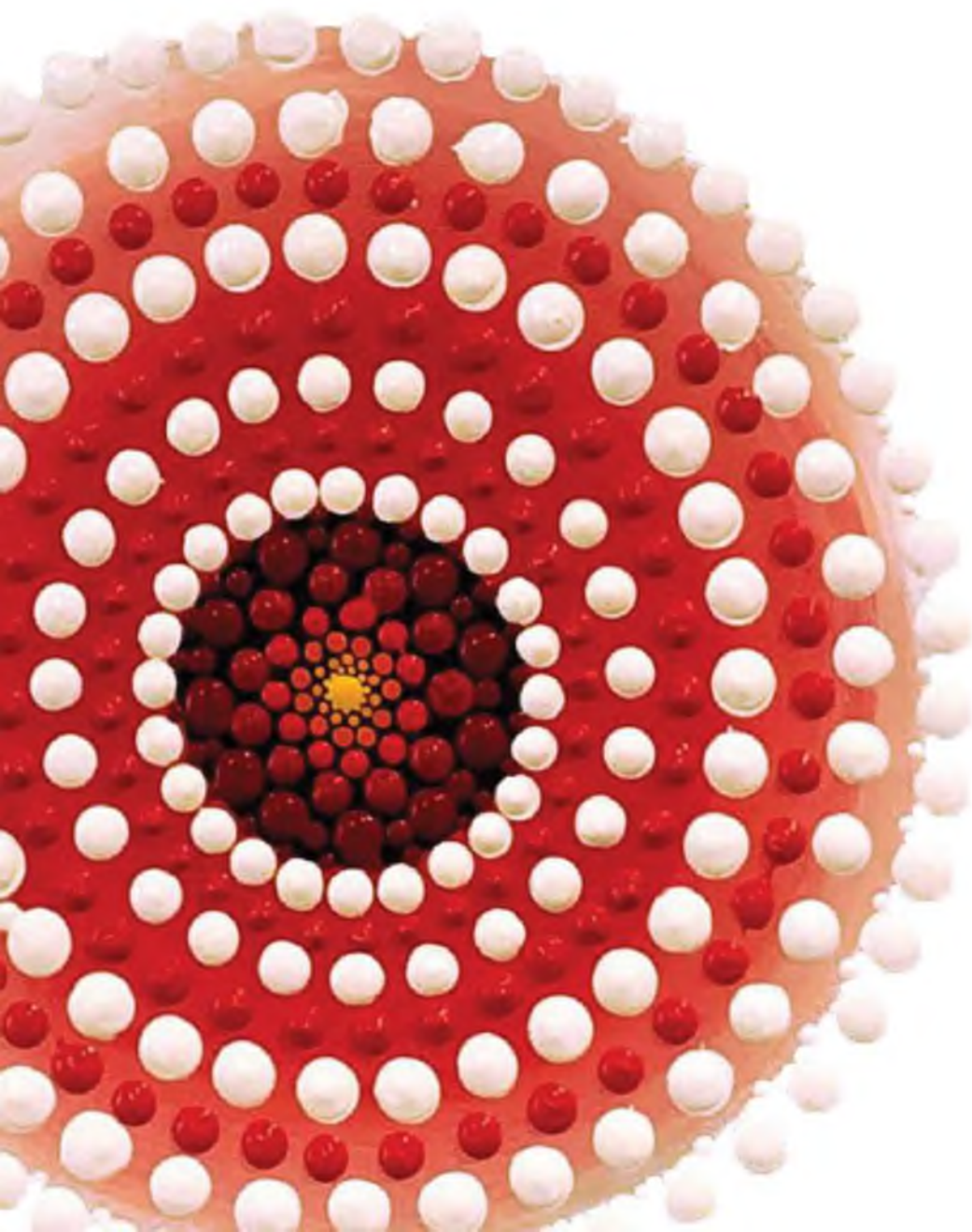




**COOPER GRACE WARD**  
LAWYERS

# Reconciliation Action Plan

(November 2022 - November 2023)



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**

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**REFLECT**

## Acknowledgement of Country

Cooper Grace Ward acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate and conduct our business across Queensland and Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to elders, past, present and emerging.

## About the artwork

The artwork featured in this document was provided by Brooke Sutton, a contemporary Indigenous artist from the Kalkadoon people of the Mount Isa area in Queensland.

'Walumarra business' is the name of this painting which translates into 'women's business' in the Kalkadoon language. The Kalkadoon people have a connection to the sea as they used to travel north to the gulf country to hunt and gather food. Brooke's painting depicts the many vibrant colours and life given by the sea to all living sea creatures.

