

Somerset Regional Council

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

November 2025 - May 2027

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Artist profile

Jennifer Kent is a First Nations Artist with a diverse multicultural heritage. Jennifer acquired a love for painting and arts when she attended boarding school at Shalom Christian College during the 1990s however did not start professionally painting until 2017. Jennifer has First Nations sovereign heritage from South East and Central Queensland and shares kinship with sovereign peoples from the North West Queensland regions.



Artwork story

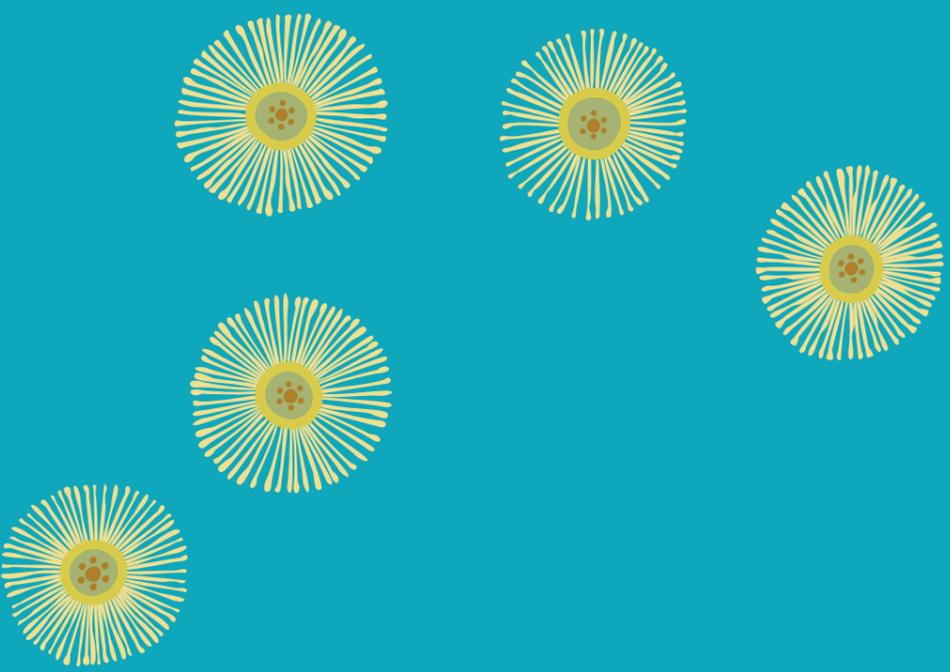
This artwork celebrates the Somerset region's vital role as a source of life-giving water and home to rich biodiversity. Koala prints symbolise the carers of Country, *djarra*, who nurture the rivers and restore balance through their care for native species.

Bunya pine nuts embody wisdom, knowledge and truth, while five yellow box gum flowers represent Council's Corporate Values: Positive Interactions, Community Champions, Empowered Workforce, Safety Star and Excellence.

Together, these elements reflect Council's collaboration with Traditional Custodians and First Nations communities through the Reconciliation Action Plan.



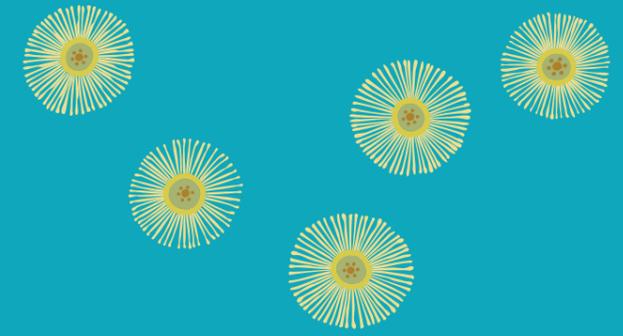
Smoking ceremony with Jinibara Dance Troupe
Somerset NAIDOC celebrations 2025



Acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians

Somerset Regional Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which we live and work, the Jinibara, Jagera, Yuggera, Ugarapul, Kabi Kabi and Dungibara Peoples.

