



Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust
Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

May 2024 – May 2025





Craig Murphy-Wandin (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung) performing a Welcome to Country.
Melbourne General Cemetery, May 2023.



Acknowledgement of Country

Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our cemeteries and memorial parks are located. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise and respect their culture, beliefs, and connection to Country, with traditions and customs that have existed for over 60,000 years, and we are privileged to share the lands we live on and work with.

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About the artwork

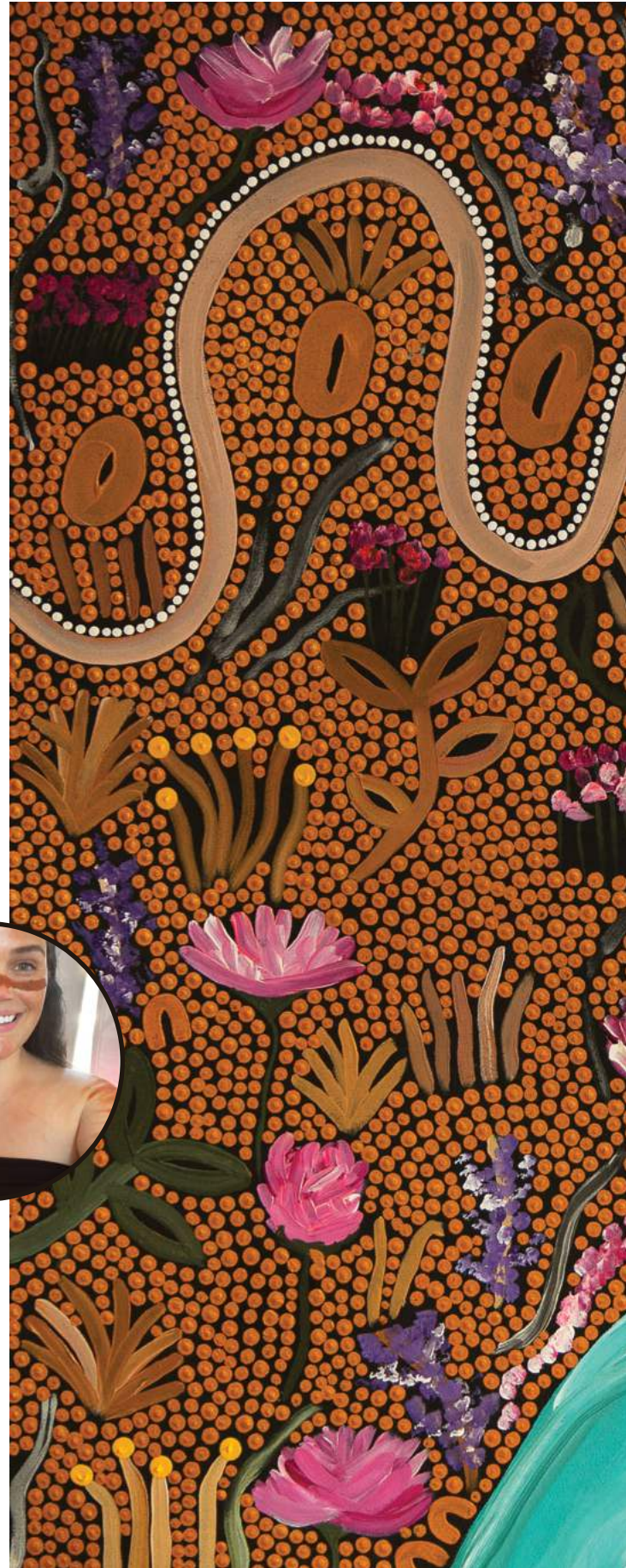
Life's Journey is a celebration of life, the beauty of the natural world, and the strength found in community. As you gaze upon it, your eyes are first drawn to the sweeping journey line that winds across the canvas. This line represents each family's journey, capturing the essence of their experiences. Nestled near to the journey line are nine circles, symbolizing each of the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT) sites. Scattered throughout the painting in bronze are U-shaped symbols, reflecting the SMCT team members who support the families through their journey and highlighting the strength found within the community.

Running through the piece is the Birrarung (river), a sacred place to the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri people. Water holds deep significance as a healing and cleansing element for our people. Vibrant florals and native plants are interspersed throughout, serving as reminders of our profound connection to the earth and how it sustains and nurtures us on our journey. Each flower and leaf tells a story, reflective of the diverse communities and flora of the SMCT cemeteries and memorial parks.

