




RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

actlawsociety



Reflect

Reconciliation Action Plan

November 2017 — October 2018

The Law Society of the ACT acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of this country and pays respects to the Traditional Owners and Elders, past and present, of all lands on which we come together.

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Joint statement from our President and CEO

We are proud to introduce the ACT Law Society's first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

This Reflect RAP represents the beginning of our reconciliation journey. We acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Reconciliation Australia in preparing this document.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians face inequality and discrimination, stemming from a long history of dispossession and institutionalised racism. Consequently, they confront greater hurdles to participating in our legal system.

The Referendum Council's Final Report on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, released on 30 June 2017, acknowledged the enduring legacy of colonisation, the laws and policies which marginalised and excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and noted that sovereignty over their lands was never ceded. The Report provides a clear case for inclusion and recognition of Australia's distinct and enduring cultures – cultures which have existed for many thousands of years.

The ACT Law Society believes that taking action to break down those elements of inequality and discrimination that are within our control presents opportunities to create a more equal world for all peoples. This requires dealing with the historical roots of present inequalities. We can improve and expand the everyday operations of the ACT Law Society and its members to be more inclusive and supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. We can support change within our sphere of influence.

Reconciliation will not be an easy journey, but it is one that we are honoured to be a part of.

Sarah Avery

PRESIDENT, ACT LAW SOCIETY

Dianne O'Hara

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ACT LAW SOCIETY

About the Law Society of the ACT

The Law Society of the ACT exists to:

- Represent, advance, and defend the interests of an independent legal profession in the ACT.
- Protect the public interest in the ACT system of justice through the efficient regulation of the profession in accordance with the Legal Profession Act and the Society's Rules for Solicitors.

Our core business includes the following activities:

- Lobbying for "good law" and to reduce costs and improve conditions for members
- Maintenance of professional standards and guardianship of the profession's public image and reputation
- Business, professional and personal counselling, education and training
- Information and communication
- Social and networking
- Commercial services
- Community services.

Our organisation employs ten full time staff and five part time staff. Our structure comprises the office of the President, the Council, the Executive, the Secretariat, and our Committees.

No employed staff of the Law Society of the ACT currently identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or of being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Membership demographics are inconclusive as to whether any Law Society of the ACT members identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or of being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

The Law Society of the ACT's organisational reach is predominantly ACT-based, with a small number of members residing outside of, but employed within, the ACT.

The Law Society of the ACT has one office located at Level 4 of 1 Farrell Place, Canberra City ACT.

The President

Sarah Avery is the current elected President. Ms Avery's election was declared at the Annual General Meeting of the Law Society held on 22 September 2016.

The President:

- Chairs the Executive Committee and oversees the implementation of its decisions.
- Is spokesperson for the Law Society.
- Responds to enquiries or concerns from members.
- Appoints the members of the Society's Committees.
- Liaises with politicians, government agencies, the Law Council of Australia and its constituent bodies (ie other Law Societies and Bar Associations), the media, other professional and industry bodies, and members of the public.

Further information about our President can be found via our website at www.actlawsociety.asn.au.

The Council

The Council is the governing body of the ACT Law Society. It comprises 15 elected members and the Immediate Past President. Five of the elected members, the Immediate Past President and a member appointed by the Council form the Executive Committee. In addition there are five Council-appointed observers. Councillors are elected by the membership of the Society.

Council convenes once a month. The Constitution of the Society vests the Council with the responsibility for the management of the Society's affairs, including income and property. Council meetings settle the policies of the Society, approve major Society submissions and lobbying activities, and decide all disciplinary matters.

The Council has delegated to the Executive Committee the responsibility of overseeing the administration of the Society's activities and the implementation of Council policies. The Committee also considers applications for practising certificates. Many of the matters considered by the Executive Committee require Council consideration and approval.

The Council members for 2017-18 are:

- President — Sarah Avery
- Vice Presidents — Craig Painter and Peter Cain
- Secretary — Louise Vardanega
- Treasurer — Vik Sundar
- Council-appointed member — George Marques
- Immediate Past President — Martin Hockridge
- Councillors — Valerie Bradley, Matthew Carmody, Martin Carrick, Elizabeth Carroll, Paul Edmonds, Sama Khan, Gavin Lee, Sage Leslie, George Marques, Susan Platis.

Further information about our Council members can be found via our website at www.actlawsociety.asn.au.

The Executive

The Executive consists of five elected members, the Immediate Past President and a member appointed by the Council.

