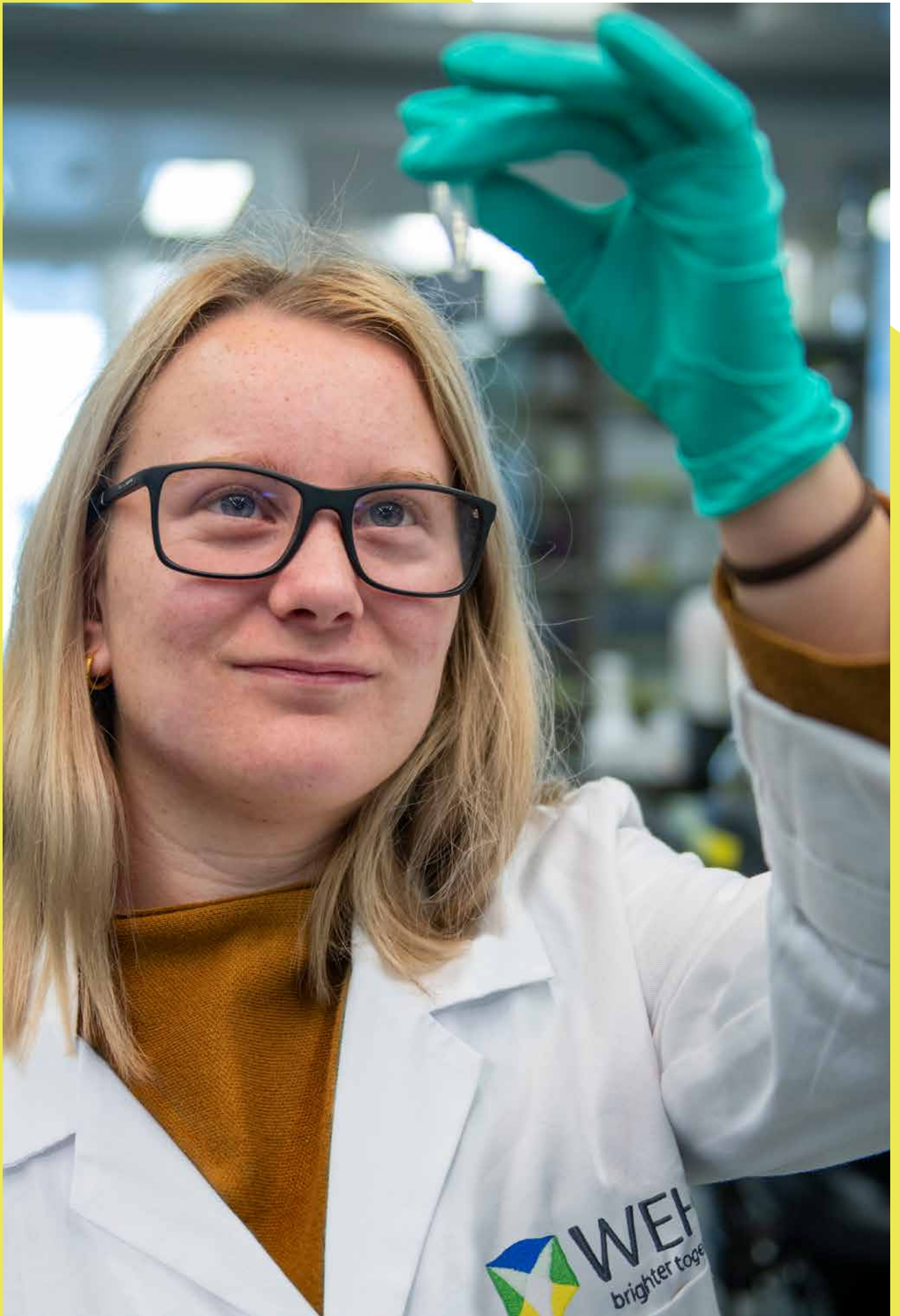


Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan



June 2023 - June 2025



Acknowledgement

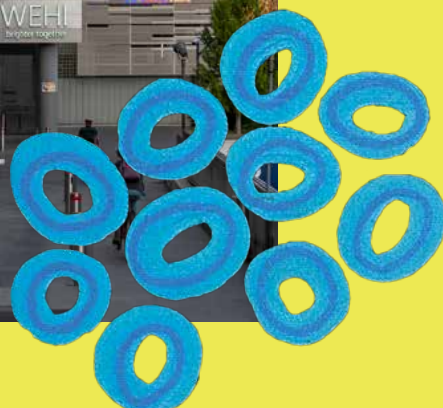
The Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation are the Traditional Owners of the land at Parkville, Kew, Bundoora and the Elizabeth Street campus on which WEHI operates.

We pay respects to their Elders past and present and embrace their continued connection to the places where WEHI staff and students work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first scientists on this continent who asked questions and especially looked to the land, sky, animals, and plants for answers.

We acknowledge the ingenuity, resilience, design capability and collaborative and creative thinking of First Nations Peoples that enabled them to thrive and to ensure that the voices and designs of the first scientists were passed on from generation to generation.

We respect that as the oldest living generations of teachers, artists, engineers, and scientists, how First Nations Peoples understood and continue to understand the world, has benefited, and will always benefit, all of us.



Contents

The Art & Artist	5
Message from the Director	6
Message from Reconciliation Australia	7
Background	8
WEHI Vision for Reconciliation	9
WEHI RAP	10
Overview of intentions	10
Aspirations	10
Overview of work so far	11
Timeline of key WEHI reconciliation actions	11
Reviewing our RAP	12
What we heard via the review	12
Summary of comparative WEHI survey findings	13
Priorities moving forward	14
Overview of achievements	15
Current relevant research	15
Case studies	16
With thanks to our stakeholders and partners	19
Reconciliation Action Plan June 2023 - June 2025	20
Relationships	20
Respect	22
Opportunities	24
Governance	26

The Art & Artist

Luruk-In

Aimee McCartney is a proud Taungurung, Wotjobaluk, Wemba Wemba and Boon Wurrung woman. Aimee was born and raised on Wurundjeri country in Naarm, Melbourne and currently lives on Gunaikurnai Country (Victoria).

An emerging contemporary Aboriginal artist, Aimee's vibrant approach to life coupled with her strong ancestral and cultural identity allows her to create unique, intricate and eye-catching artworks on canvas. With a mixture of bright colours and textures, Aimee explores modern society through the looking glass of the world's oldest living culture.

Aimee's strongest inspiration comes from her Country, its waterways and mountains, its sand, soil and shells. Aimee's hope is to continue the sacred tradition of Storytelling through art and to inspire people to connect and learn about First Nations' culture, history, stories and language.