Further, we embrace and promote the Somerset region's heritage to incorporate all cultures, their beliefs and aspirations.



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Message from Reconciliation Australia

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

Somerset Regional Council joins a network of more than 3,000 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 over 5.5 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 Somerset Regional Council 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 Somerset Regional Council, 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



Message from the Mayor

Somerset Regional Council is a unique local government in South East Queensland in that it has the largest land area but the smallest population. We are surrounded by three city councils and five other regional and coastal councils.

Our vast local government area is home to Traditional Custodians, the Jinibara, Jagera, Yuggera, Ugarapul, Kabi Kabi and Dungibara Peoples. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2021 Somerset was home to an estimated 1,358 First Nations people, about 5.35% of our population.

As a Council, we are dedicated to serving all of our people and preserving the culture and traditions of people who have come before. Having a Reconciliation Action Plan means Council can better align its corporate and operational plans to ensure greater connections with Traditional Custodians.

This connection can enable more opportunity for First Nations voices to help inform decision making for Somerset's future. Traditional Custodians have a unique connection to this land, their culture and community.

Through this Reconciliation Action Plan, Council can strengthen relationships between First Nations peoples, non-Indigenous residents and Council, allowing all parties to make meaningful and positive change.

For Council's part, there are a range of actions involved, including inviting First Nations people to interagency meetings and community events, supporting the Emerging Elders Camp, growing Council's First Nations Sport and Recreation Program in the region's high schools, and educating people about First Nations culture through our Somerset Libraries event program.

We will also work to improve relationships with Elders and First Nations teams from all government departments and non-government services which support our region.

I thank the Traditional Custodians for sharing their land, stories and voices with us.

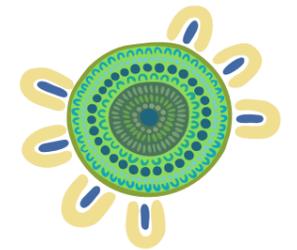
This plan is a step on our path to reconciliation. Council will endeavour to work with Traditional Custodians and our community to continue this journey.

JASON WENDT
Mayor, Somerset Regional Council





Our organisation



Somerset Regional Council area is an hour west of Brisbane. It has strong agricultural, environmental, heritage and tourism values. It contains important vegetation and forest, areas of high scenic and landscape amenity and significantly, and the key water catchments for South East Queensland with the headwaters of the Brisbane River. The Somerset region has an area of 5382 square kilometres and includes five major townships: Esk, Fernvale, Kilcoy, Lowood and Toogoolawah. The region is home to approximately 25,000 people and is expected to grow to an estimated 34,500 by 2031.

Recognising Council does not have large towns, similar to neighbouring regional Councils, it provides services with a much lower annual rate revenue. Council is often reliant upon grants to help provide the necessary infrastructure for the growing region. Council is responsible for the maintenance of local infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, parks, council-owned sporting facilities and swimming pools, libraries, visitor information centres, cultural and community buildings as well as its offices in Esk, Kilcoy and Lowood. It is also responsible for the management of waste and other environmental services and provides building inspection and town planning services. It supports the Somerset community through provision of activities, events, library services and by advocacy to other levels of government to improve the health and lives of residents.

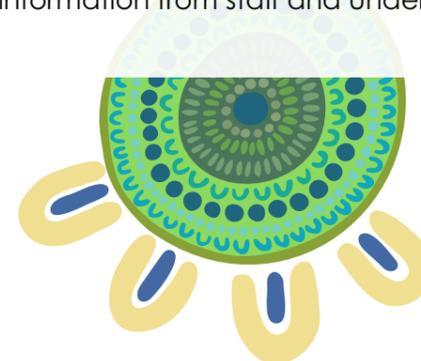
Council's vision encapsulates the community's aspirations to live in a prosperous region defined by the quality of its natural environment, the strength of its economy, the wellbeing of its people and its quality lifestyle.

The Somerset region, with its unique identity and proud heritage, is vibrant, cohesive and connected, providing the foundations for a prosperous rural lifestyle.

