Reflect
Reconciliation
Action Plan

January 2025 - December 2025

aarnet

RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
REFLECT

Acknowledgement of Country
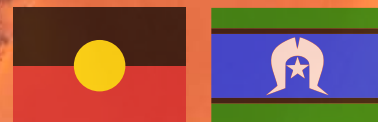
AARNet acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we work upon and connect across, recognising the profound connection to lands, waters and communities where we operate.

We honour the enduring cultural legacy and continuous thread of storytelling and communication of the world's most ancient living cultures.

We extend our respect to the Elders, those who have passed, those who are with us today, and those who will guide us into the future.

Introduction to our Reflect RAP

This inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) marks the beginning of AARNet's formal commitment to reconciliation. Our RAP will guide us on our journey to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and contributions.

Through listening, learning, and collaboration, we aim to lay a strong foundation for future action—embedding reconciliation in our values and operations while making meaningful impact to reconciliation in our workplace and beyond.

We express our gratitude to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals who have generously shared their wisdom and insights during the formulation of our Reflect RAP.
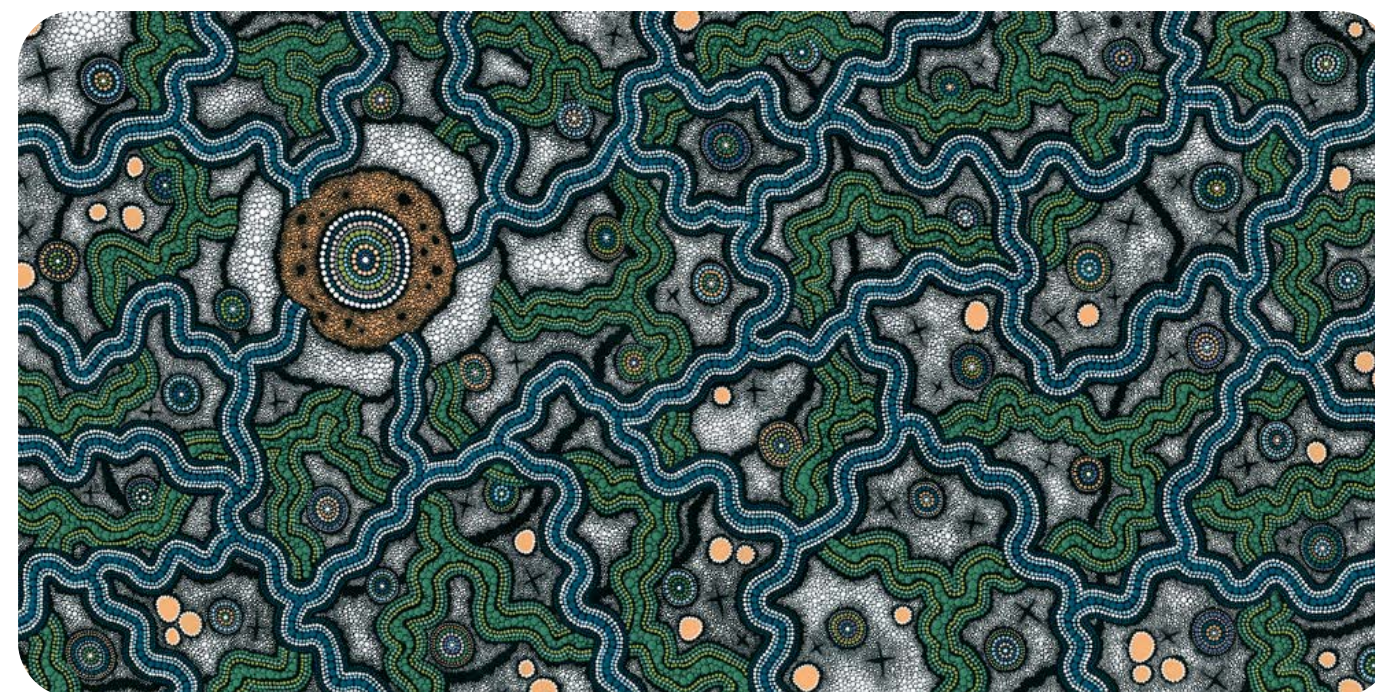
AARNet's Reflect RAP artwork created by Kamilaroi artist Bianca Gardiner-Dodd.