Artwork Title: River Journey

This artwork represents WEHI's continued commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Victoria. The large circular symbols represent WEHI as a central meeting place with additional meeting places depicting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These meeting places symbolise an area in which people gather and share stories, developing and strengthening meaningful and respectful relationships. Surrounding each meeting place are circular designs which symbolise WEHI's role to listen to the unique relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with Country and land.



*Aimee McCartney
Taungurung, Wotjobaluk, Wemba Wemba, Boon Wurrung*

A major focal point of the artwork is the river, which links all meeting places together and depicts the journey of WEHI across the country to engage with communities. The river extends to the furthest corner and continues off the artwork, representing the ongoing responsibility to be responsive to the needs of Aboriginal communities across the state. The colours throughout painting represent the movement, essence and spiritual connection between community and country, enhancing the importance of custodianship and acknowledging traditional lands. A key element throughout the artwork are the mountains, which are used as visual representation of truth, symbolising the history of Australia pre and post colonisation. The mountains on either side of the river act as timeline showcasing the landscapes creation stories from the last 60,000 years and emphasises the importance of celebrating First Nations peoples and cultures in the nation's identity.

Artist: Aimee McCartney
Community: Taungurung, Wotjobaluk, Wemba Wemba, Boon Wurrung
Title: *River Journey*
Year Created: 2023

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Message from the Director

The land on which WEHI stands has been under the continual care and custodianship of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation for 60,000+ years. We honour and pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge their deep wisdom and knowledge built and passed down over millennia.

We commit to carrying a sense of place in our community. We know the land around our Parkville campus would have been used by the Wurundjeri people as a central passage, hunting on the grassy plains and in the surrounding Eucalypt woodland and making use of the creek that flows under the roads where the eels still follow their ancient migration patterns today. We take time to recognise the cyclical nature of the 7 Kulin Nation seasons and how the flora and fauna changes with each shift in the weather.

Our third RAP comes at a momentous time for all of us in this nation as we reflect on who we are and want to be. WEHI commits to using its collective will and capacity as a preeminent Australian research institute to advocate for voice, treaty, and truth-telling at both the State level led by the Yoorook Commission and nationally through the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We will tread carefully and commit to understanding how best to use our position of influence.

This RAP also comes at an important time for WEHI as we seek to broaden and strengthen our reconciliation efforts. We have listened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and know we have more work to do so our aspirations meet expectations. We will continue delivering on the commitments set out in our Indigenous Employment Strategy with its focus on building the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, building a culturally competent workforce and a safe and welcoming place, and fostering partnerships to support careers.

Our RAP sets us a clear challenge to take meaningful action to contribute to improving health outcomes for First Nations Peoples. We must be purposeful, visible, and bold in our efforts through listening to community and doing everything we can to meet their needs. This must be in action not just words and we have failed if we don't progress this through investment and resilience.



Professor Doug Hilton
DIRECTOR

Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research on the formal endorsement of its Second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. WEHI continues to be part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types— Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that WEHI will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to WEHI using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for WEHI to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, WEHI will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

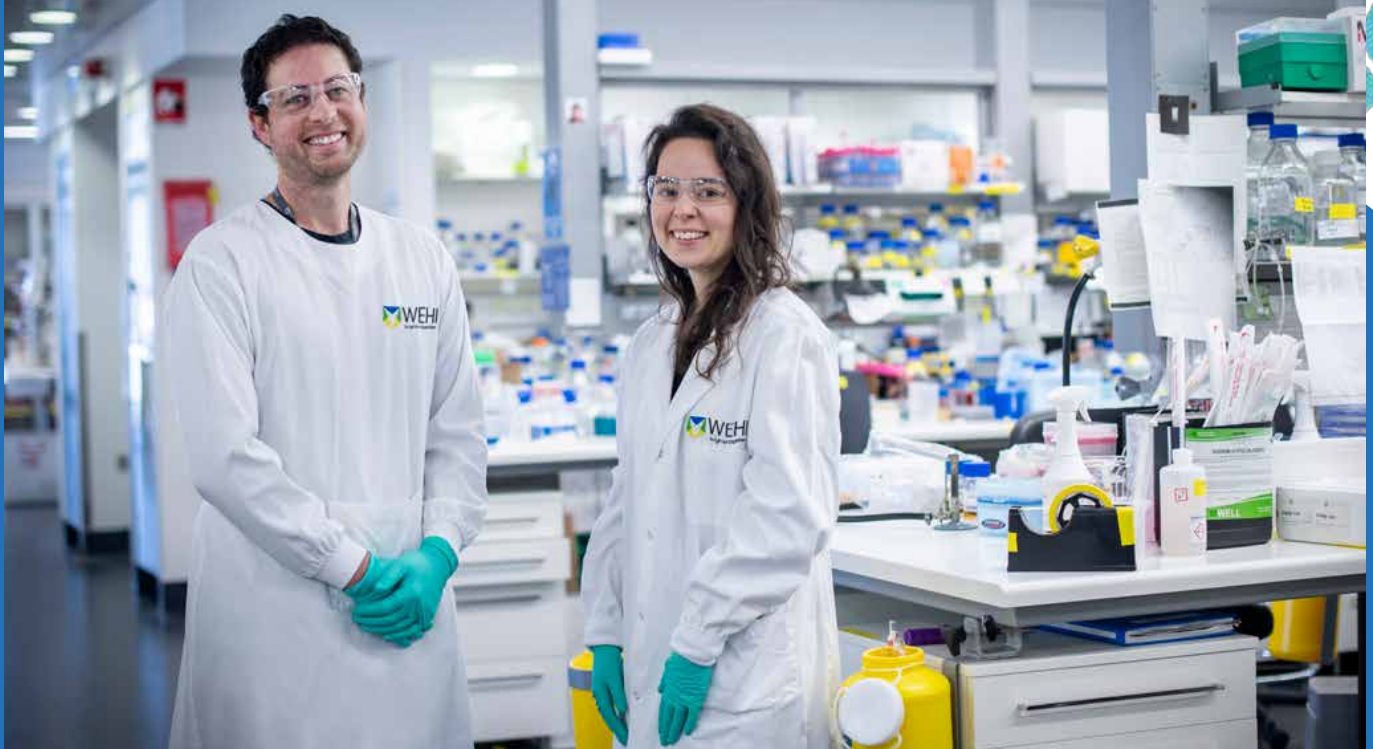
Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of WEHI's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations WEHI on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Background



Who we are and what we do

WEHI is where the world's brightest minds collaborate and innovate to make discoveries that will help us to live healthier for longer.

We bring together people with different skills and experience who are committed to long-term discovery. Our medical researchers have been serving the community for more than 100 years.

Our teams of researchers are committed to solving the most complex health problems, making transformative discoveries for cancer, infectious and immune diseases, developmental disorders, and healthy ageing.