Somerset Regional Council's mission statement sets out the purpose of the organisation and demonstrates how it will achieve the vision:

To provide leadership in making locally-responsive and informed decisions, focusing on our customer's needs to deliver the highest-quality efficient services and facilities to all communities of the Somerset region.

Somerset Regional Council employs about 240 staff dedicated to serving the growing region. The majority of staff operate from the Council Administration Office at Esk, with other staff based in the various towns, including Kilcoy, Lowood, Toogoolawah and Fernvale. Historically, Council has not obtained from staff details of their cultural heritage, including if staff identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, however, to better understand and support workplace diversity, Council plans to seek more demographic information from staff and understand this information in a culturally sensitive way.





Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Council wishes to implement a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to provide a pathway toward continual cultural improvement and ensure greater connections with Traditional Custodians to inform decision-making.

Through its networks and relationships Council interacts with all levels of government, suppliers, business, organisations, community groups and individuals and recognises the significant role that it can play in progressing reconciliation throughout our community.

To commence this journey, Council will reflect on current practices and gradually integrate new processes into Council's corporate and operational plans. Council recognises it needs to address internal practices as a first step.

Council is committed to reconciliation. It is in preliminary stages, over the last two years Council has commenced building relationships with Traditional Custodians in our region. Council will continue to consult with Traditional Custodians, First Nations staff and Elders who reside in our region to increase Council's understanding of First Nations cultures and traditions so they can be incorporated into facets of Council's internal operations and external activities, including events.

Our RAP Champion is the Director Corporate and Community Services. We are developing a Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group which will include members of the executive team and representatives from all sections of Council's workforce, including First Nations staff who express an interest in becoming a member of the group. Deliverables will be reported to the entire team to ensure reconciliation becomes part of business as usual and everyone's responsibility.

Our partnerships and current activities

Council is consulting with Traditional Custodians, the Jinibara and Jagera Peoples, in relation to the development of hiking trails on Mount Glen Rock, Esk. As the land was previously privately owned, Council is keen to ensure the area is treated with care until the cultural heritage study is completed. Upon completion, Council will ensure the development proceeds in a manner sensitive to identified cultural needs.

Council works with Elders from the Jinibara People who have a successful Native Title claim over the north-eastern part of the region to provide Welcome to Country and cultural activities at community events and festivals. Council does this to build relationships with the Jinibara People, with the aim of raising residents' awareness of Traditional Custodians' unwavering connection to this land, their cultures and communities.

Council's Community Development team have a working relationship with the First Nations teams from Metro North Health, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, ECT Ltd and Services Australia and work with First Nations organisations Kambu Health and Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH).

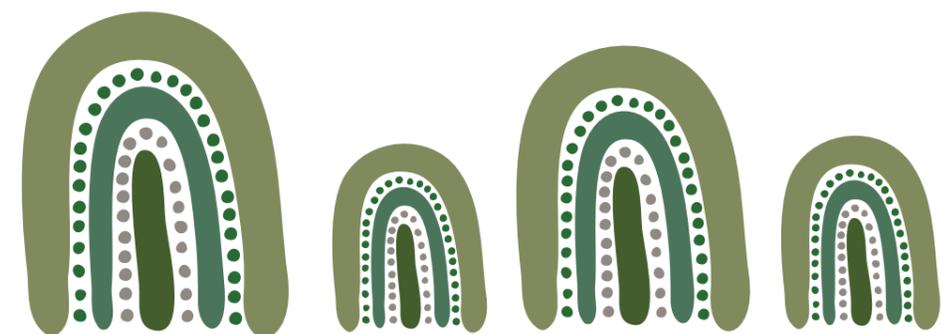
The First Nations teams are invited to participate at interagency meetings and community activities and any First Nations person is encouraged to provide a cultural lens to discussions and activities. At Interagency meetings, preference is given to a First Nations person to provide a Welcome to Country where they hold cultural authority over Country. If a Traditional Custodian is not available, or the person does not feel comfortable to provide a Welcome to Country, another person will be asked to provide an Acknowledgement of Country, and if no other member wants to share their Acknowledgement of Country, the chair will commence the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Council libraries include an Acknowledgement of Country in their Storytime activities and offer NAIDOC activities each year. In 2025 activities include creative workshops including dot pot painting and jewellery making enabling participants to gain a deeper understanding of rich traditions and more understanding into the significance of symbols, colours and patterns. These are led by First Nations artists who live in neighbouring regions. The activities are supported by two library staff who identify as strong First Nations women. These activities are funded by Council. Council also supports other NAIDOC activities held at schools within the region. Council's Community Development team work with First Nations resident and teacher to bring three primary schools together to share a day of cultural learnings. It is also common for this team to attend school-led activities at the Lowood State High School.