This artwork invites the viewer to reflect on their own journey through life, considering the people and places that have shaped them. It encourages a deeper appreciation for the interconnected pathways that bind us together as a community, celebrating diversity and a deeper appreciation for the shared pathways that connect us all.

About the artist

Kenita-Lee is a proud Wemba Wemba, Wotjobaluk, Boon Wurrung, Nari Nari, and Wiradjuri woman and mother of three, deeply connected to the saltwater shores, rivers, and mountains of her homeland. Through her artwork, she weaves the culture and traditions of her people, resonating with her ancestors, community, and Country. Her vibrant colors embody the resilience and vibrancy of her culture, ensuring that the stories, traditions, and teachings passed down through generations thrive and endure, reflecting a profound sense of place and belonging.





A message from our Trust Chair Dr Vanda Fortunato

I am honoured to introduce our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust.

In serving and guiding an organisation such as SMCT I am aware of many privileges.

I am privileged to be part of an organisation that cares for community at such a vulnerable time in their lives – a time of loss and grief and memories. It is a privilege to curate the nine beautiful cemeteries and memorial parks we care for on behalf of the Victorian community, and to honour their loved ones, our history and this land. And it is a privilege to have this opportunity, through our RAP, to begin a journey of learning and friendship with Traditional Owners as we care for Country, community, our shared history and our futures.

We work in a deeply personal industry, where people are at their most vulnerable. Our grounds offer spaces of reflection, connection, and natural beauty for our community. As curators of public space in perpetuity, we are uniquely placed to directly care for both our community and the environment in which we operate.

Our vision is to walk forward towards reconciliation with open hearts, mindful of the deep and enduring connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians have and create with the beautiful land that we manage.

Our RAP is a conversation between us and community and Traditional Owners and the land. It's an opportunity for us to explore the shared histories, the hidden histories, and the new histories of our sites for community and to re-imagine a more sustainable future together.

This RAP formally initiates the first steps in our reconciliation journey. It outlines our commitment to help shape a sustainable and equitable future through shared understanding and connection to the beautiful lands. It is the map through which we can start exploring what it means to work and walk together.

As an organisation, and as individuals, we are excited to take these steps together with our community and look forward to sharing our journey in coming years.

Dr Vanda Fortunato

Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust Chair



Statement from Reconciliation Australia CEO Karen Mundine

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust joins a network of more than 2,200 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 close to 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 will lay the foundations, priming 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.

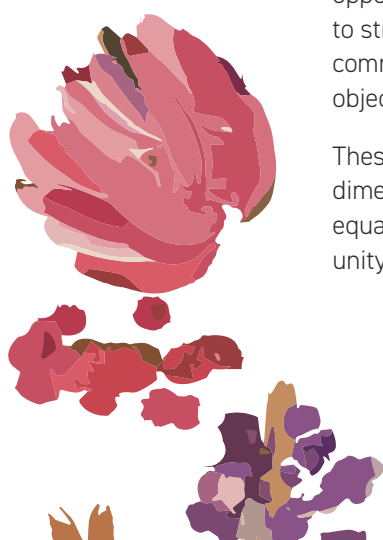
It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust 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 first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia





Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin and Craig Murphy-Wandin (Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung) performing a Welcome to Country. SMCT ELT members, project director and staff. Project Cultivate. Melbourne General Cemetery, May 2023.

About Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust

SMCT is a public entity under the Victorian Public Administration Act, reporting to the Minister for Health, responsible for the perpetual care and maintenance of nine diverse cemeteries and memorial parks across Melbourne's south east region. Focused on redefining the role cemeteries and memorial parks play in our community, we create caring environments that encourage families and friends to come together and celebrate the lives of loved ones.