"Our RAP will guide us on our journey to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and achievements."

About the
artwork

As part of our commitment to reconciliation, AARNet commissioned a bespoke artwork to support the design and development of our Reflect RAP. Created by Kamilaroi artist Bianca Gardiner-Dodd, the piece captures the idea that just as traditional pathways once connected remote villages and camps, AARNet's network weaves a powerful digital connection across Australia.

"AARNet, from its core, extends tendrils of optic communication linkages that spread expansively—beyond, along and beneath this ancient land. Within the confines of this timeless land, the optic fibres radiate to link 38 Australian universities and their surrounding learning communities with our pre-eminent scientific institution, the CSIRO.

This artwork features 39 meeting places (dotted circle formations), representing the shareholders: 38 universities and the CSIRO.

The traditional meeting places of the land are now inexorably linked through AARNet to the far reaches of the continent and the global world.

It also features pebbles representing earth and foundational values. They hold the core values and information of our First Nations people on which everything else is built, as well as representing AARNet's core values.

The traditional indigenous pathways connected remote villages and bush camps along well-worn walkabout routes, on land and through watercourses, to assist positively, the living amenity of their daily lives. In much the same way, AARNet has woven a 'spider's web' of interconnectivity, enabling the greatest wealth of intelligence gathering, sharing and communication—binding a continent as never before through the most optimum conduit currently available!

This, however, is only the start. Through physical undersea optic cabling, a mesmerising array of information opportunities is now accessible to the world at large!

The blue connections within the artwork represent cables that travel through waterbodies, symbolising the sharing of knowledge, resources and collaborations overseas. The green represents of the cabling through land.

The tribes of the 'Dreaming' could once only look at the stars and wonder about the world around them but now the AARNet network represents a quantum leap forward in information sharing and understanding of the dynamic world around us!"

– Bianca Gardiner-Dodd

AARNet

Meeting places:
38 universities and CSIRO

Values

Underwater cables

Terrestrial cables

About the
artist

Bianca Gardiner-Dodd is a Kamilaroi woman with cultural ties to Bundjalung through her husband and children. Born in Liverpool, New South Wales, Bianca has spent the last 35 years living on the Far North Coast, in the Tweed region of NSW.

Much of Bianca's work reflects her contemporary perspective of Aboriginal art, with inspiration drawn from the pristine coastal environment of the ocean, beaches, surf, dunes, creeks, rainforests, and parklands that surround her.

Bianca graduated from Queensland University of Technology with a double degree in Dance and Education. Her artistic discipline and dynamic reflection of movement in dance have intuitively transitioned into her art, often reflecting a moving tableau of images, actions, and directions.

Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Inaugural Reflect RAP

Reconciliation Australia welcomes AARNet to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

AARNet joins a network of more than 2,500 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

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

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

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

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

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

Congratulations AARNet, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Statement from CEO of AARNet

I am proud to introduce our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), a foundational step in our commitment to reconciliation and fostering respectful and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This Reflect RAP represents an opportunity for us to learn, listen, and reflect on how we can best contribute to reconciliation through our actions and decisions. As an organisation deeply embedded in supporting Australia's research and education sector, we understand the importance of recognising and honouring the histories, cultures, and contributions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have cared for this land for tens of thousands of years.

Through this plan, we commit to building awareness within AARNet, cultivating respectful relationships, and exploring opportunities to connect and work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. It also provides us with the framework to lay the foundations for future actions that contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

This RAP is not just a document; it is a commitment to action. We understand that reconciliation is a journey that requires ongoing effort and dedication. I invite all members of the AARNet community to join us in this important work.

Together, we can make a difference and contribute to a more just and equitable future for all.

Chris Hancock AM
Chief Executive Officer
AARNet

REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

AARNET OFFICIAL

Our business

AARNet is Australia's national research and education network, owned by 38 Australian universities and the CSIRO and operated as a not-for-profit company dedicated to supporting the advancement of research and education.