Council supports the local Emerging Elders Camp by sponsoring a bus to ensure First Nations young people can attend. At the 2025 camp 37 First Nations young people attended from the three high schools within the Somerset region.

Council's Sports and Recreation Team have successfully developed a First Nations Sport and Recreation Program, funded by the Queensland Government. The program was piloted in 2024 at Lowood State High School and then extended to Somerset's three high schools in 2025. All three programs aim to increase physical activity levels of First Nations students. This year Lowood is participating in rugby league, with the other high schools engaging in basketball. As well as learning the sport and receiving a ball each to keep (provided by Council) the students are mentored by First Nations Instructors from Moreton Bay Suns and Ipswich Force.

Council has a First Nations Somerset resident on its Social Plan Advisory Committee. Expressions of interest are advertised and two community members are selected from a diverse range of interested persons. Although not mandatory, Council was pleased to receive interest from this First Nations community member, who has brought a wealth of knowledge and cultural lens to the discussion. Positions are held for two years before being re-advertised and there is nothing to prevent a sitting member re-applying.



Relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	January 2026	Director Corporate and Community Services, Community and Tourism Manager, Community Development Coordinator
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	January 2026	Community and Tourism Manager, Community Development Coordinator
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	June 2026	Director Human Resources and Customer Service
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	June, 2026	Chairperson of Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June, 2026	Chief Executive Officer

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	January 2026	Chief Executive Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	January 2026	Director Corporate and Community Services, Community and Tourism Manager, Community Development Coordinator
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	January 2026	Director Corporate and Community Services, Community and Tourism Manager, Community Development Coordinator
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	December 2025	Director Human Resources and Customer Service
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March 2026	Director Human Resources and Customer Service



Respect



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	March 2026	Director Human Resources and Customer Service and Director Corporate and Community Services
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	March 2026	Director Human Resources and Customer Service and Director Corporate and Community Services
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.	January 2026	Director Corporate and Community Services
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	January 2026	Chief Executive Officer and Director Human Resources and Customer Service

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2026	Chief Executive Officer and Director Human Resources and Customer Service
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2026	Chief Executive Officer and Director Human Resources and Customer Service
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week of July, 2026	Chairperson of RAP Working Group

Opportunities



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	March 2026	Director Human Resources and Customer Service
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	March 2026	Director Human Resources and Customer Service
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	May 2026	Director Corporate and Community Services and Chief Financial Officer
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	May 2026	Senior Procurement Officer