SMCT is responsible for nine cemeteries and memorial park locations, including:

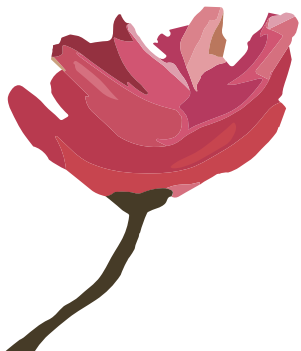
- Bunurong Memorial Park, Frankston-Dandenong Road, Dandenong South
- Brighton General Cemetery, Corner North and Hawthorn Roads, Caulfield South
- Cheltenham Memorial Park, Wangara Road, Cheltenham
- Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery, Charman Road, Cheltenham
- Dandenong Community Cemetery, Kirkham Road, Dandenong

- Melbourne General Cemetery, Colledge Crescent, Parkville
- St Kilda Cemetery, Dandenong Road, St Kilda East
- Sorrento Community Cemetery, 78 Normanby Road, Sorrento
- Springvale Botanical Cemetery, 600 Princes Highway, Springvale

Formed in March 2010 under the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003, the Trust, chaired by Dr Vanda Fortunato, reports to the Minister for Health through the Cemetery Sector Governance Support Unit of the Department of Health.

SMCT's corporate office is located within the grounds of Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

Our environments encompass heritage and historical monuments in iconic locations such as Melbourne General Cemetery, through to the beautiful botanic and native settings of Springvale and Bunurong, where our café, florist, playgrounds and multipurpose function areas provide space for sanctuary and reflection.





SMCT Locations

- ① Melbourne General Cemetery
- ② St Kilda Cemetery
- ③ Brighton General Cemetery
- ④ Springvale Botanical Cemetery
- ⑤ Cheltenham Memorial Park
- ⑥ Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery
- ⑦ Dandenong Community Cemetery
- ⑧ Bunurong Memorial Park
- ⑨ Sorrento Community Cemetery

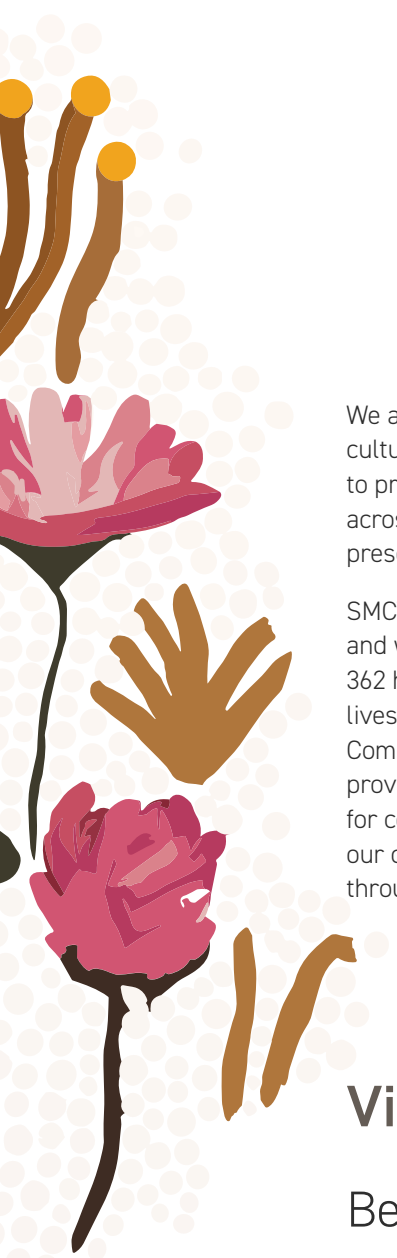
Aboriginal land councils

- Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Country
- Bunurong Country



Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust locations in 2024.





We are proud to work together with cultural and religious community groups to provide choice and meaningful services across each location and be custodians of preserve history.

SMCT conducts cremations and interments and welcomes visitors to our sites across 362 hectares to honour and celebrate the lives of their loved ones. Our innovative Community Care and Wellbeing program provides opportunities and resources for connection and self-care to support our communities on their journey through grief.

As at 30 June 2024 SMCT employs 393 people across the nine sites located across Melbourne's south-east region.

Currently SMCT employs 4 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff member based on self-identification through the 2024 People Matter Survey.

The SMCT Trust has three members who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Vision

Be a sector leader in cemeteries and memorial parks, and in supporting our diverse communities as they grieve, honour and celebrate life.

Purpose

We create and maintain cemeteries and memorial parks where people can honour and celebrate their loved ones.



Why a Reconciliation Action Plan?

SMCT has a critical role to play in supporting the Victorian community in perpetuity. We acknowledge that meaningful, respectful and productive relationships with First Peoples and communities are important to the commitment of the reconciliation process.

The RAP Supports our Strategic Plan FY 2025 - FY 2027 through the intent to develop SMCT's long-term broader corporate social responsibility approach and aligns with our Vision and Purpose to empower communities and acknowledge their cultural, religious and personal preferences to celebrate and honour loved ones.