For more than 30 years AARNet has provided trusted and transformational telecommunications services, along with an expanding range of collaboration and cyber security services, all designed to meet the specialised needs of the research and education sector.

AARNet infrastructure interconnects over two million users—researchers, faculty, staff and students—at institutions across Australia with each other and their peers worldwide, the public internet, data storage, scientific instruments, computing facilities, cloud services and content providers. Our customers include Australia's universities and the CSIRO, many research institutes, hospitals and TAFEs, over one thousand K-12 schools, as well as state and federal galleries, libraries, archives and museums.

251
Number of AARNet staff

25,000 kms
AARNet network spans across land and sea

Brisbane (Milton)
Turrbul and Jagera people

Perth (West Perth)
Whadjuk Nyoongar people

Armidale
Anaiwan people

Canberra (Braddon)
Ngunnawal people

Adelaide (Mawson Lakes)
Kaurna people

Sydney (Chatswood)
Cammeraygal people

Melbourne (Collingwood)
Wurundjeri-willam people

We actively collaborate with the research and education sector and government to extend the reach of our high-speed network and services and seek out opportunities to connect research and education facilities and organisations in regional, remote communities, as well as in metropolitan areas. Through this commitment, our aim is to help Close the Gap in education and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders by providing equitable access to education opportunities and digital technologies.

AARNet has approximately 251 employees (February 2025) and offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth and Armidale. Currently, we do not collect ethnicity data for our employees. However, to the best of our knowledge, we do not have any employees who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are underrepresented in our organisation, and we are actively exploring opportunities to increase their representation.

Our Reflect RAP

AARNet is developing this Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) because we believe that reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is everyone's responsibility.

We believe our Reflect RAP will provide us with the structure required to strengthen existing and explore new relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in the communities we serve and make meaningful impact.

Connecting People and Cultures

AARNet is more than just a telecommunications provider; we are a bridge connecting people and cultures. By providing robust and reliable telecommunications services, we are enabling communities to share their stories, preserve their heritage, and engage with the wider world. Our network connects researchers, educators and students across Australia, fostering collaboration and innovation.

Our commitment to reconciliation and connectivity ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are not left behind in the digital age. We believe in the power of connection to bring people together, to share knowledge, and to create opportunities for education, growth and development.

Respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Rights

At AARNet, we have for many years approached any construction work required for expanding our network infrastructure with respect for the lands and waters traditionally owned or used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organising meetings with community leaders to discuss our network expansions. These discussions go beyond seeking permission; they are about understanding the cultural, historical and spiritual significance of the lands. Through these conversations, we learn about sacred sites, traditional practices and the rich heritage that must be preserved and respected.

Our RAP reflects our commitment to acknowledging and honouring the sovereignty and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over their traditional lands and knowledge.

> "AARNet is more than just a telecommunications provider; we are a bridge connecting people and cultures."

Delegates at a 2024 global CEO forum hosted by AARNet enjoyed an Aboriginal cultural performance and traditional smoking ceremony by Walangari Karntawarra and Diramu Aboriginal Dance and Didgeridoo. Photo: Good Thanks Media.

Cultural Sensitivity

Our commitment involves ensuring that our fibre infrastructure respects and preserves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, heritages and practices. Our RAP will continue to guide us to conduct operations with cultural sensitivity and respect.

Before any construction begins, we collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and cultural heritage experts to conduct thorough site assessments. These assessments help us identify areas of cultural importance and ensure that our infrastructure development does not disrupt these sites. When necessary, we adjust routes and find alternative solutions to protect sacred lands and honour cultural practices.

A Path Forward

Our vision for reconciliation involves constructing network infrastructure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and waters with respect and collaboration. By understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, cultural sensitivity and community progress, our RAP serves as a model for integrating modern technology with traditional values.

Our success relies on genuine partnerships and ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The RAP is not just a document but a living commitment to fostering relationships, respecting traditions and supporting the growth and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

As we continue to expand our network across Australia, we remain dedicated to these principles, ensuring that every step forward is taken with respect, understanding, and a shared vision for a connected and inclusive future.