*Gallery catalogue number – WALGTLDW71*

*Artist – Brooke Sutton, 14 years old*

*Medium – acrylic and textured acrylic on canvas*

*Artist language group – Kalkatungu (Kalkadoon)*

*Artist language group – Emu Foot Province, Mount Isa Queensland*

*Year painted – 2019*

*Size – 60cm wide x 90cm high*

[www.cherneesutton.com.au](http://www.cherneesutton.com.au)



## Statement from Reconciliation Australia CEO

Reconciliation Australia congratulates Cooper Grace Ward on continuing its reconciliation journey by formally endorsing Cooper Grace Ward's second Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Through this plan, Cooper Grace Ward continues to play an important role in a network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with over 2.3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP continues the journey and primes the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Cooper Grace Ward to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Cooper Grace Ward on your second Reflect RAP, and I look forward to following your continuing reconciliation journey.



**Karen Mundine**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia

## A message from our Managing Partner

I am proud to present Cooper Grace Ward's 2022-2023 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Within this document, we describe the goals and initiatives for the future that support our reconciliation journey and help us to build better lives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and corporations.

An initiative of Reconciliation Australia, the Reconciliation Action Plan program provides a framework for organisations to support the national reconciliation movement. The RAP program contributes to reconciliation by supporting organisations to develop respectful relationships and create meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our RAP is important to us, as we see it as a way for our firm to advance reconciliation within our own sphere of influence, being the legal and business communities in Queensland and across Australia.

This is our second RAP, and we are striving to take a more proactive role in lifting the principles and voices of First Nations people in the legal industry. It describes the initiatives we have in place to continue the journey of reconciliation.

Our RAP aligns with our purpose and values and includes both internal and external goals that will contribute to reconciliation. With a growing team, much still needs to be done to reach our reconciliation goals and this second RAP is a welcome step forward.

I am proud of the culturally inclusive and diverse environment we have created at Cooper Grace Ward, but there is always an opportunity to do better, and this RAP will provide us with a solid platform to support greater inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – both at the firm and across the legal industry.

In partnership with Reconciliation Australia, my team members and I are committed to working towards achieving better social, economic and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and corporations.

I look forward to working with our RAP Working Group and team members to progress our reconciliation journey.



**Charles Sweeney**  
Managing Partner, Cooper Grace Ward

# About Cooper Grace Ward

## Our business

Cooper Grace Ward is an independent law firm that provides legal services to businesses and individuals in Queensland and across Australia. We offer a full range of commercial legal services to our clients with a focus on corporate and commercial, property, litigation, insurance and family law. Our key practice areas are among the largest Brisbane-based teams in their respective areas. Our core purpose is to deliver success for our clients, our team and our community. In our business decisions and in all interactions with our clients, stakeholders, community and each other, we act in accordance with our values of mutual respect, excellence and curiosity.

Cooper Grace Ward was established in 1980 and quickly became one of the largest Queensland based law firms, operating from a single office in Brisbane with a team of more than 200. We recognise our team as our most important asset and provide an array of flexibility with 45% of team members currently on some type of flexible working arrangement.

We participate in the bi-annual Inclusion@Work survey conducted by the Diversity Council Australia to assess our firm's diversity and inclusion efforts from the perspective of our team members. In the most recent Inclusion@Work survey of October 2021, one team member identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. We are determined to lift this representation in our team and to continue building a workplace that attracts, retains and enhances relationships with more First Nations people.

## Our purpose and values

Cooper Grace Ward places great importance on our identity, our vision and our values as a firm. We believe this approach translates into a better culture and working environment for our team, which in turn ensures outstanding service for our clients.

Our leadership team participates in strategic and business planning each year to set the medium and long term course of the business and to ensure we achieve our goals. This includes looking ahead to assess client needs and what we need to do to position ourselves to best support these needs.

### Our purpose (who we are)

Our purpose is to ensure the success of our clients and our team, and to positively impact our community.

### Our values (what we stand for)

In our business decisions and in all interactions with our clients, stakeholders, community and each other, we value:

#### Mutual respect

We show consideration for every person's unique qualities, contribution and aspirations, being honest, clear and authentic.

#### Excellence

We work together positively with our team and our clients to understand their needs and deliver our very best every time.

#### Curiosity

We continuously seek and embrace change that adds value.