The Council has delegated to the Executive Committee the responsibility of overseeing the administration of the Society's activities and the implementation of Council policies. The Committee also considers applications for practising certificates. Many of the matters considered by the Executive Committee require Council consideration and approval.

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Further information about our Executive members can be found via our website at www.actlawsociety.asn.au.

The Secretariat

The role of the Secretariat is to assist the Executive Committee in the daily running of the Society, and to implement the resolutions of Council.

Current secretariat members are:

- Chief Executive Officer — Dianne O’Hara
- Professional Standards Manager — Rob Reis
- Finance & Business Services Manager — Lea McLean
- Executive Secretary — Debbie Sims
- Complaints Committee Secretary — Linda Mackay
- Research Officer — Natasha Del Piero
- Professional Development Officer — Margaret Ryan
- Communications Officer — Nicole Karman
- Committee Secretary — Tanya Holt
- Bookkeeper — Kathleen Lui
- Receptionist & LAB Administrator — Robyn Guilfoyle.

Committees

Through our committees, we are able to look in detail at proposed legislation and its impact, not only on legal practice in the ACT, but the community’s access to justice and the fairness and efficiency of the administration of justice. Whilst some committees are filled by invitation, many are filled by expression of interest from members. All Law Society committees are subject to our Committee Charter.

Our Committee Charter and further information about our Secretariat can be found via our website at www.actlawsociety.asn.au.





Our Reflect RAP

The Law Society of the ACT has developed this Reflect RAP because we are committed to promoting equality for all Australians and believe that a structured approach is the best way to do this effectively.

During 2014, it became apparent that there was a desire in at least some segments of the ACT legal community for the development of a RAP for the Society and its members. Although the Society determined that developing a RAP was not critically urgent, we acknowledged the Society's and member's desire for the development of a RAP by committing to undertake a considered development of a RAP through the Society's Committee framework. This RAP is a product of those deliberations and consultations over a period of 3 years. Members of our Inclusion & Diversity Committee have led the completion of the RAP for the Society.

Our RAP Working Group

Our President, Sarah Avery, and CEO, Dianne O'Hara are champions of our Reflect RAP internally. Our RAP Working Group is comprised of members of our Inclusions & Diversity Committee, all of whom volunteer their time and all of whom have been involved in the development of our RAP.

- Chair — Sara Wedgwood
- Members — Avinesh Chand, Senzeni Zambezi, Timothy Nicholls.

Contact details

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Position: RAP Working Group Chair

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Relationships

We will develop and maintain meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and ensure that staff continue to develop their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values, practices and beliefs.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
RAP Working Group (RWG) actively monitors RAP development and implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting.	<p>RWG oversees the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP.</p> <p>Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented on the RWG.</p> <p>Meet at least twice per year to monitor and report on RAP implementation.</p> <p>Establish Terms of Reference for the RWG.</p>	December 2017	RAP Working Group Chair
Build internal and external relationships.	<p>Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.</p> <p>Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.</p>	February 2018	RAP Working Group Chair
Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<p>Encourage our staff to attend a NRW event.</p> <p>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</p> <p>Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</p>	27 May to 3 June 2018	CEO
Raise internal awareness of our RAP.	<p>Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness amongst all staff across the organisation about our RAP commitments.</p> <p>Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP.</p>	May 2018	CEO



Respect

We will engage with our staff to build their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, histories and achievements. This engagement will advance reconciliation by building expertise, advocacy skills and a desire to change.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development.	<p>Develop a business case for increasing awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements within our organisation.</p> <p>Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.</p> <p>Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation.</p>	May 2018	CEO
Participate in and celebrate NAIDOC Week.	<p>Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.</p> <p>Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting community events in our local area.</p> <p>Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event.</p>	First week in July 2018	CEO
Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols.	<p>Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our local area.</p> <p>Scope and develop a list of local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisations sphere of influence.</p> <p>Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols (including any local cultural protocols).</p>	October 2018	CEO



Opportunities

We will investigate employment opportunities within our organisation and sphere of influence to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the legal sector.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. Identify current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities.	October 2018	CEO
Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.	Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	October 2018	CEO
Investigate ways to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers in the ACT.	Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover the cost for one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member to attend the National Indigenous Legal Conference; and Recognise the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the legal profession including as part of the Law Week program. 	October 2018 May 2018	CEO RAP Working Group Chair

Governance and Tracking Progress

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
Build support for the RAP.	Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation. Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities. Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	December 2017 December 2017 Due 30 September 2018	CEO
Review and Refresh RAP.	Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements. Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review. Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement.	August 2018	RAP Working Group Chair





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the law society of the australian capital territory
a member of the law council of australia
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