Our ethos is one of inclusion and respect. We include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations, leaders, communities and families in our considerations so we learn from one another and develop a real awareness, understanding, appreciation, and respect for the cultures, histories, and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples. This understanding is inextricably linked to the deep connection and care for Country and the sustainability of our sites in perpetuity. A RAP sets us on a deliberate journey of understanding and inclusion as we work towards reconciliation.

The Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation are acknowledged as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we operate.

- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation are representatives of the Traditional Owners of the areas on which our Cheltenham, Brighton, Dandenong, Sorrento, Springvale and St Kilda cemeteries are located.
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation are representatives of our Traditional Owners of the land on which the Melbourne General Cemetery is situated.

Bunurong Memorial Park



Our Reconciliation Action Plan

This RAP recognises SMCT's commitment to build and strengthen respectful relationships in order to explore and understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, heritage and our shared history.

Grief is a deeply personal experience; death changes the nature of our relationships with loved ones and asks us to find different ways to connect. For many, creating a special sense of place to reflect and honour their loved ones is an integral part of their grief journey.

We are the guardians and curators of beautiful and iconic public environments imbued with significant personal, historical, and cultural meaning. As a Trust, we have a responsibility to maintain this ongoing connection to our past, present and future – sustainably and for all. We do this through working with communities to understand their needs and the lasting connections forged through memorialisation within our grounds.

This understanding of communities' most intimate connection with land makes it even more important that we acknowledge and build respectful relationships with the

Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate. Environmental and cultural sustainability are inextricably linked. Understanding the cultural practices, knowledge, and deep connection to Country of the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people within the context of the historical and current practices of a changing society is key to understanding and moving towards reconciliation and creating a sustainable future.

We acknowledge the challenging conversations involved in this work and respect the contribution of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we serve.

Our Reflect RAP will establish strong foundations to contribute to reconciliation respectfully and meaningfully. It represents the first step on our journey; a practical plan of action to build relationships, respect and opportunities.

Through an increased awareness and shared understanding of culture, knowledge, and practices, we will strengthen our capability to connect to community, to Country, to our shared history and to each other.



Important aspects of working towards our RAP goals are to commit to better understanding and implementing cultural protocols to support cultural safety and to exploring an organisational understanding of the context of history and Country.

In 2023 the Trust determined a RAP be developed to explore and strengthen our relationships and reconnect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

The RAP Working Group including representatives from finance, governance, customer experience, and people and capability teams was established to consult internally with our Trust, executive team and project leaders from across the organisation to develop the RAP and engage in activities to promote cultural awareness.

The RAP Working Group is established to support the implementation of our RAP and review the work undertaken in partnership

with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community representatives, Elders, staff, customers and visitors to our sites.

We have engaged an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identified person as a consultant to the RAP Working Group to help advise on cultural issues and the RAP.

An internal RAP Supporters Group will increase activities to promote cultural awareness through the organisation, and report back to the RAP Working Group on any initiatives undertaken to support reconciliation.

We will appoint, support and maintain a RAP Champion from the Executive Leadership Team.



Walking together – partnerships and collaboration

SMCT is committed to listening and learning as we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from across our communities.

Our inaugural RAP highlights our foundational work in building relationships and forming links with community.

We are working towards the goals of RAP through a number of initiatives. One example is engaging with culturally safe and inclusive spaces such as Doveton Gathering Place and Nairn Marr Djambaba.

We are also engaging with Indigenous-led organisations including Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Nomuckerlener Indigenous Consulting, Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. These in-person engagements are vital to listening, fostering relationships, and promoting open conversation on essential topics such as the appropriate use of language and local history and customs.

Our sites have proudly hosted several Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies this year. We have