Our partnerships and current activities

AARNet is committed to supporting reconciliation through improving access to digital technologies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, research and cultural heritage care. We actively seek out opportunities to connect remote communities to AARNet services as well as partnerships and projects that will benefit from our infrastructure and expertise.

Our reconciliation journey includes activities that focus on partnership and community progress.

Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)

Since 2013, AARNet has provided support for the work of AIME through the provision of connectivity and Zoom services. Through the AIME AARNet partnership, our technologies continue to be vital in enabling AIME to grow and positively impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students across Australia.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

AARNet has worked with AIATSIS in Canberra for more than a decade to deliver robust and scalable network solutions designed to underpin their research and digital curation activities. Most recently, to meet AIATSIS's evolving needs, an optical fibre network was delivered in 2023 to connect the new AIATSIS Central Australia facility in Alice Springs to the AARNet network. This connectivity will enable the digitisation and care for community held collection materials and the repatriation of Indigenous cultural information and material.

Language Data Commons of Australia

AARNet is one of 17 partner organisations, including AIATSIS, collaborating to develop a new digital research infrastructure, the Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA). The project aims to secure vulnerable and dispersed collections of language data, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages at risk of being lost forever, and to provide improved digital analysis tools for research.

GLAM Peak

AARNet supports GLAM Peak, the organisation that brings together the representative bodies for Australia's galleries, libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, cultural heritage organisations and research peak bodies. Since 2015 GLAM Peak has promoted and advocated for Australian cultural heritage collections. GLAM Peak recognises the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy – Revive pillar Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First: Recognising and respecting the crucial place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories at the centre of Australia's arts and culture.

> "...enhancing the quality of education and research in these communities."

Regional Connectivity Initiatives

Batchelor, NT Project

Under the Australian Government's Regional Connectivity Program, AARNet will provide optical fibre to Batchelor, Northern Territory, connecting key sites providing research and education-related services in the town. These sites include the council building, museum, school, community health centre and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. This connectivity will support teaching, learning, and research, helping to close the digital gap and create new opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Northern Midlands, WA Projects

AARNet will deliver fibre broadband and fixed wireless broadband connectivity to the towns of Three Springs, Mingenew, Coorow, and Carnamah in Western Australia's Northern Midlands region. This project will connect key premises, including public libraries and schools, to AARNet services, enhancing the quality of education and research in these communities.

Midwest, WA Project

AARNet, in partnership with CSIRO and the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR), is working to deliver fibre connectivity to the Pia Wadjarri community in the Yamaji (Midwest) region of Western Australia. Leveraging existing fibre infrastructure that supports the Inyarrimanha Ilgari Bundara—CSIRO's Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory—and the Square Kilometre Array sites, the project will enhance telecommunications for the Pia Wadjarri Remote Community School, local facilities, and community organisations, supporting regional economic development.

Above: Rolling out the network in Western Australia.
Right: Hauling a network cable across Sydney Harbour.

Governance and oversight

To implement our RAP effectively, we have established a RAP Steering Committee responsible for setting specific plans to achieve RAP commitments across business units.