Cancer – understanding the basic processes that are disrupted to generate cancer cells, and how these can be targeted to treat disease.

Immune health and infection – discovering how the body fights infection, and how errors in the immune system can lead to disease.

Development and healthy ageing – studying how the biological foundations laid down during gestation and childhood affect development, and how our longer life expectancy presents new challenges for our ageing population.

New medicines and advanced technologies – a powerful hub for cutting-edge technologies underpinning biomedical discoveries and for the translation of these discoveries into new medicines and diagnostics.

Computational biology – developing and applying new tools to analyse the genomes of disease-causing parasites, as well as better understanding the immune system and genetic drivers of cancer.

WEHI operates over four campuses in Melbourne with its main campus in the Parkville Biomedical precinct. We offer postgraduate training as the Department of Medical Biology of The University of Melbourne and are affiliated with the University of Melbourne and The Royal Melbourne Hospital.

WEHI has over 1300 staff and students and currently employs 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and 9 students. This includes one senior scientific leader and two post-graduate researchers.



WEHI Vision for Reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is a society that embraces truth-telling and celebrates First Nations Peoples and cultures, seeing these acts as central to our nation's development and identity.

Our collective intent as a values-based Institute will be used to elevate and amplify the voices of First Nations Peoples, both within the medical research sector and the broader community.

WEHI recognises and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's first scientists. We want to contribute to creating a future research landscape that sees Indigenous knowledge woven into the fabric of Australian science.

Under the leadership and guidance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, our research contributions will have a meaningful impact on First Nations People's health outcomes that is valued by communities.

Themes emerged from developing the RAP vision

1) Strengthening relationships

- Building and strengthening relationships with Indigenous community
- WEHI's activities being built with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

2) Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

- Learn and celebrate First Nations cultures
- Recognising rich histories and cultures – that ought to be integrated and at the forefront of everything across all our key activities

3) Recognising research and expertise

- Celebrating First Nations research and expertise
- First Nations wisdom needs to be elevated and celebrated
- Weaving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sciences and knowledge into the fabric of Australian science – to embed something that makes our work unique
- Adapting our approach in recognition of First Nations expertise

- We need to take a sophisticated approach to understanding our remit as a key contributor toward improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's health and wellbeing
- We need to take a sophisticated approach to understanding our reconciliation remit as key contributors, while striving to achieve our truth-telling vision

4) WEHI's research contribution

- Under leadership of First Nations Peoples, we need to make research contributions that improve the health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Be bold and act – driven from a position of listening, learning and direction from and with First Nations Peoples

5) Using WEHI's voice and platform to elevate First Nations voices

- Need to use our voice as a leader within medical research – both within the sector, and as a contributor to the national conversation
- Prioritising and elevating First Nations voices and knowledge – within WEHI and broader Australian society. We need to seek advice and knowledge from First Nations Peoples who have looked after our country and waterways for millennia
- We need to use our voice and advocate and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices
- WEHI gain credibility as a supporter and advocate

6) Truth-telling

- Needed to enable forgiveness and healing to move forward as one cohesive society
- We need to explore and understand/ recognise the impacts "Science" has had on certain aspects of First Nations cultures and identities
- Engage in truth-telling about science
- Reconciliation, and more specifically, truth-telling is critical to the nation's development. It's critical to race relations in Australia

WEHI RAP

Overview of intentions

WEHI understands the importance of a RAP in terms of ensuring accountability and transparency of our work as we strive to grow our contribution towards a reconciled nation. We have made a clear commitment to reconciliation across the four key themes in our Strategic Plan and made the following commitments:

- '(to)...ensure that we play our part in achieving health equity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the wider Australian population. Addressing the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be a feature of our third Reconciliation Action Plan.'
- 'As an Institute, we will consider how we communicate in a culturally sensitive way and raise awareness of history, policies and systems which have resulted in disparities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to further reduce barriers to engagement. We recognise there are barriers, both to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities accessing our researchers and our research, and researchers reaching out to these communities. The Institute will develop an Indigenous engagement strategy and work across the precinct and nationally to create a consultative and collaborative ethical framework that places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the centre of decision making in health and medical research.'

WEHI is at an important juncture in our work as we seek to meet our own aspirations and take strides towards realising our vision for reconciliation and, importantly, meet the expectations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to continue to grow our reconciliation efforts.

Aspirations

Our RAP will guide our aspirations to be:

1) Purposeful and visible in our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- Act with purpose in building its relationships and partnerships through visible engagement, particularly at the grassroots and with local Victorian communities
- Lean into our sector leadership role and strive to work with the Australian Association of Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) to facilitate partnerships between medical research institutes (MRIs) on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and medical research

"So long as we are providing valued, practical outcomes for those communities and not just "ticking a box", and so long as we are actively involving communities and listening to what they have to say and not just assuming we know."

- STAFF SURVEY RESPONDENT

2) Bold and engage in truth telling:

- We have a key role to play in truth-telling around the history of science in this country
- We will accelerate our Indigenous research plans and capacity building
- We will develop a nuanced understanding of how to advocate for the Uluru statement and Victorian truth, justice, and treaty process

3) Focussed on furthering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:

- We have a major, time-critical decision to determine our role and contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research driven by a mandate from the community

"Provide support and promote more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to receive cutting-edge education in science so that they can be an integral part of the next generation of scientists"

- STAFF SURVEY RESPONDENT

Overview of work so far

WEHI has had a formal commitment to reconciliation in place since 2013. Our Reflect RAP (2014-15) helped to build the foundation across the key areas of respect, relationships, and opportunities. Building on the successful implementation of the Reflect RAP, WEHI launched an Innovate RAP 2016-18. The Innovate RAP was developed with the advice and guidance of external stakeholders from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Over the past few years WEHI's focus has been on developing and implementing its first Indigenous Employment Strategy with a focus on strengthening our work to build the pathway including through expanding our internship program, launching our first Indigenous fellowship, and forming a partnership with Deadly Science to nurture Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's interest and engagement in science. We are proud of the progress we have made over this time but know we have much more to do.

Timeline of key WEHI reconciliation actions

2013

Formation of WEHI's Reconciliation Committee and development of the first WEHI "RESPECT" RAP

2014

2015

Launch and implementation of the WEHI "RESPECT" RAP

2014

Establishment of CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program, offering multi-year internships to undergraduate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students. *(See more detail below)*

2014

Five year funding agreement with Teachabout/Titjimat to provide community led education programs to young people in remote NT.

