

USU Reconciliation Action Plan

Summary

The adoption and value of RAPs is significant. Developing the USU's first RAP will enable holistic reconciliation work that is framed by a common plan. The accountability and alignment produced by a RAP is so valuable, that we shouldn't unnecessarily delay this first RAP by making it overly complex. We have significant appetite and ambitions for reconciliation, and this RAP is by no means the end of the USU's reconciliation journey. A timeline has been developed with input from key directors and staff. Leveraging exemplar RAPs and considering the USU's unique context, 15 approaches (strategies) have been developed. Within these, currently, 57 actions (deliverables) have been developed. Next steps include agreeing on deadlines and owner/s. Central to this process is engagement with community and experts.

Context on RAPs

Three million Australians work or study within an organisation that has an active RAP and three million are members of organisations which have RAPs (RAP Impact Report, 2020). Compared to the general community, RAP employees have more pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, acceptance of historical facts, and awareness of the real-world impact of racism (Workplace RAP Barometer and Australian Reconciliation Barometer, 2020). Most RAP employees believe that by having a RAP their organisation shows effective leadership (Workplace RAP Barometer, 2020).

Justification for USU

A USU RAP will frame our whole-of-organisation approach to reconciliation and support accountability. Hearteningly, there's a substantial appetite from members and staff to operationalise reconciliation. But without a common plan, we risk incoherently pulling in different directions. A RAP will set a baseline for the USU that produces alignment and coordination through agreed approaches. A USU RAP will map our diverse reconciliation initiatives in one place to provide necessary high-level and granular information for directors and staff respectively. Having actions with owners, deadlines, and specificity will keep us on track with the delivery of outcomes. It's critical that the USU engage meaningfully with community and experts, so decisions are informed.

Scope of this RAP

The USU's first RAP should capture the ambition of our staff, directors, and members, while also being pragmatic. We want to further our vision toward reconciliation, and this plan is an important step in that direction. So, we won't needlessly delay operationalising strategic and meaningful reconciliation, but we will diligently collect feedback from our staff, members, and communities. A USU RAP shouldn't contain entirely new ideas. We've had productive engagement with community groups and members on reconciliation with numerous outcomes and actions. We will combine those with some newer ideas so we can deliver on the things we're already planning on while having stretch. Significantly, this RAP will also establish RAP governance and terms of

reference. In short, we should view this first RAP as an enabler and a conversation starter to get things moving towards a subsequent and even more ambitious RAP.

Acronyms

RAP - Reconciliation Action Plan, RWG - Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, NRW - National Reconciliation Week, SLT - Senior Leadership Team, HODs and MODs - Heads and first line Managers of Departments, DVC ISS - Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Strategy and Services

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Timeline of RAP Development

In RAP development, the aim has been to propose draft deliverables, approaches, and intent around National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week. [National Sorry Day](#) is a significant day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and particularly for Stolen Generations survivors. Reconciliation Week which is an ideal time for everyone to join the reconciliation conversation and reflect on shared histories, contributions, and achievements.

| <i>Reconciliation Action Plan Timeline</i> | | |
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| Group | Action | Date |
| DVC-ISS, USU SLT, and USU President | Meet to understand capacities and discuss opportunities for collaboration and RAP. | Sep 2022 |
| USU President | Circulate draft RAP timeline to key members of USU SLT and USU Board for feedback. | Early October 2022 |
| USU President, CEO, and Dir. P&C | Meet to discuss USU's capacity for a RAP and corresponding scope. | Oct 2022 |
| USU President | Circulate draft RAP Briefing to key members of USU SLT and USU Board for feedback. | Dec 2022 |
| USU SLT and Board | Informal RAP discussions. | Dec 2022 |
| USU SLT and Executive | Agree on the broad scope and intention of RAP. | Dec 2022 |
| USU Executive Committee | Review and endorse RAP Timeline and RAP Briefing. | Dec 2022 |
| USU SLT and Executive | Consider feedback to determine draft Approaches | Jan 2023 |
| USU Board | Agree on Approaches (strategies) of RAP | Feb 2023 |
| USU President and SLT | Present the scope and intention of RAP to all staff. Seek feedback. | Mar 2023 |
| USU President and SLT | Draft RAP actions based on conversations to date. | Mar 2023 |
| USU SLT | Discuss RAP and gather EOIs for RWG involvement. | Mar 2023 |
| USU President and SLT | Expand on actions in HODs and MODs strategy day. | Apr 2023 |
| USU Executive | Consult with members and gather EOIs for RWG. | May 2023 |
| DVC ISS and USU SLT and President | Meet to follow-up on previous action items, gather feedback on RAP, and propose DVC ISS foreword. | May 2023 |
| USU Executive Committee and SLT | Agree on next steps and draft for public and staff feedback. | May 2023 |
| USU CEO, COO, and President | Contestable SSAF application submitted to fund RAP implementation and identified role. | 24 April - 3 June 2023 |