## Our RAP

At Cooper Grace Ward, providing a supportive work environment is a cornerstone of how we operate, and we are proud that our achievements have been recognised externally. For example, in 2022 the firm received the HRD '5-Star' Employer of Choice Award and an Australasian Lawyer Law Firm of the Year Excellence Award. Cooper Grace Ward is also one of only four Australian law firms to have been named as an Inclusive Employer by the Diversity Council Australia continuously since 2019. We aim to create a culture where all team members, irrespective of background or attributes, are treated with respect and honesty while contributing to the team.

This culture readily supports the principles of equal employment opportunity across gender, ability, race, ethnicity and socio-economic background, as well as other differences including work styles, education, family, sporting or study responsibilities. We apply these principles not only when interacting with current and potential team members, but also when dealing with any stakeholder who interacts with our firm.

Cooper Grace Ward developed its first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2019. We have continued to focus on and report against the goals in that RAP, although we experienced some significant disruption to our plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With more face-to-face collaboration and training now possible, we are taking this opportunity in 2022 to renew our commitment to Reconciliation through an updated Reflect RAP.

Through the development of this next RAP, we aim to build relationships, respect and opportunities together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our goal is to create a workplace culture that understands, values and respects the history, diversity, and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We aim to do this through the transformation of internal attitudes in the workplace by developing cultural awareness, as well as committing to tangible outcomes through employment, mentoring and support for local First Nations businesses.

To demonstrate our commitment to the RAP, we have developed a sub-committee of the Cooper Grace Ward Diversity & Inclusion Group, to focus on monitoring and championing the implementation of our RAP in the workplace. This RAP Working Group is comprised of one senior partner, a lawyer, a law clerk and an administration assistant who identifies as a First Nations person, along with our manager – people and culture, marketing director and communications coordinator. The make-up of this group ensures representation of a variety of internal stakeholders across Cooper Grace Ward, providing a range of perspectives and supporting stronger two-way communication between the Working Group and the rest of the firm.

In addition to the RAP Working Group, we have appointed our new managing partner Charles Sweeney as our RAP Champion. In his role as leader of the firm, Charles will be responsible for driving our team's engagement with, and awareness of, the RAP.

Our RAP Champion and RAP Working Group are firmly committed to achieving the goals of our RAP, ensuring that we enhance the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our workplace, supply chains and other business relationships.



## RAP relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	March, 2023	Lead: Manager – People & Culture Support: RAP Working Group
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	December, 2022	Lead: Manager – People & Culture Support: RAP Working Group
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May, 2023	Communications Coordinator
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June, 2023	Chair Diversity & Inclusion
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June, 2023	Lead: Chair, Diversity & Inclusion Support: RAP Working Group
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	November, 2022	Managing Partner
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	December, 2022	Lead: Manager – People & Culture Support: RAP Working Group
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	December, 2022	Lead: Manager – People & Culture Support: RAP Working Group
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	March, 2023	Lead: Manager - People & Culture Support: RAP Working Group
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March, 2023	Manager – People & Culture





Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. 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.	December, 2022	Manager – People & Culture RAP Working Group
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	December, 2022	Lead: Manager – Business Systems & Risk  Support: Manager – People & Culture
	Identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island training provider to deliver cultural awareness / cultural competency training to our Senior leaders.	February, 2023	Lead: Chair Diversity & Inclusion  Support: Manager – People & Culture
	Investigate potential Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island training provider to deliver cultural awareness / cultural competency training or alternative to our broader CGW team	February, 2023	Lead: Chair Diversity & Inclusion  Support: Manager – People & Culture
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	November, 2022	Lead: Chair Diversity & Inclusion  Support: RAP Working Group
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	November, 2022	Lead: Managing Partner  Support: Chair, Diversity & Inclusion
	Acknowledgement of Country to be provided by the presenter at the beginning of key meetings, functions and events	November, 2022	Lead: Managing Partner  Support: Chair Diversity & Inclusion

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. 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 of NAIDOC Week.	June, 2023	Communications Coordinator
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June, 2023	Communications Coordinator
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2023	Lead: Chair Diversity & Inclusion  Support: RAP Working Group

## RAP opportunities



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Review recruitment processes and practices for any unintended barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	January, 2023	Manager – People & Culture
	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	April, 2023	Manager – People & Culture
	Continue to sponsor events at local universities that support First Nations employment.	April, 2023	Manager – People & Culture
	Investigate further career opportunities and/or employment pathways for First Nations people at CGW	May, 2023	Manager – People & Culture
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	July, 2023	Director – People & Culture
9. 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.	June, 2023	Lead: Manager – People & Culture  Support: Corporate Services Coordinator
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	June, 2023	Lead: Manager – People & Culture  Support: RAP Working Group