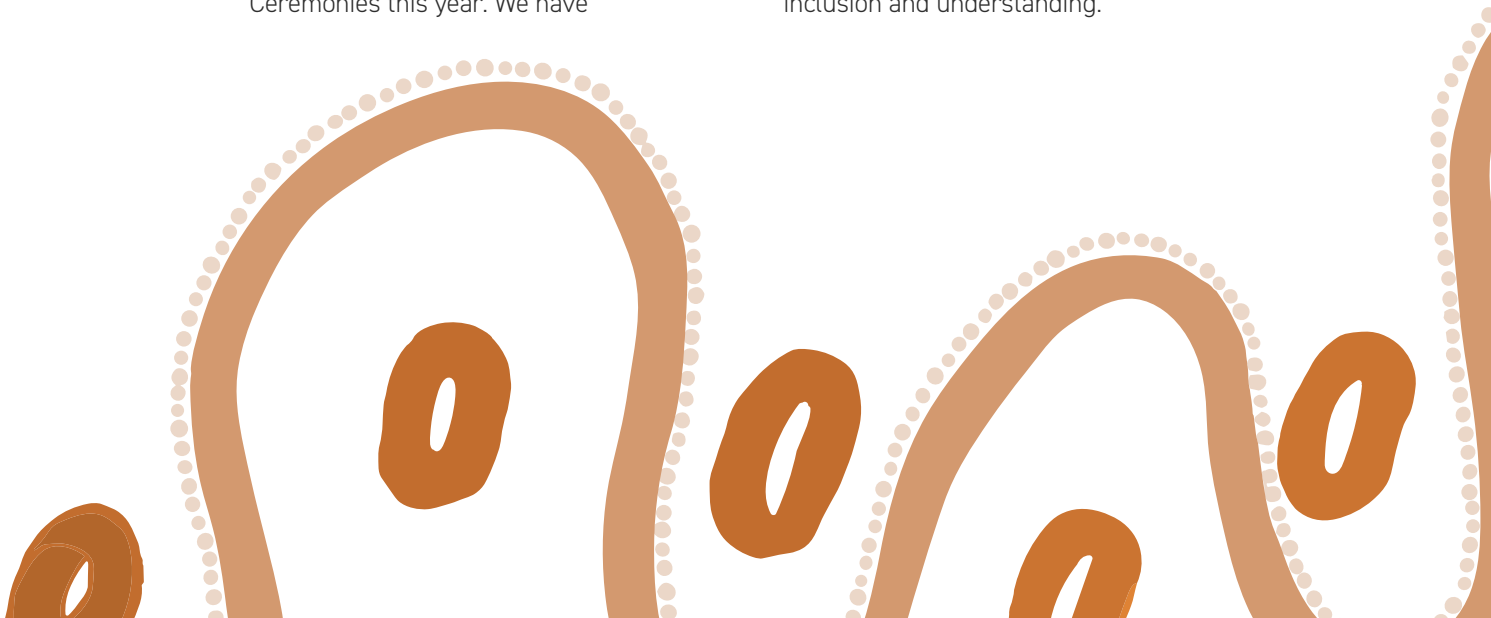
also launched a range of important environmental initiatives, and in doing so have engaged thoroughly with Indigenous groups.

For example, Project Cultivate at Melbourne General Cemetery involved extensive collaboration with Traditional Owners to determine appropriate plants and names for the site.

Similarly, we are designing a memorial for early pregnancy loss that will incorporate native plants to foster a connection to Country.

Each year we share communications both internally with employees, and externally via social media regarding National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. We have produced an Acknowledgment of Country guide for our teams, and are collaborating with Reconciliation Australia and Girraway Ganyi Consultancy on the development of our RAP.

We continue to work closely with community to support the ongoing development of our RAP and to ensure it reflects our shared vision of welcome, inclusion and understanding.



Elder Uncle Mark Brown (playing the yidaki) and Danny West (Bunurong Boon Wurrung) performing a Welcome to Country ceremony to the Six Feet Under: Design + Death event. Bunurong Memorial Park , June 2024.



Jillian West (Bunurong Boon Wurrung) welcoming attendees to the Six Feet Under: Design + Death event. Bunurong Memorial Park , June 2024.