2016

2018

Launch and implementation of second WEHI "INNOVATE" RAP

2019

Worked with PwC Indigenous Consulting to conduct a review of the implementation of our second RAP *(See more detail below)*

2021

Publication of first Indigenous Employment Strategy *(See more detail below)*

2021

Establishment of the Chism Indigenous Honours Scholarship program that nurtures budding First Nations researchers. *(See more detail below)*

2022

Development of the third WEHI RAP *(See detail above related to the themes for the development of the RAP Vision)*

2022

Partnership formed with DeadlyScience *(See more detail below)*

Reviewing our RAP

WEHI worked with PwC Indigenous Consulting to conduct a review of the implementation of our second RAP to allow us to build an understanding of the enablers and barriers to ensuring success of our future reconciliation work. A comprehensive consultation process was carried out to inform this work including:

- An all staff and student survey
- A series of interviews with WEHI leadership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students
- Focus groups with key WEHI staff including Scientific Faculty members
- Interviews with external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and medical leaders and a Wurundjeri Elder



What we heard via the review

Survey of WEHI staff and students:

- Valued activities that increased awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge
- Wanted to see WEHI's success in medical research be replicated in our contribution towards improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes
- Limited engagement and connections to First Nations communities

Stakeholder consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members:

- Leverage the position of WEHI within Parkville to drive coordinated approach to employment and research activities
- Increase efforts to improve cultural competency to support and attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- Ensure the long-term commitment to reconciliation and improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is a primary focus and 'business as usual'
- Engage with First Nations communities
- Implement a research strategy including:
 - Consideration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health within the new Healthy Development and Ageing theme's priorities
 - Translate cultural understanding, awareness, and practices (such as cultural protocols) into meaningful research outcomes

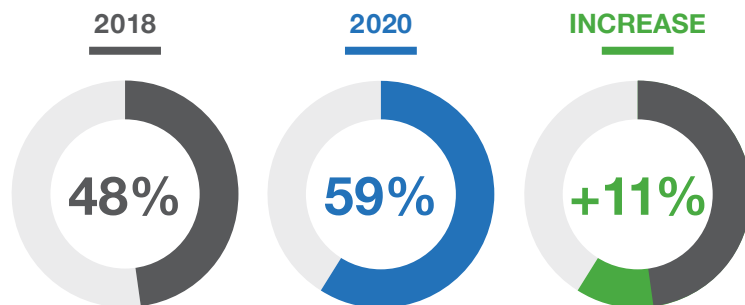
This work gave us an in-depth understanding of the opportunities, areas for improvement and future considerations for the development of our third RAP. Several recommendations based on the key findings and themes were made to elevate, progress, and achieve meaningful outcomes for WEHI's reconciliation program.

These recommendations informed areas of focus in our RAP and provided framing for the discussion at the WEHI Indigenous Stakeholder roundtable for the development of the RAP in June 2022.

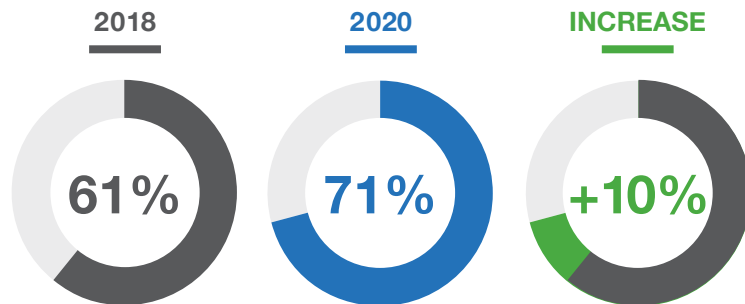
Summary of comparative WEHI survey findings

Through our participation in the Reconciliation Australia RAP Barometer surveys, we know that more survey respondents now believe:

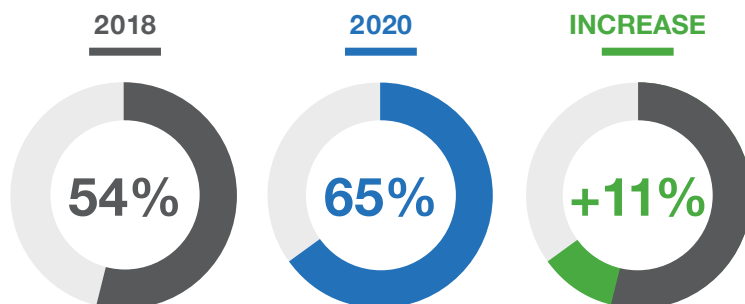
“The wrongs of the past must be rectified before we can move on.”



“It is very important to know about the histories of Indigenous people in Australia”



“It is very important to know about Indigenous cultures.”



Priorities moving forward

Challenges and learnings

Our evaluation of our reconciliation work provided an evidence-based foundation to inform our key learnings and identify three key themes where we are facing the greatest challenges:

1. Building working relationships

We now recognise we need to continue to bolster our efforts to build strong and trusted relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. Successful collaboration with partners will be central to realising WEHI's mission to making discoveries that improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We have had some successes, but we must ensure we focus investment and time in stakeholder engagement particularly at the local level. It will be important for us to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's involvement in our reconciliation activities to ensure a diversity of voices guide our efforts.

"I would like the Institute to continue to develop and strengthen its relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and particularly with MRIs that are focused on the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."

- STAFF SURVEY RESPONDENT



2. Delivering our research activities

One of WEHI's key challenges since we began our reconciliation work has been to understand how we can best contribute to improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. As an institute that specialises in research at a molecular level this presents both challenges and opportunities. Although we have made important discoveries in relation to diseases such as Acute Rheumatic Fever, Scabies Mite and HTLV1 infection, we are committed to moving to a more strategic approach to the work guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with more tangible benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

"As a medical research institute, we have an obligation to conduct research that benefits all Australians, including Indigenous people. We have a special obligation to close the gap in the health and life expectancy of Indigenous people."

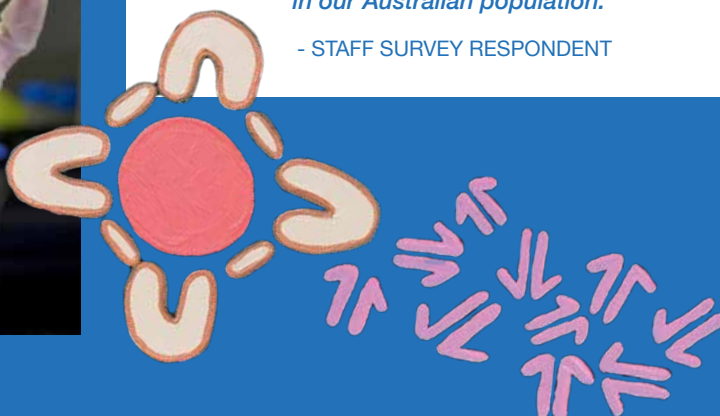
- STAFF SURVEY RESPONDENT

3. Demonstrating sector leadership

As the largest and a leading medical research institute in Australia of its kind and an authority on medical research, we know we have a significant role to play in demonstrating leadership in our sector. We understand and value the recognition from our stakeholders' expectations in this regard. We need to discern how we can best realise our reconciliation ambitions working alongside key organisations in both the Parkville medical precinct and nationally.

