



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF NEW SOUTH WALES



Reconciliation
A U S T R A L I A
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS

LAW SOCIETY OF NSW RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2012 – 2014

The Law Society of NSW recognises the diverse language groups, kinship structures and customs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. We recognise also the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, which live both traditionally and non-traditionally in urban, rural and regional locations. In this document, reference is made to Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous peoples. When referring specifically to Indigenous peoples in NSW, the term "Aboriginal" is used. However, this is not intended to exclude Torres Strait Islander people from the Law Society's RAP initiatives.

WHO WE ARE

The Law Society of NSW is the peak association for solicitors in New South Wales, representing a membership of over 24,000 solicitors. The Society has served the legal profession and the community of New South Wales for over 125 years.

The Society is dedicated to working for a just and fair legal system. It is dedicated also to a community served by ethical, competent and independent legal practitioners, and to a community with reasonable and affordable access to justice.

Through its standing policy committees, the Society is a respected stakeholder in the reform of the law and the legal system. The Law Society works also with the Law Council of Australia and its constituent bodies where issues occur federally or in other states but which have relevance to the legal profession in NSW arise.

MISSION AND VISION

“Build relationships where you walk and work with us, rather than do things to us.”

Mick Gooda, Social Justice Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney, 11 April 2011

The Law Society of NSW acknowledges the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both as the first peoples of Australia and by reason of Australia's history. The Law Society acknowledges also that all Australians have much to gain from reconciliation. The Society is committed to playing an active part in this necessary process to build healthy relationships, mutual respect and to provide new opportunities and reinforce existing ones for Aboriginal people in the legal profession.

The Society is committed also to a model of reconciliation that requires it to re-examine and reset its relationship with Indigenous Australia, thereby bringing real change. Through its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), it seeks to cultivate a legal profession where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in NSW can thrive personally and professionally, and where the greater community can enjoy the flow-on effects of these personal successes. The Society's first RAP focuses on the following:

- supporting Aboriginal lawyers and improving the representation of Aboriginal lawyers in the legal profession;
- protecting and promoting the rights of Aboriginal peoples in NSW;
- addressing the legal needs of Aboriginal peoples in NSW by supporting those who provide legal services to Aboriginal clients and by engaging with relevant law reform issues;
- developing new partnerships and services to address needs identified and provide new opportunities;
- raising awareness of the complexity and richness of Aboriginal culture; and
- countering existing misunderstandings and misinformation.

1. RELATIONSHIPS

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
<p>(a) Develop the relationship with and support Ngalaya Aboriginal Corporation, the Indigenous Lawyers and Law Students Association of NSW, to build its organisational capacity and functionality</p>	<p>(i) CEO (ii) CEO/CFO (iii) Managing Editor</p> <p>(iv) Community Events (v) Director, Communications</p>	<p>(i) to (ii) July, 2012 (iii) Starting March, 2012 (iv) March, 2012 (v) March, 2012</p>	<p>(i) Provide in-kind office support including office space. (ii) Provide financial support for one part-time administrative support person. (iii) Provide opportunity to Ngalaya to communicate with the profession via the <i>Law Society Journal</i>. (iv) Provide opportunity for Ngalaya to participate in Law Week. (v) Provide opportunity for Ngalaya to publicly communicate via Law Society media/marketing unit.</p>
<p>(b) Hold an annual Reconciliation event.</p>	<p>(i) Events Coordinator/RAP/Working Group/Indigenous Issues Committee</p>	<p>(i) National Reconciliation Week in 2012 and 2013</p>	<p>(i) Work with Ngalaya and the Indigenous Legal Issues Committee to develop and hold a panel event.</p>
<p>(c) Support Indigenous business and enterprise</p>	<p>(i) RAP Working Group (ii) Policy and Practice department</p>	<p>(i) Report by September, 2012 (ii) April, 2012</p>	<p>(i) Investigate ways to support the Australian Indigenous Minority Suppliers Council (AIMSC). (ii) Work with members, including the Business Law Committee, to develop a list of business lawyers willing to assist Indigenous businesses. Disseminate this list, particularly to AIMSC.</p>
<p>(d) Engage with legal RAP community</p>	<p>(i) Policy and Practice/RAP Working Group (Vicky Kuek) (ii) RAP Working Group (Bob Campbell) (iii) RAP Com Working Group (Vicky Kuek) (iv) RAP Working Group (Vicky Kuek)</p>	<p>(i) to (iv) First report by March 2013</p>	<p>(i) Participate in the newly-established Legal Professional Reconciliation Network. (ii) Work with the Legal Professional Reconciliation Network to create a web portal for the legal RAP community to allow information and resource sharing and a forum for specialist referrals. (iii) Work with the Legal Professional Reconciliation Network to develop a “menu” of RAP options for small to medium firms interested in having a RAP. (iv) Work with the Law Council of Australia and its constituent bodies to support RAP development and implementation where appropriate.</p>
<p>(e) Undertake ongoing regional consultations</p>	<p>(i) RAP Working Group (Vicky Kuek) (ii) RAP Working Group (Bob Campbell)</p>	<p>(i) May, 2012 to brief the Regional Presidents, then quarterly (ii) First report by June 2012, then quarterly</p>	<p>(i) Work with the Regional Law Societies where appropriate. (ii) Develop and consult with regional contacts and relationships to inform the Law Society's RAP on an ongoing basis.</p>