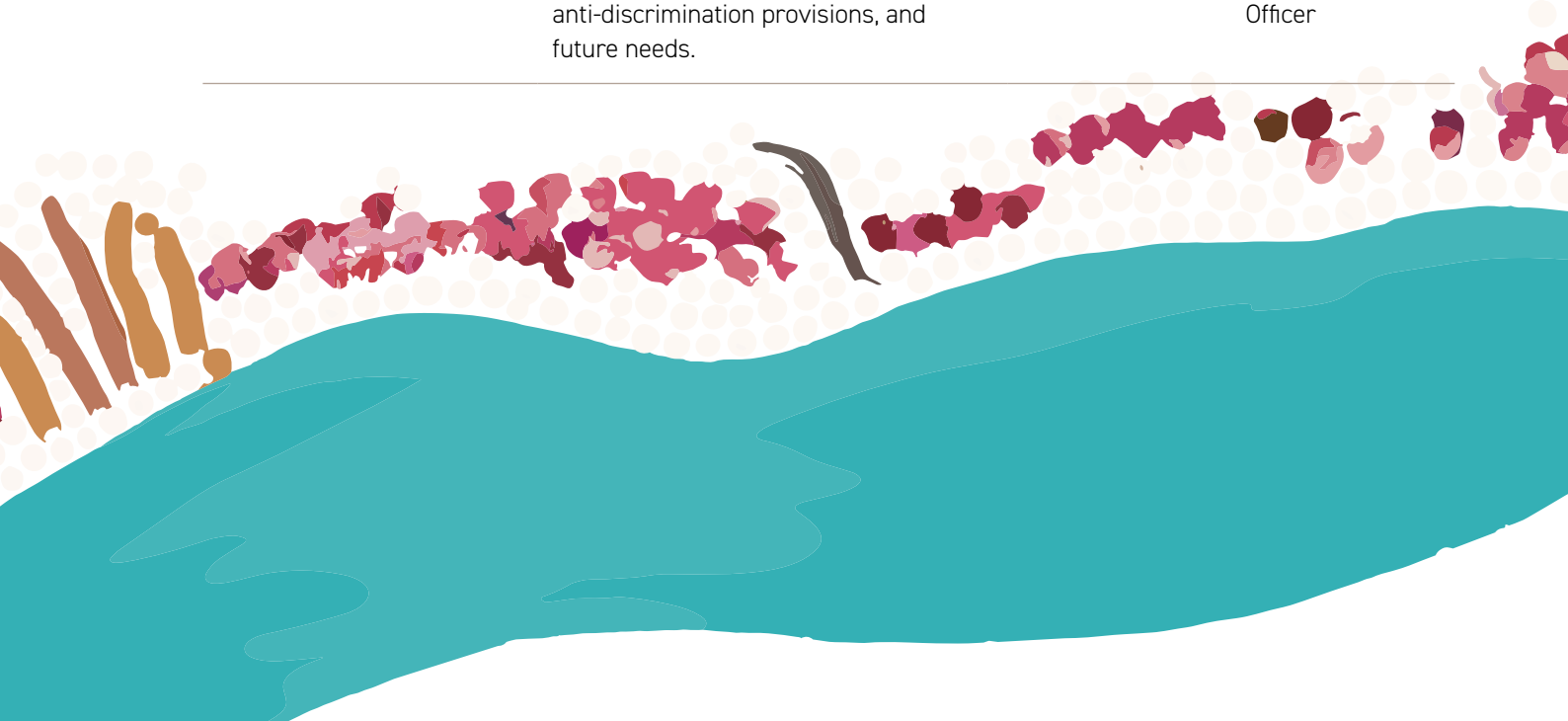


Relationships

| 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. | July 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. | July 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Use the Reconciliation Action Plan framework to develop a protocol to support internal staff to reconnect and rebuild relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. | August 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| 2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week. | Circulate Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. | May-June 2024 May-June 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Establish a communications calendar to support acknowledgement and understanding of key events throughout the year, inclusive of National Reconciliation Week. | June 2024 + 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Hold an internal National Reconciliation Week event for staff members. | May-June 2024 + 2025 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | RAP Working Group members to participate in an external National Reconciliation Week event. | May-June 2024 + 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |



| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|---|---|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate National Reconciliation Week. | May-June 2024 + 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| 3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence. | Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. | June-November 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. | June 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Identify like-minded organisations that SMCT could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. | July 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Create an internal online information hub. | June 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| 4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies. | Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. | July 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |
| | Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. | June 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |






Respect

| 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. | August 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |
| | Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. | June 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |
| | Create a cultural competency training framework. | September 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |
| | Establish an annual calendar of activity, including dates for training and communications to the organisation regarding our commitment to reconciliation. Create a survey to track progress. | June 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Initiate cultural competency training for the RAP working group (RWG) and RAP Supporters Group. | June 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |
| 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. | Ongoing June 2024 - June 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Invite and engage Traditional Owners or Custodians to participate at significant events each year where appropriate. | Annually from launch | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. | June 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Create a strategy for signage around Acknowledgement of Country at each of our sites in consultation with Traditional Owners. | July 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |

| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Ensure that all staff are including an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of Trust, Community Advisory Committee and leadership meetings, as well as meetings with external parties and appropriate external print and digital communications of SMCT. | September 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Encourage staff to conduct as appropriate an Acknowledgement of Country within their own team meetings. | June 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Create and distribute a survey to measure staff understanding of the purpose and meaning behind cultural protocols and significant dates. | February 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| 7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week. | Raise awareness and share information among our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. | June-July 2024 + 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. | June-July 2024 + 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| | RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. | First week in July 2024 | Senior Communications Lead |