"Promoting and enhancing Indigenous involvement in medical research will strengthen our work and help improve the application of research findings in our Australian population."

- STAFF SURVEY RESPONDENT



Overview of achievements

Our vision for reconciliation has guided us on our responsibilities and will help us to improve health outcomes for First Nations Peoples, especially by using our strengths in education and training for the next generation of scientists and to bring to bear the importance of WEHI work being led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

We have had a strong focus on building a culturally aware and safe organisation through our partnership with the Koorie Heritage Trust since 2019 to deliver cultural awareness training for our staff and students.

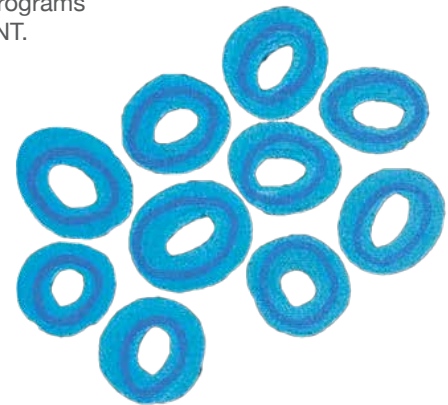
*What I most valued learning about was...
“the history of the stolen generation and what that actually means, the current impact it’s still having on Aboriginal communities and individuals, and also things like terminology and what is I isn’t acceptable.”*

- CULTURAL AWARENESS
TRAINING PARTICIPANT

We published our first Indigenous Employment Strategy in 2021 to increase representation at all levels and all parts of WEHI, develop and support staff and students and continue to strengthen our cultural understanding and competency.

We have continued to grow our long-standing partnerships with the CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship program. Since 2014 we have supported 25 students. We currently have 8 interns undertaking multi-year undergraduate internships which is realising pathways to honours, PhD and other research positions. We have also supported 8 Aurora Foundation internship students since 2018.

We have entered into our second five-year funding agreement with Titjimat to provide community led education programs to young people in remote NT.



Current relevant research

A summary of the work currently being undertaken by WEHI researchers to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is as follows:

Dr Rob James

PhD student and ACRRM trainee, Nhulunbuy, NT (Professor Ivo Mueller, Professor Sant-Rayn Pasricha)

- Aetiology, epidemiology and impact of respiratory infections (including COVID-19) in the Miwatj community

Professor Marc Pellegrini:

- HTLV1 prevention using new therapies in Central Australia; planning clinical trials.

Professor Len Harrison:

- Associations between microbiome and poor growth (stunting) in Northern Australia; guidance on a lifestyle/ nutrition intervention study (led by Doherty, UoM) in Elcho Island

Professor Ian Wicks:

- Inflammation impact on rheumatic heart disease

Case studies

Examples of reconciliation in action at WEHI

DeadlyScience

WEHI has partnered with leading Indigenous not-for-profit, DeadlyScience, to foster the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scientists, in the first partnership of its kind.

Under the new partnership, WEHI and DeadlyScience will work to co-design and deliver science-based programs and activities for First Nations school students.

The collaboration with WEHI is the first time DeadlyScience has partnered with a medical research institute and is the first partnership to be created under its DeadlyPathways program.

WEHI director, Professor Doug Hilton AO, said the partnership would build the important momentum needed to inspire and offer opportunities for future First Nations scientists.

"It's an honour to be able to mark this year's National Reconciliation Week with a partnership that expands WEHI's commitment to supporting the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scientists through brave action and a vision for change," Professor Hilton said.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples were the world's first scientists and WEHI embraces and pays respect to this millennia of knowledge.

"Improving First Nations People's representation in STEM will benefit everyone, and this partnership will draw on our strengths in education and training to support their engagement at the scientific frontier by providing opportunities to make exciting discoveries and decisions about the future of health in this country," Professor Hilton said.



A student from Minyerri in the Northern Territory looks at slides under a microscope.



WEHI donated books to DeadlyScience to assist schools that had been impacted by the 2020 bushfire crisis.

Partnership with CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program

In its eighth year, the Institute's partnership with the CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program is going from strength to strength.

CareerTrackers is a national non-profit organisation that creates multi-year internship opportunities for high-performing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students.

Wayne Cawthorne

Wayne Cawthorne is a CareerTrackers intern at WEHI, following in the footsteps of his cousin who also participated in the program. Throughout his undergraduate degree, Wayne has interned in the Murphy Laboratory in the Inflammation Division at WEHI's Parkville campus.

This means he is a long way from home.

Wayne is a Warrungu, Djiru, and Jirrbal person from North Queensland, born and raised in Townsville. His mother is Murri, descended from Warrungu and Djiru Nations through her maternal grandfather and the Jirrbal Nation through her maternal grandmother. His father is Koori. Wayne attended Oonoonba State School and Townsville State High School for primary and secondary schooling respectively and went on to study a Bachelor of Advanced Science with a major in Molecular and Cell Biology at James Cook University. After graduating, he moved to Melbourne to work as a research assistant for six months in the Murphy Laboratory and will complete his Honours degree this year (2023).

"Living independently away from my hometown wouldn't have been possible without the support of the CareerTrackers programme."

"Most opportunities for internships are not available for students who live in regional and rural areas. Programmes like CareerTrackers can enable rural students to access opportunities that are available to other students in metropolitan areas."

"The financial support that programmes like CareerTrackers can provide range from access to Indigenous Cadetship Scholarship (ICS) to support students and families throughout periods of study where employment may not be possible, paid internships during semester breaks, and assistance in funding travel and accommodation costs for travelling internships," Wayne said.



The CareerTrackers programme has helped Wayne to bridge a financial and educational gap that might otherwise have been impossible to achieve. He believes that the programme is helping to improve university retention rates and lead to more secure employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

"The programme expanded my career avenues after completing my undergraduate degree by connecting me with future employers and study supervisors. These things directly led to me being employed and accepted to study an Honours degree at WEHI."

"The programme allowed me to earn an income over my semester breaks through my internships, whilst also allowing me to access the ICS provided by the federal government throughout my study periods, which was pivotal to finishing my undergraduate degree."

"I was also able to network with many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from across the country whilst interning, which has been both motivating and validating."

"I value the opportunities that the CareerTrackers internships at WEHI have provided in meeting and building relationships with professionals in my field, in developing my scientific skills, and in giving me the opportunity to demonstrate myself professionally," Wayne said.