2. RESPECT

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
Within the Law Society			
(a) Cultural awareness orientation and training	(i) to (iii) Human Resources/RAP Working Group (Mark Holden)	(i) to (iii) First report by March, 2013	(i) Provide mandatory training for senior management every 2 years. (ii) Provide cultural awareness training opportunities for Law Society staff every year. Investigate partnership with existing Legal Aid training program. (iii) Provide cultural awareness training opportunities for the Law Society Council.
(b) Celebrate Indigenous culture	(i) and (ii) RAP Working Group (Catherine Garcia/Kathryn Byron)	(i) and (ii) First report by March, 2013	(i) Provide extra cultural awareness opportunities for Law Society staff including information events such as a RAP FAQ morning tea, art excursions and an Aboriginal cultural awareness walk in Sydney. (ii) Promote awareness of Indigenous cultural events and celebrations through Law Society publications (Grapevine and Monday Briefs where appropriate).
(c) Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome to Country	(i) RAP Working Group (Vicky Kuek) with Claudia Oakley (ii) RAP Working Group (iii) Marketing and Development	(i) April, 2012 (ii) May, 2012 (iii) April, 2012	(i) Develop Law Society protocol for speeches and public print and online material including contact details for the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council. (ii) Engage employees in understanding the protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country ceremonies to ensure that there is shared meaning behind the ceremonies. (iii) Include Acknowledgment of Country on the home page of the Law Society website.
In the Legal Community			
(d) Annual Desert Walk on Country event.	(i) Director, Marketing and Development	(i) August, 2012	(i) Continue to promote and facilitate the CONTACT walk operated by Into The Blue Creative Walks (Raymond Hawkins).
(e) Continuing Legal Education (CLE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	(i) and (ii) RAP Working Group with Ngalaya, Human Resources and Young Lawyers.	(i) June, 2012 (ii) Report by March 2013	(i) Provide at least one CLE per quarter on issues related to Indigenous policy or practice or both. (ii) Work with Ngalaya to investigate development of a CLE unit to be integrated into MCLE anti-discrimination training.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
Policy and Practice			
<p>(a) Establish and support an Indigenous Legal Issues standing policy committee. This Committee will be responsible for formulating Law Society policy on Indigenous people and the legal profession, and for the Law Society's engagement on law reform and policy issues.</p>	<p>(i) and (ii) President, CEO and Policy and Practice Dept</p>	<p>(i) and (ii) April, 2012</p>	<p>(i) Establish committee to be operational by 2012.</p> <p>(ii) Provide appropriate Law Society staff support.</p>
Indigenous professional development			
<p>(b) Establish an Indigenous Solicitors' Fund to provide members with the opportunity to assist Indigenous professional development</p>	<p>(i) and (ii) RAP Working Group (Kathryn Byron) with pro bono assistance from Tony McAvoy and tax/trust Senior Counsel.</p>	<p>(i) and (ii) Report by March, 2013</p>	<p>(i) Continue investigation of the NSW Bar Association's Indigenous Barristers Trust as an example to guide the establishment of the Law Society's fund.</p> <p>(ii) Develop a similar Solicitors fund to allow members to make donations and to allow it to assist Indigenous students, lawyers and relevant organisations upon application.</p>
<p>(c) Engagement with high school students</p>	<p>(i) and (ii) Community Events Coordinator</p>	<p>(i) August or September 2012</p> <p>(ii) First report by March 2013</p>	<p>(i) Facilitate "role model" talks to be given by Indigenous lawyers and law students at high schools with high Indigenous populations to encourage students to finish high school and to think about pathways to tertiary education and/or a career in law.</p> <p>(ii) Ensure Mock Trial and Mock Mediation programs feature case materials and scenarios relevant to Indigenous students, promoting further cultural understanding.</p>
<p>(d) Mentoring</p>	<p>(i) to (iii) RAP Working Group/Young Lawyers</p>	<p>(i) to (iii) First report by March, 2013</p>	<p>(i) Facilitate relationship development between Indigenous students and young lawyers and the profession through existing Law Society events.</p> <p>(ii) Hold one networking event per year for young Indigenous lawyers to meet members of the profession.</p> <p>(iii) Promote the Law Society's existing mentoring program to young Indigenous lawyers. Encourage young Indigenous lawyers to provide cultural co-mentoring to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentors.</p>
<p>(e) Streamline existing Indigenous cadetships, internships, clerkships and graduate programs to assist with the advancement of Indigenous lawyers in the legal profession</p>	<p>(i) RAP Working Group/Large Law Firms Relationship manager</p> <p>(ii) RAP Working Group (Cathy Wiecek)</p>	<p>(i) Report by March, 2013</p> <p>(ii) Report by June, 2012</p>	<p>(i) Facilitate initial meeting between Ngalaya and the Law Society's summer clerkship stakeholders.</p> <p>(ii) Make a list of firms that provide employment opportunities to Indigenous students available to Ngalaya for publication on its website.</p>

