake's catchment and undertaken a range of further monitoring studies of the lake.

With improved water quality in recent years, the EPA in 2012 sought views from the South East Aboriginal Reference Group (Boandik people) about the way that they would seek to use the lake and its catchment as part of a formal environmental values setting process. As part of this, the EPA and the South East Aboriginal Reference Group discussed a shared interest in exploring the cultural use of water. The group invited the EPA to present at an On Country Cultural Water Workshop about the [environmental, cultural and spiritual values](#) that the lake should be able to support in the future.

### **3.3 Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement**

The Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement (KNYA) translates to 'Listening to Ngarrindjeri people talking' agreement. The KNYA is a consultation and negotiation agreement between the South Australian Government and the Ngarrindjeri people. DEWNR is the lead South Australian Government agency in the Agreement.

The EPA's investigative science and monitoring work informs DEWNR's management, in consultation with the Ngarrindjeri people under the KNYA, of the Coorong Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth areas. The EPA has also recently attended the KNYA Task Force meeting and provided an update of relevant activities that intersect with Ngarrindjeri interests. EPA was also represented at the February 2014 KNYA Water Workshop at Blanchetown, to discuss Aboriginal interests in relation to water policy and planning and the implementation of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan in SA.

### **3.4 Revision of the Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality 2000**

The EPA is represented on a COAG Joint Steering Committee revising the national water quality guidelines. It was successful in promoting that the need to address the protection of Indigenous cultural and spiritual values. The guidelines will be used to inform planning, regulation and management of water quality across Australia and New Zealand.

### **3.5 Revision of the Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2003**

The EPA consulted with more than 120 Aboriginal groups in the recent review of the Water Quality Environment Protection Policy (EPP) and met with two groups to better understand indigenous needs with regard to water quality management. As a result of this consultation the revised EPP will, for the first time, include provisions to better consider Indigenous interests when determining environmental values of waters with Indigenous cultural or spiritual significance.

### **3.6 EPA membership of the South Australian Murray–Darling Basin NRM Board**

The EPA has had a long-standing membership of the South Australian Murray–Darling Basin NRM Board and through the Board has participated in a number of Aboriginal Partnerships Projects.

Aboriginal Partnership Projects aim to increase the participation of Aboriginal communities in natural resource management (NRM), raise awareness of Aboriginal culture, and protect culturally significant sites and species. Aboriginal Partnership Project initiatives include:

- Aboriginal Learning on Country (ALOC): The program provides meaningful NRM employment and training opportunities to members of the Aboriginal community.

ALOC projects involve participants in a range on NRM activities, including pest plant and animal control, revegetation, erosion control, wetland management and monitoring. Current projects are based at Berri, Glossop, Monarto Zoological Park and Raukkan.

- Riverland Working on Country project: The Riverland Working on Country (WOC) project employs five Aboriginal rangers to work on Calperum Station and the Riverland Ramsar site.

The project is a partnership between the South Australian Murray–Darling Basin NRM Board, the Australian Government Land and Coasts Division, and the Australian Landscapes Trust.

- Aboriginal property planning and technical support: The Aboriginal Partnerships Project supports Aboriginal land managers to develop NRM plans for their properties to guide future management and assist in attracting funding for projects. Ongoing technical support and training is also provided for a range of NRM issues including pest plant and animal control, revegetation, wetland management and monitoring.
- Raising Cultural Awareness: A range of activities have been undertaken to increase community awareness of Aboriginal culture and its links to NRM, including coordinating cultural awareness training, organising tours, visiting schools, attending field days and speaking at community group meetings.

A [skills register](#) has been developed to assist with connecting Aboriginal people with NRM opportunities across South Australia.

### **3.7 Maralinga Land and Environment Management Committee**

Between 1953 and 1963 the Maralinga lands were used by the British Government as a nuclear test site. In 2009, and following extensive Australian rehabilitation activities in the interim period, the last section of land (known as Section 400) was handed over by the Commonwealth to South Australia and the Maralinga Tjarutja.