Naomi Jones

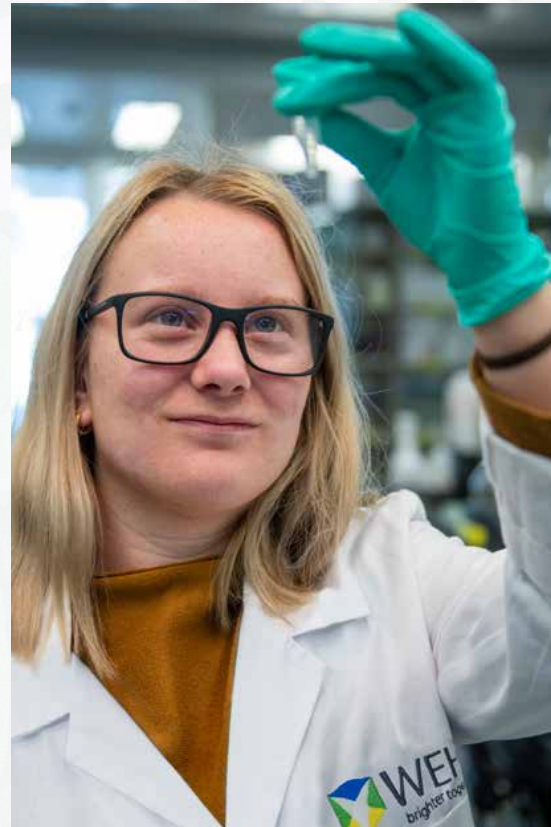
Naomi joined WEHI as CareerTrackers intern in 2018, working on projects including how cell signalling impacts inflammatory bowel disease, and using structural biology to understand potassium transport into cells. She is now a Research Assistant working in the Pasricha laboratory.

She says WEHI promotes an atmosphere of sharing and learning.

"You can talk about your passion for science and have those engaging conversations about areas that you might not be accustomed to within science," she said.

Naomi said CareerTrackers has been a major part of her undergraduate degree and has allowed her to appreciate the community and culture she belongs to. *"I'm proud to say I'm a Darug women of the Boorooberongal clan, which flows through my mother's side," she said.*

"CareerTrackers has allowed me to connect with other students who share the same beliefs in culture and customs. It is a valuable initiative as it allows us students to wear our culture with pride in the community and workforce."



WEHI Indigenous Employment Strategy

The aim of WEHI's four-year Indigenous Employment Strategy (2021-2024) is to increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples at all levels of WEHI in both research and professional services. The strategy outlines a framework to support and develop existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

The vision for the strategy is to commit to seeing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples engaged at the scientific frontier, making exciting discoveries and decisions about the future of health in Australia, and being part of a leading professional services workforce supporting the realisation of these discoveries.

This vision will be achieved by:

- Being a culturally safe place that values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's knowledge and actively addresses structural racism
- Providing opportunities for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical and health researchers
- Supporting the career progression and development of First Nations people through sustained investment
- Prioritising access to institute expertise, facilities, and technology for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to further their own research
- Forming partnerships with key stakeholders to enhance employment and education opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

With thanks to our stakeholders and partners

RAP champion

Our RAP is championed by our Director Professor Doug Hilton alongside the senior leaders from our Reconciliation Committee.

Reconciliation Committee members

Co-Chairs

- Professor Sant-Rayn Pasricha
Division Head
- Associate Professor Tracy Putoczki
Laboratory Head

Members

- Megan Auld
Head of Communications and Marketing
- Associate Professor Jeff Babon
Laboratory Head
- Nirashaa Bound
PhD student
- Dr Jason Brouwer
Senior Research Officer
- Wayne Cawthorne
Honours student (Warrungu, Djiru, and Jirrbal)
- Alex Fisher
Internal Communications Manager
- Dr Ka Yee Fung
Senior Research Officer
- Jacqueline Ho
Division Coordinator
- Dr Lisa Ioannidis
Research Officer
- Dr Nadia Kershaw
Laboratory Head
- Kerry Ko
Scientific Education Administrator
- Dr Rob James
Clinical Research Fellow
(Top-Western Group, Torres Strait Islands and D'entrecasteaux Islands - Papua New Guinea)
- Associate Professor Misty Jenkins
Laboratory Head (Gundjitsmara)
- Louise Johansson
Diversity and Inclusion Manager
- Naomi Jones
Research Assistant
(Darug of the Boorooberongal clan)

- Tegan Jux
Philanthropic Grants Manager
- Jim McDonagh
Procurement Category Specialist
- Professor Ivo Mueller
Division Head
- Kaiseal Sarson-Lawrence
PhD student
- Anna Stewart
Diversity and Inclusion Advisor

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community partners

WEHI is privileged to have a long-standing relationship with several Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the health and medical and broader STEM sector who provide expertise, advice, and guidance.

External members of our Reconciliation Committee:

- Dr Ngaree Blow
(Quandamooka/Noonuccal, Taribulung & Yorta-Yorta) 2013-2021
- Luke Williams
(Gumbaynggirr) 2019-2021
- Kristy Meilselbach
(Gundjitsmara) 2019-present

We would also like to thank the following people for their contribution in the evaluation of our activities and development of our RAP:

- Aunty Diane Kerr
Wurundjeri Elder
- Professor Alex Brown
South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
- Corey Tutt
Deadly Science
- Dr Shayne Bellingham
Lowitja Institute
- Dr Lyndon Ormond-Parker
Australian National University
- Michelle Kerrin
- Warwick Padgham
University of Melbourne



Relationships

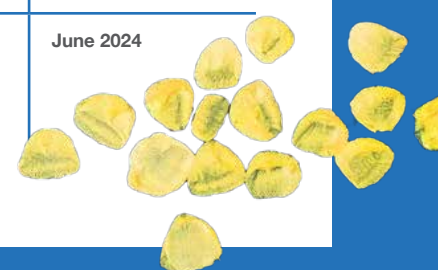
Successful collaboration with partners is central to realising WEHI's mission to make discoveries and improve human health. WEHI recognises the important role it must play in working to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers whose strengths align with our areas of research including chronic diseases, cancer, and ageing.

We understand that to achieve this and to continue to strengthen our contribution across all aspects of this RAP, we must bolster our work to build trusted and reciprocal

relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities. This will take time and sustained effort by the WEHI community.