(f) Improve employment prospects for Indigenous law students	(i) RAP Working Group (Cathy Wiecek) (ii) and (iii) RAP Working Group and Ngalaya.	(i) Report by June, 2012 (ii) Draft guidelines by June 2012 (iii) Report by March 2013	(i) Investigate the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' Indigenous Cadetship Support program and if appropriate encourage private firms (particularly smaller, rural/regional firms) to apply for Indigenous Cadetship Support and to provide cadetships. (ii) Provide appropriate support for firms interested in providing cadetships by providing guidelines on how to provide cadetships and to provide information on benefits and tips for a successful cadetship experience for both the firm and the cadet. (iii) Provide appropriate liaison between firms and cadets.
(g) Develop the capacity of Indigenous legal support staff	(i) to (iii) Training and Locum Coordinators	(i) Report by March, 2013 (ii) August, 2012 (iii) Report by March, 2013	(i) Investigate working with the Aboriginal Legal Service, particularly in large regional centres, to provide their support staff with skills training, including offering ALS support staff free access to the relevant Legal Support Staff Training Program online training module. (ii) Offer two spots in the Legal Support Staff Training Program to candidates identified by a community partner. (iii) Develop a supported training and employment opportunity for 3-5 young indigenous women in partnership key support organisations.

Recruitment

(h) Update recruitment strategies to attract Indigenous applicants	(i) and (ii) Human Resources	(i) March, 2012 (ii) March, 2012	(i) Advertise job positions in the Koori Mail. (ii) Include wording in all job advertisements to note "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants are encouraged to apply."
(i) Train human resources staff in relation to development and retention strategies for Indigenous staff	(i) Human Resources	(i) As soon as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members have been recruited	(i) Provide training for human resources staff in relation to the development and retention of Indigenous staff upon recruitment of Indigenous staff members.

4. TIMELINES, REPORTING AND REVIEWING

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Monitor interim progress: RAP Working Group to meet quarterly to match progress against each target.	RAP Working Group	March, June, September, December
Report annually to the Law Society Council and to Reconciliation Australia (via an Annual Impact Measurement Report) regarding progress against each target.	RAP Working Group, Leadership Group	First report by March, 2013
Update the RAP annually and work with Reconciliation Australia to refresh action objectives, as appropriate.	RAP Working Group, Leadership Group	First report by March, 2013
Include the next RAP into the Law Society's 2013-2016 Business Plan and observe the attendant obligations.	CEO, RAP Working Group	January, 2013