The Steering Committee with Executive Sponsorship from our Chief Financial Officer, will provide oversight, direction, and governance on the implementation of our Reflect RAP commitments. This governance structure ensures that we maintain accountability and continue to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and representation throughout our reconciliation journey.
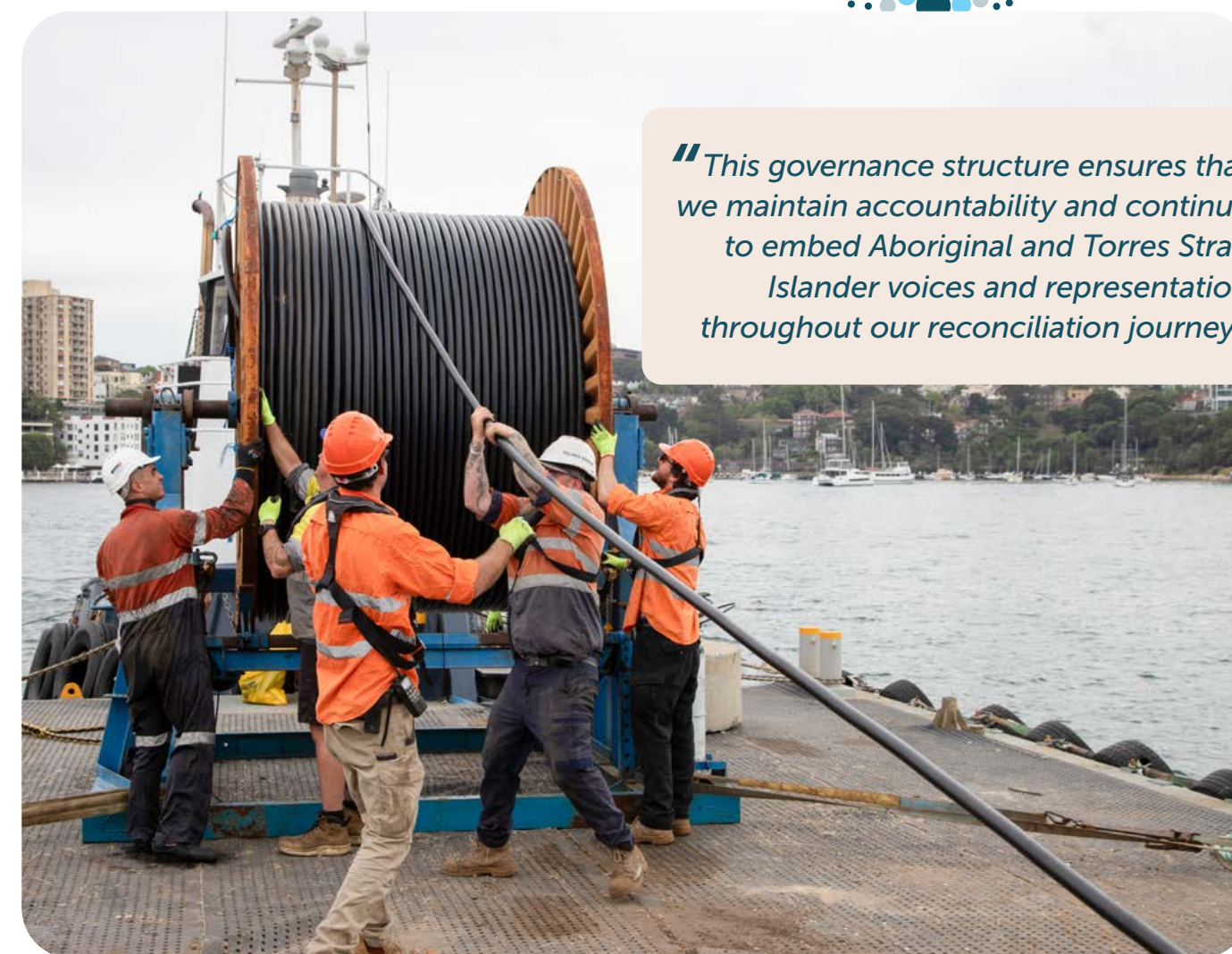
The Directors of AARNet are committed to our RAP and play an active role in its success. Their support is vital in driving our initiatives forward and ensuring that our reconciliation efforts are integrated into the strategic direction of the company. With their backing, we are confident in our ability to create meaningful and lasting change.

Our RAP Steering Committee

- » **Chief Financial Officer**, Chair
- » **Executive Assistant to the CEO**, RAP Champion
- » **Director, Marketing and Communications**
- » **Director, Major Infrastructure Construction**
- » **Manager, Human Resources**
- » **Director, Government Relations**
- » **Head of ESG**
- » **Brendan Littlechild**, Indigenous Workforce Consulting
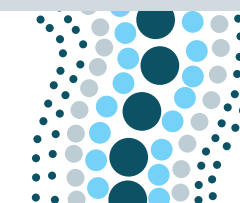
> "This governance structure ensures that we maintain accountability and continue to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and representation throughout our reconciliation journey."