Partnerships will be critical for our work as researchers and to support First Nations employment and education and building a culturally safe workplace. We commit to building these connections with a focus on local communities in recognition of our location on the lands of the Wurundjeri people and our responsibility to be responsive to the needs of Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
1 Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	August 2023
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Chief People Officer	December 2023
	Provide sponsorship of one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health conference annually.	Head of Marketing and Communications	December 2024
	WEHI to offer in-kind and financial support to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to hold Indigenous health conferences.	Chair of Sponsorship Committee	June 2023
2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	Head of Marketing and Communications	May 2023, 2024 and annually
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	May 2023, 2024 and annually
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	Head of Marketing and Communications	May 2023, 2024 and annually
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	Head of Marketing and Communications Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	May 2023, 2024 and annually
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	Head of Marketing and Communications	May 2023, 2024 and annually
3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation.	Head of Marketing and Communications	June 2023
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	Head of Marketing and Communications	June 2023
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	Head of Marketing and Communications	June 2024
	Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the opportunity to set up a Victorian MRI RAP working group. 	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	June 2024



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <hr style="width: 20px; margin: auto;"/> <p>Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence (continued)</p>	Join the Reconciliation Industry Network for health-related organisations to take practical measures to support reconciliation specific to the sector.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	December 2023
	Take an active role in supporting the progression of the Statement from the Heart and encourage others in the MRI sector to support the Statement.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	June 2023
	Understand how WEHI can contribute to the Victorian truth and treaty process led by the Yoorook Justice Commission.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	June 2023
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <hr style="width: 20px; margin: auto;"/> <p>Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies</p>	Conduct regular reviews of People and Culture policies and procedures to eliminate discrimination and promote equality for race relations.	Chief People Officer	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	Chief People Officer	June 2024
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	Chief People Officer	June 2024
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	Chief People Officer	June 2023
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <hr style="width: 20px; margin: auto;"/> <p>Build and maintain key partnerships that enable WEHI's contribution towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, wellbeing, education and employment</p>	Develop and maintain a formal partnership with Deadly Science to co-design and deliver science-based programs and activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students.	Head of Marketing and Communications	June 2023
	Maintain a partnership with Tjitjimat/ Teachabout through the implementation of the 2021-2026 funding agreement to support the delivery of education and cultural activities with children and young people in remote NT communities.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Continue the partnership with CareerTrackers to identify opportunities for Indigenous interns as well as strengthen the partnership with the Aurora Indigenous Internship program. (IES 2021-2024 action)	Chief People Officer	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Establish relationships/partnerships with universities and other relevant organisations to build the pipeline for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students across WEHI. (IES 2021-2024 action)	Chief People Officer	December 2024
<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <hr style="width: 20px; margin: auto;"/> <p>Build relationships with other independent MRI's to support Indigenous health research and the research workforce</p>	<p>Investigate opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create formal alliance/s • Support collaboration between the Institutes • Build understanding of approaches to undertaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research • Facilitate student exchanges 	<p>Reconciliation Committee co-chairs</p> <p>Reconciliation Committee co-chairs</p> <p>Reconciliation Committee co-chairs</p> <p>Chief People Officer Student Experience Manager</p>	<p>June 2024</p> <p>December 2024</p> <p>December 2024</p> <p>March 2025</p>



Respect

We value and celebrate the world's oldest living culture and 60,000+ years of continuous occupation of this land.

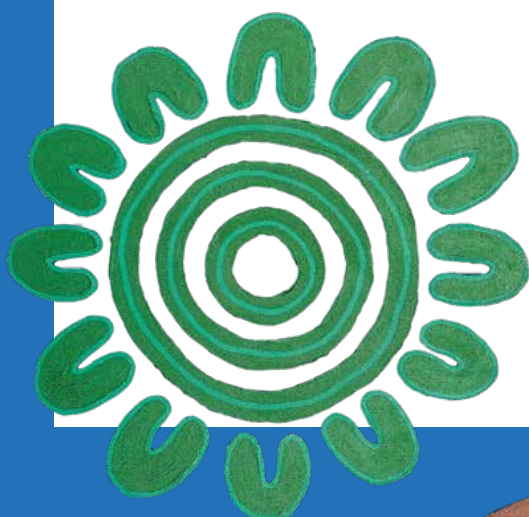
Building our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures, and Peoples and the ongoing impact of colonisation has formed a key focus of our reconciliation work. Learning from, listening to, and amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples has enriched us as a community and provided a foundation to further our contribution towards a reconciled nation.

We know that to create a place that will support our aim to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and ensure non-Indigenous researchers' engagement respects First Nations communities, we must continue to build cultural awareness and cultural safety.

Respect of First Nations' knowledge systems, the importance of data sovereignty and creating a sense of place are critical to this work.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
<p>1</p> <p>Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning</p>	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Chief People Officer Learning and Organisational Development Manager Diversity and Inclusion Manager	June 2024
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	Chief People Officer Learning and Organisational Development Manager Diversity and Inclusion Manager	December 2024
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff.	Chief People Officer Learning and Organisational Development Manager Diversity and Inclusion Manager	March 2025
	Provide opportunities for Reconciliation Committee members, People and Culture leaders and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	Chief People Officer Learning and Organisational Development Manager Diversity and Inclusion Manager	June 2023, 2024, and annually
	Hold one seminar annually on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories from Elders and community leaders.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	July 2023, 2024, and annually
<p>2</p> <p>Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols</p>	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Head of Communications and Marketing	June 2023
	Conduct regular reviews of WEHI's cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	Head of Communications and Marketing	June 2023
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	Head of Communications and Marketing	June 2023
	Continue the practice to include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of meetings.	Head of Communications and Marketing	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Encourage the use of an email block acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land.	Head of Communications and Marketing	June 2023
	Include the traditional place name on stationary, business cards etc.	Head of Communications and Marketing	June 2023

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <hr style="width: 20px; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week</p>	Reconciliation Committee to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	July 2023, 2024, and annually
	Hold a Wednesday seminar or other event during NAIDOC week from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander speaker/researcher.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	July 2023, 2024, and annually
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	Head of Communications and Marketing	July 2023, 2024, and annually
	Continue to monitor People and Culture policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	Chief People Officer	June 2023, 2024, and annually
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <hr style="width: 20px; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">Acknowledge and demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on our three campuses</p>	Commission an original artwork from an Aboriginal artist to feature on the next RAP.	Head of Communications and Marketing	May 2025
	Investigate the opportunity to hold an annual “artist in residence” to encourage open dialogue about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures with staff and students.	Head of Communications and Marketing	April 2024
	Add new signage in reception areas at each campus to acknowledge the Traditional Owners using traditional place names.	Head of Facilities	September 2023
	Explore opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in updates to building infrastructure.	Head of Communications and Marketing	December 2023, 2024 and annually
	Create an Indigenous plant garden at one of the campuses in partnership with an Aboriginal horticulturalist and have appropriate ceremony and signage for education.	Head of Communications and Marketing	June 2024





Opportunities

Our Indigenous Employment Strategy provides the roadmap to supporting and developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students. Creating multiple entry points and diversification of pathways into science and professional careers will be crucial to achieving this.

WEHI continues to grow its core commitment to support the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers through our undergraduate internship programs and ongoing support for their career pathways from honours and beyond.