The EPA works with the Maralinga Tjarutja, the Commonwealth government and other South Australian agencies to ensure the rehabilitated lands continue to be managed and monitored. This is administered through the Maralinga Land and Environment Management Committee, made up of traditional owner and government representatives and chaired by the EPA.

### **3.8 Aboriginal employment**

The EPA has actively pursued Aboriginal employment through:

- Accessing the DFEEST Aboriginal Employment Register
- Implementation of Aboriginal cadetships
- Provision of cultural awareness training for EPA staff, particularly for branches preparing for Aboriginal recruitment.

**The RAP is based on three focus areas:**

- engagement
- cultural awareness
- employment.

The EPA recognises that action around these areas is necessary to continue to help us strengthen and build positive relationships with Aboriginal people and promote reconciliation in Australia.

The three areas of our RAP are included in the following actions.

## 1 Relationships

The EPA values strong relationships as the foundation for creating effective and influencing good environmental outcomes for South Australia and providing genuine engagement opportunities.

Building strong relationships with Aboriginal people is an essential part of listening, acknowledging, considering and responding to the voices of those who have an interest in our actions.

### Focus area: Engagement

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
<p>1 RAP Working Group</p> <p>a The EPA will establish a RAP Working Group to actively monitor the RAP, including implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting.</p> <p>b RAP Working Group has established terms of reference.</p>	<p>Executive lead</p> <p>Manager People &amp; Capability, and Senior HR Consultant</p>	31 December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first RAP developed by the start-up RAP group is endorsed and signed off by the EPA Executive.</li> <li>A RAP Working Group is established and consulted, with EPA Aboriginal staff members involved.</li> <li>The Working Group will oversee RAP progress.</li> <li>The Working Group will meet twice a year to monitor and review the RAP implementation.</li> </ul>
<p>2 Support and promote the RAP</p>	<p>Chief Executive &amp; Executive</p> <p>Manager People &amp; Capability, and Senior HR Consultant</p>	July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RAP is endorsed by Executive.</li> <li>A consultation and communications plan is developed to assist implementation of the RAP.</li> </ul>
<p>3 Celebrate National Reconciliation Week</p> <p>Provide opportunities for Aboriginal employees and other employees to build relationships.</p>	<p>Manager People &amp; Capability, and Senior HR Consultant</p>	27 May 2014– 3 June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with DEWNR to contribute to an internal event each year.</li> </ul>
<p>4 Implement the South Australian Policy Framework: Aboriginal Languages Interpreters and Translators, DPC February 2014</p>	<p>Manager People &amp; Capability, and Senior HR Consultant</p>	31 December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities with the DEWNR Project Officer Reconciliation to establish</li> </ul>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
			network links between the EPA and DEWNR.
5 Partner with DEWNR Reconciliation Network to promote Reconciliation Action throughout the EPA	Senior HR Consultant	31 December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities with the DEWNR Project Officer Reconciliation to establish network links between the EPA and DEWNR.</li> </ul>
6 The EPA Executive will explore opportunities to include reconciliation action within the Leadership agenda	Chief Executive/Chair RAP Working group	Twice a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA Executive will include reconciliation on the agenda twice a year to promote and increase awareness of reconciliation action.</li> </ul>

## 2 Respect

Respect is important as engagement with all stakeholders in environment protection is part of the EPA Strategic Plan (2012–15). Respect for Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of country is facilitated through our strategic priority of 'genuine engagement' and our commitment to working with Aboriginal people to progress our key environmental goals.