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence, starting with AARNet's office locations.	June 2025	Director, Marketing & Communications
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	June 2025	Director, Government Relations & Partnerships
	Conduct regular engagement and outreach activities to connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	December 2025	Director, Government Relations & Partnerships
2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Promote and circulate information on the meaning of reconciliation, Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and NRW internal and external events to our team.	May 2025	HR Manager
	Organise NRW celebrations at AARNet offices nationally.	May 2025	HR Manager
	AARNet RAP Steering Committee members and Executive Team to participate in at least one external NRW event in their local area.	27 May – 3 June, 2025	RAP Champion
	Encourage and support AARNet team members to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 June, 2025	HR Manager

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Create and execute a communication strategy aimed at informing both internal team members and external stakeholders about our commitment to reconciliation, our journey towards reconciliation, and the initiatives outlined in our RAP.	March 2025	Director, Marketing & Communications
	Identify external stakeholders (including members and suppliers) that AARNet can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2025	Director, Marketing & Communications
	Identify other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2025	Director, Government Relations & Partnerships
4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	February 2025	HR Manager
	Conduct a review of AARNet HR policies and procedures to identify if existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March 2025	HR Manager

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5 Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case (road map) for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within AARNet.	April 2025	Finance Partner
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	March 2025	HR Manager
	Research, invite and engage with a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultant to conduct a Cultural Competency Survey to ascertain the baseline of cultural competency at AARNet.	October 2024	RAP Champion
	Provide our Executive, Leadership Team and all employees access to cultural competency training.	May 2025	External Advisor
6 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop a deeper understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters at AARNet's national offices and operational areas.	September 2025	Director, Marketing & Communications
	Increase our team's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.	March 2025	Director, Marketing & Communications
7 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Promote and circulate information to our team on the meaning on NAIDOC Week to celebrate and recognise the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	June 2025	HR Manager
	Promote and encourage AARNet team members to attend NAIDOC Week external events in their local area.	June 2025	HR Manager
	Organise and host NAIDOC celebrations at AARNet National Offices.	First week in July 2025	HR Manager
	AARNet RAP Steering Committee to participate in at least one external NAIDOC Week event in their local area.	First week in July 2025	RAP Champion

Opportunities

| Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case (road map) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within AARNet.	November 2024	HR Manager
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	February 2025	HR Manager
	Identify and engage with a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment specialist.	November 2024	HR Manager
9 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case (road map) for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	May 2025	Director, Major Infrastructure Construction
	Provide internal education and training for procurement teams and decision-makers on the importance of supplier diversity and how to effectively engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	June 2025	RAP Champion
	Establish and maintain Supply Nation membership.	June 2025	RAP Champion
	Leverage our membership with Supply Nation to increase our Supplier Diversity.	May 2025	Director, Major Infrastructure Construction

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
(10) Establish and maintain an effective RAP Steering Committee (RSC) to drive governance of the RAP.	Establish and maintain a RSC to govern RAP implementation.	October 2024	RAP Champion
	AARNet RAP to meet monthly to monitor progress on actions and deliverables.	October 2024	RAP Champion
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RSC.	October 2024	RAP Champion
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RSC.	November 2024	RAP Champion
(11) Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	September 2024	RAP Champion
	Engage the AARNet Executive Team in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2024	RAP Champion
	Appoint an AARNet Executive to champion our RAP internally.	March 2024	RAP Champion
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	October 2024	RAP Champion
	Identify and build partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and experts to support the implementation of RAP commitments.	June 2025	Director, Government Relations & Partnerships
	Incorporate RAP-related KPIs into the CEO's regular performance reviews. Ensure these reviews include progress updates on RAP initiatives, with specific attention to the achievement of set targets and goals.	December 2025	CEO
	Provide regular reporting to AARNet's Board and Members on progress toward RAP-related KPIs.	December 2025	CEO