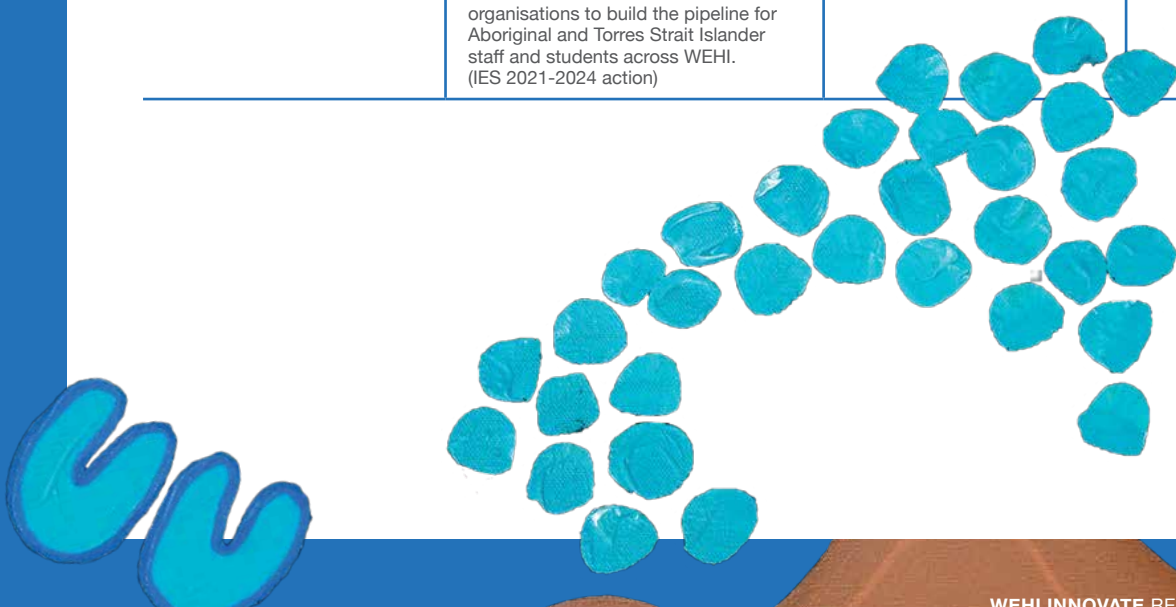
Our new partnership with Deadly Science will enable us to catalyse young people's interest and passion for science and support work experience opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

We want our commitment to reconciliation to be reflected across all our key activities. Creating opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and run businesses will form a critical component of our third RAP.

As a medical research institute, a major responsibility lies in ensuring our research meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and that we find ways to open our facilities and expertise to First Nations researchers to facilitate their work and discoveries.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development</p>	Implement and monitor WEHI's Indigenous Employment Strategy 2021-2024.	Chief People Officer People and Culture Board Committee	December 2024
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	Chief People Officer	June 2024
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	Chief People Officer	June 2023, 2024, and annually
	Review People and Culture procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	Chief People Officer	June 2023, 2024, and annually
	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce.	Chief People Officer	December 2023, 2024 and annually
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes</p>	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	Chief Financial Officer	December 2023
	Continue Supply Nation membership and explore a corporate partner relationship with Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Victoria.	Chief Financial Officer	December 2023
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	Chief Financial Officer	June 2024
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Chief Financial Officer	December 2024
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Chief Financial Officer	December 2023, 2024 and annually

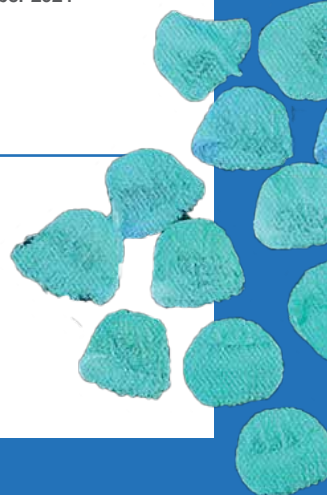
ACTION	DELIVERABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: auto;"/> <p>Contribute to improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</p>	Conduct a community consultation process to define how WEHI can best use its research skills, technologies, and facilities to contribute to improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	June 2024
	Develop an Indigenous research and engagement strategy.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	December 2024
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: auto;"/> <p>Build pathways for emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers into health and medical research</p>	Implement Indigenous Employment Strategy 2021-2024 key actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the development of an Indigenous specific scholarship fund that targets tertiary students (at all levels) currently studying in areas related to medical research • Explore the value of introducing a specific PhD scholarship for Indigenous students • Implement the Indigenous Visiting Research Fellowship to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to further their research at WEHI 	Chief People Officer Head of Fundraising and Philanthropy Chief People Officer Head of Fundraising and Philanthropy Chief People Officer Head of Fundraising and Philanthropy	December 2023 December 2023 June 2023
	Develop and maintain a formal partnership with Deadly Science to co-design and deliver science-based programs and activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students.	Head of Marketing and Communications	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Maintain a partnership with Titjimat/ Teachabout through the implementation of the 2021-2026 funding agreement to support the delivery of education and cultural activities with children and young people in remote NT communities.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Continue the partnership with CareerTrackers to identify opportunities for Indigenous interns as well as strengthen the partnership with the Aurora Indigenous Internship program. (IES 2021-2024 action)	Chief People Officer	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Establish relationships/partnerships with universities and other relevant organisations to build the pipeline for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students across WEHI. (IES 2021-2024 action)	Chief People Officer	December 2024





Governance

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
<p>1</p> <p>Maintain an effective Reconciliation Committee to drive governance of the RAP</p>	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Reconciliation Committee.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Establish and apply Terms of Reference for the Reconciliation Committee.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	June 2023
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	Reconciliation Committee co-chairs	February, July, October, December 2023, 2024
<p>2</p> <p>Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments</p>	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Chief People Officer	September 2023, 2024 and annually
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Chief People Officer	September 2023, 2024 and annually
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Chief People Officer	September 2023, 2024 and annually
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	Chief People Officer	June 2023, 2024 and annually
<p>3</p> <p>Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally</p>	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	September 2023, 2024 and annually
	Report RAP progress to all staff, senior leaders and the People and Culture Board sub-committee quarterly.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	July 2023, 2024 and annually
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	December 2023 then annually
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to ensure that our primary and secondary contacts are up-to-date to ensure we are receiving important correspondence.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	June 2023, 2024 and annually
	Follow up with Reconciliation Australia if we have not yet received our unique reporting link to participate in the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	1 August 2023, 2024 and annually
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	May 2024
<p>4</p> <p>Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP</p>	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	December 2024
	Provide a Traffic Light report to Reconciliation Australia to assist in the development of our next RAP.	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	December 2024



Contact

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