### Focus area: Cultural awareness

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1 Engage employees in understanding the protocols around 'Acknowledgment of Country' and 'Welcome to Country' ceremonies to ensure there is shared meaning behind the ceremonies	Senior staff and Committee chairs	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protocols communicated across the EPA and the statement is made available on the EPA hub.</li> <li>• Observance of 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgment of Country' protocol.</li> </ul>
2 Deliver cultural awareness and anti-racism training to increase understanding and appreciation of different cultural backgrounds in order to lay the foundation for other RAP actions to be achieved	Manager People & Capability	2014–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal employees are consulted in the development of the annual EPA Learning and Development plan.</li> <li>• Cultural awareness training is a component of the annual EPA learning and development plan.</li> <li>• Partner with DEWNR to access training service providers to deliver cultural awareness training.</li> </ul>
3 Provide opportunities for the EPA to be visible and accessible to Aboriginal people and communities	Manager Stakeholder & Information Management Chief of Staff	July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional EPA Board meetings – promoted to regional communities eg Eyre Peninsula Round Table July 2014.</li> <li>• Pursue the concept of a competition for young Aboriginal artists to display their work on the CBD air quality station located at Victoria Square.</li> </ul>
4 Review the EPA project management templates to include engagement with Aboriginal people	Chief Information Officer, Knowledge, Information and Strategy	September 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project management templates refer to building engagement with Aboriginal people.</li> </ul>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
5 Review the EPA engagement planning templates to include engagement with Aboriginal people	Manager, Stakeholder and Information Management	December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The engagement planning templates refer to building engagement with Aboriginal people.</li> </ul>
6 Review the EPA Board Communication and Engagement Framework to include engagement with Aboriginal people	Manager, Stakeholder and Information Management	July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EPA Board Communication and Engagement Framework refers to building engagement with Aboriginal people.</li> </ul>

### 3 Opportunities

The EPA will enhance opportunities for involvement and contribution by Aboriginal people in the organisation. By creating opportunities the EPA's environmental priorities can be enriched by the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as custodians of country.

#### Focus area: Employment

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1 Investigate opportunities within the EPA to increase Aboriginal employment	Senior HR Consultant	December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review HR procedures and policies to ensure barriers to Aboriginal employees are able to be addressed.</li> <li>Engage with existing Aboriginal staff to consult on employment strategies.</li> <li>Advertise vacancies in Indigenous media.</li> <li>Continue to promote Aboriginal cadetship opportunities within the EPA.</li> <li>Liaise with DEWNR and tertiary institutions in relation to sourcing candidates for cadetships.</li> </ul>
2 Explore and tailor appropriate waste management operational procedures in outback areas of South Australia to enhance engagement with Aboriginal people	Compliance Branch	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaise with DPC–AARD to ensure any EPA projects affecting the APY lands are consistent with the goals of the Regional Partnership Agreement between APY Executive, State and Federal Government (three-year project).</li> <li>Continue working with DPC–AARD and Zero Waste SA to publish guidelines specific to the management of waste in outback areas.</li> </ul>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress a cabinet submission proposing legislative changes to better facilitate waste management in remote Aboriginal communities in collaboration with the publication of the Outback Waste Management Guidelines.</li> </ul>
<p>3 Continue to ensure that appropriate engagement occurs with Aboriginal people on relevant environmental planning, regulatory and management issues relating to water quality</p>	<p>Water Quality Branch</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with Ngarrindjeri people, via KNYA process, to ensure the SA implementation of the water quality aspects of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan adequately reflects Aboriginal interests.</li> <li>Cooperation with Kaurna people to incorporate Aboriginal interests into the ‘Catchment to Coast’ Caring for our Country project to protect water quality of watercourses and the Adelaide Coastal Waters.</li> <li>Liaison with South East Aboriginal Reference Group re future actions concerning Lake Bonney.</li> <li>EPA involvement with Australian Government Department of the Environment national consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the Indigenous cultural and spiritual values of the revised national water quality guidelines.</li> </ul>

#### 4 Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1 Final version of the RAP is endorsed by EPA Executive	Manager People & Capability, and Senior HR Consultant	July 2014	
2 The RAP is promoted internally within the EPA and made available on the Hub and on the website		August 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP achievements/activities are regularly communicated</li> </ul>
3 Achievements are reported annually		September 2014 and 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress is reported each year in the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire</li> </ul>