Opportunities

| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|---|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development. | Develop a business case or policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. | September 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |
| | Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. | September 2024 | Chief People and Governance Officer |
| 9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes. | Develop a business case or policy for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. | June 2024 | Chief Finance Officer |
| | Investigate Supply Nation membership for procurement. | June 2024 | Chief Finance Officer |
| | Investigate use of Kinaway Chamber of Commerce members for local procurement. | June 2024 | Chief Finance Officer |





Governance



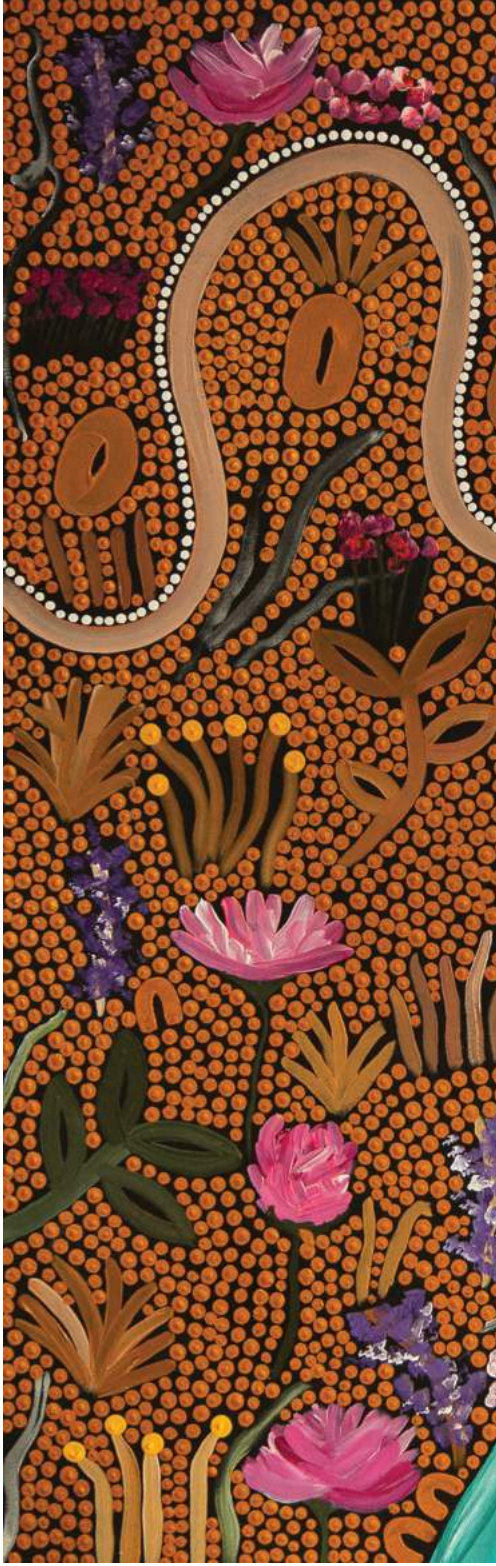
| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|---|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group to drive governance of the RAP. | Form a RAP Working Group to govern RAP implementation. | August 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Draft a Terms of Reference for the RAP Working Group. | August 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP Working Group. | June 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership on the Community Advisory Committee with a view to establish representation. | June 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| 11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments. | Define resource needs for RAP implementation. | August 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Appoint and support a RAP Champion from our Executive Leadership Team. | August 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. | June-November 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. | August 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| 12. 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 2025 | Communications and Engagement Manager |
| | SMCT's RAP, achievements and progress published internally and externally on the SMCT website. | Ongoing June 2024 - June 2025 | Senior Communications Lead |
| 13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP. | Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. | August 2024 | Communications and Engagement Manager |

**Contact for public enquiries
about our RAP**

RAP@smct.org.au
smct.org.au/rap
1300 466 904







SOUTHERN
METROPOLITAN
CEMETERIES TRUST



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
REFLECT