First Nations exhibition 2021
The Condensery - Somerset Regional Art Gallery

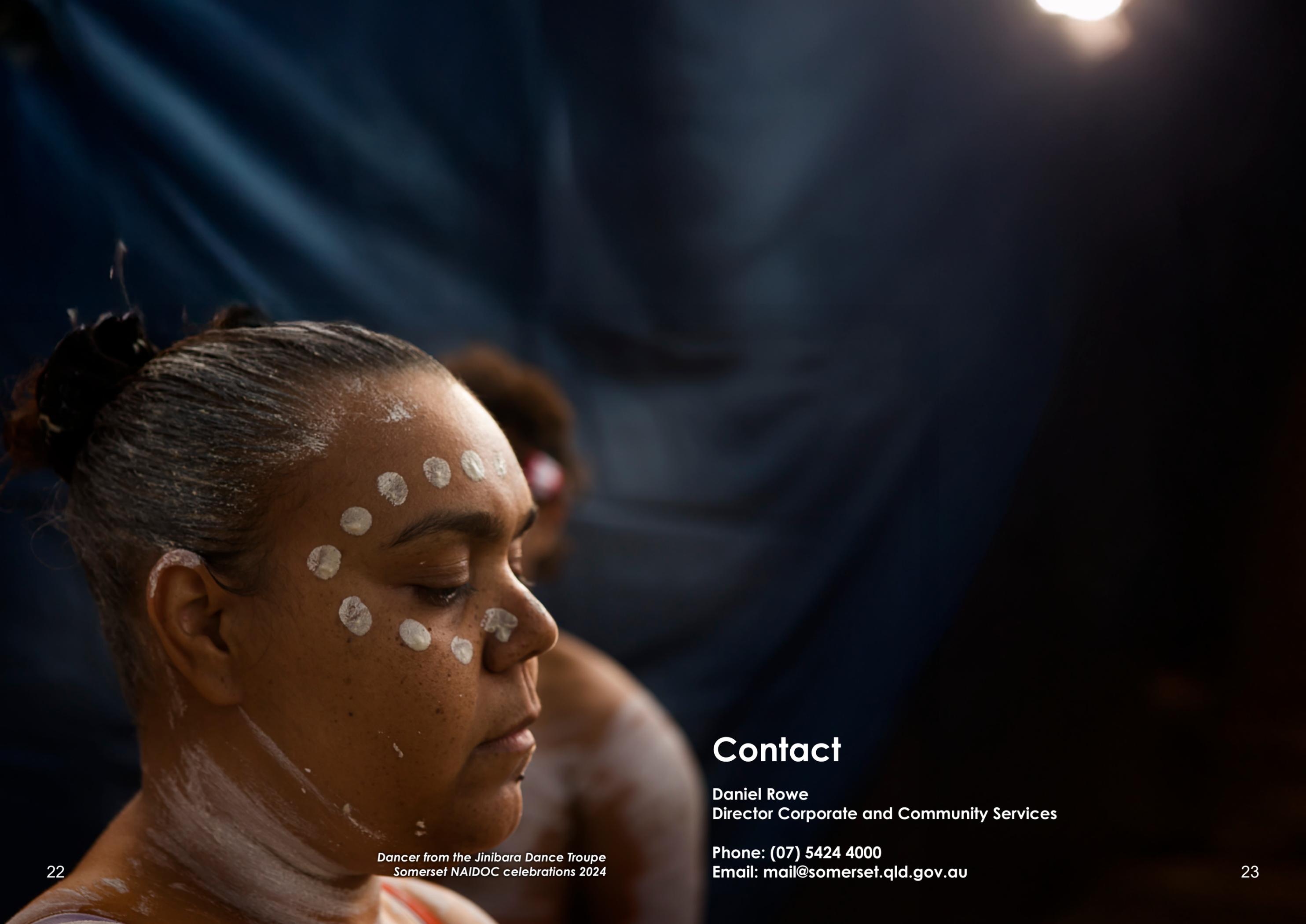


Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	December 2025	Director Human Resources and Customer Service and Director Corporate and Community Services
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	December 2025	Director Human Resources and Customer Service and Director Corporate and Community Services
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	December 2025	Director Human Resources and Customer Service and Director Corporate and Community Services

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	December 2025	Director Corporate and Community Services
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	December 2025	Chief Executive Officer
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	December 2025	Chief Executive Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	December 2025	Director of Corporate and Community Services
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, ensuring we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June annually	Executive Assistant to the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August annually	Executive Assistant to the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	Chief Executive Officer
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	May 2027	Director of Corporate and Community Services



*Dancer from the Jinibara Dance Troupe
Somerset NAIDOC celebrations 2024*

Contact

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