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
(12) Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	AARNet will contact Reconciliation Australia to verify our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June annually	RAP Champion
	AARNet will contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	RAP Champion
	AARNet will complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	RAP Champion
(13) Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	AARNet will register on the Reconciliation Australia's website when AARNet is ready to begin developing our next RAP.	October 2025	RAP Champion
	Conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of the current RAP to identify successes, challenges and areas for improvement.	September 2025	RAP Champion
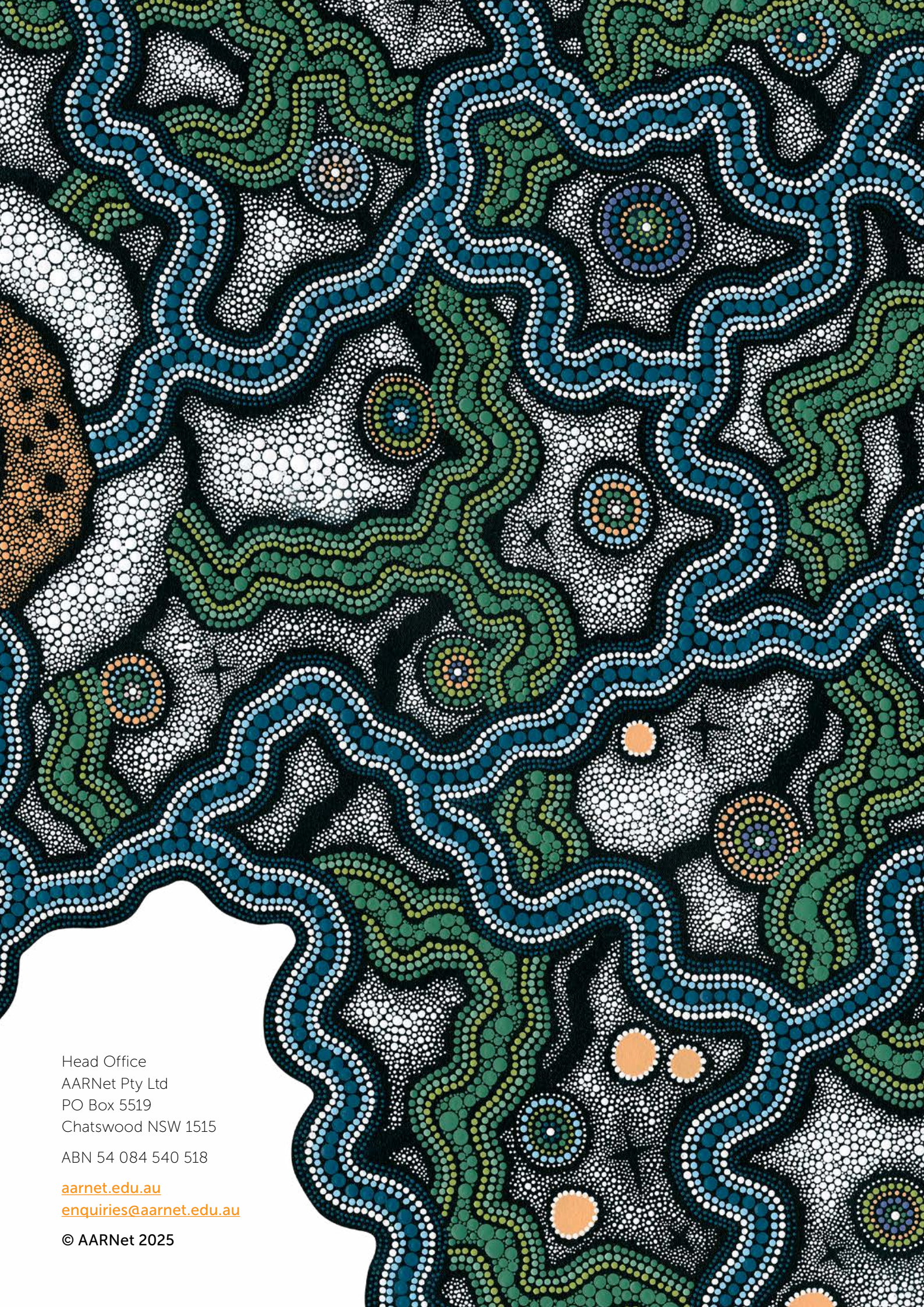
Head Office
AARNet Pty Ltd
PO Box 5519
Chatswood NSW 1515

ABN 54 084 540 518

aarnet.edu.au
enquiries@aarnet.edu.au

© AARNet 2025