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| USU CEO and Marketing | Seek member and staff feedback through a survey. In particular, to seek feedback on timeframes. | Jun 2023 |
| USU President and SLT | Ensure any feedback is reflected in the draft RAP. Agree on timeframes and accountabilities. | Jun 2023 |
| USU Governance Com'tee | Review and endorse the draft RAP. Ask management to submit to Reconciliation Australia. | Jun 2023 |
| USU Executive Committee and SLT | Engage in feedback rounds with Reconciliation Australia and DVC-ISS to receive endorsement. | Jul 2023 |
| USU Marketing | Completion of RAP document design and layout. | Aug 2023 |
| USU Governance Com'tee | Reviews and endorses final RAP. | Aug 2023 |
| USU Board | RAP approval. | Aug 2023 |
| USU CEO | Email staff and members who indicated interest in RWG involvement with updates and next steps. | Sep 2023 |

What's Missing from this Draft RAP?

- Deadlines - to be based on feedback from USU's members and staff on priorities.
- Owner/s - to be determined by USU's Senior Leadership Team after feedback.
- Engagement with Reconciliation Australia - to occur after feedback in July.
- Coherent, visual design - to be done once content is endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

Structure (Page Breakdown)

1. Cover (first)
2. Artwork and Acknowledgement of Country
3. Message from CEO/President
4. Message from Reconciliation Australia
5. Our business, values, mission, and strategy
6. Our vision for reconciliation, journey, and RAP Working Group (which might be TBC)
7. Our partnerships and current activities (Music, Art, Gadigal Centre)
8. Relationships
9. Respect
10. Opportunities
11. Governance
12. Cover (last)

Approaches and Draft Deliverables

Underpinning all RAPs are the core pillars of relationships, respect, opportunities, and governance (RAP Impact Report, 2020). The project of national reconciliation relies on attributes such as leadership, awareness, participation, cultural learning, relationships, and visibility (Workplace RAP Barometer, 2020). Within each approach are numerous SMART actions which will need to be determined. The attainment of these approaches would be overseen by the Board until a RAP Working Group is developed.

Relationships

| Approach | Deliverable |
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| 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. This stakeholder mapping should include student, University, and local groups. |
| | Provide targeted grants for clubs to do First Nations initiatives similar to 2022's Pride and Consent Week grants. |
| | Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. |
| 2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW). | Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. |
| | RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. |
| | Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. |

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| 3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence. | Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff and encourage them to provide feedback. |
| | Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. |
| | Understand how other student organisations are doing this, assess their approaches, and share USU's priorities and planning. |
| | Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. |
| 4. Promote positive interactions between diverse individuals and groups through anti-discrimination strategies. | Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. |
| | Provide meaningful cultural competency training as part of the induction of new directors, staff, and club executives. |
| | Encourage positive staff interactions and encourage wellness through team building opportunities, particularly around cooking with Indigenous ingredients or methods. |
| | Conduct an audit of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. Consider engaging an advisory group or consultant. |