## RAP governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	June, 2023	Manager – People & Culture
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	December, 2022	Communications Coordinator
	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	June, 2023	Manager – People & Culture
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	November, 2022	Lead: Chair Diversity & Inclusion  Support: Manager – People & Culture
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	November, 2022	Director, People & Culture, Chair Diversity Committee
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	October, 2022	Chair, Diversity & Inclusion
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	December, 2022	Communications Coordinator
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June annually	Manager – People & Culture
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	Manager – People & Culture
	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	30 September, annually	Manager – People & Culture
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2023	Manager – People & Culture

## Our partnerships and current activities

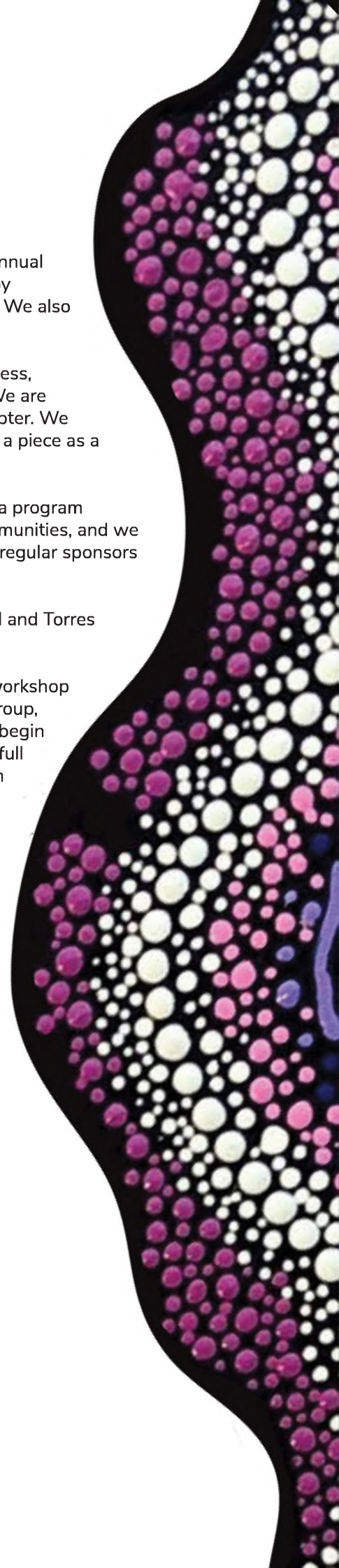
Since 2015, Cooper Grace Ward has celebrated NAIDOC week, by hosting an annual morning tea for our team members to raise awareness and promote unity, and by producing posters and other marketing materials to draw attention to the week. We also observe National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week.

In 2011, we formed an internal Diversity & Inclusion Group which raises awareness, ensures everyone in our team is represented and feels welcome and included. We are active members of the Diversity Council Australia and its legal industry sub-chapter. We proudly display First Nations artwork throughout NAIDOC week and purchased a piece as a permanent and unique arrangement in our reception space.

Historically, we have provided pro bono support to Thancoupie's Bursary Fund, a program offering scholarships to young Aboriginal artists, in the Western Cape York communities, and we utilise the services of local First Nations catering companies. In addition, we are regular sponsors of First Nations events at local universities.

A key focus in the year to come is to deepen our team's awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and perspectives.

Following approval of our new RAP by Reconciliation Australia, we will hold a workshop with our key internal stakeholders (RAP Working Group, Diversity & Inclusion Group, Executive Leadership Team, and People & Culture Team) to gain their input and begin progressing our plan. Following this, we intend to communicate our RAP to our full team at a firm-wide meeting, to ensure we can move ahead with shared goals in mind.



## RAP working group



**Scott Hay-Bartlem**  
Partner



**Melissa Dodd**  
Manager  
People & Culture



**Ella Blackman**  
Administration  
Assistant  
*Yidindji, Biri Gureng  
and Waanyi woman*



**Sophia Horrocks**  
Associate  
Corporate Advisory



**Charlie Leman**  
Coordinator  
Marketing &  
Communications



**James Rimmer**  
Director  
Marketing & Business  
Development



**Adrienne Soteriou**  
Law Clerk



**Carly Ashwood**  
Special Counsel  
Corporate Advisory

### Further information

For public enquiries about our RAP please contact:

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[cgw.com.au](http://cgw.com.au)

[reconciliation.org.au](http://reconciliation.org.au)