Respect

| Approach | Deliverable |
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| 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. |
| | Training among staff critical prior to implementation so it's not just a box-ticking exercise. Prioritise holistic learning and development early in the RAP implementation process. |
| | Develop cultural learning programs for members. For example, day trips, campus tours, or cultural exchange (similar to the existing Language Exchange program). This could involve collaboration with Gadigal Centre's Yarning Groups program. |
| | Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation and provide additional opportunities to staff. For example, the University provides three modules to all staff prior to the completion of their probation period. |
| 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. |
| | Budget for cultural ceremonies, events, and activations. |
| | Increase staff and director understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. |
| 7. Build member, staff, and guest respect for Aboriginal and Torres | Raise awareness and share information among our staff and volunteers about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. For example, through a speaker event, Day Trips, or Verge project. |

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| Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week. | Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. For example, through a dedicated P&C newsletter. |
| | Deliver an event which platforms an Indigenous speaker or panel and turns members' attention to a critical issue - e.g., Freedom Rides or Voice to Parliament. |
| | RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. |
| 8. Build recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures among members, staff, and guests. | Raise awareness and share information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures among USU communities, staff, and members. For example, through EDMs. |
| | Introduce people USU supports to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. |
| | Consider commissioning artwork by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artists to use for promotions. |
| | Explore and implement opportunities to platform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and perspectives. |
| | Facilitate opportunities to participate in and increase awareness of activities related to Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal cultures. For example, in collaboration with the Gadigal Centre. |
| | Facilitate focus groups to understand what knowledge people currently have, what they're interested in learning about and what activities they would like to participate in. |
| 9. Holistically embed Indigenous culture, language, and recognition throughout the USU. | Explore and pursue opportunities to recognise indigenous place/campus names. For example, rename Manning Meeting Rooms 1/2 or utilising Indigenous campus names. Shouldn't rename already named rooms - e.g., rooms in Manning that celebrate women's history in the Women's Union. |
| | Consider how <i>PULP Magazine</i> editors could be encouraged to celebrate or platform Indigenous culture or language while respecting their editorial autonomy. |
| | Culture campus tour for students run by Indigenous or Gadigal people or elders. |
| | Investigate how to promote the language of the Gadigal people. |

Opportunities

| Approach | Deliverable |
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| 10. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development. | Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. This could involve development of an Indigenous recruitment policy or procedure. Consider Discrimination Australia matrix for identified positions. |
| | Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. Develop reporting metrics. |
| | Careers development or support for students. |
| | Having role applications dedicated for those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. |

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| | Promoting jobs for students through the Gadigal Centre to increase employment and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. |
| 11. Increase procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and business to support improved economic and social outcomes. | Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. |
| | Encourage clubs to buy merchandise, catering, supplies from Indigenous businesses. For example, establishing preferred partnership relationships. |
| | Consider development of an Indigenous menu for HostCo. |
| | Identify local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. Consider leveraging University of Sydney supplier research and connections (UniBuy, Supply Nation). |
| 12. Collaborate with the University of Sydney Office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services). | Provide the Gadigal Centre with USU-funded Pixii products so menstruating students and staff can access them for free. |
| | Consider how to support the DVC-ISS artist in residence program through the USU's Verge Gallery. |
| | Develop relationships with key teams to pursue collaborations - e.g., collaborate with the Gadigal Centre's social media team on marketing. |
| | Scope how USU can support DVC-ISS with merchandising capacity. Consider development of Indigenous merchandise range. |
| 13. Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in USU decision-making. | Consult with stakeholders and organisations to increase Indigenous student awareness of USU Board elections. |
| | Explore the advent of a First Nations Portfolio Holder. |
| | Employ identified student leadership role/s to coordinate USU reconciliation work and assist with RAP implementation. |
| | Seek Indigenous applicants for Board Committee roles. |

Governance

| Approach | Deliverable |
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| 14. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP. | RWG to meet regularly to govern RAP implementation. |
| | Develop a Terms of Reference for the RWG. |
| | Per the Terms of Reference, appoint members of the RWG. |
| 15. Collect data on this RAP, review progress on it, and develop a